

Jil Matheson  
National Statistician  
Government Buildings  
Cardiff Road  
Newport  
South Wales  
NP10 8XG

By email

Monday, 4 February 2013

Dear Jil,

### **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.

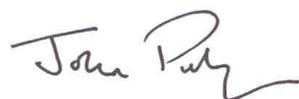
Whilst we continue to hope for legislative change, we have identified two actions that would avoid misuse of these statistics in the meantime. We consider that:

- the National Statistician, and her heads of statistical profession in government departments, should ensure that all official statistical tables on deaths in England and Wales make crystal clear whether tabulation is by death-year or by death-registration-year and give an explanation that these differ, and the extent to which they do; and
- 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 these are sensible step to take and will feel able to act quickly to assist users of these important statistics. I have also written concerning the second point to

the Director General of the Office for National Statistics, Glen Watson, and the Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care Information Centre, Tim Straughan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Pullinger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

John Pullinger  
President of the Royal Statistical Society