
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Diana Johnson MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

6 January 2012

Dear Ms Johnson,

STATISTICS ON DRUG SEIZURES

Thank you for your letter of 13 December 2011. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

As a matter of principle, the Statistics Authority expects that statistics quoted by those in Government in the course of parliamentary or public debate will be readily available in the form of statistical releases compiled in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. We believe that this is the best way to ensure informed debate, so that any alleged bias or over-interpretation can be identified and challenged.

As far as we have been able to establish, the Home Office Press Release (113/2011) referred to in my letter of 15 November 2011 (and attached to that letter) is not widely available. Statistics Authority officials have been unable to find it on either the Home Office or UK Border Agency websites. This is unsatisfactory, not least because the Home Office's Statistical News Release 'Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, 2010/11' (published on 10 November 2011) refers directly to this press release.

Ministers are, of course, entitled to select and comment on published official statistics as they choose; that is fundamental to the nature of public debate. However, it is our view that the possibility for confusion as to the source of the statistics being cited in departmental press releases is not helpful and we will draw this to the attention of Home Office statisticians.

I am copying this letter to the Minister of State for Immigration, to the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and to the National Statistician.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Scholar KCB