
Director General for Regulation

Amy Wilson
Head of Profession for Statistics
National Records of Scotland
(By email)

22 November 2018

Dear Amy

ASSESSMENT OF ONS AVOIDABLE MORTALITY STATISTICS

We recently assessed ONS's Avoidable Mortality statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics and have today published our Assessment Report. I am grateful for the contributions made by your staff to this process.

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) vital events statistics were designated National Statistics (NS) in 2011.¹ At that time it was agreed that further developments to increase the value of these statistics could also carry the NS designation providing the underlying data and processes used to collate the statistics had been the subject of our original assessment. Since 2017, NRS has published avoidable mortality statistics, using the definition developed by ONS, as part of its annual release of vital events statistics on deaths.² We heard from your team that these statistics were introduced in response to requests from users for detailed Scottish statistics on avoidable mortality. This kind of user-focused innovation is encouraged by the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Based on our assessment of ONS's Avoidable Mortality statistics, we are confident that sound methods are used to produce these statistics and appropriate steps are taken to arrive at suitable definitions, assure the quality of the underlying data and conduct the analysis. We identified a number of improvements to the statistics in the course of the assessment, some of which have already been actioned by the ONS team. None of the requirements we identified materially impact on the definition of avoidable mortality that ONS developed, and which NRS use to produce statistics for Scotland. However, I would like to draw your attention to our requirement for succession planning to ensure that continuity is maintained if a change of expert clinical advisor occurs. NRS should be involved in these plans.

We judge that it is appropriate for the NRS Avoidable Mortality statistics, which are now published as part of NRS's vital events statistics, to be designated as National Statistics.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with me or my team at any time.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

¹ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-on-vital-events-in-scotland/>

² <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths>