

Preparing appropriate basis for estimating unemployment...

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I note that [Sky News](#) has recorded that:

Britain's benefits system is bracing for up to four million unemployed in the coming months as the economic fall-out of the COVID crisis accelerates.

The work and pensions secretary Therese Coffey told Sky News her department was preparing to support that level of unemployed, but said she "genuinely hopes" that we do not reach that figure.

I have noted that the [Daily Mail](#) has repeated the story, suggesting that the Office for Budget Responsibility agrees the claim, based on July data.

I welcome the government's recognition that it is facing an unemployment crisis: it is about time that it did.

I also think it time to say that I'm already expecting considerable manipulation of unemployment data over the months to come.

As the [Guardian has already reported](#), hundreds of thousands of people are already being denied Universal Credit even though they are now unemployed. That figure is obviously going to rise significantly over coming months.

What we can also be sure of is that many hundreds of thousands more people will simply not register as unemployed or claim benefits, largely because many of them will be over the retirement age, but would otherwise nonetheless work.

What this then means is that even though the government is now preparing for 4 million benefit claimants, the true figure of those unemployed is likely to be very much higher, and that will be the case even if the benefit claimant figure is higher than 4,000,000, as I think entirely plausible.

Preparing appropriate basis for estimating unemployment is going to be one of the challenges of the coming year.