

---

**Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead**

Amy Wilson, Head of Profession for Statistics, National Records of Scotland  
(by email)

28 March 2019

Dear Amy

**HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY IN SCOTTISH AREAS**

We recently carried out a short review of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics of the [Healthy Life Expectancy \(HLE\) in Scottish Areas](#) statistics, prompted by NRS taking over responsibility for producing these from Information Services Division. Our review also covered the changes in methods used to estimate HLE introduced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in December 2018 that NRS has also adopted. Thank you for notifying us of these changes.

We considered the impact on users of the decision to move production of Scottish HLE statistics to NRS and the processes that ONS undertook to develop the new estimation method, including ONS's consultation with users. Moving the Scottish HLE statistics to NRS adds value for users by bringing all life expectancy statistics in Scotland together in one place. Your decision to adopt ONS's new estimation method means that the HLE estimates for Scotland produced by ONS and NRS are now consistent and will enable cross-national comparisons of HLE between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Local area estimates of HLE in Scotland will also now be available on a more regular basis. These developments will be welcomed by users. The methodological changes made by ONS have clearly improved the value of these statistics for users by removing some of the volatility that affected some local area estimates. As we indicated to your team in February, I am pleased to confirm that these should continue to be designated as National Statistics and welcome the statement you have included in your bulletin describing the recent developments to these statistics. Today I have also written to Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician at ONS, outlining the rationale for our judgement on UK HLE statistics in more detail.

We have noted in our letter to ONS that the new estimation method relies on Census data which might not be available post-2021, depending on decisions taken about questionnaire content. We will be encouraging ONS, NRS and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to work together to ensure that harmonised measures of health and disability continue to be available after the next Census.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont  
Assessment Programme Lead