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Ed Humpherson
Director General
Office for Statistics Regulation

Sent via e-mail.

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TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF NATIONAL STATISTICS DESIGNATION FOR EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCES, 2020-21

Dear Ed,

I am writing to ask you to consider a temporary suspension of the National Statistics badging for the Scottish Government's Education Maintenance Allowance statistics publication.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is an attendance based benefit paid to young people to support them with their studies either at School or College. The Scottish Government have been collecting and publishing the data for users since it began in 2007, in line with the following legislation, *The Education Maintenance Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007*.

The data collection, and corresponding publication, was put on hold following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the reprioritisation of resources and work priorities. This pause in the production of the EMA publication has resulted in three academic years' worth of data due to be published in the same release.

Due to the disruption caused to schools and colleges, as a result of the pandemic, the payments of EMA became inconsistent with the time series and as such, the quality assurance of three years' worth of data has become increasingly challenging. The team's priority is to set out the data as clearly as possible and with all the appropriate caveats and remove some of the tables and commentary which are no longer comparable with previous publications.

These statistics are currently designated as National Statistics, but it is my assessment that given these challenges, the statistics cannot be subject to the normal level of quality assurance. Having consulted your published COVID-19 guidance on the suspension of National Statistics status, I feel the most appropriate course of action would be to seek temporary de-designation for the above mentioned release.

I am confident the issues are specific to this release and will be resolved going forward. I anticipate writing a further letter asking for the temporary suspension of the National Statistics badging to end ahead of next year's release.

Yours sincerely,



Alastair McAlpine
Chief Statistician