
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Tony Dent,
Better Statistics CIC
(by email)

03 October 2022

Dear Tony

Thank you for your email of 31 August 2022. I apologise for the delay in my response.

We have also seen your letter to Sir Robert Chote so there are five points I want to address in this reply: your concerns with our use of the Public Confidence in Official Statistics results in our state of the system report; our overview of the population estimates in our state of the system report; our contact with CDEI; the Covid Infection Survey; and our overall interaction with you and Better Statistics CIC.

Taking them in turn:

Public Confidence in Official Statistics

We appreciated you flagging your concerns with our state of the statistical system report for the use of the [Public Confidence in Official Statistics 2021](#) results. We have reviewed the survey and our presentation.

I completely agree with you. We have in general sought to avoid placing too much weight on this survey. In line with this, our report should have made clearer that the results reflected the views of the survey respondents, and your suggested wording is an improvement on what we published.

As a result, we have amended the report on our website along the lines you have suggested.

Thank you again for this feedback.

Population estimates

With regard to your concerns with how we have discussed the population estimates in the state of the statistics report, we acknowledge your concerns, but we don't agree that we understated the issue. The purpose of the state of the statistics report is to highlight overall issues rather than get into the specific detail of each case but we felt that population estimates was an important case that we wanted to highlight in this report.

CDEI

Following our meeting with you, I contacted CDEI's Director and raised questions about the representativeness of the survey and how the survey's technical aspects are communicated. CDEI responded positively, albeit informally, and met with members of my team. In short, CDEI appreciated the feedback and were open to the case for making improvements. Rather than pursuing this formally, therefore, I decided to await their next publication and see whether the improvements have been made.

CIS

Thank you for your engagement with us during our review. It was helpful to discuss your thoughts, alongside those of many other users of the Survey with whom we engaged. With regard to your request for a formal response to your letters of 3rd May and 20th June we considered our meetings with you as overtaking the need for a formal response as we responded fully and openly during those meetings.

My colleague Anna provided you with an email on 30 August (also attached) regarding our latest position on the Covid Infection Survey. This email sets out our current thinking on the Survey. Although we did not style it as a formal response, we would be happy for you to consider it as our current official position on the Survey, alongside our published review.

With regard to publishing our correspondence, we are happy for you to publish our letters and emails. However, for the emails we would prefer you to specify which emails you wish to publish. This allows us to publish the same things as you on our website (in the interests of full transparency) and also allows us to be sure that we are not putting anything into the public domain that we would not normally publish (eg names of junior OSR staff).

Better Statistics CIC

Finally, although we have covered a wide range of issues in this letter, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you again this autumn. We have a shared interest in the availability of the best possible statistics to inform the public about the economy and society and it would be good to explore how we can identify topics of common interest.

Yours sincerely,



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation