

UK Statistics Authority

Regulation Business Plan 2016/17

Foreword from the Director General for Regulation

This Business Plan sets out a clear direction for the Authority's regulatory function. It describes our purpose and the strategic drivers that will guide our work in 2016/17.

Our plan was prepared and approved before the publication of the Review of Economic Statistics by Sir Charles Bean in March 2016. While it is consistent with the Review's recommendations for the regulatory function, there are aspects of the Review the plan does not address explicitly, most notably the proposal to create a separate regulatory office.

The opportunity to create a more distinct identity is an exciting one. The regulatory function already achieves a great deal and I am proud of what my team delivers in supporting the production of trustworthy, high quality and valuable official statistics in the UK. But statistics producers face significant challenges: reflecting a changing society in the statistics they produce, drawing on new sources of data, and disseminating statistics in new ways. In this context, I am concerned that we have not always secured the profile and impact our work deserves. As a result we've not always been able to foster sustained improvement in the way statistics are produced and disseminated. The creation of a clearer identity and a wider scope of work can address these concerns.

My team, working with the Authority Board and engaging with external stakeholders, will develop our ambitions for this refreshed model over the summer of 2016. There is a range of ways we expect to supplement the attached business plan, including considering how to enhance our core statutory work of assessment work to provide greater focus on the quality and value of statistics; creating a clearer public voice for the regulatory function; deepening our focus on statistical methodology and on setting standards; and most significantly, developing an approach to evaluation that provides a clear view of the state of the UK's official statistics system.

We expect to communicate these changes in the autumn. In the meantime, we will implement the following plan, which itself is ambitious in driving improvement in the production of official statistics across the UK.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

Regulation of Official Statistics

Our aim is to ensure that official statistics serve the public good. They serve the public good when they are trustworthy, high quality, and valuable. The purpose of regulation is to ensure that official statistics meet these standards, and to provide confidence to users of statistics. The UK Statistics Authority was created by the Statistics and Registration Act 2007. It has two main functions: production of official statistics; and regulation of official statistics. The regulatory function is independent of the production side, with autonomy over all regulatory decisions, separate governance through the Regulation Committee of the Board, and separate determination of resourcing and business planning. The Authority's regulatory function has been delivered through:

- **Assessment:** the core statutory power is to assess statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and if they comply in full with the Code, designate them as National Statistics.
- **Monitoring:** Reviewing issues and opportunities at a systemic level.
- **Casework:** Making public comment on the uses of official statistics, often based on complaints brought to our attention by others

Strategic Drivers

Since 2008, the regulation function has helped ensure official statistics serve the public good, and mitigated the detriment of mistrusted or misused statistics.

The Authority's public voice is powerful. Public players respect it, and do not want to fall foul of it; statistical professionals listen to it, and use our messages as a way of enhancing their influence in policymaking and operational communities. We deploy this voice when we see an opportunity to enhance the respect with which official statistics are perceived, and to enforce our principles.

However, the regulatory function needs to refresh its approach to avoid regulatory work becoming a treadmill for the Authority and statistical producers, and to ensure there is openness to emerging issues. This requirement to refresh our approach takes on added importance in the context of external scrutiny of statistical governance, notably through Sir Charles Bean's Independent Review of UK Economic Statistics which will have wide reaching implications for the assessment of UK official statistics. The full impact is still under consideration.

Our strategic drivers therefore propose focusing regulatory effort on supporting a transition of statistics from a 'collect and count' model of production to a higher value added service, while continuing to advocate the National Statistics brand, and

taking stock of the code of practice. In terms of sectors, we will focus on the economy and the labour market; crime and justice; health and social care; housing statistics; and population statistics.

We will focus on 6 drivers:

- advocate and enhance the importance of the National Statistics brand
- focus on the public value of official statistics, emphasising the need to shift from 'collect and count' to shining a light on answering key questions
- raise the profile and value of the Code, taking it out of the shadows and challenging myths about it
- promote the crucial role, voice and influence of statistical professionals at all stages of the policy and communications cycle
- improve our engagement and raise our profile with our stakeholders
- innovate in our processes and regulatory model

Key Activities 2016/17

In 2016-17, we will deliver the following main activities.

We will complete a stock take of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and make changes if necessary.

During 2016 we will work with stakeholders to consider the code in detail, this will:

- challenge the myths about the Code and emphasise the way it supports statistical professionals across

Government and at all stages of the policy cycle

- enable the regulatory function to engage very widely across the GSS and beyond and to re-set expectations of how we engage and support improvement
- and, by clarifying the core components of the Code, re-affirm the value of National Statistics and encourage producers to look critically at their National Statistics estate

We will carry out strategic reviews of cross-cutting issues or thematic groups of statistics which aim to maximise the value of official statistics to the UK public.

During 2016 we will carry out strategic reviews of:

- Housing statistics (new)
- Statistics on outcomes and destinations (new)
- Continued drive to improve Crime and justice statistics and health statistics

We will carry out formal Assessments of UK official statistics in order to assess whether official statistics comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and to designate as National Statistics.

During 2016 we will carry out 20 Assessments including: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, Hospital Episode Statistics, Benefit Cap and productivity statistics.

We will develop a programme of compliance checks. These are lighter touch reviews of statistics, and are a mechanism

for us to be able to spread our net much wider between assessments.

During 2016 we will carry out 30 Compliance Checks and an ongoing review of how key economic statistics are meeting Requirements set in past Assessments.

We will continue to make appropriate public interventions and carry out casework to advocate the value of official statistics.

We will continue to use casework as a tool to respond to the way statistics are disseminated and used in the public domain. This will involve writing publicly, either in the voice of the Authority Chair or Director General for Regulation, to uphold the Code of Practice and defend the integrity of official statistics. It is inherently demand-led, but on past experience we would expect to handle around 100 cases during 2016/17.

Capability and Innovation

To deliver on our ambitions, we will adapt our regulatory model, moving towards one with greater coverage of the 1000 National Statistics, with a team that is more empowered, and with better management

of change. In order to meet this challenge we need to innovate in our model and develop our capability.

We will adapt our model to be issue-led and sector-led. So instead of focussing on discrete programmes of assessment and monitoring, we will consider emerging issues in different sectors and define interventions from our range of regulatory tools to address those issues.

In 2016-17, we will expand the business model and innovate with our current processes by:

- Developing a new compliance check tool to increase our coverage of official statistics
- Making our assessment process leaner
- Enhancing our alliance with the Authority's Good Practice Team & Quality Centre
- Bringing in subject matter experts on short term contracts
- Developing our staff capability through continued emphasis on learning and development, focussing on leadership and personal impact
- Raising our profile through more effective public communications