
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Sandra Tudor
Head of Profession for Statistics
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
(by email)

19 September 2024

Dear Sandra

Statistics on social housing lettings in England

We have recently completed a compliance check of your [statistics on social housing lettings in England](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We found that these statistics are a good demonstration of how to produce and publish official statistics, and the statistics should keep its [accredited official statistics](#) status. Our review found a range of positive features that demonstrate the trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics.

These statistics transparently show the availability of social housing lettings in England and the characteristics of those renting these dwellings. The statistics are presented in two separate bulletins on [tenants](#) and [tenancies](#) that include a variety of breakdowns and are presented in an accessible and informative way. We found a good balance of statistical content and commentary that will help users to interpret the statistics appropriately and understand what they show. For example, comparisons are made between social rent rates and private rent rates in different geographical locations.

The [technical notes](#) provided with the publication contain much information that helps users understand the strengths and limitations, which in turn supports the appropriate use of the statistics. For example, the information on the use of weighting and imputation for certain measures is accessible to both expert and non-expert users. This methodological information indicates the level of uncertainty in the statistics, enabling their appropriate use.

As well as the qualitative indications of uncertainty provided, the quantitative information on uncertainty given in the [quality data tables](#) is a fantastic resource for expert users who wish to use the statistics for analysis. Confidence intervals tables are presented for specific figures which are imputed, allowing users to understand the extent of missing data in CORE and how much has been imputed.

Between the 2022 and 2023 publications, you undertook a large amount of work to develop both the presentation of the statistics, and the CORE system. The improvement of presentation and accessibility is exemplary and has enhanced the usability of the statistics. Separating the statistics into bulletins on tenants and tenancies allows more space for interesting analysis on each topic area in an accessible way. Furthermore, the statistics are easier to navigate, and a clear distinction is made between the statistics on tenancies and tenants, each of which has distinct uses.

We were also told by the statistical team that there have been improvements to efficiency and quality assurance because of these recent developments. Question routing and inference is now possible, which has reduced respondent burden for existing tenants, as questions can be skipped in appropriate circumstances and information from previously completed fields can be carried forwards. The improvements to the CORE data collection, have made it cheaper to run and less dependent on experts, showing your commitment to ensuring value for money and efficiency. The team also told us that it plans to carry out quality assurance of LA data submissions mid-year, allowing for quality issues to be caught early.

Your plans to set up an ad hoc requests database that will bring together data from different types of information requests, including direct ad hoc analysis requests and those made through FOIs, will provide a better overall user experience. Constructing this as a database will reduce the number of repeat requests for information; improve efficiency by limiting the need to recompile information; and ensure that previous information is not lost.

To further enhance the trustworthiness, quality and value of these statistics, we have identified ways the statistics and their presentation could be improved:

- Though the communication of uncertainty in the technical notes is excellent, the communication of uncertainty within the tenants and tenancies bulletins could be improved. It could be clearer that the quoted figures are estimates with varying degrees of uncertainty. Communicating the level of uncertainty in the statistical bulletins will help to ensure an accurate interpretation of the statistics.
- It would help potential new users if you more explicitly communicated your approach to user engagement, so people know how to get in touch and that you are open to hearing their views. Proactively engaging with external users will allow the statistical team to gather feedback from a broader range of sources and facilitate an ongoing dialogue around the further development of the statistics.
- Providing more links between the different social lettings outputs, for example, to the data tables and technical notes in the bulletins, would enhance the accessibility of the full range of outputs for users.

I would like to thank your team for its positive engagement during this review. We recommend the team looks for opportunities to champion the value of the recent developments, for example, through the publication page itself, and through cross-government channels such as the GSS housing and planning steering and working groups. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter. I am copying this letter to Richard Field, Head of Housing and Planning Statistics, MHCLG; and Rachel Worledge, Lead Statistician, CORE Social Housing, MHCLG.

Yours sincerely



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