
Mary Gregory, Deputy Director for Regulation

Jonathan Athow, Deputy National Statistician
Stephen Aldridge, Director of Analysis, MHCLG
Sandra Tudor, Head of Profession for Statistics, MHCLG
(by email)

27 August 2021

Dear Jonathan, Stephen and Sandra

Review of Household projections for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

I am writing to highlight findings from our [recent compliance checks](#) of household estimates and projections for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The findings from these reviews offer insights which can also support production and use of household projections for England, including covering some of the themes highlighted in our recent [review of population statistics produced by ONS](#).

A key finding from our review was the importance of collaboration between producers of household estimates and projections across the UK in order to share best practice. For example:

- direct engagement between producer teams and local authorities in Wales and Scotland has helped to ensure that local knowledge is accounted for as part of the production and quality assurance process.
- in Northern Ireland, sensitivity analyses carried out by NISRA statisticians has enhanced understanding of the quality and robustness of household projections.
- NISRA's collection of students' home and university addresses during the Census, should provide assurances around data quality in university towns.

Our review also recognises the importance of strong working relationships between those producing the projections and those responsible for future housing need analysis. We saw clear examples of where this works well and the potential benefits. For example, in Wales it led to the production of a timely and accessible [estimates of housing need publication](#), which includes clear guidance around what the estimates should and should not be used for and draws on different household projections variants to illustrate inherent uncertainties associated with assessing future housing need.

Looking ahead, we welcome the public commitment made by UK producers to coordinate timing of the next sets of subnational household projections in 2023. During our compliance checks, statisticians in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland committed to working together to help maximise the trustworthiness, quality and value of the updated household estimates and projections, we would welcome the same commitment from ONS and MHCLG. We also expect to see close engagement between the different producer teams, policy analysts and other users to maximise the value of the outputs and to reflect the latest methods and quality improvements. For example, MHCLG officials responsible for

housing need analysis will need to work closely with producer teams in ONS, to ensure that future housing need analyses are informed by a clear understanding of the strengths, limitations, and potential projection variants, and where published, that these analyses are made available transparently and informed by the principles of the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Any future assessments of housing need should be informed by the latest data, so that it reflects any methods and quality advances. We expect that future housing need analyses produced for England will be based on ONS's updated 2021-based household projections. This will also bring the approach taken in England in line with those already established in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which themselves will be informed by the 2021 Census.

Please feel free to contact me about any aspect of this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mary Gregory

Deputy Director for Regulation