
Director General for Regulation

Stephen Penneck
Chair, Royal Statistical Society National Statistics Advisory Group
(by email)

17 November 2021

Dear Stephen

Thank you for your letter about the delay to the release of Home Office's *Police powers and procedures: Stop and search and arrests, England and Wales* publication. I agree with you that it is important for producers of statistics to be transparent and open about delays to reduce any threat to the trustworthiness of the statistics.

In this case, the delay was announced on 25 October, as shown on this [archived webpage](#), three days before the statistics were originally due to be published. We consider that Home Office acted in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics by announcing the delay and explaining the reason for the change. It is important that the Head of Profession for Statistics has the authority to delay a publication when they have concerns about data quality. Appropriate quality assurance should be undertaken before statistics are released, particularly when they cover such a sensitive, high-profile topic.

However, there are some areas where more could have been done to provide confidence in the decisions being made.

It would be helpful if the [announcement webpage](#) contained a record of updates to allow readers to see when changes were made. The page has been updated since the change was first announced. The date of the original announcement is no longer showing, and the timing and content of subsequent changes to the page are not clear.

It would have also supported confidence to announce the delay to the publication further in advance of the planned publication date. However, our understanding is that the delay was announced promptly on identifying the concerns. Home Office informed us that it split the original police powers and procedures statistical release into two separate releases – one covering stop and search and another covering all other topics. This was done because the team anticipated it would need additional time to process the data. Both releases were pre-announced in April 2021. The *Police powers and procedures: Other PACE powers, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2021* [announcement webpage](#) shows it is due to be published on 14 December 2021.

The policy and organisational context is important. In this case, the progress of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill through parliament may affect the public's perception of a change to the release of statistics. This makes it even more important that decisions are clearly explained. Releasing statistics in an open and transparent manner is central to the trustworthiness of the people and organisations producing the statistics.

We have asked Home Office to provide further details of the nature of the delay and the additional work undertaken to produce the statistics and accompanying explanations in the stop and search statistical bulletin, due to be published tomorrow. This should support the trustworthiness of the statistics.

I am copying this letter to Amy Baxter, Acting Head of Profession for Statistics at Home Office.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation