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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Will Moy  
Chief Executive, Full Fact  
(by email)

5 May 2023

Dear Will

**Home Office's recent use of statistics and data**

Thank you for your detailed letter of 27 March about the Home Office's recent use of statistics and data. We share your disappointment that claims continue to be made by Ministers that cannot be verified from the Home Office's published statistics.

We have been engaging with the Home Office both publicly and privately for some time. As the regulator of official statistics, our priority is to work with statistics producers to embed best practice and influence positive change in the statistics system. This is not always best achieved through public interventions. We are encouraged by the positive engagement we've had with officials in the Home Office, from the statistics teams to the Permanent Secretary, and welcome the steps they are taking to prevent the continuation of these episodes.

The issues highlighted in your letter are not unique to the Home Office and our expectations for intelligent transparency apply across the statistical system. This is why we are continuing to roll out our intelligent transparency campaign across government, so that the principles become the default practice in official statistics.

As noted in your letter, we have [written to the Home Office](#) about the need for [intelligent transparency](#) on multiple occasions. Officials in the Home Office have [responded constructively](#) to these letters and have actively engaged with our wider work on intelligent transparency. For example, the department has introduced new [official statistics on irregular migration](#), published [additional data in response to new issues regarding Albania](#), published an [ad-hoc statistical release relating to the Illegal Immigration Bill](#), and has added [additional breakdowns](#) to other existing statistics to reflect policy changes.

The Home Office has also developed new internal guidance for communications and policy teams covering best practice on the use of data in public statements. It is encouraging that the guidance advises Ministers and briefing teams to involve analysts in preparing lines that contain statistics, to avoid unpublished information being referred to. However, we recognise that more needs to be done to ensure the internal guidance and our expectations on intelligent transparency are followed within the Home Office as they have not yet been adopted across all parts of the department.

While we welcome the positive developments at the official level, we remain concerned that the continued misuse of these data by Ministers may undermine public confidence in the statistical and analytical outputs of the department and of ministerial statements related to them. We have continued to intervene on these cases, most recently on [claims on asylum backlogs](#) and the [number of displaced people](#).

Ministers will rightly receive up to date management information about fast moving situations, but the use of this information in public statements should be by exception rather than a regular occurrence. However, when statistics are used without context and clarity, or when they are sourced from private and unverifiable information, this leads to confusion and undermines public confidence in the department's statistics and outputs on other topics.

We therefore continue to discuss with the Home Office how official statistics are used by Home Office Ministers, and how the official statistics system can best support the needs of the Government in providing evidence on this complex, high profile and rapidly changing policy area.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation