

OFFICE FOR STATISTICS REGULATION

A REVIEW OF OUR
FIRST YEAR



Office for
Statistics Regulation

OFFICE FOR STATISTICS REGULATION: A REVIEW OF OUR FIRST YEAR

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FOREWORD

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) was created in November 2016. It is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority.

When we launched as OSR, we set out to focus more on quality and public value. This Review summarises our progress against these ambitions.

Highlights include: our focus on the need to improve the quality of statistics, for example on migration; our focus on collaboration between statisticians in different departments, so that statistics are more understandable for users - for example in health and care statistics; and our update of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which emphasises the value of statistics to the public, and which we will publish in early 2018.

What does our first year tell us about the state of the system?

There is a clear appetite for improvement and change in the UK statistical system. We celebrate initiatives that go beyond merely collecting and reporting data, and which adopt innovative approaches, use new data sources, and make statistics and underlying data more accessible to users.

Our work has identified statistical leadership as a key differentiator between those areas of statistics that are improving, and those content to languish in established practice. Where there is strong statistical leadership, there is the confidence to engage openly both outside and within government and to identify and address society's key questions with courage and insight. Without this statistical leadership, official statistics often fail to develop and improve.

This is our first year and we are impatient for change. However, there is also a gap between our ambition to drive improvements in statistics and what we've achieved. The factors described above - willingness to identify and address key questions and leadership - are also key to our success. Where we live up to them, as shown by the examples in this review, we deliver on our ambitions. But we do not do this all the time.

Our aim for 2018 is to continue to close the gap between our ambition and achievement.



“Without this statistical leadership, official statistics often fail to develop and improve”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson'.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
December 2017

INTRODUCTION

How many people are moving to the UK?

Which school performs best in my local area?

How much money does the UK send to the EU each week?

Is serious violent crime increasing?

What is the demand for accident and emergency services during the winter?

Facts and figures are all around. Whether you are making decisions as a head teacher or town planner, developing social housing policy, have an interest in your local library remaining open, or are considering the country's major economic decisions, you will be using official statistics. You need to be confident that you will be able to find these statistics, understand what you can quote from them or re-use, and be able to trust them.

The **Office for Statistics Regulation** (OSR) was launched to provide you with this confidence. OSR is the independent statistics regulator for the UK, aimed at enhancing public confidence in the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics produced by government.

National Statistics are a rich source of evidence that can be used to explain and understand life in the UK. They are produced by the devolved administrations, different government departments, arm's length bodies and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This review introduces the scale and

depth of the National Statistics landscape and explores aspects of our work regulating the statistical system.

The statistical system doesn't always provide the best service to people:

- individuals can struggle to find the statistics that they are looking for;
- when seemingly similar statistics are published it can be difficult to know which are best to use; and
- sometimes progress in developing new statistics, or keeping existing statistics relevant, stands or falls on an individual demonstrating leadership, rather than the statistical system demanding and delivering these standards

OSR sets high standards for official statistics and works to ensure that these are upheld. Our first year has been exciting and challenging. We have delivered a wide range of projects, focused on the questions that users of statistics need answers to.

This is our first Annual Review. It presents the highlights of our work, showing how we have focused on issues that really matter to the public, including crime, migration, and health and social care. It also provides an overview of the UK statistical system. While we are proud of what we have done, this Review shows that we have a lot more to do in the coming years to support and drive the best possible statistics for the UK.

"OSR is the independent statistics regulator for the UK, aimed at enhancing public confidence in the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics produced by government."

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN YEAR 1

November 2016

We launch the Office for Statistics Regulation.

December 2016

We publish our review of the current Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

January 2017

We temporarily suspend the National Statistics status of statistics on National Insurance Number (NINo) allocations; our report helps to ensure that the limitations of these statistics as a source of evidence on migration are clearer to users.

February 2017

Following leaks of management information, NHS data providers in England agree to publish more timely A&E performance statistics. This helps the public and parliament hold the health system to account.

March 2017

We launch a consultation for our work programme for 2017/18.

April 2017

We publish our view of the value of crime and justice statistics across the UK.

May 2017

Statistics are widely used in the UK General Election campaign.

June 2017

We refresh our brand and celebrate ONS halting pre-release access to its statistics.

July 2017

We launch our UK-wide consultation about the Code of Practice.

We publish a report about student migration statistics; this helps a wide range of users understand the strengths and limitations of these high-profile statistics.

August 2017

We publish our assessment of regional GVA statistics, supporting ONS to meet the needs of those researching local economic growth. We re-designate Consumer Price Indices including Housing (CPIH) following work by ONS.

September 2017

We highlight the opportunity to engage with a much wider range of users of Chronic Pain statistics for Scotland.

We speak out about the misuse of figures on the UK contributions to the European Union, raising awareness of our role.

October 2017

We close our code consultation, and start analysing views from around the country and across the world.

We bring together leading experts in migration statistics to consider how the statistics can be improved.

WHO ARE WE?

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. Previously known as the 'Monitoring and Assessment Team', we re-launched as OSR in November 2016 in response to Professor Sir Charles Bean's Independent review of UK economic statistics (for more details on how we have responded to the Bean Review, see [Annex A](#)).

Our **team** is based in Edinburgh, Newport and London, and is led by Ed Humpherson, the Director General for Regulation.

Over the past year we have changed how we regulate - we are more focused on the value of statistics to the public. We have looked at statistical issues across themes, in addition to focusing on individual statistical releases. We have a lot of work to do to continue to build this model and we continue to invite interested parties to work with us.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Set standards and assess

- Develop a new Code of Practice for statistics
- Assess statistics against the Code
- Review on-going compliance with the Code

Analyse statistical issues

- Respond to public enquiries
- Challenge misuse when public confidence is at risk

Convene, collaborate and report

- Organise expert meetings and conferences
- Work with producers and demonstrate statistical leadership
- Publish thematic reviews

Build our capability

- Develop expertise across statistical themes
- Grow our team and our skills

WHO BENEFITS FROM OUR WORK?

Our work benefits everyone who uses official statistics. We investigate when statistics are unclear or misleading, and push for improvements, so that the public, researchers and the media can access clear and accurate information. We support government statisticians to improve data quality to give policy makers and politicians the best information to make the right decisions about public services that affect us all. We comment publicly about the use of statistics, helping people interpret what they read or hear.

NATIONAL STATISTICS LANDSCAPE

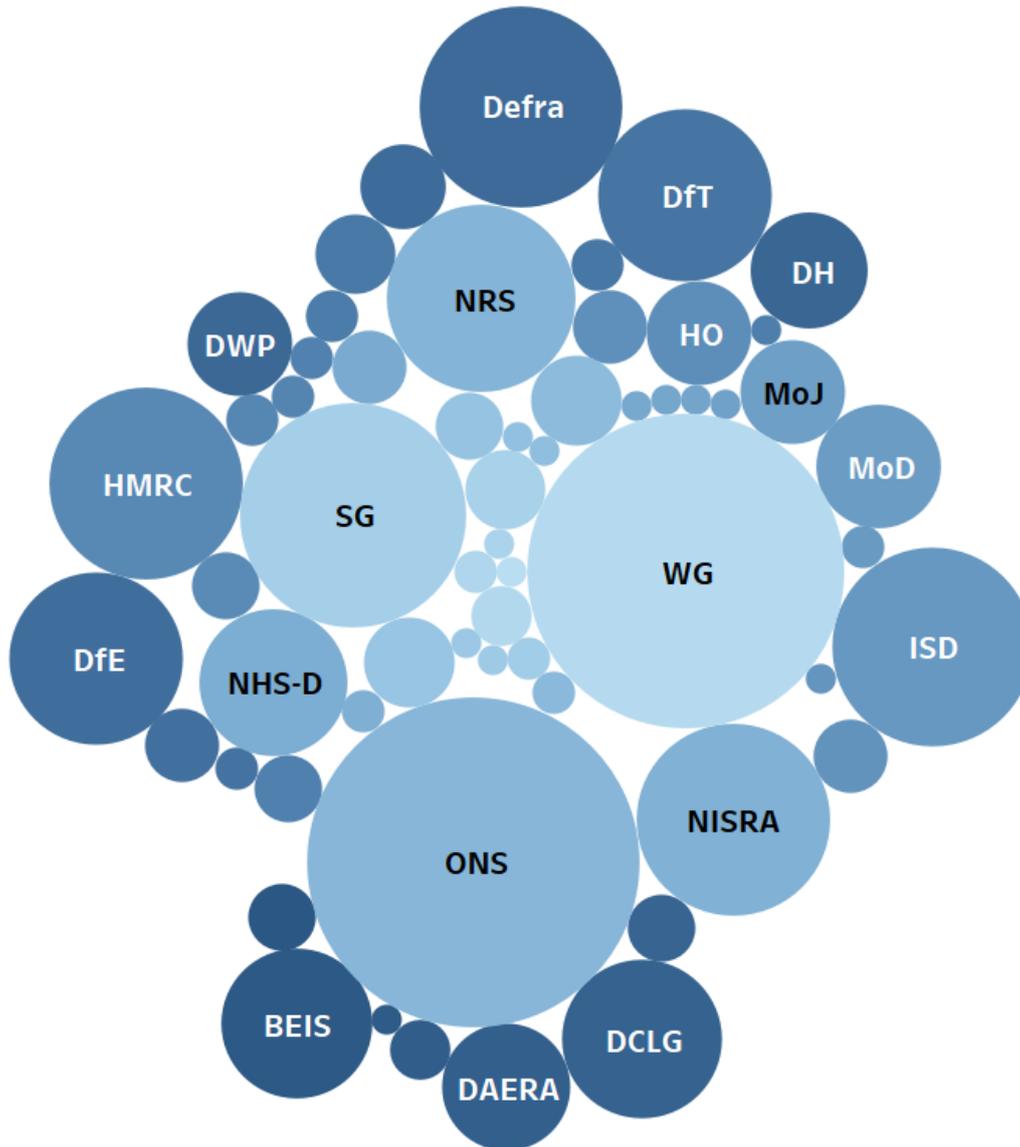
When statistics that are produced by government and certain other public bodies (called official statistics producers) meet the standards set out in the Code of Practice, they are designated as National Statistics. To date, 861 statistical releases in the UK have been awarded the National Statistics status. A database of all current National Statistics is available on our [website](#).



NATIONAL STATISTICS BY THEME

Health & Social Care 160	Economy 79	Population 78
	Travel, Transport & Tourism 77	Labour Market & Welfare 55
Agriculture & Environment 107	Housing, Planning & Local Services 71	Crime & Justice 53
	Business, Industry, Trade & Energy 55	Security, Defence & International Relations 19
Children, Education & Skills 96		Culture & Identity 11

NATIONAL STATISTICS BY PRODUCER



BEIS	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy	ISD	Information Services Division (Scotland)
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland)	MoD	Ministry of Defence
DCLG	Department for Communities & Local Government	MoJ	Ministry of Justice
Defra	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs	NHS-D	NHS Digital
DfE	Department for Education	NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
DfT	Department for Transport	NRS	National Records of Scotland
DH	Department of Health (Northern Ireland)	ONS	Office for National Statistics
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions	SG	Scottish Government
HMRC	HM Revenue & Customs	WG	Welsh Government
HO	Home Office		

NATIONAL STATISTICS BY GEOGRAPHY

One country		Two or more countries
Scotland 149	England 147	330
Northern Ireland 121	Wales 114	

United Kingdom 210	Great Britain 54
England & Wales 61	Other* 5

*Other includes: England & Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland;
England, Wales & Northern Ireland

SET STANDARDS

REFRESH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics (the Code) sets the standard for the production and dissemination of official statistics and supports the continuous improvement of those statistics. Meeting the standards of the Code shows that the statistics are produced to the highest professional standards.

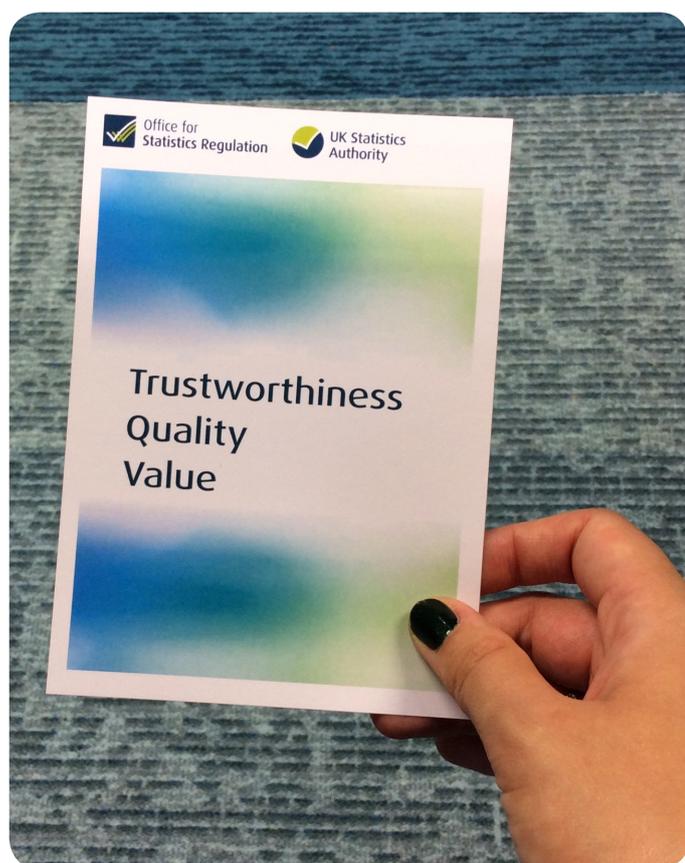
The first edition of the Code was published in 2009. Users of statistics are now seeking information in different ways, whether that is something that is easily digestible on a mobile device, a high volume of detailed underlying data, or a quick fact check. In 2015 we started a programme to review and update the Code, to ensure that those who use statistics can continue to have confidence in National Statistics.

The refresh of the Code aims to modernise it, to achieve greater public confidence in statistics. We

seek to better reflect the challenges of emerging data sources and new ways of sharing and publishing data and statistics.

In 2017 we undertook a **wide programme** of engagement with statistics producers and users, testing our thinking through focus groups, seminars and conversations. We launched a public consultation between July and October, and received 77 formal responses. We will address the feedback as we finalise the second edition of the Code, which we aim to publish in early 2018.

“The refresh of the Code aims to modernise it, to achieve greater public confidence in statistics. We seek to better reflect the challenges of emerging data sources and new ways of sharing and publishing data and statistics.”



THE REFRESHED CODE

The **responses to the consultation** showed that there was strong support for a framework based on Trustworthiness, Quality and Value:

- **Trustworthiness:** having confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics
- **Quality:** using data and methods that produce assured statistics
- **Value:** releasing statistics that support society's needs for information

As well as maintaining the Code's standards across the official statistics community, we are ambitious for other publishers of data and statistics, in all kinds of organisations, to apply the Code's universal principles. We propose that organisations outside official statistics might consider applying the principles of the Code in the way that they publish data and statistics.

ANALYSE AND CHALLENGE

USING OUR PUBLIC VOICE

We aim to use our voice to stand up for statistics. Anyone can raise a query with us about the trustworthiness, quality or value of official statistics. In all cases, we investigate the issue carefully, provide a considered response, and follow up with the correspondent where necessary. Below, we highlight some of our recent interventions.

The UK's financial contributions to the European Union

Issue: We responded to the Foreign Secretary's use of statistics on the UK's financial contributions to the European Union. The figure was used in connection with the amount of money that might be available for public spending when the UK leaves the European Union.

Response: We clarified that the appropriate statistics to use are the UK's net financial contribution to the European Union. This clarification helped address concerns about the appropriate use of the statistics.

Use of homelessness statistics in press notices and parliamentary debates

Issue: A concern was raised about the use of homelessness statistics produced by Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in a departmental press briefing and parliamentary debates, and also the comparability of statutory homelessness statistics over time.

Response: The use of the statistics in the parliamentary debate was relatively clear, but other aspects caused us concern. The definition of 'statutory' homelessness was omitted from a press release. The exclusion implied that there was a greater reduction in homelessness than the statutory series shows. DCLG has more work to do to better explain these statistics and inform public debate.

Chronic pain

Issue: We received a query from the Cross-Party Group on Chronic Pain about NHS Scotland's Information Services Division (ISD) Chronic Pain Waiting Time Statistics. There were concerns about the commentary and coverage of the statistics.

Response: ISD made a series of misjudged decisions that reduced the usefulness and accessibility of the statistics and eroded user confidence. These issues were the result of limited engagement with users outside government. We encouraged ISD to engage with a wider range of users in the development and improvement of their statistics, and highlighted the need for statisticians to be transparent in their plans and reasoning.

Crime Statistics in England and Wales

Issue: ONS publishes Crime Statistics for England and Wales; the two main sources of these statistics are the Crime Survey for England and Wales and crime recorded by the police. The statistics published in October 2017 led, wrongly, to media headlines about an apparent 13% increase in crime as a whole.

Response: We wrote to ONS to welcome the prompt initiative taken by the Deputy National Statistician to clarify trends in crime. However, we think that the crime statistics published by ONS need to ensure that users can easily interpret the trends, and our team will be monitoring future reports closely.

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

Economic statistics represent some of the UK's most important and widely used statistics. The **Bean Review**, published in March 2016, identified a number of system-wide issues with economic statistics, and there is currently a large programme of work and development underway to enhance these statistics. At the heart of the Bean Review was the need to change the mindset on economic statistics from producing a sequence of statistical products, to providing users with insight into how the economy is changing.

Our work on ONS economic statistics over the last year provides a perspective on how far ONS has developed along these lines. We see some significant developments. The prompt creation of the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence has provided much greater capacity to consider cutting-edge issues, and the Data Science Campus allows ONS to develop more experimental approaches to data collection and linkage. ONS has created theme days that bring together related statistical releases; has improved the quality of key outputs like the Consumer Price Index including owner occupied housing (CPIH) and Regional Gross Value Added (R-GVA); and has focused on addressing the 'productivity puzzle'. Confidence in a country's principal inflation statistics is one of the key hallmarks of the integrity of its economic statistics, and before we restored the National Statistics status of CPIH this summer, we made sure that ONS had worked with users to build confidence in this principal economic statistic.

But there is more to do: important statistics like trade and construction output still have not regained their National Statistics status. We will continue to review ONS's progress to improve the quality and value of these statistics.

In the course of 2017, we also provided evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee review of economic data. We highlighted the strengths: the provision of a wide range of economic data to help people understand the Scottish economy, but also the gaps, including sub-regional data and statistics on the Scottish labour market.

Report on Consumer Price Index including owner occupied housing (CPIH) – July 2017

The Consumer Price Index including owner occupied housing (CPIH) is one of the main measures of inflation. We suspended the National Statistics status of these ONS statistics in August 2014 due to growing concerns about their quality. We started a re-assessment in mid-2015.

Findings: Following a long period of engagement with ONS, and a substantial amount of work from ONS to improve the quality and public value of the statistics, we concluded that ONS had met the required standards. Some of the key improvements include enhanced quality assurance of rents data, more proactive and improved engagement with users, and clarifying the purpose of the index for users.

Actions: These statistics were re-designated as National Statistics in July 2017.

Report on Northern Ireland Tourism statistics

Tourism is an important part of the economy of Northern Ireland. Statistics on this topic, produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), provides information to support planning, marketing and target monitoring at a national and local level, and help users understand how the tourism industry evolves over time.

Findings: NISRA engages actively with key users of the statistics and shows a good understanding of their statistical needs. NISRA has a good relationship with the providers of the data and demonstrates trustworthiness and professionalism in working with senior officials to ensure the quality and value of its statistics. NISRA should explore more regular formal engagement with wider users to further enhance the public value of the statistics.

Actions: These statistics were designated as **National Statistics** in June 2017.

Report on statistics on Regional Gross Value Added

ONS's Regional Gross Value Added (R-GVA) statistics are a key source of information on regional productivity and growth.

Findings: ONS has demonstrated commitment to improving the trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics, and is taking a positive approach to working with internal and external stakeholders to understand uses of these statistics.

Actions: We have set ONS a number of requirements, including: to review the methods for deflating regional estimates of imputed rent, to enhance relationships with government users, and to consider partnerships with regional analysts.

MIGRATION STATISTICS

Statistical evidence about international migration has a major influence on the decisions made across various sectors, whether private, public or charitable, and at local, regional, national and international levels. It is vital that there is a comprehensive understanding of migration in the UK. In the last year, we have published three pieces of work related to international migration that challenged producers to address issues with the statistics.

Report on National Insurance Number allocations to overseas nationals

The number of adult non-UK nationals registering for a National Insurance number is often used to understand the level of inward migration to the UK.

Findings: We temporarily suspended the National Statistics status, due to the lack of pro-active engagement with users outside government and a lack of documentation on the limitations of the data and quality assurance processes.

Actions: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has made some improvements to the release. DWP considers that further development of these statistics is not currently the best use of its resources. Neither we nor DWP consider that these statistics meet the standards to be National Statistics.

Report on international student migration Statistics

ONS's long-term international student migration estimates are some of the highest profile and most debated migration statistics. A range of concerns were raised about the robustness of the former-student emigration estimate.

Findings: The former-student emigration estimate may not provide a complete and coherent picture of former-student emigration. We requested ONS to publish this estimate as experimental statistics.

Actions: ONS is making improvements to the migration statistics to ensure that they serve the needs of users. This includes using new data sources, for example the Home Office's exit check data, to better understand the outcomes of international students.

Report on the Labour Force Survey

ONS's Labour Force Survey is the primary source of labour market data in the UK. A concern was raised about the robustness of employment statistics for foreign workers.

Findings: The main headline estimates remain sufficiently robust to continue to meet the standard of National Statistics. But ONS does not explain well enough the quality of the estimates of employment for non-UK nationals and non-UK born workers.

Actions: ONS is improving the commentary, and providing additional information to address the lack of context and clarity about the degree of uncertainty around the employment estimates.

CONVENE AND COLLABORATE

We take a leading role in bringing together statisticians and users of statistics to agree developments and enhancements across a range of statistical themes.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STATISTICS

Where can I find comparable health statistics for the UK?

How long are patients waiting for operations?

How do you count the NHS workforce, where can I find definitions for this?

How many EU citizens work as nurses in the UK?

How do I access the underlying data for my research?

HEALTH STATISTICS IN ENGLAND -PROGRAMME OF CHANGE

Users have told us that they find it difficult to find statistics to answer their questions about health and social care. We are clear that improvements need to be made and that this will involve a cross-departmental approach, due to the number of different organisations producing health and social care statistics in England.

This year we have continued to invest our resources in improving these statistics in England – organising four events between February 2016 and June 2017. We have brought together leaders of the five main organisations in the English health and social care system to discuss how best to change the production of statistics. We have also brought statisticians and people who use statistics together to gain a better

understanding of what users need and want from health and social care statistics.

As a result, producers established the cross-departmental **English Health Statistics Steering Group** (EHSSG), to ‘provide a comprehensive, quality service to inform policy, enable analysis and research and improve decision making for health and social care in England’ and a work plan has been put in place.

We are encouraged by the progress made by the producers this year, and also by the willingness of producers to assume the future statistical leadership for this area. However, there is still a lot of work to do to ensure users can find the answers to their questions easily and without confusion. We will continue to monitor the work by the EHSSG and will intervene if progress is not sufficient.

BRINGING TOGETHER STATISTICAL LEADERS TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS:

IDENTIFYING STATISTICAL ISSUES - EXPERT MEETING

February
2016

- Attendees at our expert meeting agreed that the decentralised health and care statistics system in England appeared incoherent and inconsistent. We had concerns about presentation, dissemination, accessibility, quality management and advice.
- The English Health Statistics Steering Group (EHSSG) was formed.

USER NEEDS - CONFERENCE

July
2016

- The conference created a shared understanding of the problems surrounding health and social care statistics, what users need and want, and what works well for statisticians in other parts of the UK.
- We asked the EHSSG to set out an action plan and a set of shared principles, that all the producers of these statistics in England could publicly sign up to, and to which we would hold them to account.

ACTION PLAN - SECOND EXPERT MEETING

December
2016

- Producers committed to work together to develop improved insight and analysis.
- The EHSSG published their Terms of Reference and work plan, including a set of deliverables by priority, along with a 'landscape' document signposting different sets of health and social care statistics in England.

COLLABORATION - THIRD EXPERT MEETING

June
2017

- In the short term, the focus will be on strengthening the existing system through the collaborative work plan set out by the EHSSG.
- The longer term ambition of the group will be to maximise the utility of data via the creation of a central data repository which a wide network of analysts will be able to access.
- We welcomed the statistical leadership shown by producers. We announced that we will step back from our role of convening these meetings. This will enable statistical producers to demonstrate leadership in setting the strategic direction for health and social care statistics.

MIGRATION STATISTICS

What is the net migration level in the UK?

Where are people immigrating from?

Where do people move to outside of the UK?

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS REVIEW

International migration is a focus of interest for the public, media and policymakers. A wide range of statistics is available that can help build the picture of UK migration. We are running a programme of work to understand:

- What questions cannot currently be answered due to a lack of information on international migration
- What information about migrants living inside or outside the UK is still required to address these issues and questions
- What changes in official statistics, if any, are needed to enable these issues to be addressed

Understanding user needs

This programme explores how the main statistics producers can improve international migration statistics that are linked to employment and business, and to service delivery, to better meet stakeholders' needs to support decision-making.

Action: We support the drive for a more coherent approach to the production of international migration statistics by the Office for National Statistics, the Home Office, and the Department for Work and Pensions. The producers identified some ways to better meet the information needs identified by users in both the shorter and longer term.

CRIME AND JUSTICE STATISTICS

Am I more likely to be a victim of crime these days?

How much computer fraud is there going on?

Is the prison population increasing?

Our **2017 review of crime and justice statistics** in the UK noted some positive findings; for instance, that the statistics already help to answer many relevant questions. It also highlighted the potential of using data to make these statistics even more relevant and increase their value.

Crime and justice statistics are devolved and it is important that all statistics producers work together at a strategic level to ensure that crime statistics remain relevant.

Summer 2017

Sharing and linking crime and justice data will lead to a better understanding of how justice affects people and organisations. We convened a meeting with statistics producers from the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the Office for National Statistics to explore how they could address these challenges in England and Wales.

Action: The statisticians set up a new Crime and Justice working group to take forward the work on sharing and linking datasets.

RESEARCH AND REPORT

HOUSING STATISTICS

Housing affects everyone in the UK. Official statistics on housing and planning play a vital role in helping to inform decision-making of all kinds. Our report **Public Value of Statistics on Housing and Planning in the UK** sets out ways that the statistical system could increase the public value of these statistics, and ultimately improve the information available to those responsible for decisions about housing and planning, and for those who want to understand different aspects of the system.

Examples of key questions where stakeholders want better information – through statistics and other evidence – include:

Is there a housing shortage?

Are we building the right types of houses in the right places?

How long does it take for houses to be built?

What is the stock of the UK private rental market?

How many people are homeless?

How many affordable homes are being built?

Our findings

There is a large number of official statistics in this area and there are lots of examples of good practice. However, possible improvements include:

- Signposting statistics to support an overarching narrative on key issues and making statistics easier to find
- Filling gaps in understanding in areas such as the private rental market, planning and land ownership
- Improving transparency to better describe statistics and their limitations and comparability, such as for affordable housing and homelessness
- Addressing quality concerns and improving information about quality assurance of the data, for example the concerns that quarterly statistics on house building in England and Wales undercount the number of houses built

Our research

We focused on the user perspective. We received feedback from over 60 individuals across 43 organisations throughout the UK to find out about the value of these statistics, what questions users are seeking to answer and how well these statistics meet their needs.

More strategic coordination and collaboration between statistics producers across the UK, as well as greater engagement with users, could also help drive improvements in outputs.

Next steps

We are continuing to work with statistics producers, encouraging them to improve collaboration across the UK and establish more effective ways of engaging with users. These actions will help improve the statistical outputs.

We have engaged with the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE), who develop evidence about the UK housing system to inform academic debate, housing policy and practice across the UK, and also join together a range of stakeholders. We will identify specific areas for collaboration, to support improvements to these statistics.

MONITOR IMPROVEMENTS

We monitor the impact of our reports to ensure that statistics stay relevant.

INCOME AND EARNINGS STATISTICS

What is the average income?

What is the gender pay gap?

How many people are on zero hours contracts?

Few issues are as important to so many people as the income they receive. In February 2015 we published a **report** on statistics on income and earnings that focused on how well different measures complement each other, and whether users are able to find, understand and use the statistics. Since then, our team has worked closely with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as they deliver the recommendations set out in the report. Although there have been some positive developments in this area, on the whole, progress has been disappointingly slow.

Positive developments

In September 2017, **ONS published a paper** explaining the differences between the two main sources of earnings statistics – the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and the Average Weekly Earnings survey (AWE). The paper adds value by providing important information for users on the coherence of these two earnings statistics, although it should be supplemented by a more quantified reconciliation of the two sources.

Areas for improvement

There are two other key recommendations that remain to be addressed. The first is the development of more timely statistics on income from self-employment. ONS believes that the only possibility is using data from HMRC's Making Tax Digital programme, which will not be available for several years. The second is the Income and Earnings theme page on ONS's website, which is expected to enhance accessibility of the statistics. ONS has mentioned this as a priority but the theme page has yet to be developed.

REPORT ON NATIONAL SURVEY FOR WALES

The National Survey for Wales is a face-to-face survey of over 10,000 adults and covers a wide range of issues affecting people and their local area.

The Welsh Government made a number of substantial changes to the survey. The Chief Statistician approached us to review these changes to ensure that the statistics still met the high standards of National Statistics. We noted many improvements to the statistics, especially in relation to the efforts that the statistical team had made to understand the needs of the users and develop products to meet these needs. We **confirmed** the continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics.

BUILD OUR CAPABILITY

Which school performs best in my local area?

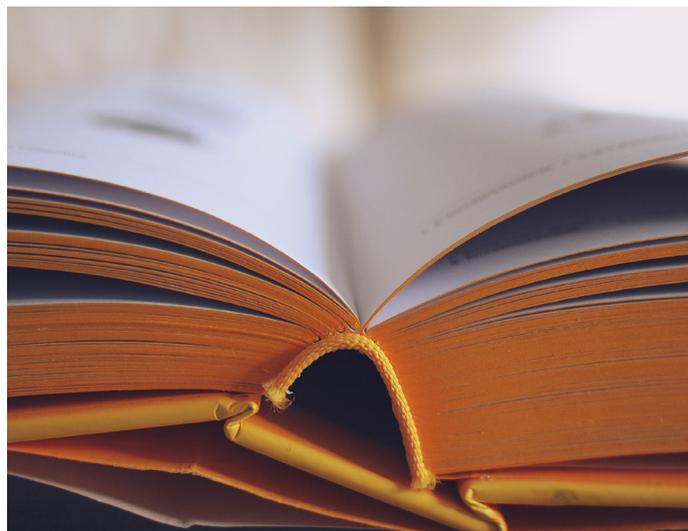
Are apprenticeships making a difference to individuals and the economy?

Are there more students from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university?

During the past year we have committed to building our expertise in subject areas where statistics really matter to individuals, to businesses and to government. In the area of Children, Education and Skills statistics we have developed our expertise to identify issues and respond quickly to queries raised by the public.

Children, Education and Skills data and statistics help the public to understand society and make decisions about everyday life. Interest in the use, availability and presentation of these statistics is high. We continue to build our capability in this area to better understand the policy landscape, the needs of users, and the challenges faced by producers. We have responded publicly to more queries in this area than any other since April 2016 (see [Annex B](#) for further details); building our knowledge and relationships with stakeholders has been central to our ability to do this.

Over half the correspondence we received over this period questioned the trustworthiness of the statistics or their uses. Common issues were the appropriate use of statistics and who can access underlying data. Other queries related to the quality and value of the statistics; the most common issue on value was the accessibility of good quality data.



Many of the concerns were related to the education system in England, with particular interest in grammar schools, academies and apprenticeships. We have prioritised our work to reflect this public interest.

We have started [a project](#) to explore the improvements and innovations being undertaken by official statistics producers in the Children, Education and Skills area. We aim to increase our expertise in skills, further education and higher education statistics over the next year, including considering whether the current statistics available in these areas are meeting user needs.

RECOGNISE AND SUPPORT INNOVATIONS

Official statistics need to remain current and relevant. Several initiatives are emerging across the UK where innovative approaches to statistics and data are being developed to better answer questions and inform decisions. There are also some excellent examples of collaborative work in this area. Some examples include:

Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset

The Department for Education, in collaboration with a number of government departments and arms length bodies, is leading an innovative piece of work linking higher education and tax data to chart the transition of graduates from higher education into the workplace. This provides insight into the destinations of graduates without imposing additional data collection burdens on universities, employers or members of the public. This data linkage project clearly adds value – through innovating, working collaboratively, producing experimental statistics and answering important questions.

4 Nations - Health Care Quality Indicators (HCQI) - Experimental Statistics

In response to the OECD report Reviews of Health Care Quality - United Kingdom (2016), statisticians in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland collaborated to produce these experimental statistics.

This has created a much more accessible picture of health care quality across the UK, pulling together data on acute care, avoidable hospital admissions, patient safety, and life expectancy/healthy life expectancy across the UK. The work is a basis for answering the questions that users have about comparable statistics across the UK.

Home Office statistics in response to the Grenfell fire

The Grenfell fire in June 2017 raised questions about the safety of residential tower blocks. Statisticians in the Home Office recognised the need for timely statistics about fires in high rise purpose-built flats to inform the debates that followed. They published an **ad-hoc statistical release** within two weeks of the fire. This presented data for England covering: fires in different types of housing, including purpose-built flats by the number of storeys; non-fatal casualties and fatalities; and fire safety audits. Specific tables for London were also included in the release. The Home Office has now added these statistics to their **existing publications** to continue providing information for those who require it.

The SAIL (Secure Anonymised Information Linkage) databank

Based at Swansea University medical school, SAIL supports a range of projects designed to improve health, wellbeing and services using anonymised population data. It brings together data from a range of sources including primary and secondary health care, social surveys, and school attainment data. Researchers can access data via a remote privacy-protecting safe haven, with additional safeguards used to protect anonymity where necessary. A consumer panel is involved in all aspects of the work, including developing ideas for research, commenting on proposals, participating in the approvals process, advising on public engagement and acting as public advocates for data linkage. New technology developed by SAIL is now being piloted to support and streamline data sharing and linkage in local government.

LOOKING FORWARD – THE CHALLENGE

Everyday our team works with skilled and dedicated statisticians who are delivering complex projects in rapidly changing circumstances. We meet talented teams and individuals who are seeking to deliver high standards and further improvements in their work.

Users look for statistics to answer their questions. Official statistics often serve this purpose but sometimes they fail to do so. Our work this year has highlighted some key areas for the statistical system to focus on to improve the value of statistics. These are underpinned by a challenge for the statistical system to improve statistical leadership. Strong statistical leadership is essential to provide insight into the questions that are being asked - this is how statistics will develop, improve and help everyone better understand our society. This leadership does not happen just at the top of departments and organisations; we expect to see it at every level.



Our role is to ensure that the statistical system provides accurate, accessible and usable statistics to the public. The updated Code of Practice will provide a framework to support statistical producers in taking these steps. Our strategy and work programme will continue to evolve to monitor the success of the system in delivering on this work.

Note:

This review of OSR's first year is the outcome of a pilot study, as we consider how best to share our learning with our stakeholders. A crucial part of shaping the work has been the expert input that we received from a number of users of statistics. We would like to thank all of those who took time to share their views with us.

These specialists helped to frame our thinking of OSR work in the context of the statistical service and in our role as a regulator. We plan to keep this dialogue going and widen it further. In future reviews we will extend our view more comprehensively across the statistical system and obtain the input of a wider range of interested users to inform our work.

If you have any comments on this Review, please contact us on regulation@statistics.gov.uk

OSR STATISTICAL THEMES



Agriculture and Environment



Health and Social Care



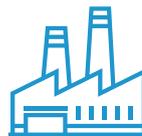
Business, Industry, Trade and Energy



Housing, Planning and Local Services



Children, Education and Skills



Labour Market and Welfare



Crime and Justice



Population



Culture and Identity



Security, Defence and International Relations



Economy



Travel, Transport and Tourism