
Rob Kent-Smith, Deputy Director for Regulation

Steve Ellerd-Elliott
Chief Statistician and Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Work and Pensions
(by email)

17 September 2024

Dear Steve

Personal Independence Payment statistics: Confirmation of accredited official statistics status

We have independently reviewed the actions taken to address the one requirement outlined in our [assessment report](#). On behalf of the Board of the UK Statistics Authority, I am pleased to confirm that they comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and should be labelled accredited official statistics. We have included the detail around our judgement in the annex to this letter.

We are assured by the plans your team has in place to strengthen its user engagement to help understand a wider range of user views and to drive the future development of the statistics.

Your team has also gone beyond the expected actions taken to meet the assessment requirement by identifying other areas for improvement from the assessment and incorporating these into its plans to meet the assessment requirement. Improvements have been swiftly implemented in the [March 2024 publication](#) to further support users' understanding and interpretation of the statistics; as set out in the annex below. We consider that identifying extra areas for improvement and acting on them shows a real commitment from DWP to accredited official statistics status.

I would like to thank your team for its open and constructive engagement throughout and for your ongoing commitment to improving these statistics.

I am copying this letter to Alexander Rass, Head of Client Statistics at DWP, and Jess Arrowsmith, Juwaria Rahman and Rosie Benfield, the statistical team at DWP.

Yours sincerely



Rob Kent-Smith
Deputy Director for Regulation

Annex: Review of actions taken in response to Assessment Report 384: Personal Independence Payment Statistics, produced by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP)

Requirement: Enhancing value and informing future developments

To enhance the value of the PIP statistics and inform future developments DWP should capture a fuller range of users' views and ensure that these users' needs are fully understood specifically by:

- a) Considering how best to build on its existing user engagement activities to better understand the broader users of the statistics. Identifying currently unknown users will enable the team to gain a clearer understanding of how the statistics are and could be used.**
- b) Considering any data gaps and data needs and identify opportunities to address them, either from existing DWP data or in collaboration with other government departments.**
- c) Being clear and transparent with users about what can and cannot be achieved regarding user needs, providing them with outcomes of the feedback they have provided.**

Actions taken by DWP

To capture wider user feedback the team has put plans in place to capture a wider range of user views. The team has set up a [user questionnaire](#), and shared with us its plans to publicise it in the September [PIP statistics bulletin](#) released today (adopting a similar approach [NISRA takes with its PIP statistics](#) as highlighted in the assessment report).

The team has reviewed the feedback collated by OSR during this assessment, summarising it into themes. Some of the user feedback relating to navigation and finding data on Stat-Xplore is expected to be addressed with the recently published [PIP data on Stat-Xplore: user guide](#) (see section 'Further actions taken by DWP' below). The team told us that it will alert these users to the new user guide and will also share the user questionnaire to help gain further insights from these users. We are assured that the team is considering how best to continue engaging with users so that this engagement is not just a one-off.

The team has added additional text in its PIP statistical release to highlight and point users to publication-specific and cross-departmental plans for future developments and changes that have already been implemented, which are included in the [DWP Statistical work programme](#) and the [PIP statistics release strategy](#).

OSR's evaluation of evidence

We consider this requirement to be met – the team has firm plans in place to strengthen its user engagement and build on the links built during the assessment to ensure ongoing conversations with users.

Given the team's proactive approach to make other improvements from the assessment (as set out below) we are confident that the team is committed to fulfilling its plans set out for this requirement.

Further actions taken by DWP

The PIP team has also been very proactive in identifying other areas for improvement from the assessment and is carrying out extra actions as follows:

- Made the signposting to the Stat-Xplore user guide in the PIP bulletin clearer.
- Created a [Stat-Xplore user guide specific to PIP statistics](#), to aid users in navigating Stat-Xplore and using it to access the statistics they require. Similar guides have already been created for other statistics products, and this approach is likely to be adopted generally across all DWP subject areas in future.
- Added extra information in the PIP bulletin to explain to users the effect of the retrospection and data entry errors on the statistics and their interpretation.
- Added a link in the bulletin to the DWP Benefit Combinations statistics to better signpost users to this alternate source of data (derived in part from the PIP statistics) which allows users to see what other benefits are claimed in combination with PIP.
- Exploring the use of ChatGPT to identify other users of the PIP statistics.

The PIP team considered our suggestion to consider whether the findings from OSR's Quality Review of HMRC statistics, including further thought on producing a process map for use within DWP (which shows the steps in the production of its official statistics from data collection to publication, identifying any risk points throughout the process, and the mitigating actions that are taken to ensure the quality of the statistics at these points) would be beneficial. The team identified that it already has an internal document covering all aspects of the production process.

There is also an ongoing DWP-wide initiative, driven by user research, to improve and modernise the Stat-Xplore online help guidance following a project looking at best practices for digital learning and development (for a tool like Stat-Xplore).