



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Right to Buy Sales in England statistical release

Technical Notes



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# Data collection

Right to Buy Sales of local authority stock are collected through the Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts returns supplied to MHCLG by Local Authorities. This provides information at district level for all local authority council house sales as well as housing capital expenditure related to Right to Buy replacements. This is a quarterly return and is reconciled annually, at the June release of this publication, with updated figures from Pooling returns and Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS).

## Data quality

### Assessment of data quality

In 2015, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published a [regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data](#) (updated in 2019). To assess the quality of the data provided for this release, the department has followed that standard.

The Quarterly Right to Buy Sales statistical release is produced by MHCLG based on data provided by Local Authorities. An assessment of the level of risk based on the Quality Assurance Toolkit:

<b>Table 1: MHCLG Right to Buy Sales sources</b>				
<b>Statistical Series</b>	<b>Administrative Source</b>	<b>Data Quality Concern</b>	<b>Public Interest</b>	<b>Matrix Classification</b>
Right to Buy Sales Statistics	Local authorities' individual data systems.	Low	Medium	Low Risk [A2]

The Quarterly Right to Buy Sales release can be considered as medium profile, as there has been mainstream media interest, with moderate economic and/or political sensitivity.

The data quality concern is considered low given that the data are checked by providers and is subject to data quality checks prior to publication.

Overall, the Quarterly Right to Buy Sales release has been assessed as A2: Low/Medium Risk. A full outline of the statistical production process and quality assurance carried out is provided in the flow chart in Figure 1. Further details are also provided against each of the four areas outlined in the Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) Toolkit.

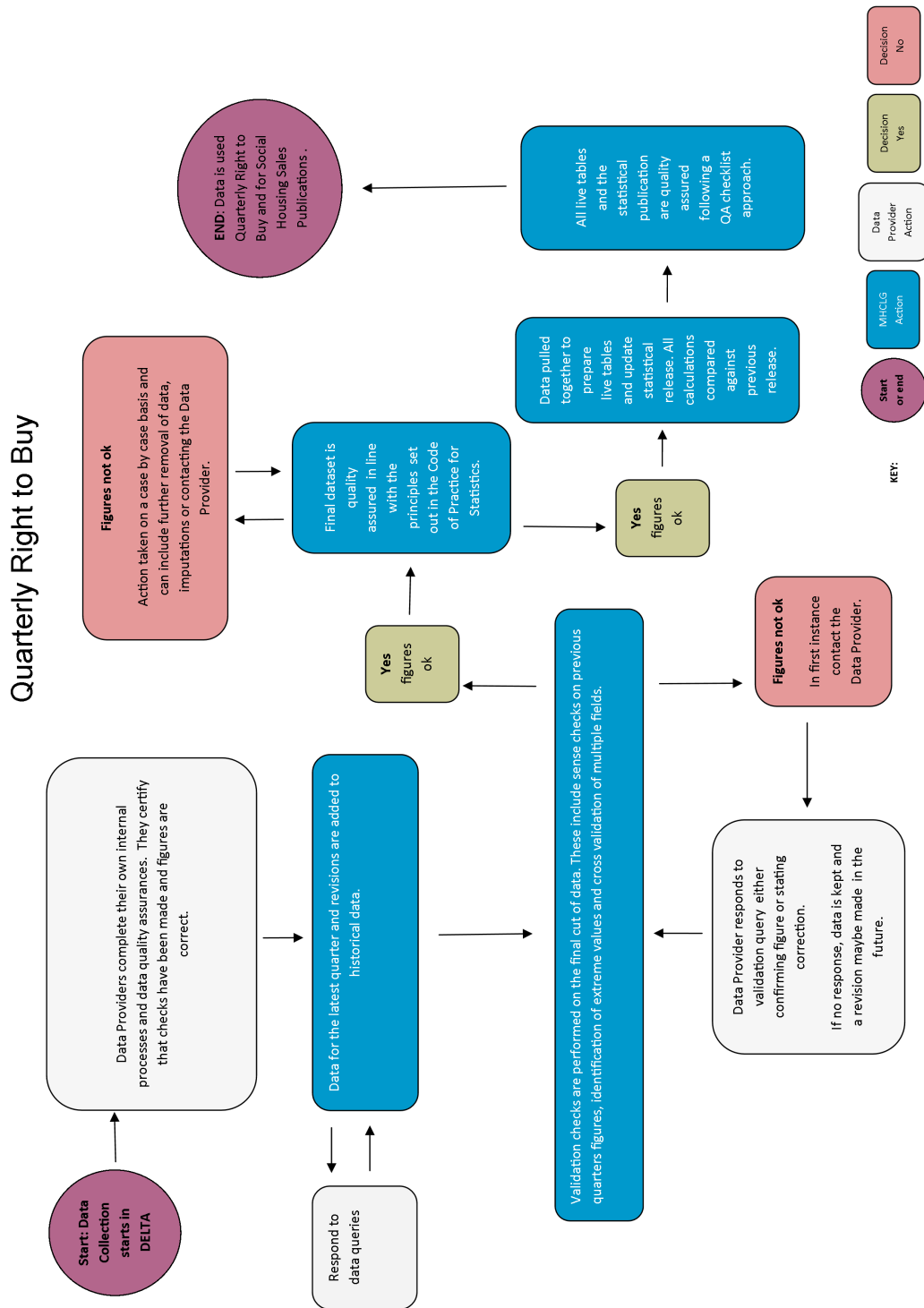


Figure 1 Quality Assurance Flow Chart

## **Operational context and administrative data collection**

For Local Authority data returns (submitted through the Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts), the figures on Local Authority Right to Buy sales and receipts are audited annually by Local Authorities and continuously quality assured by MHCLG, which can result in revisions. For consistency, the sales figures are additionally compared against those supplied through the annual LAHS return, which can result in further revisions. This is done in the June releases of this publication.

The figures for starts on site and acquisitions are particularly sensitive to reporting error as they are not audited in the way that sales and receipts figures are and there are no comparable statistics collected against which they can be assessed. Previous consultation revealed that the question the Department asks in its Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts Return about starts on site and acquisitions was interpreted in different ways by different local authorities. For example, in the past, some local authorities may have reported all starts on site and acquisitions rather than excluding those that were partially or fully funded by HE or the GLA. To address this issue, MHCLG keeps in contact with the data suppliers to ensure that there is a common understanding of what information is being supplied.

However, it is possible that interpretation of starts on site and acquisitions by local authorities may still not be uniform. We continue to work with local authorities to improve the quality of the data and the way it is collected. In some cases, the quarter in which the start is reported may be later than the quarter when the start actually occurred. This is caused by a delay between the start on site occurring and this being reported to us via the local authority.

To ensure the accuracy of starts on site and acquisitions figures, the department contacts local authorities with more than 20 starts on site and acquisitions, for confirmation of their figures.

Every effort is made to collect data from every Local Authority but on occasion estimates may be used (see imputation). Care should be taken using data at a Local Authority level as, for many authorities, the totals are low and therefore can be volatile.

## **Communication with data supply partners**

There are regular contacts with the data suppliers for this release to ensure that there is a

common understanding of what information is being supplied.

Communication with suppliers is managed through several formats (regular contact with data providers via email or phone either during the data collection or validation checks processes).

### **QA principles, standards and checks by data suppliers**

The Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts data is provided by Local Authorities and the Department does not have full oversight of their systems and quality procedures. We provide clear guidance and documentation to them via DELTA. Data received by the Department undergoes an extensive validation and imputation process which is set out in **Figure 1**.

The data provided as part of the Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts is subject to the audit procedures of the local authority and is therefore subject to detailed checks and certification by the authority before providing data to MHCLG.

### **Producers' QA investigation and documentation**

Whilst providers are expected to carry out their own checks before the data is submitted for this publication, further quality assurance is carried out once the data is received by the responsible statisticians for this publication (**Figure 1**).

The quality assurance process includes sense checks on previous quarters figures, identification of extreme values, cross validation of multiple fields and, if necessary, contacting the data provider for confirmation of figures.

The data, report and tables are independently quality assured by another statistician in the production team. Further final checks are performed to the final end product. These checks use a clear checklist approach to ensure the figures are consistent across the release and live tables, with each check being systematically signed off when it has been completed.

## **Imputation**

Imputations are no longer performed on the Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts data. Up to Q4 2017-18, MHCLG imputed values for local authorities that did not submit data for the

past four quarters. This involved replacing missing data (blank return) with a zero and highlighting the changes made in the live tables. Imputation highlighting was removed after four quarters.

Due to a change in the data collection system in Q1 2018-19 it is no longer possible to distinguish between a return of zero and a blank return. Since then, imputations could not be identified for quarterly Right to Buy sales, receipts and starts-on-site and acquisitions. However, this does not affect published totals.

## Definitions

### Right to Buy sales

Right to Buy Sales, in this release, are counted as any sale of a property, built before 2008, which was owned by a Local Authority Housing Revenue account and sold with a discount through the Right to Buy Scheme.

The sales figures exclude Right to Buy (RTB) sales of dwellings which are not accounted for in a local authority's Housing Revenue Account, either because the authority, having disposed of nearly all its dwellings to a Private Registered Provider (PRP), has closed down its Housing Revenue Account or because the dwelling was originally tied to a particular occupation (e.g. a school caretaker's cottage or a park keeper's cottage). The figures may also exclude any Right to Buy sales of dwellings which, although accounted for in the Housing Revenue Account, are the subject of an agreement made either under section 80B of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as inserted by section 313 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and now repealed) or under section 11(6) of the Local Government Act 2003 (as inserted by section 174 of the Localism Act 2011).

The figures may include sales at less than market value of dwellings accounted for in the Housing Revenue Account to secure tenants of a local authority, even when those sales are not strictly under Right to Buy.

Sales also include any shared ownership sold through Right to Buy where the premium paid by the purchaser exceeded 50 per cent of the market value of the property (see **Proportions of dwellings** below).



## **Proportions of dwellings**

Some figures will include proportions of dwellings. This is because the figures also include sales of a shared ownership lease of a dwelling accounted for in the Housing Revenue Account where either the premium (i.e. a portion of the market value of the dwelling) paid by the purchaser exceeded 50 per cent of the market value of the dwelling or the sum of the premium paid by the purchaser and all other premiums paid up to two years before the payment of the current premium. Where a shared ownership disposal has been included, the figure corresponds to the portion of the market value paid; for example, the purchase of a 50 per cent equity share will be represented by 0.5.

## **Right to Buy receipts**

The figures include receipts arising from all sales included in the sales figures. Figures for a quarter may include receipts arising from a sale in another quarter, but do not include receipts arising from sales before 1 April 2012. After a portion of these receipts are reserved for costs incurred by authorities in administering the Right to Buy scheme, paying off additional local authority housing debt, an amount for authorities to use for general capital purposes, a share required by HMT, and (in a small number of cases) for buying back former council properties, the remainder of the receipts are for the funding of additional homes for affordable or social rent.

A local authority may either return this portion of the receipts to Homes England or the Greater London Authority for redistribution for funding these additional homes, or, if it has signed an agreement with MHCLG, retain part or all of this portion on the condition that it spends, or ensures that another body spends on its behalf, an agreed amount for this same purpose within three years. Details of starts on site and completions (including acquisitions) using recycled Right to Buy receipts since 2014-15 can be found in live tables, 1011S and 1011C, respectively: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>

The definitions used in this publication can be found in the 'Housing statistics and English Housing survey' glossary published by MHCLG and that can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-statistics-and-england-housing-survey-glossary>

# Revisions policy

This policy has been developed in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official statistics and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government Revisions Policy and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistical-notice-mhclg-revisions-policy>.

It covers two types of revisions that the policy covers, as follow:

## Non-Scheduled Revisions

Where 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.

## Scheduled Revisions

Revisions to the latest quarter will be made in the subsequent release after this data is submitted by the local authority.

Where there was an error or data was not previously provided, revisions to any previous historical quarters will be made in the June quarterly publication

Annual sales tables from Social Housing Sales will be updated along with the June quarterly release which covers the whole financial year data. Among the tables that will be updated is Live Table 678 which contains all sales of social housing, including Right to Buy sales.

## Other information

### Uses of the data

These statistics are used to monitor local authority Right to Buy sales and analyse the effectiveness of policy changes around Right to Buy and the housing sector.

## Related Statistics

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is part of a cross-government working group, including devolved administrations and the Office of National Statistics, working to improve the trustworthiness quality and value of housing and planning statistics across the UK. This working group has published action plan to make the planned improvements on house building statistics clear and transparent to users.

Details of this work and how you can provide feedback are available via the Government Statistical Service website: <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/working-with-users-2/housing-and-planning-statistics/>

Quarterly Right to Buy Sales and related statistics are detailed in **Table 2**. Further information can be found in the separate statistical release for each source which can be found at the links below.

<b>Table 2: Social Housing Sales and related statistics</b>				
<b>Release</b>	<b>What do statistics show?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Where does the data come from?</b>	<b>What are these figures most appropriate for?</b>
<b>This release:</b>  <b>Quarterly Right to Buy</b>  <b>MHCLG</b>	Quarterly estimates of sales of Local Authority owned dwellings under Right to Buy scheme, the receipts resulting from these sales and the number of starts and acquisitions	Quarterly (March, June, September, January)	Data provided directly by local authorities	'Leading indicator' for the Right to Buy policy.  Figures provided are Local Authority Right to Buy sales, the associated receipts. The starts on site and acquisitions of the delivered replacements.
<b>Social Housing Sales</b>  <b>MHCLG</b>	Annual estimates of sales for social housing stock in England.  It also includes Private Registered Provider sales	Annual (usually December)	The Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) form administered by MHCLG. The Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts return administered by MHCLG. The Statistical Data Return (SDR) from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The COntinuous REcording (CORE) data	These figures provide an overview of all sales of social housing stock in England. Shared ownership sales are not counted as they are treated as supply and not the sale of existing stock.  These figures provide characteristics for PRP sales that have been recorded in COREsales.

			collection run by MHCLG. The Investment Management System (IMS) administration system run by the HE Greater London Affordable Housing Statistics from the GLA.	
<b>Affordable housing Supply</b> <b>MHCLG</b>	Overall affordable housing supply (new build and acquisitions)	Annual (November)	HE and GLA data which is published every six and three months, respectively, combined with and Local Authority Housing Statistics Data	Provides the most complete estimate of affordable housing supply. Affordable housing figures are a subset of total housing supply.
<b>Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) dataset</b> <b>MHCLG</b>	Stock and condition of Local Authority owned housing, including information on rents and waiting lists	Annual (November-January)  Note: there is no longer a dedicated release to the LAHS data collection. Instead the data is released alongside relevant publications	Data provided directly by local authorities	Information on the stock, condition and changes to local authority owned properties.
<b>Statistical Data Return</b> <b>RSH</b>	Stock and condition of Private Registered Provider owned housing	Annual (October)	Data provided directly by Private Registered Provider to the Regulator of Social Housing	Information on the stock, condition and changes to Private Registered Provider owned properties.
<b>House building; new build dwellings</b> <b>MHCLG</b>	Quarterly estimates of new build starts and completions	Quarterly (March, June, September, December)	Building control officers at: - National House Building Council - Local Authorities Approved Inspectors	This is a 'leading indicator' of house building, available less than 2 months after each quarter's end
<b>Housing supply; net additional dwellings</b> <b>MHCLG</b>	Total housing supply that comprises all new build, conversions, change of use, other gains/losses and demolitions	Annual (November)	Comes from local authorities outside London (Housing Flows Reconciliation Return) and for London boroughs is provided by Greater London Authority (London Development Database)	Provides an accurate assessment of annual change in all housing stock and is the most comprehensive estimate of supply.
<b>Dwelling Stock estimates</b> <b>MHCLG</b>	Total housing stock, split by tenure	Annual (May)	Overall change in stock from Net Additional Dwellings. Tenure information provided directly from Local Authorities and Housing Associations.	Provides an accurate assessment of the total size of the housing stock and how it is split by tenure

## **Social Housing Sales**

Social Housing Sales statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-social-housing-sales>

Social Housing Sales figures may diverge from the figures in this publication due to the rolling four quarter revisions policy in the quarterly Right to Buy Sales estimates.

For annual Right to Buy Sales data back to 1980-81, refer to Live Table 678 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-social-housing-sales>

## **Local Authority Stock Data**

Local Authority Stock Data can be found in Live Table 116 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

Stock data has been used to calculate the number of Right to Buy Sales per 1,000 dwellings of existing local authority stock, presented in **Map 1** in the Right to Buy sales section of the statistical release.

## **Private Registered Provider stock**

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) publish annual statistics collected through its Statistical Data Return (SDR) on stock size, location, type, provider characteristics and rents relating to PRPs in England. Data from the SDR is the main source of PRP data used in the social housing sales statistics.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistical-data-return-statistical-releases>

## **Homes England Housing Statistics**

Homes England (HE) publishes bi-annual statistics collected through its Investment Management System (IMS) and Planning Concept Statement (PCS) returns detailing the housing starts on site and housing completions delivered by the HE.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-statistics>

## **Greater Local Authority Housing Statistics**

The Greater London Authority (GLA) publish monthly statistics detailing the housing start on site and housing completions delivered by the GLA.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/housing-and-land/increasing-housing-supply/affordable-housing-statistics>

### **Dwelling stock estimates**

MHCLG also publish statistics showing the total dwelling stock in England each year and estimates of stock by local authority district and tenure. They can be found at the following link: [www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants)

## **Devolved administration statistics**

### **Data for Wales**

The Welsh Government publishes information on social housing sales, which does include information on Right to Buy sales. On 26 January 2019, Right to Buy was repealed for all council and housing association tenants. The latest release can be found at the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/social-housing-sales/?lang=en>

### **Data for Scotland**

The Scottish Government publish information on social housing sales, however, from 1 August 2016, Right to Buy was repealed for all council and housing association tenants in Scotland. The last release can be found at the following link:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/Sales>

### **Data for Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland social tenants have the right to a statutory house sale, which is similar to Right to Buy. The latest release can be found at the following link:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

## **User engagement**

Users are encouraged to provide feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. Comments on any issues relating to this statistical release are welcomed and encouraged. Responses should be addressed to the "Public enquiries"

contact given in the "Enquiries" section below.

The Department's engagement strategy to meet the needs of statistics users is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-strategy-to-meet-the-needs-of-statistics-users>

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Information on Official Statistics is available via the UK Statistics Authority website:

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

Information about statistics at MHCLG is available via the Department's website:

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics)