

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Short-term Migration for England and Wales

*(produced by the Office for National
Statistics)*

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment Reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, Reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment Reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment Reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment Report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act requires all statistics currently designated as National Statistics to be assessed against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*³. The Act also allows the National Statistician to request an assessment of other official statistics in order for them to gain National Statistics status. This report is in response to such a request. The report covers the set of statistics reported in *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales*⁴, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

1.1.2 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales* are designated as National Statistics, subject to ONS implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting to the Authority by January 2011 for Requirement 9 and by May 2011 for Requirements 1 – 8 and Requirement 10.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

1.3.1 Short-term migration (STM) estimates produced by ONS have been published as *experimental statistics*⁵ annually since October 2007. The statistics are used to estimate the size of the transient population by helping users understand the difference between ONS population estimates and other population statistics produced from administrative sources. Administrative sources include both long and short-term migrants; for example National Insurance Number registrations⁶ and General Practitioners' Flag 4 registrations⁷.

1.3.2 There has been good user consultation and user involvement in the development of the statistics through the Short-term Migration Reference Group, the Local Population Estimates Working Group and other liaison meetings with local authorities. Road shows run as part of ONS's Improving

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=15363>

⁵ Experimental statistics are new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

⁶ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino_allocation

⁷ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15283>

Migration and Population Statistics⁸ (IMPS) programme are also used to update users and inform them of future plans. The development process has been documented in feasibility⁹ and research reports¹⁰, although these are difficult to find online. The statistical team have also produced a methodology report¹¹ and a Summary Quality Report¹² which were published in December 2010.

- 1.3.3 ONS has improved the timeliness of the statistics, at the request of users. By using some provisional data, the statistics are now released 8 months earlier than previously without significantly compromising their quality. Although there is still a 20-month lag between the reference period and the publication of the statistics, the reasons for this are clearly documented.
- 1.3.4 The burden on data suppliers is minimised, to the extent that the statistics are produced directly from the International Passenger Survey (IPS)¹³ which is primarily used to capture data on international tourism. The IPS was redesigned in 2008 to increase the amount of migration data collected. An exercise¹⁴ to reconcile combined long and short-term migration estimates against those from administrative sources helped to develop the STM estimates so that they are fit for purpose.
- 1.3.5 STM statistics have been released as 'experimental statistics' and the statistical release has been used to document much of the recent development. However, the release needs significant improvements including more contextual information and links to Excel data tables to enable users to re-use the data.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that ONS could strengthen its compliance with the *Code*. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

⁸ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/index.html>

⁹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/archive-pre-08/updates/short-term-migration-feasibility-report.pdf>

¹⁰ http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/population/future/imps/updates/downloads/STM_Research_Report.pdf

¹¹ http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/stmmethodology.pdf

¹² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/quality/qual-info-economic-social-and-bus-stats/quality-reports-for-social-statistics/summary-quality-report-for-short-term-migration-estimates.doc>

¹³ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Source.asp?vlnk=348&More=Y>

¹⁴ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/updates-reports/a-reconciliation-exercise-between-ips-based-estimates-of-international-immigration-and-counts-from-administrative-sources.pdf>

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

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|----------------------|--|
| Requirement 1 | Continue to take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of the statistics outside government, and the needs of current and potential users; and publish plans to acquire better information to support the use of the statistics (para 3.2). |
| Requirement 2 | Publish investigations into further reducing the time lag between the reference period and publication (para 3.12). |
| Requirement 3 | Provide a more detailed explanation of non-sampling errors and how the short-term migration estimates may be affected by the bias that these errors can introduce (para 3.15). |
| Requirement 4 | Provide an explanation in the statistical release of the two definitions of short-term migrants used (para 3.17). |
| Requirement 5 | Provide information about the quality and reliability of the statistics in relation to the range of potential uses (para 3.23). |
| Requirement 6 | Ensure that the Short Term Migration estimates are clearly accessible on the website (para 3.25). |
| Requirement 7 | Review and improve the presentation of the <i>Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales</i> report, and include commentary that provides contextual information, key points, additional analysis, importance and use (para 3.26). |
| Requirement 8 | Provide users with access to data tables to enable further analysis and re-use (para 3.27). |
| Requirement 9 | Provide the name and contact details of the responsible statistician in the report (para 3.32). |

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales* provides information about the number of visits of between 1 and 12 months made to England and Wales by overseas residents; the number of visits made overseas of between 1 and 12 months by British residents; the average stock of short-term visitors in England and Wales over a 12 month period; and the average stock of British residents on short-term visits overseas over a twelve month period. The United Nations' definition of a short-term migrant¹⁵ is used as well as a broader definition, in response to users' needs.
- 2.2 The topic of short-term migration has been of increasing interest in recent years. The accession of Eastern European countries to the European Union has resulted in new patterns of migration emerging. Migration statistics are an important component of population estimates, which themselves underpin decision-making on policy development, resource allocation and service delivery at a national and local level.
- 2.3 Local authorities' (LAs') funding is based on mid-year estimates of the population, which do not include short-term migrants. STM statistics estimate the difference between official population statistics and local authorities' understanding of population levels based on data from administrative sources. LAs hope that with accurate STM estimates, their funding settlements can more accurately reflect the burden on resources.
- 2.4 STM estimates are based on data from the IPS and provide statistics for England and Wales only. These estimates were initially published as tables in a feasibility report in January 2007, and consequently as experimental statistics¹⁶. They have been developed in line with user consultation to ensure that they meet user needs. As the IPS collects data across the UK, there is potential for GB and UK level estimates to be produced.
- 2.5 The development of estimates of short-term migration for LA areas is underway. Administrative data will be used to distribute England and Wales level estimates across LAs. Sound estimates at this geographic level are important to LAs, where they will be used in financial settlements and planning.
- 2.6 The IPS is primarily used for the collection of travel and tourism data and for the travel accounts of the Balance of Payments¹⁷. The only cost to the STM team involves the use of an analyst to produce the required tables and carry out the analysis of the resulting statistics. The cost of producing the estimates was approximately £6,000 in 2009/10, and this is expected to decrease in future as processes become more efficient.

¹⁵ Slide 10: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/migrationegm06/DOC%20%20Linda%20Concepts%20presentationGB.ppt#10>

¹⁶ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=15363>

¹⁷ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=1118>

3 Assessment findings

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

- 3.1 The principal users of STM estimates have been integral to the development of the output. The Short-term Migration Reference Group meets quarterly and includes representatives from LAs and central government. During the development of STM estimates its role was to comment on methods, check provisional results and to help develop the publication. The Local Population Estimates Working Group has representatives mainly from central government and includes discussion of STM estimates. As part of IMPS, ONS meets regularly with LAs, gives presentations to users within government, LAs and academics, and runs road shows to promote awareness of the ongoing development work and to receive feedback from users. The STM feasibility report requested feedback from users. A summary of this feedback was published in 2007¹⁸ together with ONS's response and an action plan.
- 3.2 ONS continues to provide opportunities for all users to give feedback through the road shows and the website. However there is not much evidence of how this feedback has influenced the development of the statistics. ONS has provided examples of non-government users' involvement in the development and approval of the methodology, but there seems to be little continuing engagement with non-government users. Some users who contacted us in response to this assessment thought that "short-term migration will not receive the attention it merits if it is discussed as part of the broader population and migration debate," and are concerned that "attention will focus only on the elements that contribute towards the official estimates of the population." As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should continue to take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of the statistics outside government, and the needs of current and potential users; publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics¹⁹ (Requirement 1).
- 3.3 STM estimates are published each February, at the same time as the cross-government coordinated release of migration statistics²⁰ and the LTM estimates²¹. The reasons for the lag of 20 months between the reference period and publication are explained in the statistical report (see para 3.10).

¹⁸ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/archive-pre-08/updates/summary-of-feedback-received-to-short-term-migration-feasibility-report.pdf>

¹⁹ In relation to Principle 1, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*.

²⁰ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Product.asp?vlnk=15230>

²¹ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15053>

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

- 3.4 *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales* is available in PDF format on ONS's website, free of charge. ONS told us that the statistics will be made available in Excel table format as soon as possible. However, updates to ONS's website are restricted because of ONS's web improvement programme currently underway (see para 3.27).
- 3.5 The statistics team told us that it adheres to ONS's revisions policy²². Some provisional data are used in producing STM estimates, to improve the timeliness of the statistics. The estimates are revised in the subsequent publication with differences between the two sets of figures explained in the publication's Appendix. We suggest that ONS indicate which figures have been revised in the tables.
- 3.6 During the development of STM estimates, changes to methods and classifications were announced as part of the IMPS programme and through the reference and working groups. The STM team assured us that any future changes would be announced in advance in accordance with *the Code of Practice*.
- 3.7 There is currently no pre-release access to these statistics.

²² http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/methodology_by_theme/revisions_policies/default.asp

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

- 3.8 ONS publishes *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales* separately from government or political statements, and there is no evidence of any information being released before publication.
- 3.9 No incidents of political pressure or abuse of trust were reported to or identified by the Assessment team in the course of this assessment.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

- 3.10 The data used to produce STM estimates are collected in the IPS. Explanations of the methods used and why they were chosen are given in the annual release, the Summary Quality Report²³ and the Methodology paper²⁴. Data are collected in interviews conducted at the end of each migrant's visit (in order to provide more accurate information about length of stay and location). The STM estimates are produced on a mid-year basis, whereas the IPS statistics are produced on a calendar year basis. This causes a further delay while the weights for IPS are finalised. As a result of these two factors, there is currently a 20-month time lag between the reference period and publication of statistics.
- 3.11 The use of some provisional data in more recent publications has enabled the publication of the statistics to be brought forward by eight months. A comparison of estimates produced using final data with estimates produced using provisional data found minimal differences between the two sets of estimates. Each annual release updates the previous year's provisional data and provides a similar assessment of quality.
- 3.12 A large time lag between the reference period and the publication of the statistics is an inevitable result of the survey design. Although a reduction has been made, there is the possibility of further improvements. The STM team told us that investigations have been made into the feasibility of reducing the time lag further. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should publish their investigations into further reducing the time lag between the reference period and publication²⁵ (Requirement 2).
- 3.13 The methods used for calculating STM estimates have been accepted by ONS's Methodology Directorate, the Short-term Migration Reference Group and the ONS Centre for Demography's Research Review Group. The latter comprises statisticians and expert users from government and academia. Some users who contacted us in response to this assessment voiced concern about small sample sizes. The STM team assured us that the sample is sufficiently large for sound estimates to be calculated, and that the cost of an increased sample size may outweigh the potential benefits. The sample size has increased considerably since the redesign of the IPS after the Port Survey Review in 2008. The sample size for STM is provided in the methodology paper.
- 3.14 To help users assess the quality of the STM estimates, standard errors (SEs) are published in the data tables. The statistical release and the methodology

²³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/quality/qual-info-economic-social-and-bus-stats/quality-reports-for-social-statistics/summary-quality-report-for-short-term-migration-estimates.doc>

²⁴ http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/stmmethodology.pdf

²⁵ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*.

paper state that SEs greater than 25% should be treated with caution. However, ONS does not provide users with information on the quality and reliability of the statistics in relation to the range of potential uses (see para 3.23). Furthermore, there is little explanation for non-statistical users of how SEs should be interpreted. We suggest that ONS provide a clearer explanation how to interpret SEs for a less technical audience.

- 3.15 The methodology report provides a brief explanation of non-sampling errors and the bias that may be introduced because of them. These are general issues that affect the IPS as a whole. There is no discussion of non-sampling errors specific to STM in either the methodology report or *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should provide a more detailed explanation of non-sampling errors and how the short-term migration estimates may be affected by the bias that they can introduce²⁶ (Requirement 3).
- 3.16 There have been challenges in quality assuring the STM estimates as the collection of data for this specific type of migration is relatively new and therefore brings with it challenges to its accurate estimation. STM trends are compared with trends in LTM and any divergences are queried with the IPS team. STM estimates have also been combined with LTM estimates in order to reconcile with data from administrative sources, published as the reconciliation report²⁷. The STM team told us about quality assurance work using the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP's) Lifetime Labour Market Database, the Migrant Workers Scan, and statistics from the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Progress is reported through the IMPS quarterly updates²⁸.
- 3.17 The estimates are presented using the UN definition of a short-term migrant as well as a broader definition, as requested by users. However, neither definition is explained in the statistical release. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should provide an explanation in the statistical release of the two definitions of short-term migrants used²⁹ (Requirement 4).

²⁶ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*.

²⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/updates-reports/a-reconciliation-exercise-between-ips-based-estimates-of-international-immigration-and-counts-from-administrative-sources.pdf>

²⁸ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/updates-reports/current-updates-reports/migration-statistics-improvement-work-programme-update-november-2010.pdf>

²⁹ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*.

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.

3.18 ONS has assured us that it takes all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data it collects. These include data suppression, and aggregation, to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. ONS has developed statistical disclosure control policies for different types of statistical outputs, to protect confidentiality whilst meeting users' needs.

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

- 3.19 STM estimates are produced using data from the IPS, the respondent burden of which is minimal. Interviews are carried out with people in transit through airports, seaports and Eurostar, and information about the survey, including confidentiality protection measures is given verbally. The response rate is estimated at around 80%.
- 3.20 ONS is becoming more proactive in its exploitation of administrative data relating to migration. Phase 1 of IMPS focused on gaining access to record-level data from administrative sources – for example, DWP’s Lifetime Labour Market Database – for use in compiling and quality assuring migration estimates. Phase 2 of IMPS is focusing on using these administrative data, in particular, for the development of short-term migration estimates for LA areas.

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

- 3.21 The development of STM estimates is funded from a range of government organisations, including the Home Office, DWP and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The cost of producing the statistics is estimated to be approximately £6,000.
- 3.22 There is a risk that a reduction in departmental budgets could mean that the funding for the development of LA estimates is reduced. The well-documented necessity of these statistics for LAs and the extensive user involvement in their development may help mitigate against this happening.

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.

- 3.23 The statistical reports contain helpful information about data quality, methods used and classifications. However, there is no information to help users understand how the quality and reliability of the statistics may impact upon the use of the statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should provide information about the quality and reliability of the statistics in relation to the range of potential uses³⁰ (Requirement 5).
- 3.24 Additional information is also provided in the methodology report and the Summary Quality report. The development of the estimates is well-documented but finding this information online could be easier. We suggest that ONS provide clearer links and sign-posting to documentation about the development of these statistics.
- 3.25 The STM estimates have been published as experimental statistics since their inception in 2007. When the statistics were put forward for assessment a specific product page was created for the STM outputs. The product page is not linked under the 'Population and Migration' theme pages, nor is it linked from the IMPS area. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should ensure the STM estimates are easily accessible on its website³¹ (Requirement 6).
- 3.26 *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales* contains no contextual information, key points or any analysis that goes beyond describing rises and falls in the time series. There is no explanation in the releases about why the statistics are important and for what they are likely to be used. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should review and improve the presentation of the *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales* report, and include commentary that provides contextual information, key points, additional analysis, importance and use³² (Requirement 7). We also suggest that charts be added to the publication in order to highlight trends in STM estimates.
- 3.27 The STM estimates are currently available only as data tables published within the PDF report. There is no way for users to download the data for further analysis. ONS told us that the statistics will be made available in Excel tables as soon as possible. However, updates to ONS's website are currently restricted because of the ongoing web improvement programme. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should provide users with access to data tables to encourage further analysis and re-use³³ (Requirement 8).

³⁰ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*.

³¹ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*.

³² In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*.

³³ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*.

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

3.28 The requirements for this Protocol are covered elsewhere in this report.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

- 3.29 There is currently no pre-release access to STM estimates. ONS has told the assessment team that should access be requested for a future release, then an appropriate pre-release list would be prepared according to ONS pre-release guidance.
- 3.30 All ONS releases are accessible through the National Statistics Publication Hub. ONS publishes a full timetable of releases, and announces any changes to the timetable. The STM estimates are published 20 months after the reference period. The reasons for this are clearly explained in the report and in the methodology paper.
- 3.31 The Code requires National Statistics releases to be issued at 9.30am on the day of publication. ONS's website systems do not enable releases to be published simultaneously, which means there is sometimes a delay beyond 9.30am. ONS informed us that this matter is being reviewed as part of its web development programme, which ONS expects to be implemented on 30 April 2011. The Head of Assessment has agreed an exemption from Protocol 2 Practice 4 for ONS until the new website functionality is available. The exemption request and the Head of Assessment's response are available on the Statistics Authority's website³⁴.
- 3.32 As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should provide the name and contact details of the responsible statistician in the report³⁵ (Requirement 9).

³⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/exemption-requests/index.html>

³⁵ In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*.

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

- 3.33 As part of the IMPS programme, extensive work has been carried out to investigate ways of using administrative data in the production of migration statistics. The first phase of the programme sought and gained access to record level administrative data from various sources. For example, ONS now has access to data on students from the Higher Education Statistics Agency and data from DWP's Lifetime Labour Market Database. The second phase, currently underway, is putting that data to use.
- 3.34 As part of this second phase, the STM team is using administrative data in the development of estimates of STM for LA areas. A first attempt at distributing the England and Wales level data to LAs using a regression model was published in a research report³⁶. As a result of feedback from users, a second method which uses administrative data more directly is currently being developed.
- 3.35 A key use of the STM estimates is to provide an understanding of the differences between official mid-year population estimates (which do not include STMs) and population estimates derived from administrative sources. A reconciliation exercise between STM estimates and data from administrative sources³⁷ has been published. Some improvements were made to the methods for producing STM estimates as a result of this work. For example, additional questions were added into the IPS to provide information on location of stay and reasons for visit.
- 3.36 ONS has explored the potential for using data from the eBorders system³⁸, but the STM team told us that initial analysis of data from the pilot (Project Semaphore³⁹) concluded that the data would be of little benefit to STM estimates. ONS is continuing to work with the UK Border Agency to ensure that the statistical benefits of eBorders in relation to migration estimates are maximised. However, delays in the implementation of eBorders together with future budget constraints may reduce its use for further statistical purposes. We suggest ONS keep users informed of progress with the eBorders project.
- 3.37 ONS has published a Statement of Administrative Sources⁴⁰.

³⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/updates-reports/historical-updates-reports/updates-reports-09/research-report-on-local-authority-level-short-term-migration-estimates---october-2009.pdf>

³⁷ Data came from three administrative sources: General Practitioner Flag 4 registrations; National Insurance number allocations to overseas nationals; Worker Registration Scheme.

³⁸ <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/travellingtotheuk/beforetravel/advanceinfopassengers/>

³⁹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmhaff/170/17004.htm>

⁴⁰ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/ns-standard/cop/statement-of-administrative-sources/index.html>

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to *Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales*, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

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| Suggestion 1 | As part of documenting the use of these statistics (see Requirement 1), refer to the types of use put forward in the Monitoring Brief: <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> ⁴¹ (para 3.2). |
| Suggestion 2 | Indicate which figures have been revised in the tables (para 3.5). |
| Suggestion 3 | Provide a clearer explanation how to interpret standard errors for a less technical audience (para 3.14). |
| Suggestion 4 | Provide clearer links and sign-posting to the documentation on the development of STM estimates (para 3.24). |
| Suggestion 5 | Add charts to the <i>Estimates of Short-term Migration for England and Wales</i> report in order to highlight trends in STM estimates (para 3.26). |
| Suggestion 6 | Keep users informed of progress with the eBorders project (para 3.36). |

⁴¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from September 2010 to January 2011.

A2.2 The Assessment team – Rachel Beardsmore and Kim Reimann – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of ONS in September 2010. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 2 November 2010. The Assessment team subsequently met the ONS during November 2010 to review compliance with the Code of Practice, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A2.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare assessment reports.

A2.4 The Assessment team received 5 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Local Government Association	1
Local Authority	2
ONS	1
UK Government	1

A2.5 The users who responded were generally satisfied with the engagement by the producer team but it was felt that there was still room for improvement.

A2.6 Short Term Migration estimates are considered highly useful for examining outflows from, and (especially) inflows to, local authority areas. This information is important to determine the allocation of central government funding to LAs. However, some users expressed concern that the statistics may suffer from bias as the collection methods do not measure flows in comparable ways.

A2.7 Users expressed a desire for statistics to be produced for LA areas. Also, it was suggested that the data might be used more efficiently in conjunction with eBorders data.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

