

Statement

27 February 2009

Terms of Reference for a Pause and Review exercise

The Authority's Monitoring and Assessment (M&A) Team will evaluate its assessment programme on an ongoing basis. The process of review will be particularly important in the early stages of the assessment programme. This note describes the outline arrangements the M&A Team proposes to put in place to evaluate its procedures.

A formal pause and review will take place over the summer, after we have completed the initial tranche of assessments (due to take place between February and June 2009). In addition, as we progress through the initial assessments, we will keep procedures under continual review and make improvements as soon as we can.

We expect the review to focus on the following areas:

1. The process of assessment, including the burden imposed (on producers, users, and the M&A Team), and the sequencing of activities.
2. The collection of written evidence from producers and users - whether we might streamline this.
3. The usefulness of the supporting documentation that we ask producers to provide.
4. How readily we were able to make recommendations about designation as National Statistics.
5. The National Statistician's guidance to producers of statistics.
6. The scope for bundling related sets of statistics, for future rounds of assessment.
7. The maintenance of common standards across the M&A Team.
8. Whether any existing statements of practice in the Code need to be rephrased, or new practices required.
9. Whether common themes are emerging from these first assessments that might be addressed more systematically.

In order to facilitate the formal pause and review we will:

- keep our own records about the effectiveness of the process. This will include notes of what issues arose, what the impact was, and what we could do better in future
- inform producers at the start of the process that we will be holding a formal pause and review. We will ask them to provide feedback on the process so that we can conduct an informed evaluation over the summer. We may meet formally with producers to discuss how the assessments went, perhaps as part of the meeting at which we discuss the draft report, or separately if preferable. We will consider whether to hold a focus group with a range of those producers who have been assessed, in order to generate some discussion about what was helpful/unhelpful and how we can make the process more effective
- record how much time we spend on the various activities involved in the process (eg analysing written evidence, preparing to meet producers, conducting face-to-face interviews with producers, writing reports and so on) so that we have better information on which to base future plans

- ask producers to record how much time the assessment took them, perhaps with a broad breakdown into 'written evidence', 'oral evidence', 'other'
- ask users how they felt that their views were represented in the assessment process and in reports.