

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Committee for Official Statistics

Minutes

Meeting of Tuesday 13 November 2012
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London

Present

Members

Professor David Rhind (Chair)
Mr Richard Alldritt
Dr Colette Bowe
Dr Norman Caven
Mr Andrew Dilnot
Professor David Hand
Ms Jil Matheson

Secretariat

Mr Rob Bumpstead
Mr Joe Cuddeford

Other Attendees

Mr Tim Andrews
Ms Stephanie Howarth (for items 3 and 4)
Mr Richard Laux

Apologies

Professor Angela Dale
Mr Partha Dasgupta

Declarations of Interest

None

1 Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record. The Chair noted that this would have been Ms Dale's last meeting as her term on the Committee had ended. The Committee recorded its gratitude for the valuable contribution Ms Dale had made to the work of the Committee.
- 1.2 Progress with actions was reviewed. With regards to scheduling further discussion of the future of the Publication Hub, the meeting heard that the Government Digital Service was prioritising work to migrate five government departments to the new single web domain by April and so further consideration of its possible role in hosting the Publication Hub had been delayed.
- 1.3 In relation to an action for the Head of Assessment to examine the case for two Statistical Expenditure Reports, Mr Alldritt reported that he had put forward proposals on these to that morning's meeting of the Assessment Committee. Statistical Expenditure Reports had previously been commissioned and considered by COS and the meeting considered the governance arrangements, which would be reviewed and confirmed in due course.

2 Activities of the Government Statistical Service [SA(COS)(12)27]

- 2.1 Ms Matheson summarised the activities of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) from September 2012 to October 2012, including international developments. The UN Statistical Commission had taken on an action from the Rio+20 Conference to develop a harmonised set of indicators of sustainable development. The UN had in 2012 adopted a new global standard for a system of Environmental Economic Accounting.
- 2.2 It has been announced that a new round of European statistical peer reviews will take place, although the format and order of the reviews is to be confirmed. The UK review would cover all departments that produce statistics for Eurostat, of which it was estimated that there were between 30 and 40 departments. ONS, as the UK's National Statistical Institute, was likely to be given a coordinating role.
- 2.3 A European Statistical System (ESS) peer review of the UK's performance against the European Code in 2008 found that the UK either 'fully met' or 'largely met' all 35 indicators in the Code. The Committee heard that the areas where the UK had fallen short were related to a lack of statistical legislation (which had been addressed by the Statistics Act) and the need for improvements to the ONS website.
- 2.4 The Committee considered developments regarding quality assurance in the GSS. The Quality Assurance Framework, which would involve a series of annual reports from Heads of Profession to the National Statistician, was being finalised. Separately, there were two strands of work for assuring quality: regular professional quality checks using the GSS Quality Methods and Harmonisation Tool and more in-depth methodological reviews. Such reviews had previously been undertaken as part of the programme of National Statistics Quality Reviews. These reviews had been suspended in 2008 in advance of the start of the Assessment programme. The meeting heard that the National Statistician anticipated reinstating the programme of reviews. The Committee was interested in these developments and wished to be kept informed.

Action: National Statistician to provide an update on developments regarding the quality assurance in the GSS.

3 Update on the GSS strategy [SA(COS)(12)27a]

- 3.1 Ms Howarth provided an update on progress with the overarching strategy for the GSS.
- 3.2 The Committee welcomed the strategy. The meeting discussed the 'wedge' diagram on page two of the strategy document, which showed a shift in focus from collection towards dissemination and collaboration. This represented a ground-breaking change which would admittedly be challenging to implement in the current climate. There were pressures on the GSS to move in the other direction and so the case needed to be continually made for this aspiration.
- 3.3 It was recognised that users were not necessarily concerned about collaboration and required high quality data and statistics. However, there is a 'feedback loop' at play whereby increased collaboration should lead to better statistics that meet users' needs.
- 3.4 The meeting heard that, while the intended audience for the document was staff in the GSS rather than the wider public, the strategy would be published on the National Statistician's pages of the Authority website in due course. The Authority was developing its own strategy, which would be public facing. The Committee agreed that it was important for the strategies to be aligned so finalisation of the GSS one will be delayed until the UKSA one is completed.

4 Open Data [SA(COS)(11)27b]

- 4.1 Ms Howarth provided an overview of the current position with the 'Open Data' initiative in relation to statistics and the GSS.
- 4.2 The following points were made in discussion:
- i. there were a range of committees and organisations that had an interest in Open Data, such as the UK Data Strategy Board, the Open Data User Group, the Public Data Group, the Open Data Institute and the UK Data Forum;
 - ii. one of the tasks of the GSS Data Strategy Task-and-Finish Group was to understand and map who was doing what across Government regarding data sharing; and
 - iii. the GSS was committed to making its data as available and accessible as possible. There was a case to be discussed regarding the role of the GSS in adding value to raw data, and there was a debate about the point in time at which the GSS should release data.
- 4.3 The Committee discussed developments with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Administrative Data Task Force, which had recommended that Administrative Data Research Centres should be set up in each of the four administrations of the UK. The potential role of ONS and of the Authority in these developments was considered.

5 Revised Standards for Statistical Releases [SA(COS)(12)28]

- 5.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a revised set of standards for statistical releases.
- 5.2 The meeting noted that the revised standards were consistent with the seven ideas for improving statistical communication that the Authority Chair had discussed in recent contexts. The Committee endorsed the revised standards, subject to some drafting points that would be subsequently provided to Mr Laux for consideration. It was agreed that the standards should be published jointly with the National Statistician's endorsement.

Action: Members of the Committee to provide drafting comments to Mr Laux, prior to publication of the standards with the endorsement of the National Statistician.

6 Cuts to Official Statistics [SA(COS)(12)29]

6.1 Mr Andrews provided an update on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics, and on public consultations relating to those statistics.

6.2 The following comments were made in discussion:

- i. due to the nature of the available data, it was difficult for the Committee to get a picture of the overall effects of budget reductions over a period of time. It was not currently possible to say fully what the real effects of budget reductions had been;
- ii. the recruitment freeze, which had bitten deeply, had now been relaxed. Recruitment exercises had not yet met the demand for new graduate-level statistical staff which was very high; and
- iii. there was a continuing concern about the reduction of statistical staff of Grade 5 and above at the most senior levels of the civil service.

7 Proposals for Statistical Expenditure Reports [SA(COS)(12)29]

Mr Alldritt confirmed that the Monitoring and Assessment team intended to take forward work on Statistical Expenditure Reports in two areas:

- i. the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) income related benefit statistics (once DWP had published the results of its current consultation, expected in January 2013); and
- ii. the Department for Communities and Local Government's decision to cease the publication of regional statistics.

8 Good Practice Team: Progress and Evaluation Plan

8.1 Mr Andrews provided an update on progress and an evaluation plan for the six-month pilot of the Good Practice Team (GPT). The team had begun work on a list of various interventions at the invitation of eight departments.

8.2 The Committee agreed that the initial results from the project seemed encouraging. It was agreed that the proposed output measure of increased media coverage was not correctly defined; the goal should be improved coverage rather than an increase in volume.

8.3 Mr Andrews confirmed that an interim report on the work of the GPT would be provided to the January meeting, with a final report to be submitted in March.

Action: Mr Andrews to provide an interim report on the work of the GPT to the January meeting.

9 Any other business

There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on 24 January at 10:30 in London.

Committee for Official Statistics

Agenda

Tuesday, 13 November, 2012

Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 13:30 - 16:00

Chair: Professor David Rhind

Apologies: Dr Colette Bowe, Professor Angela Dale, Mr Partha Dasgupta

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 110911
2	Activities of the Government Statistical Service	SA(COS)(12)27 Ms Jil Matheson
	i. Update on the GSS Strategy	SA(COS)(12)27a
	ii. Open Data	SA(COS)(12)27b
3	Revised Standards for Statistical Releases	SA(COS)(12)28 Mr Richard Alldritt
4	Cuts to Official Statistics	SA(COS)(12)29 Ms Jil Matheson
5	Proposals for Statistical Expenditure Reports	Oral report Mr Richard Alldritt
6	Good Practice Team: Progress and Evaluation Plan	SA(COS)(12)30 Mr Tim Andrews
7	Any other business	

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(12)27

***Activities of the Government Statistical Service –
September 2012 to October 2012***

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) with an update of Government Statistical Service (GSS) activities from September 2012 to October 2012.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee are invited to note the summary of GSS activities for this period.

Discussion

Open data and transparency

3. The Open Data White Paper 'the Right to Data' was published in June 2012 based around three key themes – enhancing data access, building trust in public data and smarter use of data. A Data Strategy Task and Finish Group has now been established to maintain momentum in this area. Paper [SA(COS)(12)27a] on the agenda for this meeting provides more information.

Review of arrangements for arms' length bodies

4. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) recently carried out a light-touch review of guidance for Heads of Profession (HoPs) on engaging with arm's length bodies (ALBs). The review gathered views from some HoPs with responsibility for ALBs. At the HoPs Group meeting on 9 October 2012 it was agreed to extend the review to gather the views of ALBs themselves. It is planned to despatch a questionnaire to them in November with initial results expected to be available to HoPs in December. It is planned to present the findings of the full review to COS at a subsequent meeting.

Quality Assurance Framework

5. Following discussion at recent HoPs Group meetings the NSO is finalising the development of the Quality Assurance Framework. Quality assurance statements are required to enable the National Statistician to provide comprehensive quality assurance to stakeholders e.g. the UK Statistics Authority, Parliament, and the public, to be able to take a view on performance standards, make comparisons over time and against other nations and, in effect, to answer the question, how good are UK statistics? The first batch of statements will cover the financial year 2012/13.

Raising Professional Standards

6. The GSS People Committee is reviewing the range of learning opportunities for our statisticians, with a view to developing new refresher training on statistical analysis topics for middle managers. In addition, it has recently revamped the guidance for Fast Streamers and their line managers, providing key advice on their career development. The recent surge of new recruits (see paragraph 8 below) has required the NSO to run additional Induction Courses in London and elsewhere.

GSS Fast Stream Recruitment

7. The process of sifting for the applicants for 2013 Fast Stream has begun. Numbers are slightly up on the same round for 2012. Departmental bids are still around the 40 mark.

Statistical Officer Recruitment

8. The demand for Statistical Officer recruitment continues to grow. In 2012 almost 100 new graduates were recruited, many of whom have yet to begin their postings. Current plans for 2013 indicate that around five recruitment rounds will be run, split between London and elsewhere. In addition badging boards will be held for analysts in ALBs.

Reporting on changes to statistical outputs

9. Paper [SA(COS)(12)29] on the agenda for this meeting provides the usual update on the current position.

Compliance with the EU Code of Practice

10. The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has recently reported on whether Eurostat had improved the process for producing reliable and credible European statistics. It found that the European Code of Practice has only been partly implemented by the Commission and Member States. It found a lack of verification and enforcement of compliance with the Code. European statistical work programmes are seen to have design flaws that hamper their use to plan and monitor delivery of quality statistics. It recommends change within the European Statistical System (ESS) to guarantee professional independence, adequate resources, and strong supervision, including sanctions where quality standards are not met. The report confirms that an ESS peer review of the UK's performance against the European Code in 2008 found that the UK either 'fully met' or 'largely met' all 35 indicators in the Code. The UK's model for ensuring compliance is the preferred model of Eurostat in that it is based on self assessment and independent accreditation within the statistical system of the Member State.
11. The ECA report makes a number of recommendations that the UK Government could support. These include a more systematic approach to the identification of priorities in the development of statistical work programmes, and less bureaucratic administration of grants to Member States. However, neither Eurostat nor Member States have signalled any support for recommendations that would give Eurostat a direct supervisory and investigatory role for ensuring Code compliance within Member States.
12. The European Statistics Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) has also just published its Annual Report on the implementation of the European Code. It underlines the need to accelerate the rate of progress in implementing the Code. It recommends:
 - i. Member States' governments recognise that reliable statistics cannot be produced without adequate resources;
 - ii. professional independence is fully respected;
 - iii. enhanced coordinating role for National Statistics Institutions;
 - iv. optional independent boards at the national level for overseeing compliance with the European Code;
 - v. transparent appointment and dismissal rules for heads of statistics offices;
 - vi. equal access to statistics and a right to comment on misuse of official statistics;
 - vii. better exchange of micro-data;
 - viii. enhanced use of administrative data;
 - ix. more streamlined ESS governance;
 - x. a new round of peer reviews to include all national statistical authorities i.e. this would mean a review covering both ONS and other GSS departments; and
 - xi. more Member State Commitments on Confidence, and improvement actions in Eurostat's Commitment on Confidence.

EU Regulatory Agenda

13. There are no significant changes to report on the major revision to basic law for European Statistics; the ESS five year Work Programme; Demographic Statistics for EU

voting rights; and harmonisation of data and metadata exchange. But note that the issues raised in the ECA and ESGAB reports are relevant to the ongoing negotiations in Council and the European Parliament on the revision to the basic law and the five year Work Programme. The UK is currently well-placed in terms of securing its negotiating aims for both dossiers, broadly: encouraging improved implementation of the Code across Europe without compromising our current constitutional framework for official statistics, and minimising the impact of new European statistical demands on our resources.

Breaches Guidance

14. Revised guidance for reporting and dealing with breaches of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics was agreed by the Authority Board on 27 September 2012 and presented to Heads of Profession on 9 October 2012. The new guidance seeks to improve the consistency of dealing with breaches across the GSS and in reporting breaches to the Authority. The guidance will be published on the GSS's internal site 'StatNet' shortly, together with supporting documentation detailing common breach scenarios and a selection of frequently asked questions. Regional seminars to promote the guidance and its practical implementation will be scheduled for early in 2013.

National Statistician's Office, November 2012

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(12)27a

Update on the GSS Strategy

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on progress with the overarching strategy for the GSS. The current draft of the strategy is attached at **Annex 1**.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) are invited to note the content of the strategy and consider this in the development of the Authority's wider strategy statement.

Discussion

3. The overarching strategy for the GSS – called *Building the Community* – has been developed in close consultation with GSS members, users of official statistics and other key stakeholders. The strategy outlines the challenges and opportunities facing the GSS and how we intend to respond to these over the period up to 2020.
4. The draft strategy was last considered by COS at its meeting of November 2011 [SA(COS)(11)33], and previously at its April 2011 [SA(COS)(11)10] and February 2011 meetings.
5. In responding to the challenges that we face, the GSS will need to rebalance its activities away from data collection and towards greater analysis, dissemination and support for users. Collaboration will become the norm as we move towards getting our statistics used more, especially in the important areas of decision-making and debate. This can be summarised in the GSS vision - "statistics produced by a collaborative community, used in decision-making and debate".
6. The strategy outlines some key actions in five priority areas that move us towards achieving this vision. These areas cover:
 - i. people;
 - ii. users;
 - iii. methods;
 - iv. impact; and
 - v. community.
7. The version of the strategy attached at Annex 1 is a near-final draft. It will be finalised and launched following the completion of the Authority strategy. This will ensure that the two strategies are closely aligned.

Stephanie Howarth, National Statistician's Office (Strategy), November 2012

List of Annexes

Annex 1 Draft strategy for the GSS

Annex A Draft Strategy for the Government Statistical Service

This document will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The document will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/government-statistical-service/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(12)27b

Open Data and Transparency

Purpose

1. This paper provides an overview of the open data and transparency agenda and its relation to the Government Statistical Service (GSS).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee is invited to note the content of this paper and, in particular, that a GSS data strategy and implementation plan is expected to be available by summer 2013.

Discussion

Open Data White Paper

3. The UK government's transparency agenda was launched in late 2010 and is led by the Cabinet Office. It aims to improve the accountability of government and recognises the potential for economic benefits from the reuse of government data. The policy aims for data to be made available in 'open formats' for easy reuse.
4. Following on from this, the Open Data White Paper – 'Unleashing the Potential' – was published in June 2012. It states that opening up data allows the public to hold government to account, allows more informed choice and decision-making, and inspires innovation and enterprise. The white paper is based around three key themes:
 - i. *Enhancing access to data* – All departments have published open data strategies which set out how they will meet the open data challenge. Departments should be guided by the public data principles and make data available in re-useable formats as assessed by Tim Berners-Lee's five-star scheme (see **Annex A and B**). User engagement will be essential in ensuring that priorities for new open data sets are identified and developers are aware what data is being released.
 - ii. *Building trust in public data* – It will be important to strike the right balance between openness and privacy, and develop an understanding of how different anonymous data sets could be combined to reveal confidential information.
 - iii. *Smarter use of data* – It is suggested that sharing data between public authorities and research bodies will help to deliver joined-up, personalised services. Social mobility is seen as a key area where linking data sources could help to provide a better understanding of the barriers to progression. There is also a push for citizens to engage with public services through accessing their own personal data.
5. The open data agenda is compatible with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics – to make statistics available in as much detail as is practicable and in flexible formats, subject to legal and confidentiality constraints.
6. The GSS is supporting the open data agenda by increasingly making the data that it collects available in more reusable formats. According to a 2011 stock-take, around 55 per cent of official statistics are already published at the three-star accessibility level and there are a number of initiatives aimed at making more data available in ways that

increasingly encourage reuse. User engagement will be essential to help prioritise the data sets to open up and understand the format that they should be released in.

7. The National Statistician's statement on open data¹ states that the next steps for the GSS will include releasing statistical summaries in HTML [hypertext markup language] format, increasing use of social media, planning and announcing the release of detailed data sets, and releasing data in GSS standard linked data formats.
8. There is also a role for the GSS to share our expertise to help others open up data. The GSS is mentioned in the white paper as being expert in disclosure control, which is central to the theme of building trust in public data. The GSS also has experience of data sharing, which the white paper aims to encourage more of.

Data Strategy Task-and-Finish Group

9. The GSS Transparency Sub-Group steered the GSS's initial response to the open data and transparency agenda. Following the group's closure, a need was identified to consolidate the GSS's response to a number of data challenges (for example, transparency, open data, disclosure control, big data, and data sharing). The Data Strategy Task-and-Finish Group was formed to provide strategic direction and momentum in this area.
10. The group is chaired by Sean Whellams from HM Revenue and Customs, with membership being made up of Heads of Profession or their representatives from departments with extensive involvement in data sharing or the use of administrative data.
11. The group met for the first time in September 2012, and agreed that its aim would be to produce a GSS Data Strategy and associated implementation plan. It is expected that the GSS Data Strategy will be a high level statement focusing on particular strands including:
 - i. legal – i.e. data sharing;
 - ii. IT – i.e. technological challenges;
 - iii. confidentiality – i.e. risks of deanonymisation; and
 - iv. capability – i.e. ensuring the correct skills across the GSS.
12. The initial stage for producing a GSS Data Strategy will be to map the landscape of all data issues and stakeholders across government affecting statistics. The implementation plan will focus on delivering solutions to the challenges presented in the GSS Data Strategy.
13. It is anticipated that the GSS data strategy and high level implementation plan should be completed by summer 2013.

**Pam Davies and Stephanie Howarth, National Statistician's Office (Strategy),
October 2012**

List of Annexes:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Annex A | Public Data Principles |
| Annex B | Sir Tim Berners-Lee's five-star scheme for assessing the degree to which individual datasets are re-usable |

¹ Open Data and the GSS: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-guidance/open-data-and-the-gss.pdf>

Annex A Public Data Principles

1. Public data policy and practice will be clearly driven by the public and businesses that want and use the data, including what data is released when and in what form
2. Public data will be published in re-usable, machine-readable form
3. Public data will be released under the same open licence which enables free re-use, including commercial re-use
4. Public data will be available and easy to find through a single, easy-to-use, online access point (www.data.gov.uk)
5. Public data will be published using open standards, and following relevant recommendations of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
6. Public data from different departments about the same subject will be published in the same, standard formats and with the same definitions
7. Public data underlying the Government's own websites will be published in re-usable form
8. Public data will be timely and fine-grained
9. Release data quickly, and then work to make sure that it is available in open standard formats, including linked data form
10. Public data will be freely available to use in any lawful way
11. Public data will be available without application or registration, and without requiring details of the user
12. Public bodies should actively encourage the re-use of their public data
13. Public bodies should maintain and publish inventories of their data holding
14. Public bodies should publish relevant metadata about their datasets and this should be available through a single online access point; and they should publish supporting descriptions of the format provenance and meaning of the data

Annex B Sir Tim Berners-Lee's five-star scheme for assessing the degree to which individual datasets are re-usable

Level	Format		Licence
★	Make your data available on the web (in any format)	and	Open Licence
★★	Make it available as structured data (for example, Microsoft Excel instead of image scan of a table)	and	Open Licence
★★★	Make it available in an open, non-proprietary format (for example, CSV or XML instead of Microsoft Excel)	and	Open Licence
★★★★	In addition to using open formats, use Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) to identify things using open standards and recommendations from W3C, so that other people can point at your stuff	and	Open Licence
★★★★★	In addition to using open formats and using URLs to identify things, link your data to other people's data to provide context	and	Open Licence

SA(COS)(12)28 – Revised Standards for Statistical Releases

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(12)28

Revised Standards for Statistical Releases

This document has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

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

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(12)29

Update on the impact of cuts on statistical inputs and outputs, and monitoring statistical capability

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics, and on public consultations relating to those statistics. The paper also reports the up-to-date position for staffing statistics in the Government Statistician Group (GSG) against which reports are being benchmarked.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) are invited to note:
 - i. the latest position on reported cuts to official statistics and further potential cuts subject to public consultation and other official statistics issues being consulted upon; and
 - ii. the staffing levels for the GSG.

Discussion

3. Since the last report to the Committee on 11 September 2012, the National Statistician has been notified of one cessation of production of statistics from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Early in 2012, DCLG ran a consultation about Land Use Change Statistics, Local Authority Housing Statistics and Regional Statistics. The Committee was informed of this consultation in February 2012 [SA(COS)(12)03]. The outcome is that DCLG will no longer produce regional statistics.
4. Further information about this cessation including the outcome of consultations can be found at **Annex A**. Historical information about cessations by department up to October 2012 can be found at **Annex B**.
5. There have been 10 notifications of statistical consultations to the National Statistician's Office (NSO) since the last update to the Committee. Four of these are notable.
 - i. The Welsh Government is seeking views on the use of economic and labour market statistics. This consultation is held every three years to ensure the usefulness of the outputs and the uses made of them.
 - ii. In addition, the Welsh Government is carrying out a consultation on the publication arrangements for official statistics on health.
 - iii. The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) is consulting on the Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England Survey to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of this data and to ensure the survey continues to be relevant and meaningful to the needs of users. This consultation builds on an earlier review by seeking more detailed views about the survey methodology.
 - iv. The National Statistician is consulting on options for amending the way the Retail Prices Index is constructed at the lowest level of aggregation. The consultation focuses on statistical methodology and best practice, though the consequences of any potential change are noted.

6. There are currently eight live statistical consultations along with two closed consultations not previously reported to the Committee (see **Annex C**). There are currently no live consultations previously reported to COS.

Monitoring Statistical Capacity

7. A summary of key changes underlying the GSG membership figures since 2000, and the reasons behind them, has been provided as background information to previous meetings; the graphs showing the overall trend in GSG numbers are reproduced at **Annex D** for information. It should be noted that, historically, this information has been collected for the purpose of maintaining communication links between the NSO and GSG rather than for workforce planning. This limits the usefulness of this data in accurately tracking historical changes to GSG membership.
8. Current data on GSG membership by department is also shown at Annex D and includes information about October 2011 (the baseline), January 2012, April 2012, June 2012, September 2012 and November 2012. Please note that direct comparisons should not be made between the historical graphs and current data in Annex D as they are compiled using different bases.
9. There continues to be a high demand from departments for both Fast Stream and Main Stream new entrants.

National Statistician's Office, November 2012

List of Annexes

Annex A	Cuts notified to the National Statistician since the last update
Annex B	Cuts previously reported to COS
Annex C	New consultations about cuts and changes to statistics
Annex D	Historical GSG membership data 2000-11, as measured by headcount; and Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department – November 2012

Annex A Cuts notified to the National Statistician since the last update

This table summarises cuts to official statistics that have been notified to the National Statistician as of 1 November 2012, since the last update was provided in September 2012.

Details	Description of statistics	Reasons for cessation or reduction	Details of consultation/ impact on users	Cost/benefits assessment	Status
<p>Statistics: DCLG Statistics – Regional Outputs</p> <p>Date of Cessation: October 2012 for outputs that would not be affected by a change of PRA. All others changes will be implemented by the end of 2013.</p>	<p>Summary statistics by Government Office Regions for all statistics outputs produced by DCLG.</p>	<p>Description of proposed changes.</p> <p>Many of the Government's policies now use alternative sub-national geographies and use of the former Government Office regional boundaries no longer provides a coherent framework for considering policies following the abolition of the Government Office network, the Regional Development Agencies and Regional Strategies.</p> <p>The consultation sought views on geographical levels for statistical outputs.</p> <p>Reasons for the change.</p> <p>The abolition of the Government Office network at the end of March 2011.</p>	<p>The consultation ran from January 2012 until April 2012. It sought users views on:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal to end the publication of statistics at the former Government Office regional level; • what alternative presentation they would find helpful; • for any geographic level suggested, explanation as to how the statistics are or would be used for, and what actions and decisions are likely to be taken using them; • what would be the impact if statistics were not published at a regional level <p>Assessment of impact on users.</p> <p>75 responses were received from users (local authorities, Central Government, professional networks and associations, academia, voluntary sector organisations and other respondents).</p> <p>In light of the responses received, and taking into account the rationale for the original proposal, the Department has decided to include additional sub national geographies where appropriate in its statistical publications, promote local authority level data, and end the publication of regional statistics.</p> <p>DCLG have recognised that the majority of respondents still see some benefit in regional statistics. As such, where possible, they plan to make data available that allows users to create their own regional statistics. For example, in some cases, local authority data will be published from which regional aggregates could be derived.</p>	<p>None identified</p>	<p>Confirmed.</p>

SA(COS)(12)29 - Cuts to official statistics

Annex B Cuts previously reported to COS

Department	Statistics	Date of cessation
Department for Communities and Local Government	The Place Survey	July 2010
	Local Government Key Facts Card: England	November 2010
	Citizenship Survey	March 2011
	Official Statistics on Supporting People	May 2011
Department of Culture Media and Sport	Target Group Index statistics on arts attendance	31 October 2011
Department for Education	Schools Providing Access to Extended Services Statistics	October 2010
	Parental experiences of services provided to disabled children Statistics	November 2010
	Diploma Learning England	November 2011
	School Destinations of Secondary School Pupils Resident in London Boroughs	September 2011
	Behaviour in schools	1 April 2012
Department for Health	Health Profile of England	Last publication March 2010
	Mortality Monitoring: Life Expectancy and all-age-all-cause mortality, and mortality from selected causes - overall and inequalities	Last publication October 2011
	Mortality Monitoring: Infant Mortality and inequalities	Last publication December 2011
Home Office	Statistics on post-decision reviews on asylum applications, applications for asylum support, and asylum appeals.	25 August 2011
	Basic Command Unit level recorded crime and detection statistics	April 2012
HM Revenue and Customs	Business Payment Support Service	Last publication July 2011
Ministry of Defence	RAF Pocket Brief	April 2012
	Civilian Staffing by agency, trading fund and location	February 2012

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NHS Information Centre	Prescription Cost Analysis statistics	July 2012
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	Northern Ireland Abstract of Statistics Online	16 June 2012
Welsh Government	1. Health Visitors, District Nurses and Other Community Nurses 2. NHS Day Care 3. Community Psychiatric Nurses and Community Learning Disability Nurses	October 2010
	New Deal Statistics	November 2010
	Welsh Short Term Output Indices	Within weeks if that decision is made by Ministers
	Local Authority Education Expenditure	Suspended for 2010/11 year.
	Affordable housing provision – collection of information from registered social landlords	2012/13
	NHS staff vacancies	1 March 2012
Scottish Government	1. Children Educated outwith Schools 2. Placing Requests 3. Teacher and Educational Psychologists Vacancies 4. Pre-Appeal SQA Examination Results 5. Expenditure on Schools 6. Budgeted School Running Costs 7. The Independent School Census	November 2010
	Various changes to Scottish Government Surveys	2012 onwards
Department for Work and Pensions	New Deals and the Flexible New Deal programme statistics	March 2011
	Tax Benefit Model	8 June 2011

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	National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK	August 2012
	Vacancies handled by Jobcentre Plus	Autumn 2012
	Income Related Benefits: Estimates Of Take-up	Unconfirmed – consultation ended on 4 October 2012
Office for National Statistics	Quarterly dividends inquiry	5 March 2012

Annex C New consultations about cuts and changes to statistics

This table summarises the consultations that have been notified to the National Statistician in the period 23 August 2012 – 31 October 2012 or have been discovered by the National Statistician's Office undertaking periodic trawls of departmental websites.

The list demonstrates that GSS statisticians are actively reviewing the need for continued statistics with users in order to improve efficiency, as well as responding to reductions in resources in the current public sector financial climate.

Details of consultation	Description of consultation	Consultation End
<p>Future dissemination strategy for the publication of National Statistics on crime in England and Wales</p> <p>Producer: ONS</p> <p>Open Date: 1 November 2012</p>	<p>ONS has developed proposals for the future dissemination of crime statistics, with the aim of improving the presentation for users and to provide a clearer overall picture of crime. It is important that any changes made are done so with input from those that read and use crime statistics outputs.</p> <p>This consultation provides details of proposed changes to both the content of regular crime statistics outputs, as well as the presentation of the crime classifications used in those outputs.</p> <p>Proposed changes to the publication of crime statistics include the regular publication of thematic-based reports and associated tables that supplement the standard bulletins published each quarter. Changes to the presentation of police recorded crime include introducing two broad categories to distinguish between crimes with a direct victim and those without a direct victim, the introduction of a 'theft offences' category and movement of some individual offences in to more appropriate categories. Proposed changes to Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data include a simplification of the categories used to group offences and changes to the presentation of some offences to make them more consistent with police recorded crime.</p>	31 December 2012
<p>Economic and Labour Market Statistics Outputs</p> <p>Producer: Welsh Government</p> <p>Open Date: 5 October 2012</p>	<p>This consultation seeks views on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of economic and labour market statistics. • Potential areas of unmet demand for development of economic and labour market statistics. • Views on the quality of outputs and changes made since the last consultation. • Views on engagement. 	4 January 2013

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<p>Content and Timing of Official Statistics on Health</p> <p>Producer: Welsh Government</p> <p>Open Date: 1 October 2012</p>	<p>The consultation will be examining the publication arrangements for official statistics on health to ensure they add value</p>	<p>31 December 2012</p>
<p>Consultation on the Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics</p> <p>Producer ONS</p> <p>Open Date: 21 September 2012</p>	<p>ONS currently publishes a Statistical Bulletin each month giving the latest figures on overseas trade in goods and services. Around three working days later, the Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics (MRETS) is published.</p> <p>A review has shown that MRETS now contains little that is not available within the Bulletin. This consultation document seeks users' views on the cessation of the MRETS publication.</p>	<p>31 December 2012</p>
<p>Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England: Survey Consultation</p> <p>Producer: NHS Information Centre (NHSIC)</p> <p>Open Date: 24 September 2012</p>	<p>The consultation aims to engage with the users of the Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England (SDD) publication to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of this data and to ensure the survey continues to be relevant and meaningful to the needs of users. Comments will be considered against resource pressures, but will be invaluable to determine requirements for new contractual arrangements after SDD 2013.</p>	<p>17 December 2012.</p>
<p>Crime outcomes consultation</p> <p>Producer: Home Office</p> <p>Open Date: 19 October 2012</p>	<p>The consultation contains proposals for revising the current framework for recorded crime outcomes. It proposes adding new categories with the aim of improving transparency of crime data and supporting police officer discretion in choosing most appropriate disposals in response to crime.</p> <p>The Home Office is seeking views on the proposed new disposal categories, to ensure the final framework is based on a full consideration of the impact of these changes, and that it is clear, accessible and meaningful to the widest possible audience.</p>	<p>7 December 2012</p>

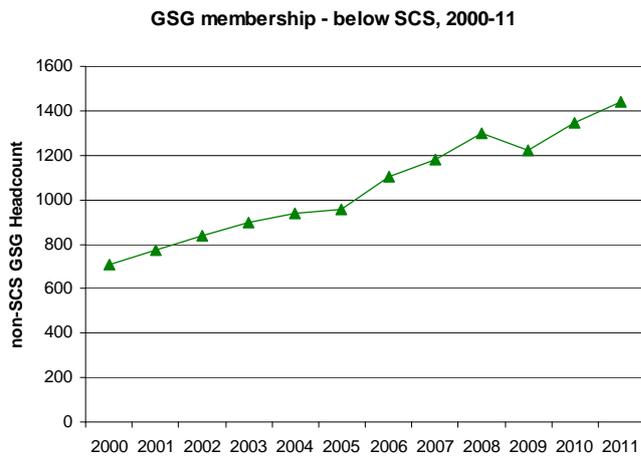
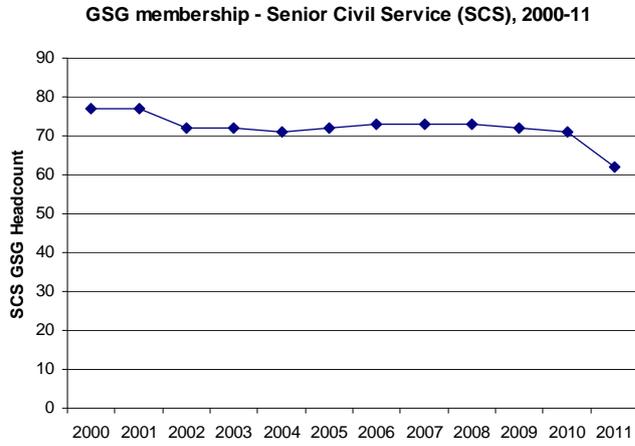
Annex C - SA(COS)(12)29 - Cuts to official statistics

<p>National Statistician's consultation on options for improving the Retail Prices Index</p> <p>Producer ONS</p> <p>Open Date: 8 October 2012</p>	<p>The National Statistician is inviting views on options for amending the way the Retail Prices Index (RPI) is constructed at the lowest level of aggregation.</p> <p>Views are also sought on a proposal to change the way private housing rental prices are measured in the RPI and CPI through the use of a new data source.</p>	<p>30 November 2012</p>
<p>Fuel Poverty: Changing the framework for measurement</p> <p>Producer:</p> <p>Department of Energy & Climate Change</p> <p>Open Date: 18 September 2012</p>	<p>The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the Government's proposed changes to the way they measure fuel poverty in England. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a proposal to change the definition of fuel poverty, - recommendations on changing elements of the methodology used to calculate the fuel poverty statistics, - the implications for the associated fuel poverty target which is set out in the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 ("WHECA"). 	<p>30 November 2012</p>
<p>Consultation on production and dissemination of Claimant Count statistics following the introduction of Universal Credit</p> <p>Producer ONS</p> <p>Open Date: 3 October 2012</p>	<p>The consultation document contains a brief background to Universal Credit and its impact on benefit and Claimant Count statistics, emerging proposals around the presentation of benefit statistics, and detailed proposals around the production and dissemination of Claimant Count statistics following the introduction of Universal Credit.</p>	<p>23 November 2012</p>
<p>Proposals to cease publication of the Statistical Press Release "Participation in Full-Time Education and Vocational Training by 16 and 17 Year Olds in Northern Ireland"</p> <p>Producer: DELNI</p> <p>Open date: 21 August 2012</p>	<p>The statistical press release "Participation in Full-Time Education and Vocational Training by 16 and 17 Year Olds in Northern Ireland" is published jointly by the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)". The latest report covering 2010/11 was published on 29 November 2011 and is available on the websites of both departments</p> <p>Given the change in customer focus and the emerging data issues it is proposed that the publication of the statistical press release on the participation of 16 and 17 year olds will henceforth cease.</p>	<p>31 October 2012</p>

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<p>Improvement to the Estimation of Employment in Public Sector Education in England</p> <hr/> <p>Producer ONS</p> <p>Open Date: 12 September 2012</p>	<p>The Office for National Statistics produces quarterly estimates of public sector employment in the UK. Estimates are provided for total public sector employment and also for sectors, industries and regions. These statistics can be found in the Public Sector Employment release.</p> <p>Improvements to the way employment in public sector education in England is estimated are proposed. These improvements are expected to be implemented in the December 2012 release covering estimates for September 2012. At this time the entire Public Sector Employment series will be open to revision in line with the revisions policy. Further details of the new method and the impact on estimates of Public Sector Employment will be provided alongside the publication of the new estimates.</p>	<p>31 October 2012</p>
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Annex D Historical GSG membership data 2000-11, as measured by headcount



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Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department: October 2011 - November 2012

Department	October 2011		January 2012		April 2012		June 2012		September 2012		November 2012	
	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)
BIS	3	46	3	47	3	47	3	48	3	46	3	47
DCLG	2	50	2	51	2	51	2	48	2	46	2	51
DECC	1	21	1	24	1	25	1	27	1	29	1	28
DEFRA	2	29	2	28	2	27	2	26	2	25	2	27
DfE	2	91	2	90	2	92	2	91	2	92	2	94
DfID	1	28	1	30	1	32	0	32	0	33	0	33
DfT	2	33	3	33	3	35	3	34	3	34	2	35
DH	3	59	2	59	1	54	1	53	1	53	1	52
NHSIC	1	67	1	71	1	77	1	80	1	81	1	81
DWP	2	171	2	165	2	167	2	166	2	168	2	166
HMRC	3	103	3	112	3	110	3	109	3	108	3	107
HO	2	20	2	18	2	18	2	20	2	24	2	23
MoD	2	64	2	63	1	63	1	62	1	62	1	61
MoJ	1	55	1	54	1	53	1	56	0	58	0	59
UKSA/ONS	21	123	20	129	20	133	20	133	20	134	20	135
SG	1	119	1	119	1	117	1	117	1	117	1	117

N.B. All data reported are rounded, full time equivalent figures. Data exclude staff currently occupying non-analytical posts.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(12)30

Good Practice Team – Progress and Evaluation Plan

Purpose

1. At the 11 September 2012 meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS), Jil Matheson outlined the Good Practice Team (GPT) initiative. The meeting asked to be provided with an update on progress and an evaluation plan for the six-month pilot.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
 - i. note progress of the GPT from 1 October to date; and
 - ii. note plans to evaluate the GPT and comment on the suitability of the plans.

Discussion

Progress report

3. The GPT got off to a good start on 1 October and as requested hit the ground running. Three Grade 7 statisticians were in place on day one, but it has not proved possible to recruit a more junior specialist to support them. This has not greatly impeded the work so far and additional administrative support can be provided by the NSO.
4. The GPT has:
 - i. begun working with eight departments to improve commentary and or user engagement;
 - ii. established a 'Good Practice Reference Panel' which the team can consult, to provide weight in its discussions with departments and external evidence of improvement;
 - iii. supported those departments who are already carrying out peer review of releases and collating good practice;
 - iv. begun to collate examples of good practice more broadly, with a view to establishing a StatNet presence where these can be shared / promoted;
 - v. worked with the Social Statistics section of the Royal Statistical Society to plan an event in January bringing together voluntary sector users and producers of official statistics;
 - vi. established an Assistant Statistician/Statistical Officer group to take forward targeted improvements in their departments. A chair has been appointed and a plan drafted;
 - vii. established relevant project documentation and the documents for recording and monitoring the success or otherwise of its activities (see evaluation plan below); and
 - viii. held monthly progress meetings with Jil Matheson and Richard Alldritt.
5. Clearly the team has cast its net widely in the early phase of the pilot and set up a challenging initial work programme, which it is monitoring closely. The team is targeting a broad range of departments and initiatives, to try different methods of intervention and ensure that there are enough of the right kinds of interactions to demonstrate what can be achieved. It will be necessary to sharply narrow the focus over the next few weeks so as to concentrate on a smaller, well defined set of interventions and permit of evaluation as set out in the evaluation plan.
6. So far GSS Heads of Profession and many producers at the working level have showed a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to the GPT approach. The GPT will though

keep an eye out to make sure that they also engage with harder to reach parts of the producer community.

Evaluation Plan

7. The evaluation plan will have four measurement elements: inputs; processes; outputs; and outcomes. The team will attempt to consider these factors in the context of some counterfactual scenarios.
8. **(i) Inputs.** The time of the GPT. All work of the team will be chunked and logged to specific projects.
9. In so far as it is possible, the input of producers and other stakeholders will be logged. For user engagement, this will be challenging as significant inputs may come from the external user community.
10. **(ii) Processes.** Understand what good looks like.
11. Diagnose the issues and barriers: organisational rules; organisational culture; lack of resource; failure to appreciate the importance of good commentary and user engagement; or lack of specific capability.
12. Trial a wide range of interventions, which will be classified by type. For instance:
 - working alongside producers and transferring skills;
 - sharing best practice;
 - establishing communities of enthusiastic practitioners who will sustain the good work; and
 - educating users - for instance some users have made it quite clear that they want releases with as little commentary as possible, how can we show them the value of good commentary while respecting their views?
13. **(iii) Outputs.**
14. For user engagement:
 - What new channels have been set up? For instance a new StatsUserNet community or user group.
 - How many additional users have been reached?
 - Has the producer extended reach to a broader range of users?
 - Does the producer have a better understanding of users?
15. For commentary:
 - Has an objectively better release been produced, as judged by producers, the GPT, and the user advisory panel?
 - Assessment against *Standards for Statistical Releases* by Monitoring and Assessment.
 - Has (positive) media coverage increased in amount and breadth?
16. Experience of this way of working:
 - What was the subjective experience of the GPT staff themselves of this way of working (all have extensive experience in applying a range of interventions to improve statistics)?
 - Did HoPs, producers and users think this was a good way of working? Did it boost skills and motivation to improve?

17. **(iv) Outcome.**

18. For user engagement:

- Has the producer followed up on improved engagement and responded by, for instance, changing the scope, definition, methodology or presentation of the statistics they produce?
- Has the sense of user voice been enhanced?

19. For commentary:

- Are existing users able to get more out of the statistics?
- Has an improved release reached a wider audience and led to wider take up of the statistics?

20. At this level we might also expect to see some interaction in both directions between improved commentary in statistical releases and improved user engagement, as the objectives of each work strand start to merge.

21. **(v) Counterfactual.**

22. Some analysis will be attempted of the effectiveness of the GPT approach relative to other possible means by which the Authority might deploy its resources, so as to achieve its broad aim of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. At the end of six months, does the resource of three GPT staff, along with inputs from producers and users, lead to a greater gain than if the equivalent resource were to be deployed on say Assessment, Monitoring or a targeted approach such as the Quality Improvement Fund?

23. At the end of the pilot, the Authority will be better placed to make a decision about how best in future to deploy its limited resources to achieve the aim of better statistics, better presented and more extensively used by the widest possible audience across society.

**Tim Andrews, Deputy Director Delivery, National Statistician's Office
November 2012**