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**Rob Kent-Smith, Deputy Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation**

Alex Lambert, Director of Social Surveys  
Liz McKeown, Director of Economic Statistics  
cc Becca Briggs, Deputy Director of Household Resilience  
Office for National Statistics  
(by email)

10 February 2026

Dear Liz and Alex

**Compliance review of Family Spending statistics from the Living Costs and Food survey**

Today, we have published a review of the latest Family Spending statistics from the Living Costs and Food survey (LCF) against key elements of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We previously [set out](#) an intention to undertake further regulatory work on response issues impacting household surveys used across the statistics landscape. This assessment was undertaken as part of this work.

Based on the findings of this review, the [Family Spending in the UK](#) statistics, which are sourced from the Living Costs and Food survey (LCF), can continue to be published as accredited official statistics. The review found that, despite recent challenges with achieved sample size and timeliness, the Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF) continues to produce statistics of sufficient value and quality to meet user needs.

We found that the LCF is a valued data source and informs key analyses. Many users we spoke to mentioned appreciation for the survey and noted the unique role of the food diary, as there are no other free, publicly available datasets to get a comprehensive view of household food consumption.

ONS has begun to make improvements to improve the value and quality of these statistics. In response to user demand, ONS increased the LCF sample in April 2024, and will continue investing in LCF improvements, subject to funding and the conclusion of current business planning processes. ONS has also made initial steps to increase the resources available to the data production and analysis team, which should mean that other quality issues, such as timeliness, should be improved. Innovations such as modernised processing infrastructure, a digital interviewer-facing diary and receipt-reading tools are being developed to improve data accuracy and reduce the processing burden within the LCF data collection environment.

As well as requiring that ONS follow through and report on LCF improvements in its Economics Statistics Plan and its Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan, we have three detailed recommendations from this review to further meet users' needs. These focus on more engagement with users to understand their needs, being clearer about how ONS

can speed up the publication timetable and providing more information about survey representativeness and comparability.

We note that ONS is already progressing work to ensure full compliance with the updated Code of Practice for Statistics (Code 3.0), and we welcome the commitment to embed these standards as part of ongoing development of the statistics.

We expect ONS to report on its progress against our recommendations for improvement from this review by April 2026.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Kent-Smith', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Rob Kent-Smith

Deputy Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation