



Office for
Statistics Regulation



UK Statistics
Authority

Systemic Review of Public Value

Statistics on Housing and Planning in the UK

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Office for Statistics Regulation

We provide independent regulation of all official statistics produced in the UK. Statistics are an essential public asset. We aim to enhance public confidence in the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics produced by government.

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Foreword

Housing matters and it affects all citizens in the UK. Official statistics on housing and planning play a vital role in helping to inform decision-making of all kinds.

This review and its findings are focussed on the user perspective. We've heard a number of users' views across the UK on the value of these statistics, and how well they meet their needs. This perspective – based on feedback from over 60 users across 43 organisations – has allowed us to build a picture about the statistical landscape for this topic, and the necessary drivers needed to improve these statistics to increase their public value. Value means that the data and statistics are easy to use, remain relevant, and benefit society, helping the public to understand important issues and answer key questions.

Overall, the topic of housing and planning appears to be well served by an impressive volume of official statistics. Our report highlights a number of areas of good practice in statistical production from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We have also identified opportunities for improvements to the statistical landscape at two levels: firstly, improvements to statistical outputs can help shine a light on society's evolving questions about housing and planning in the UK. Secondly, more strategic coordination and collaboration between statistics producers across the UK, as well as greater engagement with users, can help drive improvements in outputs.

We think that starting from the users' perspective is an essential prerequisite to improvements. This review provides a user-based stocktake, and it is therefore the starting point for these improvements. We welcome statistics producers being open to feedback and willing to listen to these views. We would be very happy to help facilitate changes, and to that end will continue to engage with producers and users of these statistics.

Ed Humpherson

Director General, Office for Statistics Regulation

Executive Summary

Scope of this Review

- ES.1 The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) provides independent regulation of all official statistics produced in the UK to enhance public confidence in the trustworthiness of statistics producers and in the quality and value of the statistics they produce. Our regulatory role gives us a unique view of Government statistics across the UK and as part of this role we undertake systemic reviews designed to explore a set of statistics in a thematic area or on a cross-cutting topic. Systemic reviews are particularly focused on exploring the public value of statistics although they may also identify concerns about trustworthiness or quality. **Chapter 1** presents further information about our systemic reviews and the approach we have taken in conducting this review.
- ES.2 Having somewhere secure to live, in good condition, and within the financial means of an individual is essential for people's health and wellbeing. The availability of useful and reliable housing and planning statistics is vital both for those responsible for decisions about housing and planning and for those who want to understand and develop insights into different aspects of the housing and planning system. The impetus for this systemic review comes from our view that housing and planning statistics – like many statistics and data produced by government – are a valuable public asset.
- ES.3 Statistics on housing and planning present information about many aspects of housing, including housing stock and new supply by tenure; housing cost and affordability; house sale transactions and prices; housing conditions; household projections; homelessness; land valuations; and planning applications. Responsibility for housing and planning policy is devolved across the UK, and local authorities play a central role in the provision of housing. As a result, the wide range of official statistics on housing and planning inform decision-making of all kinds that affects all citizens in the UK. Given the localised nature of housing matters, there is also increasing recognition of the need to disaggregate data.

Key Findings

- ES.4 Overall, the topic of housing and planning appears to be well served by an impressive volume of official statistics – in part available due to the devolved nature of housing and planning matters. This report highlights a number of areas of good practice - including examples of thematic publications and analyses - and commends producers for their willingness to acknowledge some of the issues identified and commitment to addressing them. We judge that despite efforts to date, improvements can be made at two levels:
- A. Official STATISTICAL OUTPUTS need to continue to move beyond a 'collect and count' approach:** there are many routine outputs reflecting individual data collection streams. Whilst there is clearly a need for this data to

be collected as the basis for deeper analysis, improvements can help shine a light on society’s evolving questions about housing and planning in the UK. We have identified **five key areas** where improvements to statistical outputs are required.

B. There needs to be a move towards greater SYSTEM wide working, within the UK as a whole, and within UK countries: the statistical system involves many statistics producers across the UK, often working in silos. While recognising that housing and planning are devolved matters, more strategic coordination and collaboration across producers that goes beyond cross-working for individual statistics publications or surveys, as well as greater engagement with users are seen as **two key enablers** that will help drive improvements in outputs.

The key areas for improvements are presented in Table 1.

ES.5 Addressing the issues identified will result in improvements to existing official statistics, the development of new statistics outputs and see a more coordinated statistical system that better meets users’ needs. Our findings reflect our views, informed by our user-based stocktake, on the overall system of housing and planning statistics production in the UK, but the individual elements may be more or less relevant to individual countries within the UK. The illustrative examples presented in **Chapters 2 and 3** should help to draw these differences out where relevant although they do not present a definitive account of all areas where good examples were identified or improvements could be made.

Table 1: Systemic Review Findings

Improvements needed to STATISTICAL OUTPUTS	
1	<p>Coherence across official statistics publications could be improved including better sign-posting to navigate the landscape</p> <p>Users are seeking an overarching narrative on key issues and the value of housing and planning statistics would be improved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining the extent of comparability of different statistics available and clear signposting between related sources being clear which statistics are best suited to answer different questions developing thematic or topic-specific analyses to help answer key questions – potentially drawing on a wider pool of evidence (such as examples presented in Chapter 2).
	<p>Illustrative examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of outputs are based on single data collections rather than drawing together a range of data sources to add insight thematically. In England and in Northern Ireland different house building measures cause user confusion Users find it difficult to access a coherent picture on

	<p>affordable housing across the UK (paragraphs 3.3 - 3.8)</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Accessibility of official statistics could be improved to help users to access the information they seek and permit Government to maximise the value of data they hold</p>
<p>There is a wealth of official housing and planning statistics produced by many government departments and agencies across the UK which are accessed through different websites and portals. As a result, users can find it difficult to locate and access those data and microdata most relevant to their needs.</p> <p>Accessibility constraints are a barrier to the system providing the best public value. Statistics, data and associated metadata should be published at the lowest level of detail while maintaining confidentiality and quality. This matters because housing and planning are very localised subjects. Statistics producers should provide straightforward and open ways of accessing their statistics, data, and related guidance – recognising the needs of different types of users.</p>	<p>Illustrative examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users (particularly in England) find it difficult to find what they are looking for with multiple producers and no single entry point • DCLG does not routinely publish regional statistics; users have to combine data themselves to get a regional figure <p>(paragraphs 3.9 - 3.15)</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Gaps in official statistics should be addressed to help answer key questions</p>
<p>Existing official statistics cover a broad range of topics under the wider theme of housing and planning, but there have been few examples of innovations in response to the changing housing and demographic landscape. Many users have highlighted key gaps in official statistics and as a result it is difficult for them to answer important questions and understand drivers and trends.</p> <p>Addressing these gaps, including maximising use of existing data and continuing to develop statistics products in a coherent fashion across the Government Statistical Service and UK countries to respond to user needs is a key way to improve the public value of housing and planning statistics.</p>	<p>Illustrative examples of gaps in insight across the UK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private rental market • Planning including transparency around planning permissions • Land ownership and land use • Understanding the link between housing and other topics <p>(paragraphs 3.16 - 3.24)</p>

4 Transparency of official statistics could be increased through improved information about statistical definitions, methods, and strengths and limitations of official statistics

Presenting transparent information about statistical definitions and methods, together with judgements about strengths and limitations, is essential in supporting users' confidence in statistics. Some elements of housing are highly politicised and attract wide user attention. Around these areas in particular **statistics producers could improve the value of their statistics by being clearer on what is measured, the extent to which it is comparable with related statistics, and the limitations of the statistics.**

Illustrative examples:

- Definitions of Homelessness across the UK differ due to devolved policy, and information about the extent of comparability is generally limited
- Affordability of housing and different types of 'affordable housing' are key concepts but definitions across the UK vary due to devolved policy and there is a lack of clarity on appropriate comparisons across sources

(paragraphs 3.25 - 3.29)

5 Quality of key official statistics data sources could be improved

The majority of statistics on housing and planning are based on data collected through local authorities providing services within their community. The quality of official statistics is therefore dependent on the robustness of data collection practices and adequate quality assurances at different stages of the statistical production process.

In 2015 we introduced a new Regulatory Standard on the *Quality Assurance of Administrative Data*¹ and we expect to see clearer demonstration of how this has been applied across a range of housing statistics to assure users about the quality of these statistics.

Illustrative examples:

- A mixed picture about the extent to which official statistics outputs publicly demonstrate appropriate quality assurances of the data and statistics
- There is a widespread view that quarterly statistics on house building in England and Wales undercount the number of houses built

(paragraphs 3.30 - 3.35)

¹ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/osr/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/>

Improvements needed to SYSTEM wide working

6 Strengthened collaboration and strategic coordination between government departments could make the statistical system more effective

While housing and planning are devolved matters across the UK, the key questions of societal interest are often the same. **Joint cross-producer working has the scope to permit efficient use of resources with information shared and statistical development work prioritised and coordinated. This would help enable the improvements to statistical outputs highlighted above.**

Illustrative examples:

- Limited strategic cross-producer engagement and strategic collaboration, beyond ad-hoc engagement or engagement relating to individual statistics publications and surveys

(paragraphs 4.2 – 4.5)

7 The statistical system should engage more effectively with a wider range of stakeholders who are recognised as being at the heart of increasing the public value of official statistics

We heard lots of suggestions for improvements in housing and planning statistics from users and it was evident that there is currently limited opportunity for a wider range of stakeholders (beyond policy officials) to engage effectively with the statistical system about their needs.

Effective user engagement is necessary for producers to develop and maintain a current understanding of the value and potential value of their statistics and inform priorities and development plans for data collections and statistical outputs. Such engagement should be supported to ensure that statistics are accessible, remain relevant and benefit society – helping to answer key questions of the day.

Illustrative examples:

- Limited user engagement mechanisms across the four countries
- Some good examples of user engagement mechanisms in Wales and Scotland that others could learn from

(paragraphs 4.6 – 4.9)

Next steps

ES.6 OSR will now engage with housing and planning statistics producers across the UK to determine how best to work with them to support improvements. At a high level, we would like to see the housing and planning statistics system quickly establish a cross-producer group and means of engagement with a wide range of users. This would enable strategic prioritisation around developments to statistics and progress towards the ultimate goal of statistical outputs becoming more coherent, adding more value and insight and being easier to understand and

access, with enhanced metadata to support their use. We also think that increased collaboration would support necessary improvements to the quality assurance of data and statistics through an ability to share experiences and good practice.

ES.7 We are keen to engage to help facilitate changes, perhaps helping to convene initial producer and user meetings and we expect that positive outcomes would be tangible within 1-3 years in terms of:

- Existing statistics outputs improved
- Gaps in existing official statistics addressed
- Users being more satisfied with official housing and planning statistics

ES.8 We will provide updates as we progress the conversations with producers; our website will have the most up to date position.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

Introduction

- 1.1 Systemic reviews are particularly focused on exploring the public value of statistics although they may also identify concerns about trustworthiness or quality. In terms of value, OSR is looking for statistics and numerical information to be accessible, remain relevant, and benefit society, helping the public to understand important issues and answer key questions. To maximise public value, statistics producers should be seeking to make their statistics accessible, insightful, reflective of the needs of a range of users and uses and they should be innovative so that the statistics keep pace with a complex, changing world. They should also be seeking to be efficient in data collection and use.
- 1.2 One of the reasons that systemic reviews are an effective regulatory tool for examining the public value of statistics is that while value can be displayed by individual statistics, some of its dimensions are best explored by looking across a set of related statistics and at the relationships between them. One statistic is not reasonably going to be able to answer the array of questions users may have, but collectively a set of statistics can be expected to do this. Systemic reviews involve trying to understand not only the value of a set of statistics but also the reasons why value may or may not be being maximised. Often these reasons relate to the way the system of producing statistics is configured or operating and so enabling changes in the 'system' will be the most effective way to generate improvements in the statistical outputs.

Our approach

- 1.3 Systemic reviews are based to a large extent on interviews with users and producers of statistics. We seek to learn what questions users are looking to address and how well they feel the statistics system supports their ability to access and use the statistics they need. We seek to understand the environment producers are working in and what their aims and constraints are. We then consider all this information and look at the official statistics currently produced to form a judgement about where improvements might be required. We discuss our findings with producers and users and explore with them how the situation might be improved.
- 1.4 Each systemic review will have a published output making recommendations for improvement and sharing good practice. Where appropriate OSR may also undertake interventions to directly support improvements and help build momentum for long term change, working in concert with others. We recognise that the kinds of changes and improvements sought may not all be quick fixes and so there will need to be an ongoing change process in the statistical system, perhaps over a number of years.
- 1.5 The views in this report have emerged from our engagement with over 60 people including representatives from 43 organisations who use official statistics related to

housing and planning across the UK, representing a user-based stocktake, supplemented by our own research to better understand the public value of these statistics. This research includes our revisiting recommendations from the National Statistician's 2012 *Review of Official Housing Market Statistics* and engaging with statistics producers to identify actions taken in response to recommendations from this earlier review.

- 1.6 We have also had some initial engagement with the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE), which officially launched in October 2017. CaCHE aims to advance knowledge of the UK housing system by developing robust evidence to inform academic debate, housing policy and practice across the UK and join together a range of stakeholders. There are definite opportunities for synergies between both our ultimate aims and we will continue to engage with CaCHE to identify specific areas for collaboration, to address some of our findings and encourage statistics producers to work in collaboration with them. Some statistics producers told us they have already started to engage with CaCHE, which we welcome.

Policy Context

- 1.7 Housing is currently a subject rarely out of the news, whether it is related to meeting the demand for homes with an increasing and ageing population, the affordability of homes to both buy and rent, the provision of social housing or the growth of homes in the private rented sector. This is a policy area that has gained an increasing focus in recent years after a period when it was a topic subject to much less public debate - and it seems that this focus will continue to intensify, as a greater understanding of the impact of housing policy on wider issues such as health, income and the economy is likely to be examined more extensively. The devolved nature of housing means that there have been different policy emphases across the four constituent countries of the UK.
- 1.8 In England, the Department for Communities and Local Government's publication of the white paper *Fixing our broken housing market*² in February 2017 highlighted the under supply of housing in England and that high housing costs, whether buying or renting, were proving to be one of the greatest barriers to economic progress. It outlined an approach based on building the right homes in the right places, building homes faster and diversifying the housing market. The disaster at Grenfell Tower, meanwhile, brought the quality of and approach to social housing provision to the forefront of public debate.
- 1.9 In Wales, a new housing supply pact³ has committed the Welsh Government to delivering 20,000 additional new affordable homes by the end of the current government, including those supported by the Help to Buy scheme, while efforts to

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

³ <http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2016-new/affordablehousing/?lang=en>

improve standards in the private rented sector have been supported by the creation of Rent Smart Wales⁴ for the registration of private landlords.

- 1.10 In Scotland, the Scottish Government's *More Homes Scotland*⁵ put forward in 2016 an over-arching approach to support the increase in the supply of homes across all tenures with a focus on delivering 50,000 affordable homes, providing more private rented sector homes, supporting home ownership through shared equity and Help to Buy schemes and to enable a more effective planning system.
- 1.11 In Northern Ireland, the draft *Programme for Government (2016-21)*⁶ includes indicators on the number of households in housing stress and the gap between housing supply and housing need. Proposals have been drafted to increase the supply of homes across all tenure types, to address the demand for suitable housing resulting from the considerable growth in household numbers, and to reduce the number of applicants in housing stress on social housing waiting lists.

Overview of current statistics landscape

- 1.12 Housing and planning are devolved matters across the UK, and as a result there is a vast range of related official statistics produced by a number of Government departments that provide a range of data. It is worth noting that while many statistics outputs on housing and planning matters in the UK are based on administrative data collections, there are some core statistical assets based on housing surveys which enable particularly interesting analyses. For England, DCLG's annual English Housing Survey fulfils this role, in Scotland it is the annual Scottish Household Survey and in Wales and Northern Ireland the House Conditions surveys, undertaken at less frequent intervals, are key. Table 2 below sets out the relevant departments or agencies who are responsible for producing official statistics within each country, and statistics for the UK overall:

Table 2: Summary of all official statistics producers of housing and planning statistics across the UK

Country	Official statistics producer	Description of main statistics produced
England	Department for Communities and Local Government ⁷ (DCLG)	Produces the majority of official statistics related to housing, planning and local services for England
	Homes and Communities Agency ⁸ (HCA) - <i>Arms length Body of DCLG</i>	Produces official statistics on those programmes HCA are responsible for managing – 17 current programmes and 9 historical programmes, including programmes relating to affordable housing

⁴ <https://www.rentsmart.gov.wales/en/>

⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/reform/more-homes-scotland>

⁶ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme-government>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-and-communities-agency/about/statistics>

	Valuation Office Agency ⁹ (VOA)	Produces official statistics on average private rents
	Planning Inspectorate ¹⁰	Produces official statistics on different aspects of planning in England
England and Wales	VOA	Produces official statistics on non-domestic rating (including floor space) and Council Tax (including a breakdown by property type and build period) ¹¹ .
Scotland	Scottish Government ¹²	Produces the majority of official statistics related to housing, planning and local services for Scotland
	Registers of Scotland ¹³ (RoS)	Produces official statistics on average house prices in Scotland
	National Records Scotland ¹⁴	Produces household projections and household estimates for Scotland
Wales	Welsh Government	Produces all official statistics related to housing, and local services for Wales and some planning statistics
Northern Ireland	Department for Communities Northern Ireland ¹⁵	Produces official statistics on new housing starts and completions, homelessness and a Northern Ireland housing compendium that draws on other official sources in Northern Ireland
	Department for Finance / Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)	Produces official statistics on construction output and household projections
	Land and Property Services ¹⁶ / NISRA ¹⁷	Produces official statistics on new dwelling starts and completions, the Northern Ireland House Price Index and other property statistics.
	Northern Ireland Housing Executive ¹⁸ (NIHE)	Produces official statistics on housing conditions and private rented sector survey and funds non-official research reports including the Northern Ireland House Price Index statistics produced by Ulster University
	Department for Infrastructure ¹⁹	Produces official statistics on planning
UK	Office for National Statistics ²⁰ (ONS)	Produces construction output statistics; household projections in England (from 2017); an experimental index of private rental housing prices; an annual housing summary measures analyses and ad-hoc thematic analyses. Also jointly produces UK House

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency/about/statistics>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-inspectorate-statistics>

¹¹ Statistics do not include tax yields

¹² <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS>

¹³ <https://www.ros.gov.uk/property-data/property-statistics>

¹⁴ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data>

¹⁵ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

¹⁶ <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/land-property-services-lps>

¹⁷ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/>

¹⁸ https://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/housing_research.htm

¹⁹ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/planning-statistics>

²⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing>

		Price Index with HM Land Registry and produces official statistics on local area house prices
	Her Majesty's Land Registry ²¹ (HMLR)	Produces UK House Price Index, in conjunction with ONS, Registers of Scotland and Land and Property Services Northern Ireland
	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs ²² (HMRC)	Produces official statistics on property transactions in the UK, stamp duties, annual tax on enveloped dwellings

Overview of statistics users and uses

1.13 A key strand of our review was to consult with a range of users of housing and planning statistics (for a list of those organisations we consulted see **Annex 1**). These statistics support a large and informed user community across the UK and are well-used across a number of sectors including:

- central government in policy-making, monitoring and evaluation
- local government in monitoring service provision and informing local planning needs by identifying patterns and projecting future land use
- trade associations and their members to assess the housing market, develop policies and planning, to inform and support their members
- housing association representatives and their members to assess the housing market and support operational plans, and to inform and support their members
- third sector organisations in their work on housing and homelessness to support and inform people or groups in society e.g. the homeless, and to promote a cause or argue for change
- research organisations and think-tanks to inform their analyses about the housing market and to help propose solutions to address housing and planning issues
- academics to understand trends for different aspects of housing and planning; they also use microdata in their own research
- a range of users interested in understanding the impact of welfare reform
- estate agents to provide insight and intelligence about the housing market
- parliaments and assemblies across the UK
- informed citizens
- media

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-house-price-index-reports>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/about/statistics>

Chapter 2: Ways the statistics and system support public value

Introduction

2.1 In undertaking this review we identified a number of instances where the current statistics and the supporting system demonstrate public value, including examples based on recent improvements. While not comprehensive, the examples in this Chapter highlight statistics producers recognising the needs of users, and improving statistics publications or access to data. As well as recognising these positive examples, they may also give ideas for further improvements.

Providing a coherent picture

2.2 We have seen examples across the UK of government bodies helping to fund the publication of insightful analysis that is not currently provided by official statistics; of individual departments bringing data sources together to provide a more coherent picture of housing; and of statisticians from different departments collaborating to provide a clear and coherent picture of the UK housing market and house prices.

Example 1: Other organisations providing insight

2.3 The Chartered Institute of Housing funds the production of an annual *UK Housing Review*²³, a compendium publication that draws on existing official statistics and non-official statistics sources to present a coherent picture of housing across the UK. The publication is part funded by the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. While this is not an official statistics publication, it is important in enhancing the public value of housing and planning statistics across the UK. Many elements of the *UK Housing Review* are free (including the report commentary, tables and charts) with additional analyses available at a cost.

Example 2: Bringing various data sources together to provide a more coherent picture of housing

2.4 The Department for Communities in Northern Ireland produces an annual *Northern Ireland Housing Statistics*²⁴ report, supported by a quarterly publication *Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin*²⁵ which are compendia of statistics presenting information on a range of areas relating to housing including housing supply, social and private renting demand, owner occupier demand, homelessness and household characteristics. This is a good example of statisticians responding to users' needs through drawing together relevant statistics from a number of sources.

²³ <http://www.ukhousingreview.org.uk/>

²⁴ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

²⁵ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

- 2.5 In Scotland, the Scottish Government publishes an annual compendium *Housing Statistics for Scotland - Key Trends Summary*²⁶ which draws together related statistics on housing supply and public sector housing in Scotland, including measures such as new housing supply, public sector stock and house sales. This is supplemented by a quarterly publication *Housing Statistics for Scotland Quarterly Update*²⁷ which presents the latest statistics on new build housing starts and completions, affordable housing supply and local authority house sales; and a quarterly *Scottish Housing Market Review*²⁸ which presents key measures of the housing market in Scotland, supplemented with a special feature of a topical interest; and an overview of progress against the 30 indicators that contribute to the Housing and Regeneration Outcome Framework²⁹.
- 2.6 In September 2014, ONS published an article on trends in the housing market in the UK, which it developed in conjunction with statisticians in DCLG, Welsh Government, Scottish Government and NISRA, in response to the then National Statistician's *Review of Official Housing Market Statistics*³⁰ (see paragraph A2.3 in **Annex 2**) and informed by engagement with users. While we were told that developing this article presented some difficulties due to different definitions and issues about the comparability of some measures, this does demonstrate government statisticians working collaboratively to develop thematic analyses. Unfortunately, this article has not been produced since 2014. However, since August 2015 ONS has developed and published an annual article *Housing summary measures analysis*³¹ with the latest article published in October 2016, although its scope is limited to England and Wales.

Example 3: Statisticians working together to produce coherent statistics

- 2.7 Since 2011/12, statisticians in HM Land Registry, ONS, Registers of Scotland and Land and Property Services Northern Ireland have collaborated to develop a single official measure of house prices in the UK, presented in *UK House Price Index*³². The UK House Price Index is currently produced and published monthly as an experimental statistic, and is currently being assessed by OSR to determine whether it can be designated as a National Statistic.

Illustrative examples of areas for improvements can be accessed from paragraph 3.3.

²⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/09/5806>

²⁷ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/5131>

²⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/chma/statistics/SHMRQ2-2017>

²⁹ <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/partnerstories/HARO/Indicators>

³⁰ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports-reviews-guidance-and-advisory-committees/national-statisticians-reviews/national-statisticians-review-of-housing-market-statistics/>

³¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/housingsummarymeasuresanalysis/2015>

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-house-price-index-reports>

Improving accessibility

2.8 There have been specific examples in both England and Scotland where statistics producers have invested resources in providing an open data platform for users to access and analyse housing data, to supplement established resources such as the UK Data Service³³ and ONS's Virtual Microdata Laboratory³⁴ that provide access to microdata to approved researchers.

Example 4: Developing open data platforms

2.9 In England, DCLG have invested resources in developing an OpenData³⁵ platform for a selection of its official statistics and data outputs, which allows users to explore aggregated data and create bespoke data outputs according to their specific needs. The platform currently hosts 208 linked datasets, a portion of which relate to housing and planning statistics. DCLG asks for user feedback on ways they can continuously add and update the data and enhance the platform's functionality.

2.10 In Scotland, the Scottish Government has also developed an open data platform³⁶ providing access to Scottish housing official statistics. This enables users to download data and view time series for different geographies in data tables and maps. Registers of Scotland (RoS) have also been developing ScotLIS³⁷, which will be Scotland's Land Information System. ScotLIS is an online map-based data platform, containing lots of different information about property and land in Scotland. It aims to support users' accessing a comprehensive picture of property and land in Scotland, which means drawing together various sources of information produced by various organisations into one place. The first version of ScotLIS was launched in October 2017. RoS told us they have been developing this platform with user feedback at every stage of the process³⁸.

Illustrative examples of areas for improvements can be accessed from paragraph 3.9.

Addressing knowledge gaps

2.11 There are recent examples where statistics producers have developed new insight through linking housing data with other data sources and improving reports to respond to users' needs.

Example 5: Linking different data sources to provide new insight

2.12 Users across the UK expressed the need for housing data to be linked to health and social care data to understand, for example, the impact of housing on health, or the supply of appropriate accommodation for those in need. Scottish Government and NHS Scotland's Information Services Division Scotland have been working as a first

³³ <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>

³⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/paidservices/virtualmicrodatalaboratoryvml>

³⁵ <http://opendatacommunities.org/>

³⁶ <http://statistics.gov.scot/>

³⁷ www.ros.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/28033/Digital-land-and-property-information-system-report-July-2015.pdf

³⁸ www.ros.gov.uk/about-us/news/2017/scotlis

step to respond to user demand by linking data³⁹ on statutory homelessness with several health datasets to gain insight on homeless individuals' use of health services.

Example 6: Developing new insight using existing data sources

2.13 DCLG publishes its findings from the continuous English Housing Survey⁴⁰ (EHS) annually. EHS datasets are also made available via the UK Data Service for users that want to conduct secondary analysis. Over recent years, a number of topic reports have been developed to supplement the headline report, enabling users to more easily locate national findings for particular areas of interest, such as housing costs and affordability, and the social and the private rented sectors.

Example 7: Assessing housing need and demand

2.14 The Scottish Government publishes a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) tool⁴¹ alongside guidance for managers and practitioners. Data is gathered at small geographical levels from official statistics and other evidence sources to feed into wider analyses to help users explore questions around housing need and demand across different tenures and locations. In England, DCLG has recently published a consultation on a standard method for calculating local authorities' housing need⁴².

Illustrative examples of areas for improvements can be accessed from paragraph 3.16.

Improving quality

2.15 There are examples of government statisticians taking significant steps to improve the quality of data collections and statistics outputs, in order to present clearer and comprehensive guidance to users about the strengths and limitations of the data and statistics to support their use.

Example 8: Being transparent about data quality issues and working to improve data quality

2.16 In July 2016, the Welsh Government wrote to OSR to request that the National Statistics designation of its *Homelessness Statistics in Wales*⁴³ be temporarily suspended, after it became apparent that some local authorities faced difficulty in providing complete and accurate data following legislative changes impacting the data collection. Since then, statisticians in the Welsh Government have engaged extensively with local authorities to improve data collection practices and strengthen the quality assurance of the data used to produce these statistics. This involved issuing new guidance, holding workshops with local authorities to discuss difficulties in data collections and clarifying definitions, and carrying out detailed reviews of

³⁹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/HealthHomelessnessDataLinkage>

⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>

⁴¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/chma/hnda>

⁴² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>

⁴³ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/homelessness/?lang=en>

individual data collection forms, challenging and seeking explanations for changing trends in the data. The statistics team plans to continue to develop relationships with data suppliers to further enhance the statistics' quality. As a result of this significant programme of work, the Welsh Government has confirmed that they can now accurately comment on the quality and limitations of the data and will provide a full explanation in its next publication to support their use. In England, DCLG told us that it is changing the collection of its homelessness statistics to a 'case-based' system to coincide with the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018⁴⁴.

Illustrative examples of areas for improvements can be accessed from paragraph 3.30.

Effective stakeholder engagement

2.17 Effective engagement with statistics users and stakeholders is vital in gathering views to inform improvements to existing statistics outputs, in particular relating to their presentation, accessibility, coherence with related statistics and quality, as well as to help shape future developments of official statistics.

Example 9: Engaging with a range of stakeholders to ensure statistics are meeting the needs of users

2.18 In 2013, statisticians in the Welsh Government established a Housing Information Group⁴⁵ (HIG) comprised of a range of stakeholders and statistics users. The HIG meets three times a year (two themed meetings and one seminar) and acts as a forum for the Welsh Government, local authorities, housing associations, and participating agencies to share views about housing, with the agenda, minutes and actions from each meeting being published. The annual HIG seminar is open to a wider range of users than the themed meetings and includes a range of presentations from different speakers across the sector.

Illustrative examples of areas for improvements can be accessed from paragraph 4.6.

⁴⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

⁴⁵ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/user-engagement/statistical-groups-committees/housing-information-group/?lang=en>

Chapter 3: Ways the statistics could be improved

Introduction

- 3.1 This Chapter sets out five key ways in which we believe housing and planning statistics outputs could be improved, through:
- improving coherence, including through better signposting to navigate the statistics landscape
 - improving accessibility to help users access the information they seek and permit Government to maximise the value they hold
 - addressing gaps to help answer key questions
 - increasing transparency through improved information about statistical definitions, methods and strengths and limitations
 - improving quality of data sources through appropriate quality assurances
- 3.2 In each case, we present illustrative examples identified in the systemic review to support these findings.

Findings on improvements to statistical outputs

Finding 1	Coherence across official statistics publications could be improved including better sign-posting to navigate the landscape
Users are seeking an overarching narrative on key issues and the value of housing and planning statistics would be improved by:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• explaining the extent of comparability of different statistics available and clear signposting between related sources• being clear which statistics are best suited to answer different questions• developing thematic or topic-specific analyses to help answer key questions – potentially drawing on a wider pool of evidence	

- 3.3 Statistics should help to clearly answer society’s important questions, in concert with other sources of evidence. The coherence of existing housing and planning official statistics with related data sources and statistics across the UK could be improved so that users are better assisted to gain an overall perspective on housing and planning. In order for statistics to continue to move beyond a ‘collect and count’ approach to their presentation, there should be an ambition for statistics publications to be developed and framed in ways that demonstrably add to the evidence base to help answer key questions. While individual statistical data collections play an important role, they cannot solely provide all the answers to the key questions about a topic, and will need to be supplemented by other research and in-depth analyses to develop useful insights. There is therefore scope for official statistics publications to draw on related sources and analyses to present a

more-coherent picture for users. Examples of the key questions where stakeholders want better information – through statistics and other evidence - include:

- Is there a housing shortage? What does this picture look like locally and nationally?
- Are we building the right types of houses in the right places?
- Do we understand sufficiently the difference between demand and the needs of different groups in society including young people, those needing supported housing etc.?
- What does affordable housing mean? Affordable for whom and how?
- How do we best measure housing affordability?
- Is 'land banking' a barrier to building new houses?
- How long does it take for houses to be built once planning permission is granted?
- What is the stock of the UK private rental market?
- What is the cost of private rented accommodation, at a local level?
- What are the factors that contribute to homelessness?

We recognise that many of these concepts are difficult to define and measure and some can be subjective. It may then take time and require working across traditional boundaries, to develop appropriate data collections and link statistical insight with evidence from other sources.

3.4 Two key areas illustrate how we believe the coherence of statistics could be improved; these are 'affordable housing' and house building.

Example 1: Affordable housing

3.5 Housing is a devolved matter across the UK. As a result, the definition of 'affordable housing' in the UK's constituent countries is different and the extent of comparability of 'affordable housing' statistics is unclear. Table 3 presents the different definitions of 'affordable housing':

Table 3: Definitions of affordable housing across the UK

Country	Definitions of affordable housing
England	Affordable housing is social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices ⁴⁶ .
Wales	Housing where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing, both on first occupation and for subsequent occupiers ⁴⁷
Scotland	Housing of a reasonable quality that is affordable to people on modest

⁴⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/definitions-of-general-housing-terms>

⁴⁷ <http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan2/?skip=1&lang=en>

	incomes ⁴⁸ .
Northern Ireland	Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. In order to be considered as affordable the gross household income spent on housing should not exceed 35% ⁴⁹

3.6 There is user appetite within countries to see an overall, thematic picture of ‘affordable housing’. This is particularly true in England, where there are many different types of ‘affordable housing’, and applies to a lesser extent in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Statistics on affordable housing in England are produced by DCLG, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Greater London Authority. DCLG draws these statistics together on a ‘collection’ webpage⁵⁰ that links to different statistics sources and in its annual *Affordable housing supply in England* publication. Our engagement with users highlighted that it is still difficult for them to obtain a coherent picture on ‘affordable housing’ in England. Examples of the things that users want to know include:

- Whether the use of terms and definitions such as affordable housing ‘delivered’, ‘starts’, ‘starts on site’ and ‘completions’ are comparable for the types of ‘affordable housing’ presented in the statistics products published by DCLG, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Greater London Authority. While DCLG presents some guidance about these terms, users told us that the commentary doesn’t explain this clearly enough.
- Whether other DCLG housing statistics include ‘affordable housing’ in their coverage - such as statistics on housing stock, social housing etc, and if so, whether these measures are comparable with those presented in the affordable housing publications, with some users perceiving the existing guidance being of limited use.
- The coherence and comparability of statistics presented quarterly and annually - while there is some guidance on use explaining that the annual statistics are more comprehensive but the quarterly statistics give a useful indication of trends, the reasons for this could be clarified further for users.

3.7 In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, there are fewer types of ‘affordable housing’ therefore there is less confusion about these measures. In Scotland, the Scottish Government presents statistics on the supply of affordable housing in its quarterly and annual housing compendia publications (see paragraph 2.5), and in Wales, the Welsh Government publishes an annual statistics report on affordable

⁴⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/300760/0093908.pdf>

⁴⁹ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/housing-association-guide-glossary> This is the published definition of affordable housing, but we were told by policy officials in Northern Ireland that there is currently no formal definition being used

⁵⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/affordable-housing-supply>

housing provision. In Northern Ireland, it is unclear from existing statistics what outputs are defined as ‘affordable housing’ and whether this concept is recognised and used. In these cases, there is scope for presenting clearer information about the comparability and coherence of definitions and improved signposting to related statistics across the UK. There is some user appetite to access a coherent picture of affordable housing across the UK that takes into account the different definitions of ‘affordable housing’, including trends over time.

Example 2: Statistics on house building

3.8 House building is currently a topic of considerable public interest and yet some of the official statistics available make it difficult to obtain a clear picture of housing supply. There are examples where published statistics that appear to be reporting on the same measures of ‘house building’ are different, raising questions by users about comparability of these measures and the quality of statistics.

- The Department for Communities in Northern Ireland publishes two different measures of social housing dwelling starts and completions in its annual housing statistics, which are based on two different sources. There is an explanation of how these differences relate to how the statistics are collected, but some users don’t feel confident about what measure should be used in specific situations, which may be due to the limited guidance provided.
- In England, DCLG produce quarterly and annual statistics on ‘house building’ with different measures of house building ‘completions’ (see paragraph 3.31).

In these cases statistics should be presented more clearly with helpful explanations about how different sources relate to one another.

Finding 2

Accessibility of official statistics could be improved to help users to access the information they seek and permit Government to maximise the value of data they hold

There is a wealth of official housing and planning statistics produced by many government departments and agencies across the UK which are accessed through different websites and portals. As a result, users can find it difficult to find and access those data and microdata most relevant to their needs.

Accessibility constraints are a barrier to the system providing the best public value. Statistics, data and associated metadata should be published at the lowest level of detail while maintaining confidentiality and quality. This matters because housing and planning are very localised subjects. Statistics producers should provide straightforward and open ways of accessing their statistics, data, and related guidance – recognising the needs of different types of users.

- 3.9 Analytical users expect to access microdata collected through government statistical surveys and administrative systems to produce their own statistical insight on housing and planning and this should be supported. The sharing of data between government departments with the new Digital Economy Act also offers a huge opportunity to link data and develop new and improved insight on housing and planning, as well as to develop new insights into the link between housing and planning and other topics, such as health, education, poverty and inequality.
- 3.10 The dispersed nature of housing and planning statistics has resulted in some users wanting a more-accessible hub to access related statistics, since navigation around the various sources of data and statistics can be difficult. We have also heard examples of users being unable to access microdata on social housing at the level of detail they require for their analysis.

Example 3: Multiple entry points to obtain statistics on housing and planning

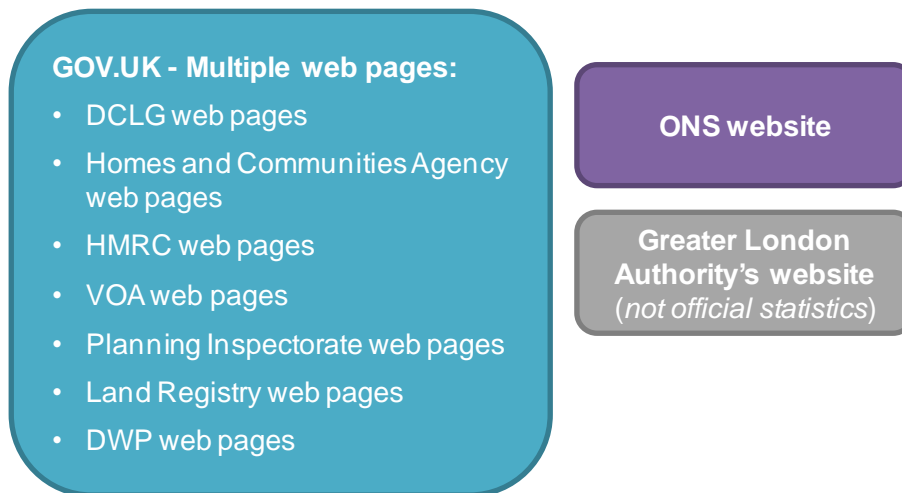
3.11 Official statistics on housing and planning in England are accessed through a number of websites. DCLG for example publishes a wide range of official statistics, including (but not limited to) statistics on affordable housing, dwelling stock, homelessness, new builds, net additions, social housing sales and lettings. Responsibility for producing statistics on household projections in England, previously produced and published by DCLG, has now transferred to ONS. ONS's website includes its own housing topic area which presents statistics on house prices (both the monthly *UK House Price Index* and quarterly *House price statistics for small areas in England and Wales*⁵¹), an experimental *Index of private housing rental prices*, statistics on the Census and a number of articles. The Homes and Communities Agency and the Greater London Authority, meanwhile, produce and publish statistics and tables related to the affordable housing provision they administer – these are presented on GOV.UK and the GLA's own website respectively (as GLA's statistics are not official statistics). Similarly, other statistics on housing and planning are produced and published by several other government departments, on their own pages on GOV.UK:

- HMRC's statistics on Stamp Duty Land Tax
- DWP's statistics on housing benefits
- VOA's statistics on average private rents in England
- Planning Inspectorate's statistics on planning in England
- Land Registry's data on prices paid for houses in England and Wales

These various entry points for related statistics are summarised in Figure 1 below:

⁵¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housepricestatisticsforsmallareas/previousReleases>

Figure 1: Entry points for statistics on Housing and Planning for England



3.12 Given the dispersed way that official statistics on housing and planning in England are presented, users find navigation around these numerous sources difficult and several users expressed a desire for a 'one stop shop' approach to accessing related statistics (similar to NOMIS for labour market statistics) to make it easier to find the statistics relevant to their needs. Some users have had to create their own 'data hubs' to support efficient use; Shelter, for example, have created the Shelter Databank, though they told us that it is time consuming for them to maintain; and the Local Government Association have produced its own Local Government (LG) Inform tool to support users in local government to assess performance locally, regionally and nationally. Other users use third party services which bring together relevant statistics and data to support easier analysis.

Example 4: Access to microdata on social housing

3.13 In England, Housing Associations continually update social housing and sales data recorded on the Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales (CORE) database. DCLG took over management of CORE in 2012 and took over responsibility for the collection of data from 2015/16. One user told us that since then, it's no longer possible for them to access the detailed microdata they require for their analysis and instead they only have end-user access to the UK Data Archive. There is also an issue with them gaining access to the data to deal with ad hoc queries, as seeking approval to access the UK Data Archive tends to be designed around a project-based requirement for data. DCLG told us that this is as a result of protecting data confidentiality.

3.14 In Scotland, the Scottish Government previously collected data from Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) about the new social lets they provided, recorded via SCORE (Scottish Continuous Recording system)⁵². This data collection ceased in 2015/16, after a consultation by Scottish Government in which it published details of alternative sources of data it proposed could be used to replace SCORE. Three of

⁵² <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/SCORE>

the alternative sources are the Scottish Housing Regulator's statistics⁵³ from the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), the *Scottish Household Survey*⁵⁴ and the *Social Tenants in Scotland*⁵⁵ publication. Despite the availability of these alternative sources, feedback from several users indicated that the withdrawal of SCORE meant they no longer have access to some information, including the reason for vacancies in most housing association properties and the income of new tenants, which limits their analyses.

Other examples on improvements needed to accessibility

3.15 Through the course of our review, we have identified other examples where the accessibility of statistics and data could be improved:

- Some users of English housing statistics cited frustration at DCLG's decision in 2013 to cease presenting its official statistics by region in England. This limits the value of the statistics to users, since many found the presentation of the statistics by region helpful for comparative analyses. While DCLG's statistics are usually presented by local authority, users find it time consuming to re-create a regional aggregation, presenting a barrier to efficient analyses.
- Users told us they appreciated that data in government is becoming more open which supports their own analysis which improves their trust in official statistics. However, some told us they would appreciate it if datasets were made available consistently across the UK. For example, at the time of our engaging users during early 2017, energy performance certificate (EPC) data for England and Wales was available⁵⁶ openly for further analysis, but equivalent data in Scotland was not. Statisticians at Scottish Government told us that energy performance information is currently available⁵⁷ at an individual record-level and there were plans to improve accessibility by collating into one open data source for analysis; and that they had recently consulted on the potential introduction of a statutory minimum standard of energy efficiency in private rented sector housing which could result in the future availability of data.
- Statisticians in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland told us that sometimes it was difficult for them to gain access to data for their country, which ultimately impacts on how far their own analysis can provide insight. For example, Scottish Government is unable to access Bank of England data about mortgage lending for Scotland and instead has to use less relevant UK data to present information about mortgages in their Scottish housing market review⁵⁸. Housing is a devolved matter, and without access to the appropriate information it will be difficult to assess how different housing policies across the four constituent countries of the UK are impacting the housing market.

⁵³ <https://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/find-and-compare-landlords/statistical-information>

⁵⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/16002>

⁵⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/02/8350>

⁵⁶ <https://epc.opendatacommunities.org/>

⁵⁷ www.scottishepcregister.org.uk/

⁵⁸ www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/chma/statistics

- In paragraph 2.3, we highlighted the *UK Housing Review* as an example of providing a coherent picture on housing across the UK. While many elements of the *UK Housing Review* are free, additional analyses are available at a cost, which could be restrictive for some users. Its future production is dependent on continued funding and it is not well signposted from existing official housing and planning statistics. We think attention should be given to bringing about the benefits of the compendium in a way which is compatible with equality of access to statistics.

Finding 3

Gaps in official statistics should be addressed to help answer key questions

Existing official statistics cover a broad range of topics under the wider theme of housing and planning, but there have been few examples of innovations in response to the changing housing and demographic landscape. Many users have highlighted key gaps in official statistics and as a result it is difficult for them to answer important questions and understand drivers and trends.

Addressing these gaps, including maximising use of existing data and continuing to develop statistics products in a coherent fashion across the Government Statistical Service and UK countries to respond to user needs is a key way to maximise improve the public value of housing and planning statistics.

- 3.16 We have identified several examples of existing gaps in the statistics landscape or gaps in insight to help users answer important questions, such as about the private rented sector, the planning system and land ownership and use, as well as the link between housing statistics and other topics.

Example 5: Need for robust statistics about aspects of the private rented sector

- 3.17 The majority of users we spoke to cited frustration at the lack of robust, timely and insightful statistics about the private rented sector. Given that this sector is growing in size, the dispersed nature of existing information about the sector hinders users in developing an understanding of changing rental patterns and insight into the ‘make-up’ of the sector, the drivers for trends and the evolving relationship between the social and private rented sector. Examples of the type of information that users need to know include:

- Robust statistics about actual rent prices for all four countries that can be compared over time and across geography; and can distinguish between new and existing lets.
- Characteristics of those living in private rented accommodation e.g. whether they are benefit recipients; personal circumstances, whether they have a disability etc.
- Types of private rented accommodation and conditions of accommodation.

- 3.18 There are a number of official statistics produced that present information about different aspects of the sector - each presenting a partial picture (see Table 4) and produced by a different government department. In most cases, these statistics are either based on national surveys or statistics on 'snapshots' of average private rent prices that cannot be compared over time or across geography and therefore provide only an indicative measure of rent prices. It appears that their existence may not be well known by a wider user base since they are presented in a number of different sources. Sources like the English Housing Survey do provide insight at a national level, and we welcome the steps taken by DCLG to develop this survey over time. We think there is scope for DCLG to further publicise this resource to users. It should be noted that some users want to access private rental statistics for smaller geographical areas than those currently presented to understand the housing market in a specific area; this may present issues with regard to reliability and/ or confidentiality.
- 3.19 There have been some recent developments to help address the information gap, such as ONS developing its experimental *Index of Private Housing Rental Prices* and other ongoing developments using Big Data to explore the feasibility of producing rent price statistics for small areas and to understand dwelling stock tenure at local levels. DCLG told us that it is currently in the field-work stage of its English Private Landlord Survey⁵⁹, the results from which should be published in 2018. These are very promising. Overall, we think the statistics system could do more to make users aware of the range of relevant sources and work together to develop further insights and present a coherent picture of the private rented sector, both at a national level and for smaller areas.

⁵⁹ <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/taking-part/studies-in-field/the-english-private-landlord-survey/about/>

Table 4: Official Statistics currently available on the private rented sector

Country	Statistics publication	Producer	Frequency	Main features
England	English Housing Survey	DCLG	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of sample of 13,468 households • Includes information about characteristics of renters and conditions of properties • Long time series
	Private rental market summary statistics	Valuation Office Agency	Bi-annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on large administrative data source • Statistics not representative of whole sector • Statistics cannot be compared over time or across geography • States that statistics are indicative only
	Leasehold dwellings statistics	DCLG	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimental statistics drawing on data collected for English Housing Survey (DCLG), Dwelling Stock Estimates (DCLG) and Council Tax: Stock of Properties (VOA) reports • Estimates of the number of leasehold dwellings in the social rented, owner occupied and private rented sectors • Available from 2014-2015 onwards
Wales	Private sector rents	Welsh Government	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on a sample (aim for 15-20% of sector) but not a statistical sample • Available from 2013 onwards • Statistics not comparable over time or across geography
Scotland	Private Sector Rent Statistics	Scottish Government	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on a sample using local knowledge of Rent Officers (aim for 10% of sector) but not a statistical sample • Available from 2010 onwards • States that statistics do not present rental values averaged across all property sizes for small areas or for Scotland⁶⁰ • Statistics broadly comparable over time and across geography but not based on a case-matched, tracked sample of weighted-index approach
Scotland	Scottish Household Survey	Scottish Government	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of sample of around 11,000 households • Statistics presented at national level, local authority tables are available in the form of web tables⁶¹

⁶⁰ Since such simple averages could be misinterpreted based on different profiles of rental stock in small areas

⁶¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/16002/LATables2015>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time series going back to 1999 • Includes information about households in the private rented sector, characteristics of the properties within the private rented sector, and characteristics of renters. • Financial information on renters is available in a separate section of the report
Northern Ireland	Family Resources Survey Northern Ireland	Department for Communities Northern Ireland	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey, based on small sample (2,000 annually) • Presents information on median household rent/mortgage payment
	Living in the Private Rented Sector	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	One off publication in 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A research report that is not an official statistic • Based on a sample of 138 people
	Performance of the Private Rental Market in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Bi-annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A research report that is not an official statistic • Based on a sample of 8,923 rental transactions in most recent survey • Based on private sector source, with its coverage unclear
	Northern Ireland House Conditions Survey	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Variable 2016 survey the first since 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey based on sample of 3,000 • Presents information on a range of measures including characteristics of properties and renters
UK	Index of Private Housing Rental Prices	ONS	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matches properties over time • Presents information on changes in rent prices over time, but not rent levels • Does not distinguish between new and existing lets
	Family Resources Survey	Department for Work and Pensions	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey based on sample of private households in UK (19,000 annually) • Presents information on median household rent/mortgage payment; respondents' income from all sources

Example 6: Need for insightful statistics about aspects of the planning system

- 3.20 Several users raised specific concerns about data on planning permissions. For example, where statistics show planning permissions exceed the number of houses built, this could be interpreted as an under-supply by house builders and possible 'land banking'. Users told us that it would be really valuable to be able to track over time the extent to which planning permissions then equate to houses being built. At present, there is no single source of data that would enable this insight. DCLG told us it seeks to control for multiple permissions within a 12 month period on the same site by counting only the most recent application in that period, but it is not clear if this covers all occurrences of multiple permissions (i.e. beyond a 12 month period) and whether there is still potential for double counting. ONS statisticians told us they are looking to acquire planning data from local authorities to help provide greater insight into this area.
- 3.21 In Wales, while some information on planning applications is collected and published by the Welsh Government, feedback from some users highlighted a lack of data about land ownership and the application routes for planning permissions granted, such as whether they have been granted through appeals. As in England, feedback about this lack of transparency also relates to an inability to know whether and how long it takes for planning permissions to result in houses actually being built.

Example 7: Lack of statistics and data about land ownership and use

- 3.22 Another key gap cited by users was the lack of statistics and data about land ownership and land use; this was a concern raised across all constituent countries of the UK but the example here focuses on England and Wales. HM Land Registry collects and owns commercial and corporate ownership data containing more than 3.2 million title records of freehold and leasehold property in England and Wales. However, some of this data had previously been available at significant cost, which presented a barrier for many users. In England, DCLG's White Paper *Fixing our broken housing market*⁶² presents a series of plans to address the problems in the housing market in England, which includes clarifying what land is available for new housing, through greater transparency over who owns land. From 7 November 2017, HM Land Registry has now released this data free of charge⁶³, which we view as a very positive development.
- 3.23 DCLG statisticians told us that it publishes some statistics on planning and land use for England in its annual *Land use change statistics*⁶⁴ and *Green belt statistics*⁶⁵. The former focuses on changes to developed land, in particular to residential development. It is based on Ordnance Survey data, and presents statistics on the density of addresses, and developments on previously developed land within the Green Belt and areas of high flood risk. The latter presents statistics on the net

⁶² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

⁶³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hm-land-registry-makes-commercial-ownership-data-free>

⁶⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/land-use-change-statistics>

⁶⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/green-belt-statistics>

change in the area of Green Belt land by local planning authority. DCLG also told us that it has recently engaged with users to improve its presentation of *Land use change statistics*, and is developing further insight into how much land is used for what purpose, which we welcome.

Example 8: Understanding the link between housing and other topics

3.24 A consistent theme raised during our user consultation was a desire to understand the link between housing and other topics, such as health, welfare, poverty and education. This applied to statistics across the UK, and highlighted a need to increasingly link data and create more ‘people-centred’ statistics, to develop new insights about the links between these topics to inform new policies and initiatives to improve citizens’ lives. This gap is not restricted to the topic of ‘housing’ and it is a theme we have heard from users of statistics on other topics such as crime, health and population through our other regulatory activities and systemic reviews (see paragraph 2.12).

Finding 4

Transparency of official statistics could be increased through improved information about statistical definitions, methods, and strengths and limitations of official statistics

Presenting transparent information about statistical definitions and methods, together with judgements about strengths and limitations, is essential in supporting users’ confidence in statistics. Some elements of housing are highly politicised and attract wide user attention. Around these areas in particular **statistics producers could improve the value of their statistics by being clearer on what is being measured, the extent to which it is comparable with related statistics, and the limitations of the statistics.**

3.25 We present examples of where improvements are needed to the transparency of official statistics, including around statistical definitions and methods. This is particularly important given the devolved nature of housing and planning statistics across the UK, and to understand the extent of comparability of related statistics.

Example 9: Understanding the different definitions of homelessness across the UK

3.26 Definitions of statutory homelessness across the UK countries differ, as a result of different policies aimed at reducing homelessness and defining those eligible for support. The main source for statutory homelessness statistics is administrative data, and because of differences in the legislative processes and systems, these statistics aren’t directly comparable across the UK. There is limited explanation within these statistics publications about how these statistics differ across the UK, and they vary in their usefulness. Furthermore, while each of the statistics present contextual information about the specific policies within each of the UK countries, there is limited advice about the comparability of statutory homelessness across the UK, and existing advice is perceived as confusing and incoherent.

- In England, DCLG states⁶⁶ that its statistics can be compared with related statistics for Northern Ireland, but not with statistics for Scotland and does not refer to the comparability with related statistics for Wales
- Scottish Government provides some information⁶⁷ on how to compare Scottish “households accepted by Local Authorities as owed a main homelessness duty” statistics with English and Welsh statistics and how to interpret the differences in proportions of single occupancy homeless households in Scotland with England, but no guidance on comparisons with Northern Irish statistics
- Welsh Government states⁶⁸ that related statistics for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland can no longer be compared with their statistics
- The Department for Communities in Northern Ireland does not provide any information⁶⁹ about comparability with the rest of the UK

Example 10: Understanding different definitions of ‘affordable housing’ and ‘affordability’ across the UK

3.27 As described in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.7, definitions of ‘affordable housing’ across the UK differ and there is scope for improvements in the usefulness of guidance available to users about definitions and comparability with related statistics. Housing ‘affordability’ and fuel poverty are other areas where related definitions across the UK can vary. Due to the devolved nature of housing matters across the UK, definitions can vary, but statisticians should do more to explain differences in definitions clearly, and the extent to which they are comparable with related statistics across the UK, to support their use and to ensure that statistics aren’t misused.

Example 11: Statistics on Household projections for England

3.28 There is a question about how historic statistics on *Household Projections for England*⁷⁰ compared with actual outturn and whether they overestimated housing need. Responsibility for producing *Household Projections for England* recently transferred from DCLG to ONS⁷¹, who launched a six week technical consultation in January 2017 on proposed changes to the methodology used to produce these statistics, which we welcome. In developing their methodology, we expect ONS to publish information about the robustness of assumptions in their proposed method, and the accuracy of their projections, by assessing past performance of the projections. It is also important that ONS presents a clear demonstration of how any methodology changes address the limitations of the previous methodology used, for example in simplifying the process and making the methods more transparent, includes clear guidance about what decisions these projections can reliably inform

⁶⁶ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621556/Statutory_Homelessness_and_Prevention_and_Relief_Statistical_Release_January_to_March_2017_corrected.pdf

⁶⁷ www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521186.pdf

⁶⁸ <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170731-homelessness-statistics-quality-report-en.pdf>

⁶⁹ www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-15-16-full-copy.pdf

⁷⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/household-projections>

⁷¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/news/transferofhouseholdprojectionstoons>

and the extent to which these statistics relate to other housing measures e.g. new housing supply.

- 3.29 One way that transparency, coherence and sign-posting of related housing measures across the UK could be improved is through the development of a single cross-UK guide or document presenting information about the comparability of related definitions and measures of housing and planning, to aid users' understanding. This could be developed collaboratively by statistics producers, and all country-specific statistics could refer to it.

Finding 5

Quality of key official statistics data sources could be improved

The majority of statistics on housing and planning are based on data collected through local authorities providing services within their community. The quality of official statistics is therefore dependent on the robustness of data collection practices and adequate quality assurances at different stages of the statistical production process.

In 2015 we introduced a new Regulatory Standard on the *Quality Assurance of Administrative Data* and we expect to see clearer demonstration of how this has been applied across a range of housing statistics to assure users about the quality of these statistics.

- 3.30 Since the majority of official statistics on housing and planning are based on data collections by local authorities, there is scope for variations in data collection practices, which can impact on the quality of data collection practices and assurances. It is not certain that the issues identified with house building statistics below would be remedied with enhanced quality assurance, but improved reporting on quality issues and quality assurance would support users trying to interpret these statistics.

Example 12: House building statistics in England and Wales

- 3.31 DCLG publishes both quarterly and annual statistics on house building and housing supply (presented in *New Build Dwellings* statistics and *Net Additional Dwellings* statistics respectively). *Net Additional Dwellings* is based on data submitted annually by local authorities and includes measures about 'new build completions', 'conversions', 'change of property use' and 'demolitions' to then present an overall measure of 'net additional dwellings'. DCLG states that this represents its most comprehensive measure of housing supply and it is the measure against which its house building ambition is based. DCLG told us that the 'new build' element within *Net Additional Dwellings* is quality assured with other sources, such as VOA data and Energy Performance Certificates. DCLG also presents a seasonally adjusted 'new build completions' measure in its quarterly *New Build Dwellings* statistics which is based on building control inspection data, from local authority building

control departments, the National House Building Council (NHBC) and from other Approved Inspectors (AIs). DCLG told us this measure represents a less complete count than the equivalent 'new build completions' measure in *Net Additional Dwellings*, and it therefore presents it as a 'leading indicator' of the annual statistics. DCLG also told us that the quarterly statistics offer the benefit of a long time-series as well as being more-timely. There is a marked difference between the statistics; for example in 2015/16 190,000 'net additional dwellings' were reported in *Net Additional Dwellings* (of which 164,000 were 'new builds') compared to 140,000 'new builds' in the non-seasonally adjusted 12 months to March 2016 presented in *New Build Dwellings*. We recognise that the annual and quarterly statistics are based on different data collections, which is the reason why the measures of new building differ.

- 3.32 We wish to acknowledge that DCLG considers that it has explained to users the difference between the quarterly *New Build Dwellings* statistics and the house-building component of its annual *Net Additional Dwellings* statistics, and that it has communicated that the annual statistics provide the most comprehensive measure. It also told us that it applies quality assurance to both series.
- 3.33 However, users are still presented with two different measures of 'new build completions'. Many users – covering all sectors – raised this issue. They spoke of concern at the two measures presenting a different picture and many specifically spoke of an 'undercount' in the quarterly new build completions statistics. Some users had theories about what issues with the statistics might be (including that NHBC data does not comprehensively capture certain types of new builds e.g higher density builds), although we have not sought to verify these. With regards to the existing quarterly statistics, users need more clarity about their quality, coverage, quality assurance and need to be convinced about their value and appropriate use as a 'leading indicator'. Ideally, users would like the coverage of the quarterly statistics to be improved so they more closely match the more comprehensive annual figures.
- 3.34 We welcome DCLG's ongoing programme of work to improve the coverage of data sources used to produce the quarterly statistics and their work with data providers to increase the consistency of recording. Because of the high profile nature of statistics on house building and the clear user need for accurate and timely figures for their operational needs, we would encourage DCLG to continue prioritising this work and to engage with users about how best it can present transparent information to address user concerns – covering as need be, definitional differences and quality assurance. It might also be that DCLG could add further value by using its extensive back series on quarterly house building to develop an approach which would enable the quarterly statistics to be adjusted so they more closely match the resulting annual measure.
- 3.35 In Wales, the Welsh Government are clear in their guidance that quarterly new build statistics only include data supplied by local authorities or the NHBC, while other private inspectors do not provide data. They state that this will lead to a small

undercount, but this is not quantified further. One user suggested that anecdotally, they believed the undercount to be more pronounced in rural areas. The Welsh Government publishes a Quality Report describing its quality assurance of these administrative data, but these assurances only relate to the Welsh Government's own data validation and verification, and do not present a fuller picture about the quality assurances of the data through all stages of the statistical production process.

Chapter 4: Ways the statistics system could be improved

Introduction

4.1 This Chapter highlights ways the existing statistics system could be enhanced to better support the public value of statistics.

Findings about improvements to system wide working

Finding 6

Strengthened collaboration and strategic coordination between government departments could make the statistical system more effective

While housing and planning are devolved matters across the UK, the key questions of societal interest are often the same. **Joint cross-producer working has the scope to permit efficient use of resources with information shared and statistical development work prioritised and coordinated. This would help enable the improvements to statistical outputs highlighted in the previous chapter.**

4.2 Currently, there are limited examples of statistical coordination and strategic collaboration between statisticians in different Departments producing housing and planning statistics. This applies at a UK level, and within countries such as England and Northern Ireland, who both have multiple producers of official housing statistics. While statisticians within the four countries have varied forms of engaging with each other, policy officials and some stakeholders, this engagement tends to be ad-hoc or focussed on specific initiatives – for example in developing statistical surveys or new data collections e.g. for the English Housing Survey. Beyond this there is no formal mechanism for statistics producers to engage with each other on a more-strategic basis to support greater system wide working to improve the provision of housing and planning statistics in the UK.

4.3 There is therefore clear scope for statistics producers to build on existing cross-working and engagement and take immediate steps to strengthen collaboration and strategic coordination with each other to provide a better statistical service to a wider range of users. Cross-government engagement and collaboration should be led by producers to ensure maximum benefit, but could focus on a range of areas:

- broadening engagement beyond individual or groups of statistical outputs to better understand what are the key questions that different user groups, and indeed the whole user community, want to answer
- planning and prioritising developments to existing statistics
- sharing best practice and experiences, intelligence, and policy developments
- addressing gaps and inefficiencies in housing and planning statistics

- coordinating to develop more-helpful user advice about the extent of comparability of statistics across the four countries that are trying to answer similar questions, to create a coherent picture for users
- exploring topics that could most benefit from more thematic analyses, through engaging with users to inform priorities
- implementing a joint work programme to improve existing official statistics through addressing some of the findings of this review
- considering the potential for more coordination around a single access point for related statistics
- establishing effective and collaborative relationships with organisations outside the Government Statistical Service, who are also working to answer society's key questions – such as the Chartered Institute for Housing and the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (see paragraph 1.6)

4.4 As the findings of our review emerged, there has been some recent dialogue between statisticians across the UK to suggest forming a new cross-government group covering housing statistics in the UK, with an initial meeting planned for November 2017. This has been instigated by statisticians in ONS and DCLG. The exact terms of reference of the group are being developed but it is envisaged that the group will have an over-arching remit to:

- a. review the quality, coherence and accessibility of existing housing statistics
- b. consider data gaps and assess/prioritise any potential development alongside de-prioritisation of current statistics, in order to divert alternative resources on key priorities
- c. consider emerging policy/user demands
- d. provide a forum for the coordination of government based housing statistics over the four UK countries and across geographies, including countries, regions, sub-regions, local authorities and small areas
- e. provide a forum for the sharing of methodologies and best practices for producing and disseminating housing statistics, particularly in maximising the potential of administrative data
- f. identify where there is value in producing UK level figures and if so, who should take responsibility.

4.5 Increasing collaboration across the UK and better meeting user needs can be achieved by focussing on the key questions that statistics (and other evidence such as research or evaluation outputs) are seeking to answer. Statistics New Zealand has made addressing 'enduring questions' the heart of its mission and this idea is also gaining traction elsewhere in the Government Statistical Service, for example for crime statistics in the UK, where statisticians have been exploring key user questions and opportunities to share information and facilitate joint working that will help to determine their priorities to develop improved insight in these statistics⁷².

⁷² <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/roundtable-meeting-sharing-information-on-crime-statistics-across-the-uk/>

Finding 7**The statistical system should engage more effectively with a wider range of stakeholders who are recognised as being at the heart of increasing the public value of official statistics**

We heard lots of suggestions for improvements in housing and planning statistics from users and it was evident that there is currently limited opportunity for a wider range of stakeholders (beyond policy officials) to engage effectively with the statistical system about their needs.

Effective user engagement is necessary for producers to develop and maintain a current understanding of the value and potential value of their statistics and inform priorities and development plans for data collections and statistical outputs. Such engagement should be supported to ensure that statistics are accessible, remain relevant and benefit society – helping to answer key questions of the day.

- 4.6 During the course of our Review, we found that policy officials in the UK Government and devolved administrations generally have good relationships with statisticians in their respective departments and on the whole, felt that the published official statistics and supporting analyses produced internally (which are not always published) met their needs as users. There were some areas identified where existing statistics don't fully answer a wider range of users' questions, reflecting that existing data collections and statistics produced from these haven't always kept pace with changes to society – such as robust and coherent statistics on the private rented sector, transparent information about planning permissions and links between house building, land ownership and land use. Overall, we found there are limited mechanisms for a wider range of users of housing and planning statistics to engage with government statisticians, such as through formal or informal user groups that go beyond their instigating contact with individual statisticians or policy officials. This was particularly apparent for users in England who are generally more dispersed geographically and in their use of housing and planning statistics. As a result there is limited opportunity for users to engage effectively with the Government Statistical Service about their needs. Without this, statistics producers will be restricted in their ability to develop and maintain a current understanding of the value and potential value of their statistics to a wider user base to inform their future development plans; as well as ensuring that statistics are accessible; remain relevant and benefit society; and help the public to understand important issues and answer key questions.
- 4.7 One exception we found was in Wales, where statisticians in the Welsh Government have established a Housing Information Group (HIG) that is comprised of a range of stakeholders and representatives of different user groups. The HIG meets three times a year to inform stakeholders about ongoing developments in policy, data collection and statistics and to discuss future developments to housing statistics (see paragraph 2.18). In Scotland, Scottish Government statisticians told

us that it gets useful feedback from a number of stakeholders about its statistics via the Joint Housing Policy Delivery Group⁷³ and users we spoke to were generally positive about their engagement with individual statisticians in Scotland.

- 4.8 Historically, there had been a Housing Statistics Network (HSN) established as a mechanism to engage with a wide range of users, with formal user events arranged to seek users' views. The HSN was coordinated by an experienced user of housing statistics with strong user connections, and was aimed at statistics users across the UK. The network was used as a mechanism to engage with users to inform developments and priorities in response to the National Statistician's 2010 and 2012 *Review of Housing Market Statistics* (see paragraph A2.3 in **Annex 2**). However, since then the network has been inactive and resource pressures within government departments have hindered any further use or maintenance of the network. There has recently been some discussion between statistics producers about reinvigorating HSN. OSR is very supportive of this development and hopes that it can form the basis for more meaningful engagement with a wider range of users going forward.
- 4.9 We recognise that official statistics alone can't always provide the answers to these questions and that other analyses and research will sometimes be needed to supplement existing statistics. We also recognise that aspects of housing and planning are sometimes complex. But it is important to coherently present statistics in the context of any relevant research and other related statistics, to maximise their value and help users draw out useful insights. We see the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) providing an important role in developing new housing evidence, and we encourage official statistics producers to engage with them to support this work.

⁷³ <https://beta.gov.scot/groups/joint-housing/>

Chapter 5: Next steps

- 5.1 Our work to date has identified that, within thematic areas, the statistical system needs certain enablers in order to maximise the public value of the statistics being produced and ensure they are responsive to user needs. At its simplest the two key enablers for an effective statistical system are coordination and collaboration across statistics producers, and effective engagement with a wide range of users who are recognised as being at the heart.
- 5.2 OSR would like to see the housing and planning statistics system quickly establish a cross-producer group and means of engagement with a wide range of users. This would enable strategic prioritisation around developments to statistics and progress towards the ultimate goal of statistical outputs becoming more coherent, adding more value and insight and being easier to understand and access, with enhanced metadata to support their use. We also think increased collaboration would support necessary improvements to the quality assurance of data and statistics through an ability to share experiences and good practice. We envisage that early developments from these activities would include identifying some quick wins to improve the presentation of existing statistics and guidance about the comparability of related measures across the UK, as well as published plans for these statistics and changes to existing products, including work to develop new sources of data to fill gaps.
- 5.3 We are keen to engage to help facilitate changes, perhaps helping to convene initial producer and user meetings and we expect that positive outcomes would be tangible within 1-3 years in terms of:
 - Existing statistics outputs improved
 - Gaps in existing official statistics addressed
 - Users being more satisfied with official housing and planning statistics
- 5.4 We will provide updates on our conversations with producers and progress made in joint meetings, user engagement and prioritised plans via our website through the latter part of 2017 and start of 2018 when we envisage some intensive engagement activity. Beyond this we would anticipate a producer-led process of change including development of some metrics to help judge success against which we will check progress regularly.
- 5.5 We will also continue to engage with the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) (see paragraph 1.6) to explore synergies in our ultimate goals and facilitate engagement between CaCHE and statistics producers to ensure related activities and developments are coordinated where appropriate

Annex 1: Organisations that contributed to this review

Over the course of the review, we received feedback from users of housing and planning statistics, either through meetings or via written feedback, from within the following organisations⁷⁴:

Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers
Cabinet Office
Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research
Chartered Institute of Housing
Cobweb Consulting
Colchester Borough Council
Community Housing Cymru
Council of Mortgage Lenders
Data Unit Wales
Economic and Social Research Council
Federation of Master Builders
Full Fact
Heriot Watt University
Home Builders Federation
Home Builders Federation Wales
Homes for Scotland
House of Commons Library
Inside Housing
Local Government Association
London School of Economics
National Audit Office
National Housing Federation
North Ayrshire Council
Northern Ireland Department for Communities
Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Perth and Kinross Council
Places for People
Residential Analysts Ltd
Resolution Foundation
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Savills
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Scottish Government
Sheffield Hallam University
Shelter England
Shelter Scotland
St Andrews University
Swindon Council
University College London
University of Glasgow
University of York Centre for Housing Policy
Welsh Government

⁷⁴ We have not listed the names of individuals who contributed their views to this review

Annex 2: National Statistician’s 2012 Review of Official Housing Market Statistics

- A2.1 Our systemic review included our revisiting recommendations from the National Statistician’s 2012 *Review of Official Housing Market Statistics* and engaging with statistics producers to identify actions taken in response to recommendations from this earlier review.
- A2.2 In 2010 to 2012, the then National Statistician conducted a *Review of Housing Market Statistics*⁷⁵. The review was conducted in 2 phases: the first stage recommended that there should be a single official house price index which meets key user needs presented in a regular official statistics report (see paragraph 2.7). The second phase presented a series of further recommendations, some of which were aimed at improving the coherence and accessibility of housing market statistics (a subset of all housing and planning official statistics) and promoting comparability across the UK (presented in Table 5).

Table 5: Extract of recommendations from the *Review of Housing Market Statistics*

Recommendation 1	a: Each publication of official statistics on the housing market should place the statistics in the context of other measures that aid interpretation, and provide links to sources of these relevant statistics.
	b: The Housing Market grouping on the Publication Hub should be reviewed to ensure it contains comprehensive coverage of official statistics relevant to the housing market.
Recommendation 2	There should be an (at least) annual article of key trends in the UK housing market which contains analysis of current housing market statistics.

A2.3 Following publication of the phase 2 review, a user event was held in October 2012 in conjunction with the Housing Statistics Network (HSN) which has since disbanded. This user event focused on gaining user input in order to take the review’s recommendations forward. In response to Recommendation 2, ONS published an article⁷⁶ (which is now archived on the ONS website) on trends in the Housing Market, which it developed in conjunction with statisticians in DCLG, Welsh Government, Scottish Government and NISRA. However, this article has not been produced since 2014 which is disappointing since it was clearly addressing a recognised user need. ONS told us that while all statisticians were cooperative in developing the article, agreeing its publication was very difficult given the lack of

⁷⁵ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports-reviews-guidance-and-advisory-committees/national-statisticians-reviews/national-statisticians-review-of-housing-market-statistics/>

⁷⁶ http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_373513.pdf

comparability of some of the measures which resulted in misleading pictures for their countries.

A2.4 Whilst there have been attempts to take forward the findings of the 2012 review, it is disappointing that there has not been more sustainable progress to the review, especially as the recommendations were informed by the National Statistician listening to what users wanted. Our conclusions are that there remains more to be done and that continued cross-Departmental working will be needed to bring about coherence in housing market statistics and accompanying narrative, and to develop greater coherence for housing and planning statistics more broadly.

