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Ed Humpherson
Office for Statistics Regulation

Sent via e-mail.

28 February 2025

Health and Wellbeing Census

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letter of 13 February regarding the Scottish Government's review of our approach to developing questions for the Health and Wellbeing Census. I can confirm that the outcomes of this review have now been published.

[Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland: Background Report](#)

Your letter also raises important questions around the status of the role of the Chief Statistician in Scottish Government, and the importance of independent decision making and leadership as set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The importance of independent decision making around statistics is fully recognised across Scottish Government. As Chief Statistician I work with individual Analytical Service Divisions across all portfolios of devolved responsibility. Decision making about the content and timing of statistical outputs is fully devolved to myself and in turn is further devolved to statisticians working in Analytical Service Divisions across Scottish Government. These Analytical Service Divisions operate independently of policy colleagues and Ministers.

Our statistical system in Scotland is generally aligned to areas of devolved responsibility. Within this structure I need assurances that statistical decisions and leadership in all areas are making the right decisions with the proper oversight and seniority and especially on statistical outputs that cuts across areas of responsibility.

Decisions on some statistical outputs and work cannot be taken in isolation, such as the Health and Wellbeing Census. These decisions need to be co-ordinated with many departments across Scottish Government. If they are not, this may pose risks to statistical decision making where there are competing priorities. In this instance, the decision making has not been adequately decisive, and as Chief Statistician I must address this.

As you are aware, shortly after coming into post I instigated an internal review of the 2022 Census to look at the lessons we could learn for decision making with respect to cross-cutting statistical projects. This review was published on 20 February:

[Developing a modern statistical system - a review of Scotland's Census 2022](#)

I will be responding to these recommendations and in due course publish an assessment of how we will meet them as we modernise our statistics, build trust and improve the transparency in our statistical decisions and methods.

I am satisfied that Scottish Ministers are fully aware of their responsibilities with respect to Official Statistics and would highlight that the Scottish Ministerial Code requires the Ministers are mindful of the Code of Practice.

This is a matter that I have raised with Cabinet and Ministers, and I am assured from those discussions that this is fully understood and processes are in place to remind them of these principles.

Yours sincerely



Alastair McAlpine
Chief Statistician