
Deputy Director for Regulation

Glyn Jones
Chief Statistician
Welsh Government
(by email)

26 March 2019

Dear Glyn

LOCAL AUTHORITY REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN EXPENDITURE STATISTICS

As you are aware we recently carried out a short review of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics of the [Local authority revenue and capital outturn expenditure statistics](#), as part of our ongoing programme of compliance checks and to support our systemic review of adult social care statistics in the UK.

We met with your team, which shared its aspirations to improve these statistics to ensure they continue to meet the standards expected of their designation as National Statistics. Within the review we focussed on Quality and Value of published material in relation to the Code. Here are our main findings.

Quality:

The data source appears suitable to meet the intended uses, but more information could be provided to assure users that data reporting has been optimised for these statistics. Addressing this in the Quality Report would enhance assurances to users that the statistics are robust. You might consider, in conjunction with your data suppliers and users, covering the following:

- Information on what quality assurance checks the data suppliers undertake and how the data are signed off before they are submitted to you. We understand that currently an assumption is made that appropriate quality assurance takes place based on trust and the fact that the local authorities are bound by law and regulations.
- Further information on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) standards. While the financial data is stated to be collected and reported using these standards, the methodology is not explained and no links are provided to the relevant standard. We understand that the standard itself is not publicly available but that comprehensive guidance is made available to the data suppliers on how to submit data in line with these standards. Providing a link to this guidance would help to assure users that these standards are being adhered to.

- Further clarity on what validation and verification checks are carried out by your team. It's clear from speaking to your team that a comprehensive suite of checks is carried out before the data are published. These should be explained more thoroughly within the report so that users can be reassured of the quality of the data.

To help you with this work we suggest you refer to the [Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit](#). To illustrate quality assurance for the less expert user, you might also provide some sort of visual explanation for the data flow and the various quality checks that happen at the various stages as the statistics are produced and published.

Value:

The statistical bulletin is written for an expert audience and is, therefore, difficult for a less expert user to understand. Although the charts are well-presented, it is difficult to understand the broader context to which the figures relate.

You've told us about your plans to make the data more accessible by commenting on local authority expenditure data on social services in the statistical bulletin about [Adults receiving care and support](#). We suggest using this approach as a template for other topic areas and determining whether users of those statistics would find this approach useful. To help with this, it would be beneficial for you to engage with a broad range of users and seek their feedback on how the releases could be improved to continue to meet their needs. ONS's [GSS Good Practice team](#) will be able to offer you advice and guidance on working with users and on improving your publications.

Trustworthiness:

WG demonstrates commitment to producing trusted statistics with integrity. The statistical bulletin has been written independently and we welcome your efforts to apply the Code of Practice standard. We did not identify any issues related to trustworthiness during this compliance check.

We are content for these statistics to retain their National Statistics designation, provided your team make the improvements outlined above by July 2019. Our Housing, Planning and Local Services co-lead, Gemma Keane, will continue to engage with the team over the coming months, to ensure that satisfactory progress against the various actions is being made.

I am copying this letter to John Morris, head of health, social services and population statistics, and Anthony Newby, lead statistician local government finance statistics.

Yours sincerely



Mary Gregory
Deputy Director for Regulation