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Public confidence in statistics, data and analysis

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR

May 2018

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- Abundant digital information
  - In our lives
  - In the media
  - In our anxieties
- Post-truth & fake news; data rights (TSB, Cambridge Analytica)

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Reliable statistics and analysis are a public asset

- The value of this asset can be harmed by:
  - Poor quality
  - Obsolescence
  - Misuse

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Regulation of this public asset

- Since 2008, the UK has been one of the very few countries to provide independent regulation of official statistics
- The Code of Practice sets the standards for official statistics

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The three pillars

Trustworthiness

People, systems, processes

- Honesty & integrity
- Independent decision making
- Orderly release
- Transparent process & management
- Professional capability
- Data governance

Quality

Robust data, method and statistics

- Suitable data sources
- Sound methods
- Assured quality

Value

Statistics that serve the public good

- Relevance to users
- Accessibility
- Clarity & insight
- Innovation & improvement
- Efficiency & proportionality

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Trustworthiness

"Onora O'Neill argued that, rather than aiming to build trust, the task should be to become **trustworthy**—this means demonstrating **competence, honesty and reliability**.

But you also have to provide **usable evidence that allows others to check whether you are trustworthy,** which necessitates making yourself vulnerable to the other party."

(Sir David Spiegelhalter)

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Quality

Quality – statistics should be the best available measure of what they aim to represent, and should not be materially misleading

Data sources:

Where are the data from and what do they measure?

Methods:

How are the data processed into statistics?

Assurance:

What is the assurance that data are robust and reliable?

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Value

..statistics that meet the test of **practical utility** are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information

(UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics)

Relevance to users

Accessible to all

Clarity and insight

Innovation

Efficiency

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The Code of Practice: Who is it for?

- Beneficiaries:
  - People who use statistics to support decisions and judgements
- Users:
  - Organisations that produce government statistics
  - Users of government statistics
  - Other producers of data and analysis

It provides the foundations for building public confidence

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Adopting the Code

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The three pillars

The Code of Practice for Statistics

Version 2.0

FULL COMPLIANCE

Research, analysis, management information, open data

voluntary adoption

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Voluntary adoption

- Flexible and entirely optional
- Involves **publishing a statement** about why users can be reassured on Trustworthiness, Quality and Value
- In preparing the statement it is helpful to:
  - **understand** the three pillars,
  - **review** the approach to producing and publishing
  - **consider** if there are ways of improving practice

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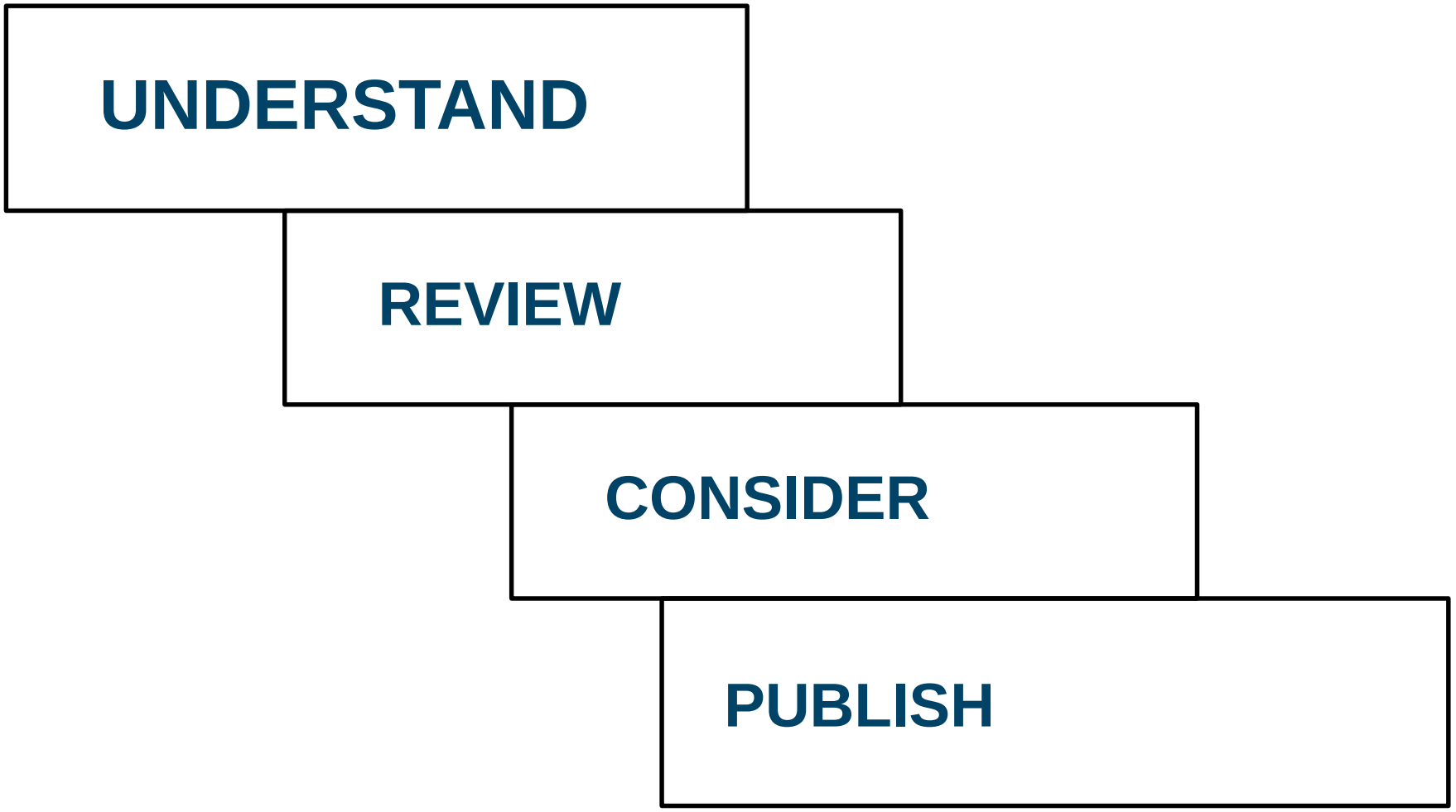

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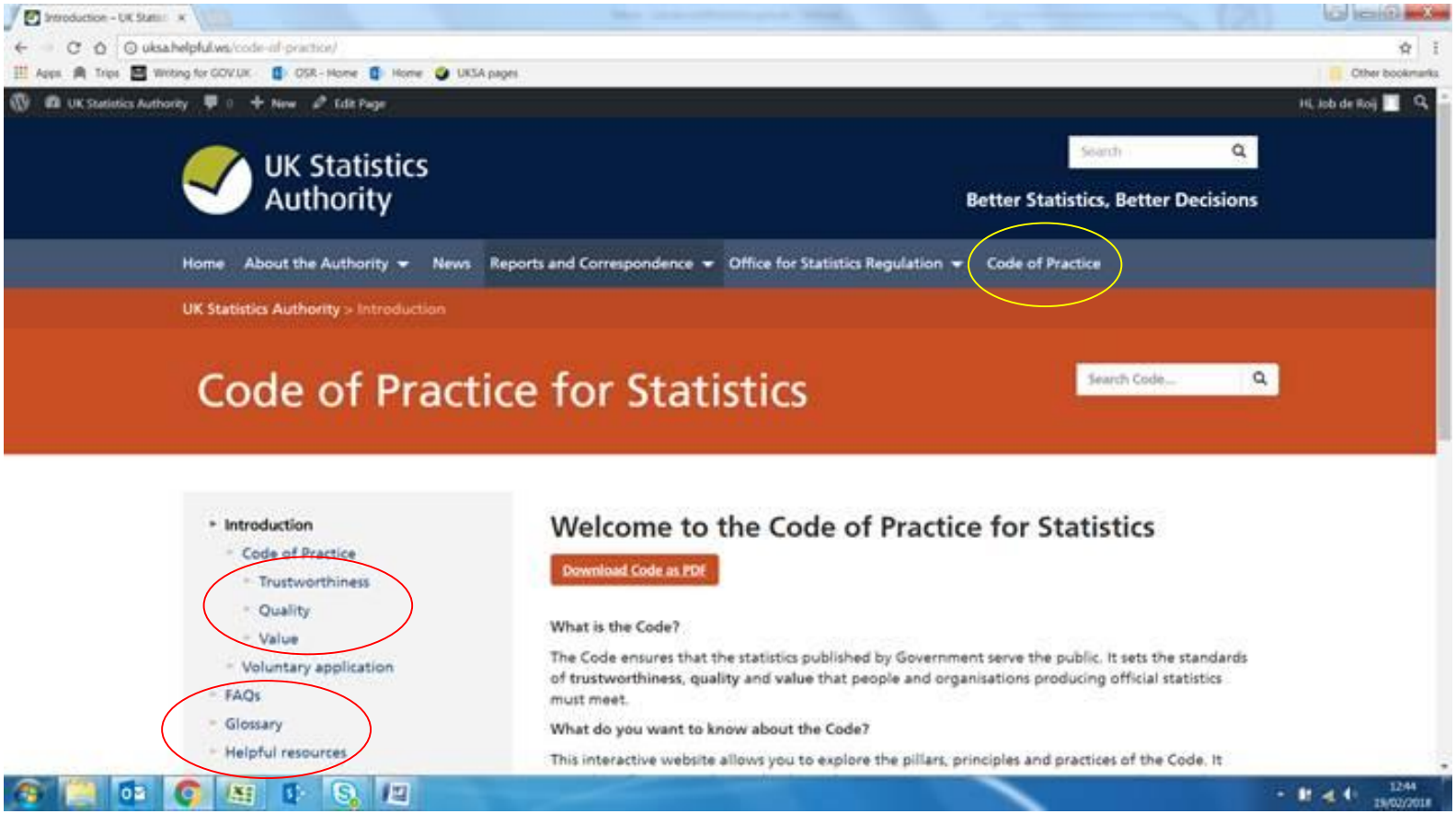
The Interactive Code



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Benefits of voluntary adoption

It shows that an organisation:

- is ethical and honest in using any data
- has a strong culture of professional analysis
- respects evidence
- is open and transparent about the strengths and limitations of its statistics, data and/or analysis
- communicates accurately, clearly and impartially
- is committed to engaging publicly to understand user needs

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