

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

## Statistics on Social Housing

*(produced by the Homes and Communities Agency)*

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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**

## **Statistics on Social Housing**

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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 allows an appropriate authority<sup>3</sup> to request an assessment of official statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*<sup>4</sup> in order for them to gain National Statistics status. This report is in response to such a request. The report covers the set of statistics reported in the *Statistical Data Return*<sup>5</sup> (SDR), produced by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
- 1.1.2 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 materiality<sup>6</sup>. 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.
- 1.1.3 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 the *SDR* can be designated as new National Statistics, subject to HCA implementing the Requirements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by May 2014.
- 1.2.2 The Homes and Communities Agency has informed the Assessment team that it has started to implement the Requirements listed in section 1.5. The Statistics Authority welcomes this.

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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> Subsection 12(7) of the Act defines ‘appropriate authority’ as Ministers of the Crown, Scottish Ministers, Welsh Ministers, Northern Ireland departments or the National Statistician

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/news/second-statistical-data-return>

<sup>6</sup> <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 HCA carried out a consultation exercise to develop *SDR* as a replacement for the previous *Regulatory and Statistical Return*<sup>7</sup> (*RSR*) which the former Tenant Services Authority<sup>8</sup> (TSA) published until 2011. HCA has a clearly defined and established relationship with the data suppliers for the statistics and is able to draw on this to inform the development of the statistics. HCA works closely with users of the statistics in government but has not established as complete an understanding of other users of the statistics and their needs and does not routinely seek and document feedback from them.
- 1.3.2 The statistics are presented in a comprehensive and clearly structured report with commentary describing the latest statistics that is impartial and mostly uses straightforward language. The report does not explain how the wider policy, social or economic contexts affect the statistics. The report provides useful time series of comparable pre-SDR statistics but the commentary does not provide an interpretation of trends and how the latest statistics relate to the longer time series.
- 1.3.3 The HCA provides sufficient supporting information about the methods used to produce the statistics and their coverage but little further information about the quality of the statistics and the extent to which they meet users' needs.

### 1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that the Homes and Communities Agency 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>	Take steps to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of these statistics, publish the relevant information and assumptions, and use them to better support the use of the statistics (para 3.1).
<b>Requirement 2</b>	Publish information to explain the extent and nature of revisions made, at the same time as the statistics are released, and clarify in the revisions policy how unplanned and planned changes will be managed (para 3.2).

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<sup>7</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120419011320/http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/nav.15039>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/tsa-archive>

- Requirement 3** Review the methods used in *SDR* to impute for non-response, estimate the effect of this on published estimates, and publish the outcome (para 3.4).
- Requirement 4** Extend the quality information to cover all aspects of quality referred to in the ESS framework and include information about the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to the range of potential uses (para 3.5).
- Requirement 5** Improve the commentary in the releases so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.6).
- Requirement 6** Review and update the title of *SDR* and the content of the HCA website to provide easier access for users and to improve the availability of supporting material (para 3.7).



## 2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 The HCA publishes the *Statistical Data Return (SDR)* annually as a statistical release with accompanying data tables. First released in August 2012, *SDR* replaced the *Regulatory and Statistical Return (RSR)*, which the former TSA published until 2011.
- 2.2 HCA was established in 2008 as the successor to the Housing Corporation<sup>9</sup> and is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). In April 2012, responsibility for housing and regeneration activity in London transferred to the Greater London Authority (GLA) under the *Localism Act 2011*<sup>10</sup>. The same legislation provided for HCA to take over responsibility for the regulation of social housing in England (including London) from the former TSA<sup>11</sup> in 2012, bringing together the regulatory and investment functions of the two bodies. Regulatory activity considers the governance, financial viability and value for money of providers of social housing.
- 2.3 The Regulatory and Statistical Return (RSR) was an annual data return by private registered providers (PRPs), previously known as Registered Social Landlords, to the TSA. Providers of social housing in England that register with the social housing regulator (the HCA) are known as PRPs.
- 2.4 HCA carried out a consultation in 2011 to establish the design and scope of the data collection form in response to its revised regulatory requirements following the transfer of regulatory powers to the HCA. The consultation was primarily aimed at PRPs and other organisations with an interest in the sector. HCA published its response<sup>12</sup> and created a new form called the Statistical Data Return (SDR) (replacing the RSR). The content of *SDR* reflects the updated SDR form and includes statistics on stock size, types, locations, rents, and the acquisition and disposal of stock during the financial year. Information about the characteristics of providers, for example the number of paid staff, is no longer collected as this element of the regulation was removed.
- 2.5 The SDR is an annual survey of PRPs carried out in the two months after the end of the financial year. The data are collected for regulatory purposes with the statistics presented in *SDR* being produced from these data. HCA has a statutory obligation to collect only data that is required for regulation. PRPs are obliged to provide data through the Governance and Financial Viability standard in *The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012*<sup>13</sup>. In response to a request from the DCLG, a few additional questions were added for statistical purposes; these questions cover evictions and mutual exchanges, and are answered by providers on a voluntary basis.
- 2.6 The data collection is carried out through an on-line system, NROSH+<sup>14</sup> (formerly the National Register of Social Housing), with data suppliers self-

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<sup>9</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100113205514/housingcorp.gov.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>

<sup>11</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/housing/1740300>

<sup>12</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120514075635/http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.21543>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/regulatory-framework>

<sup>14</sup> <https://nroshplus.homesandcommunities.co.uk/>

reporting their data. The system includes a series of checks and mechanisms to validate the data returns. HCA carries out additional checks on the internal consistency and coherence of the data. HCA follows up missing responses from providers and ensures that larger organisations complete the return to maximise the coverage of the data collection. HCA estimates that the response covers 93 per cent of the stock of housing held by PRPs, including all those held by large PRPs<sup>15</sup>. The NROSH+ website includes a range of documentation and templates to support data providers. The published data tables include all the information collected in the SDR, except for the contact details of those providing the data return.

- 2.7 Data for the rest of the UK is collected by the respective devolved administrations<sup>16</sup>. DCLG publishes further information from annual surveys on social housing by local authorities<sup>17</sup> in England and collects information about the quality and quantity of social housing in the English housing survey<sup>18</sup>.
- 2.8 HCA told us that it uses the statistics to support its understanding of the providers' operating environment, including rent levels and the financial, economic, social and constitutional risks that could cause a provider to fail to meet their economic regulation standards. In addition, HCA carries out sector profiling and analysis to inform its understanding of the changing size and diversity of the sector, trends in rental income and to understand the impact of proposed policy changes, such as welfare reforms. Within government, DCLG is the main user of the data including it as a component of *Dwelling Stock Estimates, England*<sup>19</sup> and using the data to validate the statistics published in *Social Housing Lettings, England*<sup>20</sup>. HCA told us that the statistics are also used by PRPs, academics, and other bodies working in the social housing sector, such as the National Housing Federation<sup>21</sup>, Housemark<sup>22</sup>, and the Chartered Institute of Housing<sup>23</sup>. The statistics are also used by the press, for example, Inside Housing<sup>24</sup>.
- 2.9 HCA told us that the cost to manage the data collection and to produce the statistical report is approximately 1.5 full-time equivalent staff.
- 2.10 SDR is published in PDF, with supplementary data tables published in Excel and csv formats. This equates to a level 3 rating under the Five Star Scheme proposed in the *Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential*<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Large PRPs are classed as those which hold 1000 or more units or bed-spaces of social housing, all others are classed as small PRPs

<sup>16</sup> For Wales <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/social-housing-stock-rents/?lang=en>, Scotland <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS> and Northern Ireland [http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/housing\\_stats](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/housing_stats)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-housing-data>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2012-to-march-2013>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.housing.org.uk/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.housemark.co.uk/hm.nsf/Home?ReadForm>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.cih.org/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/>

<sup>25</sup> [http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open\\_data\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf)

### 3 Assessment findings

- 3.1 The HCA statistical team has a clear understanding of the use of *SDR* statistics within the rest of HCA and the needs of main users such as DCLG. HCA consulted on the design of the *SDR* form following the transfer of the TSA responsibilities, held workshops to gather stakeholder views, and published a response to the consultation. Most responses were from the PRPs which supply data. HCA publicises the statistics within an e-newsletter which is circulated to around 18,000 subscribers including local authorities, private registered providers, developers and other housing-related organisations, for example the National Housing Federation. However, HCA does not have much understanding of the needs of users beyond itself and a small number of main users and does not engage with these users through other mechanisms. As part of the designation as National Statistics, HCA should take steps to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of these statistics, publish the relevant information and assumptions, and use them to better support the use of the statistics<sup>26</sup> (Requirement 1). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement HCA should refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*<sup>27</sup> when documenting use.
- 3.2 *SDR* includes a statement about revisions including the approach that HCA takes in dealing with late data submissions and larger errors. *SDR* includes a table listing the amendments to the statistics to support the statement. The reason for the revisions presented in the table is not made clear and it is unclear whether revisions due to errors are handled differently from planned revisions to the data. A table of definitional changes summarises the changes between the RSR and *SDR* data definitions. As part of the designation as National Statistics, HCA should publish information to explain the extent and nature of revisions made, at the same time as the statistics are released, and clarify in its revisions policy how unplanned and planned changes will be managed<sup>28</sup> (Requirement 2).
- 3.3 As part of the sign off process, the content of the statistical report is subject to approval by higher levels of management in HCA which is outside of the statistical production team. HCA told us that it is in the process of establishing a clearer link with the DCLG Head of Profession and, during the course of this assessment, has appointed a Lead Official for Statistics (Lead Official). The Lead Official will have sole responsibility for the final content of the statistical report.
- 3.4 HCA follows up non-respondents to the *SDR*, with a focus on large PRPs, to maximise the coverage of the total amount of housing stock that the survey achieves. The response rate is typically 70 to 80 per cent but 100 per cent is achieved for large PRPs giving total coverage of over 90 per cent of the total stock or units and bed-spaces. HCA told us that it does not impute<sup>29</sup> missing data items within the *SDR*. This creates the possibility that some of the

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<sup>26</sup> In relation to Principle 1, Practices 2 and 5 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> In relation to Principle 2, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>29</sup> The replacement of missing data with estimated values

changes presented in the statistics are due to changes in the level of response, rather than a change in the level of, for example, the stock of units. As part of the designation as National Statistics, HCA should review the methods used in *SDR* to impute for non-response, estimate the effect of this on published estimates, and publish the outcome<sup>30</sup> (Requirement 3).

- 3.5 The report includes information about the methods used in the collection and compilation of the statistics; this is concise but the process involved in the production of the statistics is straightforward and the amount of information provided is appropriate. HCA includes little information about the quality of the statistics within *SDR* and does not cover all aspects of quality referred to in the ESS framework<sup>31</sup>. The information provided is primarily focussed on the handling of errors within the dataset. The report does not include information about the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to their uses. As part of the designation as National Statistics, HCA should extend the quality information to cover all aspects of quality referred to in the ESS framework and include information about the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to the range of potential uses<sup>32</sup> (Requirement 4).
- 3.6 *SDR* is clearly structured with commentary describing the latest data supported by charts and tables and using language that is impartial and mostly straightforward. *SDR* includes a glossary of terms, although some terms are not explained when first used. The report provides time series of comparable pre-*SDR* statistics but the commentary does not describe the longer-term trends within the data or the wider context, for example, policy or economic effects that may affect the sector. The report provides links to related statistics for England and similar statistics produced for the other UK countries, but does not include an explanation of the coherence with these other statistics. *SDR* also does not include sufficient information about the impact of the change in data collection methods (and the resulting breaks in the series) on the trends in the statistics. The main findings are provided in bullet point format at the start of the report but the list of findings is lengthy, making it difficult to draw out the key messages and the impact of these findings on the sector is not made clear. As part of the designation as National Statistics, HCA should improve the commentary in the releases so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics<sup>33</sup> (Requirement 5). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement, HCA should consider the points detailed in annex 2. We further suggest that HCA includes an explanation in *SDR* of the coherence of statistics in *SDR* with those produced for other UK countries.
- 3.7 *SDR* is available from HCA's website through the News and Publication sections but there is no single page collating the various editions of the release and supporting material. The title of the report does not make the content sufficiently clear for users to enable them to find statistics relevant to their needs. As part of the designation as National Statistics, HCA should review and update the title of *SDR* and the content of its website to provide easier access

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<sup>30</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practices 1 and 2 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>31</sup> The European Statistical System Quality Framework has six dimensions: relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, comparability and coherence

<sup>32</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>33</sup> In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

for users and to improve the availability of supporting material<sup>34</sup> (Requirement 6).

- 3.8 *SDR* includes general contact details for HCA and, during the course of this assessment, HCA has updated its website to include the name and contact details for the statistician responsible for the statistics. HCA told us that it plans to include these details in future editions of *SDR*.
- 3.9 HCA published a list of those receiving pre-release access alongside the 2012 edition of *SDR*. Following advice from the Assessment team, a corresponding list has been published for the 2013 edition of *SDR* on the News section of the HCA website. Previously this list had only been published alongside the version of the report on the Publications section of the website.

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<sup>34</sup> In relation to Principle 8, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

## Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to the Homes and Communities Agency's *Statistical Data Return*, 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.

- |                     |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Suggestion 1</b> | 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). |
| <b>Suggestion 2</b> | Consider the points detailed in annex 2, in seeking to improve the statistical reports (para 3.6).                                                                |
| <b>Suggestion 3</b> | Include an explanation in <i>SDR</i> of the coherence of statistics in <i>SDR</i> with those produced for other UK countries (para 3.6).                          |

## **Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Reports**

- A2.1 In November 2012, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Reports*<sup>35</sup>. 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 HCA's Statistical Data Return, 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 *SDR* includes a contents page and the main messages at the start. However, the key points include some terms and refer to situations which are not explained within the report. The key points section is long and the individual findings are not related to one another. The key findings are also not placed in the longer term context, so it is difficult to interpret the importance of the changes being reported.
- A2.4 The commentary in *SDR* does not make clear the implications of the uncertainty associated with the estimates, and the report does not provide sufficient information about the extent and source of uncertainty. The commentary does not include descriptions of how the statistics relate to the economy, society or the environment, or reasons for the trends presented within *SDR*.
- A2.5 *SDR* makes suitable comparisons over time and between areas within England where these are presented. The report provides links to related statistics for England and similar statistics produced for the other UK countries, but does not include an explanation of the coherence with these other statistics.
- A2.6 *SDR* includes clearly presented charts and tables to illustrate the statistics. The language used is mostly straightforward and widely understood, but some topic specific language is used which is not explained when first used. The language avoids statements of opinion and is demonstrably evidence based.

### **Include information about the context and likely uses of the statistics**

- A2.7 *SDR* includes information about what is being measured within its Introduction section. This explains why the data are collected and how they are used by the HCA, but the report does not include information about the users and uses of the statistics. The Introduction clearly directs readers to the glossary of terms for an explanation of terms and concepts used within the release. This section also includes information about the policy and operational context in which the statistics have been produced and will be used.

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<sup>35</sup> <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**

- A2.8 *SDR* does not include information about the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to their uses.
- A2.9 *SDR* includes some information about sources of error, but this is limited and does not cover sources of bias that may affect the published statistics.
- A2.10 *SDR* includes a table showing the extent of revisions to figures published in the previous *SDR*, but does not include an explanation of the nature of the revisions. *SDR* does not make clear whether some figures will be subject to later revision.

### **Be professionally sound**

- A2.11 Descriptive statements within *SDR* are demonstrably consistent with the statistics, and are professionally sound, but do not provide sufficient information about how to interpret changes, given the usual extent of revisions.
- A2.12 Charts and tables are presented clearly and conform to good practice standards.

### **Include, or link to, appropriate metadata**

- A2.13 The title of *SDR* does not describe the coverage of the statistics but does include the period to which the statistics relate. *SDR* does not include information about when the next update is due or the frequency with which the data are compiled and updated.
- A2.14 *SDR* includes the name of the producer body and a general telephone and email address for enquiries; it does not include the name and contact details of the responsible statistician.
- A2.15 The report provides information about a change to a definition since the previous *SDR*, and includes tables showing all the changes between the 2010/11 survey and 2011/12 survey, including details of the effected data items and expected effect on the data of the change.
- A2.16 The revisions policy is within *SDR*. It explains the procedure for handling smaller and more significant unplanned revisions but does not state whether there is a procedure for planned revisions. It does not provide a sense of the usual extent of revisions. It presents the revisions to the last year's data, but does not provide any information about the reasons for these revisions.



## Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

- A3.1 This assessment was conducted from October 2013 to January 2014.
- A3.2 The Assessment team – Emma Bowditch and Neil Wilson – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of the Homes and Communities Agency in October. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 15 November. The Assessment team subsequently met the HCA during November 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 12 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:
- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Central government                    | 4 |
| Homes and Communities Agency          | 2 |
| Local government                      | 1 |
| Housing providers and interest groups | 5 |
- A3.5 Users were broadly happy with their engagement with HCA and the range of statistics provided in *SDR*, finding it a useful source for their needs. Their use tends to be focused on the data with less use of the commentary provided in the report. One user noted that the commentary seemed more suited to policy makers and that it had limited application to a broader audience. One user noted the difficulty in finding the statistics directly on HCA's website while another found the Excel data tables that accompany the report to be difficult to deal with.
- A3.6 Some users made suggestions for additional statistics and categories that could be provided. One user highlighted the statistics that are no longer available following the change over to the *SDR* and that alternative statistics are not available to fill this gap. Most users did not express any dissatisfaction with the quality of the statistics though one user raised a concern regarding the coherence of the statistics with those reported elsewhere that use different definitions and sources.

### Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

