Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Social Housing Lettings, England

Quality Report

January 2018

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.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Contents

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 the purpose and background of *Social Housing Lettings* and then provides a summary of the validation and methodology work undertaken to improve and enhance the quality of the *Social Housing Lettings* statistics. The 2016/17 statistical release carries the National Statistics badge, following the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority in 2014.

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 *Social Housing Lettings* meets user needs.

- Accuracy and reliability – This section summarises the main sources of bias and other errors in the statistics that impact on the degree of closeness between published estimates and true population values.

- Timeliness and punctuality – This section provides information on the annual statistical release and all other data releases on *Social Housing Lettings*, and considers the trade-off between timeliness and other quality dimensions.

- Accessibility and clarity – This section covers the accessibility, clarity and data security of *Social Housing Lettings* outputs, including the statistical 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, reporting of geographic variables, and information on related housing data.

1   Introduction

Primary purpose

1.1   The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)'s annual statistical report Social Housing Lettings, England (*Social Housing 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 Housing 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 produces *Social Housing Lettings* (and Social Housing Sales, England (*Social Housing 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 transferred to the department, due to changes in the regulatory function of the TSA and budgetary considerations. The CORE data collection programme was deemed an important evidence base for the department's housing policy so 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 the HCA to supply the data as per the Tenancy Standard defined in the HCA's regulatory standards[1]. For those who are not registered with the HCA, submissions are voluntary.

1.7   The statistics team in the department has overall responsibility for CORE but TNS[2] held the contract for administering the CORE system between 2009 and October 2015.

1.8   The department has now brought the CORE collection in-house. The new CORE data collection system[3] became available from 12th October 2015 and further information for stakeholders and data providers, including detailed guidance on how to use the new system is published on the CORE website[4]. The data for 2015/16 was collected by two different organisations with much of the first two quarters of data being collected by TNS from April 2015 to October 2015 and the rest by the CORE team in MHCLG.

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[1]
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419209/Tenancy_Standard_2015.pdf
[2] http://www.tnsglobal.com/
[3] https://core.communities.gov.uk/
[4] https://core.communities.gov.uk/public/GuidesAndManuals.html

2 Relevance

'The degree to which statistical outputs meet users' needs'[5]

Scope of release

2.1   Information for 2016/17 in this release reflects data given by providers for the year ending 31 March 2017. 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 2016/17 sales data from CORE is reported through the department's *Social Housing Sales*[6] statistical release, published in November 2017.

2.2   Data for *Social Housing 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 available from:
https://core.communities.gov.uk/public/GuidesAndManuals.html

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 housing lettings data that allows detailed multivariate analysis of households and dwellings.

2.5   There are a wide range of users of CORE data both internal and external to the department.

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[5]http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html
[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-sales-in-england-2016-to-2017

2.6   Social housing lettings statistics and the underlying CORE datasets inform national housing policy in areas such as the Affordable Homes 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 welfare reform. CORE data is used to inform equality impact assessments such as for lifetime tenancies[7].

2.7   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.

2.8   MOD use data collected on social housing provision for armed forces personnel to inform their Armed Forces Covenant[8] and DWP have used CORE analysis to feed into their Supported Accommodation Review.

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 use the National Statistics in conjunction with the underlying administrative data available from the UK Data Archive[9].

Key statistical concepts

2.10   The population or key units of interest in *Social Housing Lettings* are residential households let a social house 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 2016/17 available from: https://core.communities.gov.uk/public/GuidesAndManuals.html

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[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/520983/Lifetime-tenancies-equalities-assessment.pdf
[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/armed-forces-covenant
[9] http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/how-to-access

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 its statistics', accessible at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-strategy-to-meet-the-needs-of-statistics-users

2.13 Users of CORE statistics are encouraged to provide feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. The CORE statistics team is keen to receive comments so we can continually improve our statistical release and make it as relevant and useful as possible. To provide comments, please e-mail CORE@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

2.14 Users are encouraged to provide feedback in order to understand more about how the housing statistics and data are used and the decisions they inform by completing an online survey: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rents-lettings-and-tenancies

2.15 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 may be made because of new operational needs of registered providers.

2.16 Changes for the following reporting 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 consulted with government analysts, policy customers, and representatives of data providers and external organisations in autumn 2017. The purpose of the meetings was to inform the content of the 2018/19 CORE data collection. The current CORE forms are published on the CORE webpages. Changes from the forms for the previous collection year are highlighted in red.

2.18 Throughout the development of the new in-house data collection system, data providers were given opportunities to test the functionality of the system, provide comment and suggest improvements. Their feedback was

used to improve the functionality of the system and make it easier for them to use. By using their feedback the quality of the data collected through the new system has been improved.

3   Accuracy and reliability

'The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value' [10]

Overview of methodology

2.19   All data are submitted to MHCLG 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. Entries are automatically validated as they are uploaded.

2.20   The process of weighting and imputation of data is done by statisticians in the department. In 2013 the 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

2.21   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.

2.22   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 records that are similar to the records with missing data. The software then randomly chooses a record (the 'donor record') from the set of records with the closest data for the non-missing variables and copies the data for the missing variables from the donor record.

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[10] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html

2.23   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 for general needs lettings and higher for private registered providers for supported housing). 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 and ethnicity, on the missing variables for the household reference person.

2.24   Income data is not imputed. Income has a higher non-response rate, particularly amongst the elderly when it was originally reviewed in 2013. 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 data providers to encourage a higher response rate.

2.25   In most cases the imputation methodology prevents using donor data that would normally fail the usual validation process.

2.26   The imputation process uses ONS UK area classifications to group local authorities into clusters. The cluster groups are one of the variables used to judge records' similarity. The ONS uses Census data to inform these clusters and the cluster groups were updated with 2011 Census data in July 2015. From 2014/15, the imputation process used for *Social Housing Lettings* has been updated to use the updated cluster groups. Previously, the process used cluster groups based on 2001 Census data.

2.27   Due to problems with the new CORE system a number of lettings failed to record local authority of property. Where this was missing the local authority code was imputed from the postcode of the property or, for supported housing, from information given for other properties in the same scheme.

Weighting

2.28   In order to obtain representative estimates at the national level, weights are 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 some data being submitted for all

stock holding authorities (excluding Isles of Scilly) for the first time in 2013/14. Some data has continued to be submitted for all these authorities in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 (excluding Portsmouth).

2.29 Local authority weights are calculated by reference to the total number of lettings reported to the *Local Authority Housing Statistics (*LAHS) return. Generally, for the most recent year of data, provisional estimates are used as final LAHS data will not be published until later in the year. In 2016/17 final weights were used as LAHS final data was already available.

2.30 Weights are calculated for groups of similar local authorities, where these groups are defined by the [ONS UK area classifications](). For the publication of 2016/17 *Social Housing Lettings* the area classifications based on data from the 2011 Census were used. The variables used to create the area classifications are directly relevant to the factors of interest for social housing (e.g. age, nationality, employment status).

2.31 For each of the 10 geographical clusters, the weight is calculated for all responding local authorities as the ratio of the number of lettings judged to be the most reliable (either reported to LAHS, reported to CORE or a projection if neither are available), relative to those reported to CORE.

2.32 Neither imputation nor weighting are carried out for affordable rent lettings, because there are relatively few lettings. As the number grows the methodology may be extended to these lettings.

2.33 Weights are only suitable for use when conducting analysis at the national level. When conducting analysis on sub-national geographies such as local authority areas the weights should not be used.

2.34 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]()

Sources of Error

2.35 The remainder of this section summarises the steps taken to quality assure the *Social Housing 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.

2.36   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.

Coverage error

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

2.37   Any provider registered with the social housing regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency, 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 participating in accordance with their regulatory (HCA) and Single Data list (MHCLG) obligations. See below for more information on response rates.

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.'

2.38   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 working closely with data providers; the material published alongside the form (completion guides, manuals, newsletters) and the targeted communications and provision of a helpdesk to deal with data provider queries. MHCLG also 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.

2.39   Data providers are requested to submit information as close as possible to the tenancy sign up, to allow for data to be fully validated 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.'

2.40   Rigorous validation checks are built into the data collection programme to mitigate for random processing errors, user errors and extreme values, for example entering the wrong information accidentally. In addition, around 120 validation checks were run to identify potential errors in data downloaded from the CORE website. In some of these, errors were identified and where appropriate[11] data providers were contacted to resolve the errors. Further details of these checks are available on request.

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.'

2.41   To determine the impact of nonresponse error for local authority lettings CORE counts are reconciled against the Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) survey.

2.42   It is estimated that 90% of local authority social rent lettings were recorded in 2016/17. Table 4a in the National Statistics release gives more detail on the submission levels of stock holding local authorities.

2.43   The effect of non-response bias is minimised by steps applied in the weighting process (see above). Response rates are continually monitored as part of the data collection process and the CORE team tries to maximise response rates from local authorities.

2.44   For item non-response, imputation is carried out for socio-demographic variables (sex, age, economic status, nationality and ethnicity) for the main tenant. 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.

2.45   Data collected on income of households has high levels of non-response, ranging from 35% for private registered providers' general needs lettings to 64% for local authority supported housing in 2016/17.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

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[11] These cases tended to be where data provider error was identified or known system issues

values as the results would not be reliable and prone to misuse. 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.

2.46   Table 1 below[12] shows the percentage of records where missing data have been imputed for each demographic variable by type of provider.

Table 1: Percentage of lettings with imputed variables[1], 2016/17				
	2016/17			
	General Needs		Supported Housing	
	PRP	LA	PRP	LA
Age	0.6%	2.2%	5.3%	3.5%
Sex	0.3%	1.3%	4.7%	2.6%
Economic Status	3.2%	10.0%	7.9%	6.6%
Ethnicity	2.5%	7.6%	6.3%	5.3%
Nationality	2.0%	10.5%	6.2%	9.0%
1. Imputed data has being applied for missing values from 2011/12. Percentages for local authorities are based on weighted data.				

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[12] Table 4d in the statistical release tables

Revisions

2.47   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-MHCLG-revisions-policy).

2.48   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'.

2.49   Non-scheduled revisions are made when a substantial error has occurred as a result of the compilation, imputation or dissemination process. In this case the statistical release, live tables and other accompanying releases will be updated with a correction notice as soon as is practical.

2.50   Scheduled revisions are made when there has been a change in methodology, for example in the weighting approach.

2.51   Weights and local authority data are usually revised as final LAHS data is published but for 2016/17 final LAHS data and weights were used so there is no scheduled revision for the data published in the release.

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.' [13]

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 explained, and releasing the data promptly.

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. Most 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/July.

4.3   The publication date for the *Social Housing Lettings* release is pre-announced on the gov.uk website[14].

4.4   In accordance with Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, eligible members of staff are given pre-release access to the *Social Housing Lettings* release 24 hours before publication. The pre-release access list is published on the statistics web page[15].

4.5   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.

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[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

[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements

[15] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics#pre-release-access-to-official-statistics

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.' [16]

4.6   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.

4.7   MHCLG 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

4.8   *Social Housing 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.

4.9   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. The majority of data collected by CORE is also published split by local authority area location of the property being let, and also separately by the organisation that owns the property. Accompanying tables and maps available to download are accessed at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rents-lettings-and-tenancies

4.10   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-

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[16]http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html

licence/version/2/ , except where otherwise stated'. The data is published in pdf format and Excel[17].

4.11　The Linked Open Data Communities is a relatively new initiative to improve accessibility of datasets held by the department.[18] The data is available from http://opendatacommunities.org/data/housing-market and selecting 'CORE - Social Housing Lettings'. 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

4.12　The underlying CORE data that feeds into *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.

4.13　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.

4.14　The new MHCLG in-house CORE data collection system has been security accredited in line with Government standards.

4.15　Microdata (i.e. record level information) is deposited with the UK Data Archive. The UK Data Archive follow strict security protocols to store and access the datasets. Users can access the data through the UK Data service, which allows users to access record level data via different layers of protection to meet different user needs. Micro-data is only released via licence. Three licences are available and each has different disclosure controls, access and use restrictions. The End User Licence is for access to datasets that are not private information as defined by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Special Licence and Secure Access are for

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[17] this is open data 2 star rating: *available on web with an open licence in proprietary machine-readable format*
[18] http://opendatacommunities.org/

access to micro-data with 'private' information as defined by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. For further detail on CORE disclosure practices, please see details available from: https://core.communities.gov.uk/public/GuidesAndManuals.html

For further information on licencing and the process for accessing CORE record level data, see the UK Data Service website: http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/how-to-access
And a brief guide produced by MHCLG available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rents-lettings-and-tenancies

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.' [19]

Comparability with other social housing data sources

6.1   There are three main sources for information relating to Social Housing 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 recorded as authority-level summary statistics. 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 (*Social Sales*) release, covering sales of both local authorities and private registered providers[20].

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[19]http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html

[20]   https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-sales-in-england-2016-to-2017

Comparability through time

6.5 Within the CORE logs, each question response 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 comparability through time of the datasets released and avoids confusion to users.

6.6 Care must be taken when interpreting trends in Social Housing Lettings by type of provider, as the participation of local authorities in the CORE system has increased 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 data for previous years need to ensure that they have the log for the correct year. These can be found on the CORE website.

6.8 Please also reference the CORE data dictionaries which describe the variables on the dataset and can be found from the following page in the CORE website: https://core.communities.gov.uk/public/GuidesAndManuals.html

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
- Disclosure practices for releasing CORE data
  https://core.communities.gov.uk/public/GuidesAndManuals.html