



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Social Housing Lettings, England

Quality Report

December 2014

Department for Communities and Local Government

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and Signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

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Summary

This Quality Report provides a brief summary of key issues relating to quality that users of the annual statistical report *Social Housing Lettings, England (Social Lettings)* need to be aware of. The report begins with purpose and background of *Social Housing Lettings* and then provides a summary of work undertaken in 2013 and 2014 to improve and enhance the quality of the *Social Housing Lettings* statistics.

The 2013/14 statistical release for *Social Housing Lettings, England* carry for first time the National Statistics badge, following the recent assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, and reflects the work undertaken this year to improve the quality of these statistics and the way they are reported to users.

The work undertaken covers two survey years: collection, quality assuring, processing and methodological changes to the estimation and dissemination of data collected during 2013-14¹; and user engagement and questionnaire changes in relation to 2014-15 collection period.

The report covers all dimensions of quality defined by the European Statistical System (ESS) as recommended by the Code of Practice for National Statistics.

- **Relevance** – This section discusses work undertaken to ensure that the *Social Housing Lettings* meets user needs.
- **Accuracy and reliability** – This section summarises the main sources of bias and other errors in the statistics, which impact on the degree of closeness between published estimates and true population values.
- **Timeliness and punctuality** – This section provides information on headline and all other data releases on *Social Lettings*, and considers the trade-off between timeliness and other quality dimensions.
- **Accessibility and clarity** – This section covers the accessibility and clarity of the *Social Housing Lettings* outputs, including the release and tables and other supporting documentation.
- **Coherence and comparability** – This section explains how *Social Housing Lettings* monitors and reports on coherence and comparability of the statistics over time, harmonisation with ONS standards, reporting of geographic variables, and information on related housing data.

¹ Data for previous reporting periods has also been refined in line with the revisions to the weighting methodology.

1. Introduction

Primary purpose

- 1.1 The Department of Communities and Local Government's annual statistical report *Social Housing Lettings, England (Social Lettings)* presents National Statistics on new lettings of the existing social housing stock owned by local authorities and private registered providers of social housing in England.

A brief history of *Social Housing Lettings*

- 1.2 *Social Lettings* replaced the department's previous *Social Housing Lettings and Sales in England* publication from the 2012/13 reporting period onwards.
- 1.3 The department's produces *Social Lettings (and Social Sales)* using administrative data collected from private registered providers and local authorities via the COntinuous REcording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing in England (CORE) system.
- 1.4 CORE was set up in 1989 and in previous years was governed by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), now part of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the national housing and regeneration agency for England and the regulator for social housing providers in England. TSA required private registered providers to submit social housing lettings and sales information to support its regulatory function. TSA extended CORE to include the local authority sector in 2004. The project governance also included the National Housing Federation.
- 1.5 In 2010/11 project governance for CORE was novated to the department, due to changes in the regulatory function and budgetary considerations; the CORE data collection programme was deemed an important evidence base for the department's housing policy; the department took over the funding of CORE and the responsibility for managing the CORE system.
- 1.6 From 2010, the department added the CORE social housing lettings data to the single data list, a list of all the datasets that local government must submit to central government. It remains a regulatory requirement for private registered providers and local authority stock holders registered with HCA to supply the data as per the Tenancy Standard defined in the

HCA's regulatory framework². For those who are not registered with the HCA, submissions are however voluntary.

- 1.7 The statistics team in the department has overall responsibility for CORE but TNS³ has held the contract for administering the CORE system since 2009. The current contract runs until the datasets for the 2014/15 collection are delivered (autumn 2015).
- 1.8 The department is currently planning to bring the CORE collection in-house after the current contract with TNS expires, although plans will need to be finalised once the testing of a new in-house platform is deemed fit for purpose. Stakeholders will be informed of any changes via the CORE (TNS) website.

² <https://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/sites/default/files/our-work/regfwk-2012.pdf>

³ <http://www.tnsglobal.com/>

2.Relevance

'The degree to which statistical outputs meet users' needs'⁴

Scope of release

- 2.1 Information for 2013/14 in this release reflects data given by providers for the year ending 31 March 2014. All data are submitted by private registered providers and local authorities through the on-line Continuous Recording system (CORE), which also collects information for sales of self-contained dwellings and re-sales of any part-owned dwellings (shared ownership) from private registered providers. The 2013/14 sales data from CORE is reported through the department's *Social Housing Sales* statistical release, published on 16th October 2014.
- 2.2 Data for social lettings is collected through the 'Lettings' log through CORE. It covers general needs and supported housing lettings, and includes social rent lettings as well as affordable rent lettings.
- 2.3 CORE only records new and permanent general needs lettings. This excludes mutual exchanges, conversions of starter or introductory tenancies to assured or secure tenancies, successions by assignment, and temporary general needs housing. Temporary lettings are only included if a household moves into supported housing. A full list of exclusions can be found in the CORE guidance manual at:

<https://core.communities.gov.uk/LearnAboutCore/LACGuidesAndManuals.aspx>

Main uses of the data

- 2.4 CORE is unique in providing attribute information of record level data, enabling in-depth analysis and construction of small area estimates. It is the only source of social lettings data that allows detailed distributional analysis across variables.
- 2.5 There are a wide range of users of CORE data both internal and external to the department.
- 2.6 Social housing lettings statistics and the underlying CORE datasets inform national housing policy in areas such as the Affordable Homes

⁴<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

Programme, which aims to increase the supply of new affordable homes in England, and social housing allocations policy. Data on housing costs, affordability and the housing benefit propensity of new tenants is used to inform modelling on the value for money and the housing benefit impacts of investment in new affordable housing, and was essential in the analysis leading up to the welfare reform.

- 2.7 The Homes and Communities Agency uses data at different spatial levels and views it as an invaluable data source to inform their policy development. Social Housing Lettings data allows for a better understanding of the socio-economic and demographic makeup of affordable housing customers by tenure and understanding of local housing markets and affordable housing products. For example, the income and housing costs data facilitates the consideration of affordability levels by tenure, and migration between tenures and areas can also indicate where there is differing demand.
- 2.8 Social housing providers use the data to understand the market for social housing and benchmark their own performance. Local government also use these data to inform their Strategic Housing Market Assessments that form part of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.9 The social housing statistics are also used by academics, researchers, charities and the wider public to understand social housing issues. Some of these users only use the National Statistics in support of their use of the underlying administrative data available from the CORE (TNS) website.

Key statistical concepts

- 2.10 The population or key units of interest in *Social Housing Lettings* are residential households living in social housing and the dwellings let. A dwelling is defined as a self-contained unit of accommodation (normally a house or flat) where all the rooms and amenities (i.e. kitchen, bath/shower room and WC) are for the exclusive use of the household(s) occupying them. A household is defined as one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities AND a living room or sitting room or dining area.
- 2.11 The Social Housing Lettings release provides key definitions about the concepts used for the release. A full set of definitions can be found in the CORE guidance manual for 2013/14:
<https://core.communities.gov.uk/LearnAboutCore/LACGuidesAndManuals.aspx>

User engagement

- 2.12 The department has a published strategy for engaging with users of its official statistics with the stated aim to ‘establish and nurture a mutually beneficial partnership between the producers and users of the it’s statistics’, accessible at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-strategy-to-meet-the-needs-of-statistics-users>
- 2.13 A user survey is available on the Social Housing Lettings webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/rents-lettings-and-tenancies-data-notes-and-definitions-for-local-authorities-and-data-analysts>. We encourage all users who use CORE statistics to respond to this survey so we can continually improve our statistical release and make it as relevant and useful as possible.
- 2.14 Users who access the record level CORE data through a licence responded to a questionnaire in late 2013, describing how they use the CORE data and why it is important to their work. A summary of these responses is provided on the CORE (TNS) website here: <https://core.communities.gov.uk/CORE/DocumentsUpload/How%20CORE%20is%20used/Published%20articles%20using%20CORE/CORE%20data%20usage%20report.pdf>
- 2.15 Ahead of the production of the *Social Housing Lettings* release, existing data requirements are reviewed annually and any potential new data needs are considered against the burden on data suppliers, in an open and transparent process. Throughout the year, the department also maintains a list of any issues raised by the users and suppliers of the data and feeds those into the review. Some changes are made because of new operational needs of registered providers.
- 2.16 Changes for the following financial year are usually agreed around 3 months in advance of the new data collection going live in April. This allows data providers to implement the required changes in their internal management systems to provide the required data. Usually, the systems are managed by software company providers and some training and guidance is provided to these companies during the period of implementation.
- 2.17 The statistics team held a series of meetings with its analysts, policy customers and with some representatives of external organisations in autumn 2012. The purpose of the meetings was to inform the content of

the 2013-14 CORE data collection and the content of the 2013-14 Social Lettings release. The 2013-14 CORE forms are published on the CORE webpages alongside a summary of the changes made for the current collection year (2014-15).

- 2.18 In 2014, the statistics team streamlined the process for user engagement for local authorities, to raise the profile of the data collection and to ensure that user requirements are being met. This was done through the aligning of the data review for each new collection cycle with the Central and Local Information Partnerships (housing) meetings.
- 2.19 In 2014, the option to officially propose changes to CORE for the following collection year (i.e. 2015-16) was extended for the first time to external users of the statistical release, through providing the change request form on the DCLG website where users will see it as they access the statistical release: <https://www.gov.uk/rents-lettings-and-tenancies-data-notes-and-definitions-for-local-authorities-and-data-analysts>.

DCLG Statistics User Engagement Day

- 2.20 The statistics team ran a session at a department wide Statistics User Engagement Day in November 2013. The purpose of the event was:
- to seek views to inform the department's priorities and future work programme that will ensure we make the best use of our resources
 - provide a forum for greater transparency of the department's statistics and the processes behind their production and to obtain feedback on methodology or outputs, including where we can reduce or cease those no longer required
 - seek views on the coherence, scope and dissemination of statistical publications
- 2.21 63 external visitors attended the CORE session on this day, including participants from local authorities, housing trusts, academics, third sector organisations and other government departments.
- 2.22 The user engagement day provided users with the opportunity to participate in workshops and share their experiences of the various statistics.

- 2.23 Due to the types of users and data suppliers that attended the user engagement day – mainly central and local government, the focus was on the supply and use of the CORE social housing lettings data rather than the published National Statistics.
- 2.24 Statisticians reviewed the responses and have implemented changes where possible:
- TNS are prioritising more targeted and strategic communications to encourage the relevant stakeholders, within data provider organisations, to address any data collection short comings or non-responses, which will reduce data gaps or data inconsistencies.
 - TNS are also addressing some of the provider and software company related issues to assess what further changes can be made going forward, over and above the already improved lead time of the log review process and subsequent eCORE specification timings.
 - TNS has also published the results of its own data usage survey, which is now on the CORE (TNS) website⁵.
- 2.25 We expect that there may be other issues of concern to external users, which were not picked up in the time available at the User Engagement Day. All attendees were encouraged to send any further feedback after the event. The statistics team responsible for Social Lettings will work with other DCLG statistics teams and cross-government to facilitate further opportunities for user engagement.

⁵<https://core.communities.gov.uk/CORE/DocumentsUpload/How%20CORE%20is%20used/Published%20articles%20using%20CORE/CORE%20data%20usage%20report.pdf>

3 Accuracy and reliability

*'The degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value'*⁶

Overview of methodology

- 3.1 All data are submitted through the on-line Continuous Recording system (CORE) by private registered providers and local authorities. CORE is a database where individual property lettings are recorded, alongside information about the property and the tenants. The data is entered onto 'logs' (one per letting) or as a bulk upload through a facility called eCORE. Entries are automatically validated as they are uploaded.
- 3.2 The contractor TNS are responsible for collecting data through CORE and validating the data. In 2014 the department reviewed the process of quality assurance of the Social Lettings statistics and agreed a Quality Plan with the CORE contractors (TNS). The Quality Plan establishes roles and responsibilities for quality assurance throughout the process, from establishing and agreeing the new templates for data collection until the submission of the annual reports and live tables to support the Social Lettings release. The Quality Plan also establishes quality indicators for each stage of the process. DCLG's CORE project manager monitors the progress of these quality indicators.
- 3.3 The process of weighting and imputation of data is done by statisticians in the department. In 2013 ONS Methodology Advisory Service were commissioned to advise on improving the methodology to derive the *Social Housing Lettings* statistics, with funding from the UK Statistics Authority Quality Improvement Fund. The main methodology changes were to estimate population totals for social housing lettings, by applying improved weighting methods, and address item non-response for the household characteristics (such as age, ethnicity and economic status) by imputing for missing values.

Imputation

- 3.4 Some of the questions on the CORE questionnaire are not compulsory. In particular, data on household characteristics (age, sex, economic status, ethnicity and nationality) may not be available to the housing officer or may be refused by the tenant.

⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

- 3.5 As recommended by the ONS Methodology Advisory review, the department uses the Canadian Census Editing and Imputation System (CanCEIS) software to impute data using a 'donor imputation' approach. This involves identifying variables that are related to the variables with missing data; and then choose the record with the closest data for the non-missing variables and copy the data for the missing variables.
- 3.6 Imputation is carried out to address item level non-response of key data on tenant characteristics, for both local authorities and private registered providers (with local authorities having a higher level of non-response). The imputation is done separately for general needs and for supported housing, to reflect the different demographic profiles of their tenants. The imputation is done in two steps, imputing first age, sex and economic status, and then nationality, on the missing variables for the household reference person.
- 3.7 Income data is not imputed. Income has a higher non-response rate, particularly amongst the elderly. Therefore the data was deemed to be too incomplete and unreliable as imputed results may lead to biased estimates. Instead, to improve completeness of income data the department is working with TNS to improve the guidance and CORE form itself to encourage a higher response rate.
- 3.8 The imputation methodology was refined further for 2013/14 data, by building in constraints to donor variables that prevent using donor data that would have not normally have been accepted through the usual validation process.

Weighting

- 3.9 In order to obtain representative estimates across weighting at the England level is applied to adjust for record level non-response by local authorities. CORE has always captured all lettings by private registered providers in England, however local authorities have participated in CORE since 2004/5 on a voluntary basis. In the first year, only 24% of stock-holding local authorities participated, but the number of authorities participating has steadily increased since then with all authorities submitting some data for 2013/14.
- 3.10 Local authority weights are calculated by reference to the total number of lettings reported to the *Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS)* return, or its predecessor the *Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA)*. Final LAHS data are not used as they are not published until December.

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- 3.11 Weights are calculated for groups of similar local authorities, where these groups are defined by the ONS UK Output Area Classification ([link](#)). This National Statistics area classification is based on 41 detailed variables derived from the 2001 Census, many of which are directly relevant to the factors of interest for social housing (e.g. age, nationality, employment status).
- 3.12 For each geographical cluster, the weight is calculated for all responding local authorities as the ratio of the number of lettings reported to LAHS relative to those reported to CORE.
- 3.13 Neither imputation nor weighting are carried out for affordable rent lettings, mainly because it is still early in the Affordable Rents programme and so there are relatively few lettings. As the number grows the methodology may be extended to these lettings.
- 3.14 Ahead of the 2013-14 National Statistics release, the department changed the data used to derive the cluster weights to a more comparable dataset to the LAHS dataset. Instead of using the lettings totals based on the 'location' of the dwelling being let, data based on the local authority 'owning' that dwelling was chosen, because the LAHS data is also based on the ownership and not the location of the dwellings. This led to lower weights and, in turn, to a smaller total number of dwellings at the national level than with the previous methodology. The weights for 2012/13 were also revised accordingly, with a new back series of 2012/13 dataset being calculated.
- 3.15 For further information on the weighting and imputation methods, please see the report produced by ONS on '*Improving Outputs on Social Housing Lettings*':
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/245601/Improving_outputs_on_social_housing_lettings.pdf
- 3.16 The remainder of this section summarises the steps taken to quality assure the Social Lettings data and the main sources of bias and other errors that impact on the quality of the statistics. Being an administrative source, there is no sampling error in CORE-based statistics, as there is no sample. However, the Social Housing Lettings are still estimates of the true values in the population, which are subject to other sources of error.
- 3.17 The main sources of error are coverage error, measurement error, processing error, non-response and errors in the assumptions made in the derivation of data. While it is not possible to measure all sources of error, quantitative estimates are produced where possible.

Coverage error

'Coverage error arises from failure to cover adequately all members of the population being studied.'

To determine the impact of coverage error CORE counts are reconciled with other external data returns:

- Local authority CORE volumes are reconciled against the Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) survey.
- Private Registered Provider volumes are reconciled against the Statistical Data Return (from NROSH+ survey) outputs. From 2012-13 the SDR was altered to include lettings that are not recorded by CORE, but the data is still used to determine if trends on increasing or decreasing number of lettings match.

- 3.18 Any provider registered with the social housing regulator (Homes and Communities Agency from 2012, before then the Tenant Services Authority) is required to complete the CORE logs fully. Social landlords not registered but affiliated to the National Housing Federation are invited to complete the logs. Since 2004, local authorities started to submit data through CORE and as of the 2013/14 reporting period all local authorities are now full participating in accordance with their regulatory (HCA) and Single Data list (DCLG) obligations. It is estimated that around 85-90% of local authority lettings were submitted in 2013/14, as per the Statistical Release. Table 4a in the National Statistics release gives more detail on the submission levels of stock holding local authorities.

Measurement error

'Measurement error may arise due to inaccuracies in individual measurements of survey variables because of the inherent difficulties of observing, identifying and recording what has been observed.'

- 3.19 Measurement error may occur randomly, or may reflect a problem experienced by most data providers. The key mechanisms in place to minimise measurement error focus on the questionnaire form development process, re-education via programme materials; completion guides, manuals, newsletters, targeted communications, as well as interviewer and data provider training.

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- 3.20 To ensure that the questions are understood, DCLG tests the new forms with data providers via workshops or consultations. New questions introduced to the survey are reviewed by DCLG after the first quarter of data collection. TNS suggests to data providers the use of organisations offering training to registered providers to help them improve their understanding of the questions and use of the data.
- 3.21 Data providers are requested to submit information as close as possible to the tenancy sign up, to allow for data to be fully validated and reported within the relevant quarter.

Processing error

‘Processing error includes errors in data capture, coding, editing and tabulation of the data as well as in the assignment of weights.’

- 3.22 Processing error can be systematic, for example, an error in the programming syntax that leads to a wrong code being consistently applied in a particular set of circumstances. Mechanisms in place to ensure accurate data capture and processing and to minimise processing error include:
- the department and TNS carry out systematic testing of the new questions
 - TNS test syntax for automated data checking processes
- 3.23 Processing error can also be random, for example keying errors in entering data which may cancel each other out. A number of validation checks built in to the TNS data collection programme, for example against:
- unlikely values
 - unlikely combination of answers
 - time series comparison
- 3.24 The number of errors and required alterations to raw data is monitored to ensure that quality standard is maintained, and reported as part of progress meetings. Errors can be defined in terms of errors with the source data that needs to re-qualified, or errors in manually keying in data in which case the data entered needs to be verified against the original

source data. The CORE data submission system further defines two types of error:-

Primary error – Missing Mandatory information

Secondary error – inconsistent or erroneous data

In both cases, log submissions cannot be reported as 'valid' data until all primary and secondary queries are resolved. Please note: The data reflected as part of the annual statistical release data only includes valid data. The error rate for 2013-14 is as follows:

Query types	Proportion of errors raised compared to total errors that could be raised.
Lettings - Primary Queries	0.5%
Lettings - Secondary Queries	0.3%
Sales - Primary Queries	0.5%
Sales - Secondary Queries	0.9%

3.25 TNS continuously monitors the performance of individual Registered Providers submitting data to CORE with varying performance indicators:

a) Volumes compared to both previous year's volumes, or volumes submitted for other surveys, are reviewed weekly, monthly, and quarterly, The volumes are queried or confirmed via phone and email contact with individual providers. Emails contain counts to date and expected volumes.

b) Promptness of submissions – this is a measure between the date of the letting and when the information is entered into the CORE system. For 2013-14 the average was 39 days.

c) Promptness of query resolution – this is a measure between the date a query is raised and when it is resolved by data providers. For 2013-14 the average was 2 days.

For promptness of submissions and time taken to resolve queries, provider performance varies depending on organisation type, processes they use and size of organisation. For example, smaller providers tend to submit data less frequently than larger.

d) The CORE system has performance tools available for providers to allow for self-monitoring and identify areas of improvement

TNS communicate specific concerns in providers meeting their regulatory requirements to the department, and if necessary, the Homes and Communities Agency. For example, local authority performance as detailed in table 4a of the statistical release is monitored at a local authority level on a fortnightly basis in the last quarter of a data collection year.

Response rates

'Non-response bias may occur if non-respondents differ from respondents. Non-response can lead to an increase in the variance of survey estimates, as non-response will reduce the sample size.'

- 3.26 The effect of non-response bias is minimised by steps applied in the weighting process. Response rates are continually monitored as part of the data collection process and contractor and the department try to maximise response rates from local authorities. An estimate of the quantity of missing data is reported in the statistical release. Table 4a of the statistical release details actions taken to review provider performance for local authorities. The estimate is made by comparing the number of lettings reported by local authorities to CORE, to the number of lettings reported by local authorities to LAHS.
- 3.27 For item non-response, imputation is carried out when creating key derived variables. Addressing non-response through imputation can lead to the appearance of the variance within the estimates being reduced, as imputed values are usually less extreme than would be observed from sampling alone.
- 3.28 Imputation rates are now being monitored and reported on through the Quality Monitoring Reports as part of regular progress meetings with contractors. Data collected about household characteristics such as age, nationality, ethnicity and economic status have the highest levels of non-response. Table 4b of the statistical release shows the percentage of records where missing data have been imputed for each demographic variable.
- 3.29 Data collected on income of households has high levels of non-response, at around 50 per cent, and that this is likely to be further complicated in the short term by the roll out of Universal Credit. However the Methodology Review did not recommend imputing missing values as the results would

not be reliable and prone to misuse. Instead, the department is working with TNS to improve the levels of non-response by improving the questionnaire design.

- 3.30 The *Social Housing Lettings* release quantifies the levels of non-response, how it imputes for missing values and the estimated impact on the final estimates.

Assumption error in derived data

- 3.31 In October 2012, the Cabinet Secretary and the Head of the Civil Service commissioned a review of the quality assurance of analytical models that inform government policy. The review published a final report in March 2013, setting out results of work to map business critical models and quality assurance in government.⁷
- 3.32 The Social Housing Lettings release includes some data that has been derived, using an underlying model that makes some assumptions. The model assumptions are reviewed annually by the Department's statisticians to ensure that the calculations for the derived datasets remain accurate and reflect the reality of what they are aiming to measure. For example, the calculations to derive housing benefit data are updated in line to changes to housing benefits by the Department of Work and Pensions.

Revisions

- 3.33 The policy for revisions of the Social Housing Lettings data has been developed in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the Department's Revisions Policy (found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistical-notice-dclg-revisions-policy>).
- 3.34 Data are clearly indicated as being 'revised' (R) or 'provisional' (P) and subject to possible revision in further updates. Revisions of Social Housing Lettings data can be 'scheduled' or 'non-scheduled'.

⁷https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206946/review_of_qa_of_govt_analytical_models_final_report_040313.pdf

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- 3.35 Non-scheduled revisions are made when a substantial error has occurred as a result of the compilation, imputation or dissemination process, the statistical release, live tables and other accompanying releases will be updated with a correction notice as soon as is practical.
- 3.36 Scheduled revisions are made when there has been a change in methodology, for example in the weighting approach.
- 3.37 For 2012-13 we have revised the weights and therefore the national totals for the Social Housing datasets, clearly marked with 'R' in the statistical release and accompanying live tables.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-outputs-on-social-housing-lettings>

4. Timeliness and punctuality

*'Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates. Whether the outputs are up to date with respect to users' needs.'*⁸

- 4.1 There is a trade-off between timeliness and the other quality dimensions, in particular accuracy, accessibility and clarity. It is important to strike the right balance between ensuring that the data has been properly quality assured and the application of appropriate disclosure-control to public datasets released rightly made, and keeping the data up to date and relevant to their uses.
- 4.2 Private registered providers and local authorities that have social housing stock are required to complete on-line questionnaires or upload datasets via CORE for each new social letting to a new or existing tenant, in a new or existing property. CORE allows for continuous updating but has quarterly submission cut-off points. All private registered providers respond by the deadlines. There is a greater tendency for Local authorities to submit social housing lettings data in bulk to meet the final financial year end cut off deadline in June.
- 4.3 To provide timely data to users, for each of the first three quarters of the financial year, TNS publishes information reports and datasets for social housing lettings on the CORE (TNS) website based on actual returns. For the fourth quarter, publication of this information is delayed until after the official publication of Social Lettings and live tables. It is important to note that the data published by TNS through the year has not been imputed or weighted and these are not the 'official' social housing letting statistics.
- 4.4 The data is officially published after the end of the reference financial year. The publication date for the Social Housing Lettings release is pre-announced on the DCLG website and the UK National Statistics Publication Hub <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html> .
- 4.5 TNS supplies data to DCLG to feed into the Social Lettings reports.
- 4.6 In accordance with Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, eligible members of staff are given pre-release access to the Social

⁸<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

Housing Lettings release 24 hours before publication. The pre-release access list is published on the statistics web page.

- 4.7 The Social Housing Lettings data production and publication schedule are kept under review and will take into account user needs when considering the timeliness of future data releases.

5 Accessibility and clarity

‘Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the release details, illustrations and accompanying advice.’⁹

- 5.1 The Social Housing Lettings release has been changing to incorporate new features to illustrate the data and to help visualise the key messages, and to provide context for the key messages. These features are described below. This section also describes how the data can be accessed.
- 5.2 DCLG offers a facility to obtain data in alternative formats (e.g. Braille, large print or audio). For this users need to quote the title and product code/ISBN of the publication, their address and telephone number and send to alternativeformats@communities.gis.gov.uk.

Social Housing Lettings release

- 5.3 Social Lettings provides key messages summarising the flow of Social Housing Lettings in England. It is supported by maps and cartograms that help bring statistics to life. A larger group of maps is also made available in an accompanying pdf file.
- 5.4 The department makes the social housing lettings statistics available as structured data in accompanying tables. Some of these include time series that go back to 2007-08.
- 5.5 Accompanying tables and maps available to download are accessed at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/de_government/series/rents-lettings-and-tenancies
- 5.6 Feedback from users indicates that it is important for them to be able to find statistics quickly. The department’s statistics team have noted that there is potential for improvement to the layout and search facility on the gov.uk website. The *Social Housing Lettings* team has reviewed and updated the webpages for the 2013-14 release.

⁹<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

CORE (TNS) website

- 5.7 Organisations participating in CORE can download quarterly datasets from a password-protected section of the CORE (TNS) website.
- 5.8 Users need to be registered to access the Social Housing Lettings datasets through the CORE (TNS) website¹⁰. The registration process involves submitting contact details, which allows TNS to subsequently follow up with some additional questions to understand the analysis requirements and ultimately to direct potential users to the most appropriate dataset, or format, as well as vet any potential data protections concerns.
- 5.9 Users can access quarterly static pdf reports on the data collected. These reports are based on the raw datasets, before any imputation and weighting has been made. These are accessible via <https://core.communities.gov.uk/AnalyseCOREdataMain.aspx>
- 5.10 The datasets are available in SPSS or csv formats. Due to limited demand, data are not routinely made available in SAS or R, but data in SPSS format can be imported in some versions of these software packages.
- 5.11 The department has reviewed the disclosure practices for CORE data ahead of the 2013/14 release, to bring them in line with GSS practice in regards to data protection. Detail of the new practices are available through the CORE (TNS) website at <https://core.communities.gov.uk/Login.aspx>
- 5.12 The Open Data White Paper '*Unleashing the Potential*' published by Cabinet Office in June 2012 announced that 'the Government intends to adopt the Five Star Scheme as a measure of the usability of its Open Data.'¹¹
- 5.13 The Social Housing Lettings data published on gov.uk is subject to rights detailed in the Open Government Licence v2.0, as specified on the department's statistics summary page: 'All content is available under the <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/2/> , except where otherwise stated'. The data is published

¹⁰ <https://core.communities.gov.uk/ParticipateRegistration.aspx>

¹¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78946/CM8353_acc.pdf

in pdf format and Excel (Level 2 available on web with an open licence in proprietary machine-readable format).

- 5.14 The Linked Open Data Communities is a relatively new initiative to improve accessibility of datasets held by the department.¹² The Social Housing Lettings datasets are currently not included in the set of accessible data, but will be considered as the site is expanded to publish new data. The Open Data Communities is Level 5, providing linked data in multiple machine-readable formats including JSON, RDF, Turtle and N-triples, and a SPARQL 1.1 endpoint.

Social Housing Lettings data security strategy

- 5.15 The underlying CORE data that feeds into the *Social Housing Lettings* records information anonymously and absolute confidentiality on residents' circumstances is maintained. As the data is at record level and potentially at risk of disclosure, appropriate steps are taken to protect the data.
- 5.16 Tenants participating in interviews are informed of how their confidentiality is protected. The CORE manual, for use by housing officers tasked with collecting information for CORE, states that "During the interview the tenant should be informed of the uses of the data, that any answers given will be treated confidentially and that the information is passed on anonymously (no names or address)" in regards to protected characteristics, and "When asking the tenant for this information it is advisable to explain that the details are needed for general analysis, and that their specific income figures will remain confidential" in regards to income related data collected.
- 5.17 Access to full datasets is only granted to license holders; the CORE Deed of Licence sets out the conditions for data usage, including protocols for analysis, data controls and protection, and is available on request via the CORE helpdesk. The full dataset that is issued under licence is not the complete dataset and is actually slightly redacted (to the first part of the postcode). The protocol requires individual users to sign a licence, or an organisation seal to be applied. The licence contains a confidentiality clause, stating that receivers of the full dataset must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that no living individual is identified using the data and that the data is not copied or retained except as is strictly necessary. A protocol on how to use the data advises on its use in geographic information systems and in sharing with other organisations. The protocol can be downloaded from the CORE (TNS) website.

¹²<http://opendatacommunities.org/>

5.18 As part of the review to the disclosure practices there will be different licences available to access the CORE micro data, which will have different access and use restrictions. For further detail, please see details published on the CORE (TNS) website at

<https://core.communities.gov.uk/Login.aspx>

6.Coherence and comparability

*'The degree to which data can be compared over time and domain (for example geographic level). The degree to which data that refer to the same topic but are derived from different sources or methods, are similar.'*¹³

Comparability with other social housing data sources

- 6.1 There are three main sources for information relating to social lettings at local authority level: the CORE administrative system and *Local Authorities Housing Statistics* (LAHS), managed by the department; and the annual *Statistical Data Return* (SDR) of Private Registered Providers, managed by the HCA. The *English Housing Survey* also provides social housing lettings data, but the sample size of the survey leads to results which are not accurate enough at the local authority level.
- 6.2 The data collected through CORE differs from the social housing data in LAHS in that CORE is a 'flow' measure which records data at record level, whereas data in LAHS is a 'stock' measure of all social housing stock in local authorities. CORE data focuses on the tenancy details at the point of letting, and besides property characteristics also collects information on the socio-demographic profile of the household, their housing circumstances and some financial information. As a result of changing the weighting methodology, the *Social Housing Lettings* are now more consistent with the stock-based *Local Authority Housing Statistics*.
- 6.3 The SDR annual return is only completed by private registered providers and information collected includes data on size and type of home, location and rents over the year. For providers with 1,000 homes or more, it also collects data on lettings through the year. The focus is however on the property itself and does not collect information on the socio-demographic characteristics or housing circumstances of the household.
- 6.4 The *Social Housing Lettings* release covers only CORE data on 'lettings'. The CORE data on 'sales' is published in the annual Social Housing Sales (SHS) release, covering sales of both local authorities and private registered providers.

¹³<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

Comparability through time

- 6.5 Within the CORE logs, each question has a unique code and if a new response option is introduced following a log review, the next available code is used. When questions or options are deleted, the codes are not re-used. This maximises comparison through time of the datasets released and avoids confusion to users.
- 6.6 Care must be taken when interpreting trends in social lettings by type of provider, as the number of local authorities entering the CORE system has increased consistently through time. Although weights have been changed to take this into account, the quality of the data can vary from year to year
- 6.7 The questions in the CORE log may be amended each year so users that require need to ensure that they have the log for the correct year. These can be found on the CORE (TNS) website.
- 6.8 Please also reference the CORE data dictionaries which can be found on the CORE (TNS) website or on request via the CORE helpdesk:
<https://core.communities.gov.uk/AnalyseData/ASDUnderstandingDataVariables.aspx>
- 6.9 Data for social housing lettings is publicly available, by tenure, from 2004 for social rent and from 2012 for affordable rent.

Devolved administration data sources

- 6.10 Social housing lettings statistics for the devolved administrations of the UK are published separately by them. They are not directly comparable figures due to differences in data collection methodologies and the underlying social housing policies that affect some of the derived variables. Scotland runs a similar system to CORE, but this covers private registered provider lettings only.
- 6.11 Related statistics from the Devolved Administration can be found at:

Wales

- Social housing stock and rent statistics:
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2013/social-housing-stock-and-rents-31-march-2013/?jsessionid=9F56461BA178FA98598D48E0B3D56129?lang=en>
- Social housing lettings statistics:
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2013/social->

[housing-vacancies- lettings-arrears-2011-12/?jsessionid=9F56461BA178FA98598D48E0B3D56129?lang=en](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/12/?jsessionid=9F56461BA178FA98598D48E0B3D56129?lang=en)

Scotland

- Local authority social lettings:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/StockManagement>
- Social sector summary tables:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/socialhousing>
- Private registered provider social lettings:
<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/performance-tables-%E2%80%93-lettings-and-void-loss>

Northern Ireland

- Social housing statistics including data on tenancies, household, allocations and sales can be found at:
http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/stats_and_research/housing_publications.htm

Sources for further information or advice

- Link to explanation of open data standards
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-white-paper-unleashing-the-potential>
- Guidelines for Measuring Statistical Quality of official statistics, published by the ONS, available at
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/guidelines-for-measuring-statistical-quality/index.html>
- UK National Statistics Publication Hub
www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html
- Code of Practice for Official Statistics
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/the-national-statistics-standard/code-of-practice/index.html