

# **UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

## **Committee for Official Statistics**

### **Minutes**

**Meeting of Wednesday 15 February 2012  
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

#### **Present**

##### **Members**

Professor David Rhind (Acting Chair)  
Mr Richard Alldritt  
Dr Colette Bowe  
Dr Norman Caven  
Professor David Hand

##### **Other Attendees**

Mr Tim Andrews (for Ms Jil Matheson), NSO  
Ms Pam Davies (for item 6), NSO  
Mr Dennis Roberts (for items 7 and 8), ONS  
Mr Hetan Shah (for items 3, 4 and 5), RSS  
Mr James Tucker (for items 3 and 4), RSS

##### **Secretariat**

Mr Rob Bumpstead  
Mr Joe Cuddeford

##### **Apologies**

Professor Angela Dale  
Ms Jil Matheson  
Sir Michael Scholar

##### **Declarations of Interest**

In relation to items 3 and 4, Dr Norman Caven is a member of the Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC).

## **1 Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 1.1 This was the first meeting since the death of the Authority's Deputy Chair with responsibility for official statistics, Professor Sir Roger Jowell. The Chair paid tribute to Sir Roger and his immense contribution to the work of the Authority, and the social sciences generally. The meeting shared the Chair's sentiment and wished for this to be recorded.
- 1.2 The Chair also conveyed Sir Michael Scholar's apologies that he could not be present.
- 1.3 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 4 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record. It was noted that paragraph 6.1 of the minutes, regarding the development of a draft strategy for the Government Statistical Service (GSS), reflected the concerns of the GSS on the way forward given the many challenges it faced.
- 1.4 The minutes from the Monitoring Review of Statistical Publications Project Board were agreed as a correct record. The project would now consider next steps.

## **2 Update on actions**

- 2.1 All actions were complete, in hand, or to be discussed in other papers on the agenda for the meeting.

**Action: Secretariat to check whether the letters from the Authority Chair and the National Statistician to the Minister for the Cabinet Office in response to the Open Data consultation (item 12) had been included in the Cabinet Office's published consultation response.**

## **3 Web-based user engagement – RSS StatsUserNet [SA(COS)(12)01]**

- 3.1 Mr Tucker provided an update on the Royal Statistical Society's (RSS) web-based user engagement project, StatsUserNet. The site was now live, with a small selection of Statistics User Forum groups testing the site. Publicity was intentionally kept low-key during the initial phase, but a comprehensive marketing plan was in development.
- 3.2 The following comments were made in discussion.
  - i. The Statistics Authority and the RSS had a shared agenda in promoting user engagement.
  - ii. The RSS could draw from its existing network of active users to make a site such as this work. It would be more difficult to involve citizen users.
  - iii. There was a potential reputational risk from an open forum where members of the public could post inappropriate comments. The forum featured 'self-moderation' where any user could report an inappropriate post. The RSS agreed to consider how best to handle this risk.
- 3.3 The Committee welcomed these developments.

## **4 Progress on improving statistical commentary [SA(COS)(11)02]**

- 4.1 Mr Andrews introduced a paper on the work being undertaken by the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and across the GSS to improve the commentary that accompanies official statistics. The Committee heard that there was a sense that producers did enough to meet the minimum standards of assessments, but there were various barriers to further substantive improvement.
- 4.2 The Committee queried the evidence for the assertion in the paper that there had been noticeable improvements in the commentary produced by many departments. The

meeting heard that specific improvements had been documented as part of the monitoring of progress against assessment requirements. However, the bar for these improvements was not necessarily set high.

- 4.3 The following comments were made in discussion.
- i. The workshops were not compulsory and might therefore miss those individuals who needed most guidance.
  - ii. It was unclear whether the barriers to improvement were cultural or educational. If the latter, resources might need to be diverted toward supportive work.
  - iii. There was good evidence to suggest that improved commentary led to better media reporting and other subsequent use.
  - iv. The GSS was looking for ONS to be an exemplar. It was therefore crucial that ONS releases were consistently of the highest quality.
- 4.4 A suggestion was made that the Monitoring and Assessment team could rewrite the commentary for a high-profile ONS statistical release, to create an exemplar for others to work from. It was agreed that this should be raised with the Authority Board. As a preliminary exercise, a suitable release could be identified, (such as the recent Consumer Price Indices release which had been followed by misleading press coverage).

**Action: Secretariat to identify a suitable release and to progress with the Head of Assessment and the Authority Chair.**

## **5 Cuts to Official Statistics [SA(COS)(12)03]**

- 5.1 Mr Andrews summarised the latest information on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics and on public consultations relating to official statistics. The current information was admittedly piecemeal and did not yet present an overall perspective.
- 5.2 The meeting heard that ONS and the National Statistician intended to respond to the consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) about Land Use Change statistics, Local Authority Housing statistics and Regional statistics.
- 5.3 The following comments were made in discussion.
- i. The current information did not provide an indication of the net effect of cuts versus new statistical work. The impression given may therefore be worse than the reality.
  - ii. The extent to which the changes recorded during a time of austerity were different from the changes that could be expected during a normal time was not always clear.
  - iii. Also unclear was whether the rate of proposed cuts was declining, or whether the appearance of new consultations was an indication that a surge of new cuts were downstream.
  - iv. The available information suggested that cuts to statistics had thus far not been as bad as first thought.
- 5.4 The Committee agreed that no Statistical Expenditure Reports should be commissioned based on the information in the paper, but that the situation should continue to be monitored closely.
- 5.5 The Committee noted that the tables in the paper did not separate Grade 3 posts from the rest of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) as requested at the last meeting. It further

requested that the chart for SCS members of the Government Statistician Group at Annex C of the paper be expressed as a proportion of the wider SCS.

**Action: NSO to review the presentation of information on SCS membership.**

**6 Report on stage two of the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics [SA(COS)(12)04]**

6.1 Ms Davies provided an update on progress with the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics. The meeting heard that the report of the second stage of the review was in draft now and would include the private rented sector; this would be presented to COS in April. A smooth transition of production of the House Price Index from DCLG to ONS was expected in April.

6.2 The Committee noted the progress made.

**7 Quality Improvement Fund: Update on actions [SA(COS)(12)05]**

7.1 Mr Roberts provided an update on the two related actions from the previous meeting. The meeting heard that:

- i. an additional element had been adopted in the criteria for bids, to encourage bids which address findings from the assessment process; and
- ii. the terms and conditions had been changed to require successful bids to publish the outcome of the projects on their department's website, and to reference the project in relevant statistical releases.

7.2 The Committee noted the action taken. It was agreed that it would also be desirable for the outcomes of projects to be published on the Quality Improvement Fund pages of the ONS website.

**8 Quality and survey control considerations across the GSS [SA(COS)(12)06]**

8.1 Mr Roberts introduced a paper which summarised developments in terms of quality and survey control for government statistical surveys to businesses and local authorities. The meeting heard that there were plans for the current Prime Minister's Instructions (PMIs) to be replaced by new survey controls, driven by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

8.2 The plans included the publication of an online list of all government surveys to business and local authorities, which would include key survey information, the compliance cost of the survey, a quality review schedule and links to completed quality reviews, and a section on new survey proposals and plans to develop existing surveys.

8.3 The Committee welcomed the plans. It was suggested that the best location for the new online list was the National Statistics Publication Hub.

**9 Report on GSS activities [SA(COS)(12)07]**

9.1 Mr Andrews provided an update on the activities of the GSS from November 2011 to January 2012. The meeting heard of proposals to set up a new platform for the current GSS intranet, StatNet, which would provide both a public-facing site and a private area.

9.2 The meeting noted the update and welcomed the proposals.

**10 GSS chapter for the Authority Annual Report 2011/12 [SA(COS)(12)08]**

- 10.1 Mr Bumpstead and Mr Andrews summarised proposals for the GSS chapter of the UK Statistics Authority Annual Report. The Committee approved the arrangements outlined in the paper.

**11 Any other business**

- 11.1 The Committee noted the situation whereby the National Statistician of Greece, Andreas Georgiou, faced an official criminal investigation for allegedly inflating the scale of the country's fiscal crisis and acting against the Greek national interest. The Committee agreed that the Authority should consider whether it should take any action.

- 11.2 There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on 18 April at 13:30 in London.

## Committee for Official Statistics

### Agenda

**Wednesday, 15 February, 2012**  
**Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 13:45 - 16:15**

**Chair:** Professor David Rhind  
**Apologies:** Professor Angela Dale, Ms Jil Matheson, Sir Michael Scholar

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 041111
2	Progress with actions	Oral update Mr Rob Bumpstead
3	Web-based user engagement – RSS StatsUserNet	SA(COS)(12)01 Mr Hetan Shah and Mr James Tucker
4	Progress on improving statistical commentary	SA(COS)(12)02 Ms Elspeth Maclean
5	Cuts to Official Statistics	SA(COS)(12)03 Mr Tim Andrews
6	Report on stage two of the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics	SA(COS)(12)04 Ms Pam Davies
7	Quality Improvement Fund: Update on actions	SA(COS)(12)05 Mr Dennis Roberts
8	Quality and survey control considerations across the GSS	SA(COS)(12)06 Mr Dennis Roberts
9	Report on GSS activities	SA(COS)(12)07 Mr Tim Andrews
10	GSS chapter for the Authority Annual Report 2011/12	SA(COS)(12)08 Mr Rob Bumpstead and Mr Tim Andrews
11	Any other business	

**Next Meeting:** **Wednesday 18 April 2012,**  
**Drummond Gate, London, 13:30 - 16:00**

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**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)01

***Web-based user engagement – RSS StatsUserNet***

**Purpose**

1. To update the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) on the Royal Statistical Society's (RSS) web-based user engagement project, StatsUserNet.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of COS are invited to note the progress summarised below and to comment on the current and planned work.

**Discussion**

3. In December 2010, a paper was presented to COS [SA(COS)(10)27] that outlined initial plans for the RSS's web-based user engagement website. The site, StatsUserNet ([www.statsusernet.org.uk](http://www.statsusernet.org.uk)), is now live. The focus since the last update has been on setting up a user friendly, engaging site, and establishing a secure and cost-effective system for managing personal data.
4. The website is structured around 'communities', which are areas devoted to particular statistical topics. It is an interactive site, allowing members to share resources, publicise events, comment on news items, blog, and participate in discussions. The site also has a homepage which consolidates the latest news and discussion items from the individual communities, and will contain items of broader interest to the membership as a whole. The four main aims are as follows.
  - i. Facilitate communication and knowledge sharing between users of official statistics.
  - ii. Allow ongoing dialogue between users and producers.
  - iii. Reach a wide range of users.
  - iv. Identify cross-cutting issues and priorities.
5. A strategy and implementation plan are in preparation. Alongside this, the RSS is working with a small selection of Statistics User Forum groups to test the site, develop initial content, and establish proof of concept. Each of the following has a presence on the site:
  - the Health Statistics User Group;
  - the RPI/CPI User Group; and
  - the Labour Market Statistics User Group.
6. In addition to these specific topic areas, the following more general features are in place:
  - 'Statistics in the Spotlight'. A section of the homepage that will highlight newsworthy official statistics, allowing comments from site members.
  - Consultations. An area to publicise relevant consultations and allow discussion.
  - Suggestion box. An area dedicated to feedback and ideas for communities.

7. Publicity will be low-key during the initial phase to allow the site to be tested, and a comprehensive marketing plan will accompany the strategy. The following activities are however already in progress or completed.
  - i. Incorporation into the GSS and RSS conference sessions on user engagement, and into an event for theme leaders and user group leads (March/May/September 2012).
  - ii. Raising awareness in the ONS via the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group (ongoing).
  - iii. Articles in specialist publications (e.g. the Social Research Association newsletter, November 2012).
  - iv. A StatsUserNet Twitter feed (ongoing).
  - v. Guidance for community administrators on how to ensure that their content ranks highly on search engine results (completed).
8. Despite little publicity so far, there has been an encouraging level of interest from producers and user groups. A list of potential communities for the next phase is at **Annex A** and the site will continue to be rolled out in 2012.
9. Community leads will need to be proactive in ensuring their sites contain up-to-date and useful content, and in encouraging discussion and debate. It is expected that communities will initially be dependent on the efforts of a few individuals. As the site matures and membership increases, the balance will shift toward member-generated content, and new communities will be set up as demand dictates.
10. Producer participation will be required to encourage input from the user community, to ensure that user views feed into statistical plans, and to demonstrate to users that their contributions are valued. Although the site should be primarily user led, in some instances it may be necessary for the producer to lead on establishing a community. Coordinated input on the producer side would help greatly, and we hope for support from the National Statistician and the GSS.
11. The site is intended to cater for all types of user, expert and non-expert. Effective communication and dissemination of official statistics is particularly important for engaging non-experts, and the work currently underway in the GSS should help with this.

**James Tucker, Royal Statistical Society**  
**February 2012**

## **List of Annexes**

### **Annex A Potential communities of users for second phase of development**



**Annex A Potential communities of users for second phase of development**

- Well-being (ONS)
- Environmental Accounts (ONS)
- Harmonisation (ONS)
- Beyond 2011 Population Statistics (ONS)
- Business Population Estimates (BIS)
- Children, Education and Skills (DfE, BIS)
- Sub-national statistics (various)
- Data visualisation (various)
- Open Data (various)
- British Urban and Regional Information Systems Association
- Water Statistics User Group
- Financial and Economic Statistics User Group
- Housing Statistics Network

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)02

***Progress on improving statistical commentary***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents an update on the work being undertaken by the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and across the Government Statistical Service (GSS) to improve the commentary that accompanies official statistics.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) are invited to note and comment on the progress made and the planned activities for 2012 - 2013.

**Discussion**

3. The Code of Practice for Official Statistics is explicit about the need for official statistics to be accompanied by, '...full and frank commentary and analysis that aid interpretation' of the statistics (Principle 8). It is widely recognised that much of the statistical commentary currently produced is in need of improvement. The quality and quantity of the commentary in statistical releases is a common theme in assessment reports and the need for its improvement is one of the most commonly occurring requirements. It is often commented on by users of statistics and is a factor when other issues arise around the handling of releases.
4. While many statistics producers have responded positively and constructively to requirements in assessment reports, we have identified that there is a skills and culture barrier to be overcome to bring about a step change in the quality of commentary across the GSS. In February 2011 a paper was presented to COS [SA(COS)(11)03] that outlined the current and planned work being undertaken by the NSO and the GSS Presentation and Commentary Taskforce (PCT) to improve the commentary that accompanies official statistics. This paper reports on the progress to date as well as plans for future work to improve the commentary that accompanies official statistics.
5. In the past 12 months there have been a variety of initiatives aimed at addressing the quality of the commentary in statistical releases. These have been aimed at raising awareness of what good commentary looks like, sharing best practice and developing practical writing skills. A brief outline of each of these is at **Annex A**. These include:
  - i. the work of the NSO to develop and deliver workshops on improving statistical commentary across the GSS and Devolved Administrations (DAs);
  - ii. the delivery of tailored workshops on improving statistical commentary;
  - iii. development of a network of 'champions' within departments;
  - iv. publication of guidance on 'Writing about Statistics'; and
  - v. support to the GSS by the NSO following assessment.
6. Various strands of work are planned for the coming year, largely focusing on driving change across all producers of official statistics. In particular, we have engaged an external trainer so as to significantly increase the number of workshops that can be made available to the large number of GSS staff who are involved in preparing statistical releases. Elements of the forthcoming programme are detailed at **Annex B**. In summary, the programme is made up of:
  - i. development of a library of good practice;

- ii. significantly increasing the number of workshops within departments and targeted assistance for individual departments / releases;
  - iii. development of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) seminars and training to become part of the GSS induction and Foundation courses; and
  - iv. consolidating and implementing existing guidance within departments.
7. The work detailed below has led to noticeable improvements in the commentary produced by many departments. This has included improvements to existing commentary and the development of commentary where previously none existed. Internal review groups are operating in more departments, the NSO is receiving more requests for assistance and the need to improve statistical commentary has become generally accepted.
8. However, departments have accepted the challenge to varying degrees. While some have taken positive steps to improve individual releases and have set in place department wide programmes of improvement, others have been less active. Future work is focused on driving improvement right across the GSS, embedding good practice and providing support where needed.

**Elsbeth Maclean, National Statistician's Office,  
James Tucker, GSS Presentation and Commentary Taskforce, February 2012**

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A Activities and progress to date**
- Annex B Planned activities for 2011/12**

## **Annex A Activities and progress to date**

### **1. Development and Delivery of workshops by NSO**

#### *Development and Delivery of workshops across the GSS - NSO*

The NSO has developed an interactive workshop, based around the GSS guidance on Writing about Statistics (see 3 below), the aim of which is to both raise awareness across the GSS and DAs as to the importance of appropriate statistical commentary and to equip participants with some of the skills needed to write commentary.

The workshop has been delivered by NSO staff on 11 occasions, to approximately 240 staff across the GSS and DAs. Due to the high level of demand for the workshop, delivery has been handed over to a training provider (Jenny Church), on contract to the NSO. Interest has been strong and it is expected that, by the end of 2011-12, an additional 15 – 20 workshops will have been run by both the NSO and Jenny, reaching up to 500 staff in addition to those who have already attended workshops.

The workshops have highlighted concerns amongst statisticians about what they see as a change in their role from just 'producing statistics' to providing commentary that includes an element of interpretation. This is addressed in the workshops and guidance (see point 3 below) but remains an area of concern. Combating this requires a consistent message of encouragement from both Heads of Profession and the Authority.

#### *Delivery of Tailored workshops / assistance - NSO*

Alongside the workshops described above, the NSO has delivered tailored workshops (four to date), focussing on specific issues, to individual departments. These workshops have generally been aimed at releases that have been identified by the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment team as being particularly poor or where no commentary at all has previously been provided by statisticians. As a result, revised and new commentary has been prepared that has resulted in more favourable assessments.

### **2. Support to GSS prior to and following assessment**

#### *Review of release in preparation for and response to assessment - NSO*

The NSO regularly reviews and provides comments on individual releases on an ad hoc basis. All departments are offered assistance to help them comply with any requirements they may have as a result of assessment. A significant number of departments contact the NSO for feedback on individual releases. This advice has led to departments being judged as having complied with requirements for improved commentary.

### **3. Publication of guidance on 'Writing about Statistics' – *Presentation and Commentary Taskforce***

In December 2011 guidance prepared by PCT on writing statistical first releases was agreed at the Head of Profession group meeting and published on the GSS intranet, StatNet. (It will also shortly be made available on the National Statistician's pages of the Authority website.) This guidance sets out in plain English, using easy to follow examples, the basics of writing statistical commentary. The guidance has been very well received, but there is a challenge in ensuring that it is widely used throughout the GSS. Both the workshops mentioned above and the Champions network discussed at 4, are key in encouraging its use.

### **4. Development of Champions network - *Presentation and Commentary Taskforce***

A network of commentary champions, currently covering nine departments, has been

## Annex A - SA(COS)(12)02 - Progress on improving statistical commentary

established. There are plans to extend this to cover all producers of National Statistics. Champions have a key role in embedding good practice within their departments and a number have already begun to take this forward through workshops, the establishment of peer review groups and development of departmental specific guidance. In addition to this they will continue to gather examples of good practice to ensure the guidance noted in point 4 above, is kept up to date with the best available examples.

**Annex B Planned activities for 2012/13**

**1. Development of a library of good practice**

The development of a library of good practice is already underway and examples are available on StatNet. The Champions and the NSO will continue to gather examples together and make them available on StatNet.

**2. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) seminars and training to become part of the GSS induction and foundation courses**

As part of CPD, short seminars will be offered where presenters from different departments will relay their experience in improving the commentary they produce and the difficulties they encountered.

A short introduction to writing statistical commentary is already part of the GSS induction course. NSO will work with the provider of the GSS Statistical Foundation course to develop a module to be run as part of the overall course. This will help to embed good practice within the GSS.

**3. Continuation of workshops within departments and ad hoc assistance from the NSO**

The workshops and ad hoc assistance, discussed in Annex A above, will continue to be offered on an as needed basis.

**4. Consolidating and implementing existing guidance within departments**

The consolidation and implementation of existing guidance will happen as part of the workshops, and other learning activities, and may include the 'individualisation' of the guidance already available to encourage ownership by the statisticians who produce statistical releases. The NSO would ensure that the guidance was consistent across the GSS.

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)03

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

**Purpose**

1. This paper updates the Committee for Official Statistics on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics and on public consultations relating to official statistics. As agreed at the meeting in September 2011, this paper includes a new method for recording cessation information that gives members a better insight into the impact of cuts on statistical expenditure, staffing and quality/comparability.
2. The paper also reports a new base position for staffing statistics in the Government Statistician Group (GSG) against which future reports will be benchmarked.

**Recommendations**

3. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics 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 new format for reporting cessation information going forward as highlighted at **Annex A**.

**Discussion**

4. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) currently collates information from producers of official statistics on plans to cease the production of statistics as a consequence of Spending Review 2010 cuts, as well as on public consultations relating to official statistics. An update is provided at each meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics.
5. At the meeting of the Committee of 7 September 2011 it was agreed that future updates would include information on consequent reductions to statistical expenditure and, where possible, to statistical capacity. NSO would also report on the impact on quality and comparability.
6. As reported at the same meeting, Departmental Directors of Analysis (DDANs) have instigated a quarterly analysis of active professional analysts within their department on a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) basis. Figures for the GSG<sup>1</sup>, consistent with this analysis, will be reported to COS from this point forward.

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<sup>1</sup> The GSG is a subset of the Government Statistical Service (GSS), which includes all people working on the production of Official Statistics. It should be noted that the collection of information focuses solely on members of the GSG rather than the wider GSS. Whilst it may also be desirable to monitor GSS numbers, challenges relating to accurately identifying members of this group mean that such a collection would not be feasible.

Update on cessations and consultations

7. Since the last report to the Committee on 4 November 2011, the National Statistician has been notified of a number of further cessations of production of statistics. These include:
  - i. A decision by the Welsh Government (WG) not to publish a statistical bulletin analysing annual education expenditure by local authorities including a comparison between Wales and England that attracted some media attention. WG published a statistical article on 26 January 2012 to explain the reasons for the cessation and the impact on users. The underlying reason appears to be that the numbers of schools in England converting to academies and therefore moving out of local government control makes it difficult to compare budgeted expenditure.
  - ii. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has announced that the quarterly RAF manpower statistics, last published in January 2012, are to be discontinued. MoD are of the view that the data are not sufficiently valuable to users and their demise will contribute to the resource cuts being implemented in the department. There is a public consultation about this matter which ends on 6 February 2012.
  - iii. The Department for Education (DfE) have reported two cessations. The first relates to school destinations of secondary school pupils resident in London Boroughs about which it consulted users in 2010 and again in 2011. DfE's assessment was that the cessation would have minimal impact. The second relates to diploma learning in England about which it consulted users in November 2011. There were no responses to the consultation.
8. Further information about these four cessations together with three others reported by the Home Office, the Information Centre for Health and Social Care and the Arts Council for England, can be found in Annex A. Historical information about cessations up to October 2011 is available on request but is not included here.
9. A number of statistical consultations have been notified to the NSO since the last update to the Committee, spanning nine departments (DWP, ONS, NHSIC, WG, DCLG, HMT, MoD, HO and HMRC). Of particular importance is the consultation document published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) about Land Use Change Statistics, Local Authority Housing Statistics and Regional Statistics. DCLG is proposing to end the publication of all statistics at the former Government Office Regional level and is seeking views on the most appropriate geographies to deploy in their place. The consultation has been drawn to the attention of the Authority and Heads of Professions. ONS is in the process of preparing a response and it is possible that the National Statistician will want to submit her own views.
11. There are currently eleven live statistical consultations. Information about these, and previous recent consultations, is set out in **Annex B**.
12. In addition to informing the Committee, this information will also be sent to the UK Statistics Authority Secretariat frequently in order to facilitate decisions about early intervention and/or the preparation of a Statistical Expenditure Report.



Monitoring Statistical Capacity

13. Since 2000, the NSO has collected information on membership of the GSG - that is, the body of professional statisticians within government. A summary of the key changes underlying the GSG headline figures since 2000, and the reasons behind them, was provided as background information at the September meeting in paper [SA(COS)(11)22] and the November meeting [SA(COS)(11)29]. The graphs showing the overall trend in GSG numbers are reproduced at **Annex C and D** for information.
14. Current data on GSG membership by department is shown at Annex D and includes information about October 2011 (the baseline) and January 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.
15. Recent concerns about the shortage of Statistical Officers to manage scheduled statistics production has led to a request for the National Statistician to seek exemption from the recruitment ban for those grades. Approval has now been obtained from the Minister for the Cabinet Office to re-introduce a centrally-managed external recruitment scheme for departments' immediate needs for Executive Officer grade statistical officers. Recruitment Boards are being established and the scheme has been publicised on the National Statistician's Office pages of the Authority's website. This is a welcome development.
16. Moreover, ONS has commenced a root and branch study into how it recruits and manages its Fast Stream cadre, the posts to which successful applicants are allocated and the development process followed in preparation for statistical leadership. This is also to be welcomed and will dovetail with the GSS' own review due to be completed in the Spring.

**National Statistician's Office, February 2012**

**List of Annexes**

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|----------------|---|
| <b>Annex A</b> | <b>Recent cessations of production of statistics by the GSS, notified to the National Statistician, and supplemented with additional information on impact on expenditure, staffing and quality</b> |
| <b>Annex B</b> | <b>Consultations about cessations and changes to statistics produced by the GSS notified to the National Statistician</b>   |
| <b>Annex C</b> | <b>Historical GSG membership data 2000-11, as measured by headcount</b>   |
| <b>Annex D</b> | <b>Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department – October 2011 and January 2012</b>  |

**Annex A Recent cessations of production of statistics by the GSS, notified to the National Statistician, and supplemented with additional information on impact on expenditure, staffing and quality**

This table summarises the cuts to official statistics that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician between 31 October 2011 and 2 February 2012.

As agreed at the meeting of 7 September 2011, the table has been supplemented to provide COS with better information on the impact on quality of any cuts to Official Statistics.

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	DESCRIPTION OF STATISTICS	REASONS FOR CESSATION OR REDUCTION	DETAILS OF CONSULTATION/ IMPACT ON USERS	COST/BENEFITS ASSESSMENT	STATUS
<p><b>Statistics:</b></p> <p>Basic Command Unit (BCU) level recorded crime and detection figures published alongside the July annual "Crime in England and Wales" publication.</p> <p><b>Date of cessation</b></p> <p>Consultation period ended 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012, and changes to take</p>	<p>Recorded crime data by Basic Command Unit , for five key offences, per police force</p>	<p>The Coalition Agreement proposed to cut police bureaucracy and as part of this there has been a review of requirements for police forces to submit data to the Home Office. It was proposed that from April 2012 police forces should no longer be required to submit monthly totals of recorded crimes and detections at Basic Command Unit (BCU) level.</p> <p>BCUs reflect the organisational structure of a force, with each BCU covering a particular geographic area. As they reflect management structures, BCU boundaries can change frequently, which can reduce the statistical utility of data collected at this level. A number of smaller</p>	<p>Users were alerted to the consultation in the " Crime and England and Wales :Quarterly Update to June 2011" publication. It was also published separately on the Home Office "consultations" page on the website.</p> <p>12 week consultation period.</p> <p><b>Assessment of impact on users:</b></p> <p>One response received who understood the rationale behind the proposal and generally welcomed the change.</p> <p>CSP level data will still be available.</p>	<p>Small saving to the production unit but a larger saving for forces no longer having to provide the data.</p> <p><b>Impact on quality</b></p> <p>Reduction in the volatile series , allowing more focus on stable CSP comparisons, please also see 'reasons for cessation 'box.</p>	<p><b>Confirmed</b></p>

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<p>effect from April 2012.</p>		<p>forces have discontinued the BCU model altogether, operating in effect as single BCU forces. CSPs provide a more stable basis for statistical analysis at a similar geographic granularity and also have the advantage of aligning to local authority boundaries for which other data sets are generally available. Recorded crime data will continue to be published at police force area level and CSP level on a quarterly basis.</p>			
<p><b>Statistics:</b> School Destinations of Secondary School Pupils Resident in London Boroughs</p> <p>Date of cessation: DfE suspended publication of this annual bulletin in September 2011 whilst it consulted about its future.</p>	<p>This Bulletin contains London Local Authority level information showing cross border movement, the transition between Year 6 and Year 7, distances travelled and mode of travel taken to school for secondary school pupils resident in or attending schools in London in the relevant academic year.</p> <p>In 2009/10 this bulletin also contains London level cross border</p>	<p>DfE has concluded that continuing to publish this output is not be the most effective use of their resources.</p> <p>Moreover, there is an alternative source for the information that is most frequently used,</p> <p>DfE feels that withdrawing the bulletin will have minimal impact on users.</p>	<p>In autumn 2010 the DfE sought feedback from users of these statistics to get their views on the publication. This feedback was published in August 2011 and a full summary can be found at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/ols-dbcf.pdf">http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/ols-dbcf.pdf</a></p> <p>The initial consultation concluded that the low response rate (<i>30 respondents, only 4 completed the whole survey</i>) was an indication that the publication is of interest to a niche audience and that meeting this requirement may not be the most effective use of our resources. With this in mind the recommended course of action was to <u>consult with users to assess the impact of dropping the publication from the schedule on a permanent basis.</u></p> <p>In order to asses the <b>impact</b> of ending the publication, the following steps were taken:</p> <p><i>i) Dfe published an overview and links to both the bulletin and the previous consultation on the Departments <b>Research &amp; Statistics</b></i></p>	<p>TBA</p>	

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<p>The last bulletin was published on 25 August 2010.</p>	<p>movement, distance travelled and mode of travel taken to school by pupil and school characteristics.</p> <p>The bulletin includes maintained secondary schools (including middle deemed), City Technology Colleges and Academies. It does not cover pupils attending other schools in the independent sector.</p>		<p><b>Gateway</b> and included reference on the <b>front page</b> asking for users' views on withdrawing the publication</p> <p><i>ii) it included an article in the <b>ICES (Information about Children, Education and Schools) bulletin which goes out to Local Authorities (LAs)</b> (issue 51) with a link to the publication and invited views.</i></p> <p><i>iii) it sent <b>personal emails to each of the 32 London LAs</b> to specifically ask them their views on withdrawing the publication and what the likely impact would be (and whether for example, a few tables may suffice rather than the detailed bulletin).</i></p> <p>Just <b>five</b> LAs responded to this second consultation. Those LAs who responded stated they used the bulletin primarily for school place planning. Most deemed the publication '<u>very useful</u>' but assessment of their responses suggest its withdrawal would cause minimal impact to their organisation.</p> <p>More than one response suggests that this information <u>could be reproduced within LAs</u> or through some voluntary agreement but may be resource intensive to obtain.</p> <p>More than one LA referred to an <u>alternative source</u> for much of the information: The 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics' Statistical First Release. This SFR is published annually in June <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001012/sfr12-2011xbmt.xls">http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001012/sfr12-2011xbmt.xls</a>.</p>		
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<p><b>Statistics:</b></p> <p>Diploma Learning, England, 2010/11 produced by DfE</p> <p>Date of cessation:</p> <p>Proposed to be immediate – the next publication is in November 2012.</p>	<p>A small number of tables giving the number of learners who have achieved a 14 -19 diploma within the relevant academic year. The total is broken down by diploma level and certain personal characteristic. All the figures are also provided as a proportion by subject.</p> <p>A final table gives the proportion of each achieved diploma subject and level which was at A*-A grade.</p>		<p>An entry was placed on the user consultation page of the DfE Research &amp; Stats Gateway (<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/onlinesurveys.shtml">http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/onlinesurveys.shtml</a>) asking for responses by the end of 2011. A sentence was also placed under the heading of User Feedback in the recent edition of this publication for 2011 (<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d001038/osr23-2011.pdf">http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d001038/osr23-2011.pdf</a>) pointing users to the consultation page on the Gateway.</p> <p>The publication came out on 9<sup>th</sup> November, so allowing for the Christmas period, users had just over 6 weeks to respond. No responses have been received.</p> <p><b>Impact on users</b></p> <p>There are few known users of the diploma data. No concerns have been expressed so far when the publication (in November 2011) was reduced to reporting on achievements only rather than also including participation (this was done for data quality reasons).</p> <p>The number of provisional diploma achievements for the academic year is published by JCQ on the A level and GCSE results days respectively. It is hoped that diplomas will be reported on in the School and College Performance Tables for 2012 but this is not yet confirmed.</p>	<p>For 2011/12 no net saving is expected as the money not spent on the Diploma publication will be needed to work on the changes to the Performance Tables. For 2012/12 onwards though a saving of around £5,900 (90% of the approximate spend on the Diploma publication for 2010/11) is expected.</p>	<p><b>Proposed</b></p>
<p><b>Statistics:</b></p> <p>Welsh</p>	<p>This statistical bulletin analyses annual education</p>	<p>WG has previously produced annual bulletins comparing education expenditure between</p>	<p>There has been no formal consultation.</p>	<p>tba</p>	<p><b>Confirmed</b></p>

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<p>Government's Statistics on Local Authority Education Expenditure including comparison data for Wales and England</p> <p>Date of cessation:</p> <p>Data not able to be published for 2010/11</p>	<p>expenditure by local authorities. The data used in this bulletin is sourced from the local authority revenue outturn expenditure 2009-10. Furthermore, the bulletin compares local authority expenditure on education in Wales with equivalent expenditure on education in England.</p>	<p>Wales and England. Last year it informed users of <a href="#">difficulties encountered in using education data for 2010-11</a> due to the changing functions of local government in England.</p> <p>To account for these difficulties for the 2011-12 financial year, WG intended to produce a bulletin analysing purely schools budgeted expenditure [i.e. excluding elements relating to further education supported by local authorities], but this analysis has been further complicated by the numbers of schools converting to academies in England and therefore moving out of local government control.</p> <p>Following further consideration of the methodology being proposed to produce the funding comparison this year, WG could not be certain of the robustness or fitness for purpose of comparison of budgeted expenditure between Wales and England in 2011-12.</p>	<p>Users were alerted to the difficulties in producing these statistics in January 2011.</p> <p>The difficulties have been exacerbated in 2012 by the numbers of schools converting to academies in England and therefore moving out of local government control.</p> <p>WG published a statistical article on 26 January 2012 to explain the impact on users  <a href="http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/120126schoolbudgeten.pdf">http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/120126schoolbudgeten.pdf</a></p>		
<p><b>Statistics:</b> Quarterly Prescription Cost Analysis, England</p> <p>Date of cessation: IC will release</p>	<p>The number of Items dispensed in the Community in England, by quarter, listed by presentation from Prescription Cost</p>	<p>Publication of this quarterly release began in July 2011 for quarter 1, 2011. NHS BSA (Business Services Authority) Prescription Services began a monthly release of the same dataset on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011. There is insufficient value to users</p>	<p>Notification of the cessation of this publication will be announced with the release of Quarter 3 data in January 2012. Explanation will be given with a link to the NHS BSA publications. Objections or comments can be sent via the existing feedback form provided with the publication. The date of the publication of the final quarter for 2011, in April 2012 will mark the end of the consultation period (3 months).</p>	<p>A saving of approximately 6 days per year of staff time.</p> <p><b>Impact on quality:</b></p> <p>None as data could be constructed from the BSA monthly</p>	<p>Proposed</p>

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<p>the PCA by quarter on two more occasions to give a complete dataset covering 2011 – these will be released in January 2012 and April 2012. Release of data for the first quarter of 2012 data, to have been in July 2012 will now not take place.</p>	<p>Analysis statistics.</p>	<p>in the NHS IC continuing to produce the quarterly report.</p>	<p><b>Assessment of impact on users:</b></p> <p>We are assuming that users (who are, as far as we know, drug companies or appliance manufactures/wholesalers) will appreciate monthly reporting rather than quarterly reporting. The only advantage the quarterly release by the IC could have over the monthly release would be if a user actually required the data by quarter – meaning that the user would need to sum monthly releases to get quarterly data. In addition the monthly releases have the data split by dispenser type, which the quarterly releases do not.</p>	<p>release. Documentation relating to the data will continue to be made available with the annual National Statistic release.</p>	
<p>Statistics: RAF Pocket Brief</p> <p>The 01 January 2012 edition, which will be published on 09 February 2012, will be the final one.</p>	<p>Quarterly official statistic showing RAF manpower statistics: as at the quarter point, for a 12 month period up to the quarter point and for the current and previous financial year.</p> <p>Statistics cover: regular RAF strengths broken down training indicator, ethnic minority strengths, female strengths and medical deployment standards</p>	<p>This has been necessitated by the resource cuts being implemented across the Department, which has meant that DASA has needed to consider carefully the value from publications as well as internal advice. Some information in the pocket brief is duplicated from other publications. The proposal is to cease this official statistic, but continue with our flagship national statistics products: the <a href="#">MMR</a> and <a href="#">QMR</a>.</p>	<p>A statement has been placed on the DASA website: <a href="#">DASA website consultation</a></p> <p>A statement will appear on the public consultation section of the MOD website</p> <p>We will be seeking views from our main customers in the RAF: Air Mann-ACOS, Air MprReq-DACOS and Air Mann-OpsSpt DACOS</p> <p><b>Assessment on impact on Users</b></p>	<p>Savings equate to 0.1 FTE, however a lot of the information is gathered from internal publications which if ceased would increase the FTE.</p> <p>The savings will contribute towards the resource reduction.</p> <p><b>Impact on quality</b></p> <p>None</p>	<p>Proposed</p>

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	strengths. Intake, outflow, from untrained to trained, reserve strength and total length of service on promotion are also presented.		<p>A public consultation is currently on-going. However, for external users a lot of the information can be found in two of DASA's National Statistic: the <a href="#">MMR</a> and <a href="#">QMR</a>. The information does not go down to branch and trade group level but it does go down to Officers and Other Ranks, but for the general public is likely to be sufficient.</p> <p>For internal users, a lot of the information can be found in our regular internal publications.</p>		
<p><b>Statistics:</b> TGI arts attendance statistic</p> <p>Date of Cessation: 31 October 2011.</p> <p>The final statistic published was for the 2009/10 year, published September 2010.</p>	<p>The TGI arts attendance statistic presented estimates of the proportion of adults who attend different types of arts events in England and in the whole of Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland), and their frequency of attendance.</p> <p>It drew on data collected in the Target Group Index (TGI), a survey of adults living in Great Britain conducted by <a href="#">TGI Insights and Integration</a>.</p>	<p>The decision to consider ceasing publication was made at a time when reduced Grant In Aid from central government to Arts Council England meant that the Arts Council re-examined its research and statistical commitments.</p> <p>The Arts Council concluded that there was no longer a need to continue funding publication of the TGI figures on arts attendance for two key reasons.</p> <p>The first key reason is that the TGI figures are no longer the primary source of data on arts engagement used by the Arts Council or by the arts sector. TGI data were originally published because there were no alternative sources of national data on arts attendance. However, since 2005</p>	<p>The consultation period ran for twelve weeks from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August until Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011.</p> <p>Users were alerted to the consultation via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A note on the Arts Council England website (on the official statistics page, and on the TGI statistics page)</li> <li>• A note in the official statistics publication schedule available from the Arts Council website</li> <li>• A note on the DCMS website (on the official statistics page). (There is no distribution list or list of regular users of the statistic so it was not possible to email users directly.)</li> </ul> <p>Users were invited to contact the Arts Council lead on official statistics with any comments.</p> <p><b>Impact on Users:</b></p> <p>Users of statistics on arts attendance will continue to be able to use data from the Taking Part survey. Users can also subscribe to the Target Group Index survey themselves (at a financial cost) as it continues to be conducted by <a href="#">TGI Insights and Integration</a>.</p>	<p>Reduction in statistical expenditure of £23,000 per annum, not reinvested into other statistical outputs.</p> <p><b>Impact on quality:</b></p> <p>There is no impact on quality of the statistic – rather, the statistic is no longer made publicly available by Arts Council England. (Users are still able to access these statistics at a cost, by subscription to the TGI survey.)</p> <p>The Arts Council believes there is no impact on the quality</p>	Confirmed



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	<p>Arts Council England paid a subscription fee in order to be able to access and make publicly available statistics from a sub-set of the copyright TGI dataset.</p>	<p>there has been an alternative: the Taking Part survey. Taking Part is commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in partnership with Arts Council England, Sport England and English Heritage; it is also an official statistic. Taking Part is a more detailed and robust source of arts engagement information than TGI because it includes a wider range of art forms, covers both attendance and participation, and is methodologically stronger.</p> <p>The second key reason is that the TGI figures are no longer the primary source of data on <i>trends</i> over time in arts engagement. For a number of years the Arts Council continued to publish both TGI and Taking Part data, because the TGI figures could show trends over time (the same questions had been asked since 1994/95). However, now that the Taking Part survey has been running for five years, and government has committed to continuing to fund it over the current government's term, it has become established as the main source of data for year on year trends.</p>	<p>Users were invited to comment on the proposal to cease producing this statistic, and no comments were received.</p> <p>We therefore conclude that there would be very limited impact on users.</p>	<p>of publicly available statistics on arts attendance in England, because the Taking Part survey continues to be available and provides a superior alternative to the TGI survey.</p> <p>There is some limited negative impact on the public's ability to freely make comparisons across Great Britain, because there is no other single freely available statistic that captures arts attendance across all the nations of Great Britain to the level of detail included in the TGI survey. However, TGI remains available to access by subscription; there are alternative free data sources covering all of Great Britain that offer some information on arts attendance; and the Arts Councils of</p>	
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				Wales and Scotland each also fund regular surveys of national arts engagement following a very similar format to that used in Taking Part.	
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**Annex B Recent consultations about cessations and changes to statistics produced by the GSS notified to the National Statistician, with a consultation end date of October 2011 or later**

This table summarises the consultations that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician, with a consultation end date of October 2011 or later, or have been discovered by the National Statistician's Office undertaking periodic trawls of departmental websites. Details of earlier consultations are available on request.

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	DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION	CONSULTATION END
<p><b>Inheritance Tax Survey of Users' Views</b></p> <p><b>Producer: HMRC</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 3/1/2012</b></p>	<p>HMRC are committed to providing impartial quality statistics that meet user needs. HMRC encourages users to engage with them so they can improve the official statistics and identify gaps in the statistics that are produced. We are currently seeking your views on the IHT tables in general and we're also proposing some changes to certain tables. If you would like to provide feedback on these statistics, comment on the proposed changes or suggest others, please participate in the <a href="#">User Survey</a></p>	<p><b>5 April 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Proposed changes to publication cycle of six Indirect Taxes National Statistics Bulletins.</b></p> <p>Producer: HMRC</p> <p>Open date: 20/1/12</p>	<p>HM Revenue and Customs are currently seeking your views on publishing the following National Statistics <a href="#">Bulletins</a> every three months: Landfill Tax, Betting and Gaming, Air Passenger Duty, Aggregates Levy, Climate Change Levy, Insurance Premium Tax. They are currently published monthly. If you would like to comment on the proposed changes, please participate in the <a href="#">User Survey</a>.</p>	<p><b>19 April 2012</b></p>

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<p><b>Mental Health Act Statistics consultation</b></p> <p><b>Producer: NHSIC</b></p> <p><b>Opened: January 2012</b></p>	<p>We are seeking your views on the national statistics publication 'Inpatients formally detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, and patients subject to Supervised Community Treatment, Annual figures'.</p> <p>A consultation is particularly important now because a change of data source for this publication has been proposed that would potentially make further relevant data available for analysis. The Mental Health Minimum Data Set (MHMDS) has been identified as a source for national statistics about the use of the Mental Health Act in the future, and it is proposed that this will eventually replace the KP90 collection as the source of statistics for this publication. The MHMDS is a rich data source and makes possible several new dimensions for these statistics.</p> <p>All questions are optional but the more information you provide the more of your feedback we will be able to consider for incorporation into future iterations of our mental health act statistics.</p>	<p><b>20 April 2012</b></p>
<p><b>NHS Contraceptive Services, England: Consultation Review</b></p> <p><b>Producer: NHSIC</b></p> <p><b>Opened: 30 Dec 2011</b></p>	<p>This consultation aims to engage with users of the reports to enable us to develop a more complete understanding of the uses made of these statistics to ensure they remain relevant and useful. We would like to understand what purposes the statistics are used for, and whether the level of detail provided is sufficient.</p> <p>We would also like to understand how the SRHAD record level dataset can be used to provide meaningful information for decision making and would seek your views on how you would like to see this information presented. These will be used to inform the content and design of the SRHAD based publication. Whilst we will consider all views we receive, we can not guarantee that we will be able to implement all of them.</p>	<p><b>23 March 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Welsh Government Consultation on Social Housing Sales Data Collections</b></p> <p><b>Producer: WG</b></p> <p><b>Opened: 12 Jan 2012</b></p>	<p>Knowledge and Analytical Services of the Welsh Government are consulting on changes to existing social housing sales data collections. The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the data items collected on social housing sales and to the accompanying definitions;</li> <li>• The use of publications on social housing sales.</li> </ul> <p>Your contributions will help us to understand the impact these changes could have on the individuals and organisations that use these statistics. The outcome of this consultation will inform our decision as to whether these changes can be implemented. This is in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice which states that effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. These proposed changes would ensure that the information collected and published on social housing sales remains relevant, accurate and meets the needs of users. The changes aim to provide more clarity to data providers and remove data items no longer relevant or required by end users of the data.</p> <p><b>The consultation will run from 12 January to 1 March 2012 and a full summary of the responses received will be published on our website. We would very much welcome your views on the proposals.</b></p> <p><b>Further information on the consultation rationale, including a response form, are available at the following link :</b></p>	<p><b>1 March 2012</b></p>

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	<p><a href="http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/socialhousing/?lang=en">http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/socialhousing/?lang=en</a></p>	
<p><b>Consultation on proposed changes to statistics: Land Use Change Statistics, Rationalised Collection of Local Authority Housing Statistics and Publication of Regional Statistics</b></p> <p><b>Producer : DCLG</b></p> <p><b>Open date : 10 January 2012</b></p>	<p>As part of the drive to deliver cost savings across government, DCLG is considering how best to meet the needs of users of the Land Use Change Statistics in a cost effective way. Four options have been identified to achieve this and it is seeking users' opinions on the relative importance of the various categories of land use change and the method of data collection.</p> <p>The proposed new local authority housing data collection rationalises data returns in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Annual statistical data returns from local authorities via the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix / Business Plan Statistical Appendix / Housing Sales Monitoring return (P1B form).</li> <li>2) Key information on rents and stock from the Housing Revenue Account administrative returns.</li> <li>3) Key aggregate level information from the discontinued Register Of Licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation collection.</li> </ol> <p>Whilst the scope of the data review did not include related collections by the Tenant Services Authority or the Homes and Communities Agency it has sought to avoid duplication with other data collections and to use consistent definitions and questions where appropriate.</p> <p>The third part of the consultation on regional statistics covers all of the Department's statistical outputs.</p>	<p><b>2 April 2012</b></p>

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<p><b>PESA National Statistics user consultation</b></p> <p><b>Producer: HM Treasury</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 22 Dec</b></p>	<p>The overriding purpose of the consultation is to seek views from users about the particular uses to which they put our statistics.</p> <p>Suggested key questions are arranged by theme, however users need not stick rigidly to these and may comment on any aspect of PESA publications. This includes the annual PESA command paper, a compendium of already published PESA National Statistics along with departmental spending plans.</p> <p>The intended audience for this consultation is any person or body who provides data for; or uses; or has a strong interest in, Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses releases e.g. government bodies; businesses; local authorities; voluntary organisations; academics, etc.</p>	<p><b>15 March 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Public consultation on the future of the Construction Statistics Annual publication</b></p> <p><b>Producer: ONS</b></p> <p><b>Open Date: 21 Dec 11</b></p>	<p>ONS publishes a range of statistical information and analysis in compendia publications. The Construction Statistics Annual is a compendium of construction related data, published by the ONS, other government departments and non-public sector sources. Most of the data is already available for free on the internet and much of the content is published more regularly than annually. As a result, the annual becomes out of date very quickly and loses its value as a source of reference. It is proposed that the annual will cease to exist in its current format. This consultation will seek views from users on proposed improvements.</p>	<p><b>23 March 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Ceasing production of rolling-year interregional migration estimates</b></p> <p><b>Producer: ONS</b></p> <p><b>Open Date: 12 Dec 11</b></p>	<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces internal migration estimates on both a quarterly and an annual basis.</p> <p>This consultation is concerned with the quarterly publication of rolling-year interregional migration estimates.</p> <p>Due a combination of the annual mid-year estimates being regarded as more robust and greater availability of data on the ONS website it is proposed that the rolling-year interregional migration estimates are no longer published.</p> <p>Please read the paper and then responses to the questions should be sent to Pete Large either by email, at migstatsunit@ons.gov.uk or by post to IMPEEG, Room 2300, Office for National Statistics, Segensworth Road, Titchfield, Hampshire, PO15 5RR.</p> <p>A summary of responses will be published approximately two months after the consultation has closed</p>	<p><b>27 February 2012</b></p>

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<p><b>Proposed Changes to Homelessness Data Collections</b></p> <p><b>Producer: WG</b></p> <p><u>5/12/2011</u></p>	<p>The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further changes to the current quarterly and annual homelessness data collection return; and</li> <li>• the introduction of a new twice yearly data collection return covering homelessness prevention and relief.</li> </ul> <p>Further information on the consultation rationale, including a response form, are available at the following link : <a href="http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/homelessness/?lang=en&amp;status=open">http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/homelessness/?lang=en&amp;status=open</a></p>	<p><b>16 January 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Consultation on the cessation of DASA's quarterly Royal Air Force Pocket Brief</b></p> <p><b>Producer: MoD</b></p> <p><b>Open Date:</b> 25 Nov 2011</p>	<p><b>Defence Analytical Services and Advice Air (DASA Air) plan to cease the compilation of the RAF Pocket Brief, which is currently published as a quarterly Official Statistic.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent on the consultation the 01 January 2012 edition, which will be published on 09 February 2012, may be the final one.</li> <li>• This has been necessitated by the resource cuts being implemented across the Department.</li> <li>• We are seeking the views of all users inside and outside the MOD on this change.</li> </ul>	<p><b>6 February 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Collection and Publication of Fire Statistics</b></p> <p><b>Producer: WG</b></p> <p><u>9/11/11</u></p>	<p>The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on proposals to change the data collections and statistical outputs. Your contributions will help us to understand the impact these changes could have on the individuals and organisations that use these statistics. The outcome of this consultation will inform our priorities for the years ahead. This is in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice which states that effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value.</p>	<p><b>1 February 2012</b></p>

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<p><b>Proposed Domains and Headline Indicators for Measuring National Well-being</b></p> <p><b>Producer: ONS</b></p> <p><b>31 October 2011</b></p>	<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Measuring National Well-being (MNW) programme aims to develop and publish an accepted and trusted set of National Statistics to understand and monitor well-being.</p> <p>The programme was launched in November 2010 with a national debate on 'What matters to you?' to improve understanding of what should be included in measures of the nation's well-being.</p> <p>This consultation seeks your views on a proposed set of domains (aspects of national well-being) and headline indicators which are outlined in the <a href="#">discussion paper</a>.</p> <p>The domains and indicators have been developed from responses to the national debate, research into well-being and international initiatives.</p>	<p><b>23 January 2012</b></p>
<p><b>National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK</b></p> <p><b>Producer: DWP</b></p> <p><b>October 2011</b></p>	<p>Please note DWP have today launched a consultation on 'National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK' at</p> <p><a href="http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino_allocation">http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino_allocation</a></p> <p>We have also published the feedback from the previous consultation on the Statistical Summary at <a href="http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=news#ss_feedback">http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=news#ss_feedback</a></p> <p>Any queries about the 'National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK' consultation contact RUSS.BENTLEY@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</p> <p>Any queries about the DWP Statistical Summary contact JOANNE.LONE@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</p>	<p><b>24 February 2012</b></p>
<p><b>British Crime Survey (BCS)<sup>2</sup> 2012-15</b></p> <p><b>Launched on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011</b></p>	<p>The BCS is a nationally representative face-to-face survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to interview. As such, the BCS provides regular monitoring on levels of crime, which include those not reported to or recorded by the police.</p> <p>The BCS also asks about attitudes to crime-related issues such as the police, criminal justice system, and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour. These figures are produced as National Statistics on a routine basis</p> <p>The Home Office is proposing a reduction in the annual sample size of the BCS from a nationally representative achieved sample of 46,000 adults (aged 16 or over) to 35,000 adults. This will reduce the number of achieved interviews with children (aged 10 to 15 years) from 4,000 to 3,100 per year. A new sample design is proposed that will preserve the ability to produce estimates with reasonable levels of precision at police force area level based on a minimum sample of 650 interviews with adults per year.</p>	<p>January 2012</p>

<sup>2</sup> The name of the survey is due to change from April 2012 to reflect its geographical coverage.



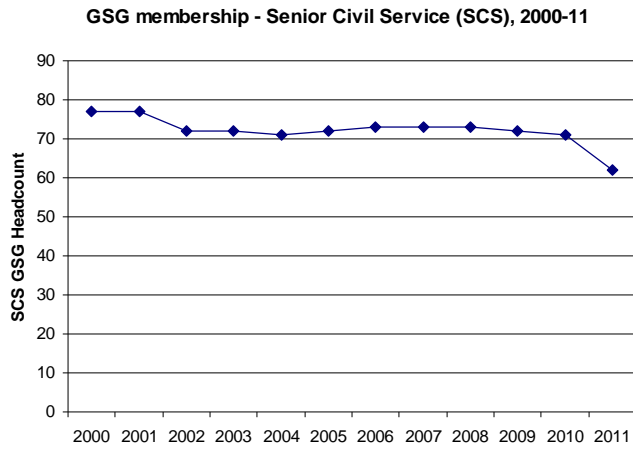
## Annex B - SA(COS)(12)03 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p>Improving the Measurement of Car Prices in the Consumer Prices Index and Retail Prices Index (2011)</p> <p>Producer: ONS</p> <p>3 October 2011</p>	<p>The UK Statistics Authority, in September 2011, endorsed proposals from the Consumer Prices Advisory Committee (CPAC) relating to the measurement of car prices in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) and Retail Prices Index (RPI). CPAC recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Office for National Statistics (ONS) changes the method used to measure new car prices in the CPI and RPI. The proposal is to use transaction prices from car dealer websites instead of the current approach of using 'list' prices. In addition, this method will be used for both the CPI and RPI (currently, two different methods are used)</li> <li>2. the new method should be introduced for the February 2012 CPI and RPI, published on the 20 March 2012</li> </ol>	<p>23 December 2011</p>
<p>Welsh Health Survey Outputs</p> <p>Producer: WG</p> <p>13 Sept 2011</p>	<p>We are consulting to seek user views on outputs from the 2010 Welsh Health Survey.</p> <p>The Welsh Health Survey provides unique information about the health and health-related lifestyles of people living in Wales. It covers a range of health-related issues, including health status, lifestyle and health behaviours, and health service use. The 2010 annual report was published on September 13th 2011, along with a local authority bulletin and additional online tables and charts.</p>	<p>6 December 2011</p>
<p>Triennial Review of Index Numbers of Producer Prices (SPPI) Voluntary Survey of Users</p> <p>Producer: ONS</p> <p>18 October 2011</p>	<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is required by Government to regularly review each of its statistical surveys. We are currently in the process of conducting a review of the SPPI and would be grateful if users of the information could take the time to provide us with feedback in this voluntary questionnaire.</p> <p>The review is a requirement of the Prime Minister's instructions on survey control. The main objective of the review is to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of all of our procedures, and to identify where improvements can be made.</p>	<p>25 November 2011</p>

## Annex B - SA(COS)(12)03 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p>Triennial Review of Index Numbers of Producer Prices (PPI) Voluntary Survey of Users</p> <p>Producer: ONS</p> <p>18 October 2011</p>	<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is required by Government to regularly review each of its statistical surveys. We are currently in the process of conducting a review of PPI and would be grateful if users of the information could take the time to provide us with feedback in this voluntary questionnaire.</p> <p>The review is a requirement of the Prime Minister's instructions on survey control. The main objective of the review is to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of all of our procedures, and to identify where improvements can be made.</p>	<p>25 November 2011</p>
<p>NHS Staffing Statistics</p> <p>Producer: WG</p> <p>30/8/2011</p>	<p>We would like your views on the proposal to stop data collection and publication on NHS Staff Vacancies, and other views about NHS staffing statistics that we publish.</p> <p>The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on the above proposal and our other NHS staffing statistics. The reasons and evidence behind the proposal is detailed in the consultation document that can be downloaded from this page. Your contributions will help us to understand the impact these changes could have on the individuals and organisations that use these statistics. The outcome of this consultation will inform our priorities for the years ahead.</p>	<p>11 October 2011</p>

**Annex C Historical GSG membership data 2000-11, as measured by headcount.**



**Annex D Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department - October 2011 and January 2012**

	October 2011		January 2012	
Department	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)
BIS	3	46	3	47
DCLG	2	50	2	51
DECC	1	21	1	24
DEFRA	2	29	2	28
DfE	2	91	2	90
DfID	1	28	1	30
DfT	2	33	3	33
DH	3	59	2	59
NHSIC	1	67	1	71
DWP	2	171	2	165
HMRC	3	103	3	112
HO	2	20	2	18
MoD	2	64	2	63
MoJ	1	55	1	54
UKSA/ONS	21	123	20	129
SG	1	119	1	119
WG	1	58	1	62
Other depts./agencie	2	129	3	130
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1285</b>

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

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)04

***Report on stage two of the National Statistician's  
Review of Housing Market Statistics***

**Purpose**

1. This paper updates the committee on progress with the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics.

**Recommendations**

2. Committee members are invited to note progress with the review since it was last presented in June 2011.

**Discussion**

3. Statistics on the housing market are produced from a variety of different sources including both public and private sector organisations. The range and coverage of the different existing measures has been recognised as an area of user concern. Questions have been raised around the coherence and comparability of official statistics on the housing market, and house prices in particular. For example, the different coverage of the various official measures of house prices leads to very different estimates of average price and price movements month by month.
4. Sir Michael Scholar raised his concern "about whether the public and policy makers are getting all of the information that they need for decision making about the housing market" in a letter to Jack Straw, the minister then responsible for the Land Registry, in December 2008. Following this, the National Statistician agreed to review the available official housing market statistics and to make recommendations on the way forward.
5. Stage one of the review focused on house price statistics and was published in December 2010. The report contained two key recommendations. These were:
  - i. a single definitive house price index and accompanying statistics should be produced by the official statistics producer community; and
  - ii. a regular official statistics report should be developed presenting and analysing official house price measures and their relationship to other non-official sources and wider housing market indicators.
6. Stage two of the review, relating to wider housing market statistics, began in January 2011. Discussions were held with key users to identify the uses of housing market statistics, and to assess how well the current official statistics meet user needs. In addition, an event was jointly organised with the Housing Statistics Network to gain the views of a wider range of users on how official housing market statistics could be improved. The evidence from these activities fed into a draft report and recommendations. Publication of the report was deferred in May 2011 to ensure that the wider housing market review fully considered future plans for house price statistics, which were still in the process of being developed.
7. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Land Registry response to Recommendation 1 of the National Statistician's Review of House Price Statistics, to produce a single definitive index and accompanying statistics, was received in December 2011. However, responsibility for the House Price Index (HPI) currently produced by DCLG will transfer to the Office for National

Statistics (ONS) by April 2012. ONS and Land Registry have agreed to work together to follow up on recommendation 1 of the National Statistician's review.

8. The transfer of the HPI to ONS, together with the ONS and Land Registry commitment to work towards producing a single definitive index, means that there is greater clarity on future plans for house price statistics. In light of this, the report on stage two of the review of housing market statistics is expected to be published in May 2012.
9. ONS and Land Registry will announce how they intend to meet the recommendations from the first stage of the review once the house price index has successfully been transferred to ONS.
10. The draft report from the second stage of the review will be discussed with the review steering group before being presented to COS in April 2012.
11. The report is expected to be published in May 2012. We anticipate this will be followed by a user event in June 2012 to gain users input to how the recommendations will be implemented and the relative priorities.

**Pam Davies, National Statistician's Office**  
**February 2012**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)05

***Quality Improvement Fund:  
Update on actions from last meeting***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on the two Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) related actions from the meeting of November 2011 [SA(COS)(11)31].

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
  - i. note the actions taken to encourage projects that more closely address the main findings from UK Statistics Authority assessments; and
  - ii. note the additional options for the wider dissemination of the QIF reports.

**Discussion**

*Update on Action 4.2 (November 2011)*

3. The committee requested further consideration of how the findings from UK Statistics Authority assessments can be addressed. ONS and Government Statistical Service (GSS) Heads of Profession are looking at lessons learned from assessments. Actions arising from this will be taken forward at a GSS level.
4. In terms of actions to encourage QIF bids for funding which address findings from the assessment process, discussions were held with the UK Statistics Authority and, in line with the suggestion made by the Committee, an additional criterion was adopted. The updated criteria have been used for the current bidding round (2012/13) and can be found at **Annex A**. These criteria also reflect the recent shift to providing greater weight to bids addressing cross-GSS issues, such as raising standards and skills.
5. The revised criteria resulted in 18 bids for QIF funding in the current round (2012/13). The bids have been assessed by the QIF sub-group of the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC), which has recommended that 13 of these bids be approved. Of these, a number relate to the findings of assessments or wider issues raised during the assessment process. These include bids for funding to: improve methodology, provide guidance and templates around quality review requirements for surveys, increase the accessibility of data for users, improve the use of existing data sources and administrative data and address disclosure control issues and training. Some other bids were not approved in this round but feedback was provided and some of these bidders were encouraged to reapply for funding in round two, including a bid relating to understanding users and their uses of statistics.
6. The recommendations of the subgroup have been submitted to GSS SPSC for overall approval and the outcomes will be communicated to bidders by the end of February. The remaining QIF budget for 2012/13 will be available for a second call for bids in early Summer 2012.

*Update on Action 4.4 (November 2011)*

7. The committee also requested further information on options for wider dissemination of QIF reports; beyond the current dissemination on the GSS intranet site (StatNet) and at GSS conferences.
8. The terms and conditions of the Quality Improvement Fund have now been updated and successful bids are required to publish the outcome of the projects on their department's

## SA(COS)(12)05 - Quality Improvement Fund: Update on actions

website, and to reference the project in relevant statistical releases (as appropriate). The updated terms and conditions can be found at Annex A.

9. Additional options for dissemination include publishing QIF project reports on the relevant section of the ONS website. The ONS Quality Centre is responsible for administering the fund and already has relevant QIF pages. The reports could be added to these pages and this central location for the information disseminated via advertising and the quality training that is conducted across the GSS.
10. Projects that have impacted specific surveys could also be linked from the relevant listing on the online list of government statistical surveys that is to be developed under proposals approved at GSS SPSC in January 2012. More information on these proposals is included in paper [SA(COS)(12)06] for this meeting.

**Dennis Roberts, Methodology Directorate, Office for National Statistics  
February 2012**

### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A Criteria and terms and conditions for the Quality Improvement Fund  
2012/13**



## **Annex A Criteria and terms and conditions for the Quality Improvement Fund 2012/13**

In discussions leading up to the setting up of the UK Statistics Authority, it was recognised that an assessment function should lead to improvements in statistical quality, but that improvement would incur costs. The Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) is primarily designed to support work to improve the quality of and trust in Official Statistics across the GSS (including NISRA).

In November 2011 the UK Statistics Committee for Official Statistics (COS), reviewed the arrangements for the QIF. The committee said that the QIF projects had brought beneficial improvements to the methods used in the production of the statistics. Further benefits could be found in projects that sought to directly address the two main issues identified during assessments: improving the commentary accompanying statistics, and improving producers' understanding and analysis of the use made of statistics.

Exemplar projects, which could have broad applicability across the statistical service, should be considered. Bids for these types of projects could be encouraged by earmarking a special category of funding and/or revising the criteria used to evaluate bids for funding.

In line with the COS observations the Statistical Policy and Planning Committee (SPSC) has agreed the following revised criteria for assessing all submitted QIF bids:

They should:

- relate to UK Statistics Authority priorities for 2012/13 (these are included in the emerging 2020 strategies which are available on the [National Statistician's pages of] UK Statistics Authority website);
- address Code compliance issues highlighted in UK Statistics Authority assessment reports; particularly around improving the commentary accompanying statistics, and improving producers' understanding and analysis of the use made of statistics;
- have wide applicability across GSS, ensuring knowledge sharing and implementation across other Departments;
- require expertise to be bought in from an external source.

Funding will not be awarded for work that is considered to be 'business as usual', or for the temporary promotion of staff (with the back-filling of posts), which is viewed as a departmental subsidy. The minimum threshold for bids is £5,000 and all bids should be for one-off projects with a clear end date.

If you wish to make a bid for this period of QIF funding, please complete the attached templates. Only fully completed templates that include the approval of your Head of Profession (HoP) will be considered. Please ensure sufficient time is allowed for this approval, as it is not possible to accept bids submitted after the deadline of 12 noon on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2012.

Completed templates should be returned to [ONS.Quality.Centre@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ONS.Quality.Centre@ons.gov.uk) and copied to David Stephens ([david.stephens@ons.gov.uk](mailto:david.stephens@ons.gov.uk)) by the time/date given above. If you have any questions regarding your proposed QIF bid or the QIF process, please contact either David Stephens (01633 455267) or Jill Pobjoy (01633 455468)

### **Terms and Conditions**

Submission of a bid presumes that you have read, understood and agreed to the following terms and conditions:

1. Successful project bids must be completed within the financial year to which the fund applies, must deliver to timetable and within the agreed budget.

## Annex A - SA(COS)(12)05 - Quality Improvement Fund: Update on actions

2. A mid-project report template will be issued (including progress, a financial update and outlook etc). This must be completed (maximum four pages) and submitted to David Stephens
3. An end-of-project report template will be issued (to include: achievements in relation to statistical process and/or output improvements, the impact on users, application across the GSS, identification of best practice, etc) and must be completed and submitted to David Stephens within four weeks of project completion.
4. A report suitable for publication must be provided to David Stephens within six weeks of project completion. This will be disseminated GSS wide via StatNet. The report should also be published on your Department's website, referenced from statistical releases where appropriate, and should include details of the project's successes, how the GSS have benefited from the project as well as the individual department, and how the findings have/will be disseminated.
5. Documentation relating to successful bid projects must be retained for audit purposes and possible evaluation by the QIF sub-group of the GSS SPSC. If requested, this documentation must be made available within two weeks of the request.

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)06

***Quality and survey control considerations across the GSS***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) with an update on developments in terms of quality and survey control (respondent burden) considerations for government statistical surveys to businesses and local authorities.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of COS are invited to:
  - i. note the developments; and
  - ii. provide a recommendation on where the online list of government statistical surveys to businesses and local authorities should be located.

**Background**

3. The Government Statistical Service (GSS) Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) aims to assist the National Statistician to fulfil her responsibilities to promote and safeguard the quality of official statistics, through the development and promotion of statistical policy, and through driving continuous improvement in methodologies, standards, and classifications.

**Discussion**

4. At the January meeting of the GSS SPSC, proposals on maintaining and promoting quality and respondent burden controls across the GSS were discussed and agreed. These proposals are based on an understanding that the current Prime Minister's Instructions (PMIs) expired with the change of government. The proposals are that the Statistics Authority should not seek to renew the PMIs on survey controls under the coalition government but rather that survey controls be driven by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
5. Specifically, the proposals state that:
  - i. Survey controls continue to be managed by the Survey Control Unit (based in ONS) but transparency and openness is increased through the publication of an online list of all government statistical surveys to businesses and local authorities (initially taking on the scope of the PMIs to enable a smooth transition). This list will include:
    - a) key survey information (e.g. purpose, topics covered, responsible department) and a link to the questionnaire(s);
    - b) the compliance cost of the survey;
    - c) a quality review schedule (see below) and links to completed quality reviews; and
    - d) a section on new survey proposals and plans to develop existing surveys.
  - ii. The scope of the 'reviews' conducted under the PMIs (currently focussed on respondent burden) be broadened to be more consistent with the Code. These quality reviews would address matters of survey quality and methodology (as well as respondent burden), thus complementing the existing UK Statistics Authority assessments and addressing the recent steer from the National Statistician that quality reviews should be conducted on a more formal basis.

Note: Consistent with the PMIs, the proposals will initially apply to England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own ongoing survey controls. Initially the reviews will focus on survey quality but could subsequently be extended to incorporate the whole statistical value chain (including the use of administrative data). The whole statistical process is already covered in the Quality, Methods and Harmonisation Tool – which will be used as a basis for these reviews.

- iii. A schedule of quality reviews is published for each survey as part of the online list of government statistical surveys. Completed quality reviews incorporating action plans to address any areas for improvement identified will also be published as part of this list.
6. These proposals will have a number of benefits for users and stakeholders:
- i. The proposals aim to rationalise, make more consistent and increase the transparency of the survey controls and survey reviews conducted under the Code of Practice. Much of this work is already conducted, although not always in transparent or consistent ways. Thus, the proposals will help departments meet their obligations under the Code and provide the National Statistician with a comprehensive and coherent view of government survey activity (initially only for surveys to businesses and local authorities).
  - ii. The online list of surveys will provide a central location for information on surveys (to businesses and local authorities) analogous to the publication hub for outputs. It will increase transparency and ensure that stakeholders and the Authority are aware of the information being collected across government – this will also facilitate the awareness of existing data sources across government, with the aim of reducing redundant data collection.
  - iii. The implementation of quality reviews and their publication along with action plans to address any areas for improvement will assure users and stakeholders that quality and methodology considerations are being addressed. It will also be a means of sharing survey best practice (areas of strengths) and improvement methodologies across government.
  - iv. The section of the online list on newly proposed surveys and planned developments to existing surveys will function as a central location for consultation, providing a straightforward way to inform stakeholders about departments' survey plans.
  - v. The self-assessment approach of the proposed reviews will move the GSS towards requirements proposed in recent European Commission communications on the European Code of Practice (Communication 211/2011), particularly proposals for self-assessments, quality assurance and improvement plans.
7. The Committee is asked to provide their views on whether the online list of surveys should be located on the ONS website or the website of the UK Statistics Authority.

*Timescale for implementation*

8. Survey Control Liaison Officers are already in place across departments (under the PMIs) and could assist Heads of Profession in the work of implementing these proposals. The Survey Control Unit would continue to coordinate this work, the implementation of the proposals and reporting to the Statistics Authority.
9. Given the structures already in place, we aim to start the implementation of these proposals from 1 April 2012 with the online list published in September 2012. Work has already started on developing guidance and templates to facilitate the implementation of these requirements with little additional resource for department whilst yielding substantial benefits. It is noted that some flexibility is required for departments to implement in full.

Next steps

10. The proposals will be established during 2012/13 for surveys to businesses and local authorities. Subsequently, consideration will be given to the extension of their scope to incorporate:
  - statistical surveys to individuals and households; and
  - the whole statistical process (not simply the survey element).
11. Any proposed extension of scope would be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the devolved administrations and GSS Heads of Profession.

**Dennis Roberts, Methodology Directorate, Office for National Statistics, February 2012**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)07

***Activities of the Government Statistical Service  
November 2011 to January 2012***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Committee for Official Statistics with an update of Government Statistical Service (GSS) activities from November 2011 to January 2012.

**Recommendations**

2. The Committee is invited to note the summary of GSS activities for this period.

**Discussion**

*Transparency Agenda*

*GSS Co-ordination*

3. GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) have previously raised concerns that the GSS should have training in place which ensures that we have the appropriate skills in place to deliver the transparency agenda requirements. Work is progressing to develop an Open Data e-learning module which, once completed in March 2012, will be hosted via StatNet.
4. A series of GSS transparency seminars is being arranged for spring 2012 that will be aimed at operational staff that have not had an opportunity to discuss the implications of open data. The objectives of the seminar will be to ensure that GSS colleagues understand the policy drivers behind the Government's transparency agenda and its implications for producers of official statistics, to know what actions are planned or are underway across the GSS to implement the agenda and to understand the issues around making statistical and management data available in open formats.
5. Centres of expertise are being established around three technical issues: legal and policy; privacy testing; and the jigsaw effect. The centres will principally be a way of contact for support and guidance.

*Transparency Board*

6. A presentation on the progress made by the GSS in relation to open data was made to the transparency board, chaired by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on 15 November 2011. The presentation and the progress made by the GSS was well received, with the Board expressing a desire that the GSS would be able to provide advice across Government on handling the privacy/confidentiality issues.

*Capability*

*Improving Influence*

7. The GSS taskforce set up to consider what is meant by "improving influence", presented its initial findings to GSS HoPs in December 2011. The taskforce has produced ten recommendations to support three main themes, mindset, skills/experience and GSS leadership. The recommendations from the taskforce are to be used as a steer for the review of the Government Statistician Group (GSG) Professional Competence Framework and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Policy currently underway.

*2012 Fast Stream Recruitment*

8. Round one of this year's scheme has been completed resulting in 18 successful candidates, although a few of these are 'dual candidates' with other analytical professions who may choose to follow those career paths. We are talking to the candidates to determine their choice of location before confirming posting to departments.

*Statistical Officer Recruitment*

9. Approval has been obtained from the Minister for the Cabinet Office to re-introduce a centrally-managed external recruitment scheme for departments' immediate needs for Executive Officer-grade statistical officers. Recruitment Boards are being established and the scheme has been publicised on the National Statistician's pages of the Authority's website. This is a welcome development as the government wide recruitment ban was becoming a barrier to HoPs' ability to recruit new graduates to the GSS.

*Senior Specialist Development Scheme Project*

10. November's summary of GSS activity [SA(COS)(11)35] reported the launch of this Project the aim of which was to assess whether the perception that specialists are under-represented in the higher echelons of the civil service is correct. If so, the project was to develop approaches that will address any disparity of esteem amongst the specialist professions by, for example, increasing participation of senior staff (Directors and Deputy Directors) within those professions in schemes such as the High Potential Development Scheme (HPDS) with a view to improving their representation at Director General (DG) and above level posts in government.
11. The draft report concludes that most professions consulted do think disparity of esteem is an important issue for them. As well as concern about levels of esteem, there is evidence bringing out other issues which suggest that the concept of civil service 'professions' has not reached its potential as a corporate resource. In the end this means that policy delivery and implementation is less effective than it could be. Capability Reviews have flagged "building capability" as an area of weakness across departments.
12. The draft report also notes that the professions working together could create a stronger horizontal "glue" across the Civil Service. It would provide more shape to the way knowledge, expertise and tools are shared between departments, avoiding duplication and securing economies of scale. A stronger championship of "right skills, right place, right time" would also be welcome – in particular to push the idea that mixed professional teams should become the norm. Ways should be found to strengthen the "professions" focus for talent management and workforce planning.

*Spending Review 2010*

*Reporting on changes to statistical outputs*

13. Paper [SA(COS)(12)03] for this meeting refers.

*GSS Governance*

*Review of GSS Governance*

14. A paper outlining proposed changes to the current GSS governance structure was presented to GSS HoPs in December 2011. The outcome of the review was that no fundamental change was required to the existing structure of committees, but that a series of operating principles should be established to define the way that GSS Committees should operate in future. Also noted was the need to make more use of 'task and finish' groups in the future.

*Crime Statistics Advisory Committee*

15. The Chair and membership of the committee was finalised in November 2011 and the committee held its first meeting in December 2011. A further meeting was held on 23 January to discuss the outcomes of the recent Home Office consultations on reducing the classifications and categories of Police Recorded Crime. A letter from the Chair outlining the committees' recommendations has been sent to the Home Secretary.

*International*

16. The National Statistician attended the following international meetings, a five nations meeting in Australia at the end of November 2011 which discussed common issues identified by Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the US and in January 2012, a European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) high level group meeting in Luxembourg to discuss negative priorities. It is also noted that Jil has been voted in as Chair of the OECD Bureau from January 2012.

17. The GSS International Strategy was ratified by HoPs in December 2011. The strategy will be developed further over the next few months, along with the supporting GSS International Work Programme.

*GSS 2020 Strategy*

18. The GSS 2020 Strategy, which incorporates the GSS People Strategy and the GSS International Strategy, was endorsed by HoPs at their meeting in December 2011. An implementation plan is being developed which will see the delivery of many elements of the strategy embedded into the work programmes of the main GSS committees. A communication plan is also currently being developed.

**National Statistician's Office, February 2012**



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY  
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)08

***UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2011/12  
Chapter 3: Government Statistical Service***

**Purpose**

1. This note covers an outline of the chapter of the UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12 relating to the Government Statistical Service (GSS).

**Timing**

2. The Authority's Annual Report and Accounts must be laid before the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures before the end of June 2012, in order that Parliament might consider it before the parliamentary summer recess. Comments about the outline of this chapter are invited at this stage, in order to meet future editing, design and production deadlines. Draft text of the chapter can be subsequently circulated via correspondence for comment if the Committee wishes.

**Recommendations**

3. The Committee is invited to:
  - i. note the structure of the Annual Report and Accounts; and
  - ii. comment upon the proposed outline of the GSS chapter, provided by the National Statistician's Office and set out in **Annex A**.

**Discussion**

4. Under the terms of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 the Authority is required to produce a report at the end of each financial year "on what it has done during the year, what it has found during that year, and, what it intends to do during the next financial year". The Report is to be laid before the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures. The Authority is also required to lay its Annual Accounts before the UK Parliament under the *Government Resource and Accounts Act 2000*.
5. At its January 2012 meeting the Authority Board agreed that, in order to meet the requirements of the National Audit Office, it would produce a combined UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts in a single volume. This would cover the Authority, the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS), as well as the combined Resource Accounts for the year.
6. The Annual Report will consist of six chapters. Each chapter may be reviewed by a sub-committee of the Authority Board, before approval of the Report by the Authority Board as a whole.

Foreword by the incumbent Chair, Andrew Dilnot

Chapter 1 - Chair's Report by Sir Michael Scholar and 'About the UK Statistics Authority';

Chapter 2 - Monitoring and Assessment Annual Report (Assessment Committee);

Chapter 3 - GSS Annual Report (Committee for Official Statistics);

Chapter 4 - ONS Annual Report (ONS Board); and

Chapter 5 - Corporate and Summary Financial Information (Audit Committee).

Chapter 6 - Resource Accounts 2010/11 (Audit Committee).

**Authority Secretariat, February 2012**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Outline of Chapter 3 of the Report**

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As in previous years, Chapter 3 of the Report will comprise of two elements: an 'Introduction from the National Statistician' and the 'Government Statistical Service (GSS) Annual Report'. The latter will include case studies from across the GSS that illustrate how departments have responded to public expenditure constraint in terms of the prioritisation of statistical outputs and the impact on capability and to the Open Data agenda.

Section 1 National Statistician's Introduction\*

Section 2 The GSS (to include costs and illustration of geographical spread)\*

Section 3 International engagement of the GSS (facts and figures)

Section 4 "Right Statistics, Right Methods, Right Impact" (the three principal themes of the chapter that will include what the GSS has achieved, where it is at the moment and its plans and priorities for 2012/13 and beyond)

\* = featured in 2010/11 Annual Report