

---

**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE**

Sir Robert Devereux KCB  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9DA

10 March 2016

Dear Robert,

As you may be aware, Jonathan Portes, National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) has raised with the UK Statistics Authority his concerns that the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) ad hoc release<sup>1</sup> of information about the proportion of EEA migrants claiming in-work benefits and tax credits did not include full details of the underlying methodology and assumptions.

My understanding is that:

- On 4 December Jonathan Portes submitted a Freedom of Information request about a number of methodological questions on the analysis reported in this ad hoc statistical release.
- On 18 January DWP wrote to Jonathan Portes explaining its decision (under section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act) not to provide the information that he has asked for.
- On 24 January Jonathan Portes requested an internal review of the decision not to provide the information.
- On 19 February DWP wrote again to Jonathan Portes to say that it needed more time to consider the balance of the public interest, and that it expected to provide him with a response by 18 March.
- On 8 March DWP wrote to Jonathan Portes apologising for the delay to the original request and concluding that Section 35 was not applicable.

I am pleased that, consistent with the principles of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the Department has on 8 March overturned its previous position.

Publishing details of the methods underpinning the analysis, as I understand the Department plans to do today, including explanations of why particular choices were made, as required by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, means that legitimate public debate about a topic of considerable public interest can be more informed.

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-benefit-and-tax-credit-claims-by-recently-arrived-eea-migrants>

As the Authority highlighted recently<sup>2</sup>, a lengthy delay between the publication of statistics and an explanation of the underlying methodology and assumptions is not in keeping with the spirit of equality of access which the Code of Practice promotes.

We look to government departments to ensure, in line with Principle 8 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, that timely access to information on “*methods, procedures, and classifications*” supporting official statistics is provided.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE**

---

<sup>2</sup><https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Letter-from-Ed-Humpherson-to-Edward-Troup-110216.pdf>