

UK Statistics Authority Business Plan 2011

Contents:

Section A: Role and Purpose

Section B: Aims and Objectives

Section C: Business Priorities

Section D: Other Data

Section A: Role and Purpose

1. The UK Statistics Authority is the Non-ministerial Department that has the statutory objective of 'promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good' (*Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, Section 7 (1)*).
2. The Authority was established under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* (referred to in the Act as the "Statistics Board") as an independent statutory body and on 1 April, 2008 formally assumed its powers under the Act.
3. The Authority has two principal statutory functions:
 - independent scrutiny of all official statistics produced in the UK, through monitoring and assessment against a Code of Practice for Official Statistics; and,
 - governance of its Executive Office, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) - the UK's National Statistical Institute and largest producer of official statistics.
4. The Authority is required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and ensure good practice in relation to official statistics. It is responsible for producing and maintaining a *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and for taking action when there are infringements of the Code.
5. It is also responsible for devising and conducting a programme of assessments to determine which official statistics may be accredited as National Statistics and to publish lists of those statistics each year. It is the Authority's duty to report any concerns it may have about the quality of official statistics to Parliament or to the devolved legislatures.
6. The Authority covers official statistics produced throughout the UK. It reports to the UK Parliament and to the devolved legislatures on the exercise of its functions. The *2007 Act* sets out how the Authority will produce a report to Parliament and the devolved legislatures on what it has found during the year and what it intends to do during the next financial year.

Section B: Aims and Objectives

1. The Authority's statutory task of 'promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good' is set in broad terms. The role of the Authority is to ensure that official statistics are produced and used for the public good, not necessarily for the benefit of government alone.
2. The UK Statistics Authority aims to ensure that:
 - the right range of statistics are produced;
 - high and consistent professional standards are maintained; and,
 - official statistics are well explained, including strengths and weaknesses - leading to better decision-making in the public interest.

By so doing, the Authority aims to enhance trust in the statistical system, in terms of quality, political independence and impartiality.

UK Statistics Authority Business Plan 2011

3. In order to achieve these aims the Authority's strategic objectives, or tasks, are to:
 - support the National Statistician in improving statistical planning (decisions on what statistics will be produced and in what form) taking systematic account of user needs;
 - use its scrutiny powers to ensure high and consistent professional standards across all producers of official statistics;
 - work with the statistical service to help improve communication of statistics and related advice to users; and,
 - build confidence in the statistical service, and in the Authority, among those people who use official statistics.
4. The UK Statistics Authority has four principal mechanisms by which to achieve its objectives:
 - systematically assessing compliance of official statistics with the Code of Practice, and investigating and reporting independently on major issues;
 - direct responsibility for the governance of the Office for National Statistics (ONS);
 - working with the statistical service to design and implement improved procedures where the need for this is identified; and
 - reporting to Parliament and advising government about any aspects of the statistical service, or the use of official statistics, about which the Authority has concerns.
5. These mechanisms relate to three different, but overlapping spheres of the official statistics system:
 - the Authority's scrutiny and oversight function;
 - the National Statistician's leadership of the Government Statistical Service (GSS); and
 - the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
6. The budget for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) accounts for over 97 per cent of the Authority's total resource allocation. The budget for the Authority Board, Secretariat and the Monitoring And Assessment function for 2011/12 is £3.3 million. Further information about Departmental Expenditure is contained in the ONS Business Plan.
7. Business priorities and outcomes for each of the Authority's s four strategic objectives are set out at **Section C** overleaf.

UK Statistics Authority Business Plan 2011

Section C: Business Priorities

Strategic Objectives	Business Priorities	Activities
<p>1. To support the National Statistician in improving statistical planning (decisions on what statistics will be produced and in what form) taking systematic account of user needs.</p>	<p>1.1 To promote the integrity and coherence of the system of official statistics.</p>	<p>Through the Committee for Official Statistics, to monitor the coverage, comprehensiveness, quality and availability of official statistics.</p>
	<p>1.2 To ensure the Authority has knowledge of the extent and scope of official statistics and what is being produced.</p>	<p>Maintain and publish annually a list of National Statistics and review draft Statistics Orders.</p>
	<p>1.3 To discharge its top level responsibilities in respect of the governance of its executive office, the Office for National Statistics (ONS).</p>	<p>Through the ONS Board, to agree and monitor the ONS work programme and budget, and ensure that ONS meets its objectives and targets.</p>
<p>2. To use its scrutiny powers to systematically assess compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.</p>	<p>2.1 To produce and maintain a Code of Practice for Official Statistics and to consult on its on-going development.</p>	<p>Keep the Code of Practice under review and promote its observance.</p>
	<p>2.2 To enhance compliance with the Code of Practice.</p>	<p>Produce and follow up Assessment Reports and advise on its interpretation.</p>
	<p>2.3 To respond to issues of public concern by producing reporting publicly and by intervening when misuse of statistics occurs.</p>	<p>Produce Monitoring Briefs; Monitoring Reports and interventions (including letters from the Chair or National Statistician).</p>

UK Statistics Authority Business Plan 2011

Strategic Objectives	Business Priorities	Activities
3. To work with the statistical service to design and implement improved procedures, where the need is identified, and help to improve communication of statistics.	3.1 To work with the National Statistician to improve the accessibility, understanding and availability of statistics.	Pursue findings and recommendations from Monitoring and Assessment Reports
	3.2 To promote Authority policies with producers, users and government, and persuade and deliver measurable results.	Produce and publish statements, reports, correspondence; hold events and maintain communication activities.
4. To build confidence in the statistical service, and in the Authority, among people who use official statistics.	4.1 To demonstrate effective governance and deliver value for money by the optimum use of the Authority's available resources.	Annual Report and Accounts
	4.2 To demonstrate independence and provide effective and transparent accountability to Parliament, the devolved legislatures and the public.	Publishing good quality reports and appropriate correspondence
	4.3 To maintain high standards across the service to promote confidence among users.	Monitoring and Assessment of on topics of matters of public concern.

Section D: Other Data

1. A range of other data on our structure - including our organisation chart - can be located at <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/what-we-do/index.html>

2. Further information can also be found on our website at <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>