
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

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Dear Steve

ASSESSMENT OF LEGAL AID STATISTICS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Thank you for the correspondence outlining the actions that have been taken to address the requirements in Assessment Report number 325 on *Statistics on Legal Aid in England and Wales*. On behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, I have reviewed these on the advice of the Assessment team and I am pleased to confirm the designation of *Legal Aid Statistics in England and Wales*.

I welcome the commitment and responsiveness that the Legal Aid Agency statistics team has shown in meeting the requirements and its very positive and pro-active engagement with the regulatory team throughout. I also welcome the improvements made to the public value of the statistics by the statistics team, through its engagement with a wider range of stakeholders in order to better understand their needs, by publishing new data and commentary to meet those needs and by clearly setting out its plans for further development of the statistical bulletin. I encourage the team to continue this direct engagement with a wide range of users as you develop the statistical evidence base for the analysis of legal aid take-up and expenditure in England and Wales. A continued and consultative engagement approach with all users will also be important in the context of planned changes to the structure of the quarterly statistical report later in 2017.

I also welcome the additional value added by the statistics team clearly setting out in the Guide to Legal Aid Statistics, the fact that some Legal Aid data are only available through FoI requests and linking to where the relevant FoI requests and responses are published. Particularly commendable is the substantial review of the data sources used in the production of Legal Aid Statistics by the statistics team in order to assure itself of the quality of the source data in reference to the UK Statistics Authority's Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit. The accessible and candid summary presented in the Guide to Legal Aid Statistics of the team's professional judgments about the strengths and limitations of each source in relation to potential uses of the data is one of the best that the regulatory team has seen. As such, we intend to publish a summary of the approach taken as a case study example of good practice on the Office for Statistics Regulation web pages.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value and is something to be celebrated. We invite you to include a statement alongside the statistics which reflects the National Statistics status. You may wish to base your statement on the boilerplate text included within the Assessment Report.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with us at any time. I am copying this letter to John Pullinger, the National Statistician, Richard Field, James McEwen and to Richard Heaton.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ed Humpherson