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[www.number10.gov.uk](http://www.number10.gov.uk)

Permanent Secretary

12 December 2008

Dear Sir Michael

Thank you for your letter of today's date regarding the publication of statistics relating to knife crime.

First let me make clear that the Prime Minister and all his Ministers, officials and advisers take very seriously the importance of maintaining the integrity of official statistics. In this case - given continuing strong public interest in knife crime trends and the Government's desire to make available the latest relevant management information and data as soon as possible, insufficient attention appears to have been given to the views of the NHS Information Centre statisticians on whether one specific data set included in the Tackling Knives Action Programme Fact Sheet was ready for publication. The National Statistician's concern about this was only brought to No 10's attention yesterday morning, after the data had already been released.

The Prime Minister remains strongly committed to building public trust in official statistics and to the new measures he has put in place to safeguard their independence. In light of your letter, Sir Gus O'Donnell will discuss with the Permanent Secretaries of the departments involved and the National Statistician any lessons to be learned from this case and remind all staff and advisers of the procedures that must be followed to protect the integrity of official statistics.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours and to Hugh Taylor at the Department of Health.

Yours sincerely

**JEREMY HEYWOOD**

Sir Michael Scholar KCB