

## Implementation of National Statistics Designation Date for National Statistics Outputs

February 2019

### Summary

1. In future all National Statistics products should include details of the date they were designated as National Statistics and developments since this date. Heads of Profession should use their discretion to determine the best way to capture the designation date within a brief narrative published alongside the statistics.
2. Implementation of this change will be through a gradual roll out. Where feasible the information should be included in the next publication of the output with an expectation that information will be provided as part of all National Statistics publications by March 2020.

### Proposal

3. National Statistics products should include details of the date they were designated National Statistics.
4. A statement should be included within the bulletin or associated webpages for all National Statistics products. The relevant Head of Profession for Statistics is responsible for determining the format this takes.
5. We anticipate statements will take different forms for different organisations and outputs, depending on the product and how it is disseminated. All statements should:
  - i. State when the National Statistics status was awarded through the most recent assessment or re-assessment against the Code of Practice for Statistics.
  - ii. Refer to any compliance checks which have led to continued designations.
  - iii. Outline how outputs have been developed since the latest confirmation of National Statistics status.

An example statement is provided at **Annex B**.

6. We anticipate a gradual roll out of this new approach. Where feasible the information should be included in the next publication of the output and we expect information will be provided as part of all National Statistics publications by March 2020.

### Background

7. The designation date proposals were developed following consideration of the best approach to an expiry date for National Statistics designation. We consider the approached outlined would offer the greatest benefit for users, this includes the flexibility for producers and OSR to focus on work which will have the highest impact and providing information to allow users to be well informed about the statistics they are using. The proposed approach should provide confidence to users that the outputs are being actively developed and the expectations of National Statistics status continue to be met without the need to routinely undertake assessments because a certain time frame has passed.
8. We also anticipate it will help us have early conversations with producers about when some form of review of National Statistics designation is appropriate and what the best timing for any review would be.
9. The designation date proposals were shared via a Heads of Profession meeting and the HoPs weekly email. The proposals set out in this document, and associated FAQs (**Annex A**), reflect the feedback received from HoPs.

## **Annex A - Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Why are you introducing designation date proposals?**

As the time elapsed since the first National Statistics assessments grows it has become increasingly clear that consideration of an expiry date or alternative is important.

We considered - and discussed with HoPs - a range of options, including how long National Statistics status should last for an output following assessment and what approach would be most beneficial to users of statistics.

The proposed designation date strikes a balance which allows users to understand the time elapsed since designation and the potential implications of this and the ability for producers and OSR to focus work on the most important areas. Providing a narrative around changes since the designation date should support user confidence in the statistics and demonstrate that outputs continue to meet the standards expected of National Statistics.

### **2. Why didn't you just put a time limit on National Statistics status?**

To reassess all National Statistics on a regular basis would be a huge programme of work which in some cases would have limited benefits to users. As a result, it would not be an efficient use of producers' or OSR's time. The approach outlined allows OSR to carry out assessments at a time that makes sense for OSR and producer organisations. It should also allow OSR to have a greater impact by focusing work on key issues and outputs.

### **3. I have been trying to reduce the length of bulletins, this is increasing it. What can I do to provide users with key information without lengthening the bulletin?**

The text included in the publication should be proportionate. Its primary purpose is to provide information which will support users' interpretation of the statistics. It is likely that higher profile statistics would include more detail and lower profile or more regular publications would be more limited.

The statement should include details of the main developments which users are likely to be interested in, it does not need to include every small change made to an output. Its purpose is to demonstrate to users that statistics continue to develop and meet the standards expected of National Statistics irrespective of when the most recent assessment took place. HoPs will be best placed to judge what is appropriate for any particular publication.

If you have a short but high-profile publication and you have a lot of improvements you want to highlight you could consider including a line on the designation date in the publication itself and then linking to further details on a separate web page. Much of the information on developments should already be published elsewhere, and links to this would be sufficient.

As the approach gets implemented and example statements become available we will circulate a summary of best practice.

### **4. I publish National Statistics data directly to the Web – how does this work for me?**

Where the statistics are published as html or as part of an interactive tool then you should consider what presentation works best for the circumstances. The priority is to provide information to give the users confidence in the outputs and demonstrate ongoing compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

There are a range of valid approaches and we expect HoPs to use their discretion in these circumstances. We will circulate some good practice examples as real examples become available.

**5. I don't know what my designation date statement should look like, can you help me develop something?**

All statements are likely to be slightly different and it is for HoPs to determine what works best for each publication.

We have provided an example statement at Annex B, and plan to circulate further examples once they are available.

If at any point you are unsure about what would be best for your publication then speak to the relevant [OSR domain lead](#).

**6. You have said the information should be provided for all National Statistics by March 2020. Does this mean I don't need to do anything yet?**

No. The speed with which these proposals can be introduced will vary across organisation and output. Ideally all National Statistics outputs would include the relevant information the next time they are published, though this will not be possible in all cases. The expectation is that all publications will include the information by March 2020, this is to allow for the inclusion of information in annual publications, as there may be cases where it is not possible to add additional information in time for February 2019 publications. We would expect the information to be introduced sooner than March 2020 for monthly and quarterly publications.

**7. What do you mean by a gradual roll out?**

Feedback suggests that in most cases the changes outlined will be easy to implement. Wherever feasible the information should be included in the next publication of the output. However, there will be some circumstances where it is more complex and we want to give people time to think through the best approach for their products so that you can provide information that works for you and your users. We are therefore not putting a strict deadline on the implementation date and will take each output on a case by case basis. We expect that in almost all cases it should be realistic to have included the additional information by March 2020.

For the first few months, when undertaking our regulatory work, we will not formally highlight any producers not including this information. We will work with you to think about how and when you can implement the proposals.

Where there are concerns, we would welcome discussions with HoPs, so we can consider how they are best resolved and will be looking for examples we can share as demonstrations of best practice to support implementation across the GSS.

**8. My next publication will be after March 2020. What should I do about implementing these proposals?**

If you have a publication which is less frequent than annual you do not need to make changes to any historic publications. You should introduce these proposals the next time you publish.

**9. I have a one-off publication which has been designated as National Statistics, the suggested text does not work for me. What should I do?**

In a small number of cases (e.g. Census) a designation may apply to a one-off publication or series of publications. In these circumstances we would expect producers to use their discretion to include a statement that is most helpful to users of the statistics. This may be as little as highlighting an assessment has taken place and when.

**10. My publication has only just been assessed and designated National Statistics, so I do not have any improvements to highlight. What should I do?**

See above. In these circumstances the statement may be limited to highlighting an assessment has taken place and when. You may also want to highlight developments which have been implemented as a result of the assessment. This statement is an ongoing requirement so it is likely that there would be more to include for future publications.

**11. I am concerned that this will undermine the statistics if considerable time has passed since the most recent assessment or compliance check?**

The intention is that providing information alongside the details of the designation date will support user confidence and allow them to see how outputs have developed in line with the Code of Practice. In some cases, preparation of this narrative may highlight the need for some further regulator intervention (assessment or compliance check). In these cases, we would welcome a conversation with you.

**12. Do these proposals apply to official statistics?**

No. The proposals outlined are only expected of National Statistics outputs. It is good practice to highlight developments to outputs and keep users informed. There may be some circumstances where producers of official statistics think taking the approach outlined will be helpful for official statistics, for example, to highlight a compliance check and subsequent developments. However, for the majority of cases the proposals would not apply to official statistics.

Where this approach is applied to official statistics the text may be something like:

*Since the compliance check undertaken by OSR in [insert date and link] we have delivered the following improvements:*

**13. This requirement is not in the Code of Practice, will this form part of an assessment or compliance check?**

While the specifics of this proposal are not in the [Code of Practice](#), the Code is very clear on the need to support users, V1 Relevance to Users, states: "Users of statistics and data should be at the centre of statistical production; their needs should be understood, their views sought and acted on, and their use of statistics supported". This proposal is a key aspect of supporting use of statistics.

Seeking continuous improvement is central to Principle V4 Innovation and Improvement. Again involving users is fundamental to complying with this aspect of the Code.

During any assessment or compliance check we will be considering the statements provided alongside National Statistics outputs in the context of supporting users interpretation of the statistics. However, particularly in the initial period of implementation, our priority will be to discuss any issues you may have with you.

**14. I think this is a great idea – is there any way I can raise awareness of it?**

We are planning to publish a blog to let people know about our approach to designation dates. We think it would be great if a producer could write a complementary blog or contribute to our blog. If this is something you'd be interested in doing then please let us know!

**15. What should I do if I have any other questions?**

We anticipate that HoPs will support roll out within statistical producers, but we would be happy to have a chat to anyone with remaining questions. We will also share examples of how the proposals have been implemented in different circumstance as they become available.

If you have any further questions please talk to [one of the team](#).

## Annex B - Example



### **NATIONAL STATISTICS STATUS**

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in August 2017 following a compliance check by the Office for Statistics Regulation [*include hyperlink*]. The statistics last underwent a full assessment [*hyperlink to report*] against the [Code of Practice](#) in 2014.

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Example A – E.g. added more value by providing more detailed breakdowns
- Example B – E.g. introduced validation against new administrative data sources to better assure ourselves of the quality of the statistics
- Example C – E.g. enhanced trustworthiness by reducing/removing pre-release access

[Include links to key documents relating to the improvements where possible].