

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Committee for Official Statistics

Draft Minutes

**Meeting of Thursday 29 May 2014
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

Present

Members

Professor David Rhind (Chair)
Dame Colette Bowe
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 Ian Wood (for item 2)
Ms Pam Davies
Mr Sandy Stewart
Ms Pat MacLeod (for item 3)
Mr Roo Reynolds (Government Data Service, for item 4)
Ms Sam Hall (Office for National Statistics, for item 4)
Mr Richard Laux

Apologies

Mr Partha Dasgupta

Declarations of Interest

None

1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr Dasgupta. The minutes of the previous meeting of 20 March 2014 were agreed. Progress with actions was reviewed.
- 1.2 In noting the deferral of action 2, regarding a list of the major UK official statistics with information on why each was collected, action 3, regarding the Committee's suggestions about the UK's position in the European Statistical Service (ESS), and action 8, regarding information about the proposed European Data Protection regulation, the Chair requested that these actions be completed without delay, and that future actions should include dates for completion. The Chair also requested that, to enhance accountability, all papers should be signed with the author's name.

Action: Secretariat to ensure future actions include dates for completion as appropriate. All future papers to be signed with the author's name.

Action: Ms Davies to provide information on the proposed European Data Protection regulation, to be circulated via correspondence after the meeting.

- 1.3 The meeting considered the role of the National Statistician's Office (NSO) as the main conduit through which issues related to the Government Statistical Service (GSS) currently flowed. Having an up-to-date and coherent view across the GSS was an important part of the Authority's activity.
- 1.4 The meeting heard that the Monitoring and Assessment team was awaiting final inputs for the 'Monitoring Update' report, and intended to publish this in June. It was suggested that this report might be the last in the series in this particular format.

2. Statistical Futures and Capability [SA(COS)(14)21]

- 2.1 Mr Wood gave a presentation on the Statistics Futures and Capability projects. He outlined the strategic approach and requested comments and a steer from the Committee on potential risks and opportunities.
- 2.2 The following comments were made in the discussion.
 - i. It was important to collate information about the costs of the various activities of the GSS. This information would need to be provided by departments. Explaining the benefits that will come from collation of this information could help secure cooperation from departments in providing estimates.
 - ii. The dichotomous model of 'producers' versus 'users' sometimes served a useful purpose; but overemphasis of this distinction risked underplaying the overlap of these categories. There was perhaps an opportunity for the Statistics Futures project to explore this overlap.
 - iii. The 'blueprint', a proposed output from the Statistics Futures project – built upon a careful study of future user needs for statistics - could cover resources, activities, methods, efficiency, structure and governance. A prioritisation process could also be included.
 - iv. The Statistics Futures project should be managed as formal project, appropriately funded with good project governance. The project should report to the Authority Board.
 - v. Economic statistics needed to feature centrally in both projects.

- vi. In the context of thinking about increased professionalisation of the GSS, one important difference was that the formal outputs of the statistical service were now regulated via assessment against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
- vii. Greater movement of people in and out of the GSS, to and from other professions, at all career levels, was likely to strengthen capability in the GSS.
- viii. It was suggested that insights could be gained from conducting qualitative research about the experiences, perspectives and trajectories of GSS staff, and also those who used to be in the GSS but have since moved into other areas.

Action: Mr Wood to take forward the Statistics Futures and Capability projects in light of the comments made by members of COS, reporting formally to the Authority Board and keeping COS informed of progress as appropriate.

- 2.3 It was agreed that it would be useful to establish some baseline information about the condition of the GSS. Ms Davies suggested that the information currently provided to the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) about staff numbers and changes to statistical outputs could be significantly improved. It was agreed that this information would be reviewed prior to the next meeting.

Action: Ms Davies to review the information provided to COS about staff numbers and changes to statistical outputs, and provide improved information to the next meeting.

3. Monitoring Review: Administrative Data and Targets [SA(COS)(14)22]

- 3.1 Mr Humpherson provided an overview of the emerging findings from the Monitoring and Assessment team's Administrative Data Work Programme.
- 3.2 The following comments were made in the discussion.
- i. Use of administrative data to produce official statistics was not a new phenomenon, but the understanding of uncertainty of data was not as well developed as that of survey data. The language and tools to understand and describe uncertainty with administrative data were not as fully developed.
 - ii. An important consideration, which could be included in the proposed 'maturity matrix', was the human motivational aspects of administrative systems. Statisticians should ask, who collects the data? Why? Is there anything inherent in its use that could lead us to have concerns?
 - iii. Audit of administrative data was one important part of a wider quality assurance framework.
 - iv. The proposed maturity matrix should be applied in a risk-based context. Different levels of assurance would be necessary in different situations. The maturity matrix would benefit from further explanation in this regard.
 - v. As well as providing guidance to statisticians, it would also be of benefit to provide assistance to non-statisticians to help them to make sense of administrative data.
- 3.3 The meeting heard that the Monitoring and Assessment team would draft a report for consideration at the July meeting of COS. This would then be published as an 'exposure draft' for comment, before publication of a final report in the autumn.

4. The National Statistics Publication Hub: Demonstration [SA(COS)(14)24]

- 4.1 Ms Davies provided an update on progress with developing a new National Statistics Publication Hub. Mr Reynolds and Ms Hall provided the Committee with a demonstration of the prototype replacement Publication Hub.
- 4.2 It was confirmed that the new Publication Hub would be an index of statistics, rather than a repository, as was the case with the existing Publication Hub. Full training would be provided to those who required it, prior to the new system being adopted. Subject to approval at the Authority Board, it was intended that the new system would be launched in August. The Committee agreed that it would be preferable to take extra time if needed, in order to ensure that the launch went smoothly.
- 4.3 The Committee heard that there were decommissioning costs associated with shutting down the old Publication Hub. It was agreed that a note on what these costs comprised would be circulated via correspondence.

Action: Ms Davies to provide a note on what the decommissioning costs for the old Publication Hub comprised, for circulation via correspondence.

- 4.4 It was suggested that the new Publication Hub could provide direct links to the relevant Assessment Report for each set of National Statistics announced on the Hub. The Committee heard that the Government Digital Service would include this feature free of charge, should the Authority agree that it would like to adopt this policy.
- 4.5 The final decision on whether to decommission the old Publication Hub and move to the new system would be made by the Authority Board. However on the evidence available COS was impressed by the new capabilities and commended it to the Board.

5. Issues Raised with Authority [SA(COS)(14)23]

- 5.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which provided an overview to the Committee of recent issues raised with the Authority.
- 5.2 The meeting considered a draft letter from the Chair of the Authority regarding the Authority's position in relation to the sharing of health data for research purposes. The meeting suggested some amendments to the draft, which the Chair would consider.
- 5.3 It was agreed that the draft report of the GSS's project regarding communicating uncertainty would be circulated.

Action: Ms Davies to provide the draft report of the GSS's project regarding communicating uncertainty, for circulation via correspondence.

6. Experimental Statistics [SA(COS)(14)25]

- 6.1 Mr Laux introduced a paper on the Authority's policy on Experimental Statistics. Experimental Statistics was a label applied to new official statistics that were undergoing evaluation. Under the current arrangements, statistics labelled as Experimental Statistics were being assessed as compliant with the Code of Practice, and therefore labelled as National Statistics. This led to the seemingly counterintuitive situation where statistics were both National Statistics and Experimental Statistics at the same time.

- 6.2 It was suggested that it was wrong that statistics labelled as Experimental could be assessed as compliant with the Code, as the Experimental label was evidence that the producer was unsure about whether the quality of the statistics met users' needs. The meeting considered whether the Code as currently written would permit statistics to be National Statistics in these circumstances.
- 6.3 The Committee agreed that the present situation whereby statistics could be both Experimental Statistics and National Statistics was not satisfactory and should be changed.
- 6.4 COS also considered how long the gestation period should be before Experimental Statistics were confirmed as 'mainstream' ones. Members recognised that this period might well vary for different statistics, but would wish to see a plan for the evaluation date and transition to 'normal status' announced when the Experimental Statistics were launched.

Action: Mr Laux to reconsider the policy on Experimental Statistics and provide a view on whether the Code of Practice as currently written would permit statistics to be National Statistics in cases where producers had not yet determined whether the statistics met users' needs, for consideration at the next meeting.

- 6.5 The meeting heard that the Experimental Statistics label had also sometimes been used incorrectly to mean that there were particular quality concerns about the statistics.

Action: Ms Davies to circulate the current GSS guidance on Experimental Statistics to the Committee via correspondence.

7. GSS Compliance with EU Legislation [SA(COS)(14)26]

- 7.1 Ms Davies provided an update on the UK's compliance with European Union (EU) statistical regulations.
- 7.2 The Committee discussed the costs of the UK's compliance with EU statistical regulations. It had been observed previously that there were areas where EU statistical regulations were not consistent with the UK's domestic statistical needs. An area where this seemed particularly the case was agricultural statistics. Ms Davies confirmed that these international issues would be discussed in a paper for the next meeting.
- 7.3 The Committee discussed how to communicate its strong views on the need to improve governance within the EU decision-making and advisory committees on statistics, as expressed at the 5 December 2013 seminar on the European Statistical System and the 3 March 2014 COS meeting. It was suggested that COS could provide its views to the Foreign Office, currently leading on the UK Government's review of the Balance of EU Competencies. The National Statistician proposed that COS could also write to the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board.

8. A Perspective of the Government Statistical Service [SA(COS)(14)27]

- 8.1 Ms Matheson introduced a paper on recent activities of the GSS, and cessations of, and public consultations about, official statistics.
- 8.2 It was agreed that a one-page summary note would be provided to the next meeting on the effect of cuts to official statistics over time.

Action: Ms Davies to provide a one-page summary note to the next meeting on the effect of cuts to official statistics over time.

9. Any other business

- 9.1 There was no other business. The Committee would meet again on Thursday 17 July 2014 at 10:30am.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Agenda

Thursday 29 May 2014
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 10:30 to 13:00

Chair: Professor David Rhind
Apologies: Mr Partha Dasgupta

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 200314
2	Statistics Futures and Capability	SA(COS)(14)21 Presentation Mr Ian Wood and Ms Pam Davies
3	Administrative Data Work Programme: - Audit of administrative data - Targets and official statistics	SA(COS)(14)22 Presentation Mr Ed Humpherson, Mr Sandy Stewart and Ms Pat MacLeod
4	Issues raised with the Authority	SA(COS)(14)23 Secretariat
5	Replacement for the Publication Hub: Demonstration	SA(COS)(14)24 Ms Pam Davies, Mr Roo Reynolds and Ms Sam Hall
6	Experimental statistics	SA(COS)(14)25 Mr Richard Laux
7	GSS compliance with EU legislation	SA(COS)(14)26 Ms Pam Davies
8	A Perspective of the Government Statistical Service	SA(COS)(14)27 Ms Jil Matheson
9	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Thursday 17 July 2014, London, 10:30 to 13:00

SA(COS)(14)23 – Issues raised with Authority

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(14)23

Issues raised with Authority

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

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

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS SA(COS)(14)24
Replacement of the Publication Hub

Purpose

1. Last year, it was agreed that the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and the Government Digital Service (GDS) should work together to develop a replacement of the release calendar functionality of the Publication Hub. Pam Davies, Sam Hall (Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Roo Reynolds (GDS) will provide a demonstration of the prototype replacement Publication Hub at the meeting.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) are invited to:
 - i. provide views on the prototype Publication Hub and any further areas which are critical to resolve before a go-live of the new system in addition to those set out below;
 - ii. agree in principle to recommend to the Authority Board that the new version of the Publication Hub is suitable for go-live once the issues set out below are resolved;
 - iii. agree to the proposed communication handling plan at paragraph 8; and
 - iv. note that the development of the replacement Publication Hub by GDS has been free of charge for ONS. However as noted previously there are decommissioning costs for the existing Publication Hub. The proposed way of handling these is set out paragraph 10.

Discussion

Progress update

3. The Authority Board approved the development of the replacement of the release calendar functionality on www.gov.uk last year following discussions at COS which included the consideration of other options which were not progressed due to the costs associated with them. This working partnership was cemented by principles agreed with GDS on how we work together.
4. Details of how the development fits with the principles are set out in **Annex A** in full, but the key areas of development are:
 - i. the front-page of www.gov.uk has already been altered to remove the implied link between policy-making and statistics;
 - ii. agreement has been reached to include text emphasizing the independence of the statistics at the top of the forthcoming releases page. This is currently being developed and if ready will be included in the demonstration to COS. The text currently reads, "This calendar of upcoming releases is maintained by the Government Statistical Service independently from government". However, this wording is likely to change. Views of COS members on wording would be welcome;
 - iii. each release page contains a full audit history of changes to dates of publication and reasons for these;
 - iv. the loading of the information onto the system is considerably simpler than the current Publication Hub; and
 - v. compared to the existing Publication Hub there are many more and easier to understand topics by which users can refine their searches.

5. There is only one outstanding technical issue which is currently being worked on which is the solution for ensuring that only statistics publications appear on the release calendar. The scale of the issue is currently being investigated and, if small, then resolution will be through targeted training and monitoring of the pages. If it is more widespread then a more technical solution may need to be deployed.
6. The new Publication Hub has been demonstrated to the Statistics Policy and Standards Committee (includes National Statistician and a range of Heads of Profession), the Good Practice Team and the Director of Analysis and Dissemination in ONS. All provided positive feedback on the work so far.

Launch date and steps between here and launch date

7. If the Committee for Official Statistics and Authority board are content with the developments then we propose launching the new calendar, once the work on ensuring the release calendar only contains entries signed off by the Head of Profession is complete. We think the launch date would likely be in August 2014 as alongside the technical work, we would wish to:
 - i. train users across the GSS in using gov.uk as some organisations will be wholly new to working on gov.uk ; and
 - ii. undertake further demonstrations and receive feedback from: Heads of Profession Steering Group on 19 June; the Good Practice Team's User Panel; and any further demonstrations that are required.

Communications plan

8. The communication strategy for this work has been discussed with Simon Crine and Ross Young. The recommendation is for a low key communication strategy focusing on the benefits to users of the change with two key communications:
 - i. an announcement on the existing Publication Hub which also sets out the benefits users will see. After the website has switched there will be an automatic redirect from the current Publication Hub to the gov.uk statistics page; and
 - ii. a letter from the Authority to the Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) informing him of the change and the benefits to users.

Financial considerations

9. As agreed, the development of the replacement Publication Hub by GDS has been free of charge and therefore the only charges would be decommissioning costs for the existing Publication Hub.
10. Our assessment of these decommissioning costs is being finalised, but our initial assessment is that the current Publication Hub costs approximately £300,000 per annum to maintain at present, so an end of August switchover to gov.uk would save £175,000 this financial year. The decommissioning cost for the existing system would be up to £179,000 and so a migration by end of August would be approximately cost neutral this year and would save £300,000 per annum ongoing. A later switchover would be likely to cost money this year but would also save money in future years. Cost estimates will be confirmed prior to the Authority Board.

Iain Bell, Chair of the GSS Presentation and Dissemination Committee, 23 May 2014

List of Annexes

Annex A Progress against key principles

Annex A Progress against key principles

Principle	Details
<p>In order to safeguard the perception of independence, the Authority should have control over the text that describes the Publication Hub, and also over the presentation of the link to the Hub from the gov.uk homepage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently early design does clearly move statistics away from department information on the front page of the site. This will be shown during the demonstration at COS. • There will be appropriate text at the top of the release calendar and also on landing pages to signal that the statistics are produced independently. The current wording is “This calendar of upcoming releases is maintained by the Government Statistical Service independently from government”. This is currently being built and if not in the demonstration on 29 May it will be shortly afterwards
<p>Any new Publication Hub should retain the use of the National Statistics quality mark to distinguish those statistics that had passed an assessment, alongside a description of the meaning of the quality mark.</p>	<p>The quality mark is included on the landing page for each statistical release.</p> <p>It is worth noting that the mark is already displayed alongside relevant statistical releases on gov.uk. Also in discussion about how to use this to educate lay users as to what the kite mark symbolises.</p> <p>The list of calendar entries will contain text to state whether each release is National Statistics or official statistics.</p> <p>Every landing page will have the appropriate kite mark.</p>
<p>The time of release of the statistics – e.g. 9.30am – should be visible on the Hub.</p>	<p>This is included in the design.</p>
<p>Entries in the Hub should also include appropriate metadata, particularly a link to the relevant Assessment Report.</p>	<p>The design also covers all meta-data currently available for each release on the Publication Hub. Release announcements provide the following information: what is being released, when, by whom, what theme the publication is linked to and whether the publication is a National or Official Statistic.</p> <p>There are more statistical topics (themes) for users to search by.</p>
<p>An evolutionary approach should be taken towards development of a new system.</p>	<p>Agreed, we are taking an Agile approach to delivery which includes designing a Minimum Viable Product on which there is potential to deliver further functionality.</p>
<p>The costs of the options should be fully set out, described and understood.</p>	<p>Costs and options submitted to COS previously – GDS solution was approved as most value for money option available. The main paper provides more details on decommissioning costs for the existing Publication Hub.</p>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(14)25

Experimental Statistics

Purpose

1. This paper is a response to the request made at the March 2014 meeting of the Assessment Committee to provide a paper to the next meeting of the Assessment Committee on the Authority's experimental statistics policy. In the light of the recommendations in this paper, it has been prepared for discussion by the Committee for Official Statistics.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee are invited to:
 - i. comment on the proposed small change to the Authority's published Statement (paragraph 5);
 - ii. note that Monitoring and Assessment will ensure that in future Assessment Reports will include a standard set of information about Experimental Statistics (ES) (paragraph 6);
 - iii. invite the National Statistician's Office (NSO) to remind Heads of Profession (HoPs) of their ongoing responsibilities relating to ES, and commission NSO to produce a complete list of ES and to publish this on Office for National Statistics' (ONS) website (paragraph 7); and
 - iv. invite NSO to produce an annual update on ES for the Committee (paragraph 8).

Background

3. The concept of Experimental Statistics is mentioned in the Code of Practice, as an example of ways in which producers can "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews or releasing statistical work in progress such as experimental statistics" (Principle 4 practice 5). Experimental Statistics (ES) are defined in the Code as "new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage".
4. All ES are official statistics. Some ES have been assessed and designated as National Statistics. Whilst this might appear counter-intuitive, the logic is rooted in the Code's focus on continuous improvement to meet users' needs – so ES are simply at an earlier stage of improvement than longer-established sets of statistics and accordingly users' views are particularly important in guiding their development.
5. The Authority's current approach to the assessment and designation of ES (as National Statistics) is set out in its Statement of February 2011 (see **Annex A**). The Statement itself might benefit from a small change in the light of experience. The penultimate sentence says that:

"It would seem natural for a producer body to cease to use the 'experimental statistics' label once the statistics had been unconditionally designated as National Statistics".

In practice the evaluation of the ES is likely to extend beyond the timescales typically associated with the implementation of Requirements: we suggest deleting the sentence.

6. Over 20 of our Assessment Reports (ARs) include statistical series that are described as ES. Whilst some of the ARs have required producers to take certain steps – such as improving the labelling of ES, publishing information about quality and reliability, and publishing plans to evaluate ESs including how users will be involved – there would seem to be scope for Monitoring and Assessment to adopt a more consistent approach to the assessment of ES, in line with the Statement, particularly relating to evaluation plans. We propose that all ARs that include ES should, in future, include the following information:
- i. when first published as ES;
 - ii. whether there are published plans to formally evaluate the ES;
 - iii. whether (and when) previously assessed and, if so, whether we made any Requirements about the ES status, and what the producer did in meeting such Requirements; and
 - iv. when the evaluation is scheduled to take place.
7. Because the reports have been produced over an extended period they are not a good source of information about the current ‘stock’ or characteristics of ES. Similarly, a paper showing ES produced by ONS was discussed at the ONS Board in June 2011 and the Assessment Committee in July 2011, but is now out-of-date. It would seem helpful for the NSO to remind Heads of Profession (HoP) of their responsibilities in relation to ES, and to compile and maintain a catalogue of ES, accessible via the relevant page on the ONS website¹. This data collection exercise could be part of the annual exercise to produce a list of National Statistics every year (section 18 of the Statistics Act) – noting that the published list purports to cover all official statistics and highlights those that are National Statistics. Such a catalogue should include the following elements:
- i. name;
 - ii. a short description of purpose/origin;
 - iii. date first published as ES;
 - iv. a link to the development plans in relation to the ES;
 - v. a short description of plans for the producers’ evaluation of the ES; and
 - vi. the date that the producer expects to consider putting them forward for assessment.
8. It would then seem appropriate for the Committee to review the list annually in order to assure itself that each ES is on course to be evaluated.

Richard Laux (Monitoring and Assessment team)
Pam Davies (National Statistician’s Office)
May 2014

List of Annexes

Annex A Authority Statement, 23 February 2011, *Assessment and Designation of Experimental Statistics*

¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/general-methodology/guide-to-experimental-statistics/index.html>

Annex A Authority Statement, 23 February 2011, Assessment and Designation of Experimental Statistics

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

To see this Document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statement---assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(14)26

Annual report on Government Statistical Service (GSS) Compliance with European Union Regulations

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update to the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) on the UK's compliance with European Union (EU) statistical regulations. This is the third annual report on this matter.

Recommendations

2. The Committee is invited to review the information and comment on any further action that may be necessary by the National Statistician's Office (NSO).

Discussion*Current UK compliance with EU regulations*

3. There are 290 different statistical data requirements in force and the UK is compliant with the overwhelming majority. All compliance issues are regularly monitored and managed by the GSS International Committee, the National Statistician, and for the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the newly formed ONS International Affairs Committee. Most departments are running 'green' in terms of compliance issues.
4. Potential future budget reductions in departments may be the greatest risk to compliance with existing regulations, especially where the needs for EU requirements are not consistent with national needs and as such are de-prioritised.
5. At the time of writing the UK currently has no EU Pilot cases¹. The previous pilot cases: i Regulation on the European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA) 1995 (Office for National Statistics, ONS); and ii. Regulation on 'Waste Statistics' (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) highlighted in last year's report, are now closed, as all outstanding data has been delivered.
6. The following three areas, where the UK is not compliant, are being actively managed and discussed with Eurostat:
 - i. Regulation on Road Freight Transport (Department for Transport) – The Eurostat Director-General wrote to the National Statistician about DfT's non-compliance on 28 November 2013. (This had also been the subject of the Eurostat DG's letter in 2011). Historically, DfT has only produced annual data, making for a late return of required quarterly data to Eurostat. DfT is working towards filling the backlog of outstanding data and has agreed a timetable of action with Eurostat. A new IT system and a full complement of staff in the Road Freight Statistics team is improving DfT's ability to comply fully. DfT's Head of Profession and a Policy

¹ These are official notifications between the Commission and Member States' Governments (the Cabinet Office in the UK). These set out the Commission's intention to launch official infraction proceedings against the Member State if a specified regulation is not fully adhered to within a set timeframe.

Director had a productive meeting with Eurostat in Luxembourg in March 2014. Eurostat is pleased with the progress made over the last five months.

- ii. Regulation on Harmonised Indices for Consumer Prices (Office for National Statistics) – likely to remain *arguably* non-compliant for a while as the requirement is for the UK to collect prices that reflect price movements over the entire month. ONS delivered its inventory to Eurostat in December 2013 which sets out the issues. There has been no response from Eurostat though it has set a compliance visit for July 2014. Due to the need to have a long time series to understand the impact of any change, and to fit in with the retendering of ONS's price collection contract, it will be 2016 at the earliest before any changes are completed.
- iii. Regulation on Community Statistics on Public Health and Safety at Work (Health and Safety Executive) – the UK Government's initiative to reduce burden on business is affecting the data requirement for 'days lost'. New methodology has been developed by HSE which will be sent to Eurostat by June 2014, as per the regulation, with the data. Eurostat will then need to approve the methodology. HSE has cleared this regulation with its Minister and will take full responsibility for any risks.

Reducing the risk of non-compliance

8. The following processes are helping the UK to manage compliance issues:

- i. Multi-site rolling programme of tailored training for GSS members on the European Statistical System (ESS), including negotiating tactics, cross-GSS coordination needs and planning considerations. At the time of writing 81 GSS staff, who are active in ESS working group meetings, have attended the training.
- ii. Quarterly monitoring of GSS compliance issues, with monthly monitoring undertaken for all requirements classified as 'amber' and above (e.g. National Accounts) – with reports to GSS International Committee (GSSIC), National Statistician, and the ONS International Affairs Committee (IAC).
- iii. Six-monthly monitoring of all GSS regulations – to help identify future problems and keep abreast of any derogations due to end that need action.
- iv. Letter from the National Statistician to GSS representatives attending ESS working group meetings – sets out the required steps and actions to ensure, among other things, that UK representatives are influencing and negotiating effectively. This will include 'clearing negotiating lines' with a relevant senior civil servant, having consulted with other relevant GSS business areas, including particularly the Devolved Administrations, and policy departments who may be affected by the outcome. Common lines are being developed by the GSSIC.
- v. Letter from the National Statistician to go to Permanent Secretaries and GSS Heads of Profession (and copied to Devolved Administrations) for all new requirements coming into law to reinforce the need to supply these data – letter being developed.
- vi. ONS IAC will maintain and manage an evolving portfolio of around a dozen big issues and discuss operational impact on the ONS. It will consider compliance reports on behalf of the ONS Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and escalate issues as necessary.

- vii. Reports by Eurostat to the European Statistical System (ESS) Directors Groups - this allows a cross check with the GSS exercise. The recent report to ESS Directors of Social Statistics (DSS) showed no major issues for the UK. The National Accounts report to ESS Directors of Macro Economic Statistics (DMES) showed some improvements with the UK moving up one category.

Future compliance issues

9. The European Statistical Programme 2013-2017 (ESP) sets out the framework in which Eurostat should consider new regulatory proposals and other policies and is linked to the EU2020 strategy.
10. The ESP is supported by Annual Work Programmes (AWPs). These set out likely regulatory proposals and may improve our understanding of future resource requirements. However, it is difficult to predict the extent and timing of the impacts and possible compliance problems with any regulation until it is finalised. Moreover, although EU funding may be available for implementing a regulation, the amount available will be unknown until a regulation is agreed. The UK faces an additional challenge in not having an automatic link between central government funding and EU statistical regulations, something which other Member States can rely on. Therefore unforeseen resource requirements within a budget period can be difficult to manage, especially in the current financing climate for government departments.
11. Last year it was reported to COS that the National Statistician's Office (NSO) surveyed draft regulations that have been considered at ESS Directors Group level at least - a reasonable proxy for those regulations likely to come into force within the next year or so - and asked departments to estimate some of the possible impacts. Over 40 such statistical regulations were identified and most seemed likely to have a minimal impact. Paper SA(COS)(13)21 highlighted some of the key issues.
12. The AWP 2015, and priority setting, was to be discussed by National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and Eurostat, at the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) meeting on 14-15 May 2014.
13. There is not yet clarity at European level about the following Regulatory proposals:
 - i. Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics (FRIBS) – aims to provide common tools for the production and compilation of business statistics (enhanced role of business registers, common definition of statistical units, exchange of confidential micro-data, common classifications and nomenclatures or harmonised treatment of statistical confidentiality). It will also define consistent data requirements and a common data quality framework which should allow linking the statistics collected through the regular collection of global business statistics – to develop an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
 - ii. Framework Regulation Integrating Social Statistics (FRISS) – aims to modernise social surveys through an integrated system of social surveys. Scope to include the main pillars: Labour Force Survey and EU SILC (Survey on Income and Living Conditions), and also the health requirements from EHIS (European Health Interview Survey), a time use survey, HBS (Household Budget Survey) and AES (Adult Education Survey). The regulation would refer to data sources and principles for statistics production. It would not include detailed variables or methodological issues that would be dealt with by delegated or implementing acts.

- iii. European Financial Benchmarks Regulation (EFBR) - sets out broad measures to improve the governance, transparency, and supervision of benchmarks and specifies more detailed provisions for interest rate benchmarks and commodity benchmarks - a recognition of the damage to market integrity from the LIBOR and Euribor scandals and investigations into commodity price manipulation.
14. There is also a lot of work currently underway in Member States (MSs) to deliver ESA 2010 requirements. ESA 2010 is to be implemented by all Member States by September 2014 alongside a new approach to submitting data via Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX). This is the new, agreed, international approach to be utilised by various international institutions, Eurostat, OECD, UN, etc. The UK will be implementing the new ESA 2010 concepts and methodology by September 2014. However, the UK, like most Member States, is seeking derogations covering specific parts of the Data Transmission Programme for a period beyond September 2014, the latest deadline being the end of 2018 to deliver all ESA 2010 concepts and methodology.
15. Developing FRIBS alongside ESA2010 will put considerable pressure on the UK. In addition, discontinuities resulting from ESA, and then FRIBS, in key economic statistics will require very careful handling. It is essential to fully understand the impact on key economic statistics before decisions are made on how to progress FRIBS. ONS IAC will keep a watchful eye on developments and escalate issues as necessary.

National Statistician's Office, 22 May 2014

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(14)27

A Perspective of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)
April 2014 – May 2014

5

Purpose

1. This paper is the third in a new series of reports to the Committee about 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.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee are invited to note the paper and provide comments.

Discussion*Improving Statistical Capability*

3. Improving statistical capability continues to be a high priority for the GSS. Our recent progress and plans are provided at item 2 on the agenda.
4. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) has just completed a successful recent recruitment campaign for Statistical Officer (StO) posts. Given the continued demand for StOs from departments, the NSO is reviewing how best to recruit and induct new entrants to the GSS. To help meet the demand in the short term, the NSO has launched an extra StO recruitment round, with the aim of bringing in StOs from September 2014 onwards. The current staffing numbers for the GSS are in **Annexes A to C**.

Data science

5. There is a much activity in the 'data' space across government. The core skills of the GSS mean that we are well placed to contribute and help shape the agenda. There are also opportunities for development of the statistical profession. Although a number of departments are making good progress individually, the profession as a whole can benefit from tackling a number of opportunities in a shared way, including the items identified in the GSS Data Strategy launched in late 2013.
6. The GSS work in this area is 'action oriented' – identifying tangible quick wins and benefits that can be realised for the profession. The following actions have been identified:
 - i. engagement with the Cabinet Office Data Science Project, partly to raise the profile of GSS and statisticians in the data scientist role;
 - ii. construct a proposition for 'Action on Data Science' for the longer-term progression by the analytical professions;
 - iii. explore potential for a career path for data scientists within the GSS;
 - iv. identify training opportunities and work with providers to develop material appropriate for the GSS; and
 - v. develop catalogue of novel data sources of benefit for the wider GSS.

Data Protection Regulation

7. There remains 'political' agreement between Council, European Parliament (EP), and Commission on the key elements. But the EP's demands for making the processing of health data for statistics and research subject to express consent are still on the table. Every National Statistical Institute (NSI) who has expressed a view is adamant that its demands are toxic and must go. The research communities are making the same lobby. Compromise may be the outcome, but the EP elections and make-up of the subsequent new Commission may effect the development of negotiations.

European Statistical System (ESS) Vision 2020

8. The European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) agreed at its May meeting to a new Vision for the ESS, which reins in the ambitions of the original vision largely driven by the Commission; a process in which the UK was instrumental in driving, working with our key allies. The new Vision sets more realistic goals and is in line with Member States' needs in the coming period. An implementation plan is now being developed for agreement in September; this and how it is managed and delivered will be of greater consequence for the GSS.

European Statistical System Peer Reviews

9. The current round of Peer Reviews of Members States' compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP) has reached an important milestone. ONS, as the UK's National Statistical Institute, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Scottish Government (SG) and Defra have all submitted their questionnaires to AAM Consulting, the contractor which is based in Hungary. HMRC, SG and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) were selected by the National Statistician to participate based on their significance in the production of European statistics and on the relative risk to the credibility of official statistics should a problem occur.
10. The peer review methodology covers all of the principles of ESCoP as well as coordination within the national statistical system and the cooperation/level of integration of the ESS. This round of peer reviews is designed to assess progress made in adherence to the Code, to identify areas where further progress should be made and to highlight innovative practices developed by member states when implementing the Code. It is expected that each NSI will have to implement improvement actions following its peer review.
11. The Peer Reviewers will be visiting the UK, probably in the first quarter of 2015, to discuss these questionnaires. A draft report will be available for comment before it is published in late Spring/early Summer 2015.

Cuts and Consultations

12. Since the last report to the Committee in March 2014, there has been one notification of a cessation to the National Statistician (**Annex D**):
 - i. The Individual Incomes Series (IIS) bulletin is produced by the Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland. The original consultation in 2009 received only a few responses. Further views were sought in 2012 with no objections.
13. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) has identified five new statistical consultations since the last update to the Committee (**Annex E**):

- i. HSCIC has two consultations ongoing:
 - a. the first is targeted at users of the Survey of Carers in Households, to gain a better understanding of the use of the data; and
 - b. the second is on the yearly Statistics Product Survey to understand who is using the publication and for what purpose;
 - ii. the Court Statistics Quarterly published by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is proposed to be replaced by three publications from September 2014;
 - iii. the quarterly Gender Recognition Certificates bulletin also published by MoJ is proposed to be subsumed into the Tribunal Statistics Quarterly; and
 - iv. The Welsh Government is consulting on the publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales to be used to measure progress made on key issues and priority areas outlined in the Welsh Government's statutory Sustainable Development scheme 'One Wales: One Planet'.
14. More details on each of the consultations can be found at Annex E.

Kieron Mahony, National Statistician's Office, 22 May 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 Cessation of production of statistics by the GSS (notified to the National Statistician)**
- Annex E Consultations about Cessation and Changes of Production of Statistics by GSS**

Annex A Government Statistician Group staffing levels by department

Department	May 2013		July 2013		August 2013		October 2013		January 2014		March 2014		May 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)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)	SCS (FTE)	Non-SCS (FTE)
BIS	3	55	3	56	3	59	4	59	4	60	4	61	4	60
DCLG	2	50	2	53	2	53	2	55	2	56	2	56	2	54
DECC	1	28	1	28	1	28	1	28	1	27	1	27	1	28
DEFRA	2	27	2	28	2	28	2	29	2	30	2	30	2	30
DfE	2	126	2	126	2	126	1	128	1	128	1	128	1	129
DfID	1	39	1	39	1	40	1	39	1	38	1	38	1	39
DfT	2	45	2	45	2	43	2	44	2	46	2	46	2	46
DH	1	51	2	54	2	50	2	52	2	53	2	54	2	54
NHSIC	1	91	1	92	1	92	1	92	1	92	1	92	1	92
DWP	3	171	3	176	3	175	3	181	3	184	3	184	3	182
HMRC	3	139	3	141	3	141	3	141	3	142	3	145	3	143
HO	2	25	2	25	2	25	2	25	2	27	2	28	2	29
MoD	1	65	1	68	1	69	1	73	1	77	1	79	1	79
MoJ	1	77	1	77	1	79	1	82	1	84	1	83	1	84
UKSA/ONS	19	132	20	138	20	140	19	143	18	142	18	142	17	141
SG	1	191	1	159	1	159	1	159	1	159	1	159	1	159
OTHERS	3	172	2	206	4	203	4	204	5	208	4	209	5	210
Sub-totals	48	1484	49	1511	51	1510	50	1534	50	1553	49	1561	49	1559
Totals	1532		1560		1561		1584		1603		1610		1608	

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	March 2014	May 2014
Statistical Officer Grades	828	848	848	863	876	879	875
Fast Stream	134	136	136	142	147	149	149
Grade 6 & 7	522	527	526	530	532	534	535
SCS1 (Deputy Directors)	40	41	42	41	41	41	41
Directors and above	8	8	9	9	8	8	8
Total	1532	1560	1561	1584	1603	1610	1608
Values are rounded to nearest whole number (FTE basis)							

Annex C Government Statistician Group by Region

GSG by Area	North	Wales/West	London/South East	Scotland	Other	Total
Statistical Officer Grades	236	125	377	133	4	875
Fast Stream	25	21	83	18	1	149
Grades 6 & 7	90	80	292	61	12	535
SCS1 (Deputy Directors)	5	13	20	2	1	41
Directors and above	2	5	1	0	0	8
Totals	360	248	771	213	18	1608

Values are rounded to nearest whole number (FTE basis)

Annex D Cessation of production of statistics by the GSS (notified to the National Statistician 2014)

This table summarises the cuts to official statistics that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician as at April 2014.

DETAILS OF CESSATION OR REDUCTION	DESCRIPTION OF STATISTICS	REASONS FOR CESSATION OR REDUCTION	DETAILS OF CONSULTATION/ IMPACT ON USERS	STATUS
<p>The Individual Income Series Bulletin DSDNI</p> <p>Date received 25/03/2014</p>	<p>The Individual Incomes Series (IIS) bulletin is produced by the Department for Social Development (DSD) in Northern Ireland and provides estimates of the individual income of women and men across the region using data from the Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS is a continuous cross-sectional survey of private households across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>DSD produces five other publications from the survey data:</p>	<p>The IIS bulletin replaced a longer National Statistics publication following a consultation in 2009 and contains headline figures and tables from the Individual Incomes Series report analysis.</p> <p>As only a small number of responses were received from the user consultation in 2009, the IIS bulletin was produced with the intention to review its usage. Two bulletins have been released for 2007/08 and 2008/09, however since its production there has been limited interest in the report.</p> <p>DSD are keen to ensure that resources best meet user needs. For example, in response to user demand a new Poverty bulletin was introduced in 2012 in order to provide headline poverty figures months earlier than previously available and in line with the release of UK figures. For this reason it is the intention of ASU to withdraw the IIS bulletin. Resources will still be available to receive ad hoc queries. These will be reviewed in order to</p>	<p>The original consultation in 2009 received only a small number of responses.</p> <p>Views have been sought from the Northern Ireland Family Resources Survey User group at a meeting in February 2012 with regards to withdrawing the bulletin. No objections were raised and the group was content with the proposed withdrawal.</p> <p>DSD consulted with the National Statistician's Office and agreed further steps to seek user views. DSD wrote to those who responded with reference to the Individual Income Series publication during the original consultation in 2009, asking for their views on the proposed withdrawal. In addition a note proposing the cessation of the IIS Bulletin was placed on the DSD website. A copy of the note is attached as an annex.</p> <p>Users were asked to forward any comments before the end of the six week period (20th September to 1st November 2012). The National</p>	<p>Proposed</p>

	<p>FRS report, Households below Average Income (HBAI) report, FRS Urban Rural report, Pensioners' Income Series Bulletin and Poverty bulletin.</p>	<p>decide how the information requested can best be met using the FRS and HBAI datasets.</p>	<p>Statistician's Office was updated on the steps being taken to seek user views and a link was provided to the web notice.</p> <p>Analytical services Unit restated the intention to withdraw the Individual Income Series bulletin at the Northern Ireland Family Resources Survey User Group in December 2013, where the User Group members confirmed they were in agreement and content for Analytical Services Unit to begin the cessation process.</p> <p>One response was received to the call for user views on the proposed cessation of the IIS bulletin – from Citizens Advice Northern Ireland. They signalled their support for the retention of the Individual Incomes Series bulletin, citing the need for publication of statistics on individual incomes across a range of households both before and after the implementation of the Welfare Reform Bill.</p> <p>The FRS questionnaire is kept up to date to reflect changing policies, including changes to the benefit system. Annually the Department for Work and Pensions, who are responsible for production of UK figures, invites users of the FRS to submit proposals for change to the forthcoming questionnaire. ASU coordinates the submission of proposals for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Any ad hoc queries received on Individual Incomes will be reviewed in order to decide how</p>	
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			<p>the information requested can best be met using the main Family Resources Survey and Households Below Average Income datasets. These datasets will still be used to produce the other five FRS based reports.</p> <p>The main FRS report provides links to a range of alternative data sources for Northern Ireland, including Labour Force Survey and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings both of which are National Statistics.</p> <p>Recently a range of information has been released by DSD relating to the impacts of Welfare Reform:</p>	
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Annex E Consultations about cessations and changes of production of statistics by GSS: 15/04/2014

This table summarises the consultations about potential cuts and changes to official statistics that have been notified to the National Statistician by Departmental Heads of Profession or have been discovered by the National Statistician's Office

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION	DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION	CONSULTATION END DATE AND RESPONSES
<p>Survey of Carers In Households, England 2009-2010</p> <p>Department: Health and Social Care Information Centre</p> <p>Opening date: 28 April 2014</p>	<p>This consultation invites responses from the users of the Survey of Carers in Households, England 2009 - 2010 to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of this data and to ensure the survey continues to be relevant and meaningful to the needs of users.</p> <p><i>What is the consultation?</i> This consultation aims to engage with the users of the Survey of Carers in Households, England 2009-2010 develop a more complete understanding of the use made of this data and to ensure the survey continues to be relevant and meaningful to the needs of users. Comments will be considered against resource pressures, but will be invaluable to determine requirements for any new contractual arrangements for any Survey of Carers in Households, England Survey.</p> <p>HSCIC are unable to commit to this survey either being re-commissioned in the future nor, if it is re-commissioned, its timing, as it is subject to funding being made available from external sponsors</p> <hr/> <p><i>Why are we having this consultation?</i> We would like to invite users to respond to a questionnaire to help us make informed decisions on the content and structure on any future Survey of Carers in Households, England. We need to understand how the Survey of Carers in Households, England is used and what Users' priorities are - partly to understand what things you would not want to change about the survey, but also discovering what innovation users would wish to see.</p>	

<p>Statistics products survey</p> <p>Department: Health and Social Care Information Centre</p> <p>Opening date: 14 April 2014</p>	<p>Statistics Products Survey</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) publishes around 200 official statistics publications every year. We want to update our understanding of who is using these publications and for what purposes, and we would like your views on what we can do to improve our products to keep them relevant to you.</p> <p><i>What we are doing</i></p> <p>We would like your views on our official statistics publications - including those which have National Statistics designation, to help us set our strategy for our future publication activity. These are products that give access to aggregated and anonymised data along with analyses and interpretation; note that we are not collecting information in this exercise about the use and re-use of our source datasets. Click here for a list of all of our official statistics products.</p>	<p>8 June 2014</p>
<p>Consultation – Court Statistics Quarterly</p> <p>Department: Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Opening date: 24 April 2014</p>	<p>MOJ feels that the location of three distinct policy areas in one publication makes it hard to maximise user engagement. For example, there have been difficulties in getting the right people around the table for internal pre-release meetings as most people are only interested in a third of the material presented. MOJ believes that splitting the publication into distinct areas of interest will improve its ability to engage with users and from this deliver better quality publications.</p> <p>Initial discussions with internal customers have been supportive of this change.</p> <p>There will be no loss of information for users.</p> <p>There will be three new publications covering the distinct areas of interest:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Civil – including information on mortgage and landlord possession statistics 2. Family – with the longer term aim of incorporating other family information from other MoJ sources 3. Court Workloads 	<p>5 June 2014</p>

<p>Consultation on Gender Recognition Certificates</p> <p>Department:</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Opening Date:</p> <p>24 April 2104</p>	<p>This quarterly bulletin presents the latest statistics on Gender Recognition Certificates applied for and granted by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service's Gender Recognition Panel.</p> <p>This information is a further breakdown of information already published in Tribunal Statistics Quarterly. MOJ proposes to move this information into this publication so that all the information is in one place. This will make it easier for users to locate all tribunal information. There will be no loss of information.</p>	<p>5 June 2014</p>
<p>Proposals concerning the publication of Sustainable Development Indicators statistical outputs</p> <p>Department: Welsh Government</p> <p>Opening Date:</p> <p>14 April 2014</p>	<p>The Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales are used to measure progress made on key issues and priority areas outlined in the Welsh Government's statutory Sustainable Development scheme 'One Wales: One Planet'.</p>	<p>4 July 2014</p>

<p>Voting, consular and statistics: review of the balance of competences</p> <p>Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office</p> <p>Opening Date: 27 March 2014</p>	<p>The government is carrying out a review of the EU's competences. The review will provide an analysis of what the EU does and how it affects the UK.</p> <p>The Voting, Consular and Statistics review covers three distinct policy areas, each of which is being led by the relevant department (Cabinet Office (voting), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (consular) and the National Statistician on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority (statistics)).</p> <p>The voting strand seeks views on the balance of competences on subjects including how to vote and stand as a candidate at elections, who can vote, and EU democratic engagement initiatives.</p> <p>The consular strand will consider the EU's limited competence in Consular Services, which extends to the coordination of efforts between Member States and the requirement that, in consular matters, Member States must treat unrepresented EU citizens in the same way as they would treat their own nationals. The consular strand will not cover the standards or quality of the UK's provision of consular assistance to its citizens.</p> <p>The objective of the statistics strand of the review is to explore the impact of the balance of competences on issues such as data collection, respondent burden and an increase in demand for information.</p>	<p>2 July 2014</p>
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