

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**Committee for Official Statistics**

**Minutes**

**Tuesday 10 March 2009**

**Present**

Members

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Chair)  
Mr Richard Alldritt  
Ms Karen Dunnell  
Ms Moira Gibb  
Ms Jil Matheson  
Professor David Rhind  
Sir Michael Scholar  
Professor Paul Wiles

Other Attendees

Mr Richard Laux  
Mr Stephen Penneck (for item 10)

Secretariat

Mr Rob Bumpstead  
Mr Ross Young

**Apologies**

None

**Declarations of Interest**

None



**1 Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 13 January 2009 were agreed as a true and accurate record.
- 1.2 There were no matters arising.

**2 Monitoring and Assessment Note - ONS news release on UK born and non-UK born employment**

- 2.1 Mr Alldritt presented a draft Monitoring and Assessment Note and an accompanying Press Notice for publication on the Authority's website. These set out the Authority's view on the release of statistics on UK- and foreign-born employment by the Office for National Statistics on 11 February which attracted subsequent media attention. The contents of both documents were discussed and a number of detailed textual amendments were proposed and considered.
- 2.2 The Committee agreed that the Note and Press Notice, revised in light of discussion, should be circulated to members of the Authority to consider, with a view to publication by 13 March. The Committee further agreed that a protocol covering the production process of Monitoring and Assessment Notes should be drawn up. It would set out how producer organisations would have an opportunity to comment on draft text and be made aware shortly in advance of expected publication.

**Action 1 - Secretariat to circulate Note and Press Release to Authority to review and comment, and publish on website**

**Action 2 - Secretariat to draft protocol on Note production process**

**3 Report from the Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)**

- 3.1 Ms Dunnell provided an oral report in her capacity as Head of the GSS.
- 3.2 The Committee noted that GSS Heads of Profession for Statistics (HoPS) would next meet on 16 March in London. The meeting was expected to discuss the role of chief statisticians in Government Departments in providing statistical advice to non-Crown bodies associated with their departments, progress on the GSS revitalisation project led by the National Statistician, the National Statistician's draft guidance on the interpretation of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the GSS working group chaired by David Frazer (DWP) on management information and administrative data, and the "Beyond 2011" Census project.
- 3.3 The Committee heard that a draft report of the Frazer working group had been prepared, and the National Statistician agreed to circulate this to the Committee.

**Action 3 - National Statistician to provide draft Frazer working group report for Secretariat to circulate**

- 3.4 The Committee further noted that ONS officials would meet the Chief Executive of the Land Registry and his staff on 17 March to discuss housing market statistics, further to correspondence between Sir Michael Scholar and the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. The Committee noted that a request from the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families to the National Statistician was expected in respect of an extension of pre-release access time for the media to assist in the production of school league tables.

3.5 The Committee again heard that the GSS Leaders in Statistics conference would take place in Bristol on 20-21 April 2009 to which Sir Michael Scholar had been invited to speak. Meetings between the National Statistician and the chief statisticians in the Devolved Administrations to discuss issues of common interest were ongoing.

#### **4 Report from the Head of Assessment**

4.1 Mr. Alldritt provided an oral report in his capacity as Head of Assessment.

4.2 The Committee noted progress on three Authority Monitoring Reports - *Strengthening and Identifying the User Voice* and an accompanying survey of opinion formers, *Improving Migration Statistics*, and *Barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics*. Each report is overseen by a project board chaired by a non-executive member of the Authority (Professor Jowell, Professor Rhind, and Mr Dasgupta respectively).

4.3 The first tranche of statutory Assessments against the Code of Practice had begun.

4.4 The Committee heard that, to date, over 3,000 copies of the first edition of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, published in January, had been distributed.

4.5 The Head of Assessment identified ongoing work within his team to consider aspects of statistical production beyond the provisions of the Code of Practice. The Committee were reminded of the contents of a recent letter from the Cabinet Secretary to Permanent Secretaries setting out further guidance on the production and publication of statistics within departments.

4.6 The Committee noted that Sir Michael Scholar had recently responded to a letter from the President of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) which identified a number of issues that the Society wished the Authority to consider. The draft reply had been considered by the Committee at its meeting in January. It was agreed to routinely share the Committee's agenda with the RSS in advance of its meetings.

#### **Action 4 - Secretariat to routinely share Committee's agenda with RSS**

4.7 The Committee discussed progress in the recruitment of a secondee from the Statistics Authority to the RSS to provide administrative support to the Statistics User Forum (SUF). It also reviewed the latest situation regarding the future funding of the SUF and question of ongoing financial support to the Forum by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

4.8 The Head of Assessment outlined new procedures for monitoring and progressing Authority casework and other issues raised with the Authority. It was noted that a regular casework meeting was held to ensure responses by the Authority are drafted speedily and comprehensively. It was agreed to share summary casework reports with members of the Committee, as required, to enable emerging themes to be identified.

#### **Action 5 - Secretariat to share summary casework report when required**

4.9 The Committee discussed progress in identifying the reporting arrangements for the Authority to the devolved legislatures. It was noted that Sir Michael Scholar had replied to a letter from the Scottish Government Minister, Jim Mather MSP, in January, requesting clarification on the Scottish Parliament's wishes in this regard. Sir Michael would meet Nigel Dodds, MP MLA on 11 March, and it was expected that reporting arrangements for the Authority to the Northern Ireland Assembly would be discussed.

**5 Monitoring Report 4 *Improving Migration Statistics - Draft Interim Report* SA(COS)(09)05**

- 5.1 Mr. Laux presented a paper containing a draft interim report of Authority Monitoring Report 4 *Improving Migration Statistics*.
- 5.2 The Committee noted that Mr. Phil Rees (University of Leeds) had been contracted to undertake a literature review to accompany the final report. The interim report was expected to be published in early April 2009. An open meeting was planned for 22 April at the RSS, at which the interim report would be presented and discussed. The meeting would include short presentations by Mr. Rees and the Local Government Association. The final report would be accompanied by a formal assessment of ONS migration statistics, and published in July 2009.
- 5.3 The Committee discussed plans for a Home Office-sponsored "migration survey", supervised by the UK Border Agency, which would provide additional information about migration and migrants. The migration survey had been discussed by the Inter-Departmental Task Force on Migration Statistics.
- 5.4 The Committee noted that reference could be made in the interim report to the E-Borders statistics programme, alongside a discussion of the wider importance of migration statistics, differentiation between migrant flows and stocks, and the rationale underpinning the Monitoring Report. The Committee heard that *Foresight* is currently undertaking a project considering aspects of long-term migration.
- 5.5 It was further noted that one driver for the Monitoring Report was to identify when the Authority expects improvements in migration statistics to be achieved, and to that end the Committee discussed the inclusion of a timetable of planned improvements in the interim and final reports. The Committee agreed that the reports should include additional discussion of proposals for address and population registers, and related progress.
- 5.6 It was agreed to remit supervision for amending the draft interim report to the Monitoring Report's project board, chaired by Professor Rhind, in light of the Committee's discussion.

**Action 6 - Improving Migration Statistics project board to supervise amendments to draft interim report, and to approve publication**

**6 Monitoring Report 6 *Strengthening and Identifying the User Voice* SA(COS)(09)06**

- 6.1 Mr. Laux introduced a paper that presented a revised draft specification for the *Strengthening the User Voice* project, following discussion with the Chair of the Committee, and a draft tender specification for the Authority's Survey of Opinion Formers.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed whether to conduct an updated survey of Public Confidence in Official Statistics, including the public's awareness of the Authority, as a module in a future ONS Omnibus Survey. It was agreed that the Strengthening the User Voice project board should consider this matter further

**Action 7 - Strengthening the User Voice project board to consider an updated survey of Public Confidence in Official Statistics.**

## COS Minutes - 100309

- 6.3 The Committee reviewed the proposal to undertake an Authority Survey of Opinion Formers which would support the preparation of the Authority's Monitoring Reports on *Strengthening and Identifying the User Voice* and review of the new pre-release access to statistics arrangements.
- 6.4 It was noted that the sample size for the survey would be such that it would provide views on official statistics generally, rather than being sufficient to provide a representative sample of views on specific statistical products. The Committee agreed that invitations to contractors to tender for this work should include a specific requirement to provide detailed information about how the sample would be constructed.
- 6.5 The importance of a wide definition of "opinion formers" was discussed, to ensure that the sampling frame included specialist and generalist users of statistics. The Committee agreed that the sample should concentrate on those individuals and organisations who might be regarded as influential voices, or whose comments about official statistics otherwise attract particular attention.
- 6.6 The Committee agreed that a project board to oversee the Strengthening the User Voice project, as specified, should be convened.

### **Action 8 - Secretariat to arrange for the convening of the Strengthening the User Voice project board.**

#### **7 Authority Advice to Organisations that Produce or Use Official Statistics SA(COS)(09)07**

- 7.1 Mr Alldritt presented a paper containing a draft advice note to be published on the Authority's website and sent from the Authority to all public bodies that produce or use official statistics. The advice note would set out the Authority's views with respect to management information, statistics presented in policy documents, and other issues which go beyond the principles set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
- 7.2 The Committee reviewed the contents of the draft advice note, in particular management of enquiries from producer bodies following the publication of the note. Members of the Committee discussed the merits of including research projects within the scope of advice that the Authority might provide to such organisations, and the relationship of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics to the code of practice published by the Government Social Research community.
- 7.3 It was agreed that the matter be considered further in the context of the forthcoming Frazer report (paragraph 3.3 refers).

#### **8 UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2008/09: Section Outlines SA(COS)(09)08**

- 8.1 The Committee agreed to consider this paper through electronic correspondence.

### **Action 9 - Members of the Committee to email Secretariat with comments and questions**

#### **9 Management of Assessments SA(COS)(09)09**

- 9.1 The Committee noted a paper, for information, presented to the Board of the UK Statistics Authority at their meeting on 20 February 2009, setting out a number of detailed aspects of the process of conducting assessments.

**10 ONS Methodology Consultancy Service and Quality Improvement Fund**

SA(COS)(09)10

- 10.1 Mr. Penneck presented a paper which described the role of the ONS Methodology Directorate in supporting the Government Statistical Service through the Methodology Consultancy Service (MCS) and the Quality Improvement Fund (QIF).
- 10.2 The meeting heard that the MCS was a newly established service offering methodological advice on a fee-paid basis to the GSS. The QIF was a £250,000 per annum fund provided by the Statistics Authority, administered by the Methodology Directorate on behalf of the GSS.
- 10.3 The Committee further noted the role of the Methodology Directorate in assisting with the drafting of the National Statistician's guidance on the implementation of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
- 10.4 The Committee discussed the role of the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee, chaired by Jil Matheson, in supervising the work of the MCS and QIF, and in deciding on QIF allocations.
- 10.5 It was also noted that the staff of the MCS included both specialist methodologists and generalists. Total staffing of the MCS would increase incrementally up to a maximum of around 12 staff in due course, although expertise could be provided from the Methodology Directorate as required.
- 10.6 Income from the MCS was expected to reach £330,000 in 2008-09. Each request for consultancy advice is costed and charged separately, and transfers made through government funds. MCS support is restricted to public bodies beyond the ONS. The relationship between the MCS, QIF and the Authority's Assessment programme was discussed.
- 10.7 The Committee thanked Mr Penneck for the briefing provided.

**11 Any other business**

- 11.1 There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on Tuesday 19 May at 2pm in London.



# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Committee for Official Statistics

### *Agenda*

***Tuesday, 10 March, 2009***  
***Board Room, Statistics House, London, 14:00 - 16:00***

**Chair: Professor Sir Roger Jowell**

**Apologies:**

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 130109
2	Report from the Head of the GSS	Oral Report Ms Karen Dunnell
3	Report from the Head of Assessment	Oral Report Mr Richard Alldritt
4	Monitoring Report 4 <i>Improving Migration Statistics</i> - Draft Interim Report	COS(09)05 Mr Richard Laux
5	Monitoring Report 6 <i>Strengthening and Identifying the User Voice</i> - Specification	COS(09)06 Mr Richard Alldritt
6	Authority Advice to Organisations that Produce or Use Official Statistics	COS(09)07 Mr Richard Alldritt
7	UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2008/09: Section Outlines	COS(09)08 Mr Rob Bumpstead
8	Management of Assessments	COS(09)09 Mr Richard Laux
9	The ONS Methodology Consultancy Service and Quality Improvement Fund	COS(09)10 Mr Stephen Penneck
10	Any other business	

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, 19 May, 2009**  
**Statistics House, London, 14:00 - 16:00**



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(09)05

***Monitoring Report 4***  
***Migration Statistics - Interim Report***

**Purpose**

1. This note covers a draft interim report of Monitoring Report 4, *Migration Statistics*.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to consider and comment upon the report.

**Monitoring and Assessment Team**  
**March 2009**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A - Monitoring Report 4 *Migration Statistics* - Draft Interim Report**



**Annex A - Monitoring Report 4 *Migration Statistics* - Draft Interim Report**

This document is published on the Authority's website.

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/migration-statistics--in-terim-report.pdf>



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(09)06

***Monitoring Report 6  
Identifying and Strengthening the User Voice - Specification***

**Purpose**

1. This paper builds on SA(09)(01) discussed at the meeting of the Authority Board on 16 January. It presents a revised draft specification for the *Strengthening the User Voice* project, following discussion with the Chair of the Committee for Official Statistics; and a draft tender specification for the Authority's Survey of Opinion Formers (SOOF).

**Timing**

2. Approval of the activity set out below would enable the Monitoring and Assessment Team to initiate the two projects promptly in line with the direction given previously by the Authority.

**Recommendations**

3. Committee members are invited to:
  - i. comment on the membership of the project board for "Strengthening the User Voice" (Annex 1, paragraph 17);
  - ii. comment on the tender specification for the Survey of Opinion Formers (Annex 2) and in particular on:
    - a. the set of issues on which it is proposed the views of opinion formers will be sought (sections 1 and 2), and;
    - b. the membership of the project board for this research contract, particularly given that it will address issues of interest both to the Committee and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board;
  - iii. discuss whether to conduct an updated survey of Public Confidence in Official Statistics (PCOS), including research into the public's awareness of the Authority, and whether to use the ONS Omnibus Survey for this purpose or to commission a non-ONS survey contractor (Annex 3 shows the timeline of PCOS activity since 2003), and;
  - iv. note the overlap between the User Voice and SOOF work. The SOOF results will inform the User Voice monitoring report (as well as the Authority's review of the new pre-release Access arrangements).

**Discussion**

**Strengthening the User Voice**

4. Membership of this project board should be drawn from organisations which might be regarded as partners of the Authority in relation to its interests in users of statistics – the Royal Statistical Society, the Statistics User Forum, and the House of Commons Library – complemented by others with relevant expertise and interests.

*The Authority's Survey of Opinion Formers*

5. The proposal to establish an Authority Survey of Opinion Formers emerged out of discussions at various Authority committees. The intention is to commission contractors such as a Market Research company to identify a group of 'opinion formers', and to discuss a number of related topics with them. The contractors' report would be part of the evidence base for the User Voice project, and would help the Authority understand external perspectives on its objectives and performance to date. Thus there are diverse potential benefits of conducting such a survey.
6. The Statistics Commission undertook analogous research with MORI in 2005 resulting in the publication of its report *Official Statistics - Perceptions and Trust*. The list of opinion formers approached by MORI would be updated, taking account of discussions of potential influencers at the Authority's Risk Committee in December 2008 [ SA(RSK)(08)(06) *Identifying influential voices among leading users and commentators*].
7. Information about likely costs will be provided at the meeting on 10 March.
8. There is a potential risk in committing to the publication of a report which might, depending upon the views of opinion formers, be critical of the Authority's performance to date. Such an approach might be seen by some as an 'own goal'. However, the Monitoring and Assessment Team consider it likely that while opinion is likely to be varied, that the Authority's activity and approach to date will be viewed positively – and that, even should it not be so, that the Authority's openness will be welcomed during this early period of its existence.

**Monitoring and Assessment  
March 2009**

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A - Specification for *Strengthening the User Voice* project**
- Annex B - Tender specification for survey of opinion formers**
- Annex C - Public Confidence in Official Statistics (PCOS) timeline**

## Annex A - Specification for *Strengthening the User Voice* project

### Definitions

1. For the purposes of this review, the term "user of statistics" refers to bodies both inside and outside government, including government departments, local authorities, businesses, the voluntary sector, researchers, and the general public; each to the extent that they use official statistics in ways that influence or have the potential to influence decision-making with the aim of serving the public interest. Within this we include the use of official statistics by government to make policy, set targets and manage public services; the use by business in ways that promote efficient markets; the use by other bodies adding value to the official statistics to facilitate decision-making; and the use by the general public in judging the performance of government and public institutions and in democratic processes, and in making their own choices.

### Purpose of review

2. The UK Statistics Authority's *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, places a number of requirements on organisations that produce official statistics in relation to understanding the needs of users of statistics. For example it says: *"Investigate and document the needs of users of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform"* and *"Provide information on the quality and reliability of statistics in relation to the range of potential uses..."*
3. This review aims to assess the current development of user engagement across a wide spectrum of users (and uses) and a wide spectrum of producer bodies.
4. We believe that a coordinated approach to improving communication between users and producers will both strengthen the user voice and increase understanding within government of the statistical needs of society. With more developed forms of engagement, users will more effectively be able to express their needs, provide feedback on the statistics being produced, and see their own requirements in the context of competing demands on the statistical service. At the same time, producers of statistics will be better able to prioritise, identify the most appropriate and relevant statistics to be produced, and balance the need to improve data against the need for better communication of, and access to, the statistical products already produced.
5. This review by the Monitoring and Assessment Team of the UK Statistics Authority is to assist the Authority in fulfilling its obligations under section 8 of the Statistics Act, particularly the requirement to report in relation to good practice. The Act states that:  
*"The Board [Authority] is to monitor the production and publication of official statistics.  
The Board may report any concerns it has about –  
a. The quality of any official statistics,  
b. Good practice in relation to any official statistics, or  
c. The comprehensiveness of any official statistics to the person responsible for those statistics  
The Board may publish its findings or any report under this section."*

6. The review will aim to:
  - raise awareness of the benefits of engaging in a systematic way with users, both in terms of serving the public good and providing incontrovertible evidence of the value of the statistical product. To this end, the review will consider the extent to which the production of official statistics currently takes account of the needs of users;
  - identify ways in which improvement in engagement between producers of statistics and users can be achieved; and;
  - identify ways in which the specific needs of different users can be communicated effectively and systematically to producers.

### **Background**

7. It is clear from dialogue with user groups and others, that users often feel that their voice is not currently being heard sufficiently clearly, and we believe that over time this may have negative consequences for all parts of the statistical value-chain, from funding, planning and delivery to ensuring public value.
8. The Statistics Act identifies and formalises a very broad concept of the value of official statistics, stating in section 7 that: *the Board [Authority] is to have the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good*. The term "the public good" embraces a wide variety of uses, for example as outlined in a report, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*, published by the Statistics Commission in March 2007.
9. That report looked specifically at public and private sector organisations. It considered the extent to which official statistics influence decision-making and provided examples of specific uses. The report also looked at the public value derived from these uses and the implications for statistical planning and governance. As part of its conclusions, the report found that there was extensive and wide-ranging use of official statistics in decision-making in public, voluntary and private sector organisations in the UK. The report went on to identify some aspects of official statistics that require attention, including the more effective engagement of users, improved communication between producers and users, and better planning arrangements taking into account all users' needs which would help to maximise the public value of official statistics.
10. The 2008 Statistics User Forum Conference was entitled *Transforming official statistics to serve society*. The conference noted that the statistical service needs to meet the needs not just of government but of all users. The conference aimed to provide a forum in which to identify the means by which such a statistical service can be achieved. This review will build on the conclusions of the conference, providing a systematic overview of these means.
11. It is generally recognised that there is no simple answer to improved engagement. Users of statistics can be difficult to identify clearly – for example because a decision-making process which is informed by official statistics may be shared by a number of committees or institutions, none of which sees itself as a significant user of statistics per se. It is thus unlikely that a single initiative would transform the engagement between such a diffuse user structure and the, sometimes diffuse, producer structure. It is more realistic to think in terms of a large number of smaller initiatives, which is why the review will begin by putting together an inventory of measures currently being taken as well as looking further afield for examples of other possible measures. The review aims in this way to map out possible paths towards better user engagement.

12. Furthermore, the process of improving engagement must be seen as iterative and self-reinforcing. Statistical producers need to be able to demonstrate that they are responding to the views and priorities that are being expressed by users. Therefore an important part of the review will be to highlight examples of where statistics production has changed to meet the needs of specific users and the benefits of these actions.

#### **Scope of review**

13. The review will focus particularly on users outside government, as outlined above, as it is their needs which often seem difficult to ascertain with confidence and are therefore hard to factor in to planning and funding discussions. The review will not produce an inventory of specific users' needs but will instead focus on examples of where these needs have not been influential and examples of where they have been communicated in an effective and systematic way. The review will aim to systematically draw together and analyse a variety of methods of user engagement.
14. The report will be prepared in four sections:
  - i. evidence of the need to further engage the user;
  - ii. examples of methods already being taken to consult users, both nationally and internationally;
  - iii. a review of these different methods; and;
  - iv. the identification of examples of beneficial changes to products following user engagement.
15. The review will also take into account and draw on the results of the survey of opinion-formers in the field of statistics on the effectiveness of the Authority and on enhancing public trust in official statistics in general, which is to be carried out during 2009.

#### **Conduct of the review and timetable**

16. The review will be undertaken by the Monitoring and Assessment Team. The project manager will be Cathy Kruger. It is proposed that the project board will comprise:
  - i. Professor Sir Roger Jowell, Chair;
  - ii. [Mike Hughes, Director of the National Statistics and Policy Group, Office of National Statistics];
  - iii. Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment;
  - iv. [Martin Dougharty, Executive Director, Royal Statistical Society];
  - v. [Jenny Church, Chair, Statistics User Forum];
  - vi. [Rob Clements, Director of Parliamentary and Reference Services or Richard Cracknell, Head of Section, House of Commons Library];
  - vii. Representative of statistical academic/research world [*to be decided*];
  - viii. Rob Bumpstead, Head of Secretariat;
  - ix. Expert in the field of qualitative research (specifically with regard to the survey of opinion-formers) [*to be decided*];
  - x. Richard Laux, Assessment Programme Director, and;
  - xi. Cathy Kruger, project manager.
17. There will be at least two meetings of the project board, one in March or April to initiate the review, a possible second meeting to discuss the development of the survey of opinion-formers and a further meeting to discuss and approve a draft of the final report.
18. A draft of the report will be circulated to project board members, within the Authority, and to any other government department affected by the recommendations. Any comments received in response to the draft report will be either acted on or included verbatim in the final report.

## **UK Statistics Authority**

# **Survey of Opinion Formers: Analysis of views about official statistics, and the Authority's role**

Specification, information and instructions to tenderers

### **1. Summary of Requirement**

The UK Statistics Authority wishes to commission some research to establish the views of stakeholders on:

- (a) the independence, integrity and utility of official statistics - whether official statistics are trusted and, to the extent that they are not, why this is the case and what might be done about it;
- (b) the strategic goals of the Authority;
- (c) the effectiveness of the Authority, to date – to serve as a baseline.

### **2. Background to the Project**

#### Context

The Authority was established in April 2008. Its overall objective is set out in section 7 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act:

- (1) In the exercise of its functions under sections 8 to 21 the Board [Authority] is to have the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good.
- (2) In subsection (1) the reference to serving the public good includes in particular—
  - (a) informing the public about social and economic matters, and
  - (b) assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy.
- (3) The Board [Authority] is accordingly, in the exercise of its functions under sections 8 to 21, to promote and safeguard—
  - (a) the quality of official statistics,
  - (b) good practice in relation to official statistics, and
  - (c) the comprehensiveness of official statistics.
- (4) In this Part references to the quality of any official statistics includes—
  - (a) their impartiality, accuracy and relevance, and
  - (b) their coherence with other official statistics.
- (5) In this Part references to good practice in relation to official statistics includes ensuring their accessibility.

## SA(COS)(09)06 - Monitoring Report 6 - User Voice – Specification – Annex B

Section 8 further requires the Authority to “monitor the production and publication of official statistics”. And the Authority also provides the oversight of the Office for National Statistics – the single largest producer of official statistics in the country.

The objective of “promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good” is necessarily abstract, and the Authority wishes to make it more tangible. It has established its scrutiny role based on twin activities referred to as *monitoring* – the review of statistical issues, or topics, from a public interest perspective - and *assessment* – the statutory requirement to review compliance against the Authority’s Code of Practice, with a view to designation as National Statistics.

### The independence, integrity and utility of official statistics

For statistics to be useful, they must have a number of qualities. For example, they need to be about the topics that users need information about; they need to be produced to the right standard – the best statistics possible; and they need to be explained well. These are professional matters, and require producers to engage effectively with users. The Authority’s Code of Practice for Official Statistics places users’ needs centre stage.

However much a set of statistics meets users’ needs, it is accepted that their utility is influenced by the environment in which they are produced. There is a need to ensure that statistics are produced independent of political or personal considerations, and accordingly the Code also emphasises the principle of impartiality.

The Authority would value views as to whether official statistics produced by ONS, government departments, the Devolved Administrations, and arms’ length bodies, are regarded as sufficiently useful in themselves, and are produced in an appropriately independent manner, and hence whether their utility in decision making is maximised. In short, are official statistics and the service provided in relation to official statistics, *trusted*? What should be the Authority’s priorities in rebuilding trust?

In exploring this issue, it will be important to be aware of the conclusions of relevant work conducted by the Office for National Statistics<sup>1</sup> and the (former) Statistics Commission<sup>2</sup>, as well as the existing work of the Authority in relation to monitoring and assessment<sup>3</sup>.

Given the totemic importance of the issue of pre-release access to official statistics to some commentators, it will be important to be aware of the new arrangements governing pre-release access<sup>4</sup>. The Authority will conduct a review of the effects of these new

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/development-programmes/public-confidence/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/archive/statistics-commission-archive/research/report-24--official-statistics---perceptions-and-trust.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/pre-release-access/index.html>

arrangements later this year, and the views gleaned during the current project will inform the later review.

The strategic goals and effectiveness of the Authority

The Authority would greatly value considered views as to its stewardship of its scrutiny role, alongside views as to how it might be most effective. The Survey of Opinion Formers will be the central mechanism by which we will assess both the priorities of the Authority and its success in tackling them.

### **3. Requirement**

The project will investigate the views of a particular set of stakeholders – those who might be termed ‘opinion-formers’, who frequently come into contact with official statistics for professional purposes and who make public comment on them. This might include:

- journalists specialising in financial/economic affairs or social policy issues
- think tanks and advisory bodies
- academics who comment on official statistics
- members of Parliamentary select committees and equivalent bodies in the Devolved Administrations
- members of the business community who comment publicly on statistics.

The consultant would agree with the Authority the relevant groups which could satisfactorily respond to the questions posed and the selection of proposed respondents. We would expect a sample size of approximately 50 individuals.

Given the complexity of the issues, we believe that the best approach would be to use in-depth unstructured interviews, although we would be open to other suggestions.

#### **Issues to be addressed**

These should be drawn from the scope of the project as outlined above, and should include:

*The independence, integrity and utility of official statistics*

- the purposes for which the respondents use official statistics, directly or indirectly
- perceptions of the quality, independence and impartiality of official statistics, and the service provided by producers of statistics
- perceptions of the way in which statistics are used or presented by government and other decision makers
- examples of ways in which independence is enhanced, or undermined
- views about whether any such problems are more, or less, significant than in the past

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- views about whether the new arrangements for pre-release access to official statistics are likely to improve public confidence in official statistics

### *The strategic goals of the Authority*

- views about the Authority's strategic goals, and the terms in which the Authority's success should be measured
- views about specific metrics by which the Authority's performance might be assessed

### *The effectiveness of the Authority*

- views about the public face of the Authority, how well it communicates its activities and opinions, and what more it might do
- perceptions of the Authority's performance to date – has it made a difference?

## **Outputs**

We would expect the final report to include:

- summary notes of the interviews and evidence submitted
- a statement of the issues identified
- conclusions and recommendations on how to maximise the effectiveness of the Authority
- conclusions and recommendations on how public trust in official statistics might be enhanced
- recommendations about the desirability and feasibility of repeating some aspects of this work in future, to monitor change.

Draft conclusions and recommendations should be made available for comment before completion of the report.

## **4. Method of working**

The timescale for the project is June – September 2009.

The appointed consultants will work in partnership with the Statistics Authority within a formal project management framework to be approved by the Authority. A project board will be chaired by a non-Executive member of the Authority, who will be nominated by the Chair of the Authority – Sir Michael Scholar.

The Project Board will be appointed by its chair but will include a senior representative of the consultancy organisation and a project manager who will be appointed by the consultancy organisation. The membership of the project board will be agreed before contractual terms are finalised. The project board will take overall responsibility for the work but it is expected that the consultants will be invited to prepare their own report to

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the Authority and the Authority will then publish that report under cover of a paper setting out their own recommendations.

The staff of the Authority will provide support to both the project board and the project manager. The details will be agreed between the parties. The project board will meet at the discretion of its chair but it is likely to meet formally about three times, with the possibility of extra meetings if needed.

The project manager will agree the detailed arrangements with the chair of the project board but it is likely that the bulk of the work will be of the following kinds:

- interviews with key informed individuals
- written reports of interviews to be agreed wherever possible with those interviewed
- correspondence with interested parties and assessment of written evidence
- reports on progress; and other planning documentation to be provided to the project board
- draft material for the final report to be discussed with project board members
- final edited text of the report in Word format and provided in electronic form and hard copy.

The Authority will arrange for, and meet the costs of, printing and distributing the report.

### **5. Timetable**

The work will commence in June 2009 and is to be completed by the end of September 2009.

### **6. Contact**

Any enquiries about this specification should be addressed to Richard Alldritt, the Authority's Head of Assessment, on 020-7014-2359 or [Richard.Alldritt@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Alldritt@statistics.gov.uk)  
Any enquiries about contractual issues should be addressed to Alison Eve (Statistics Authority) on 0207-014-2468 or [Alison.Eve@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:Alison.Eve@statistics.gov.uk).

Additional information provided at the request of any tenderer will also be copied to all other tenderers.

### **7. Timing**

The deadline for receipt of bids is 12:00 noon (date to be confirmed) 2009. Bids should be addressed to:

Alison Eve  
Head of Resources  
UK Statistics Authority

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19. Work on the report will start following final approval of the specification at the meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics on 10 March 2009. A final report should be available during the third quarter of 2009.

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1 Myddelton Street  
London  
EC1R 1UW

Email Alison.Eve@statistics.gov.uk

### **8. Format of Response**

In replying to this requirement you are asked to provide the following information:

- your approach to eliciting and documenting requirements
- experience of undertaking similar investigations. You should highlight any recent experience with opinion-formers
- brief career histories/CVs of those you propose to undertake the work
- a timetable giving the estimated time in days for the project with a corresponding rate per day
- date for submission of the final report
- all prices are to be exclusive of VAT and on a fixed price basis.

### **9. Selection criteria**

The Statistics Authority will decide on the successful supplier primarily on the basis of criteria that will include:

- price
- evidence of understanding of the specification
- evidence of relevant experience among those individuals to be directly involved
- previous track record of the supplier in broadly similar work
- an overall assessment of the value for money offered.

### **10. Contract conditions**

The contract will be awarded in accordance with Office for National Statistics (ONS) terms and conditions, a copy of which is attached.

### **11. Payment**

Payment will be made in accordance with the terms and conditions of contract, i.e. within 30 days of receipt of a correct VAT invoice. Full bank details should be shown on the invoice to enable payment via BACS.

**Annex C – Public Confidence in Official Statistics (PCOS) – Timeline**

<b>When</b>	<b>What</b>
Autumn 2003	TSC hearing. ONS tasked to measure public confidence.
January-June 2004	Exploration of concepts, initial qualitative analysis, discussions with other National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), focus groups, design of survey questions. Close work with Statistics Commission.
July 2004	1 <sup>st</sup> Omnibus module on PCOS - fieldwork
February 2005	Press Release, and accompanying publication of detailed analysis of Omnibus results, of focus group activity, and international experience report (by ONS), and Opinion Formers report (by Statistics Commission)
March 2005	2 <sup>nd</sup> Omnibus module on PCOS - fieldwork
September 2005	Press Release, accompanying the analysis of the March 2005 data
September 2005	HOPs agreed the creation of a cross-govt WG to develop a strategy to improve PCOS
October 2005	David Rhind article (Raising public trust in government statistics) – Times
November 2005	RSS/SRA Cathie Marsh memorial lecture on Public Confidence – Mike Hughes presentation
November 2005	Chancellor's announcement about Independent ONS ...
February, April 2006	Meetings of the PCOS WG
July 2006	HOPs discussion of draft strategy
September 2006	GSS – Leaders conference – parallel session on PCOS / Building Trust
September 2006	Draft article on PCOS strategy prepared, for Karen
Spring 2007	Publication of “Europeans’ knowledge on economical indicators”, Eurobarometer results showing UK 27 <sup>th</sup> out of 27 member states for levels of public trust in statistics
July 2007	RSS Annual Conference – Mike speaking at a session on Legislation, Richard speaking at a session on Trust in Statistics
October 2007	3 <sup>rd</sup> Omnibus module on PCOS – fieldwork (Statistics Commission contributed to funding)
March 2008	Press Release, accompanying the analysis of the October 2007 data
May 2008	Development of “GSS Revitalisation” strategy, including “PCOS” element.
June 2008	UK paper discussed at OECD Statistics Committee meeting on ‘How to measure public trust in official statistics’.



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(09)07

***Advice Note to Public Bodies that Produce Official Statistics***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents a draft advice note to be published on the Authority's website and sent from the UK Statistics Authority to all public bodies that produce or use official statistics, setting out the Authority's views with respect to management information, statistics presented in policy documents, and other issues which go beyond the principles set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

**Timing**

2. Immediate. A number of Heads of Profession for Statistics in Government Departments have sought advice and clarification from the Authority.

**Recommendations**

3. Committee members are invited to:
  - i. review the advice note (**Annex A**) and suggest amendments;
  - ii. consider whether the Government Statistical Service (GSS) should be consulted in advance of publication of the advice note, and if so to what timescale, and;
  - iii. agree the mechanism(s) for dissemination of the advice note through publication on the Authority's website and/or a request to Heads of Profession for Statistics to circulate the note to all public bodies associated with their departments.

**Discussion**

4. The draft advice note includes reference to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, recent advice from the Cabinet Secretary to Permanent Secretaries, and the criteria to be used in determining whether the Authority should comment publicly on a particular issue. These criteria were set out in a draft Authority statement discussed at the February meeting of the Authority, pending the outcome of a GSS review group led by David Frazer, Head of Profession for Statistics at the Department for Work and Pensions.

**Head of Assessment**

**March 2009**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A - UK Statistics Authority Advice to Organisations that Produce Official Statistics - Draft Note**



























































































