

Mark Drakeford AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair
Finance Committee

SeneddFinance@senedd.wales

24 February 2026

Dear Peredur

Recommendation 11 of the Finance Committee's recent Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget report asked the Welsh Government to work with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other stakeholders to ensure that data is available at a Welsh level to support the measurement and monitoring of economic performance and the impact of key policies. The Committee requested an update by the time the Second Supplementary Budget 2025–26 is laid on 24 February 2026. I am writing to provide this update.

Welsh Government officials continue to work closely with the ONS to ensure that Welsh priorities are fully reflected in the development of the ONS Economic Statistics and Survey Improvement Plans. We have been proactive in setting out Wales' requirements. In December 2025, the Permanent Secretary wrote to the Permanent Secretary of the ONS to welcome the progress being made while restating key Welsh priorities, including improved sample design and coverage in business surveys, the need to safeguard subnational data quality, and the critical importance of the Annual Population Survey (APS) for data on the labour market, Welsh language and population characteristics.

I continue to meet regularly with the Chief Statistician and others to maintain Ministerial oversight of data improvement.

These issues have also been discussed at senior UK wide statistical governance forums, including the regular quarterly meeting of Chief Statisticians from across the UK, where survey recovery and ONS prioritisation activities remain a regular item. At working level, officials continue to engage positively with ONS teams responsible for economic statistics, survey transformation, and labour market outputs. Through these channels we have set out

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales
Gohebiaeth.Mark.Drakeford@llyw.cymru

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Wales-specific requirements and contributed to the development of ONS prioritisation and recovery work.

On 19 February the ONS published an update on its prioritisation plans, confirming steps to streamline outputs so it can focus resources on producing and improving core national statistics such as GDP, prices, labour market and population data, alongside work on the Transformed Labour Force Survey and Census 2031. In response to strong user feedback (including from the Welsh Government), ONS confirmed that the Annual Population Survey will continue to provide local and regional insight.

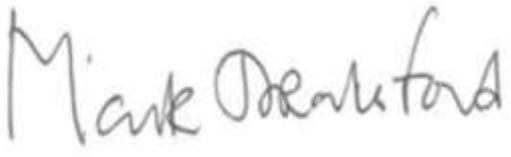
The ONS has recently published the Labour Force Survey Performance and Quality Monitoring Report for October to December 2025. It reports improvements in achieved survey responses across Great Britain, with some improvements in response rates, including within Wales, despite ongoing challenges with survey engagement. The progress shown could suggest a slight increase in confidence in the use of the data for Wales, however the data quality still remains low by historical standards. Officials have requested that ONS provide further details on quality improvements for Wales as part of future updates.

As ONS indicate, their Economic Statistics and Survey Improvement Plans are multi-year programmes and changes to survey design and operations will take time to implement carefully. They have been undertaking, and are planning, a range of improvement activities and are providing updates on the progress they have been making across a number of social and business surveys. This includes investment in increasing the interviewer workforce to improve the number of achieved responses. The [latest progress report](#), reflecting the wider GB level developments was published in December 2025. We would expect these developments to have some positive impact on the quality of data for Wales.

We continue to work with ONS on a range of other areas which contribute to the measurement of policy impact in Wales. We already have a joint work plan in place with the ONS about the [coherence of Welsh language statistics](#), which will help us improve our understanding of how we measure and monitor progress towards our target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. For example, we successfully linked Census 2021 data with Labour Force Survey data to understand differences in how people report their Welsh language ability between different surveys. We will continue working with the ONS to deliver key outputs from this work plan, for example, on understanding the requirements for information about Welsh language ability outside Wales, especially as we work with them on plans and preparations for Census 2031.

The Committee will be pleased to note that, through our ongoing engagement with ONS, we are seeing some quality improvements for Wales. However, there are still limitations with data. Officials therefore continue to recommend using a basket of indicators to monitor the labour market in Wales, including alternative sources such as the APS, annual HMRC Real Time Information on paid employees, and the claimant count. Officials will continue to engage closely with ONS as further development work progresses, emphasising the importance of robust Wales level data to support decision making. I would be happy to provide further updates to the Committee as this work develops.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a thin black rectangular border.

Mark Drakeford AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language