

# Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

## Statistics on Housing in England

*(produced by the Department for  
Communities and Local Government)*

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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 of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics**

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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 reports<sup>1</sup> prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*<sup>2</sup>. The Act requires all statistics currently designated as National Statistics to be assessed against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*<sup>3</sup>. The report covers the following quarterly National Statistics publications produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG):

- *Statutory Homelessness, England*<sup>4</sup> (SH); and
- *House Building, England*<sup>5</sup> (HB).

1.1.2 The Act also allows Ministers to request an assessment of other official statistics in order for them to gain National Statistics status. The following annual statistics are covered in this report, in response to such a request:

- *Affordable Housing Supply, England*<sup>6</sup> (AHS);
- *Dwelling Stock Estimates, England*<sup>7</sup> (DSE);
- *Local Authority Housing Statistics, England*<sup>8</sup> (LAH);
- *Net Supply of Housing, England*<sup>9</sup> (NSH); and
- *Social Housing Sales to Sitting Tenants, England*<sup>10</sup> (SHS).

1.1.3 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment Team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority 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 in paragraphs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 are designated as National Statistics, subject to DCLG implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by October 2011.

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

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga\\_20070018\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf)

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

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/publicationshomelessness/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/housebuilding/publicationsonhousebuilding/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/affordablehousingupply/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/stockincludingvacants/housingstockpublications/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/localauthorityhousing/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/netsupplyhousing/nethousingsupply/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/socialhousingales/>

### **1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses**

- 1.3.1 DCLG statisticians are proactive in their approach to user engagement and there is a strong user base for these statistics, spanning the public, private, voluntary and academic sectors. The relationship with local authority data suppliers is also well managed, with DCLG taking steps to monitor and, where possible, reduce the data burden.
- 1.3.2 Although the individual publications are generally accessible and well supported with metadata, they do not cohere to form a comprehensive picture of housing supply and demand. Concerns about data quality mean that there is relatively little detail on the size and nature of the dwelling stock, and there are discrepancies in coverage between related statistics on the supply of additional housing that are confusing for users.

### **1.4 Detailed recommendations**

- 1.4.1 The Assessment Team identified some areas where it felt that DCLG 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**

<b>Requirement 1</b>	Work with the devolved administrations to identify and document differences in the methods used to produce dwelling stock estimates and other housing statistics (para 3.14).
<b>Requirement 2</b>	Publish information, in liaison with the Office for National Statistics, about how dwelling stock estimates were derived from the 2001 Census and how dwellings will be estimated from the 2011 Census (para 3.16).
<b>Requirement 3</b>	Publish a description of the method that will be used to estimate the dwelling stock in future years, and explain why this method was chosen in preference to the alternatives (para 3.17).
<b>Requirement 4</b>	Investigate the apparent disparities between housing starts and completions and provide an indication of their scale, the reasons, and the possible impact if some types of housing or geographical area are more affected than others (para 3.19).

- Requirement 5** Consult with users about the categories of social housing sales that they would find useful and make appropriate changes to *Social Housing Sales* and its time series (para 3.21).
- Requirement 6** Clarify the criteria for inclusion in *Affordable Housing Supply*; provide more explanation of the types of scheme and explain the differences in coverage between *AHS* and the related statistics published by the Homes and Communities Agency (para 3.40).
- Requirement 7** Publish information about the strengths and limitations of different sources of data on new building by housing associations (para 3.48).

## 2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 DCLG publishes tables and charts on a wide range of housing topics<sup>11</sup>, all of which are accompanied by definitions and background information on data sources, although not necessarily by a statistical publication with commentary. *Household Projections* and statistics from the *English Housing Survey* have already been assessed<sup>12</sup>. This report covers most of the remaining topic areas on DCLG's website, the main exceptions being 'housing market and house prices' (which includes a monthly house price index) and 'rents, lettings and tenancies' (which consists of tables with accompanying notes and definitions, but no publication). The National Statistician is currently conducting a review of official housing market statistics<sup>13</sup>. DCLG also produces an annual National Statistics compendium publication (*Housing and Planning Statistics*) which is not included in this assessment: its future is currently under review.
- 2.2 Housing is often regarded as a basic human right<sup>14</sup> so provision is never left entirely to market forces. In England, Government intervention started with the first municipal dwellings in the late 1800s, while the origins of what is now the housing association (HA)<sup>15</sup> sector can be traced back many centuries. Local housing authorities (of which England currently has 326) are responsible for housing strategy in their areas and make extensive use of DCLG's statistics for planning, monitoring and benchmarking purposes. Statistics on net supply are an important part of the evidence base for government policies that aim to increase the provision of housing. House building statistics are used by investment businesses and firms associated with the construction industry, and by economists in analysing Gross Domestic Product and monetary policy. Charities, pressure groups, professional bodies and academic researchers use the homelessness and other statistics to identify and analyse housing needs, and in some cases for lobbying purposes. The volume of responses to our invitation to comment (annex 2) testifies to the existence of an active and well organised user community for housing statistics.
- 2.3 Data collected for the house building, net supply, statutory homelessness and affordable housing publications underpin four of the seven impact indicators<sup>16</sup> in DCLG's Business Plan<sup>17</sup>: the number of net additions to the housing stock; the total number of starts and completions (as a leading indicator of net additions); the number of affordable housing starts and completions delivered through the Homes and Communities Agency; and households in temporary accommodation.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/>

<sup>12</sup> Assessment reports 106 and 57

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reviews/national-statistician-s-review-of-housing-market-statistics.html>

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

<http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/469f4d91a9378221c12563ed0053547e?Opendocument>

<sup>15</sup> The term 'housing association' is used throughout this report for the sake of simplicity, as it is widely recognised. However, the statistics exclude a number of housing associations and housing societies that are not registered with the Tenant Services Authority, and nowadays include a number that operate on a profit making basis

<sup>16</sup> Impact indicators are designed to allow the public to judge whether DCLG is achieving better services for less money

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/businessplan2010>

2.4 Most of the data are collected on a non-statutory basis from local authorities and are largely derived from administrative and planning systems. The remaining data are supplied by the National House-Building Council (NHBC), the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and the Greater London Authority (GLA). All data are supplied (or where necessary estimated) at the level of individual local authorities. The data collection methods used in the production of the homelessness, affordable supply and net supply publications have been subject to National Audit Office reviews<sup>18</sup> because of their role in measuring former Public Service Agreement targets. A major review<sup>19</sup> of housing supply published in 2004 (the Barker Review) recommended that a range of improvements to the statistics should be made to enhance understanding of the housing market, including more accurate, timely or complete statistics on house building and the dwelling stock.

2.5 Three of the sets of statistics in this assessment cover aspects of social housing and homelessness.

- *Local Authority Housing Statistics* presents statistics derived from two data collections, the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) and the Business Plan Statistical Appendix (BPSA)<sup>20</sup>. The statistics include lettings, waiting lists, management information, support to the private sector, and the type and cost of work undertaken to meet initiatives such as the Decent Homes Standard<sup>21</sup>. Although the collection of data from LAs stretches back to the late 1970s, the first statistical publication covered 2007-08.
- *Social Housing Sales* presents financial year statistics on the number of Right to Buy and other sales (outright or shared equity) to sitting tenants. Data are collected on the P1B return from LAs that own housing, and are supplemented with housing association data from the HCA and TSA. The statistical publication is again relatively recent (dating from 2008-09) although tables on DCLG's website include data from the 1980s.
- *Statutory Homelessness* covers LA activities under the homelessness legislation – the *Housing Act 1996*<sup>22</sup> and the *Homelessness Act 2002*<sup>23</sup>. The statistics include numbers of households who are accepted as owed the 'main homelessness duty'<sup>24</sup> and households in temporary accommodation. Data are supplied on the P1E return, which is completed quarterly. This collection began as a result of earlier legislation in the 1970s and the first

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0809/measuring\\_up\\_psa\\_validation-1.aspx](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0809/measuring_up_psa_validation-1.aspx)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.barkerreview.org.uk/> (Recommendation 4 on page 29)

<sup>20</sup> Some LAs have transferred all their council housing to HAs and do not therefore complete the BPSA. Data on the management and maintenance of HA housing is currently collected by the TSA, chiefly on its Regulatory and Statistical Return (RSR) and through the Continuous Recording (CORE) system. The latter comprises record level data about each letting, including the rent and the characteristics of the tenant and the property. It is being extended to include LA lettings

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/138355.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents>

<sup>24</sup> The 'main homelessness duty' is to secure settled accommodation. It applies to people who are eligible, unintentionally homeless and who belong to a priority need group. Many single people, in particular, do not qualify as a priority need. Such households may be offered advice and assistance: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessstatistics/notesdefinitions/>

publication on the topic was published in 1975. To complement *SH* and provide a wider understanding of homelessness in England, DCLG also publishes two sets of experimental statistics which are not included in this assessment: *Homelessness Prevention and Relief*<sup>25</sup> and *Rough Sleeping*<sup>26</sup>. The former were first published in 2009. The latter date back to 1998, but DCLG has stated that changes to methods and definitions in 2010 mean that the current series is not directly comparable with earlier figures.

## 2.6 The remaining statistics in this assessment cover aspects of the supply of housing in England.

- *Affordable Housing Supply* presents statistics on the gross supply of housing at below market price, through new building activity, conversion, or the acquisition of property. It includes both rented and low cost home ownership homes, the latter through shared ownership, equity loans, and 'section 106'<sup>27</sup> agreements. The statistics inform the allocation of £4.5 billion designed to fund affordable homes between 2011-12 and 2014-15. Data are collected from LAs through the P1B, P2 and HSSA returns, while housing association data are obtained from the HCA. The first statistical publication dates from 2006-07, but the data tables on DCLG's website go back to 1991-92.
- *House Building* presents statistics on new house building starts and completions. The statistics are published quarterly for broad tenure categories: housing association, LA and private enterprise. The majority of data are provided by LAs (through the P2 return) and the National House-Building Council. DCLG produced its first statistics on house building in 1946. Recently, it began collecting data from other Approved Inspectors<sup>28</sup> in order to provide a more complete picture of house building activity.
- *Net Supply of Housing* provides statistics on the net change in dwelling stock each financial year, split into the components from new build completions, conversions, demolitions and changes of use. Data are supplied by LAs through the housing flows reconciliation (HFR) form and by the GLA on behalf of London Boroughs. Between 2004 and 2009 LA data were supplied by regional planning bodies, but these were abolished in 2010<sup>29</sup>, leading to a streamlining of data provision. The first statistics on net supply were produced in 2000-01 and the first official statistics publication covered 2006-07.
- *Dwelling Stock Estimates* presents annual statistics on the housing stock, which DCLG estimates by adding the net change in each financial year to the totals from the previous year. Census data provide baseline estimates. DCLG has only recently begun to publish statistical publications (for 2009 and 2010) but tables on its website go all the way back to the first Census in 1801.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessstatistics/homelessnesspreventionrelief/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessstatistics/roughsleepingcounts>

<sup>27</sup> These are contributions from a developer made as part of a planning agreement

<sup>28</sup> New build housing must be approved by an inspector. Building control was originally undertaken by LAs. The NHBC became involved in the 1980s, and other Approved Inspectors in the late 1990s

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismregionalplanning>

### 3. Assessment findings

#### Principle 1: Meeting user needs

**The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.**

- 3.1 DCLG engages proactively with the users of these statistics. It has established Central and Local Information Partnerships on Housing (CLIP H)<sup>30</sup> and Planning (CLIP P)<sup>31</sup> and makes good use of these groups to consult with LA suppliers and users. Meetings are held about three times a year and papers are published in full, although it can take some time for them to be made available. It is not practicable for every LA to be involved in CLIP, so DCLG may wish to disseminate agendas and papers more widely, before the meeting date, and encourage CLIP members to seek views from other LAs in their areas.
- 3.2 Good efforts have been made to engage with users other than those represented on CLIP, for example through the use of a tailored Housing Alerts service, which notifies subscribers about the latest publications and encourages feedback. DCLG supplied us with details of web hits and downloads for each product, and with evidence that comments and queries on the statistics are analysed and used to inform their development. At the time of this assessment, it had just conducted a user survey seeking views on *House Building*.
- 3.3 DCLG has a user engagement strategy<sup>32</sup> which invites users to comment on, and expand, the list of uses contained in that document. There is a Housing Statistics Network<sup>33</sup> (affiliated to the Royal Statistical Society) which has a discussion forum on its website. The unprecedented response to the user and supplier consultation undertaken as part of this assessment bears testament to the activity of this network and to the efforts made by DCLG to engage with users of these statistics.
- 3.4 DCLG recently published a draft statistics plan<sup>34</sup> outlining its priorities for 2011-12. This proposes to retain the products in this assessment but to reduce the amount of data collected for *Local Authority Housing Statistics* and to publish some of the statutory homelessness statistics on an annual rather than a quarterly basis. It also proposes to cease or reduce the scope of a number of other products. The Housing Statistics Network has criticised the plan on several grounds and called for a more strategic approach, for example by taking account of the statistical work of arm's length organisations and the possibilities for making better use of administrative data<sup>35</sup>. In the view of the Assessment Team, both these points are worth exploring. DCLG has informed us that it has received 60 responses to the consultation (including that from the Network) and will be publishing a detailed response to the submissions received.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.clip.local.gov.uk/lgv/core/page.do?pagelId=31632>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.clip.local.gov.uk/lgv/core/page.do?pagelId=31599>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/engagementstrategystatistics>

<sup>33</sup> <http://housingstatisticsnetwork.org/>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/plan201112consultation>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.housingstatisticsnetwork.org/node/104>

## Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

### Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

- 3.5 The statistics are presented impartially and are accompanied by information on their uses, strengths and weaknesses.
- 3.6 Revisions are made in accordance with DCLG's policy<sup>36</sup> and explained in the relevant section of individual publications. LAs sometimes submit late or corrected data, so some revision is inevitable. The statistics in some of the publications are therefore treated as provisional, with the revised statistics being published in the subsequent publication. DCLG told us that the figures in some of the 'Live Tables'<sup>37</sup> on its website are revised between publications. The dates of the latest and next updates are clearly marked on the tables, but we suggest that the existence of updates in the Live Tables is flagged up in the publications themselves.
- 3.7 DCLG issues a correction notice on its website when non-trivial errors are discovered, and alerts known users by email. The August 2009 house building publication was an example of good practice in this regard. The publication was withdrawn because of two sets of unrelated errors, one affecting the NHBC data and the other resulting from the method used to aggregate data for newly created unitary authorities. Parliamentary questions and Ministerial statements based on the incorrect data were traced and corrected. DCLG carried out an internal review and implemented the recommendations.
- 3.8 The statistics in this report are released on DCLG's website without charge. DCLG told us that it does not have a pricing policy for supplementary analysis because all requests below the limit imposed by the Freedom of Information Act (FoI) are processed free of charge. Requests above the limit are not processed at all because of the impact on staff time, but DCLG told us that it discusses such requests with the user concerned in order to determine whether their needs can be at least partially met by an analysis that is within the FoI limit.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statisticalnoticerevisionspolicy>

<sup>37</sup> A section of the DCLG website contains tables in each housing topic area - often historical time series or LA-level data that are too detailed for inclusion in statistical releases:  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/livetables/>

### **Principle 3: Integrity**

**At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.**

3.9 DCLG told us that policy and media statements which contain statistics are checked with the responsible statistician before release. No incidents of political pressures, abuses of trust or complaints relating to professional integrity, quality or standards were reported to or identified by the Assessment Team.

## Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

**Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.**

- 3.10 Local authority data are collected through a secure website called Interform<sup>38</sup>. Automatic validation checks are built into the system to help eliminate error. A central team within DCLG is responsible for checking data from each return and for raising queries with the LA concerned.
- 3.11 There is a consistently high response from LAs, generally at least 90 per cent. The publications give an overall response rate, but most are less specific about the response for individual items on the return. Missing LA data are imputed and each publication except *Local Authority Housing Statistics* includes a brief description as to how this is done<sup>39</sup>. We suggest that an indication is given of the extent of item non-response and that *LAH* includes a brief overview of imputation methods.
- 3.12 The National Audit Office (NAO) reviewed<sup>40</sup> DCLG's procedures for checking data that underpinned the calculation of statistics to inform former Public Service Agreement targets. NAO rated the systems providing information on temporary accommodation as fit for purpose, but highlighted risks with the systems used to provide information on net supply and affordable homes. These concerns related to the lack of written imputation and edit procedures for regional planning bodies to use, and a general lack of validation of the various data streams for *AHS*. NAO subsequently reassessed the systems for *AHS* and declared them fit for purpose. The recommendations for *NSH* have been superseded by the abolition of regional planning bodies: DCLG now undertakes its own validation checks on LA data. The statisticians told us they are confident that the other bodies supplying data (HCA, TSA and GLA) have appropriate systems for editing, validation and imputation, but they did not have details of these systems. We suggest that DCLG obtain this information and check that the systems are adequate.
- 3.13 DCLG provides links to the statistical releases published by the devolved administrations in some of its publications, but not in *House Building or Dwelling Stock Estimates*. It does however provide Live Tables on house building and dwelling stock at the GB and UK level. We suggest that DCLG include more signposting of devolved statistics and some summary comparisons where this would be helpful to users. In response to earlier comments from the Assessment Team, *Statutory Homelessness* now includes a brief overview of the relevant legislation in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 3.14 DCLG does not currently highlight methodological differences between the statistics produced for England and those for the devolved administrations. This can mean that users are unaware of differences that might affect interpretation,

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/datacollection/interform/>

<sup>39</sup> Detailed desk instructions were however included in the written evidence for *LAH*

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1011/review\\_data\\_systems\\_for\\_psa\\_20.aspx](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1011/review_data_systems_for_psa_20.aspx)

for example the fact that dwelling stock estimates in Scotland are derived from council tax data. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DCLG should work with the devolved administrations to identify and document differences in the methods used to produce dwelling stock estimates and other housing statistics <sup>41</sup> (Requirement 1).

### *Dwelling Stock Estimates*

- 3.15 Dwelling stock statistics were subject to a review by ONS's Methodology Consultancy Service in 2009. This review compared Census-derived estimates with those from council tax records and with LA estimates supplied on the HSSA returns. It concluded that the methods currently used to compile the statistics were broadly appropriate but recommended that users' attention be drawn to an undercount in the Census, which DCLG has now done.
- 3.16 As noted earlier, DCLG estimates the size of the dwelling stock by adding year on year changes to the base provided by each Census. The precise definition of both households and dwellings has varied over time. The totals are not the same because some dwellings are vacant or used as second homes, and some households share accommodation – a potential indicator of housing need that affects some parts of the country much more than others. There appears to be little information as to how dwelling statistics in the Census output tables are actually derived. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DCLG should liaise with the Office for National Statistics and publish information about how dwelling stock estimates were derived from the 2001 Census and about how dwellings will be estimated from the 2011 Census<sup>42</sup> (Requirement 2).
- 3.17 Problems with data have led DCLG statisticians to limit the detail provided in the net supply and dwelling stock publications. DCLG does not consider that the current level and quality of information on HFR forms is sufficient to allow the publication of statistics with a full breakdown of housing tenure. The statistics for net supply in the private sector are therefore derived as a residual figure after subtracting HA and LA provision, and it is not possible to provide a split between owner occupied and private rented housing. DCLG told us that it is hoping to use survey data to model the owner occupied and private rented split in future, although it has also been looking into the possibility of using council tax records to obtain a direct count of dwellings. Using the latter would not permit a tenure breakdown. We accept that there are likely to be difficulties in obtaining data of a similar quality and consistency from 326 LAs, given their varying circumstances and resources. However, as part of the designation as National Statistics, DCLG should publish a description of the method that will be used to estimate the dwelling stock in future years, and explain why this method was chosen in preference to the alternatives <sup>43</sup> (Requirement 3).

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<sup>41</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>42</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>43</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

## House Building

- 3.18 The data for this publication are collected from LAs, the National House-Building Council (NHBC) and other Approved Inspectors. DCLG has worked with NHBC to improve the timeliness and accuracy of the statistics – especially following the errors that were discovered in 2009 (paragraph 3.7) – and the historical statistical series has been revised. Data from other Approved Inspectors (accounting for some 8 per cent of starts and 4 per cent of completions) are not currently included within the statistics in *HB*, resulting in an underestimate of the level of house building and contributing to a disparity with the statistics in *NSH*<sup>44</sup>. This was noted in some responses to our consultation and users felt that DCLG had not been sufficiently open about the disparities. DCLG now draws attention to them in both publications and includes a paragraph in *HB* estimating the additional starts and completions. The statisticians told us that they are hoping to integrate the other Approved Inspector data in *HB* once they are satisfied with the quality. There are difficulties in collecting such data on a voluntary basis from small independent operators, but the user response is understandable given the earlier lack of transparency and the delay in making arrangements to collect these data (other Approved Inspectors began work in the late 1990s, although initially on a smaller scale than now). DCLG may wish to publish a plan and timetable for incorporating other Approved Inspector data within the house building estimates and disseminate this to users.
- 3.19 Users also pointed to disparities between the number of starts and completions<sup>45</sup>. They said this undermined their confidence in the statistics: a point that has recently been reiterated in the response<sup>46</sup> of the Housing Statistics Network to the National Statistician’s review of housing market statistics. DCLG told us that it has already worked with NHBC to improve the recording of starts. Completions should be recorded when the property is ready for occupation or when a certificate of completion is issued by an inspector. However, a certificate is not requested in every case and some LAs, especially in rural areas, do not have the resources to monitor occupation. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DCLG should investigate the apparent disparities between housing starts and completions and provide an indication of their scale, the reasons, and the possible impact if some types of housing or geographical area are more affected than others<sup>47</sup> (Requirement 4).

## Statutory Homelessness

- 3.20 This publication includes information on the type of temporary accommodation used for different types of household (for example, numbers of households with children placed in bed and breakfast style accommodation) and on length of stay in temporary accommodation before the main homelessness duty is

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<sup>44</sup> The other main reason for this disparity is the longer period for data collection in *NSH*, compared with the quarterly statistics in *HB*. The extra time means that the net supply statistics tend to be more complete and to incorporate corrections

<sup>45</sup> DCLG informed us that starts generally exceeded completions until the late 2000s, but that this has now reversed with completions exceeding starts. It is not yet clear whether the time lag between the two events is sufficient to account for these disparities

<sup>46</sup> <http://housingstatisticsnetwork.org/node/81>

<sup>47</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

ended. However, because of the aggregate nature of the returns from LAs, the scope for further analysis is limited. It is not possible to carry out any longitudinal analysis, for example, and while it is possible to examine the representation of minority ethnic groups and overseas nationals in the decisions made by LAs about homeless applications, it is not possible to examine what happens to these groups subsequently. We suggest that DCLG explore the feasibility of collecting record-level data<sup>48</sup> in this important area.

### *Social Housing Sales to Sitting Tenants*

3.21 The background notes state that the statistics in this publication relate to outright or shared equity sales to sitting tenants and do not include shared ownership sales or transfers of stock between social housing landlords. However, the 2009-10 publication states that 35 per cent of total sales were disposals of HA properties to the private sector. This was the second largest category: it is defined as sales to another organisation or individual for non-social housing use. We understand that these are not likely to be sales to sitting tenants, although they will include sales of tenanted properties. Their inclusion is inconsistent with the title of the publication and would seem to be an error. One solution would be to omit these sales in future and revise the time series, but it might be better to devise a publication that provides a more complete picture, with separate statistics on sitting tenant sales, disposals to the private sector and transfers of housing between social landlords<sup>49</sup>. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DCLG should consult with users about the categories of social housing sales that they would find useful and make appropriate changes to *SHS* and its time series<sup>50</sup> (Requirement 5).

### *Local Authority Housing Statistics*

3.22 This publication does not include the information DCLG collects on possession orders and evictions involving LA tenants. This is because of concerns about data quality – in particular, there are discrepancies with the statistics published by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Some users commented on this omission. DCLG told us that it has taken steps to improve the data collection and has issued revised guidance to LAs. If this results in data that are more consistent with MoJ figures then they will be published in future. The data collected by DCLG are of particular interest because they provide the reason for possession (usually rent arrears or anti social behaviour). MoJ statistics on actions for possession by social landlords cannot distinguish between LA and HA tenancies, while figures published by the Tenant Services Authority in respect of HAs only measure actual evictions. Whether or not it is able to publish the data it collects itself, we suggest that DCLG provide guidance for users about the availability of data in this area.

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<sup>48</sup> Such a system exists in Scotland, where the electronic HL1 data collection system introduced in 2001 collects detailed information on the characteristics and circumstances of each applicant household, the decisions taken by the LA and the rehousing outcome. Because of the continuous recording nature of this system, it is possible to identify repeat applications

<sup>49</sup> Transfers of housing between social landlords are not included in the current release, but they are published in DCLG Live Tables

<sup>50</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practices 2 and 7 of the *Code of Practice*

## **Principle 5: Confidentiality**

**Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.**

- 3.23 No personal or commercially sensitive data are contained in the aggregate, LA level data supplied for these statistics.
- 3.24 The arrangements for protecting the confidentiality of data collected by DCLG were published in the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's statement of compliance with the former National Statistics Code of Practice. As this material has recently been archived, we suggest that DCLG publish details of its current arrangements for protecting personal information.

## Principle 6: Proportionate burden

**The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.**

- 3.25 Most LAs responding to our consultation said that they would collect the majority of the data anyway and that they used the resulting statistics. DCLG supplied us with estimates of the average annual cost to an LA of completing each return<sup>51</sup>: these ranged from £150 for house building to £1,640 for one of the forms which feeds into the local authority statistics. Data provided by third party suppliers are also derived from administrative systems, thus minimising the burden.
- 3.26 The forms used to collect housing statistics have been reviewed regularly in order to eliminate requests for data that are no longer required and to identify any duplication. The most recent review took place in 2008 and is fully documented in CLIP H papers<sup>52</sup>. Examples of recent changes include reducing the frequency of P1B returns from quarterly to annual, and persuading the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to take P1E data from DCLG and to change its classification of temporary accommodation to mirror that used by DCLG, in order to reduce further the burden on LAs.
- 3.27 In February 2011 DCLG published a combined list of all the data that central government currently requires from LAs and sought views on which data requests should continue. A final version of the 'single data list' for 2011-12 has now been published<sup>53</sup>. The cost to LAs of responding to DCLG's own surveys is reported in the Annual Report on Government Statistical Surveys of Businesses and Local Authorities<sup>54</sup> and was estimated at £950,000 in 2009-10.

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<sup>51</sup> These estimates were based on small samples of LAs and should be treated as indicative. They consisted of the cost incurred in collecting any data LAs did not need for their own purposes, the costs (in full) of submitting data to DCLG, and the time spent answering queries on HSSA and BPSA

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.clip.local.gov.uk/lgv/aio/173359>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/databurdens/>

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=12732>

## Principle 7: Resources

**The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.**

- 3.28 The production of the statistics in this assessment appears to be adequately resourced. DCLG provided us with an estimate of the staff time required to compile each publication and associated tables.
- 3.29 Statistical activity is not centralised within DCLG and there is no single budget covering all statistical activities. However, the draft statistics plan for 2011-12 includes the staffing and other costs associated with each of the seven statistical theme areas (of which housing and homelessness is one); reports on activity over the previous year; and seeks views on whether to retain, cease or reduce the scope of individual products. We understand that the deployment of statistical resources will be monitored as the year progresses.
- 3.30 DCLG follows Government Statistical Service (GSS) recruitment processes and uses the GSS competency framework. It requires its statistical staff to undertake continuing professional development.

## Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

**Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.**

- 3.31 DCLG's website states that there is a gap between the supply of and demand for new homes, and that the market has not been keeping up with the needs of a growing population<sup>55</sup>. The individual statistical publications, however, cannot readily be combined to give a coherent view of housing supply and demand. They do not make it clear, for example, whether the annual supply of housing is keeping pace with demand; whether the overall stock of affordable housing is increasing or decreasing; or how the new provision of social rented housing compares with sales. There is relatively little information on the size of properties<sup>56</sup> – as measured, for example, by the number of bedrooms available in newly built stock and relets, or by the number of bedrooms required for households in need. We suggest that DCLG publish a conceptual framework document to enable users to understand how the different sets of figures relate to each other and to the operation of the housing market. DCLG statisticians could then use this framework to identify any gaps and overlaps in their statistical products, and the extent to which the existing statistical series represent the best way of reporting on supply and demand.
- 3.32 The products covered in this assessment use a variety of terms to describe the housing association sector, including registered social landlord, registered provider, and private registered provider. These terms have been introduced to reflect successive changes in registration and funding arrangements. In the interests of clarity and consistency, however, DCLG may wish to use a single term in statistical publications and on its web pages, while continuing to make the more nuanced differences in meaning available for reference purposes.
- 3.33 The commentary in each publication includes text, charts, and tables or maps. Each has a well-designed cover page with a list of contents, a summary of the main findings and contact details for further information. There are sections covering data sources, methods, data quality, revisions and related statistics. The house building, local authority housing and statutory homelessness publications also include a statement about the uses of the data.
- 3.34 Each publication is available in Word and pdf format, with links to Excel files containing more detailed tables of data. In some cases these 'accompanying tables' are in addition to the Live Tables that can be accessed from a separate menu on the DCLG's website. It was clear from the comments we received that users are not always aware of the full range of additional data that are available. This was not helped by the fact that the statistics could be accessed from two web pages, only one of which had links to the Live Tables. DCLG told us that they have now started to improve the signposting. It is also possible to generate tables, charts and maps from the housing data that are held in a

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/>

<sup>56</sup> The replacement of some of the data from HSSA returns with record level data from CORE (footnote 20) will be a step in this direction. At a national and regional level, more detailed data are available from the English Housing Survey: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/englishhousingurvey/>

separate area of the DCLG website called 'Housing and Planning View'<sup>57</sup> although there are no links to this from the housing statistics pages. DCLG may wish to consider whether to integrate the supplementary and Live Tables and improve the signposting on its website.

- 3.35 The titles of *Affordable Housing Supply* and *Social Housing Sales* are not consistent between DCLG's web pages, the National Statistics Publication Hub and the publications themselves. This can make it harder for users to access the statistics and DCLG may wish to ensure that titles are consistent throughout.
- 3.36 A page<sup>58</sup> on DCLG's website describes the types of form used for collecting data from LAs. In response to comments from the Assessment Team, DCLG has made all the actual forms and associated guidance notes available from the relevant product page.

#### *Affordable Housing Supply*

- 3.37 *AHS* covers additions to existing housing that are provided to eligible households at below market cost. Numerous products have been developed over the years that meet this description, including traditional social rented accommodation and various forms of low cost home ownership. Although there is some information in the definitions section of the publication, *AHS* does not describe all the products that it covers. The figures are provided gross: it is made clear in the text of the publication that they do not take account of losses to the affordable housing stock (for example through sales or demolitions). However, there is little explanation about how the conversion of social rented properties or their demolition and rebuild are counted.
- 3.38 Inclusion in the statistics does not necessarily mean that an additional dwelling or bed space has been provided. We understand that the basis for inclusion is that the home should either be retained for future eligible households, or that any subsidy should be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. This means, for example, that a housing association tenant who exercises the right to acquire their existing home at a discount is counted (perhaps somewhat counter-intuitively) as an increase in affordable housing provision, on the grounds that the receipts are recycled. Purchase of a 25 per cent share also counts as one unit of housing provision. The rationale for this method of counting is not spelt out in the publication.
- 3.39 The publication draws attention to related statistics on the National Affordable Housing Programme<sup>59</sup> produced by the Homes and Communities Agency, but does not clarify differences in coverage between these statistics and *AHS*.
- 3.40 Paragraphs 3.37 to 3.39 indicate that the coverage of *AHS* should be better explained. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DCLG should clarify the criteria for inclusion, provide more explanation of the types of scheme and

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housingview/>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/datacollection/formsused/>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/statistics>

explain the differences in coverage between *AHS* and the related statistics published by the Homes and Communities Agency<sup>60</sup> (Requirement 6).

### *Statutory Homelessness*

- 3.41 In addition to providing data for the latest quarter, *Statutory Homelessness* describes trends in homelessness and in the use of temporary accommodation since the late 1990s, and compares the different regions. Information about the cost of temporary accommodation is collected separately on local government financial returns. In response to an earlier suggestion from the Assessment Team, the publication now signposts users to the associated expenditure statistics.
- 3.42 In some circumstances, local authorities can refer homeless households to another LA, if they consider that the household has a local connection with that area. Information on such referrals is collected on the P1E form, but is not published in *SH* or the Live Tables. It seems possible that referrals could become more common, for example if households were to move to areas with cheaper private rented housing in response to Housing Benefit changes, and we therefore suggest that DCLG make this information available.

### *Local Authority Housing Statistics*

- 3.43 *LAH* includes commentary on selected statistics from the HSSA and BPSA returns. These collect a variety of data on waiting lists, lettings, nominations, management of the council housing stock, investment plans, and engagement with the housing association and private sectors (in order, for example, to provide affordable homes or to secure repairs and improvements). DCLG told us that the choice of what to present in the publication reflects perceived user needs, although as noted previously we found that there is user interest in possession orders. The publication includes clear warnings about the limitations of waiting lists as a measure of housing need. Charts show trends in the number of relets and non-decent homes, and there is a chart in the Live Tables showing trends in vacant LA homes. Given the declining base due to sales and voluntary transfers of housing stock, we suggest that it would be easier to compare performance if some of these trends were also presented as a proportion of stock.
- 3.44 Information about the management and maintenance of LA housing has traditionally been collected by DCLG and its predecessors, while similar information about the HA sector has been collated by the TSA and its predecessors. DCLG publishes tables from both sources on its website, but the statistics in *LAH* are confined to LA activity. We suggest that DCLG consider whether to comment on both elements of the social rented sector in future publications.

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<sup>60</sup> In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

### *Social Housing Sales to Sitting Tenants*

- 3.45 *SHS* brings together information about sales of both council and housing association housing. We suggest that the commentary include more explanation for trends in the data: for example the very steep peaks and troughs in LA sales and the fall in Right to Buy sales as a percentage of applications. It would also be helpful if some information could be provided on sales as a percentage of the housing stock: such information is used by DCLG to impute missing data but is not presented as part of the publication.

### *House Building*

- 3.46 In 2007-08 this publication was one of 37 products (from 17 producer bodies) that were assessed by the former Statistics Commission in its review of statistical publications. None of the publications met all the Commission's criteria for good practice, and in the case of *HB*, the commentary, in particular, was judged to be weak. However, when the Statistics Authority reviewed progress in early 2009<sup>61</sup>, *HB* was singled out as being one of the most improved.
- 3.47 *HB* presents starts and completions with and without seasonal adjustment, along with charts showing trends in the nine English regions. Given the variation in size between regions, DCLG may also wish to present the new build statistics in relation to the number of existing households or dwellings in each region.
- 3.48 The publication draws attention to the disparity between the *HB* and *NSH* statistics (paragraph 3.18) and offers advice about which series to use for different purposes. It also warns that it can be difficult for data providers to identify whether a dwelling is being built for an HA or a private developer. This may lead to an underestimate of starts and completions for the former and an overestimate of the latter. *HB* therefore recommends the use of *AHS* for a more complete picture of affordable housing supply. As noted earlier (paragraph 3.38) the conceptual basis of *AHS* is rather different and we think more advice is needed about which categories of *AHS* to use in order to get a better estimate of HA new build. Comparison could also be made with the statistics published by the Homes and Communities Agency on the supply of homes delivered under the National Affordable Housing Programme<sup>62</sup>. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DCLG should publish information about the strengths and limitations of the different sources of data on new building by housing associations<sup>63</sup> (Requirement 7).

### *Net Supply and Dwelling Stock Estimates*

- 3.49 As noted earlier, neither of these publications provides statistics broken down by housing tenure, although there is a split between LA, HA and private sector housing in the Live Tables on dwelling stock. No information on how the private

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/index.html>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/statistics>

<sup>63</sup> In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

sector splits between owner occupied and private rented has been published since 2007.

## **Protocol 1: User engagement**

**Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.**

3.50 The requirements for this Protocol are covered elsewhere in this report.

## Protocol 2: Release practices

**Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.**

- 3.51 The publication schedule<sup>64</sup> on DCLG's website includes date and month for the two quarterly publications (*SH* and *HB*) and month of publication for the remaining products in this assessment.
- 3.52 All publications can be accessed from the National Statistics Publication Hub<sup>65</sup>, although DCLG may wish to add future publication dates to the entry for NSH.
- 3.53 All the publications include the name and telephone number of the responsible statistician, and a generic email address for statistical enquiries.
- 3.54 DCLG publishes pre-release access lists<sup>66</sup> for each set of statistics. Between 2 and 12 people have 24 hour pre-release access to each publication, including Ministers, special advisers, policy staff and the press office. Although the central list of statistics to which pre-release access has been granted relates to 2008/09, the individual lists are date-stamped and appear to be updated regularly.
- 3.55 DCLG has confirmed that all the statistics are released at the standard time as soon as they are judged ready, and that there have been no instances of accidental or wrongful release before the pre-announced date.

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/statistics/publicationschedule/>

<sup>65</sup> In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/statistics/prereleaseaccess/>

### **Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes**

**Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.**

3.56 All the statistics in this assessment are ultimately derived from administrative sources. Although DCLG has a Statement of Administrative Sources<sup>67</sup> on its website, the statistics in this assessment are not included because DCLG regards the forms its uses to collect the aggregate data as a statistical resource through which it conducts surveys of LAs.

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/statistics/nationalstatistics/>

## Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to DCLG 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.

**Suggestion 1** Inform users in the text of relevant publications if the statistics are to be updated in the Live Tables area of the website before the next publication (para 3.6).

**Suggestion 2** Indicate the extent of item non-response in each publication and include a brief overview of the imputation methods used in *Local Authority Housing Statistics* (para 3.11).

**Suggestion 3** Obtain information on the systems used by the Homes and Communities Agency, the Tenant Services Authority and the Greater London Authority for validating, editing and imputing the data supplied for *HB, AHS, SHS* and *NSH*, and check that these systems are adequate (para 3.12).

**Suggestion 4** Include more signposting and summary comparisons with devolved statistics (para 3.13).

**Suggestion 5** Explore the feasibility of collecting record-level data on statutory homelessness (para 3.20).

**Suggestion 6** Provide guidance for users about the availability of data on possession orders and evictions (para 3.22).

**Suggestion 7** Publish details of the current arrangements for protecting personal information (para 3.24).

**Suggestion 8** Publish a conceptual framework document to enable users to understand how the different sets of statistics on the supply of and demand for housing are related to one another and to the operation of the housing market, and use this as a basis for reviewing statistical reporting in this area (para 3.31).

**Suggestion 9** Publish data from P1E returns on referrals to other LA areas (para 3.42).

**Suggestion 10** Present some of the time trends in *LAH* in relation to the declining size of LA housing stock (para 3.43).

**Suggestion 11**

Consider whether to include HA as well as LA statistics in *LAH* (para 3.44).

**Suggestion 12**

Include more explanation of the reasons for trends in *SHS* and present information on sales as a percentage of the housing stock (para 3.45).

## Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from December 2010 to April 2011.

A2.2 The Assessment Team – Jill Barelli and Gary Wainman – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of DCLG in December 2010. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided during January and February 2011. The Assessment Team subsequently met DCLG in February and March 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

A2.3 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.

A2.4 The Assessment Team received 119 responses from the user/supplier consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

	<b>Users</b>	<b>Suppliers</b>
Internal	6	0
Academic	12	0
OGD	8	0
Local Government	24	45
Private	15	0
Charity	4	0
Other	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>45</b>

### Comments<sup>68</sup> by product:

Affordable housing gross supply	54
LA housing statistics	71
Social housing sales to sitting tenants	41
Statutory homelessness	64
Dwelling stock estimates	44
House building	54
Net supply of housing	49

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<sup>68</sup> Some respondents submitted comments for more than one product, resulting in a larger number of comments than respondents

- A2.5 Users and data suppliers highlighted the importance of the statistics and the professionalism of the teams that produce them. Many commented on the helpfulness of the producers when dealing with queries. Users reported that they would like to see improvements in the timeliness, metadata and guidance on the use and interpretation of the data and there were requests for more detailed information in almost all areas.
- A2.6 Specific concerns included the completeness of *SH*, which is limited to statutory homelessness and is not as comprehensive as the data provided for Scotland. Concerns with *AHS* centred on the quality of completions data and the completeness of HCA funded acquisitions. There were also comments on the variability in HSSA data which feed into *LAH*. Concerns with the methods used for *HB* focused on the absence of other Approved Inspector data, and the differences between starts and completions. The use of Census data as a baseline was the main concern in relation to *DSE*.
- A2.7 Suppliers stated that there was little additional burden on resource as much of the data would be collected for their own use.

### **Key documents/links provided**

Written Evidence for Assessment document



