

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**Committee for Official Statistics**

**Minutes**

**Meeting of Wednesday 18 April 2012**  
**Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

**Present**

**Members**

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

**Secretariat**

Mr Rob Bumpstead  
Mr Joe Cuddeford

**Other Attendees**

Ms Pam Davies (for item 6), National Statistician's Office  
Mr Richard Laux

**Apologies**

None

**Declarations of Interest**

None

**1 Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 February 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

**2 Review of statistical publications**

- 2.1 Dr Bowe summarised progress with work to review statistical publications. A number of helpful meetings had been held with statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs). These meetings had identified certain barriers to providing better commentary; notably, there was a perception amongst some HoPs that informative statistical commentary risked appearing as political comment.
- 2.2 The need to improve the commentary and explanation which accompanies the release of statistics continued to be a consistent finding of the Assessment process. While acknowledging the work that had been done across the Government Statistical Service (GSS) in this respect, the Committee agreed that the time was now right for a further initiative. It was agreed that a working group should be established to review two or three statistical releases and propose how they should be improved. The working group should include the Authority Chair, selected non-executive directors, the Head of Assessment and the National Statistician. It was suggested that a journalist should also be invited. The secretariat would convene the group.
- 2.3 The Committee agreed that the working group should select ONS statistical releases which would serve as exemplars for the wider GSS. This should include an economic release as well as a release that was not subject to the particular production time pressures of economic releases, for example, crime statistics. To ensure credibility, all releases reviewed by the group should be high-profile. The following statistical outputs were candidates for review:
- i. Gross Domestic Product;
  - ii. Retail Sales;
  - iii. Population Estimates and Projections; and
  - iv. Crime Statistics.
- 2.4 The group would meet together with the statisticians responsible for each release, and review the selected releases in sequence. It was important to prepare the ground well in advance of the meeting by: making sure participants were clear of the purpose of the group; establishing the uses and potential uses of the statistics, and; reviewing recent media coverage of the relevant releases.
- 2.5 It was agreed that a measure of success for the project would be positive feedback from users on the revised releases. Another measure would be to compare media coverage of the original and revised releases.
- 2.6 The project would serve as proof of concept. But it was important that the outcomes were disseminated more widely. It was agreed that a report should be published following the exercise which would document the initial work with Heads of Profession and the activities of the working group.

**Action: Secretariat to convene the working group.**

**3 Activities of the Government Statistical Service [SA(COS)(12)09]**

- 3.1 Ms Matheson provided an update of GSS activities from February 2012 to April 2012.
- 3.2 The Committee discussed the development of draft legislation for European statistics that could lead to obligations for Member States in respect of the independence and quality of their statistics. This was expected to be an important issue in the coming year. Possible outcomes included Member States signing 'commitments of confidence' as had already been done in Greece, and the development of central investigation mechanisms overseen by Eurostat.
- 3.3 The Committee considered the opportunities that these developments might present. It was agreed that the National Statistician would submit a paper to the Authority Board on the emerging situation.

**Action: National Statistician to submit a paper to the Authority Board on developments with regards to European statistical regulation.**

- 3.4 On a related matter the National Statistician reported that she would be meeting with the Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee (ESC), a select committee of Parliament. It was agreed that the Head of Assessment would also attend the meeting.

**Action: National Statistician and Head of Assessment to meet Chair of the ESC.**

- 3.5 Ms Matheson provided an update on the activities of the Inter-Administration Committee (IAC) which had last met on 16 February. The IAC had discussed the obligations of the Devolved Administrations regarding European regulations. It was agreed that the Committee for Official Statistics would receive a written report on the work of the IAC at the next meeting.

**Action: National Statistician to include a report on the IAC for the next meeting of COS.**

**4 Cuts to Official Statistics [SA(COS)(11)10]**

- 4.1 The Committee discussed the latest update from the National Statistician's Office on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics, and on public consultations relating to statistics. It had proved difficult to provide a holistic overview of cuts to resources but, in general, the decisions which had been investigated by the Authority seemed to have been sensible. Notable exceptions to this were the cessations of the Citizenship Survey and questions about smoking and drinking on the General Lifestyle Survey.
- 4.2 It was agreed that the series of Statistical Expenditure Reports (SERs) worked well as a process. The existence of the process had had the effect of promoting good practice with regards to consultation and decision making on statistical expenditure.
- 4.3 The Committee agreed that no SERs should be commissioned based on the information in the paper, but that the structure for reporting should be kept in place.

**5 Review of the public availability of data from three ONS areas [SA(COS)(12)11]**

5.1 Mr Alldritt summarised ongoing work to review whether selected statistical business areas in ONS were making available in the public domain all the data that should be.

5.2 An issue had arisen over definition of terms and the review had yet to determine what 'published' and 'publicly available' should mean in the context of official statistics. The meeting noted that there was much work taking place across Government in this respect and agreed that it would be wise for the review to be fully sighted on these developments and to adopt commonly used definitions where possible to avoid confusion.

**Action: Monitoring and Assessment team to establish commonly used definitions regarding 'publication' as part of the review of public availability of data.**

5.3 The following comments were made in discussion:

- i. putting information in the public domain was the first step; making it findable and accessible was a further challenge;
- ii. there were growing legalities in relation to making data available and defining what availability meant; and
- iii. comments posted online by users of the Treasury's Combined Online Information System (COINS) revealed the potential difficulties to users of digesting a deluge of data.

5.4 The Committee considered the achievability of the draft findings and agreed that ONS should be given the opportunity to comment on them.

**Action: Monitoring and Assessment team to provide draft findings of the review to ONS for comment.**

**6 Housing market statistics: (i) Background and context [SA(COS)(12)12] and (ii) Report on stage two of the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics [SA(COS)(12)13]**

6.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which set out the background and context to the long standing issue of the adequacy of housing market statistics. The Authority's formal involvement in the matter had begun with an exchange of correspondence in 2008 between Sir Michael Scholar and the then Secretary of State for Justice Jack Straw.

6.2 Ms Davies introduced a draft report on stage two of the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics. The Committee heard that publication of the second stage of the review had been delayed due to developments regarding the transfer of the Department for Communities and Local Government's House Price Index to ONS.

6.3 The Committee sought assurance that the recommendations in the Review were appropriate and achievable. Ms Davies confirmed that she was confident that the recommendations reflected user wishes and were achievable within a reasonable period of time.

6.4 The following comments were made in discussion:

- i. the recommendation that an article about key trends in the UK housing market should be produced (at least) annually was crucial in addressing the Authority's concern, as

expressed in Sir Michael Scholar's letter to Jack Straw, that a clear set of statistical information was required;

- ii. statistics on the affordability of housing could usefully be included in the Review;
- iii. user requirements for the level of local area disaggregation were still to be established; and
- iv. the recommendation from part one of the National Statistician's Review that there should be a single official house price index did not mean that the Land Registry had plans to cease publication of its own index.

6.5 The Committee noted that there were strong views and personal interests associated with the various indicators. It was agreed that development of the new article of key trends would be a challenge, but the great deal of interest that it was likely to attract presented an opportunity for ONS.

## **7 GSS chapter for the Authority Annual Report 2011/12 [SA(COS)(12)14]**

7.1 The Committee considered a draft chapter of the UK Statistics Authority's Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12 relating to the GSS. The following comments were made on the draft chapter:

- i. statements in the introduction should be appropriately evidence-based;
- ii. the chapter should expand on the international context by including a summary of the assistance that colleagues have provided in relation to statistical issues in Europe and Greece in particular; and
- iii. a summary of the outcome of the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics should also be included in the chapter.

7.2 It was agreed that further comments on the draft chapter would be provided via correspondence.

**Action: National Statistician's Office to revise draft chapter and submit to the Authority Board for further consideration.**

## **8 Any other business**

8.1 There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on 11 June at 11:00 in London.

## Committee for Official Statistics

### Agenda

**Wednesday, 18 April, 2012**  
**Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 13:30 - 16:00**

**Acting Chair: Andrew Dilnot**

**Apologies:**

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 150212
2	Review of statistical publications	Oral update Dr Colette Bowe
3	Activities of the Government Statistical Service	SA(COS)(12)09 Ms Jil Matheson
4	Cuts to Official Statistics	SA(COS)(12)10 Ms Jil Matheson
5	Review of the public availability of data from three ONS areas	SA(COS)(12)11 Mr Richard Alldritt
6	Housing market statistics i. Background and context ii. Report on stage two of the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics	SA(COS)(12)12 Secretariat SA(COS)(12)13 Ms Pam Davies
7	GSS chapter for the Authority Annual Report 2011/12	SA(COS)(12)14 Ms Jil Matheson
8	Any other business	

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, 11 June, 2012,**  
**Drummond Gate, London, 11:00 - 13:30**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)09

***Activities of the Government Statistical Service  
February 2012 to April 2012***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update of Government Statistical Service (GSS) activities from February 2012 to April 2012.

**Recommendations**

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

**Background**

3. Following consideration by the Committee at its May 2010 meeting of GSS activity and governance arrangements [SA(COS)(10)13], it was agreed that regular updates would be provided by the National Statistician's Office (NSO) to all future meetings of COS. Throughout this recent period the GSS has been involved in the activities set out below.

**Discussion**

*Transparency Agenda*

4. An Open Data e-learning module developed by the GSS Transparency sub-group has been launched via StatNet. The model covers the background to the Open Data agenda, why statisticians should get involved, public data principles, and case studies from across the GSS. It is interactive, with questions at different stages to enforce the principles.
5. A Transparency Seminar "Transparency, Open Data and the Official Statistics Code of Practice" was held on 3 April 2012 aimed at practitioners in both the GSS and the Government Economic and Social Research network (GESR). The free one-day event was aimed at those who work with statistical data. Its aim was to encourage practitioners to make the best use of the opportunity that the transparency agenda presents to improve the range and utility of statistical data and boost the role of statisticians and researchers in relation to advising policy makers about issues around releasing large administrative datasets. The event was well supported.

*Improving Commentary*

6. At the last meeting of COS, a paper was presented on initiatives to improve the commentary in statistical first releases [SA(COS)(12)02]. This paper is re-produced at **Annex B** for information. Since mid February around 300 GSS staff have attended 22 workshops run by the NSO. There is now emerging evidence that the workshops, in combination with Assessment requirements, are driving an improvement in commentary. This will be evaluated more formally in the near future.

*National Statistician's Review of IPCC statistics*

7. The National Statistician's Review of the Independent Police Complaints Commission's (IPCC) statistics on deaths following police contact was published on 30 March. This review was conducted at the request of the Chief Executive of the IPCC following criticisms of the statistics on the Radio 4 'File on Four' programme. It concluded that the IPCC publications had been collated conscientiously with a consistent process that is followed routinely for the annual statistics. The report also concluded that the four

specific death in custody cases criticised as being incorrectly classified had been correctly classified and presented in the publications where appropriate by the research team. A number of recommendations were however made aimed at enhancing the public's understanding of the statistics, including putting the statistics forward for assessment and forging a closer working relationship with the Home Office Head of Profession for Statistics. The review raised a couple of more general questions: how active should we be in pushing out the boundary of National Statistics and assessing existing official statistics; and do relationships between arms length bodies, departments and the Authority need to be strengthened to achieve the aims of the Code? The National Statistician's review of IPCC statistics is at **Annex A**.

#### Capability : Standards and Recruitment

8. GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) have approved a revised and improved Professional Competence Framework which is used for the recruitment, promotion and Continuous Professional Development of members of the Government Statistician Group. HoPs also approved an updated Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy and guide book. At all grades, greater emphasis will be given to line manager's oversight of the individual's CPD needs and how they relate to the framework.
9. Following a very successful first round, applications for round two of this year's scheme are about to close and assessments will commence in May. Sixteen successful round one candidates have been placed, along with eleven 'near-misses', who have been offered mainstream statistical officer posts.
10. Having received ministerial approval to re-commence the statistical officer entry scheme, closed by a government wide recruitment freeze, a first round of the competition was set up in very short order and has been successfully run with 18 passes.
11. Despite having recruited around 45 new graduates in total in the past two months, clearly there is still unmet demand for statistical staff and it is likely that a second round of Statistical Office recruitment will be run later in the year in addition to the second round of the Fast Stream already underway.

#### Senior Specialist Development Scheme Project

12. The Cabinet Office is currently working on a paper, due at the end of May, which outlines reforms for the Civil Service including strengthening capability. At a recent workshop, HoPs had an opportunity to work on refining recommendations from professionals to be fed into the planned paper. It was noted that across the professions there are similar issues such as the need to strengthen the role of the HoP, CPD, and talent and career management.

#### Spending Review 2010

13. HoPs continue to be involved in responding to the challenges of the 2010 Spending Review. They have been keeping the National Statistician informed as the impact of the Spending Review starts to affect the production of statistics, so that she, together with the Authority, can monitor the effects on official and national statistics. A paper [SA(COS)(12)10] on the agenda for this meeting provides the usual update on the current position of cessations or changes to statistical outputs together with additional information now collected from HoPs on the impact of changes on statistical expenditure, quality and UK comparability.

International

14. The National Statistician attended the annual UN Statistical Commission (UNSCOM) in February, and was voted in as Vice-Chair of the UNSCOM Bureau, thereby giving the National Statistician a leading role on the group which steers the work of this important world wide statistical body.
15. The UK Parliament's European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) has recently taken an interest in the reliability and quality of internationally significant official statistics of other EU Member States, primarily Greece. The National Statistician is to meet its Chair, Bill Cash MP, to explain developments.
16. Eurostat is also leading a revision of the legislation for European Statistics that will lead to stronger obligations for Member States in respect of the independence and quality of their statistics. A likely outcome is that each Member State will have to sign a 'Commitment on Confidence' in their statistics – a prototype was issued recently by Greece. A separate regulation is being negotiated that will place heavy penalties and/or investigation mechanisms on euro-zone countries who are suspected to have 'manipulated' their debt and deficit statistics.
17. Other EU matters of importance include the finalisation of a regulation on the five year Work Programme for European Statistics. The UK along with many other Member States is negotiating for strong commitments on priority-setting, reducing burdens, and minimisation of overall demands on Member States – the ESC is looking for a commitment to no overall increase in resource demands, which may not be possible.

GSS 2020 Strategy

18. At the HoPs meeting of 19 March 2012 the GSS 2020 Strategy implementation plan, along with the launch proposals were discussed. The strategy will be launched across the GSS in June 2012 following a session at the Government Statistician Group (GSG) conference in May 2012. To ensure the implementation of the strategy, oversight for specific actions has been given to the main GSS committees with a commitment to report back on a regular basis to HoPs.

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

**List of Annexes**

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Annex A</b> | <b>National Statistician's Review of the Independent Police Complaints Commission's statistics on deaths following police contact</b> |
| <b>Annex B</b> | <b>Paper SA(COS)(12)02: Progress on Improving Statistical Commentary</b>  |

**Annex A National Statistician's Review of the Independent Police Complaints Commission's statistics on deaths following police contact**

The following document has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reviews/national-statistician-s-review-of-ipcc-statistics.html>

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(12)02

#### *Progress on improving statistical commentary*

#### **Purpose**

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

#### **Recommendations**

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

#### **Discussion**

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

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

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

#### **List of Annexes**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SA(COS)(12)10

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

**Purpose**

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

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics 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,
  - staffing levels for the GSG.

**Discussion**

3. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) collates information from producers of official statistics on plans to cease the production of statistics as a consequence of Spending Review 2010 cuts, as well as on public consultations relating to official statistics. An update is provided at each meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics.
4. At the meeting of the Committee of 7 September 2011 it was agreed that future updates would include information on consequent reductions to statistical expenditure and, where possible, to statistical capacity. NSO would also report on the impact on quality and comparability.
5. As reported at the same meeting, Departmental Directors of Analysis (DDANs) have instigated a quarterly analysis of active professional analysts within their department on a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) basis. Figures for the GSG<sup>1</sup>, consistent with this analysis, will be reported to COS from this point forward.
6. Since the last report to the Committee on 15 February 2012, the National Statistician has been notified of a number of further cessations of production of statistics. These include:
  - i. A decision by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) not to publish civilian manpower statistics by location. MoD is of the view that the data are not sufficiently valuable to users and their demise will contribute to the resource cuts being implemented in the department. Internal users stated that the output was of limited value. The information is available to external users in other MoD publications.

---

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

- ii. The Welsh Government (WG) has reported two cessations. The first relates to affordable housing provision in Wales. WG state that this change will reduce burden on data providers, the time taken to validate the projections and the collection on the information. This will free up resources to meet new additional requirements. There has been limited consultation with key users. WG do not feel a wider consultation is necessary as the change will have a limited impact of the amount and quality of information made available. The second relates to long-term NHS Staff Vacancies. Users in the NHS have commented that these figures are not useful and do not give an accurate picture of requirements for staff. Users within the Welsh Government have other management figures provided by Health Boards, which are used for monitoring the latest position. WG plan to investigate the potential for other sources of information that would be more useful for users.
  - iii. The Department for Education (DfE) has decided to cease publication of annual school behaviour statistics. OFSTED will make the same data available on their website in exactly the same format and have plans to release the data quarterly.
  - iv. ONS is to end its Quarterly Dividends Enquiry. The survey is not meeting the requirements of its only user (Private Non-Financial Corporations (PNFC) Branch in National Accounts Division). Modelling of PNFC unquoted dividends will be undertaken in the short term until a suitable alternative is found.
7. Further information about these five cessations can be found in **Annex A**. Historical information about cessations by department up to February 2012 can be found at **Annex B**.
  8. A number of statistical consultations have been notified to the NSO since the last update to the Committee, spanning five departments: ONS, NHS Information Centre (NHSIC), Welsh Government (WG), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Scottish Government (SG).
  9. Of particular significance is the consultation document published by the Scottish Government (SG) about a Scotland-wide Data Linkage Framework for Statistics and Research. It is working with a wide range of partners to establish a collaborative framework that will facilitate data linkages for research and statistical purposes to be conducted safely, securely, legally, ethically and efficiently. The foundation of the framework will be a set of principles which provide common standards for safe and effective data linkage and which will underpin a robust governance mechanism that reflects and promotes the core values in play. This is a positive development that will promote improved efficiency.
  10. As reported in SA(COS)(12)03 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) recently ran a consultation on the future of Regional Statistics, Land Use Change Statistics and Local Authority (LA) Housing Statistics. These included in particular a proposal to cease the publication of all LA based statistics at the regional level on the premise that regions are no longer a geography at which policy is directed and Government Offices for the Regions have been closed down. Many Departments, ONS and the National Statistician responded, expressing concerns about this proposal. Regions are a standard geography enshrined in the Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) classification and so ensure consistency in cross-sectional and time series analyses; data are reported to Eurostat on this basis; and many other statistics (other than the Communities LA based statistics) are presented at the regional level. If

DCLG cease to publish data aggregated to region then others will have to do so in their stead. This will introduce inconsistency, increase the risk of error and potentially be less efficient than the current arrangements. We are currently awaiting the outcome of this consultation, which closed on 2 April.

11. There are currently seven live statistical consultations. Information about these and previous consultations is set out in **Annexes C and D**.
12. In addition to informing the Committee, this information will also be sent to the Secretariat frequently in order to facilitate decisions about early intervention and/or the preparation of a Statistical Expenditure Report.

Monitoring Statistical Capacity

13. Since 2000 the NSO has collected information on membership of the GSG - that is, the body of professional statisticians within government. A summary of the key changes underlying the GSG headline figures since 2000, and the reasons behind them, was provided as background information at the last meeting. The graphs showing the overall trend in GSG numbers are reproduced at **Annex E** for information.
14. Current data on GSG membership by department are also shown at Annex E and includes information about October 2011 (the baseline), January 2012 and April 2012. The Committee requested a further breakdown of Senior Civil Service (SCS) information for SCS3 and above. There are only three such GSG posts - all within the Authority (National Statistician, Head of Assessment and Director General ONS). Please note that direct comparisons should not be made between the historical graphs and current data in Annex E as they are compiled using different bases.
15. Following the approval from the Minister for the Cabinet Office for the re-commencement of our central Statistical Officer recruitment scheme (together with 'near-miss' candidates from round one of the 2012 Fast Stream Scheme) the GSS is taking on 29 new entrants over the next four months. These will be allocated to departments whose need is critical in their statistical production process. This figure is in addition to the 16 fast streamers recruited in round one.
16. ONS has now appointed a Fast Stream (FS) Grade Manager to focus on their own cross-profession FS requirements and the GSS is working closely with her to develop closely-aligned policies and practices. We are planning how to introduce new fast stream entrants to the GSS very close to their appointment, bringing in their statistical managers at the same time to reinforce the key messages and development opportunities the Fast Stream offers. Finally, we have refocused the Statistical Induction Course to make it relevant to the demands and priorities of the GSS.

**National Statistician's Office (Delivery), April 2012**

**List of Annexes**

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Annex A</b> | <b>Recent cessations of production of statistics by the GSS, notified to the National Statistician, and supplemented with additional information on impact on expenditure, staffing and quality</b> |
| <b>Annex B</b> | <b>Cessations of production of statistics by the GSS, notified to the National Statistician and previously reported to COS</b>  |
| <b>Annex C</b> | <b>New consultations about cessations and changes to statistics produced by the GSS notified to the National Statistician</b>   |

- Annex D**      **Consultations about cessations and changes to statistics produced by the GSS notified to the National Statistician that have ended since the last meeting of COS**
- Annex E**      **Historical GSG membership data 2000-11, as measured by headcount; and Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department – April 2012**

**Annex A: Cessation of production of statistics by the GSS (notified to the National Statistician between 8 February 2012 and 4 April 2012)**

This table summarises the cuts to official statistics that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician as of 4 April 2012.

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

DETAILS OF CESSATION OR REDUCTION	DESCRIPTION OF STATISTICS	REASONS FOR CESSATION OR REDUCTION	DETAILS OF CONSULTATION/ IMPACT ON USERS	COST/BENEFITS ASSESSMENT	STATUS
<p><b>Statistics:</b></p> <p>Civilian Staff by Agency, Trading Fund and Location</p> <p><b>Date of cessation:</b></p> <p>February 2012</p>	<p>Quarterly official statistics showing civilian manpower for Agencies within the MoD and the Trading Funds of the MoD.</p> <p>Statistics cover total manpower numbers and manpower numbers for different locations by quarter point and at each quarter point during the</p>	<p>As part of a review of civilian manpower statistics with customers MOD identified that there was no longer a requirement for this product. Some of the information is duplicated in other products.</p> <p>For external users a lot of the</p>	<p>As part of the review of civilian products a consultation was placed on the MOD website for users to express their views. The consultation ended in May 2011. Civilian Agency statistics by location is a redundant legacy publication from back when there used to be a large number of agencies in MOD.</p> <p>The views of their main internal customers in Director Civilian Personnel (DCP) were also sought. Moreover, a note was also placed alongside this particular product to advise that it would be withdrawn.</p> <p>Following the consultation to which there were no responses about the cessation of this output, the publication was withdrawn in line with the original proposal.</p>	<p>Savings equate to 0.1 FTE. They will contribute towards the overall resource reduction.</p>	<p>Confirmed</p>

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

	financial year.	<p>information can be found in Defence Analytical Services and Advice's (DASA) UK Defence Statistics. MOD acknowledges that the information does not go down to location for each Agency but for the general public is likely to be sufficient.</p> <p>For internal users, a lot of the information can be found in other regular publications.</p>			
<b>Statistics:</b>  Quarterly Dividends Inquiry (QDI)	Data collected by the QDI are used to produce quarterly estimates of total dividends paid and received by UK private nonfinancial corporations	The survey is not meeting the requirements of its only user (Private Non-Financial Corporations branch, National Accounts). Modelling of	The only users are ONS' PNFC branch. A meeting was held between members of that branch and the results team. The usability of the figures provided was discussed and the outcome of the meeting was that the survey in its current format was not meeting the needs of PNFC branch. As such, it was agreed that the survey would cease and PNFC will consider if a new survey will be required or if modelling will meet their needs.	Actual Reductions : The cessation of the inquiry led to an efficiency saving of one EO in the Financial Inquiries results branch. Half of this EO's resource had been allocated to this	Confirmed

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p><b>Date of Cessation:</b></p> <p>The survey was run for the last time for the Q4 2011 period, results delivered on 5th March 2012</p>	<p>(PNFCs). Only companies that are not quoted on the London Stock Exchange are selected for this inquiry.</p>	<p>PNFC unquoted dividends will be undertaken in the short term until a suitable alternative is found.</p>	<p><b>Assessment of impact on users:</b></p> <p>The impact on PNFC branch will be minimal as a suitable alternative has been developed.</p>	<p>inquiry, the other half has been absorbed by other branch members.</p> <p>Savings reinvested: The HEO on the Financial Inquiries results branch had 5 per cent resource allocated to this inquiry. This will be redistributed to other inquiries in the branch for 2012/13 onwards. In BDD, there was very small resource required for this survey and this will be absorbed in to other inquiries also.</p> <p><b>Impact on quality:</b></p> <p>The survey went out to approximately 1250 companies per quarter.</p>	
--	--	--	---	--	--

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p><b>Statistics:</b></p> <p>Affordable Housing Provision in Wales</p> <p><b>Date of change:</b></p> <p>We plan to introduce in 2012/13, collecting data for 2011/12 and projected estimates for 2012/13 and 2013/14.</p>	<p>The number of additional affordable housing units delivered in Wales during the previous financial year and projected estimates for the current and next financial years. It also presents information on how the planning system contributed to the provision of the additional housing units.</p> <p><b>Description of proposed change:</b>(i) Data is currently collected directly from both local authorities and Registered</p>	<p>i) WG plan to introduce this change to reduce burden on data providers and reduce the time taken to validate the projections and therefore the collection in order to free up resources to meet new additional requirements.</p> <p>When the data collection was introduced data providers explained they would only be able to provide best estimates and were keen that they wouldn't be held to the projected figures in future years. Therefore</p>	<p>WG consulted with internal colleagues in Housing policy and Planning, who initiated the inclusion of the projected figures. They confirmed that they were happy with the planned change.</p> <p>WG has written to all data providers to inform them in advance and prior to receipt of the form of this change.</p> <p>It spoke to Community Housing Cymru (CHC) to assess what impact, if any, the changes to the RSL form would have on RSLs.</p> <p>It then informed other users primarily through our Housing Information Group and bodies such as the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Community Housing Cymru (CHC), about both changes.</p> <p>WG do not feel a wider consultation is necessary as the change will have a limited impact of the amount and quality of information made available. The main figures will still be available and RSLs will still have access to their own projections if they require them. Also users of Welsh housing data have undergone a high number of consultations recently, with two closing recently, and there appears to be an impact on the number of responses we are receiving.</p> <p><b>Assessment of impact on users:</b></p> <p>(i) By ceasing to collect projected estimates from RSLs WG will no longer be able to publish projected estimates for each individual RSL, which are currently only disseminated via a table on our StatsWales site. Also within the annual statistical release it will no longer be able present projected estimates of additional affordable housing provisions by RSLs for each local authority area. This accounts for 2 columns within table 3.</p> <p><a href="http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2011/1">http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2011/1</a></p>	<p>(i) It is estimated the data collection team will save 10 days validation time which will then be reinvested in the collection of data that has a high user demand.</p> <p>The analytical team will also benefit as it ensures they have sufficient time to prepare and quality assure the statistical release.</p> <p>(ii) The expansion of the question will have a limited impact on the data collection and analytical</p>	<p>Confirmed</p>
---	---	--	--	---	------------------

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

	<p>Social Landlords (RSLs) for the previous financial year and projected estimates for the next 2 years. WG plans to cease to collect the projected estimates from RSLs and only request this information from local authorities who provide estimates for all tenures.</p> <p>(ii) In addition it plans to expand the local authority data collection form which currently collects data on the number of affordable units provided on</p>	<p>limited use is made of all the projected estimates and users are told they may be subject to change. The data collection itself is very complicated as multiple RSLs will operate in multiple local authorities and therefore time is spent by the data collection team, local authorities and RSLs in attempting to reconcile differences in figures. This becomes even more complicated when attempting to validate the</p>	<p><a href="#">11019/?lang=en</a></p> <p>As the projections are best estimates only there is a limited amount of commentary on them, and users are advised that they may be subject to change and to use caution when using them.</p> <p>Users will continue to be able to access the majority of information they currently do and will still be able to access projected estimates of additional affordable housing provision for each local authority area.</p> <p>(ii) This will provide useful information for all end users of the data and ensure that relevant data are available for monitoring progress made in relation to the commitment within the 'Programme for Government' with minimal burden on data providers.</p>	<p>teams.</p> <p><b>Impact on quality:</b></p> <p>(i) In the previous release it was estimated that the number of additional affordable housing units 'Delivered' in 2010/11 were 20 per cent lower than the projected number of units as collected in 2010 and subsequently revised. WG are unable to indicate what impact the planned change will have on the overall quality if the projections.</p>	
--	---	--	---	---	--

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

	<p>land made available by the local authority over the last 5 years, to cover units provided on other public sector land.</p>	<p>projections.</p> <p>In introducing this change it will reduce the burden placed on RSLs in completing their forms and on both sets of data providers during the validation process. It will also reduce the amount of resource need by the data collection team to validate the information which will be reinvested in supporting new collections.</p> <p>(ii) One of the key commitments in the Programme for Government, which is the current</p>		<p>(ii) Expanding this question will provide more detail and will not negatively affect the quality of this data collection.</p>	
--	---	---	--	--	--

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

		<p>government strategy, is to encourage the release of more public land for affordable housing. This will provide useful information for all end users of the data and ensure that relevant data are available for monitoring progress made in relation to this commitment with minimal burden on data providers.</p>			
<p><b>Statistics:</b> Behaviour in Schools</p>	<p>This annual publication reports on Local Authority, regional and national results</p>	<p>Ofsted are making the data available on their website a month earlier than the DfE</p>	<p>Users within DfE (Behaviour and Attendance in Schools Division policy team) were alerted to the proposed cessation of the Statistical Release in September 2011. The intention to discontinue the publication was also trailed on the DfE publications website (Research and Statistics Gateway) in the published 'Schedule of Publications' in September 2011</p>	<p>The DfE resource involved is approx 0.1 HStO and 0.05 Grade 7. However it is likely that this</p>	<p>Proposed</p>

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p><b>Date of cessation:</b> 1 April 2012</p>	<p>for the standards of behaviour in schools at their most recent Ofsted inspection.</p> <p>The figures are derived by combining annual inspections data produced by Ofsted to determine the latest inspection judgement for each school as at December of each year.</p>	<p>publish the information in exactly the same format.</p> <p>Ofsted plan to release the data quarterly. Each release will show the latest position at the end of the quarter. The data are published via the following link</p> <p><a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/official-statistics-maintained-school-inspections-and-outcomes">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/official-statistics-maintained-school-inspections-and-outcomes</a></p> <p>Previously, Ofsted only used to publish the behaviour judgement for school</p>	<p><a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001036/index.shtml">http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001036/index.shtml</a> .</p> <p>There will be a further update to the Schedule of Publications on the DfE website at the end of March 2012.</p>	<p>resource will be reinvested and used on other projects. However the issue is that DfE will be duplicating effort by continuing to produce the Statistical Release and therefore wasting resource.</p>	
---	---	---	---	--	--

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

		inspections which had taken place in any given year.			
<p><b>Statistics:</b></p> <p>NHS Staff Vacancies</p> <p><b>Date of Cessation:</b></p> <p>With effect from 1 March 2012, ie there will be no future publication following the last edition in August 2011.</p>	<p>Six-monthly Statistical Release of long-term vacancies in NHS Wales (those that have lasted 3 months or more) by staff group. Associated online tables give more detail by staff group and NHS organisation.</p>	<p>Users in the NHS have commented that these figures are not useful and do not give an accurate picture of requirements for staff. The series was set up in 2001 when long-term vacancies were a problem. Since that date there has been a steady decline in the numbers. One Health Board has ceased to supply figures because they do not regard it as a useful dataset.</p>	<p>Users were informed of the proposal in the August 2011 edition and consulted over the period 30 August 2011 to 11 October 2011. See the consultation documents at <a href="http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/nhsstaffing/?lang=en">http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/nhsstaffing/?lang=en</a></p> <p>The August 2011 edition is at <a href="http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2011/110830/?lang=en">http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2011/110830/?lang=en</a></p> <p><b>Assessment of impact on users:</b></p> <p>Users within the Welsh Government have other management figures provided by Health Boards, which are used for monitoring the latest position.</p> <p>These figures are not published, but one of our responses to the consultation will be to investigate the potential for other sources of information that would be more useful for users. WG are in discussion with NHS workforce planners in the Welsh NHS Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare over the possibility of making more staffing information available and vacancies will be considered as part of that project.</p>	<p>Costed using Band C annual salary costs of £28,918</p> <p>About 2 weeks so 2/52 annual costs or £1,100.</p> <p>This reduction will help to manage with a vacancy in the section.</p> <p><b>Impact on quality</b></p> <p>A similar publication has been produced in England by the Information Centre for Health and Social Care,</p>	<p><b>Confirmed</b></p>

Annex A - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

		<p>The NHS Workforce Information Managers Group was consulted and supported cessation. There was a subsequent public consultation resulting in a balance of opinion in favour of cessation.</p>		<p>but it was suspended for 2011 “to ensure that the IC can devote sufficient resources to other areas of workforce information, such as information on workforce numbers and turnover, which are of a greater strategic value and greater relevance in the present recruitment climate.”</p>	
--	--	---	--	---	--

## SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

**Annex B: Summary of other cessations previously notified to COS**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Statistics</b>	<b>Date of cessation</b>
Department for Communities and Local Government	The Place Survey	July 2010
	Local Government Key Facts Card: England	November 2010
	Citizenship Survey	March 2011
	Official Statistics on Supporting People	May 2011
Department of Culture Media and Sport	Target Group Index statistics on arts attendance	31 October 2011
Department for Education	Schools Providing Access to Extended Services Statistics	October 2010
	Parental experiences of services provided to disabled children Statistics	November 2010
	Diploma Learning England	November 2011
	School Destinations of Secondary School Pupils Resident in London Boroughs	September 2011
Home Office	Statistics on post-decision reviews on asylum applications, applications for asylum support, and asylum appeals.	25 <sup>th</sup> 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
NHS Information Centre	Prescription Cost Analysis statistics	July 2012
Welsh Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health Visitors, District Nurses and Other Community Nurses</li> <li>2. NHS Day Care</li> <li>3. Community Psychiatric Nurses and Community Learning Disability Nurses</li> </ol>	October 2010

Annex B - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

	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.
Scottish Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children Educated outwith Schools</li> <li>2. Placing Requests</li> <li>3. Teacher and Educational Psychologists Vacancies</li> <li>4. Pre-Appeal SQA Examination Results</li> <li>5. Expenditure on Schools</li> <li>6. Budgeted School Running Costs</li> <li>7. The Independent School Census</li> </ol>	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

**Annex C Live consultations notified to the National Statistician since the last COS meeting on 15 February 2012**

This table summarises the consultations that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician in the period 8 February 2012 – 5 April 2012 or have been discovered by the National Statistician's Office undertaking periodic trawls of departmental websites.

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

<b>Details of consultation</b>	<b>Description of consultation</b>	<b>Consultation End</b>
<p><b>Consultation on International Migration Statistical Outputs</b></p> <p><b>Producer: ONS</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 5 April 2012</b></p>	<p><a href="#">International Migration Statistical Outputs - consultation document</a></p> <p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is reviewing its migration outputs to ensure they are coherent and continue to meet user requirements.</p> <p>ONS would like your views on several aspects of international migration outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Migration flows</li> <li>Population stocks</li> <li>Local Area Migration Indicators</li> <li>Migration Reporting</li> <li>Data Explorer Tool</li> </ul> <p>All the responses received will be used to help ONS determine the timing and content of future statistical outputs on international migration.</p>	5/07/12
<p><b>Review of Agricultural Statistics Outputs</b></p> <p><b>Producer: WG</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 30/3/12</b></p>	<p>The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' view on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which of the current outputs are used</li> <li>• How well do they meet user needs.</li> <li>• Priorities for change to the current outputs.</li> <li>• Priorities for extra or restructured outputs.</li> </ul> <p>Users' contributions will help to extend WG's knowledge of how users – particularly those outside government – use the outputs. This will help WG to better meet the needs of a wide range of users. This is in line with the requirements of the</p>	29/6/12

## Annex C - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

	Official Statistics Code of Practice and the requirements from the UK Statistics Authority assessment report.	
<p><b>A Scotland-wide Data Linkage Framework for Statistics and Research: Consultation Paper on the Aims and Guiding Principles</b></p> <p>Producer: NHS(S)</p> <p>Open date: 26 March</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is working with a wide range of partners to establish a collaborative framework that will facilitate data linkages for research and statistical purposes to be conducted safely, securely, legally, ethically and efficiently.</p> <p>The foundation of the Framework will be a set of principles which provide common standards for safe and effective data linkage and which will underpin a robust governance mechanism that reflects and promotes the core values in play.</p> <p>The main purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the aims of the Data Linkage Framework and a draft set of guiding principles</p>	15 June 2012
<p><b>Public consultation on new orders and export new orders in the monthly Turnover and Orders in the Production and Services Industries (TOPSI) publication and the Monthly Business Survey (MBS)</b></p> <p>Producer: ONS</p> <p>Open date: 19 March 2012</p>	<p>ONS collects and publishes monthly estimates of total new orders and export new orders as part of the monthly Turnover and Orders in the Production and Services Industries (TOPSI) publication. The key user of UK New Orders data is Eurostat, who collect it from member states under the Short Term Statistics Regulation. Currently, the UK has a legal obligation to provide new orders data under the regulation. Now Eurostat is removing this requirement from the regulation due to re-focussing priorities and problems experienced in collecting these data in some member states. In the UK, the estimates are primarily used as an early indicator of future turnover or business activity.</p> <p>The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on the proposal to remove monthly estimates of total new orders and export new orders from the TOPSI publication, and stop collecting source data by removing the relevant questions from the Monthly Business Survey questionnaire.</p>	8 June 2012
<p><b>Consultation on suspending Assets, liabilities and transactions in finance leasing, factoring and</b></p>	<p>There is a need to improve the efficiency and relevance of ONS outputs while still meeting user needs.</p> <p>The survey that underpins the output: Assets, Liabilities and Transactions in Finance Leasing, Factoring and Credit Granting (SDQ7) is being re-developed so that it fully satisfies changing National Accounts requirements.</p> <p>This work is scheduled to be completed during the 2012/13 financial year.</p>	28 May 2012

## Annex C - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p><b>credit granting (SDQ7)</b></p> <p><b>Producer: ONS</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 5 March 2012</b></p>	<p>This consultation aims to determine the wider use of this information and whether users would be inconvenienced if ONS were to suspend publication of the output until the survey development work is completed.</p>	
<p><b>Consultation on statistics produced from Mental Health Minimum Datasets (MHMDS)</b></p> <p><b>Producer: NHSIC</b></p> <p><b>No date on consultation</b></p>	<p>We are seeking your views on the analysis that is produced annually and quarterly on the Mental Health Minimum Dataset (MHMDS).</p> <p>A consultation is particularly important now because of the recent changes that have been made to MHMDS to allow for additional data items to be collected and support new requirements such as Payment by Results (PbR). As such, we are seeking your views on the publications that use the MHMDS as a data source, the Mental Health Bulletin and the Routine Quarterly MHMDS Reports.</p> <p>This consultation is a chance to review and update existing analysis as well an opportunity to produce new products that are now required under the transparency agenda.</p>	<p><b>20 April 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Mental Health Act Statistics consultation</b></p> <p><b>Producer: NHSIC</b></p> <p><b>No date on consultation</b></p>	<p>We are seeking your views on the national statistics publication 'Inpatients formally detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, and patients subject to Supervised Community Treatment, Annual figures'.</p> <p>A consultation is particularly important now because a change of data source for this publication has been proposed that would potentially make further relevant data available for analysis. The Mental Health Minimum Data Set (MHMDS) has been identified as a source for national statistics about the use of the Mental Health Act in the future, and it is proposed that this will eventually replace the KP90 collection as the source of statistics for this publication. The MHMDS is a rich data source and makes possible several new dimensions for these statistics.</p> <p>All questions are optional but the more information you provide the more of your feedback we will be able to consider for incorporation into future iterations of our mental health act statistics.</p>	<p><b>20 April 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Proposed changes to publication cycle of six Indirect Taxes National Statistics Bulletins.</b></p> <p><b>Producer: HMRC</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 20/1/12</b></p>	<p>HM Revenue and Customs are currently seeking your views on publishing the following National Statistics <a href="#">Bulletins</a> every three months: Landfill Tax, Betting and Gaming, Air Passenger Duty, Aggregates Levy, Climate Change Levy, Insurance Premium Tax. They are currently published monthly. If you would like to comment on the proposed changes, please participate in the <a href="#">User Survey</a>.</p>	<p><b>19 April 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Proposed changes to publication cycle of six</b></p>	<p>HM Revenue and Customs are currently seeking your views on publishing the following National Statistics <a href="#">Bulletins</a> every three months: Landfill Tax, Betting and Gaming, Air Passenger Duty, Aggregates Levy, Climate Change Levy, Insurance</p>	<p><b>19<sup>th</sup> April 2012</b></p>

## Annex C - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p><b>Indirect Taxes National Statistics Bulletins</b></p> <p>Producer: HMRC/ONS</p> <p>Open date: 20 Jan 2012</p>	<p>Premium Tax. They are currently published monthly. If you would like to comment on the proposed changes, please participate in the <a href="#">User Survey</a>.</p>	
--	--	--

SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

**Annex D Closed consultations notified to the National Statistician since the last COS meeting on 15 February 2012**

<b>Details of consultation</b>	<b>Description of consultation</b>	<b>Consultation end</b>
<p><b>Consultation on proposed changes to statistics: Land Use Change Statistics, Rationalised Collection of Local Authority Housing Statistics and Publication of Regional Statistics</b></p> <p><b>Producer : DCLG</b></p> <p><b>Open date : 10 January 2012</b></p>	<p>As part of the drive to deliver cost savings across government, DCLG is considering how best to meet the needs of users of the Land Use Change Statistics in a cost effective way. Four options have been identified to achieve this and it is seeking users' opinions on the relative importance of the various categories of land use change and the method of data collection.</p> <p>The proposed new local authority housing data collection rationalises data returns in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Annual statistical data returns from local authorities via the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix / Business Plan Statistical Appendix / Housing Sales Monitoring return (P1B form).</li> <li>2) Key information on rents and stock from the Housing Revenue Account administrative returns.</li> <li>3) Key aggregate level information from the discontinued Register Of Licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation collection.</li> </ol> <p>Whilst the scope of the data review did not include related collections by the Tenant Services Authority or the Homes and Communities Agency it has sought to avoid duplication with other data collections and to use consistent definitions and questions where appropriate.</p> <p>The third part of the consultation on regional statistics covers all of the Department's statistical outputs.</p>	<p><b>2 April 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Inheritance Tax Survey of Users' Views</b></p> <p>Producer: HMRC</p> <p>Open date: 3/1/2012</p>	<p>HMRC are committed to providing impartial quality statistics that meet user needs. HMRC encourages users to engage with them so they can improve the official statistics and identify gaps in the statistics that are produced. It is currently seeking views on the IHT tables in general and proposing some changes to certain tables. If users would like to provide feedback on these statistics, comment on the proposed changes or suggest others, then they are asked to participate in the <a href="#">User Survey</a>.</p>	<p><b>5<sup>th</sup> April 2012</b></p>
<p><b>NHS Contraceptive Services, England: Consultation Review</b></p> <p><b>Producer: NHSIC</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 30 Dec 2011</b></p>	<p>This consultation aims to engage with users of the reports to enable NHSIC to develop a more complete understanding of the uses made of these statistics to ensure they remain relevant and useful. It would like to understand what purposes the statistics are used for, and whether the level of detail provided is sufficient.</p> <p>NHSIC would also like to understand how the SRHAD record level dataset can be used to provide meaningful information for decision making and would seek views on how users would like to see this information presented. These will be used to inform the content and design of the SRHAD based publication. Whilst NHSIC will consider all views it receives, it can not guarantee that it will be able to implement all of them.</p>	<p><b>23 March 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Public consultation on the future of the</b></p>	<p>ONS publishes a range of statistical information and analysis in compendia publications. The Construction Statistics Annual is a compendium of construction related data, published by the ONS, other government departments and non-</p>	<p><b>23 March 2012</b></p>

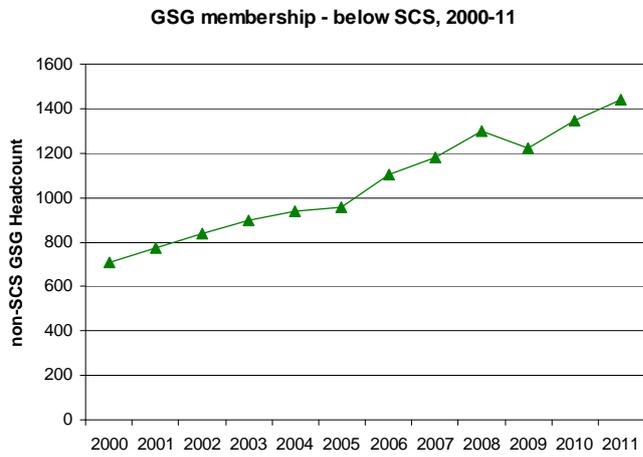
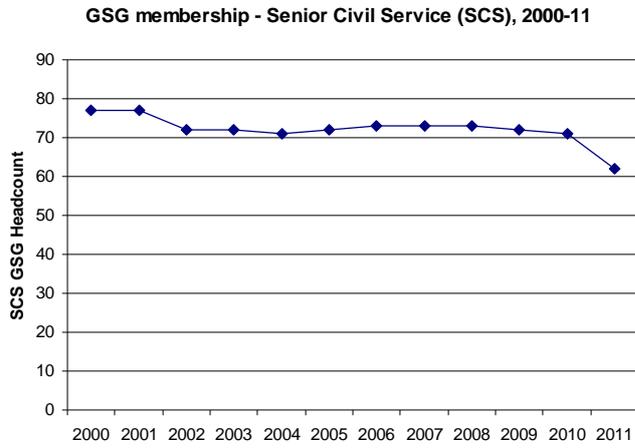
## Annex D - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p><b>Construction Statistics Annual publication</b></p> <p><b>Producer: ONS</b></p> <p><b>Open Date: 21 Dec 11</b></p>	<p>public sector sources. Most of the data is already available for free on the internet and much of the content is published more regularly than annually. As a result, the annual publication becomes out of date very quickly and loses its value as a source of reference. It is proposed that this publication will cease to exist in its current format. This consultation will seek views from users on proposed improvements.</p>	
<p><b>PESA National Statistics user consultation</b></p> <p><b>Producer: HM Treasury</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 22 Dec</b></p>	<p>The overriding purpose of the consultation is to seek views from users about the particular uses to which they put HMT statistics.</p> <p>Suggested key questions are arranged by theme, however users need not stick rigidly to these and may comment on any aspect of Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA) publications. This includes the annual PESA command paper, a compendium of already published PESA National Statistics along with departmental spending plans.</p> <p>The intended audience for this consultation is any person or body who provides data for; or uses; or has a strong interest in, Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses releases e.g. government bodies; businesses; local authorities; voluntary organisations; academics, etc.</p>	<p><b>15 March 2012</b></p>
<p><b>Welsh Government Consultation on Social Housing Sales Data Collections</b></p> <p><b>Producer: WG</b></p> <p><b>Open date: 12 Jan 2012</b></p>	<p>Knowledge and Analytical Services of the Welsh Government are consulting on changes to existing social housing sales data collections. The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the data items collected on social housing sales and to the accompanying definitions;</li> <li>• The use of publications on social housing sales.</li> </ul> <p>Users' contributions will help WG to understand the impact these changes could have on the individuals and organisations that use these statistics. The outcome of this consultation will inform their decision as to whether these changes can be implemented. This is in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice which states that effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. These proposed changes would ensure that the information collected and published on social housing sales remains relevant, accurate and meets the needs of users. The changes aim to provide more clarity to data providers and remove data items no longer relevant or required by end users of the data.</p> <p>Further information on the consultation rationale, including a response form, are available at the following link : <a href="http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/socialhousing/?lang=en">http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/socialhousing/?lang=en</a></p>	<p><b>1 March 2012</b></p>

## Annex D - SA(COS)(12)10 - Cuts to Official Statistics

<p><b>Ceasing production of rolling-year interregional migration estimates</b></p> <p><b>Producer: ONS</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Open Date: 12 Dec 11</b></p>	<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces internal migration estimates on both a quarterly and an annual basis.</p> <p>This consultation is concerned with the quarterly publication of rolling-year interregional migration estimates.</p> <p>Due a combination of the annual mid-year estimates being regarded as more robust and greater availability of data on the ONS website it is proposed that the rolling-year interregional migration estimates are no longer published.</p> <p>Please read the paper and then responses to the questions should be sent to Pete Large either by email, at migstatsunit@ons.gov.uk or by post to IMPEEG, Room 2300, Office for National Statistics, Segensworth Road, Titchfield, Hampshire, PO15 5RR.</p> <p>A summary of responses will be published approximately two months after the consultation has closed</p>	<p><b>27 February 2012</b></p>
<p><b>National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK</b></p> <p><b>Producer: DWP</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>October 2011</b></p>	<p>Please note DWP have today launched a consultation on 'National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK' at</p> <p><a href="http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino_allocation">http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino_allocation</a></p> <p>We have also published the feedback from the previous consultation on the Statistical Summary at <a href="http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=news#ss_feedback">http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=news#ss_feedback</a></p> <p>Any queries about the 'National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK' consultation contact RUSS.BENTLEY@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</p> <p>Any queries about the DWP Statistical Summary contact JOANNE.LONE@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</p>	<p><b>24 February 2012</b></p>

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



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

Department	October 2011		January 2012		April 2012	
	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)
BIS	3	46	3	47	3	47
DCLG	2	50	2	51	2	51
DECC	1	21	1	24	1	25
DEFRA	2	29	2	28	2	27
DfE	2	91	2	90	2	92
DfID	1	28	1	30	1	32
DfT	2	33	3	33	3	35
DH	3	59	2	59	1	54
NHSIC	1	67	1	71	1	77
DWP	2	171	2	165	2	167
HMRC	3	103	3	112	3	110
HO	2	20	2	18	2	18
MoD	2	64	2	63	1	63
MoJ	1	55	1	54	1	53
UKSA/ONS	21	123	20	129	20	133
SG	1	119	1	119	1	117
WG	1	58	1	62	1	62
Other depts/ agencies	2	129	3	130	3	130
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1285</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1293</b>

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

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(COS)(12)11

***Review of the public availability of data from three ONS areas***

A Monitoring Brief will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The document will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/index.html>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(12)12

***Housing market statistics: background and context***

**Purpose**

1. This note provides background information on the Authority's involvement with issues related to housing market statistics.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) are invited to note the background summary below.

**Discussion**

3. A number of different house price indices are published each month. Amongst these are the indices produced by the Halifax Bank and Nationwide Building Society in the private sector; and the indices produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Land Registry (LR) within government. All of the indices have imperfections of one form or another and none can be regarded as the definitive house price index.
4. The DCLG index has been in existence for many years and has been progressively improved over time to make it more authoritative. In 2003 it was changed from quarterly to monthly following a substantial increase in sample size and improved methodology. The LR index was introduced in November 2006, and draws on the very comprehensive database of house prices that the LR has compiled since 1995. It uses a quite different methodology to the other indices (which are all based on variations of mix-adjustment) in that it is based on repeat sales of the same property since January 1995.
5. Until the LR index was introduced, the DCLG index was regarded as the official house price index. However, when the LR index was launched, LR claimed it to be the "official independent house price index", and it is now described on the LR website as the "most accurate independent house price index." There is no clear view as to which index is regarded as the government's official or preferred house price index.
6. The indices were drawn to the attention of the Authority in November 2008, when a report was published in the Observer newspaper that regarded the exclusion of repossession properties and properties sold at auction from the LR index as evidence that "Government house price data [are] flawed" (**Annex A**). A paper was presented to the December 2008 Authority Board [SA(08)50], proposing that Sir Michael Scholar write to the Minister responsible for the Land Registry (the then Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor, Jack Straw). The letter, sent in December, suggested that the National Statistician chair a meeting of officials from LR and DCLG to discuss the issues (**Annex B**). It also indicated that the discussion should consider statistics on the wider housing market, as well as house price statistics.
7. Jack Straw replied in January 2009, indicating that he shared Sir Michael's concerns, and agreeing that the National Statistician should chair a meeting with LR and DCLG (**Annex C**). Peter Collis, the then Chief Executive of the LR, also provided a substantive reply (**Annex D**).
8. Housing market statistics were also raised as an issue of particular concern in a letter from the President of the Royal Statistical Society to the Authority Chair in January 2009.

....

9. In August 2010 the National Statistician launched a review of housing market statistics. A paper was presented to COS at its October 2010 meeting [SA(COS)(10)22] which outlined a review in two stages.
  - i. The first stage would examine the current house price statistics produced by DCLG and LR and identify any improvements that can be made to the house price statistics from official sources to better meet user needs.
  - ii. The second stage of the review would widen the scope to explore user needs for indicators of the housing market more generally. User consultation will take place to explore user needs for this broader set of statistics. This would form the basis of a report describing what a comprehensive set of official measures for the housing market might look like and how producers of official statistics might better support this need.
10. In parallel to this, the Monitoring and Assessment team began work on a Monitoring Brief on housing market statistics. A draft was presented to the October 2010 meeting of COS [SA(COS)(10)21]. This work was not continued as the Committee felt that, while it was valuable to have two independent evaluations, confusion should be avoided.
11. The initial plans for the National Statistician's review were for the first stage to be published before the end of 2010 and for the second stage to be published in March 2011.
12. A draft report for the first stage was considered at the December 2010 meeting of COS [SA(COS)(10)29] and then published on 16 December 2010 (summary at **Annex E**). The report recommended that DCLG and LR each indicate how they could more fully comply with the user-driven criteria for house price statistics, and that they work together to explore the feasibility of producing a joint publication containing a single definitive house price index. LR and DCLG agreed to report back to the National Statistician on steps they could take to better meet the requirements specified in the report. If it proved unfeasible for them to meet the requirements, it was understood that ONS could have a role in producing a measure.
13. Discussions with DCLG on the future of its house price index continued through 2011. It was agreed that it would be preferable to publish the report of the second stage of the National Statistician's review after a response had been received from DCLG, and therefore it was agreed to delay publication.
14. In December 2011 it was announced that responsibility for production and publication of the DCLG house price index would transfer to ONS from April 2012. In light of this, the report on stage two of the review of housing market statistics is expected to be published in May 2012 [see paper SA(COS)(12)14 on the agenda for this meeting].
15. Separately the Authority has received representations via correspondence about the LR's House Price Index. In response to these concerns, the Authority Chair wrote to Malcolm Dawson, the current Chief Executive of the LR (**Annex F**). A reply from Mr Dawson has recently been received (**Annex G**).
16. Since the Observer article of November 2008 the media continued to make periodic critical comment of official house price data. The most recent example is an article published by Full Fact on 5 April (**Annex H**).

**Secretariat, April 2012**

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A**     **'Government House Price Data Flawed'** - Article from the Observer, 30 November 2008
- Annex B**     **Letter from Authority Chair to Jack Straw MP, 22 December 2008**
- Annex C**     **Letter from Jack Straw MP to Authority Chair, 12 January 2009**
- Annex D**     **Letter from Peter Collis to Authority Chair, 14 January 2009**
- Annex E**     **Summary of the first stage of the National Statistician's Review of Housing Market Statistics**
- Annex F**     **Letter from the Authority Chair to Malcolm Dawson, 23 January 2012**
- Annex G**     **Letter from Malcolm Dawson to Authority Chair, 30 March 2012**
- Annex H**     **'Why House Prices Need Better Measurement'** - Article for Full Fact, 5 April 2012

**Annex A – Text from article from the Observer, 30 November 2008**

Government house price data 'flawed' – Patrick Collinson

The Government's official house price index, produced by the Land Registry, has been accused of misleading homebuyers and policymakers after it emerged that it excludes repossessions and auctions on the grounds that they do not reflect the 'full market value' of the sale.

The latest Land Registry figures, published on Friday, showed a 10.1 per cent annual fall in prices across England and Wales, a considerably more benign figure than the indices from Halifax and Nationwide, which reveal prices falling by 15 per cent and 13.9 per cent respectively.

In the past the gap between the figures has been attributed to time-lag differences. But concern is growing that the Land Registry figures, regarded as the 'gold standard' of house price data and used by the Bank of England in setting interest rates, may be fundamentally flawed, as repossessions are ignored.

More than 45,000 repossessions are expected this year - around 6 per cent of all property sales - and several economists have forecast lenders taking the keys back on as many as 100,000 homes in 2009. The previous record was set in 1991 when the number of repossessions topped 75,000.

A spokeswoman for the Land Registry said: 'Repossessions are excluded as they are "commercial" sales and do not represent full market value.

'Other surveys are based on sample sizes or mortgages or asking prices and so will reflect these differences in their results. The [Land Registry] House Price Index uses a sample size that is larger than all other statistical measures available.'

But critics argue that Land Registry data is giving a false view of the property market in many of Britain's urban centres, where savage price falls in recently built apartment blocks have been driven almost exclusively by repossessions. The price declines are also failing to appear on popular property websites used by buyers searching 'sold prices', as the data feed comes from the Land Registry.

Housing expert Henry Pryor said: 'It means the figures from the Land Registry are just inaccurate. Repossessions make up a significant part of total sales right now and will be making up an even greater number of transactions in the future. Excluding auctions is even harder to justify. Auctions are the closest you can get to the definition of open market value.'

Land Registry data also provides the basis for 'Automated Valuation Models' widely used by major mortgage lenders. During the property boom, lenders began basing mortgage decisions not on traditional - and expensive - valuations by surveyors, but on automated 'comparables' generated using Land Registry data feeds instead. Pryor said that AVMs were becoming severely compromised by both the lack of recent comparables and the exclusion of repossessions.

The following letters have been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see these letters go to:

**Annex B Letter from Authority Chair to Jack Straw MP**

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-michael-scholar-to-jack-straw-mp-22122008.pdf>

**Annex C Letter from Jack Straw MP to Authority Chair**

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-the-rt-hon-jack-straw-mp-to-sir-michael-scholar---120109.pdf>

**Annex D Letter from Peter Collis to Authority Chair**

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-peter-collis-to-sir-michael-scholar---140109.pdf>

**Annex E – National Statistician’s Review of House Price Statistics**

The following document has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reviews/national-statistician-s-review-of-housing-market-statistics.html>

The following letters have been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see these letters go to:

**Annex F Letter from the Authority Chair to Malcolm Dawson**

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-michael-scholar-to-malcolm-dawson-land-registry-23012012.pdf>

**Annex G Letter from Malcolm Dawson to Authority Chair**

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-malcolm-dawson-to-sir-michael-scholar-300312.pdf>

**Annex H 'Why House Prices Need Better Measurement' Article for Full Fact**

The following link refers to Full Fact website:

<http://fullfact.org/>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(COS)(12)13

***National Statistician’s Review of Official Housing Market Statistics***

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reviews/national-statistician-s-review-of-housing-market-statistics.html>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(COS)(12)14

***UK Statistics Authority's Annual Report 2011/12: Chapter 3: GSS***

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

The document will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/what-we-do/corporate-information/annual-report-and-resource-accounts/index.html>