

Devolution Good Practice

There have been many developments over the past two years in the devolution process. The Scotland Act 2015 has devolved a number of new powers to the Scottish Parliament, particularly regarding taxation and welfare. The Wales Act, having received Royal Assent in January 2017, will also lead to greater autonomy in Wales on a number of issues, including the devolution of income tax powers. Northern Ireland also looks set to receive control over Corporation Tax.

Devolution has an impact on our work across the Government Statistical Service (GSS). Working with colleagues across departments and governments plays a vital role in ensuring policy makers are best informed through better statistics, to the benefit of all.

It is in this light that the UK Government recently signed a [Concordat on Statistics](#) with the Devolved Administrations which sets out how producers of official statistics across the UK will work together to:

- prioritise statistical needs and reach consensus on the statistics to be produced;
- produce coherent/comparable official statistics in a way that represents good value for money;
- exchange data and other information;
- consult with each other on areas of shared interest; and
- cooperate on matters relating to professional standards and statistical staff.

This applies equally to statisticians within the Devolved Administrations as well as those within UK departments.

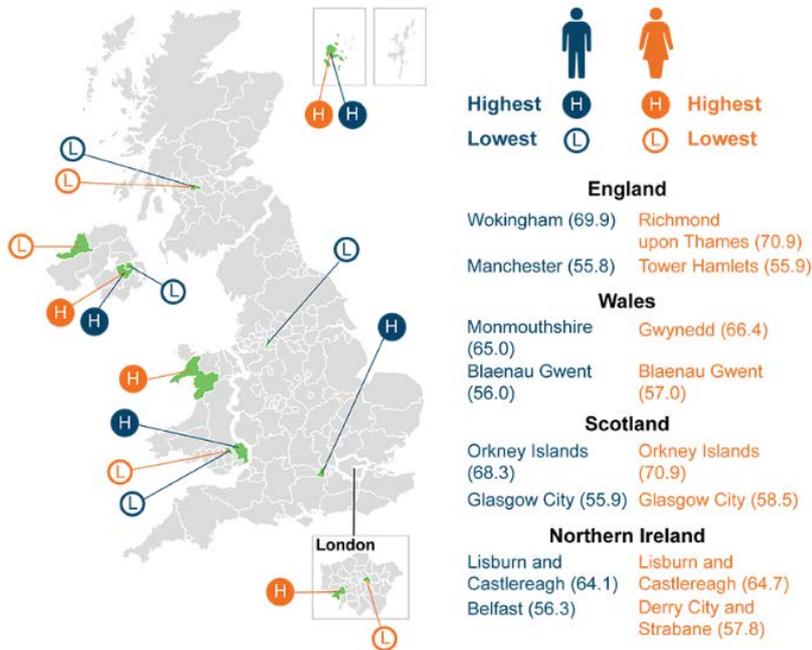
What does this mean for you?

Producers of official statistics across the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations all have a role to play in delivering better statistics. We need to be collaborative and allow time to gather, and consider, the views of counterparts in other administrations. This checklist will help you consider how to involve other administrations.

- ✓ Work collaboratively and openly across administrations when producing statistics, particularly those with a devolved interest.
- ✓ Check that it is clear what geography your output relates to and consider whether any additional breakdowns would be valuable for other administrations.
- ✓ When producing statistics for different geographies ensure you understand the context and what the key messages are for different country/regions, and don't focus only on the UK picture.
- ✓ Consult users across the UK when designing outputs and data collections.
- ✓ Harmonise where appropriate.
- ✓ Alert other administrations to upcoming publications when they contain country level data.
- ✓ Signpost users to comparable statistics where available.
- ✓ Share data securely, where appropriate.
- ✓ Allow enough time for quality assurance with other administrations. This can, and often should, include access ahead of formal pre-release to statisticians in other administrations.
- ✓ **In all of this, be proactive and consult/involve early in the process and not simply the day before (or on the day) that you intend to publish.**

Good Practice Case Study

To help inform the [Independent Review into the State Pension Age](#), ONS developed some analysis of healthy life expectancy by administrative geography and socioeconomic position, resulting in the publication of a new statistical bulletin on [Health expectancies at birth and at age 65 in the UK](#), based on 2011 Census data.



Initially this analysis covered England only, but after some discussion it was felt that the publication could be improved by extending the examination across the whole of the UK

To do this, ONS first contacted Public Health Wales, NHS Health Scotland and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to find out what health expectancy statistics were already produced and whether any included the expanded health states required by deprivation strata and administrative geography. Once this had been excluded, the team then set out plans to National Records of

Scotland, Welsh Government and NISRA to provide a comprehensive set of health state life expectancy statistics for local areas in the UK and by each Devolved Administration's measure of deprivation. The team also requested their future input for quality assurance and commentary prior to publication and to publish such statistics by local area level.

As a result of the collaboration, the first set of health state life expectancies across all local areas in the UK was published. This also acted as a stimulus to expanding the regular ONS health state life expectancy release to cover all local areas and health Boards in Scotland and Wales.

It also stimulated the creation of a UK health state life expectancy group which meets quarterly and has cross UK membership, with a remit to collaborate on the publication of these statistics in future.

**[Michael Bleakley](#), Inter Administration Committee Secretariat
Central Policy Secretariat, UK Statistics Authority
24 February 2017**