
Director General for Regulation

Jonathan Athow
Interim National Statistician
UK Statistics Authority
(by email)

2 October 2019

Dear Jonathan,

JOINING UP DATA FOR BETTER STATISTICS – OCTOBER 2019 UPDATE

We have today published an update to our 2018 report [Joining up Data for Better Statistics](#) with our assessment of progress to date on our ambition for data linkage to be widely used to answer society's important questions in a timely manner.

We recognise that there has been progress in many areas. The cross-government data linkage symposium on October 23rd and the National Statistician's Quality Review of data linkage methodology should address many of our concerns about skills and resources. The work underway to improve data quality led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Office for National Statistics is also very welcome.

However, notable gaps and fundamental problems remain. We expressed concern in [March](#) that ONS had yet to receive the data it required from HMRC and DWP to deliver major areas of its work programme. We understand that the data is now scheduled for delivery in autumn 2019. This disappointing delay is a major hindrance to understanding what is happening to the UK's economy and population – at the point when there is heightened public and policy interest in these issues.

We also remain concerned that there is a lack of cross-departmental, clear and coherent information for the public as to how data are shared and used safely to deliver public benefit, and no apparent plans to develop this. With a few exceptions, meaningful public engagement on data use is not yet a routine or core activity for statistics producers.

Your sincerely



Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation