

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Committee for Official Statistics

Minutes

**Meeting of Thursday 23 January 2014
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

Present

Members

Professor David Rhind (Chair)
Dame Colette Bowe
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Sir Andrew Dilnot
Mr Roger Halliday
Professor David Hand
Mr Ed Humpherson
Ms Jil Matheson

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Joe Cuddeford

Other Attendees

Mr Roeland Beerten and Mr Dev Virdee (Royal Statistical Society, for item 3)
Ms Pam Davies
Mr Richard Laux
Mr Sandy Stewart

Apologies

None

Declarations of Interest

None

1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 There were no apologies received. The minutes of the previous meeting of 12 November 2013 were agreed as a correct record. Progress with actions was reviewed.
- i. Regarding the draft Monitoring Review of patient outcome statistics, it was agreed that the Head of Assessment would review the report to check for developments since the draft was completed. The report could then be approved for publication outside the meeting with a view to publication. Further consideration should be given to the impact that could be derived from publication.
 - ii. It was agreed that three actions for the National Statistician's Office, relating to international issues, would be reported back to the March meeting.

Action: Head of Assessment to review the report of patient outcome statistics. Consideration to be given to any further impact that can be derived from publication.

Action: Three previous actions for the National Statistician's Office, relating to international issues, to be reported back to the March meeting.

- 1.2 Mr Halliday provided an update on the Government Statistical Service (GSS) project to assess and report on the comparability of official statistics across the countries of the UK. A report of the results would be published within the next two weeks, prior to the publication of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) compendium of UK statistics.

Action: Secretariat to circulate the report of the results of the GSS comparability work and the ONS compendium of UK statistics once these documents had been published.

2. StatsUserNet: Two Years On [SA(COS)(14)02]

- 2.1 Mr Beerten and Mr Virdee introduced a paper which provided the Committee with an update on the Royal Statistical Society's (RSS) web-based user engagement project, StatsUserNet. The following comments were made in the discussion.
- i. StatsUserNet had been launched two years ago and, since then, had seen a steady increase in usage. Among its benefits were that it enabled users to engage with each other as well as with producers; this sometimes meant users could answer their own questions. It also allowed particular user communities to more effectively coordinate and consolidate their views.
 - ii. The conceptual model of producers and users could be perceived as an 'us and them' model and there could be value in further consideration of the implications of this.
 - iii. The Statistics Authority provided support for the website through funding for a secondment post in the RSS; a two year extension to this arrangement had been agreed. The vision was for the website to move towards a model of self-sustainability.
 - iv. The total size of the user community was not known, so it was not possible to say what proportion of the community were users of the website. Some user groups operated separate internet fora, and there was scope to bring these onto the StatsUserNet system.
 - v. It was suggested that there might be scope to improve the 'findability' of StatsUserNet, for example through promotional activity and/or improving its ranking in Google searches for related topics.
- 2.2 The Committee agreed that it was encouraging to see the level of use of the website achieved so far, by both producers and users. The meeting noted that the RSS was seeking funding for future web hosting costs.

3. Draft Monitoring Outline: The Auditing of Administrative Data Sources / Influence of Targets [SA(COS)(14)03]

- 3.1 Mr Stewart introduced outlines for proposed monitoring work on the auditing of administrative data sources and the influence of targets.
- 3.2 The Committee agreed that both pieces of work were important, timely and should proceed. It was suggested that the team should consult colleagues in the National Statistician's Office regarding current work on guidance in this area.
- 3.3 It was agreed that a public statement would be made to announce this work in due course.

Action: Head of Assessment to take forward this work, taking into consideration comments made by the Committee, and provide a draft public statement for approval by the COS Chair and Authority Chair. The Targets work could be considered as a subset of the Auditing work.

4. Draft Monitoring Outline: Uses of Health Statistics [SA(COS)(14)04]

- 4.1 Mr Stewart introduced an outline for a proposed monitoring review on the uses of health statistics.
- 4.2 The Committee discussed the implied resource demands of the proposed work in the context of the wider impact of monitoring and the need to ensure resources were available to respond to emerging issues. It was suggested that, if this work were to be taken forward, an initial approach could be to undertake a small scale pilot in one area.

Action: Head of Assessment to further consider this work and the suggestion of a small scale pilot.

5. Draft Monitoring Outline: European Peer Reviews [SA(COS)(14)05]

- 5.1 Mr Laux introduced an outline for a proposed monitoring review on European peer reviews.
- 5.2 The Committee agreed that the proposed work was not a high priority for a monitoring review, and should not be taken forward at this time.

6. Benefits generated by the Quality Improvement Fund in 2012/13, and ongoing projects funded in 2013/14 [SA(COS)(14)06]

- 6.1 The Committee considered a paper which reported on the benefits derived from the allocation of Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) during the 2012/13 financial year.
- 6.2 The meeting noted the 16 projects that had been funded during 2012/13 and the ongoing projects funded in 2013/14. GSS staff testified to the value of access to such modest levels of funding.

7. A perspective of the GSS [SA(COS)(14)07]

- 7.1 Ms Matheson introduced a paper which provided an update on the activities of the GSS. The meeting noted the update.

8. Progress with delivering the Authority Strategy [SA(COS)(14)08]

- 8.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a note which covered an overview of progress with strategic work for which the Committee for Official Statistics had been allocated oversight.
- 8.2 The meeting discussed the delivery confidence of the current deliverables; the distinction between having a process to deliver something and having sufficient impact in a given area; and the need for a fuller understanding of risk in relation to the strategic objectives.

Action: Secretariat to facilitate further consideration by the Authority Board of the deliverables, impact and risk in the 2014/15 cycle.

Action: Head of Assessment to consider the ways in which the regulatory function of the Authority supports the entire Authority strategy, as well as the specific workstreams related to scrutiny.

9. Issues Raised with Authority [SA(COS)(14)09]

9.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which provided an overview of issues raised with the Authority. The meeting noted the update.

10. Draft Monitoring Review: Monitoring Update January 2014 [SA(COS)(14)10]

10.1 The Committee considered a draft update on the implementation of recommendations made in monitoring work.

Action: Head of Assessment to provide a revised version of the update, for approval via correspondence.

11. Any other business

11.1 There was no other business. The Committee would meet again on Thursday 20 March 2014 at 10:30am.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Agenda

Thursday 23 January 2014
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 10:30 to 13:00

Chair: Professor David Rhind
Apologies: None

Part 1: Seminar (10:30 to 11:15)

1	Capability	SA(COS)(14)01
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Part 2 (11:15 to 13:00)

2	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 121113
3	StatsUserNet: Two Years On	SA(COS)(14)02 Mr Roeland Beerten and Mr Dev Virdee
4	Draft Monitoring Outlines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Auditing of Administrative Data Sources / Influence of Targets • Uses of Health Statistics • European Peer Reviews 	SA(COS)(14)03 SA(COS)(14)04 SA(COS)(14)05 Mr Richard Laux
5	Benefits generated by the Quality Improvement Fund in 2012/13, and ongoing projects funded in 2013/14	SA(COS)(14)06 Ms Tricia Dodd
6	A Perspective of the GSS	SA(COS)(14)07 Ms Jil Matheson
7	Progress with delivering the Authority Strategy	SA(COS)(14)08 Secretariat
8	Issues raised with Authority	SA(COS)(14)09 Secretariat
9	Draft Monitoring Review: Monitoring Update January 2014	SA(COS)(14)10 Mr Richard Laux
10	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Thursday 20 March 2014, London, 10:30 to 13:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(14)02

Web-based User Engagement: RSS StatsUserNet Update

Purpose

1. To update the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) on the Royal Statistical Society's (RSS) web-based user engagement project, [StatsUserNet](#). The last update was provided in February 2012 when StatsUserNet was formally launched.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
 - i. note and comment on the progress made with StatsUserNet since 2012;
 - ii. note and comment on areas identified for prioritising in 2014; and
 - iii. advise the RSS on the further development of StatsUserNet.

Discussion

3. StatsUserNet is the web-based platform which serves as the interface between users and producers of official statistics. It was set up following Recommendation 5 of the UK Statistics Authority Monitoring Report *Strengthening User Engagement*¹ which specified that such a web-based platform should be hosted by the Statistics User Forum at the RSS, and should be actively supported by bodies producing official statistics, coordinated by the National Statistician. Following this recommendation the Authority agreed to fund a secondment to the RSS to support the implementation and ongoing development of this platform.
4. COS was provided with an update in February 2012 [SA(COS)(12)01], when StatsUserNet went live with a small selection of Statistics User Forum groups testing the site. StatsUserNet has now been running for nearly two years and is well established as the forum for online user engagement in respect of official statistics, and this paper reports on progress made over this period.
5. StatsUserNet is structured around statistical "Communities" of interest, covering a wide range of topics relating to particular types of statistics and statistical issues. The site allows members of each community to hold online discussions, store and share documents through their library, blog on topics of interest, and promote events of interest to members. The home page highlights latest news from the communities (discussions, events, shared files), and provides the facility to make cross-cutting announcements. It also links to the latest official statistics publications. There are also communities that have been set up specifically for cross-cutting issues, such as formal GSS consultations, and classifications and harmonisation issues. StatsUserNet also has the functionality to provide a dedicated "website" for any user group, and the Health Statistics User Group is actively using this (the only one so far).
6. The four main aims of StatsUserNet are as follows.
 - i. Facilitate communication and knowledge sharing between users of official statistics.

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/strengthening-user-engagement--final-report.pdf>

- ii. Allow ongoing dialogue between users and producers.
 - iii. Reach a wide range of users.
 - iv. Identify cross-cutting issues and priorities.
7. During 2012, the following communities had been set up and were being used actively:
- i. 2011 Census;
 - ii. Business and Trade Statistics;
 - iii. Cancer Statistics User Group;
 - iv. Construction Industry Statistics;
 - v. Consultations;
 - vi. Financial and Economic Statistics User Group;
 - vii. Health Statistics User Group;
 - viii. Labour Market Statistics User Group;
 - ix. National Well Being;
 - x. Natural Capital;
 - xi. RPI/CPI User Group;
 - xii. Statistics User Forum;
 - xiii. Sub National Statistics Network; and
 - xiv. Water Statistics User Group.
8. By the end of 2012, these communities had about 1,500 members between them, although some individuals sign up for more than one community. During 2013, efforts have been directed towards creating communities and user groups for statistical topics that were less well covered. New communities created during 2013 were:
- i. Beyond 2011 Population Statistics;
 - ii. Classification and Harmonisation of Statistics;
 - iii. Creative Industries Statistics and Classifications;
 - iv. Defence Statistics;
 - v. Equality and Diversity Statistics;
 - vi. Household Income and Spending Statistics;
 - vii. Housing Statistics Network;
 - viii. Population Statistics;
 - ix. RSS Official Statistics Section Forum;
 - x. Voluntary Sector Use of Statistics; and
 - xi. Welfare and Benefits Statistics.
9. At the end of December 2013, memberships of individual StatsUserNet communities totalled about 2,900, which was made up of about 2,300 individuals, with some joining more than one community. About 600 of the 2,300 individuals are estimated to be members of the Government Statistical Service, demonstrating an increasing commitment from producers to engage with users. Indeed, many of the communities have been set up at the request of producers, who have initially acted as administrators until users gain the confidence to play a more proactive role. For example, StatsUserNet has been used extensively to support the recent consultation on Beyond 2011, and has hosted very active discussion on the various reviews of price statistics.
10. StatsUserNet communities can be either public or closed, and some have been established to enable closed discussions for a particular purpose, such as the Good Practice Reference Panel that has been providing guidance on improving statistical commentary.

Priorities for 2014

11. The work done during 2013 to broaden the coverage and reach of StatsUserNet will continue into 2014. Some topics that have active user groups are not yet covered by StatsUserNet communities, but are using other fora such as JISCMail lists, i.e. Crime and Justice Statistics Network and Transport Statistics. Some existing communities are also using other fora, such as the Housing Statistics Network. One priority during 2014 will be to create better links between StatsUserNet and these groups, and if it makes sense, encourage them to migrate towards StatsUserNet.
12. In addition, there has been little activity on some topics that should be the subject of more user engagement, such as Children, Education and Skills and Data Visualisation, and the reasons for this will be examined over coming months to see what further help may be needed.
13. Two particular groups established in 2013, the Voluntary Sector and the Equality and Diversity Statistics Users, are likely to need ongoing support for some time to reach their very wide ranging potential memberships, from national umbrella bodies to regional and local organisations, small local groups and individuals. Joint work with organisations such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Equality and Human Rights Commission will need to continue into 2014 to enable this to happen effectively.

Funding

12. StatsUserNet was set up with financial support from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and UK Statistics Authority's secondment to the RSS User Engagement Programme Manager post (currently Dev Virdee, preceded by James Tucker and Liam Murray). Responsibility for the User Engagement Manager secondment has now moved to the National Statistician, and the National Statistician has agreed to continue to support the post for another two years. Within the RSS, this work is supported by senior management, administrative and IT support, support for user groups and the secretariat for the Statistics User Forum, including providing some facilities for holding user-group meetings and conferences.
15. The website is maintained and hosted by web company Higher Logic, and the annual maintenance cost amounts to about £8,000 per year. ESRC funding finished in 2012, and the RSS has committed to cover the 2013 cost. However there is now a need to find future financial support for the ongoing maintenance, and discussions are taking place to identify alternative sources of funding.

**Dev Virdee, Royal Statistical Society (on secondment from UK Statistics Authority)
January 2014**

SA(COS)(14)03-05 – Draft Monitoring Outlines

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(14)03-05

Draft Monitoring Outlines

- ***The Auditing of Administrative Data Sources/ Influence of Targets***
- ***Uses of Health Statistics***
- ***European Peer Reviews***

A statement regarding this work will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

Review Outlines are will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/review-outlines/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(14)06

Benefits Generated by the Quality Improvement Fund 2012/13

Purpose

1. This paper reports on the benefits gained from the allocation of Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) money to 16 Government Statistical Service (GSS) projects during the 2012/13 financial year.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
 - i. note the benefits that have resulted from the projects funded by QIF in 2012/13 benefitting both those commissioning the projects and the wider GSS; and
 - ii. comment on the selection criteria that are in place for prioritising bids, as set out in **Annex A**.

Discussion

3. Since 2009 the Authority has made provision for a budget of £250,000 per annum to support GSS quality improvements. The Quality Centre within the ONS Strategy and Standards Directorate manages the fund on behalf of the Authority and decisions on the allocation of funding are made by the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC), chaired by the National Statistician. The agreed funding criteria are at Annex A.
4. During 2012/13, two bidding rounds were conducted resulting in a total of 16 successful bids, accounting for £249,467. Brief details of the projects can be found at **Annex B**.
5. Of the 16 projects, 14 completed by the end of March 2013—most fully achieved their objectives although two only partly achieved due to lack of resource or availability of data. Two further projects experienced complications: ‘Statistical Disclosure Control for cross-sector linked datasets’ Scottish Government (SG) experienced problems with data sharing arrangements; and “Methodology for improved estimates of construction and demolition, and industrial and commercial waste” Welsh Government (WG) was postponed by one year due to there being a limited supply of good quality data. These problems did not arise until the projects had commenced hence QIF monies had already been transferred. Both projects aim to conclude by end March 2014.
6. All 16 projects related to work that tackled generic GSS issues, and 13 of the projects were undertaken by the Methodology Advisory Service (MAS).
7. The benefits of the 2012/13 QIF projects include improvements in a range of methodologies, including:
 - i. the use of Bayesian methods for compiling population and migration estimates from administrative data;
 - ii. re-design of sampling weights;
 - iii. application of Statistical Disclosure Control at the micro level;
 - iv. the use of Bootstrapping in the development of Confidence Intervals;
 - v. mixed mode data collection; and
 - vi. the wider application for selective editing for a new Integrated Business Survey (IT) system.

8. Other benefits include:
 - i. delivery of GSS training in Time Series (X13-SEATS-ARIMA), Statistical Disclosure Control, Data Collection Methods, Sample Design and Estimation, Record Linkage and Data Visualisation to various GSS departments in London, York and Leeds;
 - ii. the development of templates to assist the GSS with the Quality Review process;
 - iii. a quality assessment of sampling frames for household surveys; and
 - iv. improvements to the quality and usability of ONS/GSS microdata for research.
9. The final reports for two of the projects (plus the two delayed projects) are still outstanding, and once received, all final reports will be disseminated via the GSS Web. However, individual project dissemination activities have already been underway, via meetings, seminars, discussions with key stakeholders and conferences. Information has also been fed into National Statistics Quality Reviews where required.
10. Seventeen projects are currently underway for the 2013/14 QIF round. The outcomes and benefits resulting from these projects will be reported in due course. Details of these projects are at **Annex C**.

Ceri Regan, Head of Quality Centre, ONS, 16 January 2014

List of Annexes

- Annex A** Current criteria for QIF bids (2014/15)
Annex B List of QIF projects 2012/13
Annex C Table illustrating ongoing projects funded in 2013/14

Annex A Current criteria for QIF bids (2014/15)

Introduction

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

Bidding Criteria

The bidding criteria for QIF funding was successfully reviewed in October 2013 by the Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC). Bids for 2014/15 funding should relate to ONE OR MORE of the following:

- UK Statistics Authority strategic priorities. These are Quality, Impact, Efficiency, Coverage, and Trustworthiness. (see <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statistics-authority-statement-of-strategy.pdf> for more details). Bids are particularly welcomed which address current and strategic quality challenges which include quality assurance and risk assessment;
- address Code compliance issues highlighted in UK Statistics Authority assessment reports; particularly around improving the commentary accompanying statistics, and improving producers' understanding and analysis of the use made of statistics;
- require expertise to be bought in from an external source.

Bids need to demonstrate their potential impact on the wider GSS. This includes details on how the methodologies/techniques/knowledge developed will be shared and how they could be implemented across other Departments.

Funding will not be awarded for work that is considered to be 'business as usual', or for the temporary promotion of staff (with the back-filling of posts), which is viewed as a departmental subsidy. Funding is not permissible for projects or programmes that have been allocated a specific budget.

The minimum threshold for bids is £5,000 and all bids should be for one-off projects with a clear scope, timeline, resource requirements and end date.

Annex B List of QIF projects 2012/13

More information and links to individual project reports will be made available to members of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) via the GSS website.

Bid and Bidding Dept	Bid Amount	Outcomes Achieved	Process for dissemination
1. Scoping study to develop a set of Economic Accounts for Northern Ireland (DFPNI)	£15,000	Partially – due to limited resource	Via meetings and seminars
2. Bayesian methods in compiling population and migration estimates from administration data sets General register Office (GRO)	£8,250	Partially – due to timescales with release of 2011 Census data in Scotland	Via seminar meetings and conferences.
3. Northern GSS Learning and Development Initiative (Kate Sweeney, Health and safety Executive (HSE))	£7,500	Fully	Training delivered in Leeds for Northern Departments which increased GSS networking
4. Scottish Population Surveys, Centralised Weighting Project (OCS)	£18,488	Fully	Via seminars on weighting to Scottish Gov Statisticians
5. Supporting the GSS to Implement the new quality review (ONS)	£24,600	Fully	Via GSS SPSC, HoPs, GSS Web and ONS website.
6. Reported Road Casualties – data accessibility project Department for Transport (DfT)	£5,920	Fully	Results have been disseminated internally, and dissemination via seminars and conferences are also planned.
7. Training in methods and new software for seasonal adjustment (ONS)	£7,150	Fully	Training delivered in London and York to improve GSS knowledge
8. Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) support for the GSS (ONS)	£27,972	Fully	Awaiting final report. Results have been disseminated via the GSS SDC Task Force. Training courses have been run to support GSS understanding.
9. Measurement of Fraud and Error – Improving our Estimator and Confidence Intervals. Department for Work and pensions (DWP)	£6,936	Fully	Via meetings, presentations and seminars.

10. London GSS Learning and Development Initiative (ONS)	£7,500	Fully	Training delivered in London for GSS staff
11. Quality assessment of two sampling frames for household surveys (ONS)	£29,955	Fully	Information has been shared with key stakeholders and has been fed into National Statistics Reviews where household surveys are undertaken. This will be disseminated more widely through a publication in the near future.
12. Improve quality and usability of ONS/GSS microdata outputs for research (ONS)	£38,000	Fully	Information has been shared via meetings and discussions with key stakeholders.
13. Taking Part and Active People survey integration using mixed mode interviewing(DCMS)	£10,000	Fully	Discussed at Methodology Advisory Committee. Also used as an example on GSS training courses where mixed mode is discussed.
14. Technical advice on standardising edit and imputation, outlier detection, grossing and estimation and macros and micro quality assurance procedures, including the use of score-based selective editing for a new Integrated Business Survey (IT) system (NISRA)	£5,000	Fully	Information has been shared via meetings and discussions with key stakeholders.

Delayed Projects

Bid and Bidding Dept	Bid Amount	Reasons
Statistical Disclosure Control for cross-sector linked datasets (SG)	£12,196	This project experienced delays in data sharing agreements being put in place between organisations. There were also IT difficulties around sharing of data.
Methodology for improved estimates of construction & demolition, and industrial & commercial waste (WG)	£25,000	Due to a limited supply of good quality survey data, it was not possible to carry out initial meaningful analysis. The project has been postponed for one year and will resume as soon as more reliable data becomes available. The project aims to complete in March 2014

Annex C Table illustrating ongoing projects funded in 2013/14

1. GSS Guidelines and training in methods and new software for seasonal adjustment.	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	£9,630
2. Development of training in the open source statistical package "R".	ONS	£15,296
3. Improving outputs on social housing lettings.	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	£12,750
4. UK Trade In Goods Statistics: Improving the statistical estimates for trade below the collection threshold for EU trade.	HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)	£16,130
5. Standard errors for regional Annual Business Survey data.	ONS	£8,150
6. Improving the use of administrative sources for Government Finance Statistics through establishment of an integrated, robust and comprehensive Quality Management System.	ONS	£35,331
7. Revision of the disclosure control guidance for birth and death statistics.	ONS	£17,638
8. Assessing the value of the new Workplace Zones to inform geography policy for economic statistics.	ONS	£40,000
9. Improving the quality of the dissemination of statistics using multimedia formats.	ONS	£10,000
10. Improving disclosure control for the Business Register and Employment Survey.	ONS	£7,500
11. Creative Industries Satellite Account development.	Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)	£20,000
12. Small Business Survey Methodology Improvement.	ONS	£14,959
13. Developing Small Area Estimates of Fuel Poverty in Scotland.	Scottish Government (SG)	£9,366
14. Methodological review of DfT Traffic Estimates.	Department for Transport (DfT)	£10,200
15. Technical support with carrying out a feasibility study and subsequent data imputation on the eSAY dataset to improve the quality and reliability of the annual statistical release.	Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD)	£6,660
16. Development of a set of Economic Accounts for NI.	Department of Finance and Personnel Northern Ireland (DFPNI)	£17,750
17. Assessment of Quality of Child Maintenance Service Administrative Data.	Department for Social Development in NI. (DSDNI)	£9,692

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(14)07

***A Perspective of the Government Statistical Service
November 2013 – January 2014***

Purpose

1. This paper is the first in a new series of reports to the Committee about Government Statistical Service (GSS) activities that replaces the two previous reports presented – one dealing with recent activities of the GSS and the other with cessations of, and public consultations about, official statistics. The new report will include a mixture of both strategic and operational issues. It is intended to help the Committee to decide which issues are worthy of an in-depth examination, whether in seminar format or a substantial paper.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee are invited to note the paper and provide comments on the new format and working title.

Discussion*2014 Priorities for the Good Practice Team*

3. The Good Practice Team (GPT) has recently taken the opportunity to review its priorities, following some significant changes in the team's membership. Following agreement with Andrew Dilnot and Jil Matheson, the GPT will focus on the following areas over the next 12 months:
 - i. Presentation and dissemination. Good progress has been made on statistical commentary and the focus is now on embedding self-sustaining mechanisms for improving commentary. GPT will also begin new work on related areas such as data visualisation, use of social media, working with gov.uk and data.gov.uk websites.
 - ii. User engagement. This continues to be a priority for GPT. The focus will be on identifying and communicating the benefits of user engagement and developing networks to sustain improvements in this area.
 - iii. Quality. GPT is keen to work with Office for National Statistics (ONS)'s Quality Centre to determine how the good practice approach could be applied to developing quality across the GSS.
4. The GPT has continued to progress a number of good practice initiatives, including running a peer review group on commentary, establishing a health and social care user panel and advising on how to communicate uncertainty. This is in addition to their regular work of reviewing statistical releases and providing workshops on commentary and user engagement. The GPT would be happy to provide the Committee with more detail on its initiatives to achieve their priorities.

Improving Statistical Capability

5. The GSS Strategy to 2020 sets out a vision - 'Statistics produced by a collaborative community, used in decision making and debate'. GSS people are at the heart of meeting this goal. It is essential that they have the skills, experience and opportunity to

work together, with others, to achieve the vision and develop their careers. Users are also central to this, and the GSS has a responsibility to work with users to develop widespread statistical thinking and understanding.

6. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) are scoping a project 'Improving Statistical Capability' to address the people issues that underpin the GSS and Authority strategies. Some of our ambitions in this work are:
 - i. to be better recognised, and valued, inside and outside of government, as an essential part of the debate and decision making process, and a key contributor to all information, data and analytical developments, including the move to 'data science';
 - ii. to be an employer of choice for graduates with statistical, analytical and data management skills, facilitating movement and offering varied and fulfilling careers with the prospect of advancement;
 - iii. to identify, articulate and encourage development of the skills needed now and for the future, so that talents are recognised, developed and rewarded;
 - iv. to recruit, develop, manage and motivate our people to enhance and expand their skills to meet these needs, and to get the most out of their careers; and
 - v. to maximise the impact of official statistics by working with users to improve statistical thinking and understanding.

A Committee for Official Statistics (COS) workshop is planned for 20 January before the main meeting of the Committee to discuss the high level plans for this work.

7. NSO continues to lead the recruitment of new graduates to the GSS. The recent Fast Stream and Statistical Officer recruitment exercises were very successful, although demand for new statistical recruits continues to outstrip supply. The NSO is considering how best to meet the demand for new recruits from departments. The current staffing numbers for the Government Statistician Group (GSG) are in **Annexes A to C**.

Reform of Regulation 223 - The European Statistical Law

8. The European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) in the House of Commons called for a debate in the UK Parliament on the reform of the European Statistical Law (Regulation 223). This was originally scheduled in October but has been rescheduled for 20 January 2014. This is because, although negotiations had stalled, the Presidency is now likely to try to seal a deal before the shutdown for European Parliament elections. The debate will focus on subsidiary issues, the main concern of the ESC. The hope is that Parliament will be satisfied with the gains made in negotiations, which are felt to meet our objectives. The next step in negotiations in Brussels will be for the Greek Presidency to come up with proposals to unlock the current impasse, which mainly relates to disagreement on the role and accountability of Eurostat.

Comparability Assessments

9. The Committee is aware (see SA(COS)(13)18 and SA(COS)(13)53) of the investigation commissioned by the National Statistician in her role as Chair of the Inter Administration Committee into the measurement of geographical comparability. Each GSS Theme Leader was asked to create a list of 'headline statistics' with 5 to 15 indicators. Theme Leaders were encouraged to engage with users in order to identify these 'headline statistics'. For these headline statistics, each Theme Leader has undertaken an assessment of cross-nation comparability based upon what is known about the uses made of them. The output from the assessment is one of three markings - fully comparable, partially comparable or not comparable.

10. At the meeting of the GSS Inter Administration Committee (IAC) on 11 December 2013, it was agreed to publish a report of this work in late January 2014 in advance of the first two themes of ONS' Compendium. The report would be aimed at users, include the comparability assessments completed and invite feedback. The methodology that underpins the comparability assessment will be published at the same time in a new guidance document for statisticians.
11. The ONS compendium pulls together comparable statistics for the 4 nations of the UK into four themes - The Economy, Population and Migration, Social Indicators and The Environment. It includes headline comparisons, some detailed commentary for key statistics and a data catalogue with links to the data sources.
12. IAC also agreed the approach to further comparability assessments. It decided to commission Theme Leaders to arrange for these assessments to appear in relevant publications and invite feedback on their usefulness.
13. The National Statistician's Guidance on 'Quality, Methods and Harmonisation' contains a short section on comparability. IAC agreed that this section should be revised to highlight the importance of comparability assessments to users and to encourage their inclusion in publications. This review will be overseen by the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards

Data Protection legislation

14. Data protection legislation is made up of an EU Directive establishing principles, and national legislation delivering the detail within the limits set by the Directive. The Commission believes implementation of the Directive has been imperfect across member states; and that the Directive is out of date, especially since the advent of the internet and social media. The Commission has proposed replacing the Directive and the national legislation with a General Data Protection Regulation. Regulations have direct effect in all member states.
15. The General Data Protection Regulation proposal has political agreement. Technical drafting issues remain. These should be resolved in negotiations within, and then between, the Council and the European Parliament. Negotiations are intended to complete before May 2014 and the election of a new European Parliament and the appointment of a new Commission. If agreement is reached, the Regulation will in effect replace national data protection laws in all domains other than policing and criminal justice. Therefore the current legislative framework for processing personal data for the purposes of statistics, history and research will be replaced after a transition period of no more than three years.

Revision to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

16. The 'Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics' were developed by the UN Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in 1992 and fully adopted by the UN in 1994. On 24 July 2013, the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) endorsed the 'Principles' as still very relevant and put forward a revised pre-ambule to reflect the advice on the interpretation of the 'Principles' under current political and social circumstances. ECOSOC has also recommended that the UN General Assembly be invited to endorse the 'Principles', on which the UK 'Code of Practice for Official Statistics' is also based. The UK will co-sponsor this motion.

EU burdens on business

17. All Government departments have been asked to take a fresh look at EU rules, regulations and practices (both existing legislation and proposals for new legislation) in their areas which create barriers to business competitiveness and make practical suggestions for tackling them. A 'business-led' task force asked for input from departments in two key respects: 1) to contribute fresh suggestions for reform; 2) to rapidly analyse submissions from businesses. ONS responded to this request following a consultation with GSS Heads of Profession. The 'Intrastat Regulation' (measuring intra-EU trade flows) was identified as a regulation which does have a significant impact on UK businesses.

Cuts and Consultations

18. Since the last report to the Committee on 12 November 2013, there has been five notifications of a cessation to the National Statistician and one change of scope to an output.
- i. In autumn 2013, Department for Education ceased publishing the School Capacity Statistical First Release.
 - ii. The Department of Work and Pensions has ceased one publication and is in the process of ceasing another:
 - Get Britain Working Statistics were ceased in August 2013
 - Jobcentre Plus Activity Statistics about claimants who have been identified as potentially impacted by the benefit cap will cease in February 2014.
 - iii. The Health and Social Care Information Centre is proposing to change the scope of NHS Immunisation Statistics. Following user consultation and a review of the publication, it is proposed to cease the collection and replace with a new adolescent vaccine collection.
 - iv. Scottish Government ceased to publish the Affordable Housing Securing Planning Consent Survey in April 2013 as it is not deemed to be of great use and is not significant at the strategic level.
19. More details on each of the cessations can be found at **Annex D**.
20. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) has identified three new statistical consultations since the last update to the Committee, two of which are notable:
- i. ONS is consulting on proposals from the Review of Public Sector Finance Statistics.
 - ii. Welsh Government is consulting on proposals concerning the publication of their portfolio of official statistics.
21. More details on each of the consultations can be found at **Annex E**.

National Statistician's Office, 16 January 2014

List of Annexes

- Annex A Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department**
- Annex B Government Statistician Group by grade**
- Annex C Government Statistician Group by Region**
- Annex D This table summarises cuts to official statistics that have been notified to the National Statistician since the last update was provided in November 2013.**
- Annex E Consultations about Cessation and Changes of Production of Statistics by GSS: 08/01/2014**

Annex A Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department

Department	May 2013		July 2013		August 2013		October 2013		January 2014	
	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)
BIS	3	55	3	56	3	59	4	59	4	60
DCLG	2	50	2	53	2	53	2	55	2	56
DECC	1	28	1	28	1	28	1	28	1	27
DEFRA	2	27	2	28	2	28	2	29	2	30
DfE	2	126	2	126	2	126	1	128	1	128
DfID	1	39	1	39	1	40	1	39	1	38
DfT	2	45	2	45	2	43	2	44	2	46
DH	1	51	2	54	2	50	2	52	2	53
NHSIC	1	91	1	92	1	92	1	92	1	92
DWP	3	171	3	176	3	175	3	181	3	184
HMRC	3	139	3	141	3	141	3	141	3	142
HO	2	25	2	25	2	25	2	25	2	27
MoD	1	65	1	68	1	69	1	73	1	77
MoJ	1	77	1	77	1	79	1	82	1	84
UKSA/ONS	19	132	20	138	20	140	19	143	18	142
SG	1	191	1	159	1	159	1	159	1	159
OTHERS	3	172	2	206	4	203	4	204	5	208
Sub-totals	48	1484	49	1511	51	1510	50	1534	50	1553
Totals	1532		1560		1561		1584		1603	

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

Annex B Government Statistician Group by grade

	May 2013	July 2013	August 2013	October 2013	January 2014
Statistical Officer Grades	828	848	848	863	876
Fast Stream	134	136	136	142	147
Grade 6 & 7	522	527	526	530	532
SCS1 (Deputy Directors)	40	41	42	41	41
Directors and above	8	8	9	9	8
Total	1532	1560	1561	1584	1603
Values are rounded to nearest whole number (FTE basis)					

Annex C Government Statistician Group by Region

GSG by Area	North	Wales/West	London/SE	Scotland	Other	Total
Statistical Officer Grades	234	125	376	133	8	876
Fast Stream	23	21	82	17	3	147
Grades 6 & 7	90	81	287	61	12	532
SCS1 (Deputy Directors)	5	13	20	2	1	41
Directors and above	2	5	1	0	0	8
Total	354	245	767	213	24	1603

Annex D This table summarises cuts to official statistics that have been notified to the National Statistician since the last update was provided in November 2013.

Details	Description of statistics	Reasons for cessation or reduction	Details of consultation/ impact on users	Cost/benefits assessment	Status
School Capacity Statistical First Release Autumn 2013	This release provides information on the numbers of primary and secondary school places, unfilled school places and pupils in excess of school capacity, together with pupil number forecasts. Data are provided at national and local authority (LA) level in the main body of the SFR and at school and district level in the underlying data.	The underlying data are used to calculate the allocations of capital funding provided to Local Authorities for the provision of new school places, and the process does not fit well with the SFR process. Ministers want to see the underlying data to explore options for funding, and have a say about when allocations are announced; hence the proposal to stop producing the data in a SFR. As we now publish the underlying data to a granular level (planning areas within local authorities) alongside the allocations, users can replicate analysis at whichever level they wish, meaning the SFR is no longer needed.	Main users are Local Authorities, who will still have access to the information – just not via a SFR. Minimal impact, the data will be available for users, and we will produce national and local authority level figures for consistency with previous years.	Marginal savings from not producing the SFR itself.	Confirmed – Minister content to cease publication of SFR.
NHS Immunisation Statistics – CHANGE TO THE SCOPE OF THE OUTPUT	NHS Immunisation Statistics is an annual National Statistics report which presents immunisation statistics for England. The bulk of the report focuses on routine childhood vaccinations as measured at 1, 2 and 5 years. In total there are 24 tables in the report.	To not report on three tables in the current publication. These are Tables 6, 13 and 13a which cover the number of persons receiving BCG vaccinations and the number of reinforcing doses of diphtheria, tetanus and polio given to school leavers. It is anticipated that in future more useful data on these vaccinations can be reported. The data for Tables 6, 13 and 13a are collected on the KC50 return by the HSCIC. The quality of these data has not been good for a number of years and many Trusts have not been able to supply all the data required. The data collected in the past on the diphtheria, tetanus and polio vaccine did not enable a measure of population coverage that was fit for purpose. Many Trusts have not been able to supply data on the eligible population for BCG and the quality of the data which has been supplied has been mixed. The data quality issues associated with this	The HSCIC and DH agreed not to collect or publish the data for the 2012-13 year and instead the HSCIC undertook a review of the KC50 data collection and reporting. Data users and suppliers were invited to take part in the review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data suppliers from all Trusts providing immunisation services were contacted directly and invited to participate in the review. Those who expressed interest were asked to complete a questionnaire which included questions on how easy it was to supply the data requested on the KC50, any issues/problems there were with data supply and the accuracy of the data they currently supplied through the KC50 return. Data suppliers were also asked about their use of the KC50 data. A notice was placed on the publication webpage inviting users to participate in the 		Confirmed

		<p>collection – in particular the additional work and costs involved in querying submissions, data checking and validation, resubmission and reprocessing of the figures – have increased the burden on the NHS. The HSCIC and DH agreed not to collect or publish the data for the 2012-13 year and instead the HSCIC undertook a review of the KC50 data collection and reporting.</p>	<p>Review and known users were contacted directly. Those who expressed interest were asked to complete a questionnaire which asked how they used the information currently published from the KC50 and how useful it was. They were also asked about their immunisation information needs more generally.</p> <p>The response to this exercise was fairly poor with only 5 responses received.</p> <p>The findings from the review, which also reported on issues identified by the HSCIC through running the collection, were fed back to a meeting of key stakeholders, including the Department of Health, the Health Protection Agency (now part of Public Health England (PHE)) and a representative from Area Teams. The main findings were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data collected by the KC50 did not meet users' information needs. Some respondents specifically said they would like data measuring the immunisation coverage of the population at specific ages which has not been possible with the KC50 collection. • A number of issues with data collection were identified, including issues around the availability and accuracy of data on eligible populations. <p>PHE and DH have now reviewed data collection on teenage vaccination in light of the KC50 Review and changes in the vaccination schedule. They propose to cease the KC50 collection and to replace it with a new adolescent vaccine collection. The new collection will combine coverage data on Td/IPV and MMR (previously collected through the KC50), with HPV vaccination data (currently collected through a separate return) as well as new data required on the MenC booster following changes to the vaccination schedule. BCG data for under 1's which was previously collected through the KC50, would be moved to the COVER collection and BCG data on over 1's (for which there were on-going data supply and quality issues) would cease to be collected.</p>		
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<p>Get Britain Working official statistics</p> <p>21 August 2013</p>	<p>These statistics contain details of starts on work experience, sector-based work academies and New Enterprise Allowance. Series covered Jan 11-Aug 13.</p>	<p>Get Britain Working has ended.</p>	<p>Final publication gave termination date for Get Britain Working scheme. Users consulted about replacement publications e.g. one 'pre-work programme' publication vs. separate publications. NEA statistics to be published more frequently at users' request.</p> <p>New Enterprise Allowance and Youth Contract statistics to be published instead, so information will still be available. NEA statistics to be published ore frequently.</p>	<p>Savings reinvested, as alternative publications will be produced (one quarterly NEA publication; and a Youth Contract publication (still in development)).</p>	<p>Confirmed</p>
<p>Jobcentre Plus activity regarding claimants who have been identified as potentially impacted by the benefit cap</p> <p>February 2014</p>	<p>Jobcentre Plus collates engagement activity regarding claimants who have been identified as potentially impacted by the benefit cap. The publication has ran monthly from July to December 2013 (during the implementation of the benefit cap) and includes cumulative totals for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The number of claimants identified as potentially affected by the benefit cap accepting employment support; The number of claimants identified as potentially affected by the benefit cap participating in employment support; and The number of claimants identified as potentially affected by the benefit cap moving into work. <p>The monthly publication also includes a full back series on these cumulative measures since April 2012 which is when Jobcentre Plus began targeting extra support to claimants potentially affected by the benefit cap.</p>	<p>Since April 2012 Jobcentre Plus has been supporting claimants potentially affected by the benefit cap. This support has continued during the implementation of the cap with those who have actually been affected. All appropriate households identified were capped by the end of September 2013.</p> <p>These statistics are based on all claimants potentially affected by the cap. As the benefit cap has been implemented these statistics will begin to include both claimants who actually have been capped and those who have not because of changes to their circumstances. For this reason December should be the last statistical release of this type, and from February 2014 we will be publishing more detailed Official Statistics showing benefit cap off flows by reason. One of these reasons is "Working Tax Credit exemption" as a proxy for movements into work within the household. These new statistics will focus on those households impacted by the cap, rather than those claimants potentially affected.</p>	<p>Users consulted via the gov.uk website:</p> <p>We have developed and plan to publish more detailed official statistics in February 2014 on the number of households leaving the benefit cap (off-flows from the cap) by reason. The list of reasons will cover both newly applicable exemptions (such as Working Tax Credit), and other reasons (such as changes to benefit awards). These statistics will not explicitly show those moving "into work" but off-flows due to the Working Tax Credit exemption will form a good indicator of this.</p> <p>The current statistical release that we wish to cease is based on all claimants potentially affected by the cap. As the benefit cap has been implemented these statistics will begin to include both claimants who actually have been capped and those who have not because of changes to their circumstances. For this reason the more detailed Official Statistics showing benefit cap off flows by reason should be more useful and provide greater information for users. These new statistics will focus on those households impacted by the cap, rather than those claimants potentially affected.</p>	<p>N/A – the more detailed official statistics were already underway and being developed.</p>	<p>Confirmed</p>

Annex E Consultations

This table summarises the consultations that have been notified to the National Statistician in the period 18 September 2013 to 13 January 2014 or have been discovered by the National Statistician's Office undertaking periodic trawls of departmental websites.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION	DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION	CONSULTATION END DATE AND RESPONSES
<p>Consultation on proposals from the Review of Public Sector Finance Statistics</p> <p>Department: Office for National Statistics</p> <p>Opening Date: 17 Dec 2013</p>	<p>ONS has reviewed the Public Sector Finance (PSF) Statistics to take forward and implement the recommendations from the UK Statistics Authority's report on the Asset Purchase Facility of June 2014.</p> <p>The Review of Public Sector Finance Statistics has focused on two key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving the presentation of the statistics to ensure they are well presented and easily understood; - reviewing the methodology and guidance which underpins the "ex-measures" of Public Sector Net Debt and Borrowing which were developed in response to the financial crisis to ensure they remain robust, statistically coherent and future-proofed. <p>ONS has now reached preliminary conclusions from this process and is consulting users on the outcome from this work.</p>	<p>Closing Date: 28 January 2014</p>
<p>Community Life Survey: Development of content and methodology for future survey years</p> <p>Department: Cabinet Office</p>	<p>The Cabinet Office invite views on the proposed future approach for the Community Life Survey</p> <p>The Community Life Survey was commissioned by the Cabinet Office in summer 2012 and aims to track the latest trends and developments across areas that are key to encouraging social action and empowering communities. It provides robust and nationally representative Official Statistics to inform and direct policy and underpin further research and debate on building stronger communities. The 2012-13 survey was delivered by TNS BMRB and involved approximately 6,600 face to face interviews of adults in England throughout the period August 2012 – April 2013.</p>	<p>Closing Date: 14 February 2014</p>

<p>Proposals concerning the publication of official statistics</p> <p>Department: Welsh Government</p> <p>Opening Date: 9 December 2013</p>	<p>This consultation document highlights our priorities for the years ahead, building on the Evidence Plan published in May 2013.</p> <p>It highlights areas where we will make changes in response to the changing environment by making more use of electronic dissemination, avoiding duplication, working collaboratively across organisational boundaries and reducing work that is of lower value.</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to read this document. As ever, your feedback is important in helping us inform our decisions so please let us know what you think about our proposals.</p>	<p>Closing Date: 3 March 2014</p>
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SA(COS)(14)08 – Progress with delivering the Authority Strategy

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(14)08

Progress with delivering the Authority Strategy

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The Authority Strategy 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>

SA(COS)(14)09 – Issues raised with Authority

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(14)09

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>

SA(COS)(14)10 – Draft Monitoring Review: Monitoring Update January 2014

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(14)10

Draft Monitoring Review: Monitoring Update January 2014

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/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/index.html>