

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Mental Health Officers in Scotland

(produced by the Scottish Social Services Council)

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act gives the Statistics Authority power to re-assess whether the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*³ continues to be complied with in relation to official statistics already designated as National Statistics. The report covers the set of statistics reported in *Mental Health Officers' Report*⁴ (MHOR), produced by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).
- 1.1.2 The previous assessment of this set of statistics was reported in Assessment report 86⁵. They have been re-assessed because responsibility for the production of the statistics (called the Mental Health Officers survey, Scotland) transferred from the Scottish Government to SSSC. This is discussed further in section 2 and annex 4.
- 1.1.3 Section 3 of this report adopts an 'exception reporting' approach – it includes text only to support the Requirements made to strengthen compliance with the *Code* and Suggestions made to improve confidence in the production, management and dissemination of these statistics. This abbreviated style of report reflects the Head of Assessment's consideration of aspects of risk and materiality⁶. The Assessment team nonetheless assessed compliance with all parts of the *Code of Practice* and has commented on all those in respect of which some remedial action is recommended.
- 1.1.4 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Assessment Committee on behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, based on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

- 1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in *MHOR* are designated as National Statistics, subject to SSSC implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by June 2014.

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁴ http://www.sssc.uk.com/cat_view/67-social-services-workforce/69-statistics-and-reports

⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-86---scottish-community-care.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/guidance-about-assessment/criteria-for-deciding-upon-the-format-of-an-assessment-report.pdf>

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.3.1 SSSC does not provide sufficient information about the methods used to compile the statistics, and does not publish sufficient evidence to provide assurance to users that the underlying administrative data is suitable for use.
- 1.3.2 During the course of this assessment SSSC developed and published several key statistical documents, including a Statement of Administrative Sources, on a new data section⁷ of its website. The new documents are informative, clear and easy to read. However this data section of SSSC's website is not clearly signposted from SSSC's homepage.
- 1.3.3 SSSC engages well with the local authority contacts that supply data for *MHOR*, who are also the main users of the statistics. However SSSC has not documented its engagement with a wide range of users outside of local and central government or explained how it has investigated the needs of other users or potential users of these statistics.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that SSSC could strengthen its compliance with the *Code*. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

Requirement 1	Document the results of investigations into the uses of these statistics outside of local and central government and use this information to support the development of the statistics (para 3.1).
Requirement 2	Publish more complete information about the methods used to compile the statistics (para 3.3).
Requirement 3	Extend the information that SSSC publishes about the quality of the statistics to include evidence to demonstrate: the reasons that SSSC is satisfied that the risks associated with the underlying administrative data are low; the consequent justification for the level of quality assurance checks in place; the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to their use; and all main sources of error and bias (para 3.6).

⁷ <http://data.sssc.uk.com/>

- Requirement 4** Improve the commentary in *MHOR* so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.9).
- Requirement 5** Ensure that *MHOR* is disseminated in forms that enable and encourage analysis and re-use (para 3.11).
- Requirement 6** Ensure that *MHOR* can be accessed from the National Statistics Publication Hub (para 3.12).

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 Until November 2012 the collation, analysis and publication of the statistics published in the *Mental Health Officer's Report (MHOR)* was the responsibility of the Scottish Government and these statistics⁸ were assessed in Assessment report 86⁹. The statistics covered by MHOR are closely related to the Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC) remit. SSSC has a statutory responsibility to register those who work in social services in Scotland, including social workers; it is also responsible for regulating their education and training.
- 2.2 A mental health officer (MHO) is a social worker who has special training and experience in working with people who have a mental illness, learning disability or related condition¹⁰. Mental health officers are employed by local authorities who have legal duties under the *Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003*¹¹. The specific role is not replicated in law across the other UK administrations.
- 2.3 *MHOR* presents information about qualified MHOs who are practising within local authorities in Scotland. The report provides details about the size and demographics of the MHO workforce, the number of trainees and vacancies and the number who have left the workforce. Some additional analysis is presented on MHOs working in specialist and non-specialist teams. The statistics are derived from the Mental Health Officers' Survey which has been carried out annually since 2005. The Scottish Government previously collected the MHO survey data in March each year, and published results for the period March 2011 to March 2012 in its final publication before transferring responsibility to SSSC. For its first publication in May 2013, SSSC changed the survey collection date to December 2012 and published results for the period March 2012 to December 2012. Future data collection will continue in December, with results published for each calendar year.
- 2.4 Local authorities use the statistics to evaluate activity across similar local authorities, and at a national level. The statistics are also used by local authorities to inform workforce planning and to identify potential gaps in staffing levels, to secure funding and training places for MHO trainees and to monitor the age of the working MHO population.
- 2.5 SSSC publishes *MHOR* in PDF format, without separate supplementary tables. This equates to a level of 1 star under the Five Star Scheme that forms part of the Open Standards Principles proposed in the *Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential*¹² and adopted as government policy in November 2012¹³. Five stars represents the highest star rating within the Scheme
- 2.6 SSSC told us that it does not include staff resources when estimating costs for producing these statistics. SSSC estimates that it costs local authorities £32 each to provide the data.

⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/06/3674>

⁹ See footnote 5

¹⁰ <http://www.mwscot.org.uk/the-law/mental-health-act/mental-health-officers/>

¹¹ See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/13/contents> and

http://www.mwscot.org.uk/media/73357/a_guide_to_the_role_of_the_mental_health_officer.pdf

¹² http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-principles/open-standards-principles>

3 Assessment findings

- 3.1 SSSC chairs the quarterly Scottish Social Services Workforce Data Group (SSSWDG), which includes members from central and local government, social work and the health services. The group discusses improvements to the statistics and how they can best be used to support the planning of employers, funding bodies and training providers, and policy making in government. SSSC told us that the main users of the statistics are the data suppliers in local authorities and that the SSSC statisticians discuss the statistics with these suppliers at the Mental Health Officer's Survey (MHOS) group. SSSC publishes minutes from the SSSWDG¹⁴ and the MHOS group¹⁵. SSSC told us that it consulted with the MHOS group about a proposed change to the survey collection. The statisticians also told us that they are beginning to engage with other mental health organisations and recently met with the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland¹⁶ to discuss how it uses the statistics and to explore the benefits of working together. SSSC has consulted with representatives of Scottish Care and the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland to try to identify possible users of the statistics in the voluntary sector, and told us that it plans to explore the opportunity to make the workforce data presented in *MHOR* comparable with that produced by Health Boards. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SSSC should document the results of their investigations into the uses of these statistics outside of local and central government and use this information to support the development of the statistics¹⁷ (Requirement 1). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement, SSSC refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*¹⁸ when documenting use.
- 3.2 SSSC has published a revisions policy¹⁹, but it is not referenced from *MHOR*. *MHOR* highlights a change to previously published figures; the scale of the change and the reason are both clearly presented. SSSC's website has a clearly marked area for announcing changes and revisions, should they occur in the future. We suggest that SSSC include a link to the organisational revisions policy in *MHOR*.
- 3.3 SSSC assumed responsibility for the collation, analysis and publication of the statistic in *MHOR* from the Scottish Government in 2012. The introduction to *MHOR* states that SSSC follow the same methodology as the Scottish Government in the production of the statistics, but SSSC does not publish sufficient information about the methods used. As part of the designation of National Statistics, SSSC should publish more complete information about the methods used to compile the statistics²⁰ (Requirement 2).
- 3.4 For SSSC's first report published in May 2013 (*MHOR 2012*), and thereafter, the data collection date has been brought forward four months, from 31 March to 3 December. SSSC states in the introduction to *MHOR* that the reason for

¹⁴ <http://data.sssc.uk.com/what-we-do/scottish-social-services-workforce-data-group-ssswdg>

¹⁵ <http://data.sssc.uk.com/what-we-do/mental-health-officer-survey>

¹⁶ <http://www.mwcscot.org.uk/>

¹⁷ In relation to Principle 1, Practices 1 and 2 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.sssc.uk.com/images/stories/datasite/pdf/RevisionsCorrectionsPolicy-170913.pdf>

²⁰ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

this change was to synchronise the collection date with the annual survey of local authority social work services²¹ (LASWS), and thus improve continuity across the social services sector. The change was approved by stakeholders when the Scottish Government consulted on the issue in autumn 2012 and, subsequent to the May 2013 report, the two surveys were merged. The change of date of the survey collection has introduced a discontinuity in the time series that is not fully addressed in the report. Direct comparisons of the number of people entering (trainees) and leaving the profession (retiring or leaving) are not possible. It is unclear whether the trends presented in *MHOR 2012* are actual changes in the composition of the workforce, or if they simply reflect the change in the collection period. It is not made sufficiently clear in *MHOR* or on the SSSC website how the MHO survey and LASWS are linked, or the overall benefits to users of combining the data collection. We suggest that SSSC provide information to users about the links between the MHO survey and LASWS.

- 3.5 SSSC collects data from local authorities' administrative systems and has published a Statement of Administrative Sources²² that details the processes in place to assure the quality of the data. SSSC's quality assurance procedures include: logic and sanity checks against published data standards; trend analysis; comparing against other available sources; and checking outliers with data providers. For those data provided by the Care Inspectorate, the Care Inspectorate cleans the data before sending them to the SSSC. Local authorities provide data via an aggregate spreadsheet return, which has built in validation checks and enables them to provide commentary. SSSC then reviews the data and local authority comments, and liaises with the local authorities to resolve any remaining errors.
- 3.6 SSSC has also published a Statement of Quality²³ which outlines how the statistics are considered alongside the European Statistical System Quality Framework's six dimensions of quality²⁴. As part of the assessment process, the statistical team shared with the Assessment team the data collection forms used by local authorities to submit the data. The statistical team told us that it had recently met with the Care Inspectorate²⁵ to discuss any quality assurance processes that could overlap between their organisations, but that the Care Inspectorate does not independently review these data. SSSC told us that it considers that the risks associated with the underlying data are low because of the relatively small number of MHOs within each local authority and that the definition of a MHO is well understood and has not been an issue of debate or concern. However, SSSC has not published any documentation to demonstrate this claim, or to demonstrate that the quality assurance that it undertakes is proportionate to the risks involved. Furthermore, *MHOR* does not include sufficient information about how different counting practices could exist in local authorities and would therefore impact on the statistics and their use. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SSSC should extend the information that it publishes about the quality of the statistics to include evidence to demonstrate: the reasons that SSSC is satisfied that the risks associated with

²¹ <http://data.sssc.uk.com/what-we-do/local-authority-social-work-services-survey>

²² <http://data.sssc.uk.com/images/ONS/StatementAdministrativeSources-170913.pdf>

²³ <http://data.sssc.uk.com/images/ONS/CorporatePolicyStatementQuality-170913.pdf>

²⁴ <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/introduction/>

²⁵ <http://www.scswis.com/>

the underlying administrative data are low; the consequent justification for the level of quality assurance checks in place; the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to their use; and all main sources of error and bias²⁶ (Requirement 3).

- 3.7 SSSC told us that directly comparable statistics are not published for other administrations of the UK, as the role of an MHO is specific to Scotland. The other administrations employ approved mental health workers²⁷ who do not need to be qualified social workers in order to undertake the role. SSSC does not present any information about the reasons for the lack of comparable statistics for other UK administrations in *MHOR*. We suggest that SSSC provide users with information to explain the reasons that MHO statistics are not available on a comparable basis for the other UK administrations.
- 3.8 SSSC has published a detailed cost estimate in *MHOR* of the burden placed on local authorities in responding to the survey. The statisticians told us that feedback that they received indicated that the local authorities found the statistics useful despite the time it takes them to supply data. The local authority data suppliers who responded to our user consultation noted few overall problems with supplying the data, although some noted that calculating MHO full-time equivalent hours was difficult when MHOs worked in multi-disciplinary teams. During the course of this assessment, SSSC began to consult with local authorities about merging the MHO Survey and the local authority social work services survey to help reduce the burden on data suppliers. We suggest that SSSC monitor the burden of collecting the MHO data and continue to explore with local authorities whether there are options to reduce the burden.
- 3.9 The commentary in *MHOR* describes changes in the absolute numbers of MHOs, but does not provide any denominator (such as change in patient numbers or activities) to aid user interpretation. When increases and decreases are described it is not made clear if this reflects a change in nature of patient provision, or overall staffing levels. Similarly, the number of trainees has continuously fallen since 2008, but no explanation is given within *MHOR*, for example if this is due to a reduction in the availability of training places, a reduction in demand by local authorities for MHOs or a lack of funding. Tables are presented for specialist and non-specialist MHOs, but the terms are not sufficiently described in relation to their main activities and workload. *MHOR* reports on the age profile and sex distribution of the workforce, but does not draw any comparison with other countries or professions to demonstrate the value of this analysis. SSSC provides no information about the context for these statistics, for example how the work of MHOs relates to other aspects of mental health work in the community. Annex A of the *MHOR 2012* presents a breakdown of MHO numbers by local authority, but does not include any commentary about these statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SSSC should improve the commentary in *MHOR* so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics²⁸ (Requirement 4). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement SSSC should consider the points detailed in annex 2. The

²⁶ In relation to Principle 4, Practices 2, 3 and 4 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁷ <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/mentalhealthservices/Pages/Mentalhealthprofessionals.aspx>

²⁸ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

commentary in *MHOR* does not make clear if there are certain times of year that individuals join the profession or how long the training lasts, and if this impacts on the statistics and their use or potential use.

- 3.10 During the course of this assessment SSSC launched a new data section²⁹ of its website, dedicated to all the Scottish social services workforce data that SSSC collects and publishes, including *MHOR*. The section includes information about National Statistics and official statistics, SSSC policies and interactive visualisations. The information is useful and easy to navigate. However, the link to this data section from SSSC's homepage is difficult to find; it is listed in a drop-down menu titled 'employers and managers'. It could therefore be difficult for users who are not familiar with the statistics to access them. We suggest that SSSC include a clear link on SSSC's homepage to the data section of SSSC's website.
- 3.11 The report is available only in PDF format. The data underpinning the tables and charts are not available in an open, non-proprietary format which would result in at least a three-star rating under the Five Star Openness Rating Scheme. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SSSC should publish the data associated with *MHOR* in an open format that equates to at least a Three Star level under the Five Star Scheme, to enable and encourage analysis and re-use³⁰ (Requirement 5).
- 3.12 *MHOR* is included on the National Statistics Publication Hub, but the link to the report on the Publication Hub is currently broken³¹. During the course of this assessment SSSC has actively sought information about how best to address this. The Assessment team provided contact details and SSSC told us that this is currently being addressed. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SSSC should ensure that *MHOR* can be accessed from the National Statistics Publication Hub³² (Requirement 6).

²⁹ <http://data.sssc.uk.com/>

³⁰ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

³¹ http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/release-calendar/index.html?newquery=*&uday=0&umonth=0&uyear=0&title=Mental+Health+Officers%27+Report&pagetype=calendar-entry&lday=&lmonth=&lyear=

³² In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to the *Mental Health Officer Report* in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

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|---------------------|---|
| Suggestion 1 | Refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> when documenting use (para 3.1). |
| Suggestion 2 | Include a link to the organisational revisions policy in <i>MHOR</i> (para 3.2). |
| Suggestion 3 | Provide information to users about the links between the MHO survey and LASWS (para 3.4). |
| Suggestion 4 | Provide users with information to explain the reasons that MHO statistics are not available on a comparable basis for the other UK administrations (para 3.6). |
| Suggestion 5 | Monitor the burden of collecting the MHO data and continue to explore with local authorities whether there are options to reduce the burden (para 3.7). |
| Suggestion 6 | Consider the points detailed in annex 2, in seeking to improve the statistical reports (para 3.8). |
| Suggestion 7 | Include a clear link on the SSSC's homepage to the data section of SSSC's website (para 3.9). |

Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Reports

- A2.1 In November 2012, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Reports*³³. While this is not part of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, the Authority regards it as advice that will promote both understanding and compliance with the *Code*. In relation to the statistical reports associated with the Scottish Mental Health Officers Survey, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards.
- A2.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical reports, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

Include an impartial narrative in plain English that draws out the main messages from the statistics

- A2.3 *MHOR* is written in plain English and the statistics are presented impartially and objectively. The report includes key points which summarise the main findings, but they are presented in section 2, rather than at the start of the report. The commentary in *MHOR* describes trends in MHO numbers and activity, but does not provide any analysis of the reasons for change or the key messages for users. For example, *MHOR* states that the number of MHOs working in specialist teams has fallen, while the number working in non-specialist teams has increased, but the reasons for this are not made clear from the commentary. Similarly, *MHOR* does not provide sufficient commentary about how the workload statistics relate to the changing MHO levels, and there are no messages about what this means for the service. The number of trainees has continuously fallen since 2008, but *MHOR* offers no explanation for this decrease within the report.
- A2.4 *MHOR* presents a breakdown of MHO numbers by local authority in an annex, but does not include any commentary about these statistics, despite stating that local authorities are the main users of the statistics. *MHOR* does not fully explain some of the technical terms in the commentary, such as specialist and non-specialist MHOs: their main activities and workload are also unclear.

Include information about the context and likely uses of the statistics

- A2.5 *MHOR* briefly states that it is used for workforce planning and benchmarking. *MHOR* does not make it clear in the report who the intended users are, or if there are potential uses beyond (local authority) workforce planning. *MHOR* does not present any information about the policy context for the statistics, or if there are comparable statistics for the UK and other UK administrations (or lack thereof) in the report.
- A2.6 *MHOR* describes changes in the absolute numbers of MHOs, but does not provide any denominator (such as change in patient numbers or activities) or supplementary context to aid user interpretation. For example, *MHOR* reports on the age profile and gender of the workforce, but does not draw any comparison with other countries or professions to demonstrate the value of this analysis.

³³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-reports.html>

Include information about the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to their potential use

- A2.7 *MHOR* draws comparisons over time in the sex, age and ethnicity of the workforce in *MHOR*, but these questions are optional for MHOs and there is significant variation in the response rate between years. *MHOR* reports these as actual changes in the composition of the workforce, rather than changes among those who were willing to respond. The response rates for some of the indicators presented (age, gender and ethnic composition) are highly volatile over time. *MHOR* does not provide sufficient cautionary commentary around the interpretation of these results.
- A2.8 SSSC brought forward the collection date for the survey (from March to December) when responsibility was transferred from the Scottish Government, introducing a discontinuity in the time series. The date change means that it is not possible to make direct comparisons of the number of people entering (trainees) and leaving the profession (retiring or leaving). There could also be an element of double counting between the March and December results for 2012: both include the same 4-month period from December 2011 to March 2012. The commentary in *MHOR* does not provide information about joining dates for trainees or the length of their training period. It is therefore unclear whether the trends presented in the *MHOR 2012* are true changes in the composition of the workforce, or simply reflect the change in the collection period.

Be professionally sound

- A2.9 *MHOR* makes good use of tables and charts, presenting indicators in a number of formats to aid user interpretation: raw numbers, full-time equivalents and percentages are presented for most indicators. *MHOR* clearly states where data are missing due to voluntary submission. The tables and charts are only available in PDF so users cannot access the underlying data in an easy format for analysis and re-use.

Include, or link to, appropriate metadata

- A2.10 SSSC has published a revisions policy, but it is not referred to in *MHOR*. *MHOR* does include commentary on revisions made in previous reports. The background information in the report does not provide links to the data protection and quality assurance policies for SSSC.
- A2.11 The name and contact details of the responsible statistician are prominently displayed in *MHOR*.

Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

- A3.1 This assessment was conducted from August to December 2013.
- A3.2 The Assessment team – Emily Gleeson and Russell Whyte – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of SSSC in August. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 17 September. The Assessment team subsequently met SSSC during October to review compliance with the *Code of Practice*, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

- A3.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare Assessment reports.
- A3.4 The Assessment team received 7 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Local authority	7
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- A3.5 The low number of responses possibly reflects the narrow scope of the statistics. The local authorities who responded were both the data suppliers and users of the statistics.
- A3.6 As data suppliers, local authority respondents told us that they would collect the data even if they were not required by SSSC, but the majority noted that they would be unlikely to collect the level of detail as routinely if it was not required by SSSC. While they noted that the data return is generally straightforward, some local authorities reported that they find it difficult and time consuming to work out how to categorise their staff when MHOs are based in other teams. Most of the data suppliers who responded to our consultation reported that SSSC consulted adequately about changes, although there was some concern about the future merger of the MHO Survey with the annual survey of local authority social work services.
- A3.7 The local authorities use the statistics to evaluate activity across similar local authorities and at a national level, to inform workforce planning and to identify potential gaps. They have also been used to secure additional funding and training places for MHOs. Some concerns were raised that the work of MHOs who sit in other (non-MHO specialist) teams is not being fully captured and that this limitation is not fully reflected in the statistics.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

Annex 4: Summary of Requirements from Assessment Report 86

A4.1 The set of statistics in this assessment were assessed in Assessment report 86, published in February 2011³⁴. They have been re-assessed because responsibility for the compilation of the statistics moved to SSSC from the Scottish Government..

A4.2 Assessment report 86 identified the following Requirements in relation to the statistics being re-assessed here:

Requirement 1 Take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of each set of statistics, the needs of current and potential users, and user views on the service provided. Publish the information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics.

Requirement 5 Report the estimated costs to local authorities of completing the community care returns.

Requirement 6 Provide a more comprehensive overview of data quality in each release, including strengths and limitations, and ensure that issues affecting the data of individual local authorities are readily available for users who wish to make comparisons or examine trends over time.

Requirement 8 Include the statistics covered by this report in the published timetable for the 12 months ahead.

Requirement 9 Include *Home Care Services* and *Mental Health Officers Survey* in the Statement of Administrative Sources and ensure that the statement covers all the elements required by the Code.

A4.3 The Statistics Authority confirmed the National Statistics designation of these statistics in a letter to the Scottish Government on 2 April 2012³⁵.

A4.4 Two Requirements within this report relate to aspects of *Code* compliance that resulted in Requirements in Assessment report 86. These are:

Requirement 1 Document the results of investigations into the uses of these statistics outside of local and central government and use this information to support the development of the statistics (para 3.1).

Requirement 3 Extend the information that SSSC publishes about the quality of the statistics to include evidence to

³⁴ See footnote 5

³⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics---assessment-reports-86--128-and-131.pdf>

demonstrate: the reasons that SSSC is satisfied that the risks associated with the underlying administrative data are low; the consequent justification for the level of quality assurance checks in place; the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to their use; and all main sources of error and bias (para 3.5).

- A4.5 Requirement 1 in Assessment report 86 resulted from the shortage of documentation about the uses of the statistics, the types of decisions they inform and the needs of users. In meeting this Requirement, the Scottish Government issued a user survey with subsequent releases of social care statistics and published a document summarising the user feedback received. SSSC has not yet engaged with users in the private and voluntary sector, though it intends to do so, leading to Requirement 1 in this report.
- A4.6 Requirement 6 in Assessment report 86 resulted from a shortage of quality information about the response rate and completeness of returns from local authorities and the treatment of missing data. In meeting this Requirement, the Scottish Government included more quality information in each of the social care releases and footnotes about data issues for individual tables in *MHOR*. SSSC does not publish sufficient evidence to provide assurance to users that the underlying administrative data is suitable for use, leading to Requirement 3 in this report.

