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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Patrick Casey  
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Dear Mr Casey

**DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS STATISTICS**

Thank you for your letter of 1 October about publication of recent statistics by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). I am sorry not to have replied sooner.

I raised the points you made in relation to the two recent DWP Press Releases on benefits duration and worklessness statistics with the National Statistician, who has discussed with DWP. The Department has confirmed that these statistics are National Statistics. In both instances, I understand that they were derived from analyses produced in response to Ministerial requests for such information, and were provided with supporting advice to the Minister on appropriate use of the statistics.

I see no objection to selective quotation from datasets of this kind, provided that they are presented fairly and accurately, and provided that the public has equal access to the database concerned, so that alternative selections may be made. I am informed that DWP is taking steps to ensure public access to such ad hoc statistical analyses that are not part of their usual suite of regular publications. I understand that, in the instance of the analysis of benefit durations based on the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study, a similar analysis can be produced by members of the public using the DWP's online tabulation tool accessible via the Department's website.

Nevertheless, in the instance of the analysis of the number of people of working age who have never worked, neither this particular analysis nor the Press Release containing these statistics was made publicly available; and the source of the analysis (the Office for National Statistics' Labour Force Survey) was not given. These were, in my view, serious deficiencies in DWP's arrangements, and I have drawn their attention to this.

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires official statistics to be made equally available to all, subject to statutory provisions for pre-release access. The National Statistician has asked DWP that, when producing new analyses that are used in public statements, they ensure that the statistics are also published by their statisticians, or are accessible to non-government analysts, in a transparent way. The Statistics Authority regards compliance with this principle as central to retaining trust in official figures.

Yours sincerely



**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**