

Clare Haughey MSP
Finance and Public Administration Committee
FPA.committee@parliament.scot
Sent by email

22 October 2026

Dear Clare Haughey MSP,

National Records of Scotland – Statistical publication review

I am writing to inform you about National Records of Scotland's (NRS) plans for our statistical publications, which are set out in our annual work programme published today. I also want to update you on the public engagement activity we are undertaking with users about these plans.

NRS is a non-ministerial department in the Scottish Administration. We collect, preserve and publish information about Scotland's people and history, to inform current and future generations. NRS publishes a wide range of statistical data about the people and population of Scotland, including Scotland's census.

NRS has reviewed its portfolio of statistical publications to ensure that statistical production remains sustainable, continues to meet user needs and delivers maximum public value. The review was initiated in response to increasing pressures on analytical capacity and the need to create greater space for improvement, modernisation and transformation activity.

This work aligns closely with the Office of the Chief Statistician's strategic priorities and the principles of Public Service Reform, which emphasise directing resources towards activities that deliver the greatest public value.

We assessed publications against factors including user need, public value, policy and operational relevance. Our main aim was to focus statistical resource on publications which inform regular public policy or service delivery decisions.

We considered opportunities to reduce duplication, long-term sustainability of production, and publication frequency (particularly the need for annual data), and whether information could be provided more effectively through alternative formats or products.

As a result of this review, NRS propose:

Scaling back the frequency or content of some publications

- **Households and Dwellings in Scotland:** reducing from annual to every two years. Household data shows relatively small changes year to year, so we tend to look at changes over the longer term.
- **Small Area Population Estimates:** releasing only final estimates and no provisional figures.
- **Alzheimer's and Other Dementia Deaths:** reducing standalone publication from annual to every two years. Annual analysis on leading causes of death will continue to be published in another publication.
- **Homeless Deaths:** reducing from annual to every two years. There is more uncertainty around homeless deaths estimates than our other figures, so we tend to look at the change across multiple years.
- **Avoidable Mortality:** converting to a data-only release.
- **Monthly Mortality Analysis, Scotland:** reducing from monthly to quarterly.

Changing responsibility for production

- **Healthy Life Expectancy:** transferring production from NRS to Public Health Scotland (PHS) after the 2023-2025 reporting period. PHS will assume responsibility for the production and development of Healthy Life Expectancy statistics, while NRS will continue to publish annual Life Expectancy statistics.
- **People Registered to Vote:** transferring production from NRS to the Scottish Government, who are better placed to deliver these statistics.

Engagement to date has focused primarily on organisations and stakeholders who use statistics for policy development. We have also considered known user needs through ongoing engagement with customers.

This has provided valuable insight into how statistics support policy development, operational decision-making and public services. We also explored the impact our proposals would have on other stakeholders and the public. We now want to hear directly from the wider community of users.

Today, 22 October 2026, NRS has published a Call for Feedback and launched a six-week public engagement exercise alongside its Annual Statistical Work Programme. This will give users, stakeholders and members of the public an opportunity to provide views on the proposed changes to NRS statistical publications. Further details can be found on the [Call for Feedback](#) page of our website.

We'll carefully consider this feedback before making any final decisions. NRS will publish a summary of the feedback and our conclusions.

I want to reassure the Committee that this review is intended to ensure that Scotland's statistical system remains high-quality and sustainable, with resources focused on the outputs that provide the greatest value for users and decision-makers.

Yours sincerely

Alison Byrne, OBE

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