

# **UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

## **Committee for Official Statistics**

### **Draft Minutes**

**Meeting of Friday 4 February 2011  
Board Room, Statistics House, London**

#### **Present**

##### **Members**

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Chair)  
Mr Richard Alldritt  
Dr Colette Bowe  
Professor David Hand  
Ms Jil Matheson  
Professor David Rhind  
Sir Michael Scholar

##### **Other Attendees**

Mr Neil Jackson (for item 2)  
Mr Richard Laux  
Mr Mike Prestwood (from item 3)  
Mr James Tucker (for item 4)

##### **Secretariat**

Mr Rob Bumpstead  
Mr Joe Cuddeford

##### **Apologies**

Professor Angela Dale  
Mr Duncan Macniven

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

None

## **1 Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 10 December 2010 were agreed as a correct record. Apologies were received from Professor Dale and Mr Macniven. There were no matters arising.

## **2 Statistical Expenditure Reports [SA(COS)(11)01]**

2.1 The Committee considered three draft Statistical Expenditure Reports (SERs). The following general points were made in discussion.

- i. The current SERs were drafted to be published *post facto*, after a cut had been made. There was therefore a risk that they could be seen as post mortems, or memorials.
- ii. However, the Authority could also issue on occasion statements at an earlier stage, or respond to a public consultation. This would require responding rapidly, and may involve making cautious assertions before a complete evidence base had been produced.
- iii. The Committee agreed that the SERs as drafted lacked commentary and largely contained only process description. They should be substantively revised to include more comment and opinion on the potential impact of the proposed reductions, and should include a clear statement of the Authority's view. It was not necessary to wait until all the facts were collected before forming an initial view.
- iv. The Authority could take a range of views, for example it could criticise the decision making process, draw attention to information about the decision that should be made available, or agree that the decision was the right one.
- v. Some of the detail on processes could be annexed.
- vi. A two phase approach could be adopted, whereby an initial statement is made about the Authority's concerns, followed up later by a fuller report.

2.2 In relation to SER1 (the Citizenship Survey produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government, DCLG), the following points were made:

- i. The SER needed to be strengthened to make clear that the Authority in no way endorsed DCLG's decision.
- ii. The opening box describing the preparation of SERs 'in consultation with the relevant departmental Head of Profession' should be rephrased.
- iii. It was not necessary to wait for a summary of the responses DCLG's consultation to be published before issuing an Authority view. For example, the report could state that the National Statistician raised some important issues, that it was not clear what other issues had been raised by users, and that it was a matter of regret that DCLG had not yet responded to these points or published consultation responses.
- iv. The SER should not state that the consultation was 'competently conducted'. Critical questions were missing, including what else could be done to reduce rather than discontinue the statistics (such as a change to reporting every two years or a reduction in sample size). The suggestion in the consultation of quota sampling as an alternative was unhelpful.

2.3 The Committee agreed that the Authority's view at paragraph 1.4 of SER3 (school statistics for Scotland, produced by the Scottish Government) should be further developed. SER2 (the Place Survey produced by DCLG) should state clearly that the Authority views the discontinuation of the Place Survey as the right decision in the circumstances.

2.4 It was agreed that all three SERs should be revised and considered at the next meeting of the Authority Board.

**Action: Monitoring and Assessment to revise SERs and present them to the next meeting of the Authority Board.**

**3 Impact of cuts on official statistics [SA(COS)(11)02]**

3.1 Mr Prestwood introduced an update paper on plans for ceasing the production of official statistics as a consequence of spending cuts.

3.2 The Committee considered how the process for producing SERs would work for cuts to ONS statistics and agreed that the process would be the same, with the Authority Board considering the decision of ONS Board alongside a SER produced independently by the Monitoring and Assessment team, if required.

3.3 The Committee noted that many departments were missing from the information provided. The National Statistician's Office was reliant on information supplied by departmental Heads of Profession and it was unlikely that information would be reported before it had been formally announced. More detailed information on cessations was expected for the next meeting of the Committee on 4 April. However, it was noted that the meeting cycle was not frequent enough to permit a rapid response

3.4 It was agreed that the Secretariat should discuss with the National Statistician's Office ways to speed up the flow of information from producer departments to Committee. It was further agreed that this information should be used by the Head of Assessment to decide whether specific proposals should be raised as candidates for an immediate Authority response. The National Statistician agreed to inform the Head of Assessment if she was intending to respond separately.

**Action: Secretariat to discuss with the National Statistician's Office ways to speed up the flow of information from producer departments to the Committee and Head of Assessment.**

**Action: Head of Assessment to use information from National Statistician's Office to decide whether specific proposals should be raised as candidates for an immediate response.**

**4 Progress on improving statistical commentary [SA(COS)(11)03]**

4.1 Mr Tucker, Chair of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Presentation and Commentary Taskforce (PCT), provided an update on progress with improving the commentary that accompanies official statistics. Improving commentary was important because of the value that good commentary added to the statistics. Initiatives in the past 12 months included a review of specific publications and current GSS practice, the publication of guidance, and undertaking workshops. Planned activities included facilitating a network of 'champions', undertaking further workshops and consolidating existing guidance.

4.2 The Committee commended the achievements made so far and endorsed the planned activities. It was noted that improving commentary was not always seen as a priority by every departmental Head of Profession and it was suggested that joint workshops for statisticians and Heads of Profession could be helpful.

**5 The Inter Administration Committee and comparability of statistics across the four nations [SA(COS)(11)04]**

- 5.1 The meeting considered a paper on the conclusions reached by the GSS Inter Administration Committee (IAC). The IAC had agreed three principles related to the comparability of statistics across the four nations.
- 5.2 The Committee noted that it was unclear what 'the same thing' meant in paragraph 3i and that clarity on this point was essential. It was agreed to suggest that a further principle should be included: when measuring broadly the same thing, producers should seek to make statistics comparable.
- 5.3 The Committee noted that in addition to highlighting any areas of comparability to users, and also explaining the limits of that comparability in 3ii, areas of similarity should also be noted.

**6 UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2009/10 Chapter 3: Government Statistical Service**

- 6.1 The Committee noted the outline of the GSS chapter of the UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2009/10. It was agreed that the text of the draft chapter would be circulated to the Committee for comment in March, before approval of the Annual Report by the Authority Board in April.

**7 Any other business**

- 7.1 Mr Alldritt reported that the Home Affairs Select Committee had recently commented on the 'confusing' nature of migration statistics. The Committee agreed that the Monitoring and Assessment team should prepare a Monitoring Brief on the matter.
- 7.2 There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on 6 April at 13:30pm in London.

## Committee for Official Statistics

### *Agenda*

**Friday, 4 February, 2011**

**Board Room, Statistics House, London, 13:30 - 16:00**

**Chair: Professor Sir Roger Jowell**

**Apologies: Professor Angela Dale, Mr Duncan MacNiven**

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 101210
2	Statistical Expenditure Reports	SA(COS)(11)01
3	Impact of cuts on official statistics	SA(COS)(11)02 Ms Jil Matheson and Mr Mike Prestwood
4	Progress on improving statistical commentary	SA(COS)(11)03 Mr James Tucker
5	The Inter Administration Committee and comparability of statistics across the four nations	SA(COS)(11)04 Mr Mike Prestwood
6	UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2009/10 Chapter 3: Government Statistical Service	SA(COS)(11)05 Secretariat and Mr Mike Prestwood
7	Any other business	

**Next Meeting: Wednesday 6 April 2011,  
Statistics House, London, 13:30 - 16:00**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(11)01

***Statistical Expenditure Reports***

**Purpose**

1. To update the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) on progress on the first few Statistical Expenditure Reports (SERs), and to seek views on the drafts of the first three SERs.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee are invited to:
  - note the steps taken by the Monitoring and Assessment team (paragraph 4); and
  - comment on the drafts of SER1: The Citizenship Survey (**Annex A**), SER2: The Place Survey (**Annex B**), and SER3: School Statistics for Scotland (**Annex C**).

**Discussion**

3. At its meeting on 10 December 2010, COS commissioned the Monitoring and Assessment team to produce draft SERs on the Citizenship Survey, the Place Survey, and Statistics on Schools in Scotland, based on information provided about the impact of cuts on official statistics [SA(COS)(10)26] and earlier discussion at the Authority Board [SA(10)54]. The aim of this work is to ensure that the Authority is in a position to advise Parliament on decisions that are made. Establishing our role in advising Parliament may also serve to enhance our influence over aspects of what is decided.
4. The Monitoring and Assessment team has now developed a process for producing SERs, and piloted it in the preparation of the first reports. The process seems to work satisfactorily; early indications are that we will be likely to streamline it, minimising the work involved and the burden on producers. The team has held meetings with the Head of Profession in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government. Two draft SERs were presented to the Authority Board at its meeting on 28 January:
  - SER1: DCLG's Citizenship Survey; and
  - SER2: DCLG's Place Survey.
5. In light of the discussion at the Authority Board meeting, the Monitoring and Assessment team has made some changes to the proposed structure and format for SERs. SER1 at **Annex A** has been revised according to the new format. SER2 at **Annex B** and SER3 at **Annex C** are currently drafted in the old format, and it is proposed that they be revised to bring them in line with the format of SER1. The Committee's views on the content and format of these drafts, and the level of detail presented, would be welcome. For information, each SER took about a day to produce, and involved a one hour meeting with the Head of Profession.
6. The National Statistician emailed Heads of Profession and the Chief Statisticians in the Devolved Administrations on 18 January regarding reductions in statistical outputs and the development of SERs (**Annex D**).

**Monitoring and Assessment, January 2011**

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A** Draft Statistical Expenditure Report 1: The Citizenship Survey
- Annex A1** Statistical Release: *Citizenship Survey: April–September 2010, England*
- Annex A2** Letter from the National Statistician to the Head of Profession at DCLG
- Annex A3** Examples of time series available from the Citizenship Survey
  
- Annex B** Draft Statistical Expenditure Report 2: The Place Survey
- Annex B1** Statistical Release: *Place Survey 2008, England*
  
- Annex C** Draft Statistical Expenditure Report 3: School Statistics for Scotland
- Annex C1** Statistical Release: *Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No.1 / 2010 Edition*
  
- Annex D** National Statistician's email to Heads of Profession

**Annex A Draft Statistical Expenditure Report 1: The Citizenship Survey**

This document will appear on the Authority's website in due course:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

**Annex A1**

This document is available from the Department for Communities and Local Government website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/>



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**Jil Matheson** National Statistician | Ystadegydd Gwladol

Janet Dougharty  
Head of Profession for Statistics  
Communities and Local Government  
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7 December 2010

Dear Janet

### **Citizenship Survey**

Thank you for alerting me to the proposal from CLG to abolish the Citizenship Survey (CS) and the consultation on the future of the survey. I have some concerns about the proposal and the decision-making process that I feel I must raise with you. My apologies for writing after the close of the consultation but I trust this is still in time. I am happy for this letter to be included in the published responses.

All departments are, of course, faced with managing with fewer resources. This will lead to some hard choices. However, taking decisions on specific surveys separately may mean that we make less effective decisions, despite efforts to consult users of each survey. It is not clear to me that cross-governmental interests in data collected in the CS have been fully considered, or that the proposed next steps allow for this.

Clearly we need to start with the data that the survey collects, to ascertain whether people use it and, if so, what for and what would be the implications of not having it. I am aware that CS data are widely used, both with government and beyond. To illustrate my concerns, I list just three:

1. I announced a major work programme on measuring national well-being on 25 November, to measure quality of life as well as standard of living. We are consulting on what matters in people's lives, as the basis for a framework of measures ideally based on existing data. Early responses to this national debate confirm that many of the topics covered in the CS are important to people – such as how connected people feel with their local community, as well as the social capital existing in local neighbourhoods.
2. Work on measuring Big Society is also still at a relatively early stage. While it is for policy users to specify their requirements, I can again see considerable value in using data currently collected in the CS to help the public assess what Big Society means and how things are changing over time.

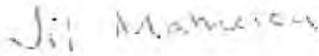
3. The CS is widely used for many of the indicators in the Equality Measurement Framework and has been identified as an appropriate source for related measurement frameworks, including on 'good relations' in the community. Alternative sources lack sample size, particularly among minority groups, or geographical coverage. The survey includes an ethnic minority boost sample of several thousand respondents from non-white ethnic groups. To achieve this boost sample requires a complex, targeted design with extensive screening of addresses. A similar boost sample is employed on the longitudinal Understanding Society survey but, as far as I know, the CS is the only such design within government.

The implications of stopping the survey are significant. Existing work, such as on equality measurement, will be delayed and continuity could be lost. New solutions will be needed for emerging work, such as on well-being and Big Society, which may be less efficient and slower than buying into the CS.

It seems to me, therefore, that there should now be a discussion about whether the survey vehicle should continue but with more cross-Whitehall engagement. The proposition that the whole survey should stop, and alternative routes for collecting what is needed be explored, would run the risk of losing the infrastructure and the potential for future use of the survey to meet emerging policy needs.

I would like to offer an early discussion at DDANs (the departmental directors of analysis network), which I chair. This would be one place to explore options further across government.

Yours sincerely



**Jil Matheson**

## **Annex A3 Examples of time series available from the Citizenship Survey**

### **Community Action**

- Whether people feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area and Britain
- Levels of participation in three strands of civic engagement: civic activism (e.g. taking on a role such as local councillor or school governor), civic consultation (e.g. attending a consultation group) and civic participation (e.g. contacting a local Member of Parliament, signing a petition or taking part in a demonstration)
- Levels of participation in volunteering
- Participation in civic engagement and formal volunteering by ethnicity, religious affiliation, sex, age and disability
- Levels of trust in institutions such as Parliament, local council or police

### **Community spirit**

- Community cohesion, by ethnicity, religious affiliation, Government Office Region, sex and age
- Proportion of people who feel that they belong strongly to their neighbourhood and Britain
- Mixing with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds by ethnicity, religious affiliation, age and sex (percentage mixing at least once a month)
- Proportion of people who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
- Proportion of people who think their area has got better, worse or stayed the same
- Views on the level of immigration (whether the number of immigrants coming to Britain should be increased, reduced or remain the same)
- How worried are people about becoming the victim of crime
- Whether people feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark

### **Harassment and discrimination**

- Proportion of people who feel that racial or religious harassment is a problem in the local area (by ethnicity, religious affiliation, sex and age)
- Perceptions of racial and religious prejudice today compared with five years ago, by ethnicity
- Whether people feel they would be treated worse than people of other races by public service organisations, by ethnicity
- Labour market discrimination

**Annex B Draft Statistical Expenditure Report 2: The Place Survey**

This document will appear on the Authority's website in due course:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

**Annex B1**

This document is available from the Department for Communities and Local Government website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/>

**Annex C Draft Statistical Expenditure Report 3: School statistics for Scotland**

This document will appear on the Authority's website in due course:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

**Annex C1**

This document is available from the Scottish Government website:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/>

**Annex D National Statistician's email to Heads of Profession**

**A message from the National Statistician 18 January 2011**

Dear Heads of Profession and Chief Statisticians in the Devolved Administrations

**Reductions to Statistical Outputs**

Thank you for providing my office with information about potential cuts to statistical outputs in your department, following the guidance sent on 10 August 2010. As I mentioned at the recent HoPs meeting, this information enables us to keep the UK Statistics Authority informed of developments.

The Authority's Committee for Official Statistics had an opportunity to consider current proposals across Government in respect of cuts in statistical outputs at its December meeting. The Committee considered how the Authority could best exercise its duty to promote and safeguard official statistics in this respect and report to Parliament on these matters, and it has decided to prepare a series of Statistical Expenditure Reviews.

These Reviews will be led by Richard Alldritt, the Head of Assessment, and will consider a limited number of particular proposals from departments. In selecting which proposals to further investigate, the Authority will be mindful of a number of criteria including: user need; whether adequate consultation has been carried out; the potential impacts on other departments or other statistical series; and the rationale underpinning the proposals.

I would like to thank you once again for your help in this and look forward to your continuing cooperation. My office will keep you informed of which proposals are to be subject to review and will do so at the earliest opportunity. Richard or a member of the Monitoring and Assessment Team will be in touch to discuss further as appropriate.

Jil Matheson

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(11)02

***Impact of cuts on official statistics***

**Purpose**

1. The National Statistician's Office (NSO) is collating information from producers of official statistics on plans for ceasing the production of statistics as a consequence of Spending Review 2010 cuts and on public consultations relating to official statistics. This paper updates the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) on the information received as at 28 January 2011, and also recent activity across departments in monitoring the impact of cuts.

**Recommendations**

2. The Committee is invited to:
  - i. note the latest position on reported cuts to official statistics and further potential cuts subject to public consultation and other official statistics issues being consulted upon;
  - ii. note the recent activity across Departments in terms of monitoring the impact of cuts on the evidence base and analytical capability; and
  - iii. consider whether any reported cuts or potential cuts should be subject to a Statistical Expenditure Report.

**Discussion**

3. The information being collated by the NSO on actual and potential cuts to statistics from Government Statistical Service (GSS) Heads of Profession (HoPs) provides the basis on which the Authority will decide whether to commission a Statistical Expenditure Report. The NSO's information includes details of all public consultations being conducted by departments whether for the purpose of determining the impact of a cut or some other purpose to aid their decision making. COS receives a report at each meeting from the NSO summarising the reported cuts, and all public consultations including those which may result in cuts, to statistical outputs. This is the second such report.
4. The table at **Annex A** includes an entry relating to proposed cuts to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) work programme that have been notified to the National Statistician. The Committee will note that a final decision about these cuts will not be made before the ONS Board meets on 11 February. The table at **Annex B** contains only a single entry relating to the General Registrar Office for Scotland (GROS) public consultation that may result in further cessations of statistical outputs or have some other consequences. **Annexes C** and **D** summarise the information about cessations and consultations made available to the Committee in 2010, and were previously included in the December paper on this topic [SA(COS)(10)26].
5. The HM Treasury review of government data reported to the Committee in December 2010 has now been formally launched. One of its aims is to reduce data collection and 'burden', but also to review dependencies i.e. the impact that any proposed cuts would have on other Departments, and on users more broadly. It is expected that potential cuts to data collection identified would then go forward to public consultation. The NSO is keeping in touch with developments via the National Statistician's membership of the Data Review Steering Group, and feedback from an ONS secondee to the HM Treasury review team. The Review is expected to report emerging findings in time for the Budget on 21 March. The final report is not expected to be available till the following month or so.

**National Statistician's Office, January 2011**

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A Cessation of production of statistics by the GSS (notified to the National Statistician between November 2010 and January 2011)**
- Annex B Consultations about cessation of production of statistics by GSS (notified to the National Statistician between November 2010 and January 2011)**
- Annex C Cessation of production of statistics by GSS (notified to the National Statistician between July and November 2010)**
- Annex D Consultations about official statistics by GSS (notified to the National Statistician between July and November 2010)**

**Annex A Cessation of production of statistics by the GSS (notified to the National Statistician between November 2010 and January 2011)**

This table summarises the cuts to official statistics that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician as at 28 January 2011.

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

DATE OF NOTIFICATION	DEPARTMENT	TITLE OF STATISTICS	DESCRIPTION OF STATISTICS	DATE STATISTICS TO CEASE	REASONS FOR CESSATION
25 January 2011	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	Citizenship Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Citizenship Survey is a face to face household survey covering a representative core sample of almost 10,000 adults in England and Wales each year, plus a minority ethnic boost sample of 5,000 and a Muslim boost sample of 1,200.</li> <li>DCLG ran a targeted consultation from 1 – 30 November. The consultation document anticipated the outcome when it stated “as part of the current drive to deliver cost savings across government and to reduce the fiscal deficit, research budgets are being closely</li> </ul>	31 March 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Secretary of State made this decision in the context of the need to deliver cost savings in order to reduce the fiscal deficit, and in the belief that priority data from the survey can be dropped; collected less frequently; or collected via other means. A statement to this effect has been placed on DCLG’s website.</li> <li>A detailed response to the public consultation on the future of the survey will be published on the department’s website in</li> </ul>

Annex A - SA(COS)(11)02 - Impact of cuts on official statistics

			<p>scrutinised to identify where savings can be made. For this reason and the belief that data can be dropped or collected less frequently, the intention is for future Citizenship Surveys to be cancelled.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within central government results from the Survey are used by policy leads and analysts across a range of government departments including Ministry of Justice, Home Office, Cabinet Office, Office for Civil Society, Department for Work and Pensions and Government Equalities Office.</li> <li>• Survey results are also used by local government, academic researchers, charities and other non-governmental organisations.</li> </ul>		<p>due course, along with a summary of each of the submissions received.</p>
18 January 2011	ONS	<p>Statistical outputs and other activities falling into the following categories are <u>candidates</u> for removal from ONS' Work Programme -</p>	<p>1. Includes Annual Abstract/ Monthly Digest; Quarterly Consumer Trends and Monthly Financial Statistics; Monthly Economic and Labour Market Review; and, Reporting on Population Change Analysis and reporting of population statistics.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 25 October and 24 December 2010, ONS sought views to help determine the shape of its future statistical work programme.</li> <li>• Responses will be used to inform ONS' work programme for the next four years.</li> </ul>

Annex A - SA(COS)(11)02 - Impact of cuts on official statistics

		<p>1. Statistical Compendia and Journals                  2. A re-focus of the ONS analysis programme                  3. The Knowledge Economy                  4. UK Health Statistics                  5. Analysis of specific health conditions including Health Statistics Quarterly                  6. Statistical services and support</p>	<p>2. Includes Public Service Productivity; Analysis of the Labour Market; and, Regional Analysis.                  3. This is principally development work, a reduction in which will partly be offset by European funding in 2011/12 and 2012/13.                  4. UK level reporting will extend only to meeting legal and international requirements eg Eurostat leading to a less comprehensive picture of health in the UK.                  5. Analytical work on healthy and disability free life expectancy will be stopped or reduced in frequency unless funding materialises. Outputs related to conceptions, teenage pregnancy and infant mortality will be less frequent. Work programme is therefore proposed to focus on mortality, data required to meet EU obligations and those activities that are income funded eg cancer analysis, health inequalities.                  6. Includes support to the cross-government Longitudinal Data Strategy and Virtual Microdata Laboratory Micro-Analysis and Support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The budget reductions announced as part of the 2010 Spending Review mean that ONS has to consider where savings can be found.</li> <li>• Consultation document outlined ONS' approach to reducing its budget that was determined by the Authority. It set three central principles:                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. whatever ONS does, it should do well. Compromising the quality of outputs is not in the public interest.</li> <li>2. Budget reductions must not damage the core infrastructure of the organisation. In particular, the development and renewal of the ONS Information Technology infrastructure must continue.</li> <li>3. ONS must continue to fulfil its statutory obligations, in terms of the statistical outputs that ONS is required to produce to meet international and domestic legal</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
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Annex A - SA(COS)(11)02 - Impact of cuts on official statistics

					<p>requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The final package of cuts is expected to be agreed by the ONS Board that next meets on 11 February.</li></ul>
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**Annex B Consultations about cessation of production of statistics by GSS (notified to the National Statistician between November 2010 and January 2011)**

This table summarises the consultations about potential cuts to official statistics that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician in the period 26 November 2010 – 28 January 2011.

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

<b>DATE OF NOTIFICATION</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>TITLE OF CONSULTATION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION</b>	<b>CONSULTATION ENDS ON</b>
9 December 2010	GROS	GROS Demography Statistical Work Programme	<p>The General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) is seeking views to help determine the shape of its future Demography statistical work programme. The budget reductions announced as part of the Scottish Spending Review on 17 November 2010 mean that GROS has to consider where savings can be found. It is critically important that our statistical outputs reflect our users' priorities.</p> <p>GROS is asking users to let them know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What GROS demography statistical outputs are used and how.</li> <li>• The impact of possible reductions in various areas of GROS demography statistical work.</li> </ul>	9 February 2011

**Annex C Cessation of production of statistics by GSS (notified to the National Statistician between July and November 2010)**

This table summarises the cuts to official statistics that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician for the period July to November 2010.

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

DATE OF NOTIFICATION	DEPARTMENT	TITLE OF STATISTICS	DESCRIPTION OF STATISTICS	DATE STATISTICS TO CEASE	REASONS FOR CESSATION AND IMPACT ON USERS
30 November 2010	Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)	Local Government Key Facts Card: England  (National Statistic)	<p>The Card is published as a portable aide-memoire of CLG's compendium publication "Local Government Financial Statistics".</p> <p>From current and capital expenditure to council tax and local authority pensions, Local Government Financial Statistics England brings together data from a wide range of sources to paint a comprehensive and important overview of local government finance in England.</p> <p>It is an essential guide to local authority financial systems, both past and present and contains detailed commentary, tables, time series, full colour charts</p>	Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CLG has decided, in the context of the SR10 budget cuts, to cease publication of this product.</li> <li>It states that this will not result in the loss of any published data simply because the contents of this Card are available within their compendium publication 'Local Government Financial Statistics'.</li> <li>CLG has advised that it will shortly notify their customer-base about this decision by means of a note on their website.</li> <li>It has judged that this decision does not</li> </ul>

Annex C - SA(COS)(11)02 - Impact of cuts on official statistics

			and maps.		warrant a public consultation.
25 November 2010	Scottish Government (SG)	<p>Scottish School Statistics -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children Educated outwith Schools</li> <li>2. Placing Requests</li> <li>3. Teacher and Educational Psychologists Vacancies</li> <li>4. Pre-Appeal SQA Examination Results</li> <li>5. Expenditure on Schools</li> <li>6. Budgeted School Running Costs</li> <li>7. The Independent School Census</li> </ol> <p>(All National Statistics)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. These annual statistics provide information on the numbers of children who were educated outwith school at any point during the school year, whether out of necessity or by parental choice.</li> <li>2. Annual statistics relating to requests by parents to local authorities that a child be placed in a specified school.</li> <li>3. Annual statistics derived from a survey which measures the level of vacancies during term time in order to indicate any possible areas of shortage.</li> <li>4. Annual statistics relating to national and educational authority level information on the cumulative attainment of National Qualifications by all pupils in publically funded secondary schools.</li> <li>5. Annual Statistics relating to figures for local authority spending on school education.</li> <li>6. Annual statistics relating to budgeted running cost information provided by education authorities, and managers of grant-aided and</li> </ol>	Immediately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In September 2010, the Education Analytical Services department of SG carried out a consultation of users of its Schools statistics.</li> <li>• This consultation followed on from an earlier one which sought views about the style and content of Schools statistics, and the Statistics Authority Assessment report on School statistics.</li> <li>• The Scottish Government has drawn the following conclusions from the consultation:-             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) There was a lack of demand for the retention of the NS in column 3 so they will be discontinued;</li> <li>ii) Attendance and Absence statistics will not be retained as an annual product but moved to a biennial basis;</li> <li>iii) There was little concern expressed about the repackaging of statistical</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

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			<p>self-governing schools.</p> <p>7. Annual statistics relating to results of the annual census of independent primary, secondary and special schools in Scotland.</p>		<p>publications and therefore SG will draw together the range of School statistics and release them on 3 key publication dates - Resources in December, Assessment in February and Outcomes in June;</p> <p>iv) In response to expressions of strong user need Exclusion statistics are retained on a biennial basis and published alongside the biennial Attendance and Absence figures in the Resources publication; and,</p> <p>v) In response to expressions of strong user need School Meals is retained but that a reduced set of information is collected and published annually in June.</p>
18 November 2010	Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)	New Deal Statistics  (National Statistics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DWP Statistics relating to the New Deal and Flexible New Deal (FND) Employment Programmes are published monthly by provider.</li> <li>• The following day WAG publishes headline statistics</li> </ul>	November 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the New Deal and the FND are being phased out WAG will no longer be publishing this headline.</li> <li>• This information will continue to be available from DWP's website.</li> </ul>

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			for Wales.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The publication of statistics on employment programmes will be reviewed once DWP have further information on the range of statistics that will be available under their new employment programme policy.</li> <li>• WAG have offered users an opportunity to discuss this decision by contacting them.</li> </ul>
6 September 2010	WAG	<p>i. Health Visitors, District Nurses &amp; Other Community Nurses</p> <p>ii. Community Psychiatric Nurses and Community Learning Disability Nurses</p> <p>iii. NHS Day Care</p> <p>(Official Statistics)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• i&amp;ii. – Used to monitor the advice and support given by health visitors, district nurses and other community nurses and by Community Psychiatric Nurses and Community Learning Disability Nurses by recording information on face-to-face contacts with patients.</li> <li>• iii – Used to monitor NHS day care facilities by recording information on first and total attendances for regular day attendees and patients using a bed by speciality.</li> </ul>	October 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A user consultation was conducted to ask for views on a proposal to discontinue these statistical returns. An earlier consultation and review within the NHS had recommended that the returns be dropped.</li> <li>• The user consultation showed that 85 per cent or more of respondents felt that each of the collections should be dropped and failed to identify significant uses of the data.</li> <li>• Some users felt that it was unwise to discontinue these</li> </ul>

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					<p>returns in the absence of fully developed alternative data collection and publication arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As Community health information has been made a priority area by the Welsh Assembly Information Requirements Board, alternative statistics will be developed.</li> </ul>
17 August 2010	Department for Education (DfE)	Parental experiences of services provided to disabled children Statistics (Official Statistics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The services for disabled children parental survey was established through the Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) programme and measures parents' satisfaction with the local education, health, and care and family support services provided for their disabled child.</li> <li>• Was established to provide data for the previous government's Local Authority National Indicator Set (NI 54) and although funded by the DfE, it also forms a measure within the NHS National Operating Framework 'Vital Signs'.</li> </ul>	November 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministerial decision that the survey that informs this publication should cease on cost grounds.</li> <li>• Unlike previous years, there will be no central follow-up with local authorities and therefore the impact of the survey could be limited.</li> <li>• Decision reflects the Coalition Government's commitment to reduce centrally imposed data burdens and to free up resources for front line services.</li> <li>• No legal obligation to publish these statistics.</li> <li>• DfE reported that there</li> </ul>

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					<p>has been no consultation with users, who are mainly Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts. Children's disability groups and parents also have an interest in the survey, but DfE does not have evidence of the level of use. DfE ministers plan to communicate to them as soon as possible, to inform them that the survey has been discontinued and providing LAs with tools that would allow them to carry out similar surveys themselves at a local level if they wish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Statistician has asked DfE to make an announcement on the Publication Hub setting out why publication is to end and their expectation of the impact on users.</li> </ul>
10 August 2010	DfE	Schools Providing Access to Extended Services Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly publication providing at a local authority level the percentage of schools providing access to the full core offer of extended services.</li> </ul>	October 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection will stop to achieve necessary savings.</li> <li>• The percentage of schools with extended services (98%) is close</li> </ul>

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		(Official Statistics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistics were used to inform the previous government's national indicators which may not reflect current government policy.</li> <li>• The relevant administrative data are collected by the Training and Development Agency for Schools.</li> </ul>		<p>to the previous government's target.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legal obligation to publish these statistics.</li> <li>• DfE reported that there has been no consultation with users. It said that the impact on users is expected to be limited as the percentage is close to the target i.e. almost all schools have extended services. There are no known alternative sources.</li> <li>• The National Statistician has asked DfE to make an announcement on the Publication Hub setting out why publication is to end and their expectation of the impact on users.</li> </ul>
27 July 2010	CLG	The Place Survey (Outputs are Official Statistics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collects the views of people on a range of issues concerning the place they live.</li> <li>• Results used to measure progress on National Indicators in the Local Performance Framework.</li> </ul>	November 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department's own reduced need for the data.</li> <li>• The need to reduce costs and achieve savings.</li> <li>• Government's desire to localise activities when appropriate, and when required.</li> <li>• CLG has stated that it will provide the National Statistician with a fuller</li> </ul>

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					explanation for the decision and outline any ramifications including for users.
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**Annex D All consultations about official statistics by GSS (notified to the National Statistician between July and November 2010)**

This table summarises the consultations about both potential cuts to official statistics and other statistical issues that have been notified by Departmental Heads of Profession to the National Statistician for the period July to November 2010.

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

<b>DATE OF NOTIFICATION</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>TITLE OF CONSULTATION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION</b>	<b>CONSULTATION ENDS ON</b>
30 November 2010	CLG	Reductions of annual returns data collected from Fire and Rescue Services and of Fires of Special Interest reporting	<p>CLG is seeking views on proposals to reduce non-financial annual data returns from Fire and Rescue Services in England and to terminate the majority of data collected on 'Fires of Special Interest' forms.</p> <p>The annual data returns relate to fire safety, health and safety, personnel and equality, and diversity.</p> <p>CLG have stated the changes envisaged are driven mainly by a desire to rationalise their data collections, and to reduce the burden imposed on data providers in the Fire and Rescue Services.</p>	14 January 2011
30 November 2010	Ministry of Defence - Defence Analytical Services Agency (DASA)	Consultation on DASA's annual manpower national statistics publications	<p>DASA plans to change the presentation of statistics on UK Armed Forces manpower currently published as National Statistics in its annual Tri-Service Publications (TSPs).</p> <p>The three National Statistics publications proposed for consolidation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TSP 8: Age distribution of UK Regular Forces</li> <li>▪ TSP 9: UK Regular Forces Rank Structure</li> </ul>	27 February 2011

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TSP 19: UK Regular Forces Intake and Outflow by Age</li> </ul> <p>last published on the 10 June 2010. DASA proposes to replace these with a single annual publication analysing the same aspects of Service manpower (age and rank) but containing more commentary, with fewer detailed tables.</p> <p>Users' views are sought on what they would like to be included in the new consolidated publication.</p>	
25 November 2010	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	Future of Agricultural Statistics	<p>DEFRA completed a consultation exercise in July 2010, writing to a number of key external stakeholders to gather views regarding the future of their Agricultural Statistics.</p> <p>DEFRA have reported that this was extremely positive and provided useful avenues to pursue. The results of the consultation are being written up and will provide a focus for internal user consultation . A smaller group of key users is in the process of being set up.</p>	July 2010
18 November 2010	WAG	NHS Performance Statistics	<p>WAG is seeking views on the service provided to their customers, the presentation of publications, whether the products meet the requirements of users and to open discussion about whether any improvements can be made.</p> <p>Given the breadth of data covered by the Health Statistics and Analysis Unit relating to NHS Performance, the consultation document has separate sections to allow respondents to give feedback on specific subject areas or all together in one document.</p>	24 January 2011
18 November 2010	WAG	Education and Lifelong Learning	<p>WAG are looking for views in general on their current suite of around 40 outputs but also in response to some</p>	30 November 2010

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		Statistics	<p>specific issues it has raised.</p> <p>WAG states that the purpose of this consultation is to seek feedback on the usefulness and useability of what it currently produces, how it can be improved, any gaps in what it provides and an indication of the relative priority attached to a particular analysis.</p> <p>Given the breadth of data covered by the Education and Lifelong Learning Statistics Unit, the consultation document has separate sections for schools, further education, higher education and a number of cross cutting areas.</p> <p>There are two separate response forms, according to whether you are a user of schools or post-16 education statistics.</p>	
18 November 2010	WAG	Statistical Directorate Annual Compendia Publications	<p>WAG's Statistical Directorate is seeking views from customers on the proposal to cease printing of hardcopy statistical publications. WAG states that the same information will still be available on their web site but will only be published electronically rather than professionally printed.</p> <p>The advantages of this approach are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data will be timelier. WAG anticipates being able to publish information on the web earlier than is currently possible due to the need to prepare and print hard copies.</li> <li>• The resources saved will be diverted into enhancing the range of information available on</li> </ul>	31 December 2010

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			<p>the interactive StatsWales data analysis tool, and hopefully finding innovative ways of making this information available. This will allow users to access a wider range of official statistics in a more flexible and user friendly way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will help reduce WAG's carbon footprint and impact on the environment and be saving on resources needed to produce and distribute paper editions.</li> </ul>	
17 November 2010	Ministry of Justice (MoJ)	Improvements to Ministry of Justice statistics	<p>The consultation seeks views on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the definitions of statistics - making the statistics consistent across MoJ publications and clarifying the definition of certain important measurements.</li> <li>• introducing a quarterly criminal justice statistics bulletin which would give an overview of trends in crime, out of court disposals, prosecutions, convictions and sentencing.</li> <li>• moving to a single measure of re-offending which would get rid of the six different ways it is currently measured. This includes consolidating five separate publications on re-offending into a single publication.</li> </ul> <p>These proposals represent significant improvements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making a wider range of data available routinely through MoJ's statistical publications;</li> <li>• presenting a coherent overview of criminal justice statistics to help understanding and ease of comparison;</li> <li>• simplifying access to information in line with the Code of Practice.</li> </ul>	18 February 2011

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			<p>The consultation is a response to a number of separate reports including the UK Statistics Authority Assessment of Criminal Justice Studies, the Stern Review of Rape Reporting and UK Statistics Authority's Barrier to Trust in Crime Statistics as well as MoJ's own internal review of criminal justice publications.</p>	
25 October 2010	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	Work Programme Consultation	<p>ONS is seeking views to help determine the shape of its future statistical work programme. The budget reductions announced as part of the 2010 Spending Review mean that ONS has to consider where savings can be found. ONS considers it is critically important that statistical outputs reflect users' priorities. User feedback can also help ONS strive to become a more efficient and effective organisation.</p> <p>The consultation document outlines ONS' approach to reducing its budget, including the core principles which determine this approach, and asks stakeholders to let ONS know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what ONS outputs they use and how they use them</li> <li>• the impact on them of possible reductions in various areas of ONS work.</li> </ul> <p>Responses will be used to inform ONS' work programme for the next four years.</p>	24 December 2010
20 October 2010	CLG	The Future of the Citizenship Survey	<p>The Citizenship Survey is a face to face household survey carried out by the Department for Communities and Local Government covering a representative core sample of almost 10,000 adults in England and Wales each year, plus a minority ethnic boost sample of 5,000 and a Muslim boost sample of 1,200.</p> <p>This statistical consultation sets out the intention to</p>	30 November 2010

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			cancel the future Citizenship Survey, and in doing so, seeks to identify the uses of the Survey data, the implications of stopping and options for alternative information sources.	
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**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(11)03

***Progress on improving statistical commentary***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents an update of progress on improving the commentary that accompanies official statistics.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note and comment on the progress made and the planned activities for 2011/12.

**Discussion**

3. The *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* is explicit about the need for official statistics to be accompanied by, ‘...full and frank commentary and analysis that aid interpretation’ of the statistics (Principle 8). It is widely recognised that much of the statistical commentary currently produced is in need of improvement. The quality and quantity of the commentary in statistical releases is a common theme in the Assessment Reports prepared by the UK Statistics Authority Monitoring and Assessment team.
4. In January 2010 the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Presentation and Dissemination Committee (PDC) presented a paper to COS [SA(COS)(10)06] that outlined the current and planned work being undertaken by them to enhance the presentation and dissemination of statistics. This current paper focuses on work that has been undertaken, or is planned, to improve the commentary that accompanies Official Statistics.
5. In the past 12 months there have been a variety of initiatives aimed at addressing the quality of the commentary in statistical releases. A brief outline of each of these is at **Annex A**. These include:
  - i. the work of the GSS Presentation and Commentary Taskforce (PCT)<sup>1</sup> and the Presentation and Commentary Coordination Group (PCCG) on reviewing specific publications;
  - ii. a review by the PCT of current practice across the GSS;
  - iii. guidance produced by the UK Statistics Authority and the National Statistician;
  - iv. workshops led by the PCT and the National Statisticians Office (NSO); and
  - v. support to the GSS by the National Statistician’s Office following assessment.
6. Various strands of work are planned for the coming year, largely focusing on driving change across producers of Official Statistics. A brief outline of each of these is at **Annex B**. These include:
  - i. setting up a network of ‘champions’ within departments;
  - ii. undertaking workshops within departments;
  - iii. consolidating and implementing existing guidance within departments; and
  - iv. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops and seminars coordinated by the NSO Statisticians in Government Team.

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<sup>1</sup> Re-named from ‘Statistical First Release Taskforce’, as referred to in [SA(COS)(10)06]

7. Over the past year, there has been considerable progress in terms of improving the commentary accompanying statistical releases. However, departments have accepted the challenge to differing degrees. Some have not only taken positive steps to improve individual releases, but have set in place department wide programmes of improvement. Others have not taken action, meaning there is still much more to be done, including continuing to raise awareness of the issue and expectations, convincing departments of the added value, and addressing any difficulties they may face. Future work is therefore focused on driving improvement across the GSS and providing support where needed.

**James Tucker, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**  
**Elsbeth Maclean, National Statistician's Office, January 2011**

#### **List of Annexes**

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

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

### **1. GSS Presentation and Commentary Taskforce (PCT)**

#### Review of current practice in the GSS

The PCT commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Methodology Consultancy Service (MCS) to produce a review of the current standard of presentation and commentary across the Government Statistical Service (GSS), using fourteen National Statistics publications to identify examples of good and bad practice against the Statistics Commission's 'Statistical Release Criteria'.

This highlighted the diversity in standards across the GSS. There were examples of clear and concise headline messages; useful context; charts and text that draw meaning and key points from the results; and explanation of the differences between apparently competing datasets. Conversely, there were releases that contained no headline messages, or jargon-heavy summaries that did not extract the key points; had no indication as to why the data is collected; and had poorly labelled and uninformative charts.

The Taskforce concluded that although there are plenty of examples of good practice, there is still much room for improvement, ranging from the basics of presentation to providing added value interpretation of the results.

#### Reviews of specific publications

The review, along with existing guidance, was used to produce targeted peer reviews of National Statistics releases from volunteer departments: the NHS Information Centre (NHS IC) and ONS. Particularly successful was a review of the NHS IC publication on the Mental Health Act, which now benefits from much improved headline messages and long-term context, and added interpretation of the results.

### **2. Presentation and Commentary Coordination Group (PCCG)**

The PCCG is a high-level group of representatives from the National Statistician's Office (NSO), the UK Statistics Authority, and the PCT. It was formed to ensure a common approach and avoid duplication of effort across the various initiatives, and inform the overall direction.

The PCCG also produced some targeted reviews of publications. Taken together with the publications reviewed by the PCT, the exercise informed the priority areas as identified in the National Statistician's statement, and the guidance published by the Authority (see point 3 below).

The group concluded that although the reviews were useful in providing some 'quick win' improvements to specific publications and informing priority areas, that it is not sustainable in the long-term; rather, work should focus on consolidating guidance and ensuring uptake GSS wide (see Annex B)

### **3. Guidance produced by the UK Statistics Authority and the National Statistician**

The UK Statistics Authority published guidance in October 2010 that sets out its view on what constitutes a good Statistical Release. The guidance is based on proposals contained in the Statistics Commission report *Releasing Official Statistics* (2008) and the requirements of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* published in January 2009.

The National Statistician released a statement on Improving Statistical Commentary in November 2010. This document emphasises the importance of Statistical commentary in bringing statistics to life and helping users to understand them. It gives producers some high level guidelines as to where they could most usefully concentrate their efforts.

#### **4. Workshops led by the GSS Presentation and Commentary Taskforce (PCT) and the NSO**

##### *Presentation and Commentary Taskforce workshop*

This workshop was hosted at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Innovation Centre, with 45 attendees from 17 departments, and guest speakers from the Statistics Authority, the NSO and ONS. The agenda covered statistical commentary and wider aspects of presentation. The focus was on gaining a shared understanding of the need for improving presentation and commentary, identification of issues, providing recommendations, and assigning actions to departments.

Recommendations included:

- i. production of 'topic guidance' documents that contain context and relevant policies or targets;
- ii. structuring reports in increasing detail with plain English headline messages up front;
- iii. improved engagement with policy colleagues and experts to improve understanding of context; and
- iv. including presentation and commentary in core training for statisticians.

Some concerns were also highlighted, such as the resources required to add commentary and the need to convince managers that it is worthwhile, and striking the balance between adding interpretation and remaining impartial and objective.

A full report from this workshop can be found on the GSS intranet site 'Statnet'.

##### *GSS Conference workshop on Writing with Impact*

A workshop was held during the GSS Conference in November that gave participants real examples of improved commentary from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Home Office (HO) as well as NHS IC. Presenters from HMRC and HO talked through their experiences of improving their releases. Participants were then given the opportunity to critique an NHS IC release and compare their observation with the latest revised release. The response to the workshop was very positive and the NSO have been approached to run a similar event again (see Annex B, point 2).

#### **5. Support to the GSS from the NSO following assessment**

The NSO offers assistance to statistical producers in responding to all requirements that result from the assessment process. As part of this the NSO has provided guidance to government departments and the devolved administrations on the type of information that could be included in statistical commentary. They have also reviewed commentary from several government departments and the devolved administrations.

## **Annex B Planned activities for 2011/12**

### **1. Network of 'champions' within departments**

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) Presentation and Commentary Taskforce (PCT) workshop identified the importance of encouraging change across the GSS to drive improvements. It is considered that PCT efforts are best focused on facilitating GSS wide ownership of the issue, drawing upon the considerable guidance on presentation and commentary that already exists. The workshop provided a list of contacts, and the intention is to identify a group of willing departments, alongside a follow-up on the actions assigned during the workshop. The exercise will be run in collaboration with the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and the proposed tailored workshops (see point 2 below).

### **2. Undertaking workshops within departments**

The NSO is currently discussing a proposal to run a series of workshops in individual departments on improving statistical commentary. These workshops would focus on practical exercises including reviewing an example of commentary produced by their department, and redrafting it based on available guidance. These workshops may form part of a programme of workshops focusing on areas identified by the Authority's assessment process such as user engagement (Principle 1) and frankness and accessibility (Principle 8).

### **3. Consolidating and implementing existing guidance within departments**

This will happen as part of the proposed workshops and may include the 'individualisation' of the guidance already available to encourage ownership by the statisticians who produce statistical releases. The NSO would ensure that the guidance was consistent across the GSS.

### **4. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops and seminars coordinated by the NSO Statisticians in Government Team**

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

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(11)04

***The Inter Administration Committee and  
Comparability of Statistics Across the Four Nations***

**Purpose**

1. The Government Statistical Service (GSS) Inter Administration Committee (IAC) has been considering the principal issues relating to the comparability of statistics across the four nations at their recent meetings. This paper informs the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) of the IAC's conclusions, according to the action agreed at the COS meeting of 13 July 2010.

**Recommendations**

2. The Committee is invited to note and comment on the conclusions reached by the IAC at paragraphs 3 to 5.

**Discussion**

3. The IAC has agreed the following principles:
  - i. when measuring the same thing, measure in the same way, and produce comparable statistics;
  - ii. when measuring different things, due to differing policy or other needs, highlight any areas of comparability to users, also explaining the limits of that comparability; and
  - iii. when measuring different things, due to differing policy or other needs, and there is no comparability, explain this and the reasons for it.
4. Thus, producers should be transparent about differences in underlying data or policy requirements that may inhibit comparability, and where it is not possible to produce comparable statistics they should say so and provide clear explanation of the reasons why this is the case.
5. The IAC has further agreed that:
  - i. National Statistician's Guidance should be prepared in order to ensure wider dissemination of the above principles;
  - ii. when considering user needs and strategic priorities, GSS Statistical Theme Leaders should continue to deal with comparability issues as they arise, and keep the IAC informed of any issues or barriers, including conflicts of interest, via their six monthly reports to IAC or more frequently as necessary;
  - iii. IAC should seek to resolve barriers to comparability, and keep the Committee for Official Statistics informed accordingly; and
  - iv. if a case is made for UK comparable data, it should be in line with any international obligations.
6. The IAC considered a paper highlighting the principal issues relating to comparison of statistics across the four nations. The paper dealt with the alignment of statistical policy with devolved policy (a debate on the need for comparable dissemination of schools attainment statistics arising from Assessment had thrown a spotlight on this issue), and the identification of user need and priority particularly in the current financial climate. The paper was requested by the National Statistician following numerous recent cases of Authority requirements for comparable statistics arising from the assessment process.
7. In discussion, the IAC noted that it did not want to cut across Theme Leaders' roles in terms of identifying strategic priorities with users. The IAC saw its role as being of

assistance to Theme Leaders, i.e. the IAC should seek to resolve issues arising or barriers to comparability referred to it by Theme Leaders. The IAC reiterated the importance of Theme Leaders keeping it informed of progress via their six monthly reporting mechanism. The IAC also agreed that transparency by producers on the extent of comparability, and any reasons inhibiting comparability, was very important.

8. The IAC's conclusions have been conveyed to Statistical Theme Leaders and GSS Heads of Profession by the IAC Secretariat. The first series of six monthly Statistical Theme Leader reports for IAC which sought information on comparability issues were considered by IAC at its meeting on 19 July 2010. The IAC Secretariat has not received requests for IAC involvement or assistance in comparability issues since these reports were received. The next series of Theme Leader reports were commissioned in December 2010 and will be discussed at the IAC meeting on 15 February 2011.

**National Statistician's Office, January 2011**

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(11)05

#### ***UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2009/10*** ***Chapter 3: Government Statistical Service***

#### **Purpose**

1. This note covers an outline of the chapter of the UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2009/10 relating to the Government Statistical Service (GSS).

#### **Timing**

2. The Authority's Annual Report and Accounts must be laid before the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures before the Summer recess in July 2011. Comments upon the outline of this chapter are invited at this stage, in order to meet future editing, design and production deadlines. Draft text of the chapter can be subsequently circulated via correspondence for comment if the committee wishes.

#### **Recommendations**

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

#### **Discussion**

4. Under the terms of the Statistics Act the Authority is required to produce a report at the end of each financial year "on what it has done during the year, what it has found during that year, and, what it intends to do during the next financial year". The Report is to be laid before the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures. The Authority is also required to lay its Annual Accounts before the UK Parliament under the *Government Resource and Accounts Act 2000*.
5. At its December 2010 meeting the Authority Board agreed that, as in previous years, it would produce a combined UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts in two volumes, which would cover the Authority, the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as well as the combined Resource Accounts for the year.
6. The Annual Report will consist of six chapters. Each chapter may be reviewed by a sub-committee of the Authority Board, before approval of the Report by the Authority Board as a whole.

#### Volume One

Chapter 1 - Chair's Report and 'About the UK Statistics Authority';  
Chapter 2 - Monitoring and Assessment Annual Report (Assessment Committee);  
Chapter 3 - GSS Annual Report (Committee for Official Statistics);  
Chapter 4 - ONS Annual Report (ONS Board); and  
Chapter 5 - Corporate and Summary Financial Information (Audit Committee).

#### Volume Two

Resource Accounts 2009/10 (Audit Committee).

**Secretariat, UK Statistics Authority, January 2011**

#### **List of Annexes**

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

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

Chapter 3 of the Report will comprise of two elements: an 'Introduction from the National Statistician' and the 'Government Statistical Service (GSS) Annual Report'. The latter will include case studies from across the GSS that showcase two things - the use made, and value of, statistics and working collaboratively with the other analytical professions. The National Statistician considers it likely that the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) will conduct an enquiry into UK official statistics in 2011. In anticipation of such an eventuality, her chapter will seek to cover ground that will be of interest to PASC and may influence the subject of the enquiry itself.

Section 1	National Statistician's Introduction*
Section 2	The GSS (to include costs and illustration of geographical spread)*
Section 3	Progress against the National Statistician's priorities*
Section 4	Examples of working with the other analytical professions
Section 5	GSS Achievements that showcase the use and value of statistics (case studies)*
Section 6	Plan/priorities for 2011/12 (to include statistical capability)*

\* = featured in 2009/10 Annual Report

**National Statistician's Office, January 2011**