

Statement

8 April 2011

Reductions in Government statistical functions

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* requires the UK Statistics Authority to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good, and to monitor and report on any concerns relating to quality, good practice or comprehensiveness.

The Cabinet Office has stated that it is for each department to decide how they manage their statistical budgets and that it is for the statisticians working within departments to advise on statistical priorities. There is thus no government requirement for departments and agencies to seek the views of the Statistics Authority as they consider whether or where to make reductions in expenditure on statistics.

The Authority recognises the severe pressures on departmental budgets at the present time. Its view is that statistical budgets have to be subject to the same level of scrutiny as other departmental activities. However, part of that scrutiny must be careful consideration of the effect of any cuts on those organisations and individuals who depend on official statistics to inform their decisions and actions. This must include consideration of the possible effect on the production, publication and uses of statistics of national importance in other departments.

The National Statistician has put in place arrangements designed to ensure that the Authority is informed of departmental decisions and consultations that affect statistical services. We will draw the Government's attention to any substantial impact there may be for the users of statistics, including Parliament, the commercial sector and the public. We will also prepare and publish periodic reports on the overall effect of reductions in statistical work and the implications for the professional statistical capacity of government in both the short and longer term.

The Authority will identify and investigate any changes to departmental statistical work programmes where there are questions about whether user needs have been fully considered; where adequate consultation may not have been carried out; where the effects on other departments or other statistical series may not have been taken into account; or on the rationale underpinning the proposals more generally. Our findings will be published in a series of Statistical Expenditure Reports.¹ Today the Authority has published the first of these reports on the Department for Communities and Local Government's Citizenship Survey.

Where sufficient information is available to us, we will aim to express any emerging concerns as soon as possible, rather than wait until decisions have been taken and may be more difficult to re-open.

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/statistical-expenditure-reports/index.html>