

Response to Consultation Document "Independence for Statistics"

I am writing as Head of the Information Products Unit of Health Solutions Wales (HSW), which is part of Velindre NHS Trust.

Whilst I welcoming the move to an independent ONS, there are some aspects which are unclear from the consultation document and which possibly have a major impact on suppliers and receivers of ONS data.

HSW currently supply ONS with small area health data for the Neighbourhood Statistics website and, as part of a reciprocal agreement, ONS send address/postcode matching and disclosure control software to HSW to ensure that the data submitted is accurately geo-coded and does not disclose small numbers. Some of the funding required to facilitate this cross-department work has been made available by the Department of the Deputy Prime Minister. It is not clear whether the independent status of the ONS will affect these agreements.

As well as being a supplier of data, HSW (together with the National Public Health Service for Wales and the Business Services Centre) are part of a NHS Wales Consortium who purchase a number of datasets from the ONS including Birth and Death records, Abortions data and Conceptions data. It is not clear how the financial position of ONS will be affected and whether it will be responsible for raising its own revenue, in a similar way to Ordnance Survey for example. There is a concern that such financial pressures will results in increased charges for ONS products.

The other area of concern is in respect of the future of the NHS Central Registry within Government and the potential impact any changes in its operation will have on organisations in NHS Wales. I am content that our concerns have been covered in a separate response to the consultation made by Allan Dickinson of the Informing Healthcare Programme.

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