



From the Minister of State
for Work and Pensions

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

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Dame Anne Begg MP
Chair Work and Pensions Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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29 July 2011

Dear Anne,

I sympathise with your concerns with the language used in some of the written press following the release of the most recent WCA statistics. It is unhelpful and unfair to those people who are disabled or who have a significant health condition and are therefore unable to work or are facing considerable barriers to doing so.

While there is confusion within the media surrounding the difference between new ESA claims and existing Incapacity Benefit claimants, the Department makes every effort to explain the difference to journalists to ensure accurate representation in the media. Your concern is understandable and we will continue to make the distinction in our press briefings.

I should say, however, that we did not and do not use the terms 'scroungers or work shy' in any of our written or oral briefings and we do not encourage journalists to use such language. Instead we give factual information: in this case on how we have strengthened the support for people to get back to work and have improved the Work Capability Assessment.

I was concerned at your disquiet at the timing of publication of these statistics. The Department does not choose the release dates - they are released on a timetable set out a year in advance by the UK Statistics Authority, as I am sure the Select Committee is aware.

The Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that we give the appropriate type and level of support to those that need it and we want to make the incapacity benefits reassessment programme as fair and efficient as possible.

A copy of this letter goes to the clerk.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steve Webb', written in a cursive style.

STEVE WEBB MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR PENSIONS