
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Andrew Dilnot CBE

Rt. Hon. Francis Maude MP
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31 August 2012

Dear Mr Maude

**REPORT ON THE PROGRAMME OF STATUTORY ASSESSMENT OF UK OFFICIAL
STATISTICS 2009 - 2012**

The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 requires that all sets of official statistics bearing the National Statistics designation be assessed independently against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This programme of work, under the management of the statutory Head of Assessment, began as soon as we had introduced a revised version of the Code in January 2009. As there were well in excess of 1,000 sets of statistics liable for assessment, produced by over 40 government departments and agencies, this was a major challenge for us.

I am writing to inform you that the first full programme of assessments, published as some 240 individual reports over a period of just over three years, is now complete and we have prepared the enclosed overview report on what was done, what we learned about the state of UK official statistics and the value of the assessment process, and what we plan to do in the future.

The report has also been submitted as part of our evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee in the context of its current inquiry in to the implementation of the 2007 Act and the work of the Statistics Authority. As I note in the Foreword, this cycle of assessments has proved to be the most comprehensive audit of official statistics ever undertaken in the UK; and quite possibly in any country.

It has set the statistical service in all four UK administrations on a path of continuous improvement and development, with a special focus on helping the user of statistics to find, understand and get the most out of the great wealth of information that is official statistics.

I am copying this letter to the Ministers with responsibility for official statistics in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; to Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee; to Lord Lipsey, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group

on Statistics; to Professor Valerie Isham, President of the Royal Statistical Society; and to Jil Matheson, the National Statistician.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a distinct 'D'.

Andrew Dilnot CBE



**UK Statistics
Authority**

Monitoring Report

**The Assessment of UK Official
Statistics 2009-2012**

August 2012

Monitoring Report

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
THE ASSESSMENT OF UK OFFICIAL STATISTICS, 2009-2012**

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FOREWORD

Under legislation that came in to force in 2008, the Statistics Authority is required to determine whether the statistical Code of Practice is being observed in relation to the more important official statistics; many hundreds of sets of them produced by dozens of organisations. The legislation said little about how this assessment was to be done but gave the Authority the power to include in a revised Code whatever it deemed appropriate, subject to certain specific exceptions and to appropriate consultation. Compliance with the Code became a binding duty on the bodies that produce the statistics.

The Code introduced in January 2009 contains some 74 specific requirements. It is a tough Code designed to prompt improvement rather than simply accept the standards already being achieved when it was introduced. It is a measure of how challenging it is that the assessment process has so far generated well over one thousand recommendations to improve compliance.

A conservative estimate put the number of major sets of statistics waiting to be reviewed at the start of 2009 at some 1200, and of course they had *each* to be reviewed against the 74 elements of the Code. This was a huge and complex task; the more so as all the findings were to be systematically published. It was, in effect, to be the most comprehensive audit of official statistics ever undertaken in the UK; and quite possibly in any country.

This report is about how the reviews were done; what was found; what we did in response; and what we are planning to do in the future. This work has set the statistical service in all four administrations of the UK, and the Statistics Authority itself, on a path of continuous improvement and development, with a special focus on helping the user of statistics to find, understand and get the most out of the great wealth of information that is official statistics.

I and my colleagues in the Statistics Authority take real pride in announcing the completion of the first full cycle of these reviews. We now have a portfolio of some 240 published reports, each typically covering several sets of official statistics. These reports – individually quite short and straightforward – build together into a rich and detailed review. This is a resource on which the Statistics Authority will draw for many years to come to advise Parliament and the public about the profoundly important work of government statisticians.

So many people made important contributions that it may seem inappropriate to single out one individual. However, all the members of the Authority Board would wish me to pay tribute to Professor Sir Roger Jowell, who, until his untimely death at the end of 2011, was the inspirational Deputy Chair of the Authority with responsibility for assessment. Other people who did so much to make it a success can take satisfaction in knowing that their efforts will stand for a long time as the definitive professional audit of a country's statistical infrastructure.



ANDREW DILNOT
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority

SUMMARY

1. This report is an account of the work carried out by the UK Statistics Authority between 2009 and 2012 to assess the compliance of every set of UK National Statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The report is intended as a formal record of what was done; a considered reflection on a unique programme of work; a set of proposals about the future; and a contribution to international discussion about statistical codes and their enforcement.
2. Official statistics are those produced by government departments and agencies, including those which are the responsibility of the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A characteristic that distinguishes the UK statistical system from its counterparts in most other countries around the world is the degree to which it developed as a decentralised system, with responsibility for the production of official statistics spread widely across government bodies. **Part 1** of this report explains the importance of this history and structure to the legislative framework and, within that, to the Code of Practice and the Assessment process. Some 40 organisations currently produce statistics under the banner of 'National Statistics'. **Annex 1** contains a description of this decentralised statistical system.
3. Some 240 individual assessment reports, covering more than one thousand distinct sets of official statistics, were produced under the programme. These have all been written, and all will have been published, in both printed and electronic form, by the end of 2012. Some work remains to follow up the formal recommendations of these reports but, at the time of writing, the first full cycle of assessment work is substantially complete. This report outlines the background, the processes followed, the themes to emerge from the reports and the conclusions of the Statistics Authority on what should be done in future to build on this foundation. In doing so it updates the statements by Sir Michael Scholar (then chair of the Authority) and Richard Alldritt (Head of Assessment) published in the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts for each of the four years 2008-09 to 2011-12.
4. **Part 2** of the report summarises the finding of the assessment programme. **Annex 2** offers a more detailed explanation of the assessment process and identifies the stages in its evolution between 2009 and 2012. **Annex 3** draws together illustrative examples of good practice identified in the course of assessment. **Annex 4** expands on some of the more problematic matters of interpretation associated with Code compliance. **Annex 5** lists all the assessment reports.
5. Whilst the primary task in the first full programme of assessment was to review all the official statistics currently badged as National Statistics, the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*¹ also made provision for steps to be taken to identify further sets of official statistics that should be drawn in to the assessment process with a view to designating them as National Statistics once their compliance with the Code of Practice had been established. In the event, a substantial number of series were added to the pool of National Statistics in this way and this process is expected to continue.
6. The meaning associated with the 'National Statistics' badge was changed by the 2007 Act. Prior to that it had no formal definition but signified, in a broad sense, that a set of official statistics was of national importance – though not necessarily of national coverage. There were no specific tests that needed to be passed to be

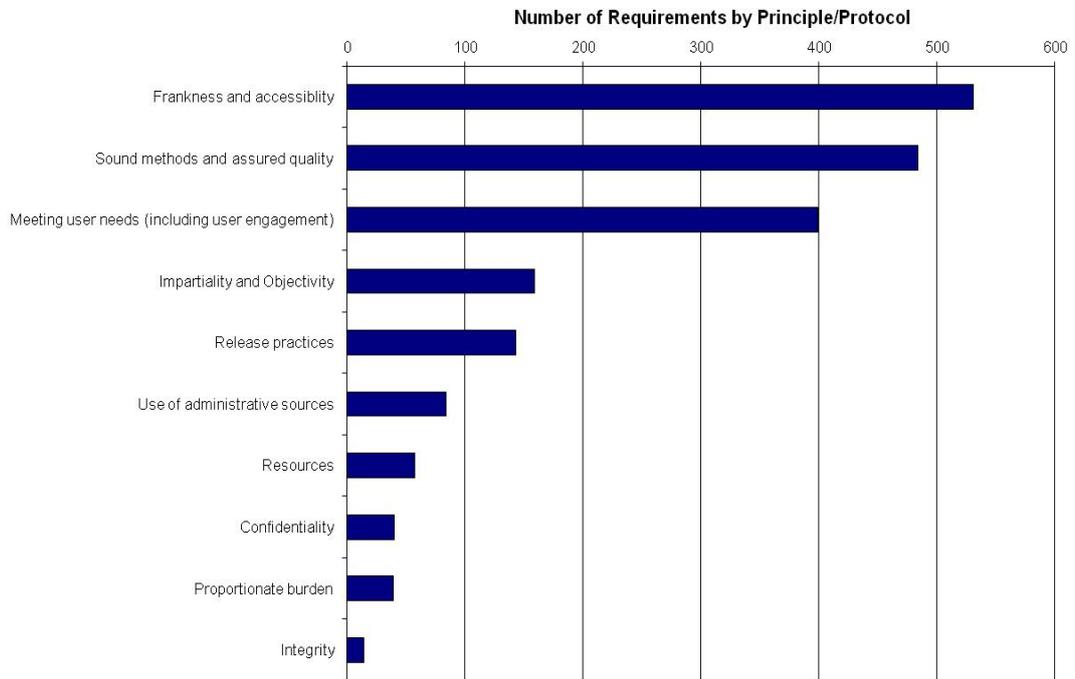
¹ <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/post-legislative-scrutiny-statistics-and-registration-service-act-2007-cm-8216>

included, but once National Statistics status had been agreed, the body producing the statistics was expected to observe the (now superseded) National Statistics Code of Practice.

7. Under the 2007 Act, a more specific meaning was introduced. Whilst sets of statistics already badged as National Statistics continued to have that designation on an interim basis, compliance with the new Code of Practice for Official Statistics became mandatory (a statutory duty) and subject to formal assessment by the Authority. The current meaning of the 'National Statistics' logo on statistical series and publications is that these official statistics have been formally assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as being produced in accordance with the Code. It no longer implies 'national importance' although most of the series included would be likely to qualify as such if a test were defined.
8. Under the legislation, a formal assessment must lead either to confirmed designation as National Statistics or to the removal of that designation. Whilst in a very small number of cases it was found necessary to remove the designation at the first review, the approach that the Authority usually adopted was to identify the need for improvements – leading to formal 'requirements' in assessment reports – and to state a period of months within which those improvements were to be made. Written confirmation that these improvements had been completed also had to be submitted to the Authority within that timescale. In the interim, the producer body was permitted to continue to use the National Statistics label. This avoided a multitude of announcements about de-designation and re-designation which could have led to confusion and loss of credibility; it also served to maximise the practical influence of the assessment process.
9. In the event, few assessment reports awarded a completely clean bill of health to the statistics being reviewed, and many required several changes to current practice. At the same time, perhaps the most telling findings were that in the vast majority of cases, and once the requirements had been addressed, the statistics were being produced as well as they reasonably could be, bearing in mind the sources of data and resources available. It was also evident that the professional culture of the statistical service, supported by the Code of Practice, was effective in preventing inappropriate interference in the production or publication of statistics.
10. Thus, viewed in the round, the assessment process has consistently demonstrated that the UK statistical service has many strengths. In most cases, the statistics are presented impartially and objectively, in environments characterised by integrity and professionalism; the methods used are appropriate; confidentiality is protected; burdens on data suppliers are contained; and resources are used sensibly. There is much to celebrate and much in which the user of statistics can have confidence.
11. However, it is also fair to conclude from the assessment reports that the statistical service has been substantially shaped by the requirements of central government rather than a balanced appraisal of all the ways that statistics can contribute to society. Developing a statistical service that maximises the public benefit more generally – including supporting the use of statistics by public service providers, business, the voluntary sector, the media, researchers and the general public – continues to require substantial and sustained work. The Statistics Authority has concluded that the key to maximising the good that the statistics can do is a better understanding and explanation of the use that can be made of them, coupled with clear communication of their strengths and limitations in relation to those uses.

12. The following chart shows the distribution of formal requirements in the assessment reports against each of the main principles of the Code of Practice.

Chart 1: Number of Requirements by Principle/Protocol



13. The chart indicates that whilst requirements were made in relation to each of the main principles of the Code, they tended to be concentrated in those areas in which the new Code was seen to push forward the current norms: the need to improve the commentary that accompanies the release of statistics; to improve the information that is provided about the quality and reliability of statistics in relation to their uses (the heading in the chart ‘sound methods and assured quality’ largely relates to requirements to publish information on these things rather than to more substantive weaknesses); and to improve user engagement.
14. Many specific ‘suggestions’ which were also made in assessment reports are not included in the chart. These related to matters which were beyond the provisions of the Code of Practice but which were identified by the assessment team in the course of the reviews. For example, a suggestion might be to explore the scope to work more closely with another producer body. There is no formal obligation on the producer bodies to act on the suggestions made but the Statistics Authority will periodically review and report on their implementation.
15. Whilst the requirements and suggestions relate to areas that the statistical service needs to tackle, assessment reports also highlighted many examples of good practice (see **Annex 3**), and we have encouraged all parts of the service to review and build on these.
16. We did not identify any individual statistical producer bodies that were particularly out of step with the majority. This is an important finding given the decentralised and devolved nature of the service (see **Annex 1**). Whilst some producer bodies did do better than others in terms of Code compliance, the strengths and weaknesses of the statistical system were widely shared.

17. One common pattern we found was a degree of inhibition among those who write the commentary in statistical releases (which are in effect statistical press notices) that accompanies the publication of official statistics. Government statisticians are acutely aware of the political implications of their work and are concerned to maintain a hard-won reputation for impartiality. The pressure from the Authority and others to include in statistical releases advice about the main messages from the statistics, and advice about the uses of the statistics and their strengths and limitations, may seem to some statisticians to risk exposing them to the charge of making politically loaded comment. However, saying nothing about the strengths and limitations of the statistics is not necessarily politically neutral either; it may also lead to misinterpretation by the news media and users. The Code of Practice thus takes a clear line that strengths and limitations of the statistics must always be explained clearly.
18. Finding a way through these difficult waters that both helps the user to understand and use the statistics whilst at the same time not leading statisticians in to partial or political comment, poses a major challenge to statisticians in producer organisations, and will be one of the main themes for future assessment work. The Authority welcomes the statistical service's evident commitment to this agenda. There is much still to be done but it must be seen as helping a good service become a better one, and one that does the maximum amount of good for society.
19. In November 2011, the Cabinet Office published a memorandum to the Public Administration Select Committee on the *Post-legislative scrutiny of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*. It made no reference to the Authority's May 2011 report, *The impact of the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Function*², but did include a summary of responses, mostly from government departments, to its own consultation exercise. The summary reported that "Nearly two-thirds felt that the new system did not represent value for money compared with the previous system, mainly because producers felt that the assessment of National Statistics was resource intensive". It went on however to say that "it was recognised that in general assessments have helped to improve quality and particularly integrity".
20. The Statistics Authority's response to the question of the perceived burden of assessment on government departments is that most of it is associated with complying with the Code of Practice itself, not the process of assessment. Compliance with the Code clearly involves some work and costs where standards need to be raised. But it also confers real benefits on both the user of statistics and the producer. It assures the user that high standards have been observed and it gives the producer organisation added credibility and authority. The Cabinet Office memorandum says little about balancing the costs of Code compliance with the benefits. **Part 3** of the report looks at the value of the assessment process more generally.
21. Looking to the future (**Part 4** of the report), our planning starts from the perspective that the Authority should take a more explicitly risk-based approach and that we should:
 - Re-assess some sets of National Statistics against the Code of Practice in much the same way as in the first programme (particularly those that are the most high profile and likely to be seen as important to users).

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-3-2011---the-impact-of-the-authority-s-monitoring-and-assessment-function.pdf>

- Re-assess other sets only in relation to those practices of the Code where we made a 'requirement' in the first round of assessment (in effect these would be follow-up reports).
 - Assess all the statistical work of some producer bodies in a single report (most suitable where the producer body is responsible for a relatively homogeneous range of statistics).
 - Focus some reports on aspects of the statistical work that are considered to have changed since the first assessment (for example, the content of publications may have changed).
 - Focus others on assessing compliance with specific parts of the Code – either for a specific set of statistics or across a wide range of statistics (for example, we might look in one report at a specific practice, such as protecting confidentiality, across the whole of the statistical service).
 - Introduce a measure of 'self-assessment' that would allow the relevant Head of Profession for Statistics to offer public reassurance about Code compliance, in relation to some parts of the Code (discussed further in **Part 4**).
22. The different strands of work will be brought together in a regularly updated forward programme of reviews that will be available on the Authority's website. This forward programme will be open to amendment at any time as the need arises.
23. In setting priorities for this programme, the Statistics Authority will welcome, and pay close attention to, dialogue with the Public Administration Select Committee, other select committees, government departments, the Royal Statistical Society, statistical user groups, and individual experts in many fields of statistics.

PART 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Background

- 1.1 The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, under which the Statistics Authority was established, was the first comprehensive statistical legislation in the United Kingdom. Whilst many countries around the world had introduced legislation governing the production of official statistics in the first part of the 20th Century or earlier, the UK did not follow their example. Part of the reason for this was that statistical work in the UK was widely distributed among government departments and it was evident that it would be difficult to craft legislation that would not infringe the accepted forms of Ministerial accountability for all the work of each Whitehall department.
- 1.2 In June 2000 the government published the 'Framework for National Statistics'³, which aimed to enhance public trust and confidence in official statistics. The Framework introduced a number of new features including:
 - a. The "National Statistics Code of Practice" - which was associated with a 'brand' used by the Office for National Statistics and selectively by other bodies called 'National Statistics' (although the nature of the association was never entirely clear).
 - b. The Statistics Commission – established to 'help ensure that official statistics are trustworthy and responsive to public needs', to 'give independent, reliable and relevant advice' and by so doing to 'provide an additional safeguard on the quality and integrity' of official statistics.
- 1.3 In 2004 the Statistics Commission produced a report⁴ setting out some possible legislative models which prompted fresh thinking on the practicalities.
- 1.4 In November 2005 the Government announced that it intended to introduce comprehensive legislation relating to the governance of official statistics. In the period that followed, there was considerable debate in government, in Parliament and among the statistical community more generally, about what form the legislation should take. It was not simply a matter of establishing a central body on a new statutory footing. Whilst the Office for National Statistics was well established as the largest and central statistical office, it was estimated at the time that it accounted for less than a quarter of the production of UK official statistics. The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had been given substantial practical autonomy in relation to their own statistical work and there were many government bodies that were producing and publishing at least a few series of official statistics of their own, with perhaps 40 of those producing statistics badged as National Statistics.
- 1.5 Parliament wanted legislation that would cover all official statistics and provide public reassurance that they were being produced to high professional standards, including independence from any partisan influences. As part of this it wanted to be

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/history/key-documents-about-the-uk-system/the-office-for-national-statistics-framework.pdf>

⁴ Report 18: *Legislation to build trust in statistics (May 2004)* <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/archive/statistics-commission-archive/research/report-18--legislation-to-build-trust-in-statistics--may-2004-.pdf>

sure that any weaknesses that did exist would be reported to Parliament and addressed.

- 1.6 The legislative model that emerged built on some of the changes introduced in 2000. The non-statutory Statistics Commission was abolished, and a new statutory body, the Statistics Board (now called the Statistics Authority), was created, with two primary functions. One was to monitor and report to Parliament on all official statistics work in government, including the work of ONS. In this context, the Board was required to create a new Code of Practice for Official Statistics and was given the power to assess all those statistics labelled as National Statistics against the Code and to confirm or remove the National Statistics designation.
- 1.7 The other main function was to fulfil the role that had previously fallen to government ministers in relation to ONS as a government department, essentially to become the top-level body accountable to Parliament for the work of ONS. However, to make this complex model viable in legal terms, it was necessary to treat all the parts – the Board itself, the staff responsible for monitoring and reporting on official statistics, and the 3,500 staff of ONS – as being within a single statutory body, a ‘non-ministerial department’, which would also be called the Statistics Board (now Statistics Authority).
- 1.8 This was recognised from the start as a complex structure which would require some internal separation of functions to be viable and credible. The legislation made provision for that and established three formal individual roles. The first is the Chair of the Statistics Authority who has overall responsibility. The second is the National Statistician who is a Permanent Secretary within the Civil Service and has responsibilities for both ONS and for professional advice on all statistical work in government. And the third is the Head of Assessment who is appointed by the non-executive members of the Board and advises the Board independently on compliance with the Code of Practice and related matters.
- 1.9 The legislation specified that, as of the time it came in to force, all official statistics that were being published as National Statistics were to be subject to formal assessment against a revised Code of Practice - but it did not specify either the detail of that process or the content of the Code⁵. On its creation in April 2008, the Statistics Authority needed to ensure both that the revised Code was appropriate to the many sets of National Statistics that already existed and that the process of assessment – which was completely new – would be effective, practicable and sufficiently quick that all those different sets of National Statistics could be reviewed within a period of a few years.
- 1.10 The revised Code of Practice for Official Statistics was published in January 2009 following extensive consultation⁶. The Code owed much to the earlier National Statistics Code of Practice but also to the then recently published European Statistics Code of Practice⁷. Those Codes in turn built on other national and international models including the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The differences between these various statistical codes tend to be in scope, style and detail rather than in principle. There is a large measure of consensus internationally about the principles of good statistical practice.

⁵ Though see paragraph 1.13

⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/report-2.pdf>

⁷ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/code_of_practice

- 1.11 There were several reasons why a new expression of the Code was required following the creation of the Authority. The former National Statistics Code had grown in detail and complexity until it filled some 14 slim volumes. For the new statutory assessment process to be practicable, the revised Code needed to be written in a concise and imperative style that would clarify the standards expected of producer bodies and support those carrying out the assessments. Broad expressions of aspiration – common in statistical Codes internationally - are not a good basis for assessment. In the event, the 2009 Code was written as some 74 specific requirements aimed at the bodies that produce official statistics, against which compliance could be determined by a central team. Under the legislation, compliance with the Code is a statutory duty on organisations that produce sets of National Statistics.
- 1.12 The new Code was a lot shorter but no less comprehensive than those that went before it. It was not a Code for individual statisticians but rather for the government organisations that produced the statistics, regardless of how many professional statisticians they employed. So it could include requirements such as 'Ensure that the relevant statistical Head of Profession has sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases'. It was, and remains, as much a Code for those who employ statisticians as for statisticians themselves.
- 1.13 However, one exception to the comprehensive nature of the Code was enforced by the 2007 legislation. It specifically prevented the Code from addressing the controversial issue of access to official statistics by Ministers and officials prior to their publication. This is instead governed by Orders made by Ministers in the four UK administrations. The Authority's position on this aspect of statistical practice was set out in a report *Pre-release access to official statistics: a review of the statutory arrangements* in March 2010. That report recommended that all four of the UK administrations should amend the relevant Orders under the 2007 Act to adopt a maximum period of 3 hours with a shorter period as the norm. This recommendation was subsequently rejected by all four administrations but remains the advice of the Authority.
- 1.14 In drafting any Code of Practice, a decision must be made as to whether it is to endorse current practice or to be used as a tool to change current practice for the better. In some important respects the new Code was pitched at the top end of current good practice. For example, it placed a number of new requirements on the form and content of statistical publications. Three in particular were seen to push forward the prevailing norms. The Code requires producers of statistics to:
- Investigate and document the needs of users of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decisions they inform.
 - Provide information on the quality and reliability of statistics in relation to the range of potential uses...
 - Prepare and disseminate commentary and analysis that aid interpretation, and provide factual information about the policy or operational context of official statistics...
- 1.15 Such expectations were seen as new and potentially onerous by some and, in practice, there was some resistance to them. One after another of the early assessment reports found that there was little documentation on the use made of

the statistics, only sparse attempts to link the quality and reliability of the statistics to the range of potential uses, and a patchy approach to offering factual information about the policy or operational context in which the statistics would be used.

- 1.16 The assessment reports consequently required producer bodies to take certain specified steps within a specified timescale – usually a few months – to address these and a wide range of other matters needing attention. Meeting these formal requirements was a precondition for continued use of the National Statistics designation. To their credit, every organisation responsible for the production of the statistics (around 40 different bodies in total) undertook to fulfil these requirements and, whilst this process is ongoing, most have managed to do so well enough for the designation to be confirmed.
- 1.17 It may be helpful here to give some examples of the form that ‘requirements’ commonly take:
- “Take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of the statistics, publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the beneficial use of the statistics.”
 - “Improve the commentary in [name of publication] so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics.”
 - “Improve the published information about the quality of the statistics on [subject].”
 - “Communicate clearly in advance any planned changes to methods and classifications, and explain the nature and extent of revisions when revised statistics are released.”

As well as these common forms which occur in many assessment reports, there are also more specific requirements related to particular series, such as:

- “Provide estimates of the undercounting of children educated outwith school, investigate options for producing consistent historical time series...” (from Report 50)
- “Publish more information about the ‘capping’ of incidents reported in the British Crime Survey” (from Report 102)

Part 2 of this report presents our findings from the first full cycle of assessment on the areas that are in most need of improvement.

Context

- 1.18 Producing official statistics is not, as some might suggest, analogous to keeping score at a cricket match. Often what Parliament, Government and the public want to know about (crime, health, poverty, the quality of school teaching, changes in the cost of living etc) is difficult either to define or measure consistently. So government statisticians often have to work with whatever is available or can readily be collected, rather than what they would ideally like to have. Increasingly the first recourse is to the administrative data which are a by-product of running public services – police records, NHS records, benefits paid and so on. And if that covers only part of the story then statisticians carry out sample surveys of

businesses and individuals to give a fuller picture. But often neither the administrative data nor the sample surveys are exactly what one would want. Designing statistical work to get as close as possible to answering the important questions in a consistent way is a complex business. In the case of the National Accounts for example, there are some 1,000 pages of rules agreed under United Nations auspices and further very detailed frameworks laid down by the European Union.

- 1.19 The task of managing the statistical material once collected is also complex and requires professional skills. There are often gaps in the data that need to be filled by imputation; there are uncertainties associated with samples that need to be estimated; there are problems with people and organisations not understanding the questions they are asked; and there can be a degree of gaming or manipulation where statistics are used to measure the performance of organisations. And statistical techniques have to be employed in some cases to make sure that confidential personal data cannot be deduced by putting multiple layers of statistical information together. There is thus a lot of work, mostly invisible to external observers, that can be done well, or less well.
- 1.20 Once the statistics have been collected, checked and prepared in a suitable form, there are challenges about how best to publish them and make them useful to the users of statistics. By 'users' we mean organisations and individuals whose decisions and actions can be enhanced by knowledge of the statistical information, to the benefit of society. In practice, the quality of presentation and communication of official statistics is variable and often not given priority or a large share of the total resources. Production timetables can be very strict, allowing little time to retrieve the situation if things start to go wrong. Some of the most important official statistics are issued monthly which can mean that information which is not available on time must be estimated. Again, there is a lot that needs to be done well, and a lot that can be done less well.
- 1.21 So when an assessor approaches a statistical team responsible for a particular suite of statistics, there will often be lots of problems of which the statisticians are already aware; and there will be projects already running to address those problems. It will not normally be a steady state, waiting on external review. At least some of the processes of putting statistics together will be evolving and adapting at any one time and it is always 'the wrong time to be carrying out a review'. That is how it feels to the statistical team and sometimes how it feels to the assessment team.
- 1.22 So the assessment process, which started in earnest in 2009, proved to be a challenge both for the bodies that produced the statistics and for the staff in the Monitoring and Assessment Team of the Authority responsible for undertaking the reviews. Judgements had to be made with one eye on the many technical problems facing the producers of the statistics and the other on whether users of the statistics were getting the figures and advice they needed. Ultimately, as with any service, the needs of the user had to be the main consideration; that philosophy is apparent in the assessment reports.
- 1.23 The decision that statistics should be collected on a topic often, and quite properly, has a political dimension. Any Government has a right to demand the collection of data that will help it monitor and pursue its policy ends. But decisions on how the statistics should be collected and presented must, under the Code, be left to the professional statisticians. The track record here appears to be good. There is a strong ethos amongst government statisticians in all parts of the UK to withstand

any subtle, or not so subtle, pressure to give the release of statistics a gloss that reflects current government policy or views. Occasionally the assessment team found signs that, for example, the 'good news' points in a release seemed to get more prominent billing than 'bad news' points but these things were always quickly corrected, if they were not fully justified by the context. This is an aspect that deserves ongoing monitoring and one that will be central to our future work. The legislation assumes that the assessment programme will continue indefinitely but we expect it to evolve and become more tightly focused on subjects and outputs that seem to present risks or otherwise be most likely to benefit from review. Our future plans are discussed in **Part 4**.

PART 2: FINDINGS

- 2.1 As the assessment programme progressed between 2009 and 2012, the Statistics Authority published⁸ four Monitoring Briefs summarising the emerging findings, including case studies illustrating aspects of good practice and discussing issues⁹ that had been identified as requiring further consideration. Five main areas for improvement were identified:
- i. Understanding and better communicating the use made of the statistics
 - ii. Improving the text that accompanies the release of statistics
 - iii. Improving the documentation of sources and methods
 - iv. Maximising the use of existing administrative data to produce statistics
 - v. Improving comparability between statistics for the four UK administrations

These are considered in turn below.

Understanding and communicating use

- 2.2 Statistics only realise their potential to do good when they are used in ways that benefit society. To achieve this, more systematic engagement with organisations and individuals whose understanding, decisions or actions are informed by official statistics is required. Without a well-developed understanding of *use*, it is difficult for anyone to make judgements about the adequacy or quality of statistics; or indeed whether they should continue to be produced; or perhaps replaced by different series of statistics. The Statistics Authority recognises that the use of official statistics is diffuse, often at several removes from the original data. But the fact that it cannot be comprehensively researched does not lessen the value of finding out as much as possible. And normally all that is needed is a generic understanding of the uses, not detailed information. For example, it may be known that some public health statistics are relevant to some local government planning decisions. That tells the producer body to bear in mind the question of the suitability of the statistics for that kind of use – in particular whether there are issues about geographic consistency that should be flagged up to local government users and others with similar interests.
- 2.3 The assessment process has found that the use of statistics within government departments in relation to developing, monitoring and evaluating policy is generally well understood by those producing the statistics. And users of statistics within central government are well placed – particularly given the decentralised structure of the UK statistical service – to make their needs known and to ensure that they are met.
- 2.4 However, we take the term ‘user’ of statistics to mean any organisation or person whose understanding, decisions or actions are influenced by official statistics. This need not mean that the user directly inspects statistics or performs calculations. It may be more a matter of being influenced by messages derived from the statistics – for example, if crime statistics suggest that thefts of mobile phones are

⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/index.html>

⁹ Such as: ‘experimental statistics’, compendia publications, the introduction of new statistical outputs, and electronic dissemination.

increasingly common, the decision to take steps to prevent such thefts can be seen as a use of the statistics. Such uses matter because they create additional demand for statistical data to be available in particular forms and levels of detail.

- 2.5 In conducting the assessment reviews, we saw evidence that users outside central government – in Parliament, business, local government, academia, and charities, for example – find it more difficult to engage with the statistical service than users inside government; and this may be exacerbated by the decentralised structure of the UK statistical system. In aggregate, the use of official statistics by these external bodies and individuals is of immense public value, could be even more beneficial, and needs to be understood and supported.
- 2.6 Whilst engagement with users outside central government is likely to require more effort and imagination, it is also likely to be repaid in terms of added public value from the statistics. The Authority's recommendations relating to engagement with users can be found in the Monitoring Report, *Strengthening User Engagement*¹⁰. The Authority has also published guidance¹¹ about documenting the use made of statistics; and this will be further developed in 2012.

Improving the text that accompanies the releases of statistics

- 2.7 For official statistics to be understood and used in ways that deliver public benefit, it is important that appropriate written advice is published alongside the figures when they are first released. This text should be seen as the heart of the statistical release, not just an introduction for the less expert user.
- 2.8 The Authority published a *Statement on Standards for Statistical Releases*¹² outlining good practice in relation to commentary, including the following expectations:
- A summary of the main messages – those points that the informed reader would regard as the most interesting and relevant to public debate about the subject of the statistics.
 - Language that is straightforward and widely understood and does not need to be 'translated' by journalists or commentators into more familiar terms. Where technical terms are needed, they should be explained immediately in the text, not just in a footnote.
 - Explanation of the statistics that goes further than simply describing rises and falls. A narrative that brings to life the story the statistics contain, making suitable comparisons – over time, between areas within the country, and internationally. Graphs, tables and maps should be used to illustrate these.
 - Factual information about the policy and administrative context of the statistics; why they are important, to whom, and for what they are likely to be used.

¹⁰ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/strengthening-user-engagement--final-report.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

¹² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-releases.html>

- Information about the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to those uses.
- 2.9 The essence of good commentary lies in statisticians bringing to bear their expertise and knowledge about the subject matter, policy context and history of the statistical series, in explaining in straightforward terms the main messages contained in the statistics. Authors need to communicate why the statistics matter, and how they are likely to be used. They should help users to understand the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to the main uses – for example, the limitations of small sample sizes ought to be explicitly mentioned where appropriate, as ought any changes in context which may affect the interpretation of the statistics.
- 2.10 This topic has attracted more requirements in assessment reports than any other aspect of the Code. Some official statistical outputs lack commentary altogether, but more often it is the limited helpfulness of what is written that needs to be addressed.
- 2.11 The experience of the assessment process suggests that staff writing statistical releases do not always have sufficient knowledge of the subject matter, or the likely use of the statistics, to be able to offer the insights that would help guide users. It is also quite common for authors to tell us that the most important users do not need advice. This is often not the case. The most *expert* users may not need much advice (although that is debateable) but some of the important users – the ones who take big decisions – are likely to be political or administrative institutions which, by their nature, are often far from expert in their understanding of the relevance of the statistics, or their nuances. The experience of assessment suggests that many authors tend to minimise the amount of commentary they include in statistical releases to reduce the risk of saying something that might subsequently be deemed inappropriate by Ministers or external commentators; and perhaps also to save time in the production cycle. But in so doing they risk selling short the value of their own work.
- 2.12 Several of the assessments that have reviewed sets of statistics in the same topic area have commented on the large number of different releases, and the absence of an overview to serve as an introduction to the topic. In some topic areas, the assessment team felt that in spite of the range of outputs, some important and obvious issues were not being discussed. In such cases the Authority often recommended the development of a conceptual framework for the portfolio of products, which could be used to identify and discuss interrelationships within the set of statistics and with other, related, statistics. Many statistical releases relate to one aspect of a wider system or process; viewed in isolation such releases are single pieces in a jigsaw. This is an area for further development.

Improving the documentation of sources and methods

- 2.13 The *Code* requires the publication of supporting documents intended to improve users' understanding of different aspects of the statistics – including details of methods and sources used to produce the statistics, the uses made of the statistics and a statement detailing the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes. Although in many cases such documentation is already available for internal use, this is still an area where *Code* compliance needs to be strengthened.

Maximising the use of existing administrative data

- 2.14 Data from administrative systems (such as those for benefit payments or school records) are used in the production of the majority of official statistics. The use of sample surveys is still important but has been overtaken by the ready availability of computerised administrative records. Such data have some well-documented strengths, compared with data collected from sample surveys, including the potential to produce better quality statistics (or indeed any statistics at all) for small geographic areas, lower burdens on data suppliers, and relatively low production costs.
- 2.15 However, the use of administrative data for producing statistics is not always straightforward:
- Even when appropriate sources have been identified, gaining access to the administrative data can be difficult for legal and bureaucratic reasons; the more so if the administrative systems are held by an organisation other than the one that employs the statisticians.
 - The quality of the data may turn out not to be good enough, at least initially, for use in the production of statistics. Administrative data are simply a by-product of administrative processes and may not exactly match the needs of the statistician. So there are several different aspects to ensuring quality:
 - The underlying concepts and definitions may need to be reviewed.
 - The way in which the administrative systems are operated, or definitions interpreted, may vary across the different organisations involved (e.g. schools or hospitals that create the data in the first place) and this may need to be tightened up.
 - The statisticians also need to be sure that having identified any concerns about definitions or consistency they will have sufficient influence over the management of the system. It is not uncommon for statisticians to know of problems with administrative data but not be in a position to ensure that they are resolved.
 - The statisticians also need to keep abreast of how administrative rules change over time, in order to be able to produce consistent time series or to highlight breaks in time series to inform users.
- 2.16 These issues were explored more fully in the Authority's Monitoring Brief *Creating official statistics from administrative data*¹³.
- 2.17 Evidence from the assessments suggests that many bodies producing official statistics were not researching sufficiently fully the quality of the data they extract from administrative sources. This is another area for further exploration and advice by the Authority.

Improving comparability between statistics for the four UK administrations

- 2.18 Many equivalent sets of statistics are produced by organisations in the four administrations of the UK. Sometimes these statistics are comparable, but in others

¹³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-michael-scholar-to-rt-hon-francis-maude---administrative-data---16032012.pdf>

they are not because different methods have been used to produce the statistics, or because concepts and policies vary from one administration to another. While the statistics may be the best possible for each of the four administrations, the different approaches can make it difficult for those users who want totals for either GB or the UK, and for those who want to compare one UK administration with another.

- 2.19 It is important that each of the four administrations takes into account the needs of users who want to compare the local statistics with those for other administrations, or who are looking for consistent totals for GB or the UK. The Authority thus encourages all four administrations to provide links to equivalent statistics from the other administrations, and to explain any differences in methods and concepts, so that users are informed about the extent of comparability.
- 2.20 A number of requirements relating to these issues have been made in assessment reports. They fall into three broad groups:
- Better signposting of equivalent statistics from the other administrations;
 - Better explanation of differences between the equivalent statistics from the other administrations; and
 - Working with the other administrations to improve comparability.

PART 3: THE VALUE OF ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 The statutory assessment function may be seen as having two related objectives – to prompt the improvement of statistical practice in government to meet the standards of the Code of Practice; and to offer independent assurance about the quality and impartiality of the statistical service. To those ends, the individual assessment reports have stimulated specific improvements; and the growing portfolio of reports (both assessment reports and the numerous ad-hoc reports of the Authority) has provided a comprehensive evidence base upon which to offer assurance and to review the broader development of the statistical service.

Conclusions about value

- 3.2 In May 2011 the Authority published a report, *The impact of the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Function*¹⁴, which considered the emerging evidence. It concluded that some improvements were identifiably the direct result of an assessment report, whilst others may have been driven by messages emerging from the assessment process more generally, or made in anticipation of future assessment. And in some cases assessment may simply have accelerated an improvement already in train.
- 3.3 The Statistics Authority's view is that the first programme of assessment has been successful. It prompted a large number of detailed improvements in statistical products and the statistical service; it gathered evidence of the need to make further improvements; and it documented the characteristics of the UK statistical service more thoroughly than we have seen in any other country.
- 3.4 The first programme cost an average of £1.5 million per annum – mostly staff and related costs for a team of up to 20 people. Whilst the long-term benefits are still to be fully realised, we note that the total cost of statistical activity across government runs to many hundreds of millions of pounds a year and that assessment represents less than half of one per cent of the cost of government statistical work. It is also worth noting here that ensuring Code compliance enhances value as well as incurring costs. Compliance with the Code confers real benefits on both the user of statistics and the producer. It assures the user that high standards have been observed and it gives the producer organisation added credibility and authority. On this basis we believe that assessment will prove to be good value.
- 3.5 More specifically, we already see improvements associated with assessment in a number of important areas, for example:
- better research into, and understanding of, the use made of statistics – which is essential in order to judge quality and guide future development of statistical products (releases, reports etc);
 - improved dialogue between government statisticians and users of statistics outside the producer organisation; and
 - the quality and accessibility of statistical products, particularly statistical releases which mark the issue of new statistical data – these are the 'shop

¹⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-3-2011---the-impact-of-the-authority-s-monitoring-and-assessment-function.pdf>

window' of the statistical service and thus central to how the work of statisticians is perceived by the media and commentators.

3.6 Assessment has also helped to give the whole statistical system in the UK a more coherent identity:

- the Authority's role (including but extending beyond assessment) has drawn public attention to the fact that the whole statistical service is independently supervised;
- the position of statistics professionals working in departments has been strengthened, in response to this environment;
- the interpretation of the Code of Practice by different organisations producing statistics has become increasingly consistent and mutually supportive; and
- there is growing international recognition of the strong system of statistical oversight in the UK.

3.7 It has taken time for the main findings from assessment to be widely accepted and for that to have an impact beyond the specific points raised in the individual reports. We expect this process to gather pace and the Authority is committed to maintaining and reinforcing the momentum created thus far.

3.8 As noted earlier, the assessment process has enabled the Authority to offer external commentators a substantial measure of reassurance about the quality and impartiality of most sets of National Statistics. We have found much that is good in terms of commitment, innovation, and professionalism; and these virtues, supported by the Code of Practice, have been effective in preventing inappropriate interference in the production or publication of statistics. In these respects, the Code and assessment function are helping both to ensure and to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the UK's statistical system.

3.9 As well as considering whether assessment has been effective, we might ask why. A number of factors may have helped:

- The statutory basis of the Code of Practice and assessment – this gave the work a practical authority and focus that previous initiatives and Codes have lacked. This was reinforced by the statutory role and standing of the Chairman and non-executive members of the Authority Board.
- Acceptance of the need for action – at the time the legislation came in to force in 2008 there was a widely shared view that there were problems in UK official statistics that needed to be addressed. Whilst the problems were articulated in different ways they amounted to concern that the lack of central control, or enforced standards, in the statistical system was leading to loss of trust in the product.
- Rigorous processes – assessment has been grounded in the collection and analysis of evidence. The reports were subject to systematic quality assurance checks before being finalised and stood up to subsequent re-examination.

- Transparency – public reporting of assessment outcomes has encouraged producer bodies to engage effectively with the assessment process.
- Regulatory pressure – producer bodies have known when assessment reports on their statistics were going to be due. Many made improvements to their statistical processes in anticipation of assessment. Others took rapid remedial steps to address matters identified in the assessment reports even before the reports were completed.

Post-legislative scrutiny by the Cabinet Office

- 3.10 In November 2011, the Cabinet Office published a memorandum to the Public Administration Select Committee on the *Post-legislative scrutiny of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*. This included a summary of 29 responses, mostly from government departments, to a consultation carried out by the Cabinet Office. It reported that: “Nearly two-thirds felt that the new system did not represent value for money compared with the previous system, mainly because producers felt that the assessment of National Statistics was resource intensive. Some also felt that the assessment process focused on where the existing statistical process was not complying with the code and did not sufficiently recognise existing good practice. Some respondents felt that the assessment programme lacked traction because even when an assessment identified statistics that required improvement, their status as National Statistics remained unchanged.” It went on to say however that “it was recognised that in general assessments have helped to improve quality and particularly integrity”.
- 3.11 The Statistics Authority’s response to the question of the perceived burden of assessment on government departments is that most of the work is associated with complying with the Code of Practice, not with the process of assessment itself. And as noted at paragraph 3.4 above, Code compliance confers benefits on both the user of statistics and the producer. It is true that assessment tends to focus on where existing statistical processes are not complying with the Code; that is intrinsic to the process. However, recognition of good practice also runs as a theme through all the Authority’s statements, including this report. And whilst it is true that National Statistics status has only rarely been removed, over 1000 individual requirements have been made and action to address each of these is followed up and documented. We regard that as sufficient traction and an appropriate balance between public challenge and constructive advice.

Consulting users of statistics

- 3.12 The assessment team sought the views of users of the statistics in relation to each assessment, by means of a brief targeted questionnaire and via a standing ‘invitation to comment’ section of the Authority’s website¹⁵. It was nonetheless difficult to obtain a good spread of users’ views in many cases – perhaps because there had already been a considerable amount of user consultation of various kinds and ‘consultation fatigue’ may have been starting to show.
- 3.13 Looking to the future, we would want to do more to raise users’ awareness about assessment and how they might contribute. We note that the StatsUserNet¹⁶ networking website, developed under the auspices of the Royal Statistical Society

¹⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/current-assessments/index.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk/StatsUserNet/Home/>

with support from the Authority and launched in early 2012, offers a potentially powerful vehicle to collect users' views in future.

The role of non-executive directors in assessment

- 3.14 The process of assessment (from 2009 to 2012), and the production and approval of reports by the Authority Board, were guided and supervised by the Authority's non-executive directors – notably the former Deputy Chair of the Authority, the late Professor Sir Roger Jowell who chaired the Assessment Committee (which considered and approved individually every one of the draft reports).
- 3.15 The assessment team found that the systematic involvement of the non-executive directors gave the whole process added momentum and focus. Their emphasis on the importance of building a coherent and comprehensive suite of reports, and accepting that the process would take time, helped to avoid a loss of momentum in the middle of the programme when tangible evidence of its benefit was sparse.
- 3.16 The non-executives also helped to draw out and formulate the broader issues raised by the assessment process, such as the need to give more advice to the user in statistical releases. This in turn informed the dialogue between the Authority and the statistical service.

Government statisticians and assessment

- 3.17 Assessment is a form of regulatory activity, and the relationship between the regulator and the regulated was never going to be a simple one; the service had developed over many decades without a regulatory element and without much in the way of specific public challenge to the decisions of managers.
- 3.18 In the early days of the Authority there were some questions raised by government statisticians about the Authority's competence and right to comment publicly on the statistical work of other government bodies. These may have been prompted in part by the fact that the Authority was formally established as a government department itself, and had absorbed within it a former government department (the Office for National Statistics). It was thus a new government department, containing a former government department. Viewed in this way, its regulatory credentials were not as clear to other parts of the civil service as they might have been. This model was sometimes contrasted with the National Audit Office which is staffed by non-civil servants with clear lines of accountability to Parliament and with no mainstream administrative functions. However, we believe that the Statistics Authority has steadily become an increasingly accepted and central part of the statistical system; and its regulatory function increasingly recognised as pivotal to the Authority's role.
- 3.19 Another view that was sometimes expressed in the early days of assessment was that the best way for the Authority to build trust was to champion the existing strengths of the UK statistical service rather than draw attention to weaknesses. The Authority has always sought to adopt a constructive and forward-looking approach but sees the identification and remediation of weaknesses in relation to the Code of Practice as fundamental to its statutory role and a more powerful way of building the long term reputation of the statistical service than simply offering public endorsement.
- 3.20 In the early stages of introducing assessment, some statisticians were concerned that the new arrangements would be burdensome, a distraction, or would interfere

unnecessarily in managerial decisions. We think that these concerns have diminished but some might still argue that:

- independent scrutiny, particularly where it shines a light on areas of relative weakness, can diminish public confidence in statistics;
- the perceived burden of both the process of assessment and the extra work required to be Code compliant may not be worthwhile;
- the assessment of all statistical outputs (as opposed to just the highest profile ones) did not represent good value for money.
- assessment reports are not sufficiently balanced – that they do not sufficiently highlight statistical work that is going well.

3.21 Whilst such views continue to be heard from time to time they seem increasingly to be a minority opinion. We have found that many senior statisticians regard assessment as beneficial (providing expert peer review advice to help them to strengthen their own statistical operation) and that they support the Authority's emphasis on enhancing the trustworthiness of statistics by improving the statistical products and services offered to users.

3.22 Another concern was whether the Authority would be an unduly 'Westminster-centric' body, and would not pay sufficient attention to devolved statistics for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These concerns eased as the assessment reports themselves showed that devolved statistics were fully within the scope of the assessment process (there were 46 assessment exercises relating to statistics produced in Scotland, 18 on those produced in Wales and 24 in Northern Ireland). It was also helpful here that the Authority has maintained a small team of staff in Edinburgh, with particular responsibility for the devolved administrations, as part of the assessment function.

International perspectives

3.23 We are aware of interest internationally in the UK's approach to assessment – reflecting the fact that the process of systematically assessing official statistics against a Code of Practice is rare among other countries. Since 2009, the Head of Assessment and his colleagues have been invited to present a number of papers about assessment at international statistical events and attended meetings with national statistical bodies. Whilst the response is often slightly wary, we have noted a more positive view of assessment from international bodies with some responsibility for statistical standards. For example, in its 2010 annual report¹⁷, the European Statistics Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) drew positive attention to the UK's statistical governance arrangements; ESGAB said that it "encourages (the) establishment of suitable Code-monitoring mechanisms in all ESS (European Statistical System) countries".

3.24 The UK's assessment process has also been discussed specifically in the context of the development of a certification scheme for official statistics in Greece, which has been stipulated in a recent change to Greece's statistical law.

¹⁷http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/esgab/documents/EN_ESGAB%20report%202010_FINAL.pdf

- 3.25 The European Commission has recently proposed that each member state sign a 'Commitment on Confidence in Statistics', as one element of a revision to Regulation (EC) 223/2009 (commonly referred to as the "European Statistical Law"). Commitments, which would be signed by national Governments and countersigned by the Commission, and which would be reported on by the Commission to the European Parliament and Council, would relate to the measures necessary to maintain confidence in the Member State's European statistics. Self-assessment and improvement actions are likely to be features of Commitments. Depending on the outcome of these proposals there may be scope to align a UK 'Commitment' with work already completed, and work planned, in relation to the assessment of UK National Statistics.

PART 4: THE FUTURE

- 4.1 This part of the report sets out the Statistics Authority's current thinking on the future of formal assessment under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*. We expect the process of assessment to continue to evolve and adapt, particularly in relation to the coverage and focus of individual reports. However, the essential feature of statutory assessment - that it tests the compliance of National Statistics against the Code of Practice and leads either to continuing 'designation' or the removal of the National Statistics designation - will remain. Given the emphasis on continuing evolution, the plans discussed below indicate where the future programme of assessment reports (beginning in autumn 2012) will be starting from, rather than a blueprint that will be followed in detail.
- 4.2 The legislation requires the Authority to 'assess and determine whether the Code of Practice...continues to be complied with in relation to statistics already designated as National Statistics.' The Act also requires the Authority to prepare and publish a programme for assessment and re-assessment. We take these provisions to mean that all statistics that are designated as National Statistics shall be kept under review, but not necessarily all in the same way or with the same frequency. There is thus considerable scope to design the assessment process to give the maximum benefit.

Starting points

- 4.3 Considerations that have influenced the Authority's thinking include these:
- The current assessment methodology is thorough and respected but it is also perceived by some producer bodies as overly detailed and burdensome.
 - All sets of National Statistics have now been assessed at least once.
 - In the first programme of assessment there was some predictability about many of the findings and requirements, leading to suggestions of diminishing returns.
 - Official statistics are increasingly being derived from administrative sources and this raises a number of generic issues about interpretation of the Code of Practice.
 - Beneficial changes will only flow from assessment with the active support of departmental Heads of Profession for Statistics and that needs to be encouraged by the process itself.
 - There is now a greater awareness and understanding of the Code of Practice among the bodies that produce official statistics, than was the case at the start of the first programme.
 - The team within the Statistics Authority has built up considerable experience of conducting assessment reviews. This means that approaches requiring greater flexibility or judgement can be adopted with little risk to quality. However, the quality of that work remains of over-riding importance.

- The reputation of the Statistics Authority could be adversely affected if it were to give priority to relatively routine assessment reviews at the expense of investigating more specific issues of concern.
- The systematic and detailed nature of the assessment process has helped to keep the importance of Code compliance, and good practice more generally, at the forefront of thinking in statistical offices in government. That momentum must not be lost.
- Parliament's intention in passing the legislation under which assessment is carried out was to ensure independent, robust, and open reviews of National Statistics that are of importance to policy, to Parliamentary scrutiny and to the democratic process. That must continue to be what is delivered.

The form of assessment

- 4.4 The first programme of assessment, from 2009 to 2012, approached every set of National Statistics in essentially the same way. This served to ensure a uniform and comprehensive review of the entire statistical system. However, that approach did have some drawbacks. It involved the production of a very large number of similar reports, which was demanding on resources, and required the assessment team to devote nearly as much work to minor sets of statistics, that are unlikely to be the subject of public or Parliamentary concern, as they did to major sets of statistics of high national and political importance.
- 4.5 Looking to the future, we would expect the coverage of assessment reports to be more varied and flexible than was feasible in the first programme; and to be more responsive to considerations of risk and to the concerns of users of statistics.
- 4.6 These general points suggest that the Authority should do the following:
- Re-assess some sets of National Statistics against the Code of Practice in much the same way as in the first programme (particularly those that are the most high profile and likely to be seen as important to users).
 - Re-assess other sets only in relation to those practices of the Code where we made a 'requirement' in the first round of assessment (in effect these would be follow-up reports).
 - Assess all the statistical work of some producer bodies in a single report (most suitable where the producer body is responsible for a relatively homogeneous range of statistics).
 - Focus some reports on aspects of the statistical work that are considered to have changed since the first assessment (for example, the content of publications may have changed or a new survey methodology introduced).
 - Focus others on assessing compliance with specific parts of the Code – either for a specific set of statistics or across a wide range of statistics (for example, we might look in one report at a specific practice, such as protecting confidentiality, across the whole of the statistical service).

- Introduce a measure of 'self-assessment' that would allow the relevant Head of Profession for Statistics to offer public reassurance about Code compliance, in relation to some parts of the Code (discussed further below).
- 4.7 A flexible approach to the form of assessment, decided for each assessment review in advance, would enable the Authority to respond to topical issues and concerns, and to make best use of its own resources.
- 4.8 There are likely to be some implications for the ad-hoc reports that the Authority produces under its 'Monitoring' series. Some of the concerns and issues covered by one-off Monitoring reviews at present could be included in the assessment programme if it had this greater flexibility. There will still be a need for ad-hoc monitoring reports that deal with issues beyond the scope of the Code; for example, looking at whether some management data in government departments should in future be treated as official statistics. That is not a matter addressed within the Code and so cannot be covered in a statutory assessment.

Current developments

- 4.9 We are taking steps to introduce a greater degree of 'self-assessment' by the responsible Head of Profession for statistics - the senior professional statistician in the producer body. The advice of the Head of Profession has always played a central part in the review process but we see value in taking more explicit account of his or her views about aspects of compliance with of the Code of Practice. Some elements of the Code will always be reserved for formal assessment by the Authority and a list of these will be maintained and published. Where the Head of Profession is unsure about compliance, or the assessment team has grounds for doubt, there would be scope to leave a particular element out of self-assessment. For the elements not covered by self-assessment, assessment by the Authority would proceed as now.
- 4.10 Another variation in the process which will allow the Head of Profession to have a more explicit role has also been trialled successfully. Instead of assessment reports always containing formal requirements, particularly on more minor matters, they may instead record a set of 'commitments' on the part of the Head of Profession to deal with matters that need to be addressed. The detail of these commitments will be agreed with the Head of Profession via email correspondence in the final stages of drafting of the assessment report and then recorded in the report. This approach reduces the number of formal requirements and places the intentions of the Head of Profession more at the centre of the process, whilst still allowing the improvements to be followed up subsequently.

Setting priorities according to risk

- 4.11 The formal 'Principles and Procedures for Assessment'¹⁸ published in 2009 is mostly still applicable but will be updated. Central to these principles and procedures is that assessment should be 'risk-based': prioritising those areas of statistical activity which are considered to present a risk to the quality and reputation of official statistics. The following criteria might guide priorities:

¹⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/guidance-about-assessment/extract-from-code-of-practice.html>

- Whether there has been a significant change to the statistics (sources, methods or outputs), or their use, or governance, since the first assessment.
- The nature of any concerns raised with us, or identified by us, about the statistics or about the implementation of requirements from previous assessment reports.
- The nature of the decisions made with reference to the statistics. We would give priority to ensuring Code compliance for official statistics that are relevant to major decisions in government or among the general public (such as in relation to elections).

Assessment of ONS statistics

4.12 It is intrinsic to the assessment process that the work of the Office for National Statistics is treated in the same way as statistics produced elsewhere in government departments and agencies across the four UK administrations. Some 48 assessment reports dealt with ONS statistics and these were given neither higher nor lower priority in the first programme. The assessment reports contained the same requirements that would have been included for other producer bodies. That will continue to be the case.

Developing the future programme

- 4.13 The different strands outlined above, including the scope to vary the format of individual assessment exercises and the application of the criteria to guide priorities, will be brought together in a regularly updated programme of reviews (covering both Assessment and ad-hoc Monitoring reviews) and will be available on the Authority's website. In practice this will be open to amendment at any time if the Board of the Authority decides that additional reviews should be undertaken.
- 4.14 In setting priorities for the programme of assessment reports, the Statistics Authority will welcome, and pay close attention to, dialogue with the Public Administration Select Committee, other select committees, government departments, the Royal Statistical Society, statistical user groups, and individual experts in many fields of statistics.

ANNEX 1: DESCRIPTION OF THE STATISTICAL SERVICE

- A1.1 The UK statistical service is largely decentralised, reflecting its historical development and the structure and conventions of government. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the UK's largest statistical producer body and is the 'National Statistical Institute' for international purposes. It is responsible for many of the UK's business, economic and demographic statistics, as well as for some statistics on topics such as health.
- A1.2 The Government Statistical Service (GSS) is the community of those involved in producing official statistics in the UK. Government departments and other bodies that employ government statisticians have a designated 'Head of Profession for Statistics'. In the case of the three devolved administrations, he or she is the Chief Statistician of the administration. The Northern Ireland Civil Service is distinct from UK civil service, but in practice the statistical staff (recruited by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and either employed by that organisation or loaned to a NI department) work closely with GSS colleagues and share professional standards and culture. More recently, the concept of the GSS was extended to cover the Information Centre for Health and Social Care, which is a Special Health Authority of the NHS. The GSS has no formal legal standing but operates as a professional statistical community across the civil service.
- A1.3 Although all UK official statistics are within the remit of the Statistics Authority, they do not all have exactly the same legal standing. The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* introduced the concept of 'devolved statistics', which are those official statistics relating to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on topics where the devolved administration has policy responsibility. So for example, official statistics relating to education or health services in Scotland are devolved whilst statistics relating to social security benefits in Scotland are not. The 2007 Act requires ONS to obtain the consent of Ministers in the relevant devolved administration before it may 'produce and publish' devolved statistics.
- A1.4 The National Statistician's Office has estimated that, as at June 2012, there were a total of 1,330 (full-time equivalent) professional statisticians working in the GSS. A further 267 are employed in the Northern Ireland statistical system (as at 31 March 2012). Table A1 shows the distribution of statisticians across the different bodies that employ them. ONS accounts for less than 10% of the professional cadre, whilst nearly 30% work in the devolved administrations.
- A1.5 The 2007 Act established the UK Statistics Authority and gave it the remit to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. Official statistics are defined in the Act as statistics produced by ONS, government departments, devolved administrations and other organisations acting on behalf of the Crown. These are referred to collectively as 'Crown bodies' and there are in excess of 150 of them¹⁹ although not all produce statistics (around 40 produce National Statistics and have been covered in the programme of assessment so far). In addition, the Act provides that government Ministers can determine by secondary legislation that statistics produced by other 'non-Crown' bodies are to be 'official statistics' and thus come within the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. To date, Ministers have made seven such orders which have resulted in some 77 additional producer bodies now falling within the remit of

¹⁹ For a list, see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/our-services/uk-crown-bodies.htm>

the Authority. The orders made so far are the Official Statistics Order 2008²⁰, 2009²¹ and 2010²², the Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008²³, the Official Statistics (Scotland) Amendment Order 2010²⁴, the Official Statistics (Scotland) Amendment Order 2012²⁵, and the Official Statistics (Northern Ireland) Order 2012²⁶.

Table A1: Number of FTE professional statisticians by department as at June 2012

Department	Total
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	51
Department for Communities and Local Government	50
Department for Education	93
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	28
Department for International Development	32
Department for Transport	37
Department for Work and Pensions	168
Department of Energy and Climate Change	28
Department of Health	54
HM Revenue & Customs	112
Home Office	22
Ministry of Defence	63
Ministry of Justice	57
NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care	81
Office for National Statistics	135
Scottish Government	118
Welsh Government	64
Other departments and agencies	137
Northern Ireland statistical system ¹	267
Grand Total	1,597

¹ as at 31 March 2012

- A1.6 The Authority has a duty under the 2007 Act to publish a list of National Statistics at least once every financial year. The most recent list²⁷ shows that a total of 932 National Statistics products were extant in 2011-2012. Table A2 lists the 42 producer bodies responsible for these statistics. A National Statistics 'product' is a statistical release that is used to disseminate National Statistics, although the nature of these products can vary greatly, from large compendium publications, presenting a wide range of different statistics, to short releases presenting single sets of statistics. Each assessment report identifies the titles of the statistical releases that have been assessed. The first full programme of assessment reviewed a total of 1,113 sets of statistics. Of these, 971 were already identified as

²⁰ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2008/9780110810027/contents>

²¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2009/753/contents/made>

²² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111502358/contents>

²³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2008/131/contents/made>

²⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2010/9780111010600>

²⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2012/9780111016909>

²⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2012/2/made>

²⁷ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/types-of-official-statistics/list-of-national-statistics/index.html>

National Statistics prior to assessment. Assessment added a further 142 sets of statistics to the pool of National Statistics. The number of sets of National Statistics that have been assessed differs from the total of 932 National Statistics products shown in table A2. That is because some of those originally listed were one-off outputs, and many others have been discontinued, merged or otherwise reconstituted.

- A1.7 All National Statistics are also, by definition, official statistics. However, there are other organisations which produce official statistics that are not included in the list of National Statistics producers in Table A2 or in the list of 77 non-Crown bodies identified in the Official Statistics Orders. The Statistics Authority is working to develop a full list of bodies that are acknowledged as producers of official statistics. This requires further research since in some cases where a government body publishes operational data, it has not yet been determined whether those data should be regarded as official statistics, and this is not necessarily a straightforward judgement. In most cases the final decision will be the responsibility of the relevant government Minister.

Table A2: Producers of National Statistics, 2011-2012¹

	Producer Body	Number of extant National Statistics products²
National Statistics Institute	Office for National Statistics	179
UK Ministerial Government Departments	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	6
	Department for Communities and Local Government	25
	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	2
	Department of Energy and Climate Change	21
	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	67
	Department for Education	30
	Department for International Development	2
	Department for Transport	35
	Department of Health	9
	Department for Work and Pensions	13
	HM Treasury	3
	Home Office	14
	Ministry of Defence	13
Ministry of Justice	12	
Other non-devolved producer bodies	HM Revenue and Customs	42
	Forestry Commission	5
	Higher Education Statistics Agency	3
	Student Loans Company	3
	Insolvency Service	1
	Marine Management Organisation	1
	Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission	1
	Health and Social Care Information Centre	36
	Health and Safety Executive	8
National Treatment Agency	2	
Scotland	Scottish Government	69
	Information Services Division, NHS National Services Scotland	44
	National Records of Scotland	54
Wales	Welsh Government	126
Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	33
	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland	17
	Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland	4
	Department of Education, Northern Ireland	8
	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Northern Ireland	9
	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland	16
	Department of Justice, Northern Ireland	4
	Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland	3
	Department for Social Development, Northern Ireland	5
	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	1
	Police Service of Northern Ireland	3
	Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service	2
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Northern Ireland	1	
Total		932

¹ More recently, the assessment of statistics produced by the Office of Rail Regulation will allow it to become a new producer of National Statistics, once it has addressed the Requirements in Assessment Report 212

² These products are extant in the sense that they have been published in the past and future publications are expected. Not all of these products will have been published in 2011-2012, since some will be published less frequently than once a year.

ANNEX 2: ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

A2.1 The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* specified that all official statistics that were being published as National Statistics at the time the legislation came in to force were to be subject to formal assessment against a revised Code of Practice. The legislation did not specify the detail of that process. The assessment team needed to ensure that the process of assessment – which was completely new – would be effective, practicable and sufficiently quick to allow all those different sets of National Statistics to be reviewed within a period of a few years.

A2.2 This Annex describes the assessment process that evolved. It covers the following:

- i. The approach to different types of statistical output
- ii. Producing an assessment report
- iii. Quality assurance
- iv. Designation
- v. How the assessment processes and procedures evolved
- vi. Assessment outcomes

A2.3 The assessment team comprised about 20 people at any one time; a list of team members since 2008 is included at Table A4.

i. The approach to different types of statistical output

Definition of sets of statistics

A2.4 In January 2009, the Authority published the first edition of a new Code of Practice for Official Statistics²⁸. The Authority also published a list²⁹ of all statistics that were being published as National Statistics (over 1000 sets of statistics).

A2.5 The Code of Practice refers to statistical reports as meaning any statistical output, including any associated commentary and metadata. Producer bodies use a variety of different statistical outputs to disseminate official statistics. These include statistical bulletins, compendium publications, webpages, supplementary tables, press releases, datasets, on-line databases and bespoke tabulation tools. The model developed for assessment treats the main statistical bulletin as the relevant statistical report for the purposes of the Code.

Compendium publications

A2.6 Many official statistics are published in compendium publications. Where assessment reports covered such publications, they considered the processes involved in preparing the compendium publications, not the production of the individual statistics themselves. The statistics would normally have been released separately prior to inclusion in a compendium and would therefore have been subject to a separate assessment³⁰. Designation of a compendium publication as National Statistics means that the producer body has, for example, identified and met user needs in terms of the content of the compendium.

²⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/report-2.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/report-3.pdf>

³⁰ Where compendia include the first publication of statistics, the assessment considered the production procedures, including the written commentary, as if they were being published alone.

ii. Producing an assessment report*Introductions, scope and timing*

A2.7 The assessment team first agreed the scope and timing of the assessment with the producer body. The 'scope' refers to the sets of statistics to be covered which sometimes included, by agreement, additional sets of official statistics beyond those already being published as National Statistics. 'Timing' refers to the date by which the producer body would provide written evidence and details of known users (see below), and an estimated date when the draft assessment report will have been prepared.

Evidence for assessment

A2.8 Three tranches of evidence were used by the assessment team.

A2.9 First, the producer body provided the assessment team with its own evidence that demonstrated compliance with the Code of Practice both in relation to the specific sets of statistics and in relation to the environment in which statistics were produced. Written evidence was normally supplied using a 'Written Evidence for Assessment' template. Alongside this, producer bodies submitted copies of relevant documentation such as statistical policies and reports of methodological reviews. In the early assessments, the Written Evidence for Assessment covered the entire Code of Practice. Later, the template was split in to two parts. One covered those practices relating to the producer body as a whole, and the second those relating to the set of statistics being assessed. This made evidence easier to collect especially as the organisational evidence was needed only once, and could be updated easily as it changed. In some later assessments more flexible approaches were adopted to collecting evidence, including collecting evidence primarily at a meeting with the producer body.

A2.10 Second, in parallel, the assessment team undertook supplementary research which mainly focused on:

- identifying potential users whose views about the statistics might be sought;
- exploring media coverage of the statistics, including of Ministerial comment associated with the statistics; and
- reviewing relevant statistical releases against the Authority's published Standards for Statistical Releases³¹.

A2.11 Third, the producer body provided the assessment team with contact details for a sample of known users of the statistics, suppliers of the data that were used to produce the statistics and other relevant stakeholders.

A2.12 The assessment team invited users and data suppliers to provide their views about the statistics being assessed. Users were asked:

- why the statistics were of interest to them, how they used them or how they would like to be able to use them;
- how well the statistics met their needs and how they considered that the statistics could be improved; and

³¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-releases.html>

- how satisfied they were with the way that the producer body engaged with them.

Similarly, data suppliers were asked:

- how easy it was for them to provide the required data;
- whether they had a clear understanding of the uses to which the data were put; and
- whether they felt adequately consulted by the producer team before changes were made to data collection procedures.

Analysis and reporting

- A2.13 The assessment team analysed the evidence provided, and prepared an emerging view about the level of compliance with the Code. This view was then subject to quality assurance by senior managers within the team. The assessment team then met the responsible statistical managers within the producer body, to ensure that the team fully understood the material it had been given, to explore any aspects of Code compliance in further detail, and to discuss the emerging findings of the assessment.
- A2.14 The team produced a brief report, in a fixed structure, which made an overall determination about designation, and commented on the extent of compliance, and on any further actions considered necessary. Those actions which the assessment team considered essential to enable designation as National Statistics were called requirements. Reports also listed further 'suggestions' which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users, but which were not formally required for designation. As the programme went on, we identified some sets of statistics – on grounds of lower risk – as suitable for a shorter report format.
- A2.15 The team then sent the draft report to the producer body, and discussed any matters of factual accuracy. The National Statistician's Office also received the draft report at this point.
- A2.16 The team then produced a final report, which was considered and approved by the Head of Assessment. The final report was subject to two further levels of scrutiny. First, the Assessment Committee – a subset of the non-executive members of the Authority Board – reviewed each report. The Assessment Committee decided whether any aspects merited further discussion with the full Authority Board. Second, the Authority Board reviewed the requirements and suggestions in all draft reports, and considered any reports identified by the Assessment Committee as needing discussion. It then approved the publication of the reports presented to it, subject to any amendments agreed. In view of the statutory separation of functions, the Director General ONS, who is a Board member, was not party to discussion of assessment reports at Board meetings.

iii. Quality assurance

- A2.17 Producing a large number of assessment reports presented a challenge in terms of maintaining consistency and quality. From the start, the Authority was concerned to maintain a high and consistent standard. The staff involved were aware that they were commenting publicly on the work of other civil servants and that any inaccuracies or unreasonable comment would rapidly undermine the credibility of the assessment process within the civil service. Accordingly we introduced several levels of quality assurance checks, designed to answer the following sorts of

questions: *“Is the evidence from producer bodies and users coherent?”*, *“What might we not have been told?”*, *“Are our reports sufficiently evidence-based?”* and *“Are they easy to understand?”*

A2.18 These checks were carried out and managed by all the senior staff of the Monitoring and Assessment Team, in different capacities, and overseen by a sub-group of non-executive members of the Authority Board, under the oversight of one of the two Deputy Chairs. Another important element of the approach to quality assurance was to show assessment reports, in draft, to the statisticians in the organisation responsible for producing the statistics. This helped to identify and resolve misunderstandings of evidence, and to allow producer bodies to explain their plans to address any concerns raised, which could then be reflected in the published report.

iv. Designation

A2.19 Assessment reports led to three possible outcomes regarding the designation of the statistics:

- (a) Some sets of statistics were confirmed immediately as National Statistics. In these cases, the Head of Assessment wrote to the producer body to confirm this.
- (b) Most sets of statistics were granted conditional designation. In these cases, the statistics continued to be designated as National Statistics, while the producer body implemented the requirements stated in the report. The producer body would submit evidence of its improvements to the team, which subsequently reviewed this evidence. Once the team was content that the Code had been fully complied with, the Authority Board would confirm the designation, and the Head of Assessment then wrote to the producer body confirming this.
- (c) A small set of statistics had their National Statistics designation removed. In such cases, the designation was removed pending the producer making the necessary improvements. The process of the producer body making and reporting improvements, and having its designation reinstated followed the same arrangements as for conditional designation.

A2.20 Where the assessment covered sets of statistics that were not previously classified as National Statistics, they could not normally be badged as National Statistics until the Code had been complied with fully.

A2.21 One issue that arose during the first programme of assessment was whether statistics should retain their National Statistics designation when they were subject to some significant change: for example, when responsibility for all or part of a set of National Statistics transferred to a different producer body; or when the producer body itself made substantial changes to a statistical release. Where changes occurred that were considered sufficiently significant to require a reassessment, we adopted the approach of re-assessing compliance with those elements of the Code relevant to the change that had taken place.

v. How the processes and procedures evolved

A2.22 The assessment processes and procedures, and the format of assessment reports, developed over the four years of the first full cycle. Initially, we wanted a process that was:

- efficient in itself and created modest burdens on producer bodies;
- evidential – producing and drawing on written material;
- achievable and straightforward; and
- sufficiently fine-grained to identify areas requiring improvement without getting submerged by detail.

A2.23 We started with well-defined processes and were able to streamline and simplify them as time went on. More recently we have encouraged a degree of flexibility – including the use of ‘self-assessment’ against some elements of the Code – to test potential new approaches for the future. A list of the key dates in the history of assessment is provided in Table A3 at the end of this Annex.

A2.24 During 2011 the Authority Board set a target to complete the programme by summer 2012. This led to some further review and simplification of procedures. We also reviewed the ‘groups’ of statistics to increase the number of statistics to be covered in individual assessment reports.

A2.25 Throughout the first programme of assessment, we used standardised report formats/templates to simplify the report-writing process, and to make it easier for readers of the reports to focus on the areas of greatest interest to them. But the template has evolved gradually. For example, from July 2011 (from Assessment Report 125) we included in each assessment report a summary of the extent to which the set of statistics meets the Authority’s published Standards for Statistical Releases.

vi. Assessment outcomes

A2.26 During the first round of assessment we found that the overwhelming majority of reports pointed to the need for some remedial action – steps that the producers were able to take within a reasonably short period, of six months or so. Eight reports did not identify any remedial action, allowing the Head of Assessment to write directly to the producer bodies to confirm the designation of the statistics. There were, though, two sets of statistics which required actions to become Code compliant that could not be achieved within an acceptable timescale:

- Scottish Government’s Child Protection Statistics (Assessment Report 67). The report identified a concern that the data on child referrals supplied by local authorities were not of adequate quality to use in the production of the statistics.
- The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills’ Construction Price Indices (Assessment Report 95). The report identified a range of concerns, including lack of commentary, lack of information about the methods used to produce the statistics, lack of information about their quality, and the statistics being available only to paid subscribers.

In both cases the problems are being addressed but, as of the time of writing, are not fully resolved.

Table A3: Key dates in the history of assessment

Date	Milestone
Nov 06	Publication of Statistics and Registration Service Bill
Mar 07	Shadow assessments
Jul 07	Passing of the <i>Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007</i>
Aug 07	Appointment of Sir Michael Scholar as Chair of the UK Statistics Authority
Feb 08	First meeting of the shadow Authority Board
Apr 08	First meeting of the full Authority Board
May 08	Appointment of the Head of Assessment
Jul 08	Appointment of the Director of the Assessment Programme
Jul 08	Draft Code issued for public consultation
Sep 08	Appointment of first assessors
Nov 08	First assessment work programme published
Feb 09	Written Evidence for Assessment template published
Jan 09	Code of Practice for Official Statistics published
Jan 09	Publication of Principles and Procedures for Assessment
Feb 09	First assessments started
Jul 09	Publication of timetable for phase 2 of the assessment programme
Aug – Oct 09	Work to group existing National Statistics together for assessment
Sep 09	Publication of the Criteria for not awarding the National Statistics designation
Nov 09	Revised version of templates for collecting Written Evidence for Assessment, splitting out organisational issues from those relating to individual sets of statistics
Dec 09	Full assessment programme published for 2010-2012
Jan 10	First producer/assessor workshop
Feb 10 – Apr 10	Trialled the use of an external assessor (AR47, Overseas Travel & Tourism, published May 2010)
Mar 10	Publication of assessment handbook for producers
Mar 10	Publication of Findings of the 2009 Assessment Programme
May 10	Publication of first short form report (AR46)
Jul 10	Publication of Findings from the first 50 Assessment Reports
Aug 10	Enhanced processes for reflecting the views of users in the assessment process
Sep 10	Second producer/assessor workshop
Oct 10	Publication of the Authority's Statement on Standards for Statistical Releases
Oct 10	Publication of the Authority's Monitoring Brief on the Use Made of Official Statistics
Feb 11	Publication of the Authority's statement on Assessment and Designation of Experimental Statistics
Apr 11	Publication of Findings from the first 100 Assessment Reports
Jul 11	Inclusion in assessment reports of Annex 2, covering Compliance with Standards for Statistical Releases, from AR125
Sep 11	Third producer/assessor workshop
Oct 11	Implementation of revised plans for the quicker completion of the first round of assessment
Dec 11	Publication of Findings from the Assessment Programme 2009-2011

Table A4: List of Monitoring and Assessment staff

Name	Position	Dates active
Richard Alldritt	Head of Assessment	May 08 onwards
Lorraine Streater	Personal Assistant to Head of Assessment	May 08 – Dec 08
Richard Laux	Director of the Assessment Programme	July 08 onwards
Melissa Rice	Statistical Assessor	Aug 08 – Sep 08
Penny Babb	Statistical Assessor	Sep 08 onwards
Jill Barelli	Statistical Assessor	Sep 08 onwards
Dave Hobbs	Statistical Assessor	Sep 08 – May 09
Mark Pont	Assessment Programme Manager	Sep 08 onwards
Cathy Kruger	Statistical Assessor	Nov 08 – Jul 11
Amanda Charles	Statistical Assessor	Jan 09 – July 10
Neil Jackson	Head of Edinburgh Office	Feb 09 onwards
Jacob Wilcock	Statistical Assessor	Mar 09 onwards
Helen Crimmins	Team Support	Mar 09 onwards
Rachel Beardsmore	Statistical Assessor	Apr 09 onwards
Joe Cuddeford	Statistical Assessor	May 09 – May 12
Ruth Naylor	Statistical Assessor	Jun 09 – Apr 10
Elspeth Maclean	Statistical Assessor	Jul 09 – Sep 10
Ed Swires-Hennessy	Statistical Assessor	Jul 09 – Sep 10
Phil Grigor	Statistical Assessor	Jul 09 – Jul 11
Catherine Barham	Statistical Assessor	Sep 09 onwards
Celia Macintyre	Statistical Assessor	Nov 09 – Nov 11
Kim Reimann	Statistical Assessor	Jan 10 – Mar 11
Emma Bowditch	Statistical Assessor	Mar 10 onwards
Alex Croker	Sandwich Student	Jun 10 – Sep 10
Roan du Feu	Sandwich Student	Jun 10 – Sep 10
David Duncan-Fraser	Statistical Assessor	Aug 10 onwards
Kat Pegler	Statistical Assessor	Sep 10 – Oct 11
Gary Wainman	Statistical Assessor	Nov 10 – Jul 12
Ruth James	Statistical Assessor	Dec 10 – Apr 12
Neil Wilson	Statistical Assessor	Sep 11 onwards
Iain Russell	Statistical Assessor	Oct 11 onwards
Emily Gleeson	Statistical Assessor	Nov 11 onwards
Donna Livesey	Statistical Assessor	Feb 12 onwards
Kay Woolley	Team Support	Feb 12 onwards

ANNEX 3: GOOD PRACTICE IDENTIFIED IN ASSESSMENT

Introduction

- A3.1 The Statistics Authority published four Monitoring Briefs³² during the course of the first full programme of assessment, in order to summarise the main themes that were emerging as the programme developed. In each of these the Authority summarised specific instances of 'good practice' that the Monitoring & Assessment Team had identified – with a view to helping the decentralised statistical service to explore innovations or other notable demonstrations of Code compliance elsewhere.
- A3.2 This Annex draws together some of the best examples of good practice that we identified during the course of the first cycle of assessment. These are by no means the only examples of good practice in the GSS; they are intended to be illustrative.
- A3.3 They are presented broadly in relation to the following themes:
- i. Engaging with users, documenting use and meeting user needs
 - ii. Sound methods, assured quality and documentation about methods
 - iii. Proportionate burden, resources and the use of administrative sources
 - iv. Good commentary
 - v. Comparability of statistics between the four administrations of the UK

Many of the examples given demonstrate good practice across more than one of these areas, although these are not listed separately here.

i. Engaging with users, documenting use and meeting user needs

Outputs from the Population Census (Office for National Statistics, National Records for Scotland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)

- A3.4 Assessment Report 28 on the first phase of the special assessment of population censuses for 2011 reported that the three census offices had each published plans for user engagement ahead of the 2011 Census.
- A3.5 As reported in Assessment Report 115 on the second phase of the assessment, the three offices continued to engage with users through to 2011 about their proposals for outputs from the Census. This engagement comprised a variety of methods, including web-based surveys and an extensive series of roadshows. The census offices published guidance documents to help users contribute to the consultations, and published documentation about the consultations. ONS also published a document explaining the decisions that it has made as a result of user feedback, including in relation to statistical disclosure control.
- A3.6 ONS and NISRA have also published detailed information about their plans for Census outputs. These prospectuses described the timing and content of the proposed statistical outputs, along with details about how the statistics would be presented, and what commentary was to be presented alongside the statistics.

³² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/index.html>

Court Statistics (Ministry of Justice)

A3.7 The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) responded to users' needs by publishing *Court Statistics Quarterly*³³ from 2009 (Assessment Report 36). MoJ had replaced a survey with administrative data in the production of some of its courts statistics. The statistics about the timeliness of criminal cases in the magistrates' courts were previously based on data collected in the quarterly Time Intervals Survey (TIS). The last wave of the survey took place in June 2011 with results published in August 2011. Due to improvements in the quality of data held on the magistrates' courts administrative systems, these statistics were now based on the administrative data rather than the bespoke TIS. These data cover all criminal proceedings dealt with in magistrates' courts. The use of the new comprehensive data source allowed MoJ to develop estimates for local areas, which it proposed to publish from 2012. Not only are the new statistics likely to be more robust and allow lower level detail to be published, but discontinuing the quarterly TIS was estimated to save £1m per year in court staff time. In addition, MoJ is also now able to link together records held on the two courts' administrative systems, from which it can publish new statistics giving the overall time from offence to completion in the criminal courts, irrespective of whether cases conclude in the magistrates' courts or in the Crown Court. This will, for the first time, give users a full understanding of the overall lifetime of cases in the criminal justice system.

A3.8 MoJ took the opportunity to integrate these statistics into its primary *Court Statistics Quarterly* bulletin and announced the changes in a Statistical Notice. It created a consistent back series from the administrative data as far as the quality of the data would allow. The first bulletin in the new format also contained a separate one-off annex providing users with information about how the new statistics had been derived, along with a summary analysis of how the administrative-sourced data compare with the previous survey data from the TIS.

A3.9 These developments were associated with a wider review of statistical organisation that MoJ undertook in the light of the new Code. Following widespread user consultation in 2010 and 2011 MoJ:

- simplified and merged its statistical outputs into five main quarterly publications, including a significant merger of publications on criminal justice and re-offending;
- improved the frequency and timeliness of key statistical series;
- released significantly more underpinning data including record level data;
- expanded the range of topics covered by bringing in new statistical publications.

Bus Statistics (Department for Transport)

A3.10 DfT collected views on its published bus statistics from users and data suppliers, using a variety of methods: meetings, email, and an online feedback form. The statisticians combined this information with their own knowledge of the ways in which the statistics were used (derived, for example, from requests for data). The exercise also included an informal consultation about proposed changes to the data collection, carried out with a view to striking an appropriate balance between the needs of users and the burden on data suppliers.

³³ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/courts-and-sentencing/judicial-quarterly>

A3.11 The results were set out in a paper³⁴ on DfT's website - a clear, transparent and comprehensive summary of the views of users and suppliers and of DfT's response, explaining how these views were taken into account. The paper included the following elements:

- a detailed account of the ways in which bus statistics were used inside and outside government, illustrated with recent and specific examples;
- a list of areas where users did not feel that their needs were fully met;
- a list of actions that DfT would take to address these concerns and improve the usefulness of the statistics where possible;
- a description of the supplier burden (time taken, staff involved, sources of data, areas of difficulty);
- responses to the consultation about proposed changes to the data collection; and
- an explanation of DfT's decision in respect of each proposal.

ii. Sound methods, assured quality and documentation about methods

Average Weekly Earnings (Office for National Statistics)

A3.12 ONS published comprehensive documentation about the methods used to produce its Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) statistics. The AWE was produced in parallel with the previously existing Average Earnings Index (AEI) so that users could compare the effects of the different methods. The methodological report³⁵ included details about sampling and estimation methods, imputation methods for non-responders, outlier treatment, and the methods used to account for non-sampling of small businesses. The report also presented extensive analysis comparing the AEI with the AWE series.

A3.13 In addition, ONS also published the report of an external review³⁶ of the methods used to produce AWE statistics and its plans for moving from the AEI to the AWE. The report included eight recommendations about the methods used to produce the AWE. ONS summarised these in its own documentation about the methodological work, along with its plans to address each of them.

National Child Measurement Programme (Health and Social Care Information Centre)

A3.14 As reported in Assessment Report 18, the Health and Social Care Information Centre's publication about National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) statistics presented a clear explanation about its key quality and reliability measures, such as confidence intervals and participation rates, and the impact that different participation rates could have on the statistics. It also described the coverage of the Programme, which is mostly conducted in state schools and in particular quantified the number and proportion of independent and special schools and pupils that chose to participate. It provided a data quality report in an annex, based on five key indicators relating to quality. These include indicators around coverage, completeness and accuracy of data entry. The performance of each primary care trust was colour-coded as red, amber or green, based on defined ranges of quality.

³⁴ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/buses/>

³⁵ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/awe/average-weekly-earnings/the-development-of-the-average-weekly-earnings-indicator/development-of-the-average-weekly-earnings-indicator.pdf>

³⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/awe/average-weekly-earnings/aei-and-awe--weale-report/aei-and-awe---weale-report.pdf>

- A3.15 The Information Centre had separately published a detailed guidance document describing the validation and quality assurance of the statistics, as well as a quality statement under the six dimensions of the European Statistical System quality framework. A statement was produced to accompany each NCMP annual report, and the latest edition outlined improvements made by Primary Care Trusts in addressing data quality issues since the start of the programme in 2005/06.
- A3.16 The Information Centre's NCMP reports included good quality commentary – including a summary, a description of the main points, and a range of accompanying charts and maps to illustrate some of the most important messages from the data.
- A3.17 The Information Centre further developed the NCMP report in the years following its assessment. In the most recent report, covering 2010/11, the Centre improved the clarity of the presentation, with well-designed charts and detailed reporting about the quality of the statistics. It extended its analysis and commentary to provide a greater range of comparisons. These included comparisons with previous years of the programme, showing the statistics for underweight as well as overweight and obese children, and giving more detailed presentations of the statistics by strategic health authority, deprivation group and rural/urban groups.

iii. Proportionate burden, resources and the use of administrative sources

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)

- A3.18 Assessment Report 139 covered the statistics produced on hours and earnings in Northern Ireland. NISRA has benefited from the work undertaken by ONS in respect of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) to reduce the burden on businesses through the introduction of electronic, rather than paper, data collection³⁷. NISRA has taken some additional steps to minimise the burden on businesses more generally: it is willing to accept administrative data from employers and works with large organisations to help develop systems that streamline data provision. For example, the statisticians at NISRA have worked with the Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland to ensure that their new payroll systems can deliver survey responses with minimal burden on them.

Fire Statistics (Department for Communities and Local Government, Welsh Government and Scottish Government)

- A3.19 Fire statistics produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government, and covered in Assessment Report 208, are based on data from a common source: the Incident Recording System (IRS)³⁸.
- A3.20 In Great Britain (GB), 55 fire and rescue services (FRSs) respond to fires, road traffic accidents and a range of other incidents, such as flooding and rescuing people trapped in buildings and lifts. Following a review³⁹ of data collection for fire statistics, published in 2004, the IRS was developed. It was introduced for England, Wales and Scotland in April 2009. Previously, data were collected from FRSs using paper forms. IRS automatically creates a record for every incident attended by FRSs in GB, populated with some basic information about the time and type of

³⁷ Some large employers are able to respond electronically to ONS with information about all of their employees who have been included in the ASHE sample.

³⁸ <https://www.irs.fire.gov.uk/irsweb/logon/>

³⁹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/130673.pdf>

incident and the location. FRSs then complete the records after returning from the incident, adding information about the details of the incident and whether there were any casualties.

A3.21 IRS is managed by DCLG, which maintains extensive guidance and provides a helpdesk to assist fire officers in classifying attributes of fires in unusual circumstances. It has also established a forum on the Local Government Association's Knowledge Hub⁴⁰, which allows effective sharing of information and discussion between producers of these statistics and FRSs. It also allows FRSs to discuss issues about data supply amongst themselves, leading to better quality and more consistent data provision.

A3.22 The IRS and the related support systems provided for FRSs represent a good example of DCLG, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government working together to minimise the burden on data suppliers and to promote comparability across the statistics for England, Wales and Scotland.

iv. Commentary

Agriculture Statistics (Scottish Government)

A3.23 Assessment Report 149 covers the Scottish Government's agriculture statistics. In 2010, the Scottish Government reviewed its agriculture outputs in consultation with stakeholders and made some substantial changes. The Scottish Government rationalised the outputs by reducing duplication and improved the layout and content of the release by providing more background information, better graphics and more helpful and insightful commentary.

A3.24 The Assessment Report found that *Results from 2011 December Agricultural Survey*⁴¹ and *Final Results from the 2011 June Agricultural Census*⁴² were clearly laid out and accessible with helpful introductions, contents pages, and main findings sections.. The commentary provided very good contextual information to aid the analysis and interpretation of the statistics. The language was straightforward, using technical agricultural terms only where necessary. Examples of good commentary included:

- an explanation of the differences that can arise between statistics based on the June Census and the December survey;
- the effects of the weather on crops;
- seasonal variations in the profiles of cattle and sheep;
- the effect of different questions (on the June and December censuses) on statistics; and
- discussion of how the increase in contract work may have affected trends in ownership of agricultural machinery.

A3.25 The Scottish Government provided good links between the various agriculture publications together with information about how the statistics should be used. For example the first bullet point in the 'Main Findings' section of *Results from 2011 December Agricultural Survey* identified decreases in all winter crop areas, but also stated that the results should be considered in the context of spring crop areas, and directed readers to a graph comparing the two sets of statistics.

⁴⁰ <https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/>

⁴¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0038/00389382.pdf>

⁴² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/358779/0121281.pdf>

Life Events Statistics (Office for National Statistics)

- A3.26 As a result of assessment activity, ONS has improved the commentary in a range of its statistical outputs on life events.
- A3.27 Following the assessment of marriage and divorce statistics, reported in Assessment Report 152, ONS improved the commentary in *Divorces in England and Wales*⁴³. It now includes possible explanations of changing patterns in divorce, including behavioural and legislative factors; and it has discussed different theories about the relationship between the economic recession of 2008-09 and divorce trends. We regard this as appropriate speculation about the reasons for changes in trends, presented neutrally and helpfully for the user to understand the factors that may be impacting on the statistics.
- A3.28 In a similar vein, ONS has also included helpful commentary, including known and hypothesised reasons for change, in its bulletin *Marriages in England and Wales*⁴⁴. Of particular note in this release is ONS's reference to relevant statistics from both DCLG's Citizenship Survey and from the Church of England (a non-official source), to contextualise its own statistics.
- A3.29 In *Conceptions in England and Wales*⁴⁵, ONS has attributed changes in conception rates to legislative changes, along with changes in attitudes towards marriage. ONS has also given helpful context by providing an explanation of why there is interest in teenage conceptions, and linking teenage conceptions with wider issues of socio-economic disadvantage.
- A3.30 In improving the commentary in each of these releases, ONS has written comprehensive descriptions of the use made of each of the sets of statistics.

v. Comparability between the four UK administrations*Housing Statistics (Department for Communities and Local Government and Welsh Government)*

- A3.31 Following Assessment Report 117 on Housing in England, DCLG added material to a wide range of its statistical releases on housing topics (such as homelessness, house building, social housing sales, dwelling stock, and affordable housing supply). The material summarises the differences in legislation, coverage, definitions, data sources, methods or timing that may affect comparability between the English statistics and the equivalent statistics for other parts of the UK. The Welsh Government liaised with DCLG over this work and has added similar material to many of its releases, in response to Assessment Report 133.
- A3.32 DCLG also published a note⁴⁶ on its website describing definitional, coverage, and methodological differences between some of the housing statistics published by DCLG and the three devolved administrations. This is comprehensive, and helpfully included links to documents relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

⁴³ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_246403.pdf

⁴⁴ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_258307.pdf

⁴⁵ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_258291.pdf

⁴⁶

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/localauthorityhousing/hssaandbpsadifferences/>

ANNEX 4: DESIGNATION AND MATTERS OF INTERPRETATION

A4.1 As part of the process of implementing assessment, we have had to make judgements about whether particular practices of producer bodies meet the standards of the Code of Practice. For example: is the engagement with users sufficiently effective to meet Principle 1? Does a producer provide enough information about the quality of its statistics to meet Principle 4? And, is the commentary provided in a statistical release sufficient to meet Principle 8? A particular challenge has been to make consistent judgements on these issues in different assessment reports. This Annex details some of the judgements we have made about where to set the bar in relation to certain practices of the Code. These examples do not represent a systematic review, but illustrate the judgements we have made.

Presenting statistics impartially and objectively (Principle 2 Practice 2)

A4.2 Assessment Report 200 considered the way in which ONS presented its mortality statistics. The report found an example of good practice in *Suicide Rates in the United Kingdom, 2006 - 2010*, which included a section that explained, impartially and objectively, the relevant policy context and targets about suicide prevention in each of the four UK countries. In some other publications, the report found that the drafting of information about the policy context would benefit from review to ensure that it would be interpreted as politically neutral. For example, *Infant and Perinatal Mortality in England and Wales by Social and Biological Factors, 2010* stated 'the white paper set out its theme ... by emphasizing the government's continued commitment to reduce child poverty'. The assessment report considered that some readers may regard this statement as endorsing government policy. It included a requirement for ONS to review the drafting of contextual information about government policy in the mortality releases, to ensure that the information presented was impartial and objective.

Promptly alerting users when errors are discovered in statistical reports (Principle 2 Practice 7)

A4.3 Assessment Report 170 considered the steps that ONS took to alert users when it discovered an error in *Output in the Construction Industry* on the day of its release. The error significantly affected the published statistics. ONS contacted all those users who were on its circulation list for the publication, to alert them to the error, published a notice and reissued the publication with a correction later the same day. However, there was a delay of four hours between the error being found and the incorrect statistics being removed from ONS's website, and some users may have unknowingly accessed the incorrect statistics during this time. The assessment report considered that the delay in announcing the error could have left some users misinformed and included a requirement for ONS to ensure that errors discovered in statistical reports are addressed, and stakeholders alerted, promptly.

Inclusion of commentary not prepared by the producer team (Principle 3 Practice 1)

A4.4 Assessment Report 2 found that police forces in Scotland provided commentary on the finalised statistics on recorded crime in Scotland which formed part of the published commentary. The assessment report did not consider it appropriate for the statistical release to include commentary provided by the police forces. It included a requirement for the authors of the statistical release to prepare their own impartial and objective commentary on the statistics rather than rely on commentary provided by police forces.

The role of the relevant statistical head of profession (Principle 3 Practices 2 and 3)

- A4.5 The preamble to the Code (paragraph xiii) notes that it is implicit within the Code that there will be sufficient managerial separation between staff responsible for official statistics and other staff of the organisation, to ensure clear lines of accountability for observance of the Code. Assessment Report 190 found that some of the statistics published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) were produced by non-statisticians who primarily work to develop and monitor DCMS's policies. The assessment team felt that this arrangement could present a conflict of interests and so could be a risk to the integrity of DCMS's statistics. The assessment report included a requirement for DCMS to document how those who produce statistical reports were protected from any political pressures and so explain how the integrity of its statistics was safeguarded.
- A4.6 DCMS has seven Arm's Length Bodies that produce official statistics. Assessment Report 190 noted that each of them had a nominated Lead Official who was responsible for the statistics. These Lead Officials may not themselves be statisticians, and may not be of sufficient seniority within the organisation to be able to address effectively any challenge that may arise to the integrity of the statistics. The assessment report noted that the Lead Officials are supported by DCMS's statistical Head of Profession. It included a suggestion that DCMS should consider whether its statistical Head of Profession should play a more active role supporting the DCMS's Arm's Length Bodies, for example through visits and discussions with relevant senior staff, to explain the importance of statistics and compliance with the Code of Practice.

Prominent labelling of statistics that appear in National Statistics publications but which are not themselves National Statistics (Principle 4 Practices 1 and 2)

- A4.7 It can sometimes be helpful for producer bodies to include non-National Statistics in a National Statistics publication to provide contextual information. For example, *Forestry Statistics* and *Forestry Facts and Figures* produced by the Forestry Commission include some statistics that are not National Statistics, to provide a more complete picture of woodland and forestry in the UK. Assessment Report 181 noted that this can be helpful to users. In these situations, the Authority expects the statistical release to indicate clearly which statistics are not National Statistics and to ensure that they are of sufficient quality to meet users' needs.

Coherence of statistical products (Principle 4 Practice 3)

- A4.8 Assessment Report 117 found that the types of product included in DCLG's statistics on affordable housing supply, and the criteria for their inclusion, were not adequately described. Nor was it made clear how and why these statistics differed from related statistics on the National Affordable Housing Programme produced by the Homes and Communities Agency. The Report included a requirement for DCLG to clarify the criteria for inclusion in *Affordable Housing Supply*; provide more explanation of the types of scheme and explain the differences in coverage between these statistics and the related statistics published by the Homes and Communities Agency.

The approach to the assessment of experimental statistics (Principle 4 Practice 5)

- A4.9 Experimental statistics are new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are produced in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development. It is for producer bodies, rather than the Statistics Authority, to determine which statistics should be labelled as experimental statistics.

- A4.10 Assessment Report 80 found that statistics on internet sales that are published by ONS as part of the Retail Sales Index release are labelled as experimental statistics, although they are collected as part of the same survey and using the same methods as the other retail sales statistics in the release. The report included a requirement for ONS to publish a plan to review the data sources and methods used to produce these experimental statistics, to ensure that they are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs.
- A4.11 The Authority has published a statement⁴⁷ that sets out its approach to the assessment and designation as National Statistics of official statistics that are labelled as experimental statistics.

Comparability of statistics for different administrations of the UK (Principle 4 Practice 6)

- A4.12 Parallel assessments were carried out of statistics about looked-after children in each of the four countries of the UK. The reports included a requirement for each administration to document clearly the differences between each administration's statistics for looked-after children and to scope the feasibility and need for a comparable data subset. In response, the producer bodies published a joint statement documenting the differences between looked-after children statistics in each of the four UK administrations, including information about legislative and other differences.
- A4.13 In discussion with the Authority Board, the assessment team's approach to what is required under Principle 4 Practice 6 has evolved since it produced the assessment reports on looked-after children. Where comparable statistics are produced for each administration, we now expect the statistical releases to provide users with links to the comparable statistics for the other countries. Where equivalent statistics for different countries are not considered comparable, we expect producers to provide users with some information about the nature of the differences and why they are not comparable. Depending on the likely level of user need, there may also be a need for producers across the different administrations to document the differences between the statistics and to consider what more might be done to improve comparability.

Use of resources (Principle 7 Practices 4 and 5)

- A4.14 Assessment Report 82 found that the Welsh Government had processes in place to monitor and review the cost of producing its short-term output indicators for Wales. However, it found little evidence that the Welsh Government had considered whether these costs were consistent with the level of user interest in these statistics and concerns about the quality of the statistics. The Report included a requirement for the Welsh Government to review the user need for these outputs, taking account of the data quality, costs, and other priorities.

Statistics used to measure progress towards meeting government targets (Principle 8 Practice 2)

- A4.15 Assessment Report 11 found that the Scottish House Condition Survey mentioned that the survey was used to measure progress against ministerial targets, but did not mention the specific targets nor highlight the relevant statistics. The Report included a requirement for the release to draw attention to any statistics that are used to measure progress towards government targets and to provide a description of the targets.

⁴⁷ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.html>

- A4.16 Where sets of statistics are compiled for the specific purpose of measuring progress against a particular government target, we think it appropriate for the statistical release to include information about the extent to which progress is being made towards the target.

Use of statistics for league tables (Principle 8 Practice 6)

- A4.17 The absence of published datasets of school-level examination results limits the accessibility of the statistics and makes it difficult for users to analyse and to re-use the statistics. Assessment Reports 49, 50 and 51 asked the producers of these statistics in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to draw attention to the availability of datasets of attainment statistics for individual schools, and to make these datasets available on request with appropriate explanation and commentary to encourage their informed use.

Archiving (Principle 8 Practice 7)

- A4.18 Assessment Report 45 on Balance of Payments statistics produced by ONS found that ONS did not have a sufficiently developed policy for archiving business survey data. The report included a requirement for ONS to take appropriate steps to deposit business survey data with the relevant national archive.

Publishing lists of those granted pre-release access to the statistics (Protocol 2 Practice 7)

- A4.19 Assessment Report 190 identified a tension between the legitimate need for DCMS to grant pre-release access to the detailed data used to produce official statistics for the purposes of data validation, and the need to limit access to the data prior to release, to prevent inappropriate use. The Report included a requirement for DCMS to review its arrangements for granting early access to these data and to ensure that all those granted access understood their obligations under the Code.

- A4.20 The Pre Release Access Order in Scotland⁴⁸ requires producers to maintain lists of those who have pre-release access to the statistics in their final form, and to provide the lists on request; it does not require the lists to be published. We are of the view that it would be good practice for the Scottish Government to publish the lists of those who are granted pre-release access to the statistics. Assessment reports for Scottish Government statistics have included this as a suggestion for improvement.

Publication of data prior to their release as National Statistics (Protocol 2 Practice 8 and Protocol 3 Practice 4)

- A4.21 Assessment Report 165 found that the Scottish Government publishes some environment statistics in an online database before they are published as National Statistics in a statistical release. This results in the numbers being in the public domain prior to their 'first release' as National Statistics. We take the view that it is the National Statistics publication in the round – tables, charts and words, as an entity – that should be protected from pre-release access, rather than the individual figures per se. The Authority has published a statement⁴⁹ that describes how it would approach any concerns about the release of management information prior to their publication as official statistics.

⁴⁸ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2008/399/contents/made>

⁴⁹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/management-information--mi--and-research-data-as-official-statistics.html>

The need to assure the quality of data drawn from administrative sources held by different organisations (Protocol 3 Practice 5)

- A4.22 Assessment Report 15 found that the Welsh Government relied on local authorities to submit accurate data on looked-after children. The Welsh Government carried out validation checks when it receives the data, but did not undertake any wider quality assurance or audit of the data held by local authorities. The report included a requirement for the Welsh Government to include more information about the arrangements for auditing the quality of the data provided by local authorities in its Statement of Administrative Sources.

Government statements commenting on statistics (Protocol 2 Practice 9)

- A4.23 The Scottish Government published two separate 'news releases' on the same day as it published statistics on recorded Crime in Scotland. We found it difficult to distinguish the statistical statement from the government statement. Assessment Report 3 included a requirement for the Scottish Government to ensure that the government statements are clearly presented as policy statements (or ministerial statements) and can be readily distinguished from statistical news releases.

ANNEX 5: FULL LIST OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS

	Set of Statistics	Producer Body	Date of Publication
1	Statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System	National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse	June 2009
2	Recorded Crime in Scotland	Scottish Government	June 2009
3	Statistics on Enrolments at Schools and in Funded Pre-School Education in Northern Ireland	Department of Education, Northern Ireland	June 2009
4	Road Casualty Statistics	Department for Transport	July 2009
5	UK Energy Sector Indicators	Department of Energy and Climate Change	July 2009
6	Statistics on Road Freight	Department for Transport	July 2009
7	Prison Population Projections	Ministry of Justice	July 2009
8	Migration Statistics	Office for National Statistics	July 2009
9	Statistics on International Development and the ODA:GNI Ratio	Department for International Development	July 2009
10	The Scottish Health Survey	Scottish Government	September 2009
11	Scottish House Condition Survey	Scottish Government	September 2009
12	Scottish Crime and Justice Survey	Scottish Government	September 2009
13	Statistics on Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England	Department for Education	October 2009
14	Statistics on Children Looked After by Local Authorities in Scotland	Scottish Government	October 2009
15	Statistics on Children Looked After by Local Authorities in Wales	Welsh Government	October 2009
16	Statistics on Children Looked After by Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland	October 2009
17	Wealth in Great Britain	Office for National Statistics	November 2009
18	National Child Measurement Programme	NHS Information Centre	November 2009
19	Average Weekly Earnings	Office for National Statistics	November 2009
20	Energy Statistics	Department of Energy and Climate Change	November 2009
21	Assessment of 18 Weeks Referral to Treatment Statistics	Department of Health	December 2009
22	Assessment of Agriculture in the UK and selected crop and livestock statistics	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	December 2009
23	Assessment of Child Benefit Statistics	HM Revenue & Customs	December 2009

24	Assessment of Producer Price Indices	Office for National Statistics	December 2009
25	Assessment of Services Producer Price Indices	Office for National Statistics	December 2009
26	Assessment of Scottish Household Survey outputs	Scottish Government	December 2009
27	Assessment of Scottish Labour Market Statistics	Scottish Government	December 2009
28	Special Assessment of the 2011 Censuses in the UK: Phase 1	Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	March 2010
29	Assessment of Labour Market Statistics for Northern Ireland	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Northern Ireland	March 2010
30	Assessment of Child and Working Tax Credits	HM Revenue & Customs	March 2010
31	Emissions Statistics	Department of Energy and Climate Change	March 2010
32	Council Tax Levels set by Local Authorities in England	Department for Communities and Local Government	March 2010
33	Welsh Labour Market Statistics	Welsh Government	March 2010
34	Labour Market Statistics	Office for National Statistics	March 2010
35	Statistics on Freedom of Information	Ministry of Justice	May 2010
36	Statistics on Court Activity	Ministry of Justice	May 2010
37	Statistics on Cancer in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	May 2010
38	Statistics on Cancer Screening in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	May 2010
39	Statistics on NHSScotland Workforce	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	May 2010
40	Statistics on Road Conditions in England	Department for Transport	May 2010
41	Statistics on School and Pupil Characteristics, and Absence and Exclusions in England	Department for Education	May 2010
42	Statistics on Health and Safety at Work	Health and Safety Executive	May 2010
43	Cancer Waiting Times Statistics for England	Department of Health	May 2010
44	Insolvency Statistics	Insolvency Service	May 2010
45	Balance of Payments Statistics	Office for National Statistics	May 2010
46	Statistics on Collection rates for Council Tax and non-domestic rates in England	Department for Communities and Local Government	May 2010
47	Overseas Travel & Tourism Statistics	Office for National Statistics	July 2010
48	School Achievement and Attainment Statistics in England	Department for Education	July 2010
49	School Statistics for Wales	Welsh Government	July 2010

50	School Statistics for Scotland	Scottish Government	July 2010
51	School Statistics for Northern Ireland	Department of Education, Northern Ireland	July 2010
52	Statistics on the Criminal Justice System	Ministry of Justice	July 2010
53	Statistics on Fuel Poverty	Department of Energy and Climate Change	July 2010
54	Transport Statistics Compendium Publications	Department for Transport	July 2010
55	Statistics on NHS Waiting Times in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	July 2010
56	Statistics on E-Commerce and Information and Communication Technology Activity	Office for National Statistics	July 2010
57	Statistics from the English Housing Survey	Department for Communities and Local Government	September 2010
58	Statistics from the National Travel Survey	Department for Transport	October 2010
59	Statistics on Prescribing and Pharmaceutical Services in England	NHS Information Centre	October 2010
60	Statistics on Prescribing in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	October 2010
61	Statistics on Transport in Scotland	Scottish Government	October 2010
62	Statistics on Transport in Northern Ireland	Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland	October 2010
63	Local Government Financial Statistics	Department for Communities and Local Government	October 2010
64	Lifestyles Statistics Compendium Publications	NHS Information Centre	October 2010
65	Statistics on Pensions	Office for National Statistics	October 2010
66	Statistics on Benefits, Employment Programmes, Sanctions and Vacancies	Department for Work and Pensions	December 2010
67	Statistics on Child Protection in Scotland	Scottish Government	December 2010
68	Statistics on Adoptions in England and Wales	Office for National Statistics	December 2010
69	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	December 2010
70	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation	Scottish Government	December 2010
71	Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation	Welsh Government	December 2010
72	Agricultural accounts, agricultural prices and farm business statistics	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	December 2010
73	Annual Employment Statistics from the Business Register and Employment Survey	Office for National Statistics	December 2010

74	Statistics on Higher Education in Northern Ireland	Department for Employment and Learning, NI	December 2010
75	Statistics on Lifelong Learning in Scotland	Scottish Government	December 2010
76	Statistics on Post-16 Education in Wales	Welsh Government	December 2010
77	Statistics on Higher Education in England and the UK	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Higher Education Statistics Agency, Student Loans Company	December 2010
78	Statistics on Further Education and Skills	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	December 2010
79	Consumer Price Indices	Office for National Statistics	December 2010
80	Statistics on Retail Sales	Office for National Statistics	January 2011
81	Short Term Economic Output Indicators	Office for National Statistics	January 2011
82	Welsh Short Term Output Indicators	Welsh Government	January 2011
83	Scottish Macro-Economic Statistics	Scottish Government	January 2011
84	Index of Production and Index of Services for Northern Ireland	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Northern Ireland	January 2011
85	Statistics on National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals Entering the UK	Department for Work and Pensions	February 2011
86	Statistics on Scottish Community Care	Scottish Government	February 2011
87	Statistics on Short-term Migration for England and Wales	Office for National Statistics	February 2011
88	Statistics on Local Government Finance in Wales	Welsh Government	February 2011
89	Statistics on Transport in Wales	Welsh Government	February 2011
90	Statistics from the Survey of Carers in Households in England	NHS Information Centre	February 2011
91	Statistics on patient experience in England	Department of Health	February 2011
92	Consumer Trends	Office for National Statistics	February 2011
93	Statistics on UK Trade in Goods	HM Revenue & Customs	February 2011
94	Statistics on the Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income	Office for National Statistics	February 2011
95	Construction Price and Cost Indices	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	February 2011
96	Statistics from the General Lifestyle Survey	Office for National Statistics	February 2011

97	Statistics on English Local Authority Capital Expenditure and Receipts, and Revenue Expenditure and Financing	Department for Communities and Local Government	March 2011
98	Statistics on Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland	Scottish Government	March 2011
99	Statistics on vital events in Scotland	National Records of Scotland	March 2011
100	UK Annual and Quarterly National Accounts	Office for National Statistics	March 2011
101	Statistics on Population, Demography and Households in Wales	Welsh Government	March 2011
102	Crime Statistics in England and Wales	Home Office	April 2011
103	Population Estimates and Projections	Office for National Statistics	April 2011
104	Statistics on Civil Partnerships	Office for National Statistics	April 2011
105	Statistics on Life Expectancy by Local Areas	Office for National Statistics	April 2011
106	Statistics on Household Projections in England	Department for Communities and Local Government	April 2011
107	Statistics on the Activity of Coroners	Ministry of Justice	April 2011
108	Statistics from the Living Costs and Food Survey	Office for National Statistics	April 2011
109	Statistics on Cancer in England	Office for National Statistics	April 2011
110	Statistics on Maternities and Births in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	May 2011
111	Statistics on Court Activity in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service	May 2011
112	Statistics on Household Estimates and Projections in Scotland	National Records of Scotland	May 2011
113	Statistics on Population and Demography in Scotland	National Records of Scotland	May 2011
114	Statistics on Further Education and Cross-Cutting Education in Wales	Welsh Government	May 2011
115	Special assessment of the 2011 Censuses in the UK: Phase 2	Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	June 2011
116	Statistics on Adult Dental Health	NHS Information Centre	June 2011
117	Statistics on Housing in England	Department for Communities and Local Government	June 2011
118	Environmental Accounts	Office for National Statistics	June 2011

119	Statistics on Homicide, Domestic Abuse, Firearm Crimes and Offences and Firearm Certificates Recorded by the Police in Scotland	Scottish Government	June 2011
120	Statistics on Tax Receipts	HM Revenue & Customs	June 2011
121	Statistics on Sexual Health in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	June 2011
122	Statistics on Contraceptive Services	NHS Information Centre	June 2011
123	Statistics on Food	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	June 2011
124	Statistics on Demography and Vital Events in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	July 2011
125	Statistics on Vehicles	Department for Transport	July 2011
126	Statistics on UK Sea Fisheries	Marine Management Organisation	July 2011
127	Statistics on Scottish Sea Fisheries	Scottish Government	July 2011
128	Statistics on Offender Management in Scotland	Scottish Government	July 2011
129	Statistics from Lifestyles Surveys	NHS Information Centre	July 2011
130	Statistics Published in Rural Scotland Key Facts	Scottish Government	July 2011
131	Statistics on Scottish Patient Experience	Scottish Government	July 2011
132	Statistics on NHS Secondary Care in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	September 2011
133	Statistics on Housing in Wales	Welsh Government	September 2011
134	Statistics on NHS Wales Performance	Welsh Government	September 2011
135	Statistics on Health and Social Care in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHSScotland	September 2011
136	Statistics on Pre-School Education Provision and Early Years Profile Results in England	Department for Education	September 2011
137	Statistics on Births in England and Wales	Office for National Statistics	September 2011
138	Annual Statistics on Hours and Earnings	Office for National Statistics	September 2011
139	Annual Statistics on Hours and Earnings in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	September 2011
140	Statistics on Families and Households in the UK	Office for National Statistics	September 2011
141	Statistics on Re-offending	Ministry of Justice	September 2011
142	Statistics on Drug Treatment	National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse	November 2011
143	UK Regional Accounts	Office for National Statistics	November 2011
144	Statistics on Public Sector Finances	Office for National Statistics & HM Treasury	November 2011
145	Statistics on Public Sector Expenditure	HM Treasury	November 2011

146	Statistics on Public Service Productivity	Office for National Statistics	November 2011
147	Statistics on Land Use Change in England	Department for Communities and Local Government	November 2011
148	Statistics on Agriculture in Northern Ireland	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland	November 2011
149	Statistics on Agriculture in Scotland	Scottish Government	November 2011
150	Statistics on Agriculture in the UK and England	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	November 2011
151	Statistics on Agriculture in Wales	Welsh Government	November 2011
152	Statistics on Marriages and Divorces in England and Wales	Office for National Statistics	November 2011
153	Statistics on Hospital Waiting Times in Northern Ireland	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland	November 2011
154	Statistics from the Farm Business Survey Rotating Modules	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	November 2011
155	Statistics on Search and Rescue Callouts	Ministry of Defence	November 2011
156	Statistics on Housing and Planning in Scotland	Scottish Government	November 2011
157	Statistics on Income Tax	HM Revenue & Customs	November 2011
158	Statistics on Welsh Businesses, Exports and Earnings	Welsh Government	November 2011
159	Statistics on Community Health in England	NHS Information Centre	December 2011
160	Small Area Income Estimates for England and Wales	Office for National Statistics	December 2011
161	Statistics on Household Resources	Department for Work and Pensions	December 2011
162	Statistics from the Armed Forces Continuous Attitudes Survey	Ministry of Defence	December 2011
163	Statistics on Sustainability and the Environment in Wales	Welsh Government	December 2011
164	Statistics on International Transactions	Office for National Statistics	December 2011
165	Statistics on the Environment in Scotland	Scottish Government	December 2011
166	Statistics on Corporation Tax	HM Revenue & Customs	December 2011
167	Statistics on Births, Infant Mortality and Teenage Conceptions in Wales	Welsh Government	December 2011
168	Statistics on Building Materials and Components	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	December 2011
169	Statistics on Regional Economic Performance	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	February 2012
170	Statistics on Output and New Orders in the Construction Industry	Office for National Statistics	February 2012

171	Statistics on Child Support in Great Britain	Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission	February 2012
172	Statistics on Indirect Taxes	HM Revenue & Customs	February 2012
173	Statistics on Sustainability and the Environment in England and the UK	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	February 2012
174	Statistics on the School Workforce in England	Department for Education	February 2012
175	Statistics on Fraud and Error in the Benefits System in Great Britain	Department for Work and Pensions	February 2012
176	Statistics on Abortions	Department of Health	February 2012
177	Statistics on Immigration	Home Office	February 2012
178	Statistics on Health Inequalities in England and Wales	Office for National Statistics	February 2012
179	Statistics on Defence Inflation	Ministry of Defence	February 2012
180	Statistics from the Annual Business Survey	Office for National Statistics	March 2012
181	Forestry Statistics	Forestry Commission	March 2012
182	Statistics on Output in the Construction Industry in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	March 2012
183	Statistics on National Insurance Contributions and Qualifying Years, and Second Tier Pension Provision	Department for Work and Pensions	March 2012
184	Statistics on Road Reliability and Congestion	Department for Transport	March 2012
185	Statistics on Post-school Education, Training and Employment	Department for Education	March 2012
186	Statistics on UK Defence Personnel	Ministry of Defence	March 2012
187	Statistics on UK Business Population and Demography	Office for National Statistics & Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	March 2012
188	Statistics on Children's Social Care in Northern Ireland	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland	March 2012
189	Statistics on Scottish Businesses and Research and Development	Scottish Government	March 2012
190	Statistics on Participation in Culture, Leisure and Sport	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	March 2012
191	Statistics on Substance Misuse in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland	April 2012
192	Statistics on Ophthalmic Services	Health and Social Care Information Centre	April 2012
193	Statistics on the Operation of Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland	Scottish Government	April 2012
194	Statistics on Trade Union Membership	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	April 2012

195	Statistics on Inheritance Tax, Personal Wealth and Capital Gains Tax	HM Revenue & Customs	April 2012
196	Statistics on Labour Productivity	Office for National Statistics	April 2012
197	Statistics on Defence Health	Ministry of Defence	April 2012
198	Statistics from the Family Resources Survey in Northern Ireland	Department for Social Development Northern Ireland	April 2012
199	Statistics on Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland	Scottish Government	May 2012
200	Statistics on Mortality	Office for National Statistics	May 2012
201	Statistics on Internet Access	Office for National Statistics	May 2012
202	Statistics on Heart Disease and Stroke in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland	May 2012
203	Statistics on Scientific Procedures on Living Animals	Home Office	May 2012
204	Statistics on Conceptions	Office for National Statistics	May 2012
205	Statistics on Child Health in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland	May 2012
206	Statistics on Profitability and Share Ownership	Office for National Statistics	June 2012
207	Statistics on Adult Social Care in England	Health and Social Care Information Centre	June 2012
208	Fire Statistics	Department for Communities and Local Government, Welsh Government and Scottish Government	June 2012
209	Statistics on Dental and Ophthalmic Services and General Practice in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland	June 2012
210	UK Defence Statistics Compendium	Ministry of Defence	June 2012
211	Statistics on Housing and Benefits in Northern Ireland	Department for Social Development, Northern Ireland	June 2012
212	Rail Statistics	Office of Rail Regulation	June 2012
213	Statistics on Green Belt Land and Planning Applications	Department for Communities and Local Government	June 2012
214	Statistics on Crime, Road Traffic Collisions and the Security Situation in Northern Ireland	Police Service Northern Ireland	June 2012
215	Statistics on Criminal Proceedings and Reconviction Rates in Scotland	Scottish Government	June 2012
216	Statistics on Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud, and the Abstract of Statistics on Benefits	Department for Work and Pensions	June 2012

217	Police Statistics in England and Wales	Home Office	June 2012
218	Statistics on Research and Development	Office for National Statistics	June 2012
219	Welsh Compendium Publications	Welsh Government	June 2012
220	Statistics on Community Care for Adults in Northern Ireland	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland	June 2012
221	Maritime, Road Traffic, Bus, Taxi, Light Rail and Disabled Parking Badge Statistics	Department for Transport	June 2012
222	Statistics on Hospitals in Northern Ireland	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland	June 2012
223	Statistics on Health and Personal Social Services in Wales	Welsh Government	June 2012
224	Statistics on Financial Investment	Office for National Statistics	June 2012
225	Statistics on Local Government Finance and Council Tax Collection in Scotland	Scottish Government	June 2012
226	Statistics on Health Service Costs in Scotland	Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland	June 2012
227	Statistics on Trade and Business in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	June 2012
228	Statistics on NHS Hospital Activity	Department of Health	June 2012
229	Statistics on Secure Care Accommodation for Children in Scotland	Scottish Government	June 2012
230	Statistics on Prisons and Probation	Ministry of Justice	July 2012
231	Statistics on Hospital Episodes and Appointments	Health and Social Care Information Centre	July 2012
232	Statistics on Education and Training in the UK and Vulnerable Children in England	Department for Education	July 2012
233	Statistics on UK Manufacturers' Sales by Product (PRODCOM)	Office for National Statistics	July 2012
234	Statistics on UK Business Investment and Capital Stocks	Office for National Statistics	July 2012
235	Statistics on Personal Incomes, Pensions, Investments, Savings, Research and Development Tax Credits, Revenue from UK Oil and Gas, Property, Charities and Trusts	HM Revenue & Customs	July 2012
236	Statistics on Health Expectancies	Office for National Statistics	July 2012
237	Statistics on Crime and Justice in Northern Ireland	Department of Justice, Northern Ireland	July 2012

238	Statistics on Religious Communities and the Labour Market in Northern Ireland	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland	July 2012
239	Statistics on Pesticide Usage in the UK and Fertiliser Usage in GB	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Northern Ireland	July 2012
240	Statistics on Tuberculosis in Cattle (Bovine TB)	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	October 2012 (scheduled)