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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove**

Stephen Lloyd MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

17 October 2017

Dear Mr Lloyd,

Thank you for your email of 26 September, in which you asked the Authority to consider the accuracy of recent statements made by Government Ministers, regarding spending on disability benefits.

As you note, Government Ministers often state that the Government spends £50billion a year on services and support for disabled people. Sometimes the figure is described as spending on “benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions” and sometimes, more loosely, as spending on “disability benefits.”

Having looked into the statements, and spoken to officials within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Authority understands that recent references to the £50billion figure have been derived from Table 4 of the Spring Budget 2017 tables.<sup>1</sup> Table 4 of the Spring Budget sets out benefit expenditure to support disabled people and people with health conditions, and provides an outturn figure of £49.0billion for 2015/16, and a forecast figure of £49.7billion for 2016/17.

Claims that the Government spends £50billion on supporting disabled people and people with health conditions are therefore valid. Describing this figure as expenditure on disability benefits *alone* is not strictly accurate.

More broadly, the Authority is aware that some users find existing data on benefits expenditure challenging to access and interpret. The data referenced in the statements are relatively new, and (as you note in your letter) previous statements made by Ministers had drawn from a different set of sources.<sup>2</sup> To improve public understanding in this area, the Authority will be recommending to DWP that they do more to make users aware of new expenditure data, and that they develop further commentary around these data to assist users.

Yours Sincerely



**Sir David Norgrove**

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<sup>1</sup> Table 4 (available [here](#)) is a new addition to the set of benefit expenditure and caseload tables. It was added as part of the Autumn Statement 2016 set of tables, and has been included in the more recent Spring Budget 2017 tables.

<sup>2</sup> The sources are set out in the annexed FoI to [your original letter](#).