

# Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

## Statistics on Migration

*(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 of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics**

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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 reports<sup>1</sup> prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*<sup>2</sup>. The Act gives the Statistics Authority power to re-assess whether the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*<sup>3</sup> continues to be complied with in relation to official statistics already designated as National Statistics. The report covers the sets of statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and reported in:

- *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report*<sup>4</sup> (MSQR); and
- *Internal Migration by Local Authorities in England and Wales*<sup>5</sup> (IM).

1.1.2 The previous assessment of these sets of statistics was reported in Assessment report 8<sup>6</sup>. They have been re-assessed as part of the Statistics Authority's ongoing programme of re-assessment. This is discussed further in annex 4.

1.1.3 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Assessment Committee on behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, based 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 the points for action in paragraph 1.5 of this report.

1.2.2 However, as discussed in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7, migration statistics have been subject to a number of wider reviews in recent years. These have indicated that the current methods, whilst the best available within current constraints (and therefore compliant with the Code of Practice), are in certain respects unsatisfactory in terms of their robustness for particular uses. This report needs to be read in conjunction with the letter<sup>7</sup> from the Chairman of the UK Statistics Authority to the Chairman of the Public Administration Select Committee of 6 December which addresses how statistics to meet these needs might be created.

1.2.3 Assessment reports relate solely to compliance with the Code of Practice and the Statistics Authority therefore confirms that the statistics listed in 1.1.1 are designated as National Statistics, subject to ONS implementing the

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

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga\\_20070018\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf)

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

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/internal-migration-by-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-8---migration-statistics--27-july-2009.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-andrew-dilnot-to-bernard-jenkin-mp-ukxa-response-hc-523-06122013.pdf>

enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by March 2014.

- 1.2.4 ONS has informed the Assessment team that it has started to implement the Requirements listed in section 1.5. The Statistics Authority welcomes this.

### 1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.3.1 ONS has responded well to the needs of users in creating and developing the *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (MSQR)*. *MSQR* presents long-term international migration (LTIM) statistics alongside a range of complementary statistics. It presents the statistics clearly, relates the different sources used, and provides some useful commentary. However, *MSQR* does not include the full range of statistics about migration that ONS produces; the migration element of the mid-year population statistics, which ONS publishes in *Population Estimates for England and Wales*<sup>8</sup>, was added to the August 2013 publication of *MSQR*<sup>9</sup>. ONS publishes some information about the quality of the statistics and the methods used to produce them but some users reported ongoing uncertainty about the most appropriate ways in which to use the statistics and the handling of confidence intervals around them.
- 1.3.2 ONS makes good use of administrative data sources to supplement the data provided by the International Passenger Survey<sup>10</sup> (IPS) and is continuing to develop models to help address the limitations of the survey. ONS provides confidence intervals for the IPS statistics used to produce LTIM statistics but presents little information about how the addition of further data sources to IPS to create the LTIM statistics impacts the confidence intervals, or how non-sampling errors impact on the uncertainty associated with the statistics. ONS provides a substantial amount of accompanying information to support the use of these statistics and about the IPS itself, but there is limited documentation to provide a fuller and more coherent explanation of the strengths and limitations in relation to different uses of the data. ONS continues to develop the internal migration (IM) statistics and has made recent improvements to the measurement of student migration.
- 1.3.3 There is a wide community of users of both sets of statistics, and various groups exist that enable ONS to engage with users. ONS discusses the statistics at a variety of events, is effective in handling user requests for data, and is developing its approach to engagement with policy makers and indirect users of the statistics.

### 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

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-england-and-wales/mid-2002-to-mid-2010-revised--national-/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> See paragraph A2.13

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/surveys/respondents/household/international-passenger-survey/index.html>

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.

## 1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

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|----------------------|--|
| <b>Requirement 1</b> | a) publish an updated strategy for engaging with users of migration and other population statistics, and b) review and document the arrangements for the production and publication of migration statistics alongside other population statistics, in order to improve the coherence and accessibility of population statistics as a whole (para 3.3). |
| <b>Requirement 2</b> | Set out a consistent approach to announcing changes to methods well in advance of the changed statistics and notify users (para 3.5).  |
| <b>Requirement 3</b> | Explain clearly and with more detail the strengths and limitations of the LTIM and IM statistics, including information about the main sources of bias and other uncertainty, in relation to the use and potential use of them (para 3.21).  |
| <b>Requirement 4</b> | Improve the commentary and charts in <i>IM</i> and <i>MSQR</i> so that they aid user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.22).   |
| <b>Requirement 5</b> | Investigate the feasibility of reducing the time-lag between the reference period and publication of <i>IM</i> and publish the findings (para 3.26).   |



## 2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 International migration statistics seek to measure the flow of people to and from the UK and are published by ONS, the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Internal migration (IM) statistics seek to measure the flow of people between different parts of England and Wales. The migration statistics covered by this report are those produced by ONS for long-term international migration (LTIM), as presented in *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (MSQR)*, and internal migration. ONS also publishes a range of short-term migration statistics in the *Short-term International Migration Annual Report* which were the subject of an earlier assessment<sup>11</sup>.
- 2.2 Long-term international migrants are defined as those who change their country of residence for a period of 12 months or more. ONS publishes LTIM statistics quarterly in *MSQR*. The statistics are published as provisional rolling year statistics for the years ending in March, June, September, and December, with final, revised, figures for the previous calendar year published each November.
- 2.3 LTIM statistics are primarily based on data from the International Passenger Survey<sup>12</sup> (IPS). The data are adjusted to allow for flows to and from Northern Ireland (with data provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency), those who change their migration intentions (for example, those intending to migrate who then decide to return to their origin country within 12 months), and asylum seekers (with data provided by the Home Office). The IPS is a face to face sample survey of passengers entering or leaving the UK with around 800,000 interviews per year; of these, around 5,000 are interviews with migrants. The IPS is carried out by ONS and was initially designed to produce data for National Accounts on tourism, but incorporates additional questions to measure migration using agreed UN definitions of migration.
- 2.4 *Internal Migration by Local Authorities in England and Wales (IM)* is published annually and presents statistics that measure the movement of people within England and Wales between local authorities. *IM* also includes statistics on migration between regions<sup>13</sup>, along with a brief comparison of internal migration against other EU countries. Internal migration statistics are based on a combination of data on NHS GP patient registrations, collected from the National Health Service Central Register, the Patient Register Data System, and data on students from the Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- 2.5 Migration statistics have been subject to several reviews over recent years. ONS established the Migration Statistics Improvement Programme<sup>14</sup> in 2008 to address concerns about the way that migration is estimated and to seek: a more coherent approach to the reporting of migration statistics; and updates to the data sources used to compile the statistics. *MSQR* formed part of the response to these concerns and addressed some of the requirements of the

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<sup>11</sup> Assessment report 247: <http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-247---statistics-on-short-term-international-migration-for-england-and-wales.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 10

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/beginner-s-guide/administrative/england/government-office-regions/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/imps/index.html>

Statistics Authority's assessment of these statistics in 2009<sup>15</sup>. ONS published a final report at the close of the project in 2012 summarising the outcome of the MSIP<sup>16</sup>.

- 2.6 The Statistics Authority published a Monitoring Report, *Migration Statistics: the Way Ahead?*<sup>17</sup> in July 2009, reporting on progress being made by ONS against previous reviews and the recommendations of a report from the House of Commons Treasury Committee *Counting the population*<sup>18</sup>. The Monitoring Report also considered the adequacy of ONS's plans for improving migration statistics and the effectiveness of co-operation across government in response to previous reviews. The Statistics Authority also published a Monitoring Review, *The Robustness of the International Passenger Survey*<sup>19</sup> in June 2013, which concluded that IPS statistics were broadly sufficient to meet a range of user needs for migration statistics at the UK level, but that there was not sufficient robustness to meet needs for migration data at lower geographic levels.
- 2.7 As part of a wider programme of work considering statistics and their use within government, a Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) report, *Migration Statistics*<sup>20</sup>, published in July 2013, identified a range of limitations in the use of LTIM statistics, particularly in measuring progress towards meeting the Government's migration targets and in analysing migration statistics at lower level geographies. The report identified the e-Borders programme<sup>21</sup> as an opportunity for further developing the statistics and suggested that other approaches to data collection should be considered by ONS and the Home Office. A letter from the Chairman of the UK Statistics Authority to the Chairman of PASC addressed how statistics to meet these needs might be created<sup>22</sup>.
- 2.8 ONS has published *MSQR* since 2009. In addition to the LTIM statistics based on the IPS, *MSQR* includes links to statistics on nationality from the Annual Population Survey, population by country of birth (produced by ONS), entry clearance visas issued to the UK (produced by the Home Office), immigration statistics (produced by the Home Office), and National Insurance numbers allocated to adult overseas nationals entering the UK (produced by DWP).
- 2.9 ONS adopts the standard UN definition for the recording of long-term international migration; those who move from their previous country of residence for a period of 12 months or more. ONS is required by EU legislation (regulation (EC) No 862/2007<sup>23</sup>) to supply Eurostat with migration statistics. The EU requirements are for a level of detail that cannot be produced reliably

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<sup>15</sup> See footnote 6

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/imps/latest-news/msip-final-report/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/authority-report-4--migration-statistics-the-way-ahead.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Volume 1 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmtreasy/183/183.pdf> and volume 2 <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.com/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmtreasy/183/183ii.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-review-4-2013---the-robustness-of-the-international-passenger-survey.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubadm/523/52302.htm>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/business-sponsors/transportindustry/ebordersrequires/>

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 7

<sup>23</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:199:0023:0029:EN:PDF>

from IPS data; ONS has developed modelled estimates to meet these obligations.

- 2.10 The statistics team told us that LTIM statistics are used in the compilation of population statistics and projections by ONS, other government departments, and local authorities. The Government has an objective<sup>24</sup> of reducing net migration from 'hundreds of thousands a year to... tens of thousands'; one of the Home Office's impact indicators<sup>25</sup> uses LTIM statistics to monitor the effectiveness of its policies for this government objective. LTIM statistics are also used by other governments departments to inform policy development and planning. IM statistics are used by local authorities for the planning and allocation of services. LTIM statistics are used by interest groups, such as Migration Watch UK<sup>26</sup> to monitor the effectiveness of government policies, and by academics and analytical consultants studying the dynamics of population change.
- 2.11 The migration statistics presented in *MSQR* and *IM* are published in PDF and HTML formats, with supplementary tables published in Excel format. A detailed file of the movement of people between local authorities by age and sex for internal migration is produced in csv format but is not routinely published. This equates to a level 2 rating under the Five Star Scheme proposed in the *Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential*<sup>27</sup>.
- 2.12 ONS told us that the staff resources used to produce these statistics is approximately 13 full-time equivalent staff.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/immigration-speech-by-the-prime-minister>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-business-plan-impact-indicators--2>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.migrationwatchuk.co.uk/>

<sup>27</sup> [http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open\\_data\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf)

### 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 ONS engages with users of migration statistics through a range of user forums and working groups including the Migration Statistics User Forum, the Migration Statistics Working Group (MSWG), the Population Group and the Central and Local Information Partnership (CLIP) Population sub-group<sup>28</sup>. MSWG is made up of representatives from ONS and other government departments, including the Home Office, DWP and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Population Group includes representatives of local authorities, analytical consultants and academics; its user group meets annually but its steering group meets more regularly. ONS convenes a Local Insight Reference Panel, which brings together representatives from local authorities, for *IM* with the most recent meeting in July 2013. Updates on migration statistics and related development work formed part of ONS's Population Statistics Roadshows<sup>29</sup>, held in Newport, Manchester and London. As a result of the roadshows, ONS is developing ways to engage better with policy makers and other indirect users of the statistics.
- 3.2 ONS has responded to user feedback in developing the content of *MSQR* and the report continues to evolve. ONS ran consultations for LTIM statistics<sup>30</sup> and *IM*<sup>31</sup> to consider changes from quarterly to annual publication of the datasets.
- 3.3 Migration statistics are a key measure of population change and the production of population statistics is dependent on them. However, the relationship between the two sets of statistics is not clearly explained to users. In December 2012, ONS published revised mid-year population estimates<sup>32</sup> to reconcile them with population statistics from the 2011 Census. The census population estimate for England and Wales 2011 was 464,000 higher than the 2011 mid-year population estimate. ONS attributed the majority of the difference (344,000) to net migration being more than originally estimated. ONS published the revised net migration component of the population change for the previous decade alongside the revised mid-year population estimates but not alongside the LTIM statistics in either the February 2013 or May 2013 publications of *MSQR*. ONS told us that it did not specifically ask users if they required LTIM statistics to be revised to reflect the higher estimates, and no users came forward requesting a revision. Instead, ONS proposed to publish an analytical paper to address the issue of the discrepancies between the mid-year

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.clip.local.gov.uk/lgv/core/page.do?pagelid=31637>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/user-engagement/events/population-statistics-roadshows/index.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/user-engagement/consultations-and-surveys/archived-consultations/2012/international-migration/index.html>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/user-engagement/consultations-and-surveys/archived-consultations/2012/ceasing-production-of-rolling-year-interregional-migration-estimates/index.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-england-and-wales/mid-2002-to-mid-2010-revised--national/index.html>

population and LTIM statistics. As a result of public criticism<sup>33</sup>, ONS told us that it intends to present both of these sets of statistics within *MSQR* in future. The migration element of the mid-year population statistics was added to the August 2013 publication of *MSQR*<sup>34</sup>. This example suggests that the planning and coherence across the range of population statistics that ONS produces needs to be strengthened. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should a) publish an updated strategy for engaging with users of migration and other population statistics, and b) review and document the arrangements for the production and publication of migration statistics alongside other population statistics, in order to improve the coherence and accessibility of population statistics as a whole<sup>35</sup> (Requirement 1).

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-andrew-green-to-sir-andrew-dilnot-080713.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> See paragraph A2.13

<sup>35</sup> In relation to Principle 1, Practice 3 and Protocol 1, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

## Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

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

- 3.4 ONS publishes the statistics in an orderly manner and they are presented impartially and objectively. The statistics are equally available free of charge to users.
- 3.5 ONS does not consistently inform users of planned changes in advance and this information is not provided in a way that all users can access, often being limited to those who are part of particular groups or forums. ONS describes changes to methods in documents that accompany the statistical reports and ONS told us that it presents changes to the statistics and reports to user forums and working groups (see para 3.1); however, it is not clear how those outside these groups would receive this information in advance of the changes and whether planned changes are presented to all relevant groups. Decisions about the development of the statistics made in some of these groups (for example MSWG) do not seem to be communicated to other users and stakeholders. Since the formal end of the MSIP, the publication of information about user engagement, developments to the statistics and further analysis has become disjointed; ONS told us that the new migration statistics landing page on its website should provide more coherence across the documentation around migration statistics. The population theme page<sup>36</sup> includes sections that can be used to highlight development work in progress. Changes to the student adjustment to IM statistics were discussed with users within the CLIP group and a report was published in October 2012 ahead of the implementation of the change in the June 2013 *IM*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should set out a consistent approach to announcing changes to methods well in advance of the changed statistics and notify users<sup>37</sup> (Requirement 2). We suggest that ONS publish the papers and minutes of decision making groups on its website.
- 3.6 ONS published a revisions policy in 2007 for Population Statistics<sup>38</sup> that is also used for its migration statistics. ONS told us that there is no routine period for updating the policy, but that it has recently discussed the production of an updated version. We suggest that ONS review the revisions policy used for migration statistics and publish an updated version if necessary.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Population>

<sup>37</sup> In relation to Principle 2, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/revisions/revisions-policies-by-theme/population/index.html>

### **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.**

- 3.7 No incidents of political pressures, abuses of trust or complaints relating to professional integrity, quality or standards were reported to or identified by the Assessment team.



## 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.**

- 3.8 ONS uses a combination of survey and administrative data sources to produce migration statistics in the absence of a single system in the UK for monitoring migration within the population. Within Europe, the only other countries to adopt this approach are the Republic of Ireland and Cyprus. ONS sufficiently sets out the different sources and methods used to produce the statistics within the statistical reports and separate methods documents<sup>39</sup>. The recent development of a migration landing page<sup>40</sup> with links to the relevant methodology section has made accessing these documents easier.
- 3.9 The IPS is the primary source of data for LTIM statistics and the only survey component. Participation in the survey is voluntary and identifies around 5,000 respondents with long-term migration intentions within the total sample of around 800,000 interviews per year. Whilst this sample size does allow estimates of migration at the UK level to be made, these estimates are subject to relatively wide margins of uncertainty (any sample based estimate has some associated uncertainty). The sample estimates of course are also dependent on the accuracy of the information provided by those people interviewed. Combined with additional sources, IPS data are suitable for analysis at the UK level with modelling used to produce statistics at a sub-national level.
- 3.10 The LTIM statistics include adjustments to account for respondents who change their original intentions, either changing to become visitors rather than migrants (migration switchers) or vice-versa (visitor switchers). ONS told us that it is carrying out additional research into migration and visitor switchers and reviewing the assumptions used in their measurement to ensure that they correctly account for the changing balance of countries of origin among migrants.
- 3.11 ONS has published a report, *Delivering statistical benefits from e-Borders*<sup>41</sup>, on the benefits that e-Borders data could deliver, and the recent PASC report<sup>42</sup> recommends that ONS further develop LTIM by linking IPS and e-Borders data 'as soon as possible'. The use of e-Borders entails an increased lag in the collection of data as data must also be collected on the later movements of those entering or leaving the UK (for example, there is a lag of 12 months to confirm whether an entrant to the UK can be recorded as a long-term migrant). e-Borders will mainly be able to enhance the headline statistics when it becomes available; it cannot provide the detailed information about migrants that IPS provides, such as the intended final destination within the UK, so it would need to continue to be supplemented with other data sources. *Delivering*

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/international-migration-methodology/index.html> and <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/internal-migration-methodology/index.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Migration>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/imps/latest-news/delivering-statistical-benefits-from-e-borders/index.html>

<sup>42</sup> See footnote 20



*statistical benefits from e-Borders* states that ONS aims to complete the second phase of feasibility research by mid-2013 and indicates that some benefits could be realised before full coverage is achieved. ONS has since informed us that this research will not be completed before mid-2015. We suggest that ONS updates users on the progress of this research together with its plans for developing migration statistics with e-Borders.

- 3.12 ONS has investigated ways to improve the LTIM statistics and evaluated the suitability of the administrative sources used for producing LTIM<sup>43</sup> as part of the MSIP. In addition, development work for using administrative sources for distributing the LTIM statistics to lower geographical levels has led to improved estimates of LTIM by local authority<sup>44</sup>. ONS has developed models to meet Eurostat's requirements for very detailed statistics, as the IPS is not reliable enough to provide these. Eurostat is content that the UK is now meeting its obligations. Academics at the University of Southampton have published an analysis<sup>45</sup> of other administrative data sources that could be used to improve the statistics but the LTIM statistical team told us that this would require substantial resources to implement.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/imps/latest-news/using-administrative-data-to-set-plausibility-ranges/index.html>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/imps/improvements-to-local-authority-immigration-estimates/index.html>

<sup>45</sup> [http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/338976/1/2011\\_WP15\\_Improving\\_Estimates\\_of\\_Migration\\_Flows\\_Raymer\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/338976/1/2011_WP15_Improving_Estimates_of_Migration_Flows_Raymer_et_al.pdf)

## **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.**

- 3.13 ONS has assured us that it takes all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data it collects. This includes the provision of information to respondents to the IPS survey and in the handling of the administrative datasets used in the production of LTIM and IM statistics.
- 3.14 IPS interviews follow guidance that makes it clear to respondents that their responses are confidential and that no data that could identify them are collected in the survey.
- 3.15 ONS receives administrative data from other government departments via encrypted email, secure data transfer, or by direct access from secure servers.

## 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.**

- 3.16 ONS publishes the respondent burden<sup>46</sup> (as time taken) for social surveys, including the IPS, in its compliance plan.
- 3.17 e-Borders is a Home Office security system currently being rolled out across UK ports. It will collect travel document information about people travelling to and from the UK. The system was not developed to provide complete migration statistics; however, data from e-Borders have the potential to enhance LTIM and other migration statistics (see para 3.11).

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/what-we-do/corporate-documentation/compliance/compliance-and-simplification-plans/compliance-plan-2011-12.pdf>

## 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.**

- 3.18 Although the LTIM statistical team told us that it currently has a vacancy within the team, ONS has developed a new data processing system that it told us will lead to efficiencies, but these efficiencies have not yet been fully realised. ONS has told us that it considers LTIM to be a priority output and is not expected to be subject to any significant cuts resulting from the latest spending review.
- 3.19 ONS has estimated that it would cost £15 million to reduce the standard errors around the IPS statistics by 50 per cent; ONS told us that it does not consider that this would provide sufficient value for money.

## Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

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

- 3.20 ONS publishes information about the quality of LTIM statistics in various documents that are linked to *MSQR*. These include guidance on comparing different data sources<sup>47</sup> and quality and methodology information<sup>48</sup> for LTIM statistics and the IPS. ONS provides confidence intervals around the IPS statistics used to produce LTIM statistics in Excel format but not within *MSQR*. *MSQR* describes the confidence intervals as information about statistical uncertainty, with links to documents in its introduction section, but includes no information about how users should interpret the confidence intervals in relation to how the statistics might be used. The August 2013 publication of *MSQR* included a new section on ‘Accuracy’ and further detail on confidence intervals has been added to the supporting documentation. While ONS provides a substantial amount of accompanying information to support the use of its migration statistics and about the IPS itself, improvements could be made by ONS to provide a fuller and more coherent explanation of the strengths and limitations in relation to different uses of the data. ONS presents little information about how the addition of further data sources to IPS to create the LTIM statistics impacts the confidence intervals around the statistics, or how non-sampling errors (such as systematic bias in the willingness of different groups to respond to the survey) impact on the accuracy of the statistics. *MSQR* provides a few useful caveats around the interpretation of some statistics, for example visas by world area, but the limitations of the statistics in relation to particular uses are not clearly conveyed. The LTIM statistics team has published a user guide for new or infrequent users of migration statistics<sup>49</sup> to support their use.
- 3.21 *IM* also links to some documents about quality, including Methodology Information<sup>50</sup> and provides a brief description of the data sources and the limitations of each source if used independently. *IM* provides caveats around statistics that may have been affected by a change to methods, but there is scope for additional guidance for interpreting some of the statistics. For example, Figure 2 of the June 2013 publication shows a steady increase in the proportion of movers from age 77; however, the commentary does not explain that the small base means one mover has a greater impact on this proportion. ONS published *Estimating Internal Migration; Customer Guidance Notes*<sup>51</sup> for users about the data sources in January 2013 but does not provide a link to this from *IM*. The confidence intervals relating to IPS statistics are presented but the further degree of uncertainty associated with the additional data sources used to create the UK level statistics are not sufficiently explained. The limits the potential understanding of users in interpreting the statistics. As part of the

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/may-2013/userinfo.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/quality-information/social-statistics/quality-and-methodology-information-for-long-term-international-migration-estimates.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/external-links/other/international-migration-stats-first-time-user-guide.html>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/estimating-internal-migration-customer-guidance-notes.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/internal-migration-methodology/estimating-internal-migration-customer-guidance-notes---november-2012.doc>

designation as National Statistics, ONS should explain clearly and with more detail the strengths and limitations of the LTIM and IM statistics, including information about the main sources of bias and other uncertainty, in relation to the use and potential use of them<sup>52</sup> (Requirement 3). We also suggest that ONS improve the accessibility of the statistics through better signposting to *Estimating Internal Migration*; *Customer Guidance Notes* and the *Quality and Methodology Information*.

- 3.22 ONS has worked to develop *MSQR* to meet users' needs for better commentary and the statistics team told us that it has received positive feedback from users as a result. The statistics team has rearranged the presentation of the various data sources to provide answers to common questions, for example, 'Who is migrating to and from the UK?'; however, the commentary still focuses on year-on-year comparisons with little commentary about the long-term trends. *MSQR* provides statistics from different sources and explains how these help to build the general picture of migration, for example, by comparing trends in net migration of non-EU citizens with visa statistics by world area. *IM* focuses on the latest statistics with only one time series presented. The report does not provide any analysis of why more people move (or not) to particular areas, or why there were fewer moves during 2009 than in any other year in the last ten years. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should improve the commentary and charts in *IM* and *MSQR* so that they aid user interpretation of the statistics<sup>53</sup> (Requirement 4). In meeting this Requirement we suggest ONS should consider the points detailed in annex 2.
- 3.23 ONS accompanies its migration statistics reports with detailed data in Excel and csv format on its website. The IM statistics, which are available in csv format, show the movement of people at local authority level by age and sex. LTIM flow statistics are available in Excel format. The LTIM team is working with ONS's Web Data Access team to provide access to a more detailed dataset within the data access tool that ONS is currently developing<sup>54</sup>. The statistics team told us that it has analysed user queries to identify the best way to present the statistics to make them as useful as possible for users.

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<sup>52</sup> In relation to Principle 8, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>53</sup> In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/what-we-do/programmes---projects/enhancing-access-to-ons-data/new-data-access-tools/index.html>

## **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.**

3.24 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.**

- 3.25 *MSQR* presents provisional rolling annual LTIM statistics on a quarterly basis. Provisional data from the IPS (including overall immigration, emigration and net migration only) are used to produce these rolling annual statistics so that more timely statistics can be provided to users. The LTIM statistics for the previous calendar year are finalised in each November publication with the addition of revised data and adjustments applied using other data sources.
- 3.26 ONS told us that it publishes *IM* 12 months after the reference period so that it coincides with the publication of the mid-year population estimates. The statistics team told us that internal migration statistics are used in the production of the mid-year population estimates; this suggests that the IM statistics could be published ahead of the current schedule. Furthermore, this is a fairly long time-lag now that ONS has (in consultation with users) ceased production of rolling quarterly IM statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should investigate the feasibility of reducing the time-lag between the reference period and publication of *IM* and publish its findings<sup>55</sup> (Requirement 5).
- 3.27 In November 2012, the net migration news release headline was published a day early. ONS provided a breach report<sup>56</sup> to the Authority. The reason for the breach was identified and appropriate measures have been put in place to prevent a reoccurrence.

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<sup>55</sup> In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 1, and Principle 1, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/breach-reports/news-releases-headline---migration-statistics-quarterly-report--november-2012.pdf>



### 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.

- 3.28 Statistics published in *IM* are produced by combining data from three administrative sources; the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR), the Patient Register Data System (PRDS), and data on students from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The method for estimating student internal migration was recently improved by linking records from the PRDS to those from HESA. The new method was announced to users in October 2012 and implemented for users to evaluate in the mid-2013 IM statistics. ONS holds unit-level data in its Virtual Microdata Laboratory<sup>57</sup>, a secure environment for accessing confidential microdata.
- 3.29 The IM statistics team told us that the statistics produced from the combination of the three administrative sources are currently the best available. ONS is also evaluating a new data source, the Personal Demographics Service<sup>58</sup> (PDS), to potentially replace the use of NHSCR and PRDS administrative data.
- 3.30 ONS's Statement of Administrative Sources<sup>59</sup> does not include the student migration data provided by HESA, or the PDS as a potential source<sup>60</sup>. Furthermore, it incorrectly includes Pupil Level Annual School Census data provided by Welsh Government as an input to the internal migration statistics. We suggest that ONS update its Statement of Administrative Sources to accurately reflect the data sources used for producing internal migration statistics.

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/who-we-are/services/vml/index.html>

<sup>58</sup> The PDS is the national electronic database of the NHS patient demographic details and includes information on patient address and age. Data is held nationally and accessed by authorised healthcare and professionals through their organisations local system. See:

<http://systems.hscic.gov.uk/demographics/pds>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/the-national-statistics-standard/code-of-practice/statement-of-administrative-sources/statistical-usage-of-administrative-or-management-sources/index.html>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/the-national-statistics-standard/code-of-practice/statement-of-administrative-sources/other-administrative-sources-with-the-potential-to-be-used-for-statistical-purposes/index.html>

## Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to ONS's migration statistics, 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.

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Suggestion 1</b> | Publish the papers and minutes of decision making groups on ONS's website (para 3.5).  |
| <b>Suggestion 2</b> | Review the revisions policy used for migration statistics and publish an updated version if necessary (para 3.6).  |
| <b>Suggestion 3</b> | Update users on the progress of the e-Borders research together with the plans for developing migration statistics with e-Borders (para 3.11).   |
| <b>Suggestion 4</b> | Improve the accessibility of the statistics through better signposting to the <i>Estimating Internal Migration; Customer Guidance Notes and Quality and Methodology Information</i> (para 3.21). |
| <b>Suggestion 5</b> | In seeking to improve the statistical reports, consider the points detailed in annex 2 (para 3.22).  |
| <b>Suggestion 6</b> | Update ONS's Statement of Administrative Sources to accurately reflect the data sources used for producing internal migration statistics (para 3.30).  |

## Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Reports

- A2.1 In November 2012, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Reports*<sup>61</sup>. While this is not part of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, the Authority regards it as advice that will promote both understanding and compliance with the *Code*. In relation to the statistical reports associated with Migration Statistics, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards.
- A2.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical reports, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

### **Include an impartial narrative in plain English that draws out the main messages from the statistics**

- A2.3 The November 2013 publication of *MSQR* presents ten introductory bullet points, which include commentary on non-significant year-on-year comparisons, followed by an introduction that provides background information and some context. The pdf version of *MSQR* is over 30 pages long but does not include a contents page.
- A2.4 The commentary in *MSQR* focuses on year-on-year comparisons with brief references to previous highs or lows. Time series for up to ten years are presented in charts and *MSQR* includes some commentary about the long-term trends. *MSQR* also includes statistics from different sources and explains how these help to build the general picture of migration, for example, comparing trends in net migration of non-EU citizens with visa statistics by world area. The June 2013 publication of *IM* focuses on the latest statistics with only one time series presented. *IM* provides a caveat around the 8 per cent increase in 2012 (shown in Figure 1), stating that it may be a result of improved methods for estimating student migration.
- A2.5 *MSQR* provides links to Home Office reports that describe migration patterns, behaviour and consequent effects in more depth. It also provides a link to labour market statistics that present employment rates by country of birth (grouped into broad categories) and nationality grouping (with appropriate caveats). *MSQR* describes the decrease in students migrating to the UK but provides limited information on reasons why the numbers are lower. *IM* presents migration flows and net migration of the top ten local authorities as a proportion of mid-year population estimates. *IM* explains that despite London's population increasing as a result of LTIM, it also has the largest outflow and a net loss of internal migrants. However, there is little further analysis to consider the impact of this on the economy or society in general.
- A2.6 The November 2013 publication of *MSQR* provides some insight around changes to EU8<sup>62</sup> migration over the previous two years: transitional controls for EU8 migration were lifted possibly making migrants' destinations change from UK to Germany – the publication also includes links to the website of the Federal Statistical Office of Germany<sup>63</sup>. *MSQR* does not include further

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-reports.html>

<sup>62</sup> Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Homepage.html>

comparisons with net migration in other EU countries. *MSQR* provides links to population statistics, short stories and *Short-Term International Migration*<sup>64</sup>. *IM* presents comparisons by region and the top ten local authorities. It also presents some brief international comparisons. *IM* provides links to mid-year population estimates and similar estimates for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Europe.

- A2.7 *MSQR* uses the term 'significant' to describe increases and decreases where they are statistically significant. However, the term 'significant' can be ambiguous and misinterpreted<sup>65</sup>. For example, the 4th key point 'Fewer Commonwealth citizens migrated to the UK for formal study, now similar to estimates in 2005/06' uses the term 'similar', suggesting that the term 'significant' could refer to the magnitude of the change<sup>66</sup>, rather than the change being statistically significant.
- A2.8 *MSQR* includes helpful charts but some are not clear when printed in black and white, for example Fig 3.12 in the November 2013 report. *IM* has interesting maps and provides links to interactive maps that can be used to visualise the flows between selected local authorities.

### **Include information about the context and likely uses of the statistics**

- A2.9 *MSQR* includes a good explanation of what is being measured and why in its introduction. *IM* provides a brief paragraph on why the statistics are of interest but this could be expanded as it is quite generic. The November 2013 publication of *MSQR* notes that the Government's objective<sup>67</sup> is to reduce annual net migration 'to the tens of thousands by 2015'.

### **Include information about the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to their potential use**

- A2.10 *MSQR* provides caveats around the interpretation of some statistics, for example visas by world area. The Excel tables present confidence intervals but these are not included within *MSQR*. They are explained as information about statistical uncertainty and linked to from the introduction but no information is given about how to interpret them appropriately. Phrases such as 'provisional' and 'estimate' are used through the report but perhaps not at the most appropriate point. For example, on page 3 of the May 2013 publication of *MSQR*, the opening paragraph describing the latest change in migration reads as though the changes are absolute and certain ('Net migration decreased in the year...') but the subsequent paragraph then presents these as provisional LTIM statistics. Furthermore, the key bullet points in the May 2013 *MSQR* do not make clear that the statistics are estimates. For example, the first bullet

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/short-term-migration/short-term-migration-estimates-for-england-and-wales/mid-2011-estimates/index.html>

<sup>65</sup> The finding of statistical significance does not mean there is intrinsic significance or importance. The word "significant" seems to imply importance. However, statistical significance is solely concerned with the confidence researchers can have in their findings. It does not mean that a statistically significant finding is substantively significant (Social Research Methods, Oxford University Press, p. 347, 4th Edition)

<sup>66</sup> See Home Office press release misinterpreting 'significant' <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/net-migration-continues-to-fall>

<sup>67</sup> See footnote 24

reads 'Latest provisional data show that there was...' but this could be better phrased as 'Latest provisional estimates indicate that there was....' *IM* uses the terms 'estimated' and 'approximately' appropriately.

- A2.11 *MSQR* provides links to information about methods and quality for both LTIM and the IPS. It also provides links to a guidance document for comparing different sources. The LTIM methodology document<sup>68</sup> presents a helpful table of all method changes and the effect on the statistics (or links to further information). The methods and quality documents are more easily accessed through the migration statistics landing page on ONS's website; however, it is not clear which of these documents is the most appropriate for particular purposes. *IM* provides a brief description of the data sources and the limitations of each source if used independently. Guidance is also provided on the appropriate use of the statistics. Links to documents about the quality of the statistics and the methods used to produce them are also provided.
- A2.12 The November 2013 publication of *MSQR* presents finalised statistics for the previous calendar year alongside provisional statistics for rolling quarters. However, although the final figures are clearly identified, there is no indication of the extent of the revisions made. There is a section in *Information for Users* describing the extent of the differences between provisional and final estimates. The May 2013 publication of *MSQR* does not provide any information about the revisions to the net migration component of the mid-year population estimates but it is provided in the August 2013 publication. The June 2013 publication of *IM* explains that the data processing methods for internal migrants aged under one have been revised leading to a reduction in the number of records for this group, but does not explain why the method was changed, or quantify the impact.

### **Be professionally sound**

- A2.13 *MSQR* presents little trend analysis. It does not discuss the related net migration component of population change, used to produce the mid-year population estimates, as a matter of course; however, the net migration component was recently revised as a result of the 2011 Census (para 3.1). This revision was described and explained in the August 2013 publication but was only included as a reference in the November 2013 publication. ONS intend to reinstate the fuller explanation for future editions; it could be usefully presented with a further explanation of why the LTIM flows are not being revised. The June 2013 publication of *IM* presents one chart (Figure 2) showing the proportion of population, by age, who had moved local authority. There is a steady increase in the proportion of movers from age 77 but the commentary does not provide any caveats around the interpretation of this (that is, the small base means one mover has a greater impact on the proportion).

### **Include, or link to, appropriate metadata**

- A2.14 The full title of *MSQR* includes the month of publication rather than the latest period to which the statistics relate. The title 'Migration Statistics Quarterly Report' implies that all migration statistics produced by ONS are included in the

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<sup>68</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/international-migration-methodology/long-term-international-migration-estimates-methodology.pdf>

report; however, short-term international migration, internal migration and the net migration component of the mid-year population estimates are not included. The full title of *IM*, 'Internal Migration by Local Authorities in England and Wales', is not a complete or clear description of the statistics presented within the report, as statistics are also presented by Region. Furthermore, it is not clear who is migrating – the resident population – or that the moves are between regions or local authorities.

- A2.15 *MSQR* provides good links to documents about quality and methods, including a quality assessment of the IPS and guidance for users about comparing the different data sources used. ONS published a good guidance document<sup>69</sup> for *IM* in January 2013 but is not linked from *IM* and is linked as 'methodology' on the migration landing page on ONS's website.
- A2.16 *MSQR* provides the UN definition of a long-term migrant used for the production of LTIM statistics. However, the statistics team told us that not all EU countries use the same definition so it would be useful if these countries could be identified. *IM* presents brief European comparisons and a link to similar statistics from other European countries that are available on Eurostat's website.
- A2.17 *MSQR* does not discuss the revisions to the migration component of the mid-year population estimates and how this affects the LTIM net migration statistics. *IM* notes a change to the methods for estimating student migrants for the latest statistics and discusses using the new method to update some of the back series. Neither report provides a link to a revisions policy.

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<sup>69</sup> See footnote 50

## Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

- A3.1 This assessment was conducted from March to December 2013.
- A3.2 The Assessment team – Rachel Beardsmore and Neil Wilson – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of ONS in March. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 28 March and 3 May. The Assessment team subsequently met ONS during July 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

- A3.3 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.
- A3.4 The Assessment team received 12 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:
- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Government departments         | 1 |
| Devolved Administrations       | 4 |
| Office for National Statistics | 4 |
| Academic                       | 3 |
- A3.5 Users were generally satisfied that the statistics met their needs and they were positive about their engagement with ONS. One user noted that ONS was sometimes hesitant in supplying unrounded migration data, potentially due to concerns over disclosure. Another user noted the issue with rounding in published data and that more detail would be welcome. Users also pointed out that they would welcome improvements in the timeliness of publication of the statistics and that there were some issues with accessing data through ONS's website.
- A3.6 Administrative data suppliers told us that they all collect the data provided for their own purposes and their interactions with ONS were straightforward. Clear processes are in place for the supply of data and all data suppliers were happy with the way that ONS consults with them. One data supplier told us that they weren't clear about the use to which ONS put their data.
- A3.7 The Assessment team also considered the published evidence<sup>70</sup> provided to the Public Administration Select Committee for its investigation into migration statistics.

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<sup>70</sup> See footnote 20

**Key documents/links provided**

Written Evidence for Assessment document



## Annex 4: Summary of Requirements from Assessment Report 8

A4.1 The sets of statistics in this assessment were assessed in Assessment report 8, published in July 2009<sup>71</sup>. They have been re-assessed as part of the Statistics Authority's ongoing programme of re-assessment.

A4.2 Assessment report 8 identified the following Requirements in relation to the statistics being re-assessed here:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Requirement 1</b> | Publish documentation outlining the development work currently underway, including how the needs and experiences of users have impacted on this work, to give users a better understanding of progress. |
| <b>Requirement 2</b> | Include migration statistics in the existing Revisions Policy for population statistics and link directly from the migration statistics website.  |
| <b>Requirement 3</b> | Improve metadata to include details of quality assurance work and quality issues relating to the publication of quarterly data as rolling years and local level estimates.                              |
| <b>Requirement 4</b> | Develop and publish a work plan, in partnership with EU officials, to investigate ways in which EU requirements can be better met.  |
| <b>Requirement 5</b> | Publish a Statement of Administrative Sources.  |

A4.3 The Statistics Authority confirmed the National Statistics designation of these statistics in a letter to ONS on 17 December 2009<sup>72</sup>.

A4.4 No Requirements within this report relate to an aspect of *Code* compliance that resulted in a Requirement in Assessment report 8.

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-8---migration-statistics--27-july-2009.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics---assessment-report-8.pdf>

