
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Roger Halliday
Chief Statistician and Data Officer
Scottish Government
(By email)

31 October 2019

Dear Roger

SCOTTISH HOUSING STATISTICS

As you are aware we recently completed our checks of compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) for two of Scottish Government's sets of Housing Statistics:

- [Housing Statistics for Scotland Quarterly Update](#); and
- [Housing Statistics for Scotland: Key Trends Summary](#)

I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics. We initiated this check following the [public commitment](#) that we made in our 2019/20 Regulatory Work Programme to focus on statistics about key issues within Housing. We reviewed the statistics against the three pillars – trustworthiness, quality and value – that are fundamental to supporting public confidence in statistics and form the basis of the *Code*. We recently had a very constructive conversation with the responsible statisticians about our review's findings and the current plans for these statistics. We would like to thank your team for their positive participation. This letter confirms our review's findings.

We found many positive illustrations of good practice in the Scottish Housing statistics:

- Statisticians' ongoing and regular engagement with Local Authorities to enhance each other's understanding of how and why the data are collected.
- Some good examples in the releases of the use of graphics to help explain the data; and providing clarity and insight through providing context around some of the topics which helps to 'tell the story'.
- The recent comprehensive refresh of the supporting documentation to help enhance users' accessibility to and understanding of the data sources, methods and quality assurance. As discussed during the recent meeting my team are happy to provide guidance should you wish to rationalise the quality information further.
- The use of [ScotStat](#) to maintain contact with users.
- The involvement of the team in the project to transition material from the old Scottish Government website to the new website, including making use of increased functionality on the new website.

We identified several areas where the value of the statistics could be enhanced:

- We recommend taking a more transparent approach when engaging and communicating with users on any development plans and progress. This would demonstrate a level of trustworthiness and helps to give users confidence in the data. Using the findings from the recent cross-government [user survey](#) as an example, you should reassure users that their feedback is being listened to by making user feedback findings more prominent. We

understand though that your housing statistics team is carrying out further analysis on the results and that it will consider this point when deciding how best to present the Scotland-specific findings.

- Your team informed us of the steps being taken to formalise the data governance and data sharing agreements with each Local Authority. We recommend that evidence of this be incorporated into your existing quality assurance documentation to further demonstrate your application of our required standards for the quality assurance of administrative data (QAAD).
- Increase the public value of the statistics by considering areas where further context could be provided to help answer key questions, for example around the supply and demand of housing – a common theme we have identified a need for in housing statistics across the four UK countries; further insight could be added by drawing on other data sources.

We welcome the updates on your continued collaborative work as part of the Cross-Government Housing Statistics Working Group and that you recognise the value of this group. We also welcome that you have put your quarterly bulletin forward for review by the [GSS Good Practice Team](#) to ensure that the statistics are presented in the most effective way to aid users' interpretation of the key messages and trends.

Our Housing, Planning and Local Services Domain Lead, Oliver Fox-Tatum, will continue to engage with your team on progress in the coming months.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further.

I am copying this letter to Joe Joblin, Felix Palin and Lyndsey Middleton, the responsible statisticians, and Adam Krawczyk, Head of Housing, Homelessness & Regeneration Analysis at the Scottish Government.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead