

Glen Watson
Director General
Office for National Statistics
Government Buildings
Cardiff Road
Newport
NP10 8XG

By email

Monday, 4 February 2013

Dear Glen,

Registration of deaths in England and Wales

As you know the Royal Statistical Society has concerns about the delayed registration of deaths in England and Wales that arises if a death is referred to the coroner and subject to an inquest. You will recall that the Society issued a statement on this in January 2012.

At the meeting of the Society's Council on 30 January 2013 we reviewed this issue and reaffirmed our concerns. I am writing to let you know that we will shortly be publishing a further statement. A copy is attached together with a document in support of our position.

Whilst we continue to hope for legislative change, we have identified a particular action for the Office for National Statistics that would avoid misuse of these statistics in the meantime. We consider that:

- the Office for National Statistics and the Health and Social Care Information Centre should develop a brief explanatory text which makes clear that requests by research teams for checks against the register of deaths in England and Wales on whether any members of their study-cohort have died by a specified date can only yield information on deaths that have both occurred and been registered by the date of interest.

I hope you will agree that this is sensible step to take and will feel able to act quickly to assist users of these important statistics.

I have written similarly to the Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care Information Centre, Tim Straughan.

Yours sincerely,



John Pullinger
President of the Royal Statistical Society