

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Committee for Official Statistics

Minutes

**Meeting of Thursday 16 May 2013
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

Present

Members

Professor David Rhind (Chair)
Mr Richard Alldritt
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Mr Andrew Dilnot
Professor David Hand
Ms Jil Matheson

Secretariat

Mr Joe Cuddeford

Other Attendees

Mr Roeland Beerten and Mr John Pullinger (Royal Statistical Society, for items 1 to 3)
Ms Pam Davies (National Statistician's Office)
Mr Roger Halliday (Scottish Government, for items 1 to 4)

Apologies

Dr Norman Caven
Dr Colette Bowe
Mr Robert Bumpstead

Declarations of Interest

None

1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of 21 March 2013 were agreed as a correct record.
- 1.2 Progress with actions was reviewed. The meeting noted that a response had been received from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Government on 29 April, regarding the Authority's Statistical Expenditure Report (SER) about the discontinuation of regional statistics previously published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The response indicated that the department did not see any case for re-opening the issue. The Committee expressed disquiet about the response. In addition, the Committee noted that DCLG had refused to address the recommendation that the responses to the department's consultation should be published.

Action: Head of Assessment to consider possible further action by the Authority in light of DCLG's response to the SER about regional statistics.

2. Issues the Royal Statistical Society wishes to discuss with the Committee for Official Statistics [SA(COS)(13)17]

- 2.1 Mr Pullinger introduced a paper which provided some background for discussion between COS and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS). Three topics for discussion were outlined:
- i. the recent strategy reviews carried out by the UK Statistics Authority and the RSS respectively;
 - ii. horizon scanning for future statistical needs; and
 - iii. recent and future engagement with Parliament.

Strategy reviews

- 2.2 Mr Pullinger welcomed the recent publication of the UK Statistics Authority Statement of Strategy, commending in particular elements such as the commitment to consider how official statistics can support the debate about Scottish independence, and ensuring macroeconomic statistics meet user needs. It was confirmed that work was in hand to define an implementation plan for the Authority's strategy; the Authority Board had considered this in May and would be considering further in July.
- 2.3 The RSS had initiated a review of its own strategy in 2012 and had recently published a series of six draft strategic goals. The following comments were made in the discussion.
- i. The RSS had a crucial 'inward' role in supporting statistics as a discipline and fostering a strong body of well-trained professional statisticians. It also had an increasingly prominent 'outward' role with regards to the use of statistics in the public interest and promoting the public understanding of statistics.
 - ii. There were parallels and complementarities between the Authority's objectives and the work of the RSS. One of the strengths of the RSS was its tradition as a campaigning organisation.
 - iii. The RSS provided external scrutiny of official statistics (for example by publicly raising concerns) and it also provided user representation via the Statistics User Forum.
 - iv. The discipline of statistics in universities was under pressure, despite the centrality of statistics as an underpinning science and the excellent employment prospects for qualified statisticians. Students express a desire to get experience in the form of internships and there was perhaps scope for the RSS to work with ONS to promote and develop ONS's current internship scheme.

Horizon scanning for future statistical needs

- 2.4 Mr Pullinger noted the elements of the Statistics Authority's strategy which related to anticipating and responding to unmet statistical needs. In particular, the Authority planned to lead a public debate on the long-term vision for official statistics in the UK and the statistical infrastructure the nation needs. The following comments were made in the discussion.
- i. An initial challenge would be to decide what were the right questions for the debate. One approach would be to start by collecting together the main problems which required answers, and using these to inform judgements about priorities.
 - ii. There would inevitably be resource trade-offs; some statistical series would have to be stopped to enable higher priority needs to be met. If there were opportunities for the private sector or academia to continue such series, these should be explored.
 - iii. The UK statistical system had in some respects evolved incrementally and there was sometimes a limited understanding of the value of existing sets of statistics.
 - iv. Issues raised by users of statistics were often about problems with existing statistics; it was also important to identify what statistics were not currently being produced but should be.
- 2.5 The Authority would further consider options for facilitating the debate on the long-term vision for official statistics, as part of the development of an implementation plan for the Authority strategy. Further discussions with the RSS would be arranged as necessary, to explore collaboration.

Engagement with Parliament

- 2.6 The Committee heard that a meeting had recently taken place between the Authority, the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC), the All Party Parliamentary Group on Statistics and the RSS to discuss the current landscape in official statistics and the role of the key stakeholders in maintaining and strengthening the current context.
- 2.7 The meeting discussed how the Authority, RSS and PASC might continue to work in a mutually supportive way in future. Select Committee reports sometimes included questions or recommendations related to official statistics, and the House of Commons library regularly received enquiries from Members of Parliament that related to official statistics. There was scope for further structured dialogue between the Authority, Parliament and the RSS with regards to these questions. Such questions could also feed in to the Authority's log of issues raised.
- 2.8 The Chair thanked Mr Pullinger and Mr Beerten for a useful discussion and looked forward to continuing this annual review and exchange of views.

3. GSS Inter Administration Committee's Task and Finish Group on Comparability [SA(COS)(13)18]

- 3.1 Mr Halliday introduced a paper which set out the work and findings of the GSS Inter Administration Committee's Comparability Task and Finish Group (TFG). The meeting heard that the TFG had developed a process, grounded in user needs, that statistics producers could follow to assess the extent to which statistics were geographically comparable. To support decisions by producers, a comparability scale had been developed. The focus of the work was on assessing the extent of comparability, rather than ways of improving comparability. The Scottish Government had carried out an

informal assessment of the comparability of the 60 indicators used on the Scotland Performs website.

- 3.2 The Committee heard that, according to the proposed process, an assessment of comparability of a particular set of statistics would be triggered by evidence of a user need for cross-nation comparability. It was confirmed that there did not need to be a great deal of evidence to trigger an assessment; a single request from a user may be sufficient.
- 3.3 The Committee welcomed the findings and proposals from the TFG. It was suggested that published information about comparability could help expose future misuse of statistics in public debate, and as such it would be important for the proposed process and guidance to be applied uniformly. It was intended that National Statistics Theme Leaders would now take forward comparability assessments for headline statistics, with published statements about comparability being incorporated into statistical releases over time. The TFG would oversee and coordinate this work, which was expected to be completed in autumn 2013.
- 3.4 It was suggested that there was scope for the guidance and the comparability scale to be extended for use with assessing comparability with countries outside of the UK.
- 3.5 It was noted that the Monitoring and Assessment team had work in train to produce a report about devolution and statistics. The information arising from the forthcoming comparability assessments would be valuable in informing this work.

4. Work of the Scottish Government [SA(COS)(13)19]

- 4.1 Mr Halliday provided an overview of the work of statisticians and analysts in the Scottish Government. Statistical staff worked across various analytical service teams, providing analysis and evidence to support decision making. Statisticians were working towards having a greater impact, in accordance with the Statistics Authority and GSS strategies. Current priorities included improving data sharing and linkage, further enhancing the communication of statistics, and considering the implications of Scottish independence.
- 4.2 The Committee welcomed the update.

5. The Future of the National Statistics Publication Hub [SA(COS)(13)20]

- 5.1 Ms Davies introduced a paper which set out the latest position on options for the future of the Publication Hub.
- 5.2 At its September meeting, COS had been informed that some users and producers had expressed some dissatisfaction with the current Publication Hub. It had been agreed at that meeting that all options for the future of the Publication Hub should continue to be explored.
- 5.3 The meeting heard that all UK government departments' websites had now migrated onto www.gov.uk, and that this had been the priority of the Government Digital Service (GDS). There was now an opportunity for ONS to work with the GDS to explore possible options for replacing the Publication Hub with functionality provided by www.gov.uk.
- 5.4 It was agreed that the Committee would return to this issue at its September meeting, when it was understood that a detailed proposal for the future of the Publication Hub would be available.

Action: National Statistician's Office to provide a paper with a proposal for the future of the Publication Hub to the September meeting of COS.

6. Update on GSS Compliance with EU Regulations [SA(COS)(13)21]

- 6.1 Ms Matheson introduced an update about changes to EU statistical requirements, resource implications, and risks of non-compliance with EU statistical regulations. The UK had now received official notifications regarding two sets of statistics, which set out the European Commission's intention to launch infraction proceedings against the UK. The National Statistician's Office planned to introduce enhanced processes for managing compliance issues across the GSS.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed the role of the Authority in considering EU compliance issues. Some compliance issues were related to ONS statistics, and could therefore be considered at the Audit Committee or the ONS Board. However, many compliance issues were system-wide. It was agreed that the consideration of EU compliance issues across the statistical system in its entirety fitted well with the Terms of Reference for COS, and as such, issues should continue to be reported to COS.
- 6.3 The paper raised potentially significant political risks, as well as specific resource implications for those departments at risk of infraction proceedings. The Government's review of the balance of the EU competences was also a factor. It was agreed the paper should be provided to the Authority Board for information, with a cover note from the Head of Assessment setting out the scrutiny concerns.

Action: Head of Assessment to provide a note for the Authority Board, setting out the scrutiny concerns raised by the paper on GSS Compliance with EU Regulations.

7. Activities of the Government Statistical Service [SA(COS)(13)22]

- 7.1 The Committee considered an update of GSS activities for March and April 2013.
- 7.2 The meeting noted that the NSO had compiled high level summaries for each of the Annual Assurance Reports (AARs) received from Heads of Profession. Some cross-cutting issues had been identified regarding the variability quality assurance and the arrangements for Arm's Length Bodies. A paper on Arm's Length Bodies would be provided to the next meeting of COS.
- 7.3 There were no plans to publish completed AARs. Heads of Profession had found the exercise valuable. It was agreed that the AAR template would be provided to the Assessment team for information.
- 7.4 In the light of the AARs being confidential between the National Statistician and the Heads of Profession, the Committee reluctantly accepted the likelihood of some duplication of reporting by the latter.

Action: NSO to provide a copy of the AAR template to the Assessment team.

8. Issues raised with the Authority [SA(COS)(13)23]

- 8.1 The Committee considered a paper which set out options for the provision of information about recent issues raised with the Authority.
- 8.2 It was agreed it would be useful to have a running log of all the issues raised since the last meeting, and also for the issues to be assessed in some way before the meeting. There was a role for both the Head of Assessment and the National Statistician in determining the prioritisation of issues.

- 8.3 It was agreed that the secretariat would develop and maintain a mechanism to provide regular information to COS comprising:
- i. the full list of issues raised with the Authority since the last meeting; and
 - ii. a list of the top strategic issues, with priorities determined by the Head of Assessment and National Statistician.

Action: Secretariat to develop and maintain a mechanism for providing to COS the full list of issues raised with the Authority since the last meeting and a list of the top strategic issues, with priorities determined by the Head of Assessment and National Statistician.

9. Cuts to official statistics [SA(COS)(13)24]

- 9.1 Ms Matheson introduced a paper which provided an update on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics, and on public consultations relating to statistics.
- 9.2 The meeting considered the update and agreed that there were no candidates for further investigation in this update. The Committee expressed its continuing concern about the long term trend of fewer statistical posts at senior civil service levels.

10. Any other business

- 10.1 There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on Wednesday 17 July 2013, at 10:30, in London.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Committee for Official Statistics

Agenda

Thursday 16 May 2013
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 10:30 to 13:30

Chair: Professor David Rhind
Apologies: Dr Colette Bowe

Seminar – 10:30 to 11:30

1	Review of Public Sector Information	Discussion Mr Stephan Shakespeare
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Usual business – 11:30 to 13:30

2	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 210313
3	Issues the Royal Statistical Society wishes to discuss with the Committee for Official Statistics	SA(COS)(13)17 Mr John Pullinger, Mr Roeland Beerten
4	GSS Inter Administration Committee's Task and Finish Group on Comparability	SA(COS)(13)18 Mr Roger Halliday
5	Work of the Scottish Government	SA(COS)(13)19 Mr Roger Halliday
6	Publication Hub	SA(COS)(13)20 Mr Iain Bell
7	Update on GSS Compliance with Regulations	SA(COS)(13)21 Ms Jil Matheson
8	Activities of the Government Statistical Service	SA(COS)(13)22 Ms Jil Matheson
9	Issues raised with Authority	SA(COS)(13)23 Secretariat
10	Cuts to official statistics	SA(COS)(13)24 Ms Jil Matheson
11	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Wednesday 17 July 2013, London, 10:30 to 13:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**Committee for Official Statistics Seminar****Review of Public Sector Information****Seminar of Thursday 16 May 2013
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London****Present***Members*

Professor David Rhind (Chair)
Mr Richard Alldritt
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Mr Andrew Dilnot
Professor David Hand
Ms Jil Matheson

Invited speakers

Mr Stephan Shakespeare (Chair of the Data Strategy Board)

Secretariat

Mr Joe Cuddeford

Other Attendees

Mr Roeland Beerten and Mr John Pullinger (Royal Statistical Society)
Mr Ian Cope and Mr Paul Woobey (ONS)
Ms Pam Davies (National Statistician's Office)
Mr Roger Halliday (Scottish Government)
Mr Sean Whellams (HM Revenue and Customs)

Apologies

Dr Colette Bowe
Mr Robert Bumpstead
Dr Norman Caven

Opening remarks from Mr Stephan Shakespeare

- Mr Shakespeare's review of public sector information had been published on 15 May. The review had aimed to take stock of the use of public sector information (PSI) within Government, and considered the full breadth of the PSI market, including the private sector, civil society and the general public. The review looked at how to unlock the economic potential of data produced by trading funds and other PSI providers.
- The review had consulted widely.
- The review had made nine recommendations. The first of these was that the government should produce a 'National Data Strategy' to encompass PSI in its entirety.
- Other points raised in the remaining eight recommendations included:
 - A twin-track policy for data release. A 'National Core Reference Dataset' of the most valuable data should be defined, with agreed data quality standards. Alongside this, other PSI should be published as quickly as possible without using quality concerns as an obstacle. The concept was that issues raised by users in the 'fast tracked data' should be fixed and the data re-released as high quality products in the second track.
 - The drivers for the implementation of the National Data Strategy were within government. A single body should have responsibility for driving access to PSI.
 - There should be a programme of investment to build skill-sets in data science.
 - Clear guidelines for confidentiality and privacy should be developed by government. Responsibility for misuse should be pushed further towards the end user, with increased penalties for misuse, including imprisonment in some cases.
- It was expected that the government would respond to the review in June 2013.

Points made in the discussion

- Some commentators had expressed concern about so-called 'data fly tipping' – publishing data in whatever form it currently exists, without consideration for quality of the provision of metadata. But it could be argued that fly tipping was a tactical way to unlock data. The PSI review recommended a two-track approach for this reason.
- The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) could help make the case for investment for building skills in data science, which was currently an area of weakness in the UK. There was a need for a 'pipeline' from schools upwards. Collaboration between the RSS and Mr Shakespeare was suggested. **Action: RSS to contact Mr Shakespeare about making the case to DfE and elsewhere for building skills in data science.**
- The review emphasised data. But by themselves, data were useless. Skill was needed to transform them into information. It was possible that people would start to 'teach themselves' how to transform and interpret data, and it was suggested that this process of self-learning may occur if data were made available.
- If responsibility for misuse was pushed further towards the end user, it was likely that some misuse would occur. But firm responses to this misuse could be a deterrent to future misuse.
- It had not yet been decided where responsibility might lie for management of the National Core Dataset. The intention of the review was not to define what the dataset should look like – that was a matter for government but the Open Data User Group could play an important role.

- The 'twin track' concept was already established in some areas. For example, with crime statistics, local crime statistics which had not been subject to quality assurance were available on the internet and the professionally assured statistics were published after a period of time.
- While it was not realistic to hold back data until it was perfect, if data was of poor quality then users needed to know that. The review mentioned that metadata should be made available wherever possible. It was argued that this was essential.
- If economic growth was the goal, then businesses would find having quality assured data and continuity in its supply much more valuable for operational purposes than ad hoc data dumps..
- The exploitation of PSI was in its infancy. People did not yet know what was out there or how it could be used.
- Nothing was said in the Shakespeare review about address data. This was because it was strictly not Public Sector Information.
- The Beyond 2011 programme had begun to bring datasets together to identify whether an alternative to the traditional Census could be found. There were significant technical and legislative challenges. The Census currently provided a reference point to validate all other data; it would be important to retain a reference point of some form.
- The private sector was already making good use of its own data, although it was not making its datasets publically available. The public sector had large datasets but was only beginning to explore how better use could be made of them. The motivation for the private sector was to increase profits; the incentives for the public sector were different. There were costs involved in making better use of PSI, but there was also value, including non-financial value. The problem was that costs and benefits fell on different organisations. The situation could be thought of as an example of market failure.

Some questions which required further consideration:

- What should the National Data Strategy say? And where will it come from? Who will own it?
- What obligations should there be on the producer to ensure data meets a basic standard of quality?
- If all the data needed to be in one place, who would be responsible for doing the integration/linking of the data, and where would the environment for this be located?
- How can the cost burdens of data and metadata production be shared with those benefiting from the economic value of the data?
- What were the specific implications for the UK Statistics Authority, ONS and the GSS?

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)17

***Issues the Royal Statistical Society wishes to discuss with the
Committee for Official Statistics***

Purpose

1. This paper provides some background information for the discussion between the Committee for Official Statistics and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS), and covers three separate topics:
 - i. the recent strategy reviews carried out by the UK Statistics Authority and the RSS respectively;
 - ii. horizon scanning for future statistical needs; and
 - iii. recent and future engagement with the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
 - i. exchange views on the strategic reviews and identify areas for further co-operation
 - ii. exchange views on identifying future statistical needs;
 - iii. note feedback from the recent meeting between the Authority, PASC and the RSS; and
 - iv. note other issues of RSS concern and provide a steer on a way forward and future engagement with the RSS.

Discussion

3. We welcome this opportunity to meet with the Committee. The UK Statistics Authority and the RSS share many aspirations for UK official statistics, and we have had a long standing relationship which over the years has covered many interests across a range of topics and initiatives.

Background

4. As the UK's only professional and learned society devoted to the interests of statistics and statisticians, the RSS plays a critical role in nourishing the profession, fostering the discipline, and in contributing to public debates for the good of society. The Authority and the RSS already cooperate on supporting user engagement and on the RSS Awards for Official Statistics. We are very willing to consider other cooperative initiatives where these might be useful and appropriate. Many government statisticians are RSS members and a number play an active role – we hope that the Authority will encourage even greater participation in the future.
5. Both the Authority and the RSS have recently conducted a strategy review. We hope that the outcomes of these reviews will provide a solid basis for further discussion and debate about the future range and quality of UK official statistics, and the role of professional statisticians within that.

UK Statistics Authority and RSS Strategic Reviews

6. In February the Authority published its statement of strategy (see **Annex A** for the full document). The RSS welcomes the five strategic priorities set out in the document, and supports the actions which have been identified.
7. In April the RSS published a draft strategy review document for wider consultation. Although the strategy review was initiated in 2012, it was decided to allow for sufficient time for a wide debate and consultation. The published document has a series of draft strategic objectives and recommendations and is mainly intended for internal use. In autumn this year we will publish a summary strategy document for external stakeholders, but thought it would be useful to share the six draft strategic objectives for the next five years (**Annex B**).
8. Going back to the Society's original objective "to collect, arrange, digest and publish facts, illustrating the condition and prospects of society in its material, social, and moral relations", it is clear from our current strategic thinking there is a key role for the RSS in promoting statistics for the public good. There are, in our view, considerable overlaps between the first RSS strategic objective and the Authority's strategic priority about coverage and the statistical infrastructure for the UK.

Horizon scanning for future statistical needs

9. We strongly welcome the Authority's strategic priority 4 about the need to anticipate new opportunities and to respond to unmet statistical needs in innovative and effective ways. In last years' Committee meeting we raised the issue of statistics to prepare for the Scottish independence referendum; but there will be other similar coverage issues which will require early detection and resolution. We would welcome a further discussion about specifically this priority and the associated action of a public debate on the long-term vision for official statistics in the UK and the statistical infrastructure that the nation needs. We would be happy to support such a debate if the Authority would wish us to.
10. It is clear one of the key components of the UK's statistical infrastructure is the decennial Census. The RSS has a keen interest to make sure user needs are taken into account in decisions regarding the future of statistics which are currently based on the Census, including the issue of comparability across the UK nations. We therefore would welcome an in-depth public debate about the options emerging from the Beyond 2011 programme and how they will affect different user groups, in parallel with the public consultation announced in the Authority's strategic priority 4. Again, we would be happy to explore with the Committee options for facilitating such a debate.
11. More generally the Authority's and the RSS strategic objectives priorities have a cross-cutting objective of meeting user needs. At last year's Committee meeting we presented a detailed overview of our work in this area, which is supported by the Authority. Both the Statistics User Forum and the web-based forum StatsUserNet have successfully been growing their presence, with an on-line membership of nearly 1,900 at the end of March 2013 (up from around 1,500 at the end of December 2012). We would welcome a further debate on the wider strategy for representing user needs over the next few years in the light of the strategic plans for both the Authority and the RSS.

Recent and future engagement with PASC

12. Recently a meeting took place between the Authority, PASC, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Statistics and the RSS to discuss the current landscape in official statistics, and the role of the key stakeholders in maintaining and strengthening the current context. We might usefully discuss how the Authority, RSS and PASC can work in a mutually supportive way in future.

Roeland Beerten, Director of Professional and Public Affairs, RSS

John Pullinger, President, RSS

Hetan Shah, Executive Director, RSS

List of Annexes

Annex A UK Statistics Authority statement of strategy

Annex B RSS Strategic Review - draft objectives

SA(COS)(13)17 – Issues the Royal Statistical Society wishes to discuss with the Committee for Official Statistics

Annexe A UK Statistics Authority Statement of Strategy

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

The document is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statistics-authority-statement-of-strategy.pdf>

Annex B Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Strategic review

The full draft of the Royal Statistical Society strategy can be found on the RSS website at:

<http://www.rss.org.uk/uploadedfiles/userfiles/files/Final%20Strategy%20Review%20Recommendations.doc>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)18

The Government Statistical Service Inter Administration Committee's Task and Finish Group on Comparability

Purpose

1. This paper sets out the purpose, work and findings of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Inter Administration Committee's Comparability Task and Finish Group.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note the contents of this paper and welcome this positive development to encourage producers of official statistics to embrace the promotion of comparability in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Discussion

3. The referendum on Scottish independence in autumn 2014 provides an opportunity to ensure that, wherever possible, comparable, coherent and quality statistics are available about the four nations of the UK. Voters in Scotland will expect to be able to compare statistics about Scotland with each of the other nations and with the rest of the UK as a single entity. Whilst this is more likely to be the case with key economic statistics, it will be also important to consider other statistics.
4. A Task and Finish Group (TFG), reporting to the Inter Administration Committee (IAC), was established for this task. This engagement between the devolved administrations and relevant UK government departments (especially ONS) is expected to meet the challenge of avoiding the absence of comparable statistics becoming a feature of national debate. The aim of the TFG was to ensure that it is clear where comparable statistics between the four nations of the UK are available and where statistics are not comparable. Its terms of reference are at **Annex A**. It adopted project management techniques to assist in delivery and identified its objectives as follows.
 - i. To establish what is good international practice in measuring comparability in official statistics.
 - ii. To develop and test a proposal for a way of recognising the extent to which statistics are comparable across geographies that is credible with users and producers and propose a delivery plan for this proposal.
 - iii. To develop and test a proposal for a way of recognising the extent to which users value improvements in comparability between the four nations and English regions.
5. The TFG provided an interim report to IAC in February 2013 in which it explained that there was no established approach in international practice. The TFG agreed that good practice needs to start with user need. Once that is evident, all high profile statistics (for which users say cross nation comparability is important) should be assessed by the relevant producers for comparability. For those statistics that are comparable, good practice is that it should be straightforward for users to access information about comparability. Where statistics are assessed as not comparable, good practice is for producers to provide a summary explanation of why this is not currently possible.

6. Key to this is that producers have some criteria by which they can assess the extent to which a statistical release is comparable with its equivalent published elsewhere. IAC agreed the TFG's view that producers should use the United Nations Generic Statistical Business Process Model (formerly called the Statistical Value Chain) as a framework for determining the criteria by which producers assess comparability. The TFG was asked by IAC to further develop its proposal for a process that statistics producers can follow to assess the extent to which statistics are geographically comparable that is grounded in user needs and priorities. The IAC supported the notion that producers needed some criteria by which they can assess the extent to which a statistical release is comparable with its equivalent published elsewhere.
7. The final report of the TFG was presented to IAC last month. It reported that:
 - i) the Scottish Government had carried out an informal assessment of geographical comparability of the 60 indicators used on the Scotland Performs website;
 - ii) to support decisions by producers, a comparability scale has been developed and added to the overall approach;
 - iii) the TFG have support for this approach with the Assessment arm of the UK Statistics Authority;
 - iv) a representative of the Statistics User Forum has seen a draft of the proposed approach and welcomed its development; and
 - iv) in accordance with the principle that any solution should optimise the use of existing GSS resources, the ONS Quality Centre is expected to be able to adapt the Quality Harmonisation and Methods Tool (QHMT) for this purpose rather than expect producers to use something separate.
8. IAC welcomed the report and agreed that National Statistics Theme Leaders should lead on the introduction of comparability assessments for headline statistics. The National Statistician and the Chair of the TFG will be writing to Theme Leaders shortly to set out their participation in what will become Phase 2 of this work. It is also planned to present the findings of the TFG to Heads of Profession at their meeting next month (to which Theme Leaders will be invited). The TFG will oversee and coordinate the outputs from Phase 2 which is expected to be completed in autumn 2013.

Roger Halliday, Chair, Comparability Task and Finish Group, 7 May 2013

List of Annexes

Annex 1 Terms of Reference for the Comparability Task and Finish Group

Annex 1A Terms of Reference for the Comparability TFG

Introduction

1. The Inter Administration Committee has constituted a task and finish group (TFG) to consider how best to maintain comparability, coherence and quality between statistics published by the four nations.

Terms of Reference

2. The aim of the TFG is to ensure that it is clear where comparable statistics between the four nations of the UK are available and where statistics are not comparable. It will be important to take the necessary steps to improve user understanding and avoid the lack of comparable statistics becoming a feature of public debate.
3. The TFG reports to the Inter Administration Committee and will:
 - Identify key sources and datasets, in particular for economic statistics, and bring together information on whether they are comparable or not comparable across the nations of the UK
 - Where appropriate, to identify useful wider international comparisons
 - Engage with Themes to assist with ensuring coherence and coordination where there is a legal or strong user requirement
 - Review the publication timetables for these key statistics to assess whether they can be adjusted so that comparable statistics are available at the same time
 - To agree ways of handling communication about non-comparable statistics
4. The TFG shall have regard to the principles of comparability adopted by IAC in 2011 (Annex 1).

Membership

5. Membership of the TFG shall comprise representatives of the following:
 - National Statistician's Office
 - Northern Ireland Executive
 - Office for National Statistics
 - Scottish Government
 - Welsh Government

Other departments as appropriate may be invited to nominate a representative.

6. Secretariat will be provided by the National Statistician's Office.

Annex 1B Principles of Comparability

1. When measuring the same concept producers should measure it in the same way and produce comparable statistics. The emphasis here is on comparability of output rather than input. That is, the aim should be to produce statistics that are comparable even if different methods are used to produce them.
2. If comparable statistics are not produced when measuring the same concept, producers must explain why this is the case.
3. When measuring different concepts, due to differing policy or other needs, producers should highlight areas where the statistics are comparable, as well the limits of that comparability.
4. When measuring different concepts, due to differing policy or other needs, and there is no comparability, producers must explain this, the reasons why and the implications of it.

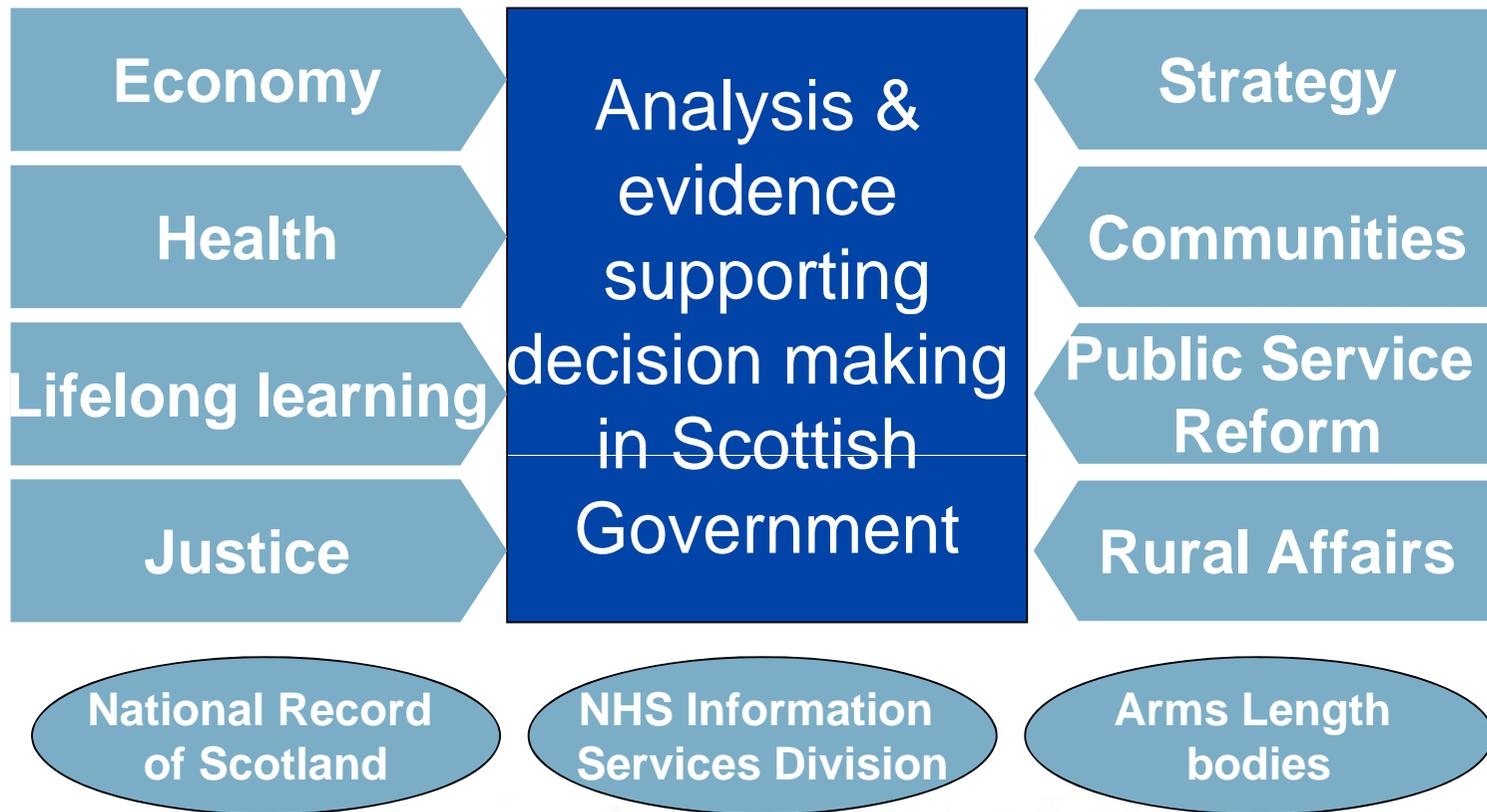
The Scottish Government

Powerful analysis
Improving outcomes

Roger Halliday
May 2013

We work in

Devolved analytical service teams



We work in

Outcome based Government

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

THE GOVERNMENT'S PURPOSE
To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth

HIGH LEVEL TARGETS RELATING TO THE PURPOSE
Growth Productivity Participation Population Solidarity Cohesion Sustainability

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

WEALTHIER & FAIRER	SMARTER	HEALTHIER	SAFER & STRONGER	GREENER
We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe				
We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people				
We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation				
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens				
Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed				
We live longer, healthier lives				
We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society				
We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk				
We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger				
We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need				
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others				
We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations				
We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity				
We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production				
Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it				
Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs				

HOW ARE WE DOING?
Visit www.scotlandperforms.com to track latest progress

December 2011

National Performance Framework - Measurement Set

Increase Scotland's Economic Growth	Improve Productivity	Improve Economic Participation	Increase Population Growth
PURPOSE TARGETS			
Population - Increase Healthy Life Expectancy	Solidarity - Reduce Income Inequality	Cohesion - Reduce Inequalities in Economic Participation Across Scotland	Sustainability - Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

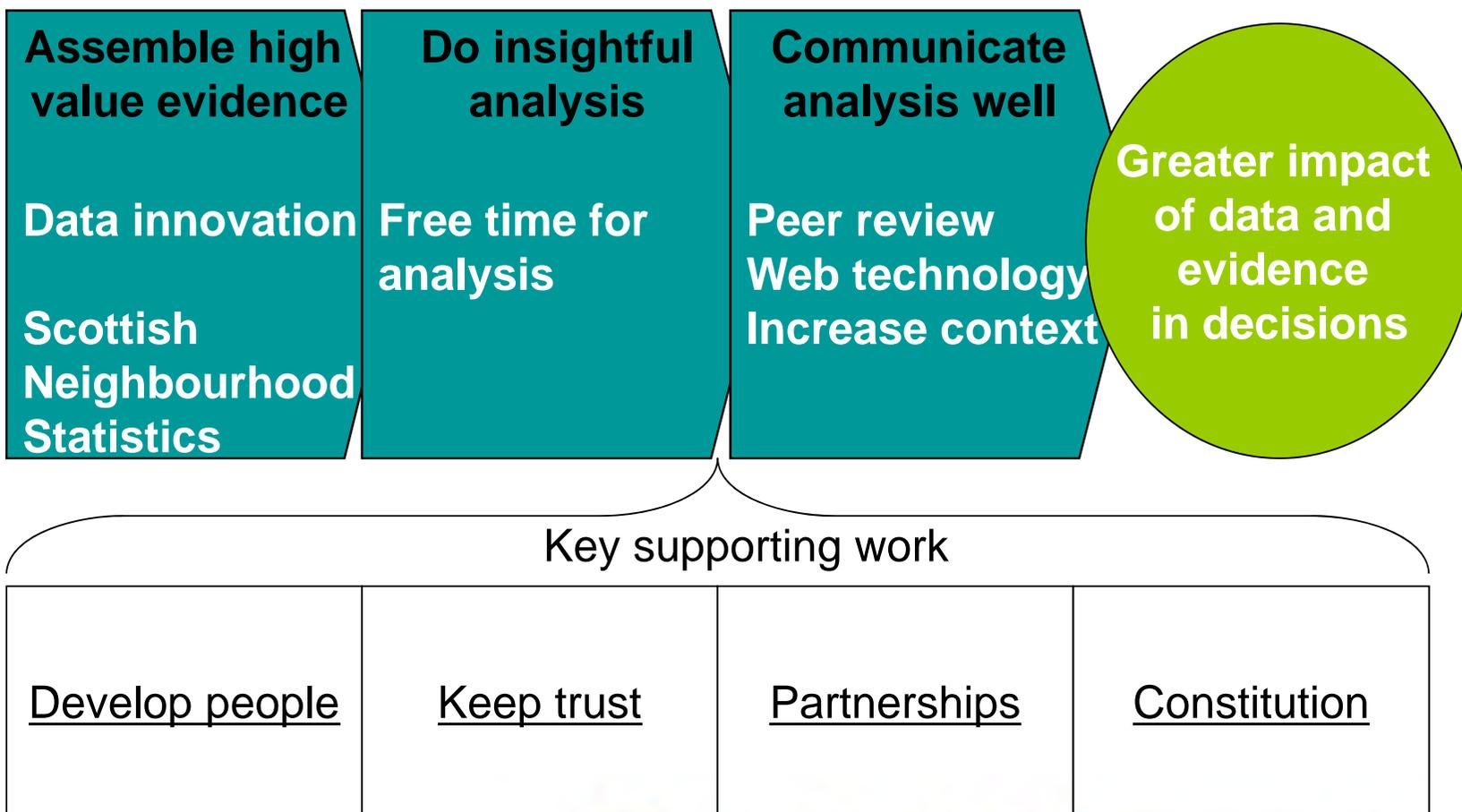
NATIONAL INDICATORS	
Increase the number of businesses	Reduce the percentage of adults who smoke
Increase exports	Reduce alcohol related hospital admissions
Improve digital infrastructure	Reduce the number of individuals with problem drug use
Reduce traffic congestion	Improve people's perceptions about the crime rate in their area
Improve Scotland's reputation	Reduce reconviction rates
Increase research and development spending	Reduce crime victimisation rates
Improve knowledge exchange from university research	Reduce deaths on Scotland's roads
Improve the skill profile of the population	Improve people's perceptions of the quality of public services
Increase the proportion of pre-school centres receiving positive inspection reports	Improve the responsiveness of public services
Increase the proportion of schools receiving positive inspection reports	Reduce the proportion of individuals living in poverty
Improve levels of educational attainment	Reduce children's deprivation
Increase the proportion of young people in learning, training or work	Improve access to suitable housing options for those in housing need
Increase the proportion of graduates in positive destinations	Increase the number of new homes
Improve children's services	Wider use of the internet
Improve children's dental health	Improve people's perceptions of their neighbourhood
Increase the proportion of babies with a healthy birth weight	Increase cultural engagement
Increase the proportion of healthy weight children	Improve the state of Scotland's historic sites
Increase physical activity	Increase people's use of Scotland's outdoors
Improve self-assessed general health	Increase the number of protected nature sites
Improve mental wellbeing	Increase the abundance of terrestrial breeding bird biodiversity
Reduce premature mortality	Improve the state of Scotland's marine environment
Improve end of life care	Reduce Scotland's carbon footprint
Improve support for people with care needs	Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport
Reduce emergency admissions to hospital	Reduce waste generated
Improve the quality of healthcare experience	Increase renewable electricity production

HOW ARE WE DOING?
Visit www.scotlandperforms.com to track latest progress

December 2011

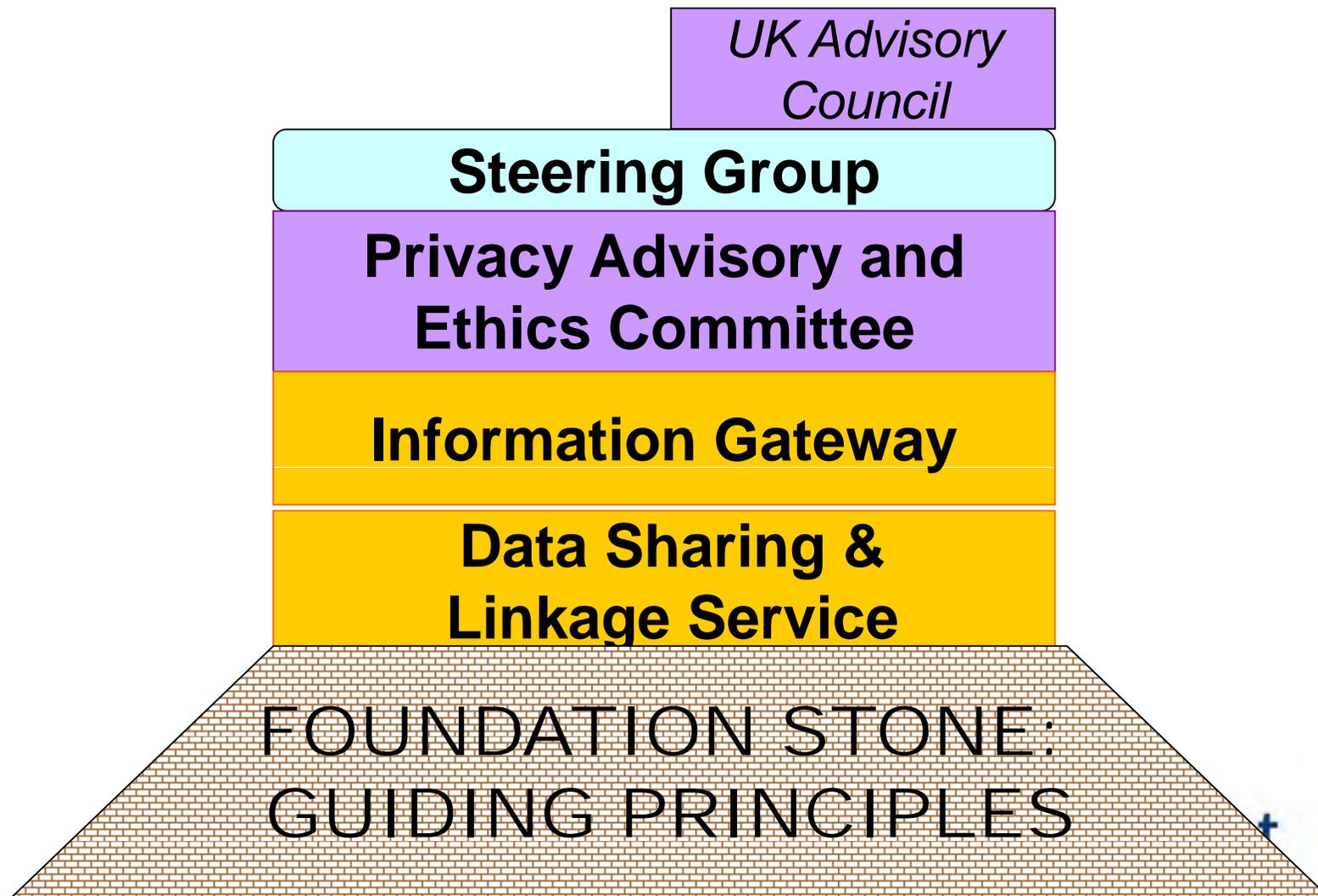
We want to

Have greater impact in decisions



We aim to

Improve data sharing and linkage



We strive to have

user led improvement

ScotStat

User engagement

Theme/topic based

1800 users

Inform & consult

Peer Review

Quality everyone's
job

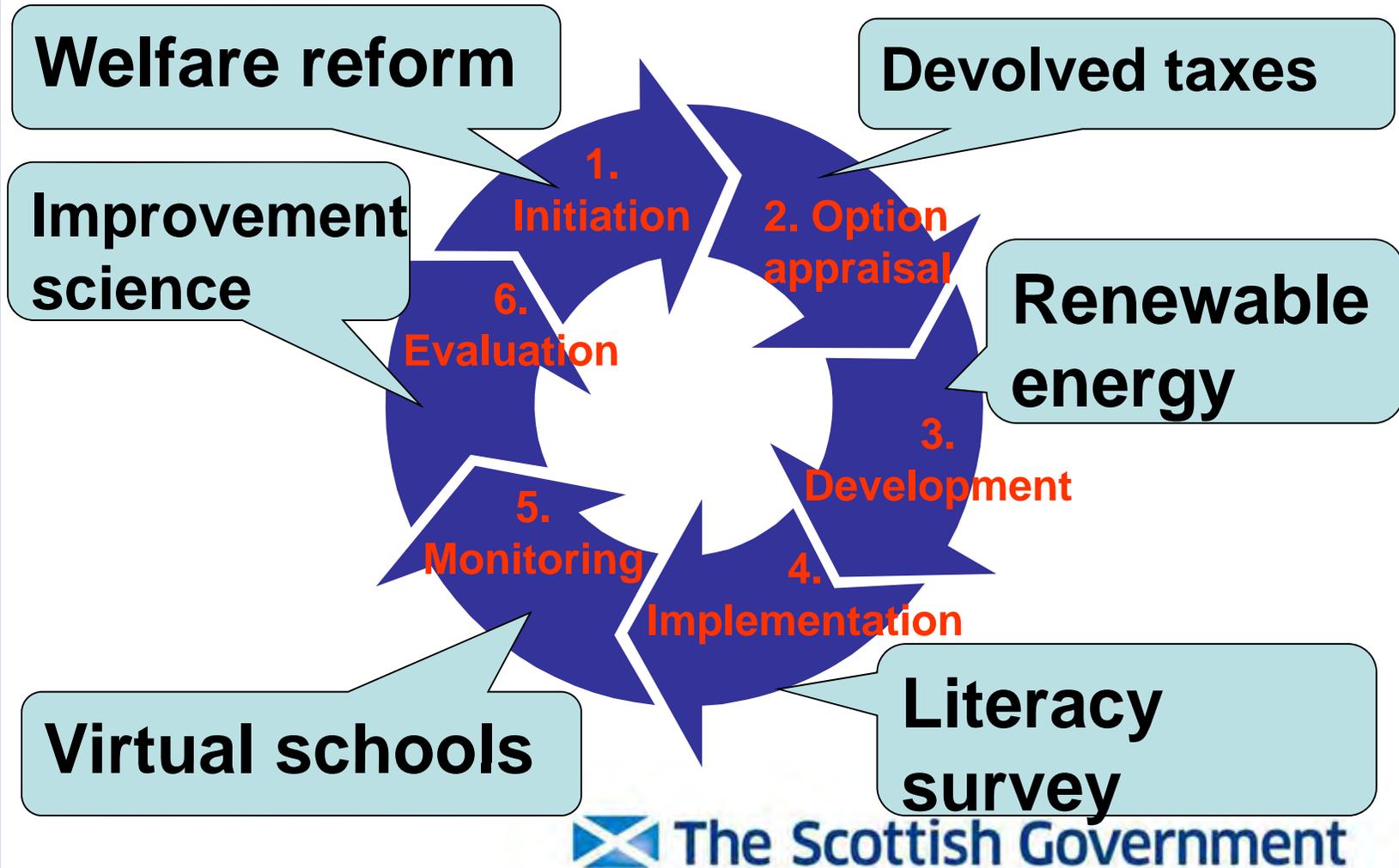
Experts & learners

12 live projects

Comms & methods

We have demonstrated

Impact of Statisticians in decisions



UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)20

5

The Future of the National Statistics Publication Hub

Purpose

1. The publication hub is the place where all National and Official statistics release dates are pre-announced. It also provides a link to all National and most Official statistics published in the UK, regardless of where they are published. This includes statistics which are published on the ONS website and the websites of the devolved administrations. This paper provides an update on the future of the publication hub, now that all UK government departments' websites, other than ONS and the devolved administrations, have migrated to www.gov.uk.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note the following.
 - i. The Government Statistical Service (GSS) have engaged proactively with the Government Digital Service (GDS) as they have migrated ministerial departmental websites onto www.gov.uk. GDS have designed in to www.gov.uk the safeguards that we need to protect the independence of our statistics on the new site.
 - ii. The GSS is about to establish a joint GSS and GDS working group, to explore options for the future of the publication hub jointly with the GDS.
 - iii. In parallel, we will explore contingencies for the possibility that the GDS either cannot deliver a new publication hub or cannot deliver one which is sufficiently independent.
 - iv. We will provide further reports on progress.

Discussion

Options appraisal for the publication hub

3. Paper SA(COS)(12)21 described the conclusions of a review of the publication hub undertaken by the GSS Presentation and Dissemination Committee. The review identified the following.
 - i. Users were dissatisfied with the publication hub – a survey of users in 2011 found that 28 per cent of users were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and 35 per cent did not find what they were looking for. One of the main reasons for dissatisfaction is that people want the statistics and the publication schedule on the same site.
 - ii. Statistical suppliers, particularly those outside of the ONS, have difficulty accessing the technology with many relying on ad hoc solutions. In addition the technology is cumbersome and resource intensive.
 - iii. The content pages of the publication hub were not well maintained because of these difficulties (among other reasons) meaning that the statistical content that is present is often very out of date.
 - iv. Modern open data standards could be developed quickly and easily to maintain a more agile publication schedule, which would allow others to use the data.

4. The paper set out three options for the future of the publication schedule of the publication hub:
 - i. continue with the existing publication hub as is;
 - ii. ask the GDS to develop the publication schedule with a view to replacing the publication hub; or
 - iii. the Authority request ONS to develop a replacement for the publication hub.
5. At its September meeting, COS agreed that all options should continue to be explored. The current publication hub continues to be maintained by ONS and used by the GSS to pre-announce our statistics, and to provide links to statistics when they are published. Now that publication of ministerial departments' statistics has been transferred to www.gov.uk, the time is right to consider the two options for change. We will discuss with ONS the possibility of them redeveloping the publication hub to better meet user needs. In parallel, we will explore with GDS the options for a replacement for the publication hub to be provided via www.gov.uk.

The move to www.gov.uk

6. All UK government departments other than the ONS and the devolved administrations have now migrated to www.gov.uk. Throughout this process, the GDS have shown that they are very willing to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the GSS to ensure that our needs are met. For example, we have been in successful in ensuring that:
 - i. statistical content is separated from political material and is accessible, in a suitably high profile way, from the front page;
 - ii. statistical content can only be approved by the statistical Head of Profession or a deputy; and
 - iii. the site is capable of publishing time critical content.
7. The GDS have designed in the safeguards we need to protect the independence of statistics. Their approach to development is to deliver initially to meet expected user needs and then to evolve and improve the website in response to feedback. Now that all ministerial department websites are migrated onto www.gov.uk, we have an opportunity to work with the GDS to explore the options for replacing the publication hub with functionality provided via www.gov.uk. We are in the process of establishing a joint GSS and GDS working group to explore those options. We anticipate that the group will include representatives from ONS and the devolved administrations as well as from elsewhere in the GSS.

Iain Bell, Office for National Statistics, 15 May 2012

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)21

***Update on Government Statistical Service (GSS)
 Compliance with EU Regulations***

6

Purpose

1. The Committee for Official Statistics (COS) considered a paper 'UK Compliance with EU statistical legislation' [SA(COS)(12)23] at its December 2012 meeting. COS requested that it receive an annual update on any changes to EU requirements, resource implications, and risks of non-compliance.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to review the information provided and comment on any further action that may be necessary by the National Statistician's Office (NSO).

Discussion*Current UK compliance with EU regulations*

3. The Director General of Eurostat writes formally on an annual basis to the Heads of National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) to highlight areas of compliance of most concern to the Commission. Since the last report on compliance to COS, Eurostat has moved towards a more aggressive stance on non-compliance. It has started to use its legal right to follow up notification of its concerns in the Director General's letter with 'EU Pilot Cases'. These are official notifications between the Commission and member states' governments (the Cabinet Office in the UK). These set out the Commission's intention to launch official infraction proceedings against the member state if a specified regulation is not fully adhered to within a set timeframe. There is now an expanded appetite within Eurostat to use these tools as they have proved successful across member states in forcing immediate action on compliance issues.
4. The UK has now received two EU Pilot Cases, the first time ever for statistical regulations, with respect to:
 - i. Regulation on the European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA) 1995 (ONS)
 In December 2012 an EU Pilot Case was raised for the non-provision by ONS of certain aspects of the financial accounts not readily available in the UK. The data were delivered after resource was diverted to produce acceptable estimates and the case was formally closed in April 2013. ONS met with Eurostat in March 2013 to discuss other areas of non-compliance and have agreed a plan for delivery. This is considered to have reduced the risk of future EU Pilot Cases being raised in this area.
 - ii. Regulation on 'Waste Statistics' (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)).
 The required data under this legislation had been provided. The case was launched because the required Quality Report had not been delivered to schedule. This is now being finalised and should be transmitted by the deadline

5. Two further areas of non-compliance have been the subject of previous letters from the Eurostat Director General. They are therefore a concern, particularly given the inconsistency in Eurostat's approach to using EU Pilot Cases:
 - i. 'Road Freight Statistics' (Department for Transport (DfT)) (subject of 2011 letter)
Historically, DfT has only produced annual data, making for a late return of required quarterly data to Eurostat. DfT has attempted to tackle this by moving to produce quarterly data from the 2011 reporting year onwards. But this transition has proved problematic given resourcing constraints and the development of a new information technology system. This issue is being actively managed with Eurostat and progress is being made in cleaning and sending quarterly data.
 - ii. 'Residence Permits' (part of Migration statistics Regulation) (subject of 2011 letter).
UK does not have a Residence Permit system and is unique in this. There is no single data source that will fully meet the requirements. The Home Office supplies data for the majority of the tables required. ONS is developing a solution for one of the (population based) tables. Eurostat has been informed that estimates will be sent to them by the required deadline for this table. The Home Office is considering what it can supply for the remaining tables and will provide updates to Eurostat.
6. There are around six other member states who have received EU Pilot Cases in relation to ESA1995. A paper submitted last year to COS SA(COS)(12)23 provides more information about the 'infraction' process. Infraction can be a lengthy process and the overall risk of a fine being incurred may be considered low. Involvement in such legal processes could be costly, however, and could undermine the UK's influence within the European Statistical System (ESS). Moreover, this risk of being fined seems to increase substantially with the level of importance of the statistics to EU policy-making; statistics relating to macro-economic policy-making may therefore be considered as the highest priority compliance issue for member states, although the Commission's approach is often unpredictable.
7. Despite over 300 statistical regulations in force, the vast majority of GSS business areas are running 'green' in terms of compliance issues. All compliance issues are regularly monitored and managed by the GSS International Committee and the National Statistician. Potential future budget reductions in departments may be seen as the greatest risk to compliance with existing regulations, especially if needs for national statistics were to be prioritised over EU requirements.

Future compliance issues

8. The European Statistical Programme (ESP) sets out the framework in which Eurostat should consider new regulatory proposals and other policies. New statistical requirements for 2013 to 2017 are linked to the EU2020 Strategy and cover enhanced economic governance, globalisation, environmental sustainability and quality of life. The ESP includes several 'statistical projects' across the ESS aimed at more efficient data collection and validation, extensive use of existing administrative data, development of shared tools and processes, and more efficient data dissemination. It does not detail the nature of any specific regulations
9. The ESP is supported by Annual Work Programmes (AWPs). These broadly set out specific areas of likely regulatory proposals in the near future and may improve our understanding of future resource requirements. However, it is difficult to predict the extent and timing of the impacts and possible compliance problems with any regulation until it is finalised, the timing of which is also unpredictable. Also, although EU funding may be available for implementing a regulation, the amounts available will be unknown until a detailed regulation is proposed and eventually agreed. In the UK we face the additional challenge in not having an automatic link between central government funding and EU statistical regulations; something which other Member States can rely on. Therefore unforeseen resource requirements within a budget

period can be difficult to manage, especially in the current financing climate for UK government departments.

10. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) recently surveyed draft regulations that have been considered at ESS Directors Group level at least - a reasonable proxy for those regulations likely to come into force within the next year or so - and asked GSS business areas to estimate some of the possible impacts. Over 40 such statistical regulations were identified. Most regulations seem likely to have a minimal impact. Some of the key issues this exercise highlighted include:
 - i. The possible impact of future regulations is highly related to the success of negotiations by GSS representatives at all levels of the ESS – this is affected by our level of competency in negotiating (including seeking derogations), but also by many external factors including the expertise of the Commission in driving through its agenda and the political positioning of other Member States.
 - ii. EU policy needs for regulations are not consistently well-understood by GSS business areas, particularly how they might match UK policy needs for similar data. Understanding additional burdens brought by EU regulations is therefore difficult. But, moreover, there is a risk that EU policy-makers are not seen as users, or rather they are seen as 'secondary' users to those in the UK. This may significantly affect the adequacy of planning for delivery, and therefore increase the risks of infraction.
 - iii. Detailed planning for future EU regulations, although improving, has not been commonplace and is not consistent across the GSS, especially in the time-frames relating to successful future Spending Review bids.
 - iv. Differences in the statistical systems of the four nations of the UK and idiosyncrasies of the overall UK statistical system will continue to present particular challenges and lead to resourcing requirements that might be unique to the UK.
11. Some specific future regulations will require extensive planning and/or resources, including regulations on: the Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics (FRIBS); Statistical Data and Meta Data exchange (SDMX); Marco-economic Imbalances Procedure Scorecard (MIPS) and European System of Accounts (ESA) 2010. The first two are cross-cutting and will require GSS collaboration to ensure consistent and efficient standards and delivery. There are concerns about having the capacity for the required re-engineering for SDMX (although this is rapidly becoming a general international standard) and for FRIBS. ESA is close to finalisation and will require substantial investment, which ONS is currently negotiating with HM Treasury, while MIPS could also lead to similar resource requirements depending on the success of negotiations. There are also concerns that FRIBS may impact on domestic statistical production. Precise impacts will not be known until the regulations have been finalised and implications fully analysed. An update on these and other emerging high impact regulations could be provided to COS later this year as further details emerge.
12. The current reform of the European Statistics Law aims to set out legal requirements for Member States to implement the European Statistics Code of Practice. The relevant negotiations may conclude around the end of 2013. The UK is well set to deal with the overall implications, following the Statistics and Registration Service Act and the consistency of the UK and EU Codes. But the new regulation may have some fundamental impacts on the UK's statistical system in such areas as access to administrative data and cross-GSS coordination of the delivery of European statistics, depending on the unpredictable outcomes of complex and relatively political negotiations.

Reducing the risk of non-compliance

13. Existing processes for managing compliance issues are set out in SA(COS)(12)23. The following developments are considered high priority, although progress may be limited due to the pressures on NSO for the day-to-day management of EU regulatory processes:
- i. A multi-site rolling programme of tailored training for GSS members on the ESS, including negotiating tactics, cross-GSS coordination needs and planning considerations.
 - ii. A central management information system for tracking new regulatory proposals and possible future impacts. This will collect key planning and negotiating information and be used to assist cross-GSS management of European statistics issues (including by COS, GSS International Committee, ONS Executive Leadership Team, and the National Statistician).
 - iii. A redesign and clarification of roles and processes in the management of negotiations on EU regulations. This should encourage early and effective negotiating action and planning by GSS business areas, including building in uncertainty about future resource requirements. A reciprocal flexibility from HM Treasury in budget provision would be helpful, noting in particular that ONS is unusual as a government department in having the vast majority of its outputs determined by EU regulations.
 - iv. A memorandum of understanding with the devolved administrations to include an annex on the provision of UK statistics within the international context.

Wesley Miles, Matthew Shearing, Paul Jackson
International Relations Team, National Statistician's Office, 8 May 2013

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)22

Activities of the Government Statistical Service: March 2013 to April 2013

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Committee for Official Statistics with an update of Government Statistical Service (GSS) activities for March and April 2013.

Recommendations

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

Discussion

Capability

Raising Professional Standard

3. The Civil Service Capability Plan was launched on 17 April 2013. It focuses on having the right people with the right skills in order to work more efficiently. The plan sets out four areas of priority - leading and managing change, commercial skills and behaviours, delivering successful projects and programmes and redesigning services and delivering them digitally. The People Strategy will be reviewed as a result of this plan to ensure alignment and also to help focus the 2013/14 work plan. Recent work to update the statistician competence framework, recruitment, promotion and continuing professional development policies will help towards meeting the formal requirements of parts of the plan. The People Committee will discuss further at their meeting in May.

Government Statistician Group Fast Stream Recruitment

4. Over 250 applications were received for round 2 of the fast stream recruitment programme which is an increase from the first round. This increase can largely be attributed to the marketing work carried out to promote the scheme such as a YouTube video featuring Jil Matheson, an online Facebook chat and marketing through the universities. Fast stream statistical assessments are taking place in June.

Statistical Officer Recruitment

5. No further rounds of Statistical Officer recruitment are planned having successfully recruited and allocated all of the candidates from the last round. We await further news from Heads of Profession (HoPs) regarding their vacancy situations in due course.

Badging

6. The capability team in the National Statistician's Office (NSO) have recently invited expressions of interest from GSS members who wish to be badged into the Government Statistician Group (GSG) profession. This is the first badging exercise for over a year and it has attracted over 60 candidates. Application forms have now been sent for completion with a view to holding the assessment centres between May and August.

International

UK compliance with EU data requirements

7. A paper has been prepared for the meeting [SA(COS)(13)21] and will inform COS about the readiness of the GSS to comply with the European Statistics Annual Work Programme.

UK Government's Review of Balance EU Competences

8. The NSO has agreed with the Cabinet Office that all issues relating to EU statistics should be covered in the statistics chapter of the cross-cutting report, due to be published in spring 2014. However, if departments feel there is a particular need to address statistical issues within reports on other EU competences they are preparing this will also be acceptable. A basic project plan and timetable for drafting the statistics chapter will be developed and managed by the GSS International Committee (GSSIC).

European Statistics Code of Practice – developing the second round of peer reviews – progress

9. The mandate is to make the next round of peer reviews more comparable with each other than the 2006-08 round. This will enable the scope to be broadened to include all aspects of the 'Code', to cover other statistical authorities that produce European Statistics, and to cover two new aspects of statistical activity: the coordination role of National Statistical Institutes; and the efficiency/integration of the European Statistical System (ESS). A Task Force, with UK involvement, is continuing to refine thinking about the approach. A series of questionnaires and guidance documents will be presented to the ESS Committee for its mid May meeting. Two pilot reviews will be conducted in 2013 in Slovakia (July) and Iceland (September). These will provide the opportunity to test particular aspects of the new peer review approach. The UK is involved in both pilots.

UN Statistical Commission

10. The last meeting, which concluded on 1 March 2013, focused on 'Big Data' and 'Well Being'. Friends of the Chair Group were involved – The UK is not involved directly but will lobby allies to influence the way forward on these issues.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

11. The OECD is focussing heavily on new approaches to economic challenges. A framework paper will be discussed in Paris on 23 to 24 May 2013. The OECD wants to strengthen a 'whole of OECD' approach to policy choices. A big theme is access to micro data. Departments have been asked to keep GSSIC informed about any issues surfacing in departments, especially if cross-cutting.

GSS Strategy

The GSS Strategy - Building the Community

12. The strategy for the GSS, 'Building the Community', was published in mid March. The NSO has been supporting HoPs to promote the strategy within their departments and consider how they will implement it. GSS committees will be discussing how they will contribute to the delivery of the strategy and take forward specific projects from the implementation plan. The strategy was also discussed with the RSS's Statistics User Forum. The links with the Authority and ONS strategies have been emphasised as part of the awareness-raising activity.

Planning and co-ordinating across the GSS

13. The NSO is currently scoping out a piece of work focusing on strengthening planning and co-ordination across the GSS. This will investigate:
- i. how other countries approach national planning and co-ordination;
 - ii. engagement with users to understand current needs, plus horizon scanning to understand how needs might change in the future; and
 - iii. what infrastructure is needed in the UK to meet these needs and effectively plan and co-ordinate the activities of the GSS.

GSS Data Strategy

14. The development of a data strategy for the GSS continues to progress well. The outline of the strategy – the Strategic Framework – has been approved by HoPs and members of the Statistics Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) and work is now underway to create and build the executive summary and more detailed content of the strategy. HoPs are keen to explore this topic further and have requested that a workshop is held at their meeting in June. A more detailed discussion regarding the data strategy will be presented to the COS meeting in July.

Statistical Advice and SupportGSS Methodological Support Task and Finish Group

15. The newly established GSS methodological support task and finish group which reports to the SPSC met for the first time on 8 April 2013. The group has been formed to review existing support mechanisms and aims to develop a coordinated framework for delivering and funding methodological support (in its widest sense) across the GSS. Initially, the focus will be on statistical quality reviews and quality assurance.
16. The SPSC have approved the Group's terms of reference and their expectations in relation to risk assessment and quality review initiatives across the GSS.

Workshops

17. A commentary workshop has recently been delivered to Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Assistant Statisticians and lead officials from arm's length bodies in Northern Ireland. Workshops were also held on improving commentary and Code compliance at OfQual.
18. A meeting has been arranged with Department for Work and Pensions statisticians and press officers to highlight the importance and relevance of the Code of Practice in building and maintaining trust in official statistics.

Annual Assurance Reports

19. NSO has compiled high level summaries for each of the Annual Assurance Reports (AARs) received from Heads of Profession which will feed into an overall report. That report will include an action plan to identify and address common issues and concerns across the GSS.

Tim Andrews, National Statistician's Office, 8 May 2013

SA(COS)(13)23 – Issues raised with Authority 51

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(13)23

Issues raised with Authority

Issues raised with the Authority are published on the UK Statistics Authority website at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/issues-log/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)24

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

Purpose

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

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note:
 - 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
 - the current staffing numbers for the GSG.

Discussion

3. Since the report to the last meeting, the National Statistician has been notified of one cessation. In April 2013 the ONS ceased publishing thirteen statistical series previously contained in the Financial Statistics compendium publication. These consisted of two monthly series sourced from the Bank of England and 11 quarterly series sourced from HM Revenue and Customs. The decision was taken following the outcome of the 2010 review that ONS would no longer publish compendium articles. No objections were raised to the cessation so there was no impact on users.
4. Historical information about cessations by department up to April 2013 can be found at **Annex A**.
5. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) has identified nine new statistical consultations since the last update to the Committee. Two of these are notable:
 - The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) is consulting on a proposed development to change the way Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data is presented in the following publications: Accident and Emergency, Admitted Patient Care, Maternity and Outpatients. These changes are intended to give users a better understanding of hospital activity and to align content across the HES publications. HSCIC propose introducing new content and to retire old content, amend some calculations and reporting groupings to improve their definition and aid interpretation. The consultation is split into four sections, one for each of the annual HES publications and closes on 30 June 2013.

- The Department for Health is consulting on proposed changes to the way it publishes abortion statistics for England and Wales, and is seeking the views of commissioners, clinicians, academics, other government departments and special interest groups. The aim of the consultation is to ensure that the abortion statistics remain relevant and useful to users. It covers: the usefulness of the annual report; the engagement of users to derive maximum value from the statistics; the relevance of the statistics to devolved governments; and whether to present detailed tables by primary care trust, clinical commissioning group or local authority. The responses and outcomes from the consultation will influence how the department presents the statistics for 2012 and closes on 10 June 2013.
6. There are currently seven live statistical consultations (**Annex B**). There are currently no live consultations previously reported to COS.
 7. In addition to informing the Committee, notable information is sent to the UK Statistics Authority Secretariat in order to facilitate decisions about early intervention and/or the preparation of a Statistical Expenditure Report.

Monitoring Statistical Capacity

8. The NSO has now updated its database of professional government statisticians so the numbers shown in **Annex C** reflect the latest returns from UK Government departments and agencies and the devolved administrations.
9. The new format shows the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) numbers of staff by the major grade groups at a moment in time, and these will be updated on a quarterly basis to provide a new time series. More staff will be joining throughout the year as those successful in recent recruitment campaigns are able to take up posts offered. In addition, a snapshot will be provided of the major departments' numbers, split as before between Senior Civil Service (SCS) and non-SCS posts.

Tim Andrews, National Statistician's Office, 8 May 2013

List of Annexes

Annex A	Cuts previously reported to COS
Annex B	New consultations about cuts and changes to statistics
Annex C	Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department
Annex D	Government Statistician Group by grade

Annex A Cuts previously reported to COS

Department	Statistics	Date of cessation
Department for Communities and Local Government	The Place Survey	July 2010
	Local Government Key Facts Card: England	November 2010
	Citizenship Survey	March 2011
	Official Statistics on Supporting People	May 2011
	Changes to DCLG Statistics – Regional Outputs	October 2012 for outputs without PRA. Outputs with PRA – throughout 2013.
Department of Culture Media and Sport	Target Group Index statistics on arts attendance	31 October 2011
Department for Education	Schools Providing Access to Extended Services Statistics	October 2010
	Parental experiences of services provided to disabled children Statistics	November 2010
	Diploma Learning England	November 2011
	School Destinations of Secondary School Pupils Resident in London Boroughs	September 2011
	Behaviour in schools	1 April 2012
Department for Health	Health Profile of England	Last publication March 2010
	Mortality Monitoring: Life Expectancy and all-age-all-cause mortality, and mortality from selected causes - overall and inequalities	Last publication October 2011
	Mortality Monitoring: Infant Mortality and inequalities	Last publication December 2011
Home Office	Statistics on post-decision reviews on asylum applications, applications for asylum support, and asylum appeals.	25 August 2011
	Basic Command Unit level recorded crime and detection statistics	April 2012

HM Revenue and Customs	Business Payment Support Service	Last publication July 2011
Ministry of Defence	RAF Pocket Brief	April 2012
	Civilian Staffing by agency, trading fund and location	February 2012
NHS Information Centre	Prescription Cost Analysis statistics	July 2012
	NHS Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff return	September 2011
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	Northern Ireland Abstract of Statistics Online	16 June 2012
	Participation in full-time education and vocational training by 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland	December 2012
Welsh Government	1. Health Visitors, District Nurses and Other Community Nurses 2. NHS Day Care 3. Community Psychiatric Nurses and Community Learning Disability Nurses	October 2010
	New Deal Statistics	November 2010
	Welsh Short Term Output Indices	Within weeks if that decision is made by Ministers
	Local Authority Education Expenditure	Suspended for 2010/11 year.
	Affordable housing provision – collection of information from registered social landlords	2012/13
	NHS staff vacancies	1 March 2012

Scottish Government	1. Children Educated outwith Schools 2. Placing Requests 3. Teacher and Educational Psychologists Vacancies 4. Pre-Appeal SQA Examination Results 5. Expenditure on Schools 6. Budgeted School Running Costs 7. The Independent School Census	November 2010
	Various changes to Scottish Government Surveys	2012 onwards
Department for Work and Pensions	New Deals and the Flexible New Deal programme statistics	March 2011
	Tax Benefit Model	8 June 2011
	National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK	August 2012
	Vacancies handled by Jobcentre Plus	Autumn 2012
Office for National Statistics	Quarterly dividends inquiry	5 March 2012

Annex B New consultations about cuts and changes to statistics

This table summarises the consultations that have been notified to the National Statistician in the period 11 March to 02 May 2013 or have been discovered by the National Statistician's Office undertaking periodic trawls of departmental websites.

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

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION	DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION	CONSULTATION END DATE AND RESPONSES
<p>Retail outlet data publication removal</p> <p>ONS</p> <p>Opening date: 16 April 2013</p>	<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) are proposing to cease the publication of the Annual Business Survey (ABS) count of retail outlets table from reference year 2011 (published in June 2013). Retail outlet counts have been published annually every summer as part of the ABS publication on the ONS website. A review of the retail outlets methodology and processes was undertaken which highlighted that similar information was available from the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR). The IDBR collects, validates and publishes retail outlet data via the annual publication - Business Activity Size and Location.</p> <p>ONS invites users' views on these proposals by 31 May 2013 by emailing abs@ons.gsi.gov.uk With "Retail outlet consultation" in the subject line.</p> <p>Or in writing to:</p> <p>Annual Business Survey Room 2.301 Office for National Statistics Cardiff Road Newport NP11 7QH</p> <p>ONS will review all responses and announce our formal plans in the first week of June.</p>	<p>31st May 2013</p>

<p>Changes to the publication of abortion statistics in England and Wales</p> <p>Department of Health</p> <p>Opening Date:</p> <p>15 April 2013</p>	<p>The Department of Health is proposing changes to the way it publishes abortion statistics for England and Wales, and is seeking the views of commissioners, clinicians, academics, other government departments and special interest groups.</p> <p>The aim of the consultation is to ensure that the abortion statistics remain relevant and useful to users. It covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the usefulness of the annual report • the engagement of users to derive maximum value from the statistics • the relevance of the statistics to devolved governments • whether to present detailed tables by primary care trust, clinical commissioning group or local authority <p>The responses and outcomes from the consultation will influence how the department presents the statistics for 2012. The 2011 annual abortion statistics report may be useful for comparing potential changes to the 2012 publication.</p>	<p>10th June 2013</p>
<p>Classifying and measuring the creative industries: Consultation on proposed changes.</p> <p>Department for Culture, Media & Sport</p> <p>Opening Date : 19 April 2013</p>	<p>The purpose of this consultation is to update the DCMS Creative Industries classification and we are inviting input from interested parties.</p> <p>The consultation will be open for 8 weeks, closing at midnight on 14 June 2013.</p> <p>Please submit the response form together with any other supporting evidence to statsconsultation@culture.gsi.gov.uk.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please contact statsconsultation@culture.gsi.gov.uk or Tom Knight on 0207 211 6021.</p>	<p>14th June 2013</p>

<p>HES (Hospital Episode Statistics) Consultation</p> <p>HSCIC</p> <p>Opening Date: No Date given</p>	<p><i>What is this consultation?</i></p> <p>This consultation invites responses on our proposed development of the presentation and output of the annual Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) publications in relation to admitted patient care, outpatients, accident and emergency and maternity activity.</p> <p><i>Why are we having this consultation?</i></p> <p>The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) publishes annual reports on hospital activity in English NHS hospitals and private providers supplying services to the NHS in England. These are the standard publications for HES.</p> <p>We are consulting users on changes to the way HES data is presented. These changes are intended to give users a better understanding of hospital activity and to align content across the HES publications.</p> <p><i>Summary of consultation</i></p> <p>We propose to amend the way in which some data is presented, to introduce new content and to retire old content. We propose to amend some calculations and reporting groupings to improve their definition and aid interpretation. The consultation is split into four sections, one for each of the annual HES publications. You're invited to contribute to one or more of these consultations by reviewing the appropriate documents and completing the questions presented. We also invite comment on any issue not presented.</p> <p>The HES annual publications are: Accident and Emergency; Admitted Patient Care; Maternity; and Outpatients</p>	<p>30th June 2013</p>
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When will the reports be published?

The 2012-13 annual HES reports will be published between November 2013 and January 2014.

How to respond

This consultation process is open to anyone - whether as an individual or representing an organisation. The closing date for the consultation is 30 June 2013.

You are asked to complete your response by completing the supplied Word file which asks you whether you support the proposal or not, and requests comments on each proposal. You can also email any comments to enquiries@hscic.gov.uk with the subject heading clearly stating "**HES annual publication consultation**".

If you would like to know more about the consultation or if you have any queries please contact enquiries@hscic.gov.uk

Alternatively, if you are unable to respond via email, you can post your comments/suggestions to:

**HES annual publication consultation
Contact Centre
Health and Social Care Information Centre
1 Trevelyan Square, Boar Lane
Leeds LS1 6AE**

<p>Sport participation measurement: consultation summary</p> <p>DCMS</p> <p>Opening Date: 20 March 2013</p>	<p>DCMS and Sport England consulted during 2012 on proposed changes to the way we measure sport in Active People (APS) and Taking Part (TP) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address quality/coverage concerns • Create a single measure for sport • Assess the potential to bring the surveys closer together. <p>More than 200 people responded, comprising Local Authorities, sport governing bodies, County Sport Partnerships, central government departments, academics and charities</p> <p>The main findings from the consultation were: (% in brackets shows percentage of respondents who considered this essential or important)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the proposal of having a single measure for sport (70%) • Strong demand for continued provision of sport specific results (71%), used for NGB performance management and Local Authority estimates for sport (88%) • Support for lowering the age range of APS to 14+ (87%) • Concern that we retain consistency and continuity with previous APS results, to enable stakeholders to see trends over time (76%) • High interest in using new and mixed methods to survey people, to reduce our reliance on landline interviews (38%), to have more face to face (34%) and to explore digital data collection (75%) • Preference for six monthly sport result (46%) and results in same or similar format as currently (37%), supported by tools (78%) • Need to continue to measure the Olympic effect (59%) and to provide cross cultural analysis (29%) through Taking Part. <p>Further detailed analysis of the consultation responses [PDF, 563KB, 17 pages]</p>	<p>2nd May 2013</p>
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	<p>We are implementing online and mobile phone pilots to allow us to consider producing a fully mixed-mode survey. Our work has been informed by technical advice from the Methodology Advisory Service and the Government Statistical Service Methodological Advisory Committee within the Office of National Statistics and the survey contractors TNS BMRB.</p> <p>Using this advice and the findings from the consultation, we are proposing to continue to ask sport participation questions in Taking Part Survey, but on behalf of Sport England. This means that sport participation data will not be analysed and reported on by DCMS or in the Taking Part publications.</p> <p>This approach allows for the inclusion of face-to-face data within Active People over time, so that Active People can become a fully mixed-mode survey. In the shorter term the data will be used to validate the landline estimates.</p> <p>View the original consultation documents and related content.</p> <p>The Taking Part publication on 21st March 2013 will therefore be the final release to contain sport data and analysis. If you have any comments on this proposal then please email us at statsconsultation@culture.gsi.gov.uk by May 2nd 2013.</p>	
<p>Beyond 2011 Consultation: user requirements for future population and socio-demographic information (ID 1612)</p>	<p>The Beyond 2011 programme is an ongoing programme within National Records of Scotland (NRS) to research suitable methods for producing population and socio-demographic information. The success of the Programme will depend on NRS having a clear understanding of user requirements and priorities and it is these requirements that this consultation is intended to capture. This consultation aims to build upon previous consultations conducted by NRS as well as stakeholder engagement sessions.</p> <p>Beyond 2011 Consultation: user requirements for future population and socio-demographic information</p>	<p>9th June 2013</p>

<p>National Records of Scotland</p> <p>Opening Date: 18 March 2013</p>	<p>The census currently provides the basis for population and socio-demographic statistics in Scotland. However, the census is becoming increasingly challenging and expensive to conduct. The Beyond 2011 programme is investigating a range of possible methods for producing population and socio-demographic statistics/information that meet the needs of users.</p> <p>The success of the Programme will depend on National Records of Scotland having a clear understanding of user requirements and priorities and it is these requirements that this consultation is intended to capture.</p>	
<p>Consultation on the Attribution Data Set GP-Registered Populations</p> <p>HSCIC</p> <p>Opening Date: Unknown</p>	<p>Scaled to ONS Population Estimates</p> <p><i>What is this consultation?</i></p> <p>This consultation invites responses on our proposals on the future of the publication of the Attribution Data Set GP-Registered Populations (ADS) by the Health and Social Care Information Centre.</p> <p>Note: The ADS of registrations will continue to be extracted annually and used by the Department of Health in Resource allocation.</p> <p><i>Why are we having this consultation?</i></p> <p>This publication contains information about populations registered with GP practices at Strategic Health Authority (SHA) and Primary Care Organisation (PCO) level in five-year age bands by gender, for England and Wales.</p>	<p>30th April 2013</p>

The data are collected in April for GP relevant populations and are scaled to the Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates - based on the Census, excluding some special populations. This reconciliation is carried out as the number of patient registrations is greater than the number of people living in England and Wales according to population estimates from the ONS. There may be a number of reasons for this, e.g. people leaving the country and not notifying their GP

We are consulting users on changes to the Attribution Data Set and advising on alternative data sources.

Summary of consultation

The ADS is primarily used by the Department of Health in resource allocations and the patient registration data were scaled to match ONS mid-year estimates at a national level. With the move to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) scaling is no longer being applied in the same way.

This raises the question of the value of processing the data to scale it to ONS mid-year estimates and if it would be of value to users.

The ADS was published by PCO in quinary age bands and by gender using this scaled data. Unscaled GP registered data is already available in other publications:

By the NHS Commissioning Board

By the HSCIC

Patients registered with a GP practice by practice, PCT and SHA by gender and in age bands: 0-4, 5-14, 15-44, 45-64, 65-74, 75-84, 85+.

<p>Publication of New Orders in the Construction Industry data</p> <p>ONS</p> <p>Opening Date: 22 March 2013</p>	<p>On 22 March 2013, ONS launched a public consultation on the future publication of New Orders in the Construction Industry data and would like to hear from users on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which tables of the publication are accessed by users? 2. What the estimates in the tables are used for? 3. The potential impact from ceasing to publish specific tables <p>Details on how to respond to this consultation can be found in annex A of the consultation document.</p> <p>Responses to this consultation will be used to inform the decision on which New Orders in Construction data will continue to be published.</p> <p>This consultation will end on 14 June 2013.</p> <p>A summary of responses and next steps will be published following the consultation.</p> <p>To respond to this consultation please forward electronic consultation templates to: construction.statistics@ons.gov.uk</p>	<p>14th June 2013</p>
<p>The Future of agricultural statistical data collection methods in Wales</p> <p>WG</p> <p>Opening Date: 22 March 2013</p>	<p>The purpose of this consultation is to seek users views on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current and future data collection methods and usage • discontinuing the December Survey of Agriculture and gauging current use <p>This is in line with the requirements of the Official Statistics Code of Practice and the requirements from the UK Statistics Authority assessment report.</p>	<p>24th May 2013</p>

Annex C Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department

Department	March 2013		May 2013	
	SCS (FTE)	Non -SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)
Business, Innovation and Skills	3	58	3	55
Department for Communities and Local Government	2	52	2	50
Department of Energy and Climate Change	1	25	1	28
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	2	28	2	27
Department for Education	2	94	2	126
Department for International Development	1	39	1	39
Department for Transport	2	46	2	45
Department of Health	1	50	1	51
NHS Information Centre	1	85	1	91
Department for Work and Pensions	3	169	3	171
HM Revenue and Customs	3	112	3	139
Home Office	2	25	2	25
Ministry of Defence	1	64	1	65
Ministry of Justice	1	66	1	77
UK Statistics Authority and ONS	19	128	19	132
SG	1	150	1	191
OTHERS	3	197	3	175
Totals	47	1390	48	1487

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

Annex D Government Statistician Group by grade

	March 2013	May 2013
Statistical Officer Grades	742	827
Fast Stream	133	134
Grade 6 & 7	513	522
SCS1 (Deputy Directors)	40	40
Directors and above	8	8
Total	1436	1531
Values are rounded to nearest whole number		