

Kemi Badenoch MP
Leader of HM Official Opposition
Member of Parliament for North West Essex
(via email)

6 May 2026

Dear Mrs Badenoch

As Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, I am writing on behalf of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), the regulatory arm of the Authority. OSR promotes and safeguards the appropriate use of statistics in public debate and considers concerns raised with the Authority where there is a risk that statistics may be misunderstood or misused.

I am writing in relation to a statement you made during Prime Minister's Questions on 29 April 2026¹, in which you said:

“He [the Prime Minister] has broken his promise to grow the economy; the only thing that has grown is the welfare bill. Can the Prime Minister tell us how many more people are out of work and claiming universal credit since he took office? ... The Prime Minister does not want to say how many more people are out of work and claiming universal credit since he took office; perhaps he does not know. Let me tell him: it is 1.5 million people.”

While it is accurate to state that welfare spending has increased, we are concerned that the way the statistic was presented could lead to a misunderstanding. In particular, the statement may be interpreted as suggesting that the growth in Universal Credit caseloads began with, and is primarily attributable to, the policies of the current government.

In practice, the increase in Universal Credit claims over the period you referred to is not solely the result of additional people entering the benefits system. A substantial proportion reflects the ongoing transfer of claimants from legacy benefits to Universal Credit². This process has been a longstanding policy and has been implemented at

¹ [Engagements: Volume 785: debated on Wednesday 29 April 2026](#), Hansard, 29 April 2026

² [Universal Credit statistics, 29 April 2013 to 8 January 2026](#), Department for Work and Pensions, 17 February 2026

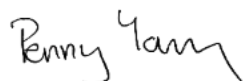
scale by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) since May 2022³, predating the current administration.

Data from the DWP show that the number of people out of work claiming Universal Credit (from July 2024 to February 2026) increased by 1.46 million people⁴, which is, when rounded, in line with the 1.5 million figure used in your statement. However, around 1.1 million people who were already out of work moved across to Universal Credit from other benefits: this is key context to the interpretation of the statistics.

We recognise that the fast-paced nature of oral parliamentary debate can make it challenging to provide full statistical context. Nonetheless, given the influence of such statements on public understanding, it is important that statistics are presented in ways that are clear and transparent, and that minimise the risk of the public being misled. Omitting relevant context can inadvertently undermine trust in both statistics and those who use them, and may divert attention from more meaningful discussion of the underlying policy issues.

We would ask you to be mindful of providing relevant context when presenting these statistics in future.

Yours sincerely,



Penny Young
Interim Chair

³ [Press release: Successful DWP campaign leads to closure of historical benefits](#), Department for Work and Pensions, 31 March 2026

⁴ People on Universal Credit, [StatXplore](#), Department for Work and Pensions, accessed 1 May 2025.

- OSR analysed data from July 2024 to February 2026, about claimants categorised as “No work requirements”, “Searching for work”, “Preparing for Work”, or “Planning for work”.