

13 March 2018

Ed Humpherson  
Director General – Regulation  
UK Statistics Authority

Dear Ed

### **Northern Ireland Claimant Count**

I am writing to request the de-designation of the Northern Ireland Claimant Count statistics due to the roll-out of Universal Credit, similar to the ONS position in 2015. The Claimant Count forms part of our monthly Labour Market Report.

The roll-out of Universal Credit began in Northern Ireland in September 2017 and replaces income-based Jobseekers Allowance for new claimants. Estimates of the number of people claiming Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed in Northern Ireland have been available since January 2018 and have been included in the Labour Market Report for reference. The headline Claimant Count has continued to be based on Jobseekers Allowance only.

The exclusion of Universal Credit Claimants up to this point has had a small impact on the Claimant Count total (approximately 1%) and no impact on the direction of the claimant count trend. However, as the number of Universal Credit Claimants is likely to increase with the roll-out of the benefit, the potential impact on Claimant Count totals and trends will increase and in turn decrease its use as a reliable measure of unemployment.

NISRA is therefore removing the NI Claimant Count based on Jobseekers Allowance only from publications to be replaced with an experimental series based on Jobseekers Allowance and relevant out-of-work Universal Credit Claimants. This is in line with the ONS approach and will take effect from 21 March 2018 – publication date of the Labour Market Report.

NISRA will submit the experimental series for assessment after the full roll-out of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland and when we are assured of the quality of the new series.

Yours Sincerely



**SIOBHAN CAREY**  
**NISRA Chief Executive**