
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Mr Tom Lee
Child Poverty Action Group
(by email)

13 April 2021

Dear Mr Lee

Data on Deductions made to Universal Credit

Thank you for your email regarding the use of data on deductions made to Universal Credit (UC) in Parliamentary Questions (PQs) by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

We have spoken to DWP which has confirmed that data on UC deductions provided in response to written PQs is sourced from operational management information, which is not aligned to its UC Official Statistics. DWP told us that whilst it aims to meet user needs through the Official Statistics, where information requested in PQs is not published, it will use internal management information which is assessed for data quality before publication. We support the publication of information in written PQs to inform Parliament, but these answers are not always particularly accessible. Where it is not possible for these answers to be clear on the methods and limitations of the data, we encourage DWP to also make these data available in another form, in line with its approach to releasing ad-hoc data to support Oral PQs.

DWP is due to publish its statistical work programme in May which will set out its priorities for the statistics and a new process overview to explain how statistical developments are taken forward. It told us that all uses of information which are not published through the Official Statistics feed into its considerations for future developments and that it has a wider ambition to develop more breakdowns within its Official Statistics.

As part of our ongoing engagement with DWP, we have been encouraging the statistics teams to use stronger user engagement to inform its decisions around the development of its statistics and we are expecting DWP to invite feedback on its published work programme. We would encourage you to share your interest in deductions data through this call for feedback. We will continue to monitor DWP's approach to delivering these improvements and we expect it to be transparent about its decisions to take forward certain developments and not others.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation