

19 November 2025

Dear Minister,

Transparency and a refreshed Code of Practice for Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority, through its regulatory arm the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), is responsible for upholding public confidence in the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics produced and used by government.

One way to achieve this is by ensuring that intelligent transparency is the default approach to government communications – this means proactively using statistics, data, and other types of analysis in an open, clear, and accessible way.

This week OSR published its Intelligent transparency: 2025 review, which provides systematic insights into how well embedded intelligent transparency is within governments across the UK.¹ We found that there has been good progress, but there is still work to be done to ensure that intelligent transparency is the default approach. We make six recommendations to support improvements. In particular, I draw your attention to Recommendation 4 which asks Ministerial departments to publish public commitments to intelligent transparency and set out how they will resolve issues if they are identified. The full list of recommendations is set out in an annex to this letter.

Our review comes at an opportune time as we launch the third edition of the Code of Practice for Statistics (the Code).² A key change in this edition is the inclusion of intelligent transparency in the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis.³ Code 3.0 also builds on and strengthens our expectations for the production, dissemination and communication of high-quality statistics.

The [Ministerial Code / Ministerial Guidance for Northern Ireland] recognises the importance of the Code of Practice for Statistics and, as a minister, you play a vital role in upholding these standards. Specifically, ministers can adhere to these standards by only quoting analysis which is already in the public domain; not using analytical evidence in a misleading way; ensuring the publication of statistics remains free from political interference; and respecting the advice of analytical leaders, especially Heads of Profession for Statistics, Chief Statisticians and/or Senior Statisticians within your department.

¹ [Intelligent transparency: 2025 review](#)

² [Code of Practice for Statistics 3.0 – What has changed](#)

³ [Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis, with required practices](#)

I would be grateful for your continued support in ensuring statistics and data are produced and communicated in a way that serves the public good. As set out in our review report, we would like to see you publicly commit your department to adhering to the principles of intelligent transparency and upholding the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Young', with a stylized, cursive script.

Penny Young
Deputy Chair

Annex: List of recommendations

To ensure that intelligent transparency is the default approach to the public use of statistics, data and wider analysis, we make the following six recommendations aimed at ministerial departments of the UK Government and the devolved governments.

Recommendation 1: To support equality of access to statistics, data and wider analysis, Number 10 should review and act on training needs on the Code of Practice for Statistics and intelligent transparency for special advisers and those responsible for the 'grid'. It should also improve connections with the statistical community across government so that issues can be identified and resolved promptly. For example, it may be beneficial to introduce a Chief Statistician role within Number 10, or for relevant colleagues within Number 10 to make links with the Head of Profession for Statistics network by joining their regular mailing list and meetings.

Recommendation 2: To support public understanding of figures and ensure adherence to the Code of Practice for Statistics, all statistics, data and wider analysis used in public communications by ministerial departments and devolved governments should cite a source and directly link to that source. To support this goal, the Government Communication Service should embed expectations about citing sources within its guidance for communication professionals and clearly communicate this across its networks.

Recommendation 3: To prevent and promptly address misuse or misinterpretation, ministerial departments and devolved governments should proactively monitor their public use of statistics, data and wider analysis.

Recommendation 4: To increase transparency and build public trust in the use of statistics, data and wider analysis, ministerial departments and devolved governments should publish public commitments to intelligent transparency. This could take the form of a statement of compliance which sets out what steps the organisation takes to adhere to the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis and how it resolves issues if they are identified.

Recommendation 5: To ensure that knowledge about intelligent transparency is consistent across professions, guidance and training on intelligent transparency should be embedded and promoted amongst the Government Economic Service, the Government Social Research profession, and the Government Policy profession.

Recommendation 6: To improve consistency of practices and reduce duplication of effort, Heads of Profession for Statistics and Chief Statisticians should regularly share their work on intelligent transparency with each other. This could include sharing of guidance and training materials, processes for the publication of ad hoc releases, and other initiatives to increase the awareness of and adherence to the principles of intelligent transparency.