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**Director General for Regulation**

Glyn Jones  
Chief Statistician  
Welsh Government  
(By email)

5 December 2018

Dear Glyn

**CONFIRMATION OF NATIONAL STATISTICS DESIGNATION FOR STATISTICS FROM THE  
WELSH HOUSING CONDITIONS SURVEY**

We have reviewed the actions that you and your team have taken to address the Requirements in Assessment Report number 338: *Statistics from the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey*.

On behalf of the Board of the UK Statistics Authority, I am pleased to confirm the designation of statistics from the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey, including the *Welsh Housing Conditions Survey 2017-18: Headline Report*.

I welcome the way in which your team has engaged with the principles and practices of the Code of Practice and the assessment team, particularly because the assessment was conducted alongside the development and production of statistics, and the team had limited resources available.

I recognise the commitment the team showed to quickly make improvements to the statistics to increase their quality and value following the publication of our Assessment Report. For instance, the shorter *Headline report* with a stronger focus on the key messages better supports users' interpretation of the statistics, and the more detailed information about quality assurance and surveyor variability helps users better understand quality.

I am also satisfied with your assurance that you will use the lessons learned from the first phase of the Housing Conditions Evidence Programme to inform resourcing for the next phase, and that you will adopt a more flexible resource allocation model to prioritise key work strands.

We have included more detail about our judgement in an annex to this letter. I, or my team, would be very happy to talk you or your colleagues through any aspects of this letter or Code compliance more generally.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value and is something to be celebrated. We invite you to include a statement alongside the statistics which reflects the National Statistics status.

I am copying this letter to John Pullinger, the National Statistician.

Your sincerely



Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation

**Annex: Review of actions taken by the Welsh Government in response to Assessment Report 338 on Statistics from the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey**

Requirement	Actions taken by the Welsh Government to meet Requirement	Office for Statistics Regulation evaluation of evidence in meeting Requirement
<p>Requirement 1 (Value)</p> <p>To better support users' interpretation of the statistics, the Welsh Government should draw out the key messages, either through an executive summary in the <i>Headline report</i> or modifying the report so it is shorter.</p>	<p>The statistical team shared the latest draft of the <i>Headline report</i>. This version is shorter than the earlier draft we reviewed and has a stronger focus on the key messages. The team told us it balanced advice from ONS's Good Practice Team and the Welsh Government publication standards, which include its accessibility rules. We welcome this continued engagement with the Good Practice Team.</p> <p>Positive factors we saw include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>Headline report</i> contains a concise overview of the trends in housing stock profile and housing stock condition, supported by clear charts that aid user interpretation of the statistics. Throughout, comparisons are made with other UK countries and previous Welsh housing conditions surveys</li> <li>• Information on the Welsh Housing Quality Standard will now be published separately in a detailed topic report, which helps reduce the length of the report</li> <li>• The 'Key Quality Information' section at the end of report is shorter. It provides helpful background/context to the survey, advice on interpreting results and links to supporting documents and related statistics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Requirement met</b></p> <p>The draft of the <i>Headline report</i> that we reviewed tells a clear and coherent story about housing conditions in Wales by drawing out the main messages. However, there is scope for making the release even shorter and more engaging. We encourage the team to adopt a similar approach to writing the detailed topic reports.</p>
<p>Requirement 2 (Quality)</p> <p>The Welsh Government should:</p> <p>a. Publish the pilot survey summary report alongside the <i>Headline report</i></p>	<p>The statistical team:</p> <p>a. assured us that it will publish, on the same day as the <i>Headline report</i>, either the full pilot survey summary report, or a bilingual executive summary with a commitment to publish the full report several weeks after. We were not able to review a draft of the summary report</p> <p>b. added a clear and succinct summary to the <i>Technical report</i> (as an appendix) of the steps it took to control for surveyor</p>	<p><b>Requirement met</b></p> <p>These two additions will enhance users' confidence in the methods and robustness of the estimates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pilot survey summary report will help users understand how the pilot survey informed the design and processes of the main survey</li> </ul>

<p>b. Add a concise summary to the <i>Technical report</i> of the steps it took to minimise bias</p>	<p>variability. These steps include: selecting a large enough sample of survey dwellings, selecting a large enough sample of suitably qualified surveyors, ensuring all surveyors have the same professional briefing, and having all survey forms quality assured by regional managers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The summary of surveyor variability will assure users that surveyor variability has been controlled to a manageable level and that the results are comparable with previous Welsh housing conditions surveys</li> </ul>
<p>Requirement 3 (Quality)</p> <p>The Welsh Government should add a summary of the quality assurance processes to the <i>Quality report</i>, for example, via a process map</p>	<p>The statistical team added two process maps to the <i>Quality Report</i> about the quality assurance of the WHCS data quality assurance and the production of the statistical outputs.</p> <p>The process maps clearly illustrate the individuals and steps involved and highlight the points where data were validated and investigated, and where input was provided. They provide an accessible overview of the quality assurance and statistical production process and aid user understanding of the quality of the statistics.</p>	<p><b>Requirement met</b></p>
<p>Requirement 4 (Trustworthiness)</p> <p>To provide assurance that future plans for housing conditions statistics and data will not be impacted by resource constraints, the Welsh Government needs to review and update its resourcing contingency plans</p>	<p>We received assurance from the Chief Statistician that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will consider resource requirement for future Housing Conditions Evidence Programme (HCEP) work as the business case is developed, taking into account the lessons learned from the programme so far</li> <li>will mitigate risks to individual projects by workforce planning across the profession, allocating resources as needed to balance user requirements and emerging priorities across all areas</li> <li>wants to continue to work with the GSS capability team to enhance outreach and marketing to ensure a successful recruitment of new statisticians</li> </ul>	<p><b>Requirement met</b></p> <p>This seems a sensible approach to dealing with resource constraints: using the lessons learned to inform resourcing for the next phase of the HCEP, and adopting a more flexible resource allocation model to ensure that key work strands are prioritised. We recognise that these issues are not unique to the Welsh Government – many statistical producers face resource challenges – but the Welsh Government should continue to ensure that its housing conditions statistics are prioritised and given sufficient resources.</p>