

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Committee for Official Statistics

Agenda

Tuesday, 13 January, 2009
Board Room, Statistics House, London, 10:30 - 12:30

Chair: Professor Sir Roger Jowell
Apologies: Ms. Moira Gibb

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 131008
2	Role of the Committee and review of Terms of Reference	COS(09)01 Professor Roger Jowell
3	Report from the Head of the GSS	Oral Report Ms Karen Dunnell
4	Report from the Head of Assessment	Oral Report Mr Richard Alldritt
5	Priorities for 2009: Issued raised by the Royal Statistical Society	COS(09)02 Mr Richard Alldritt
6	Information Gathering for Assessment and Designation	COS(09)03 Mr Mark Pont
7	Senior GSS Committees <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Inter-Administration Committee● Strategy and Planning Committee	COS(09)04 Mr Mike Hughes
8	Preliminary discussion of the Release of Management Information ahead of Statistical Releases	Discussion Mr Richard Alldritt Ms Karen Dunnell
9	Any other business	

Next Meeting: **Tuesday, 10 March, 2009**
Statistics House, London, 14:00 - 16:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)01

***Role of the Committee and
Review of Terms of Reference***

Introduction

1. This paper covers the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Committee for Official Statistics (COS). The TOR was discussed and agreed at the first meeting of the Committee in July [SA(COS)(08)01] and subsequently updated to reflect membership changes in September and November.
2. This paper also includes a summary table listing the items that were considered by the COS in 2008.

Secretariat, January 2009

List of Annexes

Annex A Terms of Reference

Annex B Items considered by the COS in 2008

Annex A

UK Statistics Authority Committee for Official Statistics

Terms of Reference

Introduction

1. On 1 April, 2008, the UK Statistics Authority formally assumed its powers under the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007). The Authority was given the high level objective of “promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good”.
2. At its meeting of 21 February [SA(08)06] the Authority agreed to constitute a sub-committee for Official Statistics, to charge this committee with responsibility for oversight of the statistical system and to report back to the Authority on its work.

Role and responsibilities

3. The role of the Committee for Official Statistics is to provide strategic direction and oversight for the official statistics system. It will consider the *Statistical Service* in its entirety. That is to say, the allocation of resource to statistical work, the production of statistics and the dissemination of those statistics.
4. The Committee will seek to ensure that official statistics are planned and produced in order to serve the public good and hence to inspire confidence and trust in them. The Committee's remit therefore includes:
 - promoting and safeguarding the impartiality, accuracy, relevance, coherence and comprehensiveness of official statistics;
 - promoting and safeguarding good practice in relation to official statistics in accordance with the Code of Practice;
 - monitoring and improving public trust and confidence in official statistics;
 - supporting the Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)/ the National Statistician in developing and implementing policies in pursuit of these objectives.
5. Specific responsibilities of the Committee include, to:
 - i. advise the Chair and Board of the Authority on the coverage and comprehensiveness of official statistics, including the scope of official statistics and the capacity of the statistical system;
 - ii. advise the Chair and Board of the Authority on engaging with users and influencing producers of official statistics to ensure that official statistics meet the needs of the full range of users;
 - iii. advise the Chair and Board of the Authority on matters related to public confidence and trust in official statistics, including measurement and monitoring;
 - iv. provide an oversight and a challenge function to the vision, objectives and priorities of the Head of the GSS, and, to the annual statistical work programme produced by the National Statistician; provide support in the implementation of this agenda across Government Departments, including support in working with Permanent Secretaries
 - v. consider Assessment compliance reports (that is reports which designate National Statistics status) and promote the implementation of improvement

actions that strengthen compliance and enhance the official statistics system;

- vi. commission, review, and revise Assessment Monitoring reports (that is reports which consider broad system issues but do not designate National Statistics status) and recommend these reports to the Chair and Board of the Authority;

Meetings

6. The Committee will meet at least quarterly.

Interaction with other committees

7. The Committee will:

- provide written reports to the Chair and Board of the UK Statistics Authority following each meeting of the Official Statistics committee (and oral reports if the meetings of both committees fall on the same day);
- provide other reports and proposals to the Chair and Board of the UK Statistics Authority, as agreed with the Chair of the Authority;
- co-ordinate its work with the UK Statistics Authority Board and other Board committees to avoid duplication.

8. The Committee will receive:

- written progress reports from the National Statistician in her role as Head of the GSS seven days before each committee meeting;
- monthly written progress reports from the Head of Assessment;
- other briefing from the Head of Assessment on ad hoc or emerging issues with official statistics such as the committee requires.

Membership

9. The members of the Committee as agreed by the Board of the UK Statistics Authority are:

- the Deputy Chair of the UK Statistics Authority with responsibility for official statistics (Chair);
- three other non-executive members of the Authority;
- the National Statistician/Head of the GSS;
- two other senior statistical producers;
- the Head of Assessment.

10. Secretariat will be provided by the staff of the UK Statistics Authority with support from the ONS secretariat as required.

Quorum

11. Committee meetings will be considered quorate when five members are present including the Chair or the Chair's delegated nominee and one other non-executive member.

12. Substitutes will not be permitted to attend Committee meetings unless with express invitation from the Chair.

Secretariat, 5 August, 2008

Annex A

Committee for Official Statistics Members

From 11 November 2008

Non-Executive Members

Deputy Chair Official Statistics System
Chair UK Statistics Authority
Other Non-Executive Members:

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Chair)
Sir Michael Scholar
Ms Moira Gibb
Professor David Rhind

Executive Members

Head of GSS & National Statistician
Head of Assessment
Director General for Statistics, ONS
Chief Scientific Adviser, Home Office

Ms Karen Dunnell
Mr Richard Alldritt
Ms Jil Matheson
Professor Paul Wiles

From 1 September 2008

Non-Executive Members

Deputy Chair Official Statistics System
Chair UK Statistics Authority
Other Non-Executive Members:

Vacant
Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)
Ms Moira Gibb
Professor David Rhind

Executive Members

Head of GSS & National Statistician
Head of Assessment
Director General for Statistics, ONS
Chief Scientific Adviser, Home Office

Ms Karen Dunnell
Mr Richard Alldritt
Ms Jil Matheson
Professor Paul Wiles

To 31 August 2008

Non-Executive Members

Deputy Chair Official Statistics System
Chair UK Statistics Authority
Other Non-Executive Members:

Professor Adrian Smith (Chair)
Sir Michael Scholar
Ms Moira Gibb
Professor David Rhind

Executive Members

Head of GSS & National Statistician
Head of Assessment
Director General for Statistics, ONS
Chief Scientific Adviser, Home Office

Ms Karen Dunnell
Mr Richard Alldritt
Ms Jil Matheson
Professor Paul Wiles

List of Items Considered by the Committee for Official Statistics in 2008

No.	Date	Reference	Title/Issue	Author	Substantive Paper
1	22/07/2008	SA(COS)(08)01	Terms of Reference	Authority Sec	Yes
2	..	SA(COS)(08)02	The UK Statistical System	ONS/GSS	Yes
3	..	SA(COS)(08)03	Leadership of the GSS	ONS/GSS	Yes
4	..	SA(COS)(08)04	Meeting the needs of Users	Authority M&A	Yes
5	..	Supplementary	i-Dissemination Taxonomy		No
6	..	Supplementary	National Statistics Work Programme 2008/09		No
7	13/10/2008	Oral Report	Report from the Head of the GSS		No
8	..	Oral Report	Report from the Head of Assessment		No
9	..	SA(COS)(08)05	Identifying and Responding to The User Voice	Authority M&A	Yes
10	..	SA(COS)(08)06	Leadership of the GSS [Revised]	ONS/GSS	Yes
11	..	SA(COS)(08)07	The UK Statistical System [Revised]	ONS/GSS	Yes
12	..	SA(COS)(08)08	A Second Official Statistics Order	Authority Sec	Yes
13	..	SA(COS)(08)09	A New System for Statistical Planning	ONS/GSS	Yes
14	..	SA(COS)(08)10	Defining Official Statistics	ONS/GSS	Yes

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)02

***Priorities for 2009
Issued Raised by the Royal Statistical Society***

Purpose

1. This paper covers a letter from Professor David Hand, President of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) to Sir Michael Scholar, and suggests how the Authority might respond. The letter draws to the Authority's attention some 26 statistical issues that the RSS considers the Authority might address.

Timing

2. At its meeting of 16 January, the Authority's Board will discuss a paper setting out proposals for Monitoring Review (MR) activity to be undertaken during 2009. The views of this Committee on the RSS's list of issues will be a valuable input to the Board's discussion.

Recommendations

3. Committee members are invited to:
 - i. consider the letter from Professor Hand (**Annex C1**), and;
 - ii. consider which issues might be regarded as priorities for Monitoring Reviews.

Discussion

4. Many of the issues raised by the RSS are related to the Code of Practice and will therefore be considered in Assessment reports; others are addressed by activity already undertaken, proposed or underway. However, some of the issues have the potential to be significant pieces of work for the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team, and a discussion of the priorities among these, alongside a discussion of existing ideas for Monitoring Reports, would help the Authority to develop a rounded forward agenda for MRs during 2009.
5. A brief summary of the Monitoring and Assessment Team's provisional response to the issues raised by the RSS is provided at **Annex C2**. Likely new ideas for future MRs are:
 - i. League tables (e.g. health, education)
 - ii. Progress implementing recommendations relating to education statistics (Statistics Commission review)
 - iii. Progress implementing recommendations relating to regional economic statistics (Allsopp Review)
 - iv. Progress implementing recommendations relating to government output and productivity (Atkinson Review)

**Monitoring and Assessment Team, UK Statistics Authority
January 2009**

SA(COS)(09)02 - Priorities for 2009 - Issues Raised by the RSS

List of Annexes

**Annex C1 Letter from the President of the RSS to the Chair of the Authority
05/01/09**

**Annex C2 Summary of the Monitoring and Assessment Team's provisional
response to the issues raised by the RSS**



THE ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY

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Sir Michael Scholar
UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Tredegar Park
Newport
NP10 8XG

5th January 2009

Dear Michael,

It has seemed appropriate to us for some time that the Royal Statistical Society should submit to you a list of issues it considers the UKSA might address. We have now put such a list together and this is attached. You and your colleagues are, of course, already aware of many of these topics, and indeed are already addressing some of them. It is also, of course, obvious that you cannot deal with everything straight away. Nevertheless, there is, I think, merit in sending you a comprehensive list of our current concerns. Among these we would like to emphasise the general points 1 to 7.

In your speech to our conference in Nottingham you said: "I see the relationship between the Royal Statistical Society and the UK Statistics Authority as having the potential to develop into an alliance of real strength and purpose. While our perspectives will sometimes be different, our goals in relation to official statistics are, I believe, very close."

We agree. To help this develop further I suggest that we consider some structure of regular meetings and other contact between the RSS, the UKSA and the National Statistician.

I look forward to hearing your views on this and, in the meantime, send my very best wishes to you and your colleagues for your endeavours in 2009. I am copying this letter to Karen Dunnell and to Richard Alldritt.

Yours sincerely

David Hand
President

List of statistical issues

A. General issues

1. The needs of users and other stakeholders – While progress has been made in the last few years the GSS and producers of official statistics need to become more outward looking and engage with society in general. Without this they will neither provide data that truly “serve the public good” nor will they grow public trust as much as they should. It is important that independence is seen as an opportunity to put in place a new form of organisation where the needs of all users are identified and evaluated by the GSS and where the needs of potential future developments are properly assessed. We welcome the public statements that have been made recognising this, the importance placed on user engagement in the code of practice, and the papers presented to, and discussion at, the UKSA meeting of October 23. We look forward to real and significant progress.

We wish, however, to point out that engagement needs to occur at all levels including the very top, i.e. the UKSA itself. Now that the Authority has recruited most of its staff and developed its organisation we hope to see it start on a programme of active engagement with all stakeholders, giving a clear lead to the GSS as a whole.

It is good that the minutes of, and papers for, UKSA meetings are in the public domain. However, we would like to suggest that the Authority considers giving advance notice of topics it intends to consider, thus giving stakeholders the opportunity to submit issues and arguments relevant to these topics. The Authority might also like to consider whether part of its meetings could be open to the public.

It is also important to realise, and take account of, the fact that users have other demands on their time and priorities which may seem more immediately pressing than discussions with official statisticians. In part this arises from the normal pressures of day-to-day work but it also reflects the lack of general understanding of the importance of official statistics for society as a whole. This is not something which the UKSA can solve on its own but it will have a key role to play in generating a wider understanding of the importance of official statistics – not least as Authority members are people of some standing and influence. The RSS is of course willing to play its part in this, within the limits of its resources.

2. The need for proper planning - Official statistics should serve society as a whole, should be relevant and evolve as society and the economy evolves. These are areas where the UK statistical system has failed in the past and still sometimes fails (for example the slowness in the 1980s and 1990s to develop statistics to reflect the growing importance of the service sector to the UK economy; more recently the well-aired problems with population and migration statistics). The decentralised and devolved nature of the system has also hampered coordinated planning. We welcome the fact that one of the initial reports the UKSA is undertaking is to examine long-term arrangements for longer-term planning; the RSS will be happy to assist in any appropriate way.

It is, though, important that proper planning does not stifle creativity and innovation and that mechanisms are in place (eg a rolling five-year plan with annual review) to allow adaptation as needed.

3. Communication and presentation - Communication and presentation of statistics has also been a weak point of the UK statistical system in the past. Symptoms of this have included the much-criticised ONS website, turgid and unhelpful press notices, and at times a failure to communicate adequately with users. We appreciate that a number of efforts are underway to improve matters - notably work to improve the ONS website - and that the draft code of practice covers this element in some detail. We do, however, suggest that this aspect of statistics is kept under close review by the UKSA and that in the not too distant future it carries out a review of the extent to which actual practice is living up to expectations. In particular it will be absolutely essential that the improvements in the website currently underway do not stop once present plans have been implemented but that adequate resources are available, both for ongoing “day to day” improvements and for the further major developments that will inevitably be needed.

4. Separation of statistical information from policy comment - We consider that the mixing of policy and ministerial comment with statistical information and releases has been a major factor contributing to the low level of public confidence in UK statistics. We therefore welcome the initiation of the publications hub and look forward to seeing its full development. It is clear though from the recent incident regarding teenage admissions to hospital as a result of knife crime and the earlier incident at the presentation for media on immigration statistics at the Home Office in August 2008 that an educational effort is needed throughout government, and particularly with press offices, to ensure that this separation happens. We urge the UKSA to initiate this or to take other steps to ensure that the civil service as a whole undertakes this.

Selective use of statistics mixed with policy comment, in a way which does not add to public debate but confuses and constrains it, does not just occur when data are released (as one example, see the “fact-sheet” issued by the Home Office on the Tackling Knives Action Programme (http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Tackling_Knives_Action_Prog1.pdf?view=Binary)). We believe that there needs to be a concerted effort throughout government to use data in a form that enlightens rather than spins. As you are aware we have already written to Sir Gus O’Donnell on these lines and hope that the UKSA, within the limits of its mandate, will also press for this.

Pre-release access has also, we believe, been part of the problem. The Royal Statistical Society considers that the UK should seek to emulate best practice in other comparable countries where pre-release access to ministers and policy officials either does not exist or is limited to a few hours at most. We do not see the need for any pre-release access in the majority of cases and only the need for, at most, a short period such as two hours for a limited number of market-sensitive statistics. We are pleased to see that the UKSA has similar views. The proposed reduction of pre-release to 24 hours for UK statistics is a welcome improvement but does not, in our view, go far enough. The intention is that this will be reviewed 12 months after it comes into practice and we hope that that review will result in further tightening. We regret the decision of the Scottish Executive to retain pre-release access of up to 5 days for Scottish devolved statistics. We hope that the UKSA will continue to press for tighter pre-release practices and offer RSS support in this.

5. The need for statisticians to understand the subject they are measuring – This is an often overlooked issue but it is, self-evidently, crucial if statisticians are able both to make the best judgements in areas of uncertainty and to plan for the future. To some extent this will be easier for statisticians in policy departments since their day-to-day work is likely to involve the acquisition of some such knowledge but it should not be assumed that this is necessarily adequate. It is essential for statisticians in the ONS and other non-policy areas to be given the opportunity to develop appropriate knowledge and make the necessary expert contacts. (See also point 25 regarding ONS relocation.)

6. Statistical coherence between the four UK administrations – Users often complain about the lack of comparability. Processes need to be put into place to ensure that there is harmonisation of statistical practice where this is justified by user need – but without infringing the autonomy of the devolved administrations. Where there are well-founded differences, the GSS should make efforts to “bridge” between the different statistics.

7. Defining National and other official statistics – The concept of “national statistics”, central to the new arrangements, has not been adequately developed. There is substantial variation between departments in the proportion of statistics that are badged as “national” statistics and some striking anomalies. We welcome the fact that monitoring report number 3 will review all official statistics not currently designated as national statistics and will also consider whether to notify the relevant minister that they should be considered for national statistics status.

In addition to defining “national statistics” there is also a need to define “official statistics” given the increasing trend to outsource official statistics to agencies. It is, also, important that official statistics which are not “national statistics” are still produced to high quality standards. Finally, there is also a need to clarify the accessibility of information for all institutions that produce statistics including quasi-public bodies such as Northern Rock and the partially publicly-owned banks.

B. Issues of particular current concern

8. Inadequacy of population and migration statistics - The problems are well known and we note that the UKSA will be reviewing this as its monitoring report no. 4.

9. The need for a national address register - for statistical purposes is well established. Previous efforts to set up a definitive register have failed, as highlighted by the Treasury Select Committee in its report “Counting the Population”. ONS is currently compiling a special register for the 2011 Census in England and Wales, buying information from the Post Office, Ordnance Survey, and the Local Government Information House. However, due to these three public bodies each defending their own intellectual property, this definitive register will not be available for any other purposes. The failure of public bodies to operate for the public good in England and Wales is in sharp contrast to Scotland, where a national address register is being created. There is a clear need for this issue to be tackled with vigour.

10. 2011 Census – The Statistics Commission and others have argued for 2011 to be the last of the current kind. High costs and high risks suggest that a different approach may offer better value for money. A clear strategy for the future needs to be established.

11. Housing market – the UK is badly in need of a coherent and comprehensive range of indicators for the housing market. This should include not only a definitive and comprehensive house price index available at appropriate levels of detail but also advance indicators such as prices at which dwellings are placed on the market. The UK Statistics Authority should also review whether there is adequate information about the mortgage market and the degree of financial pressure on householders.

12. Measurement of inflation - both the Consumer Price Index and the Retail Price Index have drawbacks. In addition there is a need to ensure that explanations of the various inflation series are communicated adequately to the public; this is particularly important at the moment. We welcome the fact that the communication of inflation is to be the subject of UKSA monitoring report no. 6 but would hope that this also looks at the compilation of the indices.

13. Retail sales series – while we accept that the official retail sales series is considerably more soundly based than the unofficial ones that are produced, the fact remains that there is a lack of confidence in it. This is particularly important at the moment, when retail sales will be a closely watched series as the UK passes through recession. If not already done, we recommend that efforts are made to discuss with key stakeholders, users and commentators to establish further the causes of discrepancies, to enable compilers of other series to accept where their series could be flawed and to ensure that there are not hidden flaws in the official series. The internet is, of course, likely to become increasingly important in this area.

C. Areas where the UK Statistics Authority should review whether actual or planned statistical information is adequate and appropriate.

14. Adequacy of environmental statistics to inform current debate – We note and welcome the fact that this will be the subject of monitoring report no. 8.

15. Crime statistics – what progress has been made in implementation of the recommendations of the Smith Review and the Statistics Commission review of crime statistics and what further steps are now needed to deal with public confusion/concern. We note that Monitoring report 7 will cover barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics.

16. League tables – Concerns on league tables have been expressed by academic and other commentators with particular reference to those for education and health. It would seem appropriate for the UKSA to review these concerns and consider whether some form of general guidance should be issued.

17. Educational Statistics – The Statistics Commission made a number of recommendations regarding educational statistics in its report no. 26: School Education Statistics: User Perspectives (2005). It would be appropriate for the UKSA to review the extent to which these had been implemented.

18. Adequacy of regional economic statistics – What progress has been made with implementation of the 2004 Allsopp Report (which was accepted in full by ministers); further steps now needed.

19. Progress following the Atkinson Report (January 2005) - on the measurement of government output and productivity; what other countries are now doing in this field.

20. Coverage of internet transactions. We appreciate that the ONS and the GSS generally have taken steps to enlarge relevant surveys, such as retail sales, to cover internet transactions. However, a fast-developing field, such as this, needs to be kept under close review since it could affect data in ways which are not immediately obvious.

D. Issues relating to general statistical practice

Many of these issues are covered, explicitly or implicitly, by the draft code of practice but they are points that we believe the UKSA should keep under review.

21. Use of administrative records for statistical purposes – following the provisions of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, it should be easier for government statisticians to access records, such as tax and benefit records, to produce better statistics. Priorities and mechanisms need to be established. We welcome the fact that the draft Code of Practice covers this issue while noting that the relevant protocol needs some further work (this letter is finalised prior to the publication of the definitive Code of Practice).

22. Classification procedures – Classification decisions, in particular classifications which could have a political impact such as the allocation to the public or private sector of business enterprises and services, need to be taken independently by the government statisticians without undue pressure or involvement from policy departments and should be consistent with international guidelines.

23. Adequacy of documentation - Processes need to be put in place to ensure an adequate standard of documentation of statistics both for public use and for the use of government statisticians themselves. This should include information regarding the degree of uncertainty attached to data.

24. Outsourcing compilation of official statistics – Solid guidelines needs to be established on when, how and why statistical work is outsourced. In particular there are examples of some agencies being both the deliverer of services and the compiler of data relating to those services. This is clearly not desirable and, if essential, eg when data depend on management information, appropriate audit arrangements need to be put in place.

E. Other points

25. Pressures on ONS and the relocation to Newport – We have been concerned for some time over the combination of pressures on the ONS: severe budget cuts; the demand of the modernisation programme; changes required by the new legislation; relocation. This is a huge amount of pressure to put on an organisation at any one time.

While we accept that there are benefits in the relocation to Newport we remain concerned over the potential loss of expertise, in particular over the impact on National Accounts and Balance of Payments data. These are highly complex areas in which statisticians only become truly expert after a number of years work; as such the risk is greater than for most other statistical series. The high profile of these series (which can only be enhanced in current circumstances) means that any resulting problems could seriously damage ONS's and the UKSA's reputation. (We note that quality problems with national accounts was no. 3 in the list of top level risks for ONS noted in the UKSA paper SA (08) 25.)

In the longer term care will need to be taken that the move to Newport does not distance statisticians from users and other stakeholders including government policy makers, the Bank of England and major financial institutions.

26. Statistics to serve democracy – Over the long term consideration needs to be given to the production of statistics that inform the electorate on political issues at times of elections as occurs in, for example, Norway. To take one possibility: if and when a referendum on Scottish independence occurs, authoritative and unbiased information on government spending in different areas of the UK and regional sources of government revenue raising (including but not restricted to oil revenues) would be examples of data that could inform citizens throughout the UK. We appreciate though that this would be a high-risk initiative and would therefore need careful preparation.

Annex C2

**Summary of the Monitoring and Assessment Team's
provisional response to the issues raised by the RSS**

Issue raised	Provisional response
1. Needs of users and others: a. Programme of active engagement with stakeholders b. Giving advance notice of topics c. Parts of meetings to be open d. Working with RSS to improve awareness of the importance of official stats	General points - Authority support for SUF; User Voice report. a. Already underway - can give some examples b. Programme of Assessments and MRs already published. If other suitable topics are scheduled for discussion, the Authority will invite others' views. c. Consider further d. Agree in principle; needs further discussion with RSS.
2. Need for proper planning mechanisms	Agree. ONS is co-ordinating improved planning mechanisms across the GSS. [Decision not to proceed with the proposed MR is subject to approval by the Authority].
3. Authority to review communication and presentation, including funding ongoing improvements to the ONS website	Next M&A Note will look at the presentation of statistics. Website issue - noted by ONS.
4. Separation of stats information from policy comment: a. Authority to undertake an educational effort across government about separation of stats from policy comment b. Need for tighter pre-release practices	a. Suggest that the Chair meets the Perm Sec responsible for Government Communication - Matt Tee. b. Authority will undertake its own review after a year
5. Statisticians' understanding of their subject matter	Agree. Covered explicitly in the Code (principle 7, practice 6)
6. UK coherence	1. Covered in the Code - 1(3) and 4(6). 2. Describe the role of the Inter-Administration Committee.
7. Defining National Statistics and official statistics	NS and OS 'defined' by the Statistics Act, and relevant Orders.
8. Inadequacy of population and migration statistics	1. MR 4 2. Brief summary of ONS-led work.
9. Need for a National Address Register	Consider further
10. 2011 Census should be the last	ONS is working on this. Latest thinking?
11. Better information about the housing market	Karen is likely to chair a meeting with CLG and MOJ officials shortly about house price indices. Could broaden the remit of this group.
12. Measurement of inflation - MR to look at the compilation of the indices	Proposed MR will look at the compilation of indices to the extent that they meet the needs of users, and that compilation issues are satisfactorily explained.
13. Work to understand and explain discrepancies in retail sales statistics	Suggest an independent expert review?
14. Adequacy of environmental statistics	Future MR.
15. Progress implementing recommendations relating to crime statistics	Future MR.

SA(COS)(09)02 - Priorities for 2009 - Issues Raised by the RSS

16. UKSA guidance on league tables	Possible MR
17. Progress implementing recommendations relating to education statistics	"
18. Progress implementing recommendations relating to regional economic statistics	"
19. Progress implementing recommendations relating to government output and productivity	"
20. Need to review coverage of internet transactions	ONS are monitoring the issue.
21. Need for priorities and mechanisms to use admin data for statistics	1. Outline existing ONS priorities for access to admin data. 2. Mechanisms are set out in legislation
22. Need for independent decisions about classifications	ONS are very much aware of the issue. National Statistician's guidelines (on interpreting the Code) will address this, drawing from the previous protocol on classifications.
23. Need for adequate documentation of statistics	National Statistician's guidelines will address this.
24. Need for guidelines relating to the outsourcing of the compilation of statistics	Authority will consider this in future.
25. Pressures on ONS, and relocation: a. Loss of expertise, especially in NA and BOP b. Diminishing contact with government policy makers, and the Bank	ONS' risk management / contingency planning
26. Consideration of the production of statistics on political issues at the time of elections/referenda	Authority will consider this in future.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)03

***Information Gathering for
Assessment and Designation***

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to share with the Committee the various materials that will be used to collect written evidence from producers, users and other stakeholders in order for the Authority to assess compliance of official statistics against the Code of Practice.

Timing

2. It is intended to finalise the questionnaires by the middle of January 2009 in order to employ them in the first assessment and designation exercises in February.

Recommendations

3. The Committee for Official Statistics is invited to:
 - i. endorse these broad proposals for collecting written evidence from statistical producers, users and others;
 - ii. offer detailed comments as appropriate, either at the meeting or in writing by 16 January.

Discussion

4. As agreed at the Authority's November meeting, information relating to the assessment of official statistics against the Code of Practice will be collected through a variety of means: documents to be supplied by producers; self-assessment questionnaires to be completed by producers; written information from users and other stakeholders, and; follow-up interviews with producers, users and other stakeholders.
5. The attachments to this paper are the drafts of the various data collection instruments. The documentation and self-assessment questionnaire are the minimum set of information that producers need to provide for the Monitoring and Assessment Team to be able to assess compliance with the Code. The user and stakeholder questionnaires are designed to target issues of user needs, which are at the heart of the Code.
6. The producer self-assessment questionnaire, attached at **Annex A**, follows the structure of the Code. Each of the Code's principles and protocols is restated, followed by a range of questions to elicit the information at all levels within the producer body to support assessment. The questions are largely open-ended or ask for links to be provided to documentation that should (in time) be in the public domain. In addition to reporting evidence against each of the statements of practice, statistical producers are required to provide various pieces of background information.
7. In developing the questionnaire, the Monitoring and Assessment Team considered restating each statement of practice. We opted against this idea as it made the questionnaire appear unnecessarily long. The questionnaire therefore ideally needs to be completed with reference to the Code. We also expect the National Statistician's supplementary advice and guidance to help producers evaluate and

SA(COS)(09)03 - Information Gathering for Assessment and Designation

report the extent to which they comply with the Code. We also considered separate questionnaires to apply to different levels within a producer body, as discussed at the Authority's November 2008 meeting. On balance, we felt that it was more appropriate to collect the relevant information in a single questionnaire.

8. Collecting information from users is an important part of determining the extent of compliance with those aspects of the Code relating to user needs. The questionnaire at **Annex B** has been developed to identify a range of basic information from users of statistics. The Monitoring and Assessment Team will follow up this information with users and the corresponding producers as appropriate.
9. The Monitoring and Assessment Team also intends to collect information from a wider range of stakeholders. The questionnaire at **Annex C** has been developed to collect basic information about stakeholders, and their relationship with the producer and users as appropriate.

Mark Pont, Monitoring and Assessment Team, January 2009

List of Annexes

- Annex A Self-assessment Questionnaire for Statistical Producers**
- Annex B Self-completion Questionnaire for Users**
- Annex C Self-completion Questionnaire for Other Stakeholders**

Aim of Assessment

The Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment, published alongside the Code of Practice for Official Statistics [insert ref] states the following aim of assessment:

“In accordance with section 7(3) of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the aim of the Authority’s assessment function is to promote and safeguard the quality of official statistics, good practice in relation to official statistics, and the comprehensiveness of official statistics. Official statistics include those designated as National Statistics.

The specific requirements in relation to assessment are set out in sections 12 and 14 of the Act – to “determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics ... has been [or continues to be] complied with “, and to “designate [or confirm the previous designation of] the statistics as National Statistics”; otherwise the Authority must “decline ... to designate them ...” [or “otherwise cancel their designation”].

The assessment function will further aim (i) to help the producers of official statistics to enhance the quality of the statistical service over a period of time and (ii) to communicate the extent of compliance with the Code to Parliament and the public.”

Purpose of this questionnaire

The objective of this self-assessment questionnaire is for statistical producers to review their compliance with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. It will also provide the UK Statistics Authority with much of the information it needs to assess compliance with the Code. We will supplement the evidence you provide in this questionnaire with:

- further evidence that we may collect from you in discussion, and
- information provided by users of your statistics, and other stakeholders.

As well as specific information about compliance with each of the principles and protocols in the Code, please supply a range of background information to help us understand your activities and their context. The list of such information is in Annex A. The list includes web links to your statistical outputs and accompanying documentation.

Structure of the questionnaire

This questionnaire follows the structure of the Code of Practice. Each of the Code’s principles and protocols has been restated for ease of reference. In each case, we have indicated the information we want you to report as evidence of compliance. You will probably find it helpful to refer to the Code as you fill in this document. You may also find it helpful to refer to the National Statistician’s supplementary advice and guidance for the specific types of evidence required to demonstrate compliance with the Code. These documents can be accessed at [insert web links].

In some cases, the information you provide will relate to more than one statement of practice; we have indicated in this questionnaire where this is the case. Not all practices apply to all statistics. There is no requirement to provide evidence against practices that:

- don’t relate to the statistics you produce, for instance those relating to surveys will not apply to statistics produced from administrative sources;
- ask for information about Code breaches, if none have occurred.

Reporting evidence against statements of practice

The statements of practice in the Code apply at different levels. Some relate to organisational policies and practices, while others are specific to individual statistical outputs. In some cases, an individual practice will apply at different levels. When completing the questionnaire, please consider the wide extent of application, and report accordingly. For instance, in Principle 1, we ask about how you engage with users. Such engagement ranges from high level engagement at organisation level, through to detailed engagement with individual users; your response should reflect that diversity.

If the assessment covers a range of statistical products within your organisation and practices vary between them, please give enough detail on each for us to be able to determine the extent of compliance for each individual product. You may either:

- include information about all statistical products in a single response; or
- complete one questionnaire for each product, pasting common text in to each copy as appropriate.

The evidence needs to be sufficient to support the assessment of each of the statistical products in this assessment.

Against each principle and protocol, you also have the opportunity to provide any further relevant evidence in support of our assessment of compliance. Please provide only that evidence that **directly** supports the assessment of Code compliance. We are also keen to learn about obstacles you face in complying with each principle and protocol, and the measures you have taken and plan to take to overcome these.

Burden

We want to minimise the burden of assessment as much as possible. We anticipate that the information we have requested will be readily available. Where the Code requires particular documents to be published, it will be sufficient to provide web links to those documents. In other cases, please provide the relevant information in whatever format you have it readily available – we don't expect you to rewrite documents simply for the purposes of assessment. In some cases, the documentation you provide will cover compliance with a range of practices in the Code. In those cases, please simply identify to which practices it relates. Please also keep your responses tightly focused on the requirements to assess Code compliance. In those cases where you send us documents and web links, please point out the particular aspects that provide evidence of compliance.

In some cases, we ask for recent documentation. We are not prescriptive about what 'recent' means. Similarly, where we ask you to report, for example, improvements made or comments received, we often don't specify a period for this. Please focus your response on those documents/occasions that demonstrate compliance with the Code.

Confidentiality and Reporting

It is our intention that in the interests of openness, we will make completed questionnaires public on the Authority's website.

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

Prin1.1 What steps have you taken to engage with your users? Explain how such engagement promoted trust and maximised public value. (You will be asked for more details about the detailed practices in Protocol 1 later.)

Prin1.2 Provide links to relevant documentation about the needs of your users, the use they make of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform.

Prin1.3 Describe the ways you have planned the production of statistics to serve the public good. How have you engaged with producers of related official statistics in order to ensure that planning was streamlined?

Prin1.4 How have you taken account of the needs of users in determining the timetable for the release of your statistics?

Prin1.5 Provide links to documentation about users' experiences of the statistical services you provide, data quality, and the form and timing of reports.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so. In particular, it will be helpful for you to send the Authority copies of:

- The results of user surveys, whether formal or informal
- Other records of engagement with users

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

Prin2.1 will be assessed based on your response to Principle 1, practice 4, and those relating to Protocol 2.

Prin2.2 How have you ensured that your statistics are presented impartially and objectively?

Prin2.3 Describe the steps you have taken to make official statistics equally available to all.

Prin2.4 Give examples of changes to methods or classifications, showing how you pre-announced them and what information you published about the changed statistics.

Prin2.5 List all recent exemptions, if any, from the practices of the Code, and provide web links to their explanations in the relevant publications.

Prin2.6 Provide a link to your Revisions Policy and give examples, if any, of published statements explaining the nature and extent of revisions.

Prin2.7 Give examples of errors discovered in statistical reports, if any, and describe how they were corrected, and of how stakeholders were alerted.

Prin2.8 will be assessed based on the publicly available statistical releases.

Prin2.9 Provide a copy of your department's charging policy for the provision of supplementary statistical services, highlighting any local variations.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

Prin3.1 How do you ensure that statistical reports are issued separately from other statements or comments about the figures? How do you ensure that no statements or comments based on prior knowledge are issued to the press or published ahead of the publication of the statistics? List recent breaches of these procedures, if any, and describe how you dealt with them.

Prin3.2 How do you protect those producing statistical reports from any political pressures that might influence the production or presentation of the statistics? Give details of how you have dealt with any such pressures that have arisen.

Prin3.3 What procedures are in place to ensure that the relevant statistical Head of Profession has the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases?

Prin3.4 List the statutory obligations and internationally endorsed guidelines governing the collection of data, confidentiality, and release of your statistics. Describe how you meet these. Give any examples of where statute or guidelines have not been followed, and how you have dealt with those situations.

Prin3.5 List any recent complaints you have received that relate to professional integrity, quality or standards, and describe how you dealt with each of them.

Prin3.6 How do you ensure that individuals working in the statistical production process do not abuse the trust placed in them for personal gain? Describe any cases of abuse, and how you dealt with them.

Prin3.7 How have you promoted a culture that allows statistical experts to comment publicly on statistical issues, including the misuse of official statistics? Give examples of where statisticians have commented publicly on statistical issues, including any repercussions of doing so. Give examples of any criticism you've received for not commenting, and how you have dealt with it.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

Prin4.1 Provide links to details of methods used to collect and process data, including:

- (for outputs derived from administrative sources) a description of the data and their sources. Include the means of collection, classification and transfer to the statistical producer, and the processes and analysis involved in producing statistical outputs from them.
- (for surveys) a description of survey methods – all stages from identifying the need for a survey through to publication of results, including copies of survey questionnaires, advance letters, and the survey instructions given by interviewers to interviewees.
- (for other analysis) a description of data sources and analysis methods.

Explain how you made decisions about which methods to use, and how these methods contribute to ensuring that users' needs are met.

Prin4.2 Give examples of how you have sought and responded to users' comments about quality and how you have designed your statistical methods to ensure a level of quality that meets their needs. Provide links to documents that describe the quality of your statistical outputs.

Prin4.3 How do you assure the quality of your outputs? Include quality assurance processes both within and external to your department, and processes about methods and outputs. How do you ensure your statistical outputs are coherent with those of others?

Prin4.4 Provide a link to your published quality guidelines. Describe how your staff are trained in quality management principles.

Prin4.5 Describe how you have developed your existing and new statistical products recently, including the ways you have engaged users and other stakeholders in the process.

Prin4.6 To what extent are your statistics comparable within the UK, and internationally? How have you promoted this? Provide a link to published documentation about deviations from the adoption of common standards etc. Describe any deviations that haven't been made public, if any, and explain why not.

Prin4.7 Describe recent revisions to time series and changes to methods and coverage. Describe the extent to which revised historical data were produced, and how users' requirements were taken into account.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so. In particular, it will be helpful for you to send the Authority copies of:

- Recent relevant quality reviews, for example National Statistics Quality Reviews
- Triennial/quinquennial reviews
- Substantive reports of technical and methodological advice, including the evaluation of new methods for data collection, classification, processing, analysis etc
- A brief summary of the extent to which you've put the recommendations from such reviews and reports into practice, and how decisions to prioritise their implementation were made

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.

Prin5.1 Provide a copy of your confidentiality protection policy, and if publicly available, your detailed methods for confidentiality protection. How have you taken account of the availability of other sources of information in deciding your policy and rules?

Prin5.2 Describe your arrangements for maintaining the security of confidential information. Describe your processes for ensuring that relevant staff understand their obligations regarding confidential data, and for ensuring that no other staff have access to confidential data.

Prin5.3 Compliance with this practice for individual products will be assessed using the survey materials that you supply under Principle 4, practice 1. In addition, provide examples of departmental or other policy statements relating to informing survey participants about confidentiality protection.

Prin5.4 Provide a link to your published description of how you have balanced confidentiality protection with the need to retain the usefulness of the statistics you produce.

Prin5.5 Provide links to prior authorisations, if any, from the National Statistician or Chief Statistician in a Devolved Administration for any exceptions, required by law or thought to be in the public interest, to the principle of confidentiality protection.

Prin5.6 Describe the arrangements you have made to ensure that your confidentiality protection applies to the exchange of data with third parties. Provide details of the relevant records you have kept.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

Prin6.1 Provide a link to the latest estimates of the costs to providers of responding to your statistical surveys. How have you tried to develop methods to reduce the costs to individual organisations or people? What barriers prevent you reducing respondent burden, and how have you sought to overcome them?

Prin6.2 Describe the steps you take to seek participation in surveys through informed consent.

Prin6.3 Explain what you have done to promote statistical purposes in the design of administrative systems. What barriers to progress currently exist, and how have you sought to overcome these?

Prin6.4 Describe your analysis of the costs of proposed new data requirements to data providers and potential benefits to users, along with decisions taken.

Prin6.5 Describe work done to evaluate the possible additional uses of existing data and estimation techniques against the need to undertake new surveys.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

Prin7.1 Provide a copy of your current business plan. Outline the budget, number of staff and grades engaged in statistical work. Include computing resources (systems and staff). Describe any areas where you feel resources are inadequate, and how you have sought to address this.

Prin7.2 How have you prioritised users' views? How have users influenced the planning of your work and the allocation of your resources? What budget have you set aside for user consultation, and how did you decide this?

Prin7.3 Provide records showing the relationship between the statistical planning process, the work programme, the allocation of resources, and the outcomes.

Prin7.4 How do you monitor expenditure against work programmes and demonstrate effective stewardship of resources allocated to statistical work?

Prin7.5 How do you balance quality and costs? How have you taken account of the expected uses of the statistics in doing so?

Prin7.6 Provide an overview of the recruitment process for analytical staff engaged in the production of statistics and an overview of career development policies and practices. Provide a copy of your department's competence framework for such staff.

Prin7.7 Provide, where relevant, details of where you use administrative sources for statistical purposes. Show how you've implemented the practices set out in Protocol 3.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so. In particular, it will be helpful for you to send the Authority copies of:

- Internal Audit reports
- Capability Reviews
- Reports from the National Audit Office
- Details of how you've put the recommendations from such reviews into practice

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.

Prin8.1 What level of quality do your users require from your statistics? Compliance with this practice will also be assessed based on the publicly available statistical releases and associated documentation, and your responses to practices 1 and 2 in Principle 4.

Prin8.2 will be assessed based on your statistical releases.

Prin8.3 What level of detail do your users require from your statistics? How did you decide the level of detail to publish? How did you determine which formats to publish?

Prin8.4 How do you publicise your statistics? What steps have you taken to ensure straightforward access to them?

Prin8.5 Provide details of the steps you take to ensure that your statistics are accessible to a range of different audiences, including those with disabilities.

Prin8.6 How do you ensure that your statistics are disseminated in forms that enable and encourage analysis and re-use, and in formats that are convenient to users?

Prin8.7 List the public records legislation applicable to your statistics and relevant codes of practice on records management. List any recent breaches of those codes, if any, and say how you dealt with each. Provide details of your practices for depositing official statistics (accompanied by information about their purposes, design and methodology) with the relevant national archive as required in legislation.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Principle, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

Prot1.1 Describe the ways you have identified users, including new users. Provide links to documentation covering their statistical needs, and the way they wish to engage with you.

Prot1.2 Describe how you ensure that users can find the information they need.

Prot1.3 Describe how you have taken account of users' views on the presentation of statistics, and associated commentary, datasets and metadata.

Prot1.4 will be assessed using your response to Principle 4, practice 2.

Prot1.5 Describe how you have involved users in the development of *experimental statistics*.

Prot1.6 will be assessed using your responses to practices 2 and 5 in Principle 1.

Prot1.7 Describe the nature of recent consultations you have undertaken with users. Provide links to relevant consultation documents. How did you determine the nature and extent of consultations?

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Protocol, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

Prot2.1 Provide internal timetables for the preparation of your statistics. Describe the processes for determining release dates. Give examples of recent public comments, if any, relating to perceived delay or withholding of information, and describe how you have responded to them.

Prot2.2 will be assessed by reference to the National Statistics Publication Hub.

Prot2.3 Describe the measures you have taken to ensure that your statistics are available in the Publication Hub. Describe recent cases, if any, where this has not happened, and what you have done to improve matters.

Prot2.4 Describe deviations from standard release practices, if any. Say how they occurred, and what measures you have put in place to prevent reoccurrence.

Prot2.5 Describe deviations from the standard release time/practices, if any, and provide links to public announcements of changes to planned release dates.

Prot2.6 will be assessed based on publicly available statistical releases.

Prot2.7 Provide lists of the people who (a) have pre-release access to statistics in their final form under the relevant Order; and (b) have pre-release access to statistics not in their final form, describing their reasons for access. List any occurrences of accidental or wrongful release, if any, and the results of investigations into the circumstances.

Prot2.8 How do you ensure that no indication of the content of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication? List any occurrences of accidental or wrongful release, if any, and the results (including decisions made) of investigations into the circumstances.

Prot2.9 Provide examples of government statements that have been issued alongside official statistics. Describe any pressures you have faced in meeting the requirements of this practice, and what changes you have made to your procedures as a result.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Protocol and the relevant pre-release access legislation, including copies of all records you are required to keep under that legislation, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

Prot3.1 will be assessed using your response to Principle 3, practice 4.

Prot3.2 will be assessed using your response to Principle 4, practice 1.

Prot3.3 Describe the measures you take to:

- maximise opportunities for use of administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data;
- use common information technology and information management systems which facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics.

Describe the hindrances you have faced in maximising the use of administrative data, and how you have addressed these.

Prot3.4 Describe the measures you have in place to ensure that no action is taken within the producer body, or public statement made, that might undermine confidence in the independence of the statistics when released.

Prot3.5 Provide a link to your Statement of Administrative Sources, including the outcome of your consultation with the National Statistician.

Provide any further relevant evidence about the way you meet the requirements of this Protocol, and obstacles that you face in doing so.

Annex A: background documentation

Overview

- Links to recent examples of publications including metadata, quality statements and supplementary reports
- One page summary of the history and key characteristics of the statistical product and team
- A summary of the main aspects of good and poor practice
- Relevant clauses from any relevant legislation
- Organisation charts of the statistical output area
- List of relevant acronyms/glossary of terms

Planning and Governance

- A high level description of the relevant business processes, for example, process maps
- Details of governance structures, including committees, advisory boards, user groups etc
- Desk instructions relating to the main processes in the production of outputs
- Relevant Service Level Agreements (eg with data suppliers, or main users)
- National Statistics compliance statements (including standards relating to release practices)

Contact Details

For each of the following give name, address, telephone number, email address.

- Main people within the statistical production process
- Data suppliers (or representatives of supplier communities if relevant)
- Internal users (end or interim) of the statistical product, for example policy colleagues
- Other internal stakeholders (eg Private Office)
- External users including user groups, forums, committees etc
- Other external commentators, including your main media contacts

Dear

Statistics Users Questionnaire

The UK Statistics Authority has a statutory responsibility under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, to assess whether its Code of Practice has been complied with in relation to any official statistics. Such assessment will support the Authority's overall objective, which is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good.

Meeting users' needs is at the heart of the Code of Practice. An important part of our assessment process, therefore, is to investigate the extent of the engagement between producers of statistics and their users and other stakeholders. The attached questionnaire seeks your views about [statistics] (which we will refer to in this document as the "statistical product") produced by [organisation] (who we will refer to as the "producer"). We will use the term "data" for convenience to refer to the data, statistics or other outputs from this statistical product.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information from users of statistics and those who could potentially make use of data if the data were more suitable. If the data from the named statistical product are of no interest/relevance to you, please ignore the questionnaire and accept our apologies.

Please could you complete the questionnaire in as much detail as you are able and return it to the Monitoring and Assessment Team either by email to assessment@statistics.gsi.gov.uk or by post to:

Monitoring and Assessment Team
UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Tredegar Park
NEWPORT
NP10 8XG

We may follow up with you any information you provide us. Wherever possible, we will keep all the information you provide us confidential, and will not publish any information in a way that attributes comments to you. However, as part of our investigations we may need to follow up some of the points you have raised with producers and others, and it may be necessary to reveal your identity to them. If you prefer us not to do this, please say so in the comments box in part D of the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely

Richard Laux
Director, Assessment Programme

Statistics Users Questionnaire

Assessment of [statistics] produced by [organisation]

Part A Background

1a Your name

1b Your contact details

Organisation:

Postal address:

Email address:

Phone number:

2 Do you currently use any data from the statistical product named above?

Yes -> please fill in part B of this questionnaire

No -> please fill in part C of this questionnaire

Part B Existing Users

This section of the questionnaire relates to use of data from the named statistical product.

3 Which data from this statistical product have you used?

4 For what purposes did you use them?

(Please tick all that apply)

- Monitoring trends
- Policy research and development
- Business/financial planning
- Regional/local comparisons
- International comparisons
- Contract pricing
- Educational project
- Research

5 Please give brief details of use

6 Thinking overall about the data you use from this statistical product, how satisfied are you with:

		Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No Opinion
a	their accessibility, including format	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	the frequency of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	the timeliness of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d	the clarity of presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e	their coverage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f	the level of detail available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g	their accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h	comparability with other sources of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i	provision of quality measures and metadata	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7 Please describe any aspects of the statistical product that you consider to be particularly strong or weak. We particularly want to know more about the reasons for any parts of question 6 you rated as “dissatisfied”.

-> go to question 22

8 Have you and the producer of this statistical product engaged for any reason about this statistical product (for example you seeking clarification regarding understanding

SA(COS)(09)03 – Annex B – User Questionnaire

published statistics or commenting on format of publication, or the producer seeking to discuss with you possible improvements to the statistical product)?

Yes [] -> 9 No [] -> 12

9 Briefly describe the nature of your contact with the producer.

10 Were you satisfied with the way the producer dealt with you? Yes [] No []

11 Please explain the reasons why.

-> go to question 22

12 Have you tried to engage with the producer, but been unsuccessful?

Yes [] -> 13 No [] -> 22

13 Please describe your attempts to engage with the producer

-> go to question 22

Part C Non-users

This section of the questionnaire relates to *potential use* of data from the named statistical product.

14 What data from this statistical product would you like to be able to use?

15 Why do you feel that you are unable to use them?

16 In which of the following areas do you consider improvements are needed to enable you to use these data?

(Please tick all that apply)

- Accessibility
- Format
- Timeliness
- Frequency
- Level of detail
- Accuracy
- Quality measures/metadata
- Other Please state...

17 What would you be able to do, or do better, if you were able to use these data?

18 Have you tried to contact the producer about your issues with this statistical product?

Yes -> 19 No -> 22

19 What issues did you raise?

20 Were you satisfied with the way the producer dealt with you? Yes No

21 Please explain the reasons why.

Part D All

22 Please use this space to provide any other comments relating to this statistical product, or your engagement with the producers.

Dear

Statistics Stakeholders Questionnaire

The UK Statistics Authority has a statutory responsibility under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, to assess whether its Code of Practice has been complied with in relation to any official statistics. Such assessment will support the Authority's overall objective, which is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good.

An important part of our assessment process is to investigate the extent of the engagement between producers of statistics and their stakeholders. The attached questionnaire seeks your views about [statistics] (which we will refer to in this document as the “statistical product”) produced by [organisation] (who we will refer to as the “producer”). We will use the term “data” for convenience to refer to the data, statistics or other outputs from this statistical product.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information from relevant stakeholders. If the data from the named statistical product are of no interest/relevance to you, please ignore the questionnaire and accept our apologies.

Please could you complete the questionnaire in as much detail as you are able and return it to the Monitoring and Assessment Team either by email to assessment@statistics.gsi.gov.uk or by post to:

Monitoring and Assessment Team
UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Tredegar Park
NEWPORT
NP10 8XG

We may follow up with you any information you provide us. Wherever possible, we will keep all the information you provide us confidential, and will not publish any information in a way that attributes comments to you. However, as part of our investigations we may need to follow up some of the points you have raised with producers and others, and it may be necessary to reveal your identity to them. If you prefer us not to do this, please say so in the comments box at the end of the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely

Richard Laux
Director, Assessment Programme

Statistics Stakeholders Questionnaire

Assessment of [statistics] produced by [organisation]

1a Your name

1b Your contact details

Organisation:

Postal address:

Email address:

Phone number:

2 What is your relationship, if any, with the producer of this statistical product?

3 What is your relationship, if any, with users of this statistical product?

4 Describe the impact this statistical product has on you and your work.

5 Describe the impact you and your work have on this statistical product.

6 Have you and the producer of this statistical product engaged for any reason about this statistical product?

Yes [] -> 7 No [] -> 10

SA(COS)(09)03 – Annex C – Stakeholder Questionnaire

7 Briefly describe the nature of your contact with the producer.

8 Were you satisfied with the way the producer dealt with you? Yes [] No []

9 Please explain the reasons why.

-> go to question 12

10 Have you tried to engage with the producer, but been unsuccessful?

Yes [] -> 11 No [] -> 12

11 Please describe your attempts to engage with the producer

-> go to question 12

12 Please use this space to provide any other comments relating to this statistical product, or your engagement with the producers. We are keen to hear details about any particularly good or poor practices that you have experienced.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)04

***Senior GSS Committees: The Inter-Administration Committee
and the Planning and Strategy Committee***

Purpose

1. This paper provides information about two senior Government Statistical Service (GSS) committees: the Inter-Administration Committee (**Annex A**) and the Strategy and Planning Committee (**Annex B**). A chart showing these committees within the overall governance structure of the UK statistical system is presented at **Annex C**.

Mike Hughes (Director of National Statistics and Policy Group ONS)
January 2009

List of Annexes

- Annex A Inter Administration Committee**
- Annex B Strategy and Planning Committee**
- Annex C Governance structure of the UK Statistical System**

Annex A Inter Administration Committee

Introduction

1. The Inter-Administration Committee (IAC) was established as part of the new governance arrangements for the GSS following the introduction of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.
2. The IAC is chaired by the National Statistician, with membership comprising of the Director General for Statistics ONS, Director of Population, Health and Regional Analysis ONS, Director of National Statistics and Policy Group ONS, the Chief Statisticians in each of the Devolved Administrations, and departmental Heads of Profession as issues dictate.
3. The terms of reference are reproduced at paragraphs 8 and 9 below.

Issues

4. The Committee has met twice. At its first meeting in May 2008 it discussed the following:
 - The Concordat on Statistics: options for amending the Concordat (which underpins a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the four nations as part of the devolution settlements in 1998). By common consent the Concordat has added little to inter-administration working, being out of date from the start and, because it is tied to the MOU, difficult to amend;
 - Section 20 of the Act: how to meet the requirement that ONS seek the consent of the Administrations before publishing devolved statistics, and by extension how to apply this across the GSS;
 - A framework document for UK statistics - options for the number and nature of necessary framework documents to clarify roles and responsibilities;
 - Links with other committees: how the IAC can ensure it plays a prominent and valuable role in the new governance arrangements.
5. At its second meeting in October 2008 the Committee progressed a number of these issues:
 - The Concordat on Statistics: On balance it was agreed to withdraw the Concordat on Statistics from the MOU and replace it with a section in the MOU referencing the importance of statistics and that separate agreements exist to manage inter-administration working. The Concordat will be replaced by a working agreement developed by the National and Chief Statisticians, and be overseen by the IAC;
 - Section 20: A draft set of conditions have been drafted and are being considered. These have been written with ONS in mind initially, but by extension the GSS in due course. Related issues have also been identified and guidance commissioned;
 - Frameworks: It was agreed that there should be an overarching UK Framework Document which would complement separate frameworks for each of the administrations.
6. In addition the IAC also discussed:
 - Planning arrangements: a discussion of how the IAC might best identify inter-administration issues and how it could then influence the planning process. There are also issues to resolve around marrying devolved planning needs with those at the UK level;
 - Funding European Union (EU) surveys: Issues surrounding the difficulty in

SA(COS)(09)04 - GSS Committees

meeting the requirements of EU surveys, and how the four nations can work together to better manage the burden placed upon them;

- IAC Work Programme - the Committee wishes to develop a clear set of priorities and issues to address over the coming year.

7. Topics to be discussed at future meetings include:

- working with the GSS and users to identify inter-administration issues;
- resolving issues around planning;
- developing a new working agreement to replace the Concordat;
- developing a framework for meeting EU survey requirements, and;
- implementing guidance for meeting the requirements of Section 20.

Terms of Reference

Purpose

8. The Committee will work within the context of a new Statistics Concordat between the UK Statistics Authority and each of the Devolved Administrations, which will outline the ways in which the four nations will work together and cooperate on statistical matters.

Role

9. The Committee's responsibilities will include the following:
 - i. develop a conceptual framework for coherent, comparable and comprehensive 4 Nation statistics, taking due account of user needs, accessibility and metadata to assess comparability;
 - ii. develop a prioritised programme to promote policies, strategies and standards which facilitate the production of coherent and harmonised statistics across the administrations;
 - iii. liaise with, and support the work of, other GSS committees;
 - iv. consider UK government statistics needed for devolved purposes in reserved policy areas, and devolved statistics needed for UK purposes. This could include cost sharing practices;
 - v. strengthen the user voice (with an emphasis on those users requiring UK-wide and international statistics);
 - vi. share and promote good statistical practice across administrations;
 - vii. identify international issues including meeting international requirements and arrangements for moving forward issues that would benefit sub UK international comparisons;
 - viii. raise issues with the UK Statistics Authority and/or Ministers as appropriate.

Annex B Strategy and Planning Committee

Introduction

1. The inaugural meeting of the UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee was held at ONS on 22 December. The intention is that membership should be confined, in the main, to members of the Government Statistical Service who are Graded at SCS Level 2 (or above). The following members attended this first meeting.
 - Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills - Professor Adrian Smith
 - Department for Work and Pensions - David Frazer
 - Ministry of Defence - Mike McDowall
 - Office for National Statistics - Karen Dunnell (Chair)
 - Office for National Statistics - Jil Matheson
 - Office for National Statistics - Steve Penneck
 - Office for National Statistics - Mike Hughes
 - Office for National Statistics - James Denman (Secretary)
 - Scottish Government - Rob Wishart
2. Professor Paul Wiles (Home Office) was on leave and sent his apologies:

Issues

3. At this first meeting, the Committee addressed the following four issues.

Terms of Reference and Modus Operandi

4. The Committee agreed that it should focus its attention on the following four key functions:
 - to provide high-level advice to the National Statistician;
 - to provide strategic leadership and direction to Heads of Profession in the Government Statistical Service - particularly with respect to the Authority's requirements;
 - to scan the horizon in order to steer statistical planning across the whole of the UK statistical system and ensure its relevance to users;
 - to liaise with the Inter-Administration Committee on matters which require a joint approach by the UK Government and Devolved Administrations.
5. The intention was to meet to a timetable which was synchronised with meetings of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) and meetings of the GSS Heads of Profession. Each meeting should be informed by updates on what the Authority had been up to during the interregnum. In this regard, the Committee felt that, at some stage, it would be beneficial to hold a joint workshop with the Authority to promote quality and standards across the UK statistical system.

A new system of Statistical Planning

6. The Committee discussed the latest iteration of a paper (already discussed and endorsed by the Authority) outlining the framework for a new planning system for the UK statistical system. The ultimate aim was to publish, on a regular basis, a high-level and long-term plan covering UK statistics as a whole which would sit alongside the equivalent plans published by each of the three Devolved Administrations, and any plans published by individual Departments within the UK Government.

SA(COS)(09)04 - GSS Committees

7. The Chair allayed concerns conveyed to her, prior to the meeting, by the Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government - about the need to preserve the legislative and political boundaries between reserved and devolved matters - by emphasising that the 'National Plan' mooted in the paper was not intended to function, or be perceived, as a central 'UK Statistics Plan' (in the dirigiste sense). It would, instead, be a plan for statistics in the UK (in a collective and co-operative sense). The Plan would provide a high-level strategic view of what needs to be done, and what needs to be undone, in order to meet government and other users' needs.

Developing a narrative description of the UK statistical system

8. The Committee was invited, and agreed, to initiate one of its first commissions - asking each of the 11 Theme Groups set up under the planning framework described above to deliver to the National Statistician a narrative description of all the 'official statistics' which come within their purview. The aim would be to provide the Authority with a better understanding of how the UK statistical system works and what it delivers.

Use of Administrative and Management Data

9. The Committee discussed the implications of the recent furore which had accompanied Number 10's selective release of statistics on knife crime. The committee felt that the basic issue raised by this incident - the need to balance the government's legitimate need for early access to management information for policy and operational purposes with statistician's professional obligation to preserve the integrity of any official statistics derived from that information - should be thoroughly aired within Government. Without such a constructive dialogue, there was a danger that a wedge would be driven between administrators and statisticians to the overall detriment of good government.
10. Members were advised that a GSS Task Force was, coincidentally and fortuitously, drafting guidance on this very issue to accompany the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice and clarify its application to administrative/management information.
11. Committee members thought it would also be useful if the Chair of the Authority, Sir Michael Scholar, wrote to the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell, reiterating the issues raised by this incident, and the Authority's concerns, with a view to preventing a recurrence. They also felt that the National Statistician should follow up such a letter by writing in a similar vein to all her Permanent Secretary colleagues.

Any Other Business

12. Members stressed the importance of developing the Committee's profile and ensuring that its messages were regularly cascaded across the GSS. This would require the Secretariat to develop a Communication Plan for the Committee's consideration.

Governance Chart for the UK Statistical System

UK PARLIAMENT

**Devolved
Parliaments and
Assemblies**

Board of the UK Statistics
Authority

Other Board
Committees

Audit Committee

Remuneration
Committee

**Committee on
Official Statistics**

**ONS Board
(Committee covering
ONS)**

**Heads of
Profession
Group**
*Chair: National
Statistician*

**Inter
Administration
Committee**
*Chair: National
Statistician*

**UK Statistics Strategy
and Planning
Committee**
*Chair: National
Statistician*

**ONS Executive
Committee**
*Chair: National
Statistician as ONS CEO*

4 Nations Group

**Departmental Suppliers
and Users Group**

**Cross-Government
Function Groups**

Planning Groups

**ONS Sub-Committees/
Functions**

- **GSS Human Resources Committee**
- **GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee** (+ Sub-Committee on Data Sharing and Confidentiality)
- **GSS Reporting, Presentation and Dissemination Committee** (+ Sub-Committee on Web Delivery)
- **GSS International Committee**
- **GSS Regional and Geography Committee**
- **GSS Methodology Advisory Committee**

UKSA Committees/Sub-Committees (top):	
Cross-Government Committees: (bottom left)	
ONS-only Committees (bottom right):	