
Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

Dr Andrew Garrett
Royal Statistical Society

Sent via email only

05 July 2023

Dear Dr Andrew Garrett,

Thank you for your 20 June letter on the ONS' Household Costs Indices (HCIs).

We remain committed to the development of the HCIs as part of our [consumer prices landscape](#) and agree that a better understanding of the impact of inflation on those on the lowest incomes is important.

Recognising the importance of the HCIs to many stakeholders, especially with recent rises in cost of living, we are currently developing our capabilities to move to quarterly publication of the HCIs later this year, a commitment I made to your predecessor Professor Sylvia Richardson. With our priority then to continue publication of these more timely quarterly estimates. We have also produced a range of work to help understand how inflation is affecting households including the [personal inflation calculator](#) and [shopping prices comparison tool](#).

However, our capacity to progress the HCIs development further will have to be considered alongside our wider priorities, including our [plans to transform UK consumer price statistics](#) and production of our monthly consumer, producer and house price bulletins. With key consumer prices transformation work planned to deliver over the next two years our priority is to ensure their successful delivery. While improvement work to areas such as the mortgage interest costs in HCIs are recognised next steps in HCI development, this work would still require a resource commitment to finalise that would impact on delivery of our wider priorities.

The work of the statistical system is currently taking place against a financial and human resources backdrop in which cash budgets are being stretched by inflation and pay pressures, and in which some increasingly important skills are harder and more expensive to attract and retain. This has already required tough decisions on prioritisation and will no doubt require more.

We will continue to review our priorities on an ongoing basis, working with the Advisory Panel on Consumer Prices – Stakeholders (APCP-S) to understand the needs of all users, including the RSS and its members. I know Mike Keoghan, our Deputy National Statistician and Director General for Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics, is attending the next meeting of the APCP-S and would be happy to take questions on our prioritisation approach from the RSS representative on the panel.

As we move to a quarterly publication schedule, we are keen to raise the profile of the HCIs with the general public and would welcome the RSS's support in our public awareness campaign and events.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Diamond', written in a cursive style.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond