
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Maree Allison
Chief Executive
Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)
(by email)

30 July 2024

Dear Maree

Compliance Check of the Scottish Mental Health Officers Statistics

We have recently completed a compliance check of your [Mental Health Officers \(MHO\) Statistics](#). These statistics were first designated as National Statistics in 2014. National Statistics are now known as accredited official statistics. We are pleased to confirm that these accredited official statistics continue to meet the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Mental health officers (MHOs) in Scotland are social workers with a minimum of two years post-qualifying experience, who have gained the Mental Health Officer Award (MHOA), which prepares experienced social workers to undertake the statutory role. The data on MHOs are compiled as part of the Local Authority Social Work Survey, an annual census data collection which gathers data at an individual staff member level. Identifiers are used to flag up MHO records for current staff and leavers. This approach is also used to identify vacant MHO posts.

These statistics provide valuable insight into the numbers and demographics of qualified MHOs who are practicing within local authorities in Scotland as well as useful information on MHO trainees, leavers, vacancies and staffing shortfalls. They are predominantly used by Scottish local authorities who also supply the data. The Scottish Social Services Workforce Data and Planning Group which consists of many of these stakeholders including representatives from Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) meets on a regular basis. It has an important role in informing user views of the statistics as well as suggesting improvements to the data collection. This includes decisions around equality data already gathered by local authorities to determine required breakdowns to include.

It is good to hear that you have ambitions to modernise the publication and introduce html formats to enhance accessibility when the newer SSSC data website functionality becomes available. From a user perspective, it may be also helpful to split sections of the report – such as data collection and methodology – more clearly. We heard that you have been engaging with and follow guidance from the Office of

the Chief Statistician in Scotland on good statistical practices such as working towards reducing the pre-release access list to only those who essentially require them prior to release. We encourage you to continue to collaborate on best practice as you develop your publication.

It is good that there are elements of communication of uncertainty in the statistics. We consider it would be helpful to users to expand on messages like “treat with caution” to more clearly explain to the user how they should interpret the figures and which aspects of uncertainty they need to take into account.

I would like to thank your team for its positive engagement with us during this review. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter.

I am copying this letter to Michael Docherty, Workforce Intelligence Manager, Jess Elsey, Head of Workforce Policy and Planning and Zara Gall in the Workforce Intelligence team.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Pont', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead