

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Minutes

Meeting of Friday 15 May 2009  
Board Room, Statistics House, London

### Present

#### UK Statistics Authority

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Deputy Chair, Official Statistics)

Lord Rowe-Beddoe (Deputy Chair, ONS)

Mr. Richard Alldritt

Ms. Karen Dunnell

Ms. Moira Gibb

Mr. Steve Newman

Professor Steve Nickell

Professor David Rhind

#### Secretariat

Mr. Robert Bumpstead

Mr. Mervyn Stevens

#### Apologies

Mr. Partha Dasgupta

#### Other Attendees

Mr. David Frazer (Head of Profession for Statistics, Department for Work and Pensions) (item 5)

Mr. Richard Laux (Monitoring and Assessment, UK Statistics Authority) (items 5 to 9)

Mr. Ross Young (Secretariat, UK Statistics Authority) (item 10)

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### **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mr. Partha Dasgupta.

### **2. Declarations of interest**

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting**

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 April 2009 were accepted as a true and fair account.
- 3.2 The meeting considered progress with recruitment of the National Statistician's successor and discussed issues arising.

### **4. Reports from Committee Chairs**

- 4.1 Lord Rowe-Beddoe reported on the meeting of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board held earlier that day. The meeting had noted good progress with the ONS budget process for 2009/10 and that delegations to budget-holders would be made shortly.
- 4.2 The ONS Board had also received an update on business continuity planning, human resource matters, information technology issues and the ONS corporate scorecard.

### **5. Use of Management Information in Official Statistics [SA(09)22]**

- 5.1 Mr. Frazer presented a paper which set out the draft recommendations of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) task force on the use of management and related information to produce Official Statistics. The paper included draft guidance from the National Statistician intended for all staff in the public service who worked with management and similar forms of information.
- 5.2 The meeting heard that the priority for the task force had been to ensure compliance with the *Code of Practice* when information was used for statistical purposes, while not preventing the use of information for the management of government business. Should there be a conflict of interest between the two purposes then the public interest should be the deciding factor. Responsibility should be given to statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) to make transparent and reasoned decisions of where and how such data might be used.
- 5.3 The Authority considered these proposals, including whether the regularity of a release or its geographical coverage ought to be factors used to help discern what should be treated as Official Statistics. In particular, the meeting was concerned that these factors should not unnecessarily narrow the scope of what might reasonably be considered Official Statistics.
- 5.4 It was agreed that the guidance would be reviewed in light of the meeting's deliberations and then issued to HoPs. The GSS task force was invited to further consider the Authority's own proposals about when it might make comment on the use of management information and statistics, and provide comment to the next Authority Board.
- 5.5 It was noted that a companion piece of work addressing the distinction between government research and Official Statistics had yet to reach a conclusion, but would be also presented to the Authority Board.

**6. UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2008-09 [SA(09)23]**

6.1 Mr. Bumpstead introduced a paper which included a draft of the Authority's 2008/09 Annual Report. The meeting was pleased to note progress and agreed that the Chair's report should include a statement on the Authority's views about the need for a National Address Register.

6.2 Further detailed comments could be sent to the secretariat via correspondence.

**7. Progress Report on the Assessment Programme [SA(09)24]**

7.1 Mr. Laux reported on progress with the initial programme of 15 assessments. A draft report of statistics produced from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System would be considered by the Committee for Official Statistics at its meeting on 19 May. 'Wealth in Britain' statistics was a forthcoming ONS publication which would be scheduled for assessment later in the year.

7.2 Initial meetings with producers of all of the other remaining 13 assessments had been held. Written evidence from the producers had been received for four assessments with the remainder due by the end of May 2009. Consideration was already being given as to how sets of statistics might be grouped together to streamline the assessment process for future assessments.

7.3 The meeting noted progress and confirmed that a monthly report should be produced for the Authority.

**8. Monitoring Report Update [SA(09)25]**

8.1 Mr. Alldritt reported on the initial programme of monitoring reports of which three were in progress.

8.2 An interim report on *Improvements in Migration Statistics* had been published on 7 April. An open meeting had been held at the Royal Statistical Society to discuss the report and this had been attended by about 60 people from a diverse range of stakeholder backgrounds and interests. The issues raised would help shape the final report which was scheduled for publication in July.

8.3 The specification for the *Strengthening the User Voice* report had been approved by the Committee for Official Statistics at its meeting on 10 March 2009. The first meeting of the project board under the chair of Professor Sir Roger Jowell had been held on 13 May.

8.4 The outline specification for the *Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics* report had been approved by the Authority Board at its meeting on 20 February 2009. The first meeting of the project board had also taken place on 13 May, chaired by Mr. Partha Dasgupta.

8.5 The Authority noted progress.

**9. Monitoring and Assessment Resource [SA(09)26]**

9.1 The meeting considered a paper which provided information about the resourcing of the Monitoring and Assessment Team and heard that recruitment of staff in London and Newport was complete, while recruitment of staff in the Edinburgh office was well advanced.

**10. Issues raised with the Authority in 2008/09 [SA(09)27]**

10.1 Mr. Young presented a paper which provided an analysis of the issues raised with

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the Authority during 2008/09.

- 10.2 A total of 99 substantive issues were raised with the Authority during the year. Of these, 41 had originated in the last three months of the year. The meeting noted the analysis with interest and agreed that a similar analysis by the ONS of issues raised with it would be helpful.

### **11. Performance Measures for the Authority [SA(09)28]**

- 11.1 Mr. Bumpstead introduced a paper which set out a framework for developing measures against which the performance of the Authority might be assessed. The paper set out high-level objectives and proposed that progress against these objectives should be measured by a mixture of self assessment, interviews with selected opinion formers and a sample survey of the general public.

- 11.2 The meeting agreed the proposals and confirmed that they should be included in the Authority's Annual Report for 2008/09 and in the submission to the Public Administration Select Committee providing the Authority's Request for Resources Estimate for 2009/10.

### **12. Correspondence with the Public Administration Select Committee: Migration and Workforce Statistics [SA(09)29]**

- 12.1 The meeting noted a letter of 8 May 2009 from the Authority Chair to Mr. Tony Wright MP, Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee, regarding the publication in February 2009 of ONS migration and labour force statistics. It was agreed that the letter would be published on the Authority's website.

### **13. Any other business**

- 13.1 There was no other business.

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Agenda*

***Friday, 15th May, 2009***

***Board Room, Statistics House, London, 11:15 - 15:00***

**Chair: Sir Michael Scholar**

**Apologies:**

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 170409
2	Reports from Committee Chairs	Lord Rowe-Beddoe
3	Use of Management Information in Official Statistics	SA(09)22 Mr. David Frazer
4	UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2008-09	SA(09)23 Mr. Rob Bumpstead
5	Progress Report on the Assessment Programme	SA(09)24 Mr. Richard Laux
6	Monitoring Report Update	SA(09)25 Mr. Richard Alldritt
7	Monitoring and Assessment Resource	SA(09)26 Mr. Richard Alldritt
8	Issues raised with the Authority in 2008-09	SA(09)27 Mr. Ross Young
9	Performance Measures for the Authority	SA(09)28 Mr. Rob Bumpstead
10	Correspondence with PASC: Migration and Welfare Statistics	SA(09)29 Mr. Richard Alldritt
11	Any other business	

**Next Meeting: Friday, 19th June 2009**  
**Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Belfast**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)22

***Use of Management Information in Official Statistics***

**Purpose**

1. This note covers a paper from the Government Statistical Service (GSS) on the use of management and related information to produce Official Statistics (**Annex A**).
2. The paper has been produced by the National Statistician's task force on use of administrative data. The group is chaired by Mr. David Frazer, Head of Profession for statistics at the Department for Work and Pensions.
3. The Authority most recently considered a substantive paper on this subject at its meeting on 20 February [**SA(09)08**]. This paper is also attached for information (**Annex B**).

**Recommendations**

4. Members of the Authority are invited to comment.

**Discussion**

5. The National Statistician established a GSS Task Force to draft guidance on the use of administrative data which is also used for statistical purposes and which may be used to produce Official Statistics. This of one of five Task Forces which have been commissioned to produce guidance on the implementation of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.
6. The administrative data Task Force decided at an early stage that it would be unable to carry out its remit without also considering the:
  - i. definition of 'Official Statistics';
  - ii. demarcation between 'statistics', 'management information' and 'research', and;
  - iii. the relevance of the *Code of Practice* to each of these different forms of quantitative information.
7. Given the complexity of these issues and the interests of other professional groups within government, the National Statistician and the Head of Government Social Research (GSR) decided to remit the issue to a joint GSS/GSR working group reporting to both of them. That work is ongoing, and when complete will be shared with the Authority.
8. The report at **Annex A** is the latest available version of the guidance drafted by the Task Force. It addresses the application of the *Code of Practice* to administrative data in respect of statistics. Questions concerning 'research', or the demarcation between 'research' and 'statistics' will be addressed when the joint working group completes its work.

**Secretariat, UK Statistics Authority, May 2009**

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A National Statistician's Guidance on the Use of Management Information in Official Statistics**
- Annex B SA(09)08 Management Information and Policy Documents**

**Annex A Report of National Statistician's Task the GSS Working Group on the Use of Management Information in Official Statistics**

**GUIDANCE FOR ALL STAFF - Good practice in the use of Management Information and related Official Statistics:**

This note applies to everyone in the public service who deals with management and similar forms of information. It has been issued by the National Statistician and builds on earlier guidance circulated by the Head of the Home Civil Service. It has been endorsed by the UK Statistics Authority and supplements the Authority's *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.

Key Message

The *Code of Practice* encourages organisations to use information drawn from administrative systems for both the management of government business, and the production of Official Statistics. It also sets out the practices that must be followed in these circumstances, especially when this information is put into the public domain. If there is any conflict between these two purposes, the public interest should be the deciding factor.

Summary of Key Practices - to be followed by everyone who uses such information:

Public use of management and similar information, and related Official Statistics

- a. seek and heed the advice of the appropriate Head of Profession (HoP) or their professional colleagues on the public presentation of such information;
- b. use published Official Statistics, where available, in any form of public statement prepared for Ministers or officials; do not use any similar, unpublished management or other forms of quantitative information;
- c. if you need to issue public statements which use quantitative information that has not previously been published, then:
  - i. obtain advice from the HoP on how that information should be presented and released, and;
  - ii. if this information is likely to be released on a regular basis, arrange with the HoP for that information to become an Official Statistic so that it complies with the *Code*, and;
- d. in normal circumstances, access to provisional versions of Official Statistics will only be given to those persons involved in their production, distribution and quality assurance. In exceptional circumstances, however, HoPs may grant access to others if they decide that this is in the public interest. Access will not be granted for the purpose of presenting or defending official policies.

Access to management information that covers similar ground to Official Statistics

- a. do not expect to get access to management and similar information if you do not need it for supporting the day-to-day management/operation of the organisation;
- b. if you do have access to such information before any related Official Statistics are published, you must not issue public statements based on that information, except in the circumstances described above, and;
- c. your organisation must publish a Statement covering those administrative sources that are, or can be, used to produce Official Statistics. It should also make information publicly available, on request, about the extent to which information from those systems is given to Ministers, CEOs and senior officials before the publication of related Official Statistics.

## **NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S DETAILED GUIDANCE - Treatment of Administrative/Management Data used for Statistical Purposes**

### Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and advice on how the principles and practices set out in *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* should be applied in the following circumstances:
  - a. where quantitative information derived from administrative, operational, managerial, financial, scientific, and research sources are initially and legitimately used to serve the day-to-day business of government and then, subsequently, transformed into, and published as, 'Official Statistics' For a definition of what is meant by the phrase 'Official Statistics', see the complementary guidance document entitled: 'The National Statistician's Guidance on Defining and Identifying Official Statistics' (Title may change);
  - b. where data collected for the sole purpose of supporting government business demonstrate, in addition, the potential to generate 'Official Statistics' as a by-product, and;
  - c. where provisional data from purely statistical surveys are made available for administrative, managerial, operational and related purposes on an exceptional, and case-by-case basis.
2. For all practical purposes, all of the circumstances described above mean that a wide range of persons, both within and outside government, many of whom may not be acquainted with the concept of a statistical *Code of Practice*, will be in a position where they can use and disseminate the data from those systems before those data are transformed into Official Statistics, and often well before any derived Official Statistics are published and made available to all. In other words they will have early access to Official Statistics which are not yet in their final form.
3. The early, and sometimes wide, availability of such data before their transformation into statistics (albeit justified) can lead to their uncontrolled or ad hoc use, and to the risk of their public disclosure or dissemination. Such early release may, in turn, pre-empt or undermine the eventual and more formal release of Official Statistics based on those data.
4. The risks outlined above mean that the arrangements for handling such access must be managed in a way which ensures that organisations fulfil their statutory duty to comply with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.

### Complementary Guidance

5. A different, but complementary, set of principles and rules apply in those circumstances where Government Ministers, Chief Executives and their close officials are given pre-release access to Official Statistics which **are** in their final form prior to publication. The arrangements governing this particular type of early access are set out in a series of legislative Orders laid by the UK Government and the three Devolved Administrations (DAs) and are explained more fully in a separate guidance manual issued by each. To date, three Pre-release Access Orders have been affirmed by the relevant Parliament/Assembly and come into effect. See the 'References' at the end of this document.



## Annex A - SA(09)22 - Management Information in Official Statistics

### Scope of Guidance

6. The principles and rules set out in this guidance apply to:
- a. all Crown Bodies and those Non-Crown Bodies identified in any Official Statistics Order. The UK Government's Official Statistics Order 2009; and the equivalent Orders in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and;
  - b. officials in any of the above bodies who either:
    - i. own, control, manage or use any administrative, management or social science research systems or processes which either generate, or have the potential to generate, either 'Official Statistics', or Code-compliant 'National Statistics', or
    - ii. use the data obtained from such processes or systems to: meet managerial, policy or operational requirements; answer Parliamentary Questions; reply to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act; or produce Official Statistics.
7. This guidance does not apply to staff in local bodies with respect to their own data (even when those data feed into central government systems) but it does apply when they are given access to national information, or information about other local bodies, that eventually feeds into Official Statistics.

### Guiding Principles

8. The following guidance is based on a number of fundamental principles, namely that:
- a. it is entirely legitimate for organisations to make full and effective use of quantitative information obtained from their administrative systems for operational and managerial purposes. The *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* is there to reinforce rather than impede such usage;
  - b. neither the *Code of Practice* nor the statutory rules relating to pre-release access to Official Statistics can apply in their entirety to such information;
  - c. organisations should employ the professional skills of government statisticians to improve the information derived from administrative systems and should also encourage them to exploit such information for statistical purposes in order to achieve value-for-money and reduce the potential burden on data suppliers;
  - d. where operational, managerial or policy decisions are informed by quantitative evidence, this process should be based on the best information available;
  - e. the regular or recurring use of administrative/management information in public statements or releases places an obligation on organisations to either publish such information as Official Statistics, and in a way which conforms to the *Code of Practice*, or publish a public explanation for the continuance of such practice;
  - f. whatever arrangements are in place, openness and transparency are key to the maintenance and enhancement of public trust in the government's use of quantitative resources, and to safeguarding the integrity of any resulting Official Statistics, and;
  - g. the overriding imperative must be to serve the public interest.

## **BEST PRACTICE**

The complexity of all the different arrangements in place across government makes it difficult to lay down a simple set of rules that will govern all the circumstances that can apply. Owners, producers and users must often make on-the-spot judgements about propriety and the correct course of action. Those judgements, however, must be based on a set of sound ground-rules which are transparent to both practitioners and the wider community. The best practices outlined below reflect and expand on those set out in the *Code of Practice* – particularly those in Protocol 3 of the *Code*. They focus on five key areas of management:

- i. publication and dissemination;
- ii. access;
- iii. stewardship and development of administrative/management systems;
- iv. assessment and maintenance of quality, and
- v. public accountability and transparency

### 1. *Managing the Publication and Dissemination of Management and Similar Information which generates Official Statistics*

#### *Proactive Release*

Many organisations use management and other forms of quantitative information in various forms of public releases, including Ministerial press releases, fact sheets, departmental reports, Chief Executive press releases, etc. The numbers given in these releases should be based on published Official Statistics whenever they are available. If there is a need to use unpublished management or other forms of quantitative information then it is incumbent on officials to:

- a. consult the appropriate Head of Profession (HoP) on the options for meeting such requests;
- b. pay heed to any advice offered by the HoP for Statistics on the quality of administrative/management data and on its proper application and usage, and include that advice in any Ministerial submission which covers that data;
- c. clearly label any alternative dataset as lying outside the domain of Official Statistics; draw attention to its provenance and status; explain the relationship between that dataset and any equivalent Official Statistics and highlight any shortcomings compared with any related statistics;
- d. avoid any statement which might pre-empt or compromise the later release of Official Statistics;
- e. avoid selective or partisan reporting that might undermine public trust in the statistics, and;
- f. if the need for such an action becomes a regular requirement, consult the HoP with a view to transforming that information into Official Statistics.

#### *Ad hoc or Reactive Release*

In the normal course of their business, organisations will receive regular requests for quantitative information – perhaps in the form of Parliamentary Questions or in the context of the *Freedom of Information (FOI) Act* - which can only be met by reference to data gleaned from their administrative or management systems. When officials respond to such requests they should, where practicable, use the Official Statistics derived from those systems in preference to any intermediary or alternative version of the information. In so doing, officials should:

- i. provide, or at least point to, the latest available Official Statistics which are germane

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to the enquiry rather than provide any intermediary, provisional or alternative versions of the data, and;

- ii. call in aid Section 22 of the *FOI Act* by referring to Official Statistics which are due to be published later.

Clearly the more that an organisation is able to publish data from its administrative or management sources in the form of 'Official Statistics', the less the likelihood that the organisation will be forced to countenance the unplanned release of internal administrative/management information. Quantitative information obtained directly from these systems should only be used to meet FOI and other requests if there is no statistical alternative. If there is an overriding case for publishing quantitative information from such systems in advance of the release of any derived Official Statistics, then officials should consult the HoP follow points (a) to (f) above.

In such circumstances, HoPs should consider bringing forward publication of any planned Official Statistics in an ordered and transparent way in order to ensure equality of access

### 2 (i). Managing access to Administrative/Management Information prior to the publication of any derived Official Statistics

Organisations that are covered by the *Code* are encouraged to make full and appropriate use of management and similar forms of quantitative information for the day to day running of their business. However, care must be taken when this information covers similar ground to any Official Statistics that are due to be published subsequently.

The controllers of such systems must:

- a. limit additional access to management and similar data (whether in electronic or hardcopy form) on a need-to-know basis. i.e. to those persons required to peer review the data and to persons within the originating or owner organisation who have a legitimate need to use the data for managerial, operational or appropriate policy purposes in advance of their publication as statistics;
- b. ensure that any web-based access to such data is appropriately protected and that users give a clear undertaking not to place such data in the public domain;
- c. where access is granted to additional parties, e.g. for exceptional reasons, refer any such instance to the statistical HoP;
- d. keep records of which post-holders are granted access for the purposes described in (c) above, and make this record publicly available on request, and;
- e. formulate and apply clear 'Conditions of Use' on such access – modelled on this guidance.

In such circumstances, users must:

- a. abide by the 'Conditions of Use' attached to administrative/management data by the HoP. This also applies to any people outside the owner organisation who are granted access for specific purposes (e.g. staff in other organisations who may be collaborating on an initiative that spans several organisations);
- b. avoid ad hoc or selective comments on, or reporting of, administrative/management data which might undermine trust in any derived statistics;
- c. avoid making any public statement that pre-judges or pre-emptes the contents of any subsequent statistical release, and;
- d. comply with the rules set out in the relevant Pre-release Access to Statistics Order in the period immediately before publication of any derived Official Statistics, e.g. by not making any comment, or issuing any statement that might

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compromise the integrity of those statistics.

Producers of Official Statistics must:

- a. publish derived statistics in accordance with a timetable which strikes an appropriate balance between timeliness of release, users' needs, resource availability, and fitness-for-purpose, and with a view to mitigating the need to use administrative/management data in the interim, and as an alternative;
- b. provide advice on integrity and propriety to colleagues who use administrative or management data before they are transformed into statistics;
- c. grant pre-release access to the Official Statistics in accordance with the principles and rules set out in the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order, and;
- d. escalate to the HoP or National Statistician any concerns about the improper use of administrative/management data.

### 2(ii). Managing access to derived Official Statistics not yet in their final form

Controllers must **not** grant early access to derived Official Statistics for policy or briefing purposes, other than under the strict conditions set in the pre-Release Access to Statistics Order 2008. This is because such access would breach the fundamental principle of 'equality of access', and might raise suspicions that such access was being used to circumvent the stricter rules which govern pre-release access to statistics in their final form.

This rule can only be waived in those very exceptional circumstances where, in the opinion of the HoP for Statistics, acting in consultation with policy colleagues, the public benefit likely to result from such access significantly outweighs the detriment to public trust in Official Statistics which is likely to result from such access. In making such a decision the HoP will judge whether the latest available quantitative information provides sufficient cause for a policy decision or intervention to be taken before the figures are placed in the public domain, seeking advice from the National Statistician as appropriate.

Such exceptional access must be publicly documented at the time of publication.

### 3. Stewardship of administrative/management systems which also generate (or have the potential to generate) Official Statistics

As the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* recognises, the statistical advantages of administrative or management systems (relating, for example, to their timeliness and breadth of coverage) can only be fully realised if statistical purposes are actively promoted in the design, development, maintenance, and adaptation of such systems. Close collaboration between the controllers of such systems and their statistical colleagues can also generate complementary improvements to the systems themselves, and to their capacity to deliver robust and useful management information. Benefits can also accrue to the wider community if such collaboration leads to the elimination of expensive data collection systems and a reduction in the form-filling burden placed on data providers. Senior managers should ensure, therefore, that close links are established and maintained between the controllers of administrative or management systems and the producers of any derived Official Statistics; that system managers and IT staff involve their statistical colleagues in the stewardship of such systems; and that statisticians are given the opportunity to influence their thinking. More particularly.....

The Controllers of such systems must:

- a. recognise that the experience and expertise of professional statisticians and other

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professional analysts in government can make a valuable contribution to the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative/management systems and their application to policy or operational purposes;

- b. establish governance arrangements which give government statisticians and other professional analysts appropriate access to administrative or management systems and the opportunity to influence the design, and further development of administrative/management systems in ways which increase the potential of those systems to provide Official Statistics which remain consistent over time, and;
- c. consult statisticians and other professional analysts in government before considering, or making, any changes to administrative/management systems or any related performance targets which might damage the viability, integrity or continuity of any derived statistics.

Those responsible for producing Official Statistics must, in turn:

- a. recognise that early access to administrative, management and related data for the purposes for which those data were originally collected does not constitute inappropriate access;
- b. avoid imposing inappropriate statistical standards on such data, or obstructing the legitimate use or publication of such data before their transformation into Official Statistics;
- c. consider the alternative option of exploiting existing administrative or management systems before launching new statistical surveys in order to avoid the possibility of imposing duplicative and burdensome obligations on data providers;
- d. collaborate with the owners/administrators of such systems to ensure that the definitions and concepts used for administrative or management purposes are a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes, and;
- e. work in partnership with the owners/managers/controllers of administrative/management systems to help enhance the potential for those systems to generate Official Statistics.

#### 4. Managing the quality of Administrative/Management Sources which generate Official Statistics

The controllers of administrative/management systems, as well as their policy, operational and statistical customers, all have an equal interest in maintaining the quality of the information they extract from those systems. For statisticians, however, there are two overriding issues. One is the extent to which they have sufficient understanding about the basis of an administrative or management system to be able to judge whether or not that system is capable of delivering robust Official Statistics. The other issue is the extent to which changes to the underlying systems – whether generated by policy shifts, or changes in IT systems or business processes – have the potential to damage the quality of the Official Statistics derived from those data, and in particular their relevance, coherence, comparability and consistency over time. The degree to which such changes pose a problem for statisticians depends to a large extent on their understanding of, and influence over, the source data; and their ability to mitigate such changes. Senior managers should ensure, therefore, that both parties cooperate in the task of assessing and documenting such systems in a manner which will serve the following purposes:

Organisations must:

- a. compile a 'Statement of Administrative Sources' (SAS) – in accordance with Protocol 3 attached to the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* – which

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describes how administrative, management or similar information is used within organisations, and the extent to which that information is released prior to its eventual publication as Official Statistics. A recommended template for a 'SAS' is shown in **Annex A** (Not included here);

- b. apply appropriate quality assurance procedures to administrative/management systems – thereby informing, supplementing and reinforcing the UK Statistics Authority's statutory accreditation 'Assessments' of any derived statistics;
- c. create and maintain a high-level 'Process Map' for each system which provides a clear description of the process which leads to the production of the original administrative or management data, and the relationship between that data and any resultant statistics;
- d. ensure, where practicable, and where there is no risk of adverse consequences, that administrative/management systems use definitions and classifications which match, or map to, those used for statistical surveys;
- e. compile appropriate documentation (As shown in **Annex B** - not included here) in order to:
  - i. inform judgements about the potential for such systems to generate Official Statistics;
  - ii. explain any system changes which have had an impact on the continuity of any derived statistics;
  - iii. inform decisions about the most appropriate way to handle discontinuities or issue revisions, and;
  - iv. foster greater public understanding of how the underlying administrative/management data are collected, processed, used, and released and how they relate to any resultant statistics;
- f. accompany any publication of administrative/management data with balanced commentary and supporting metadata which describes the nature and quality of the data used, and their fitness for purpose, and;
- g. otherwise, make transparency a key component of good practice.

### 5. Compiling a Statement of Administrative Sources

One of the most effective ways of preserving public trust in Official Statistics is to be totally transparent about their provenance, and about the processes and procedures which lead to their compilation and publication. At the simplest level this requires officials to make publicly available a list of the 'names' or 'titles' of all the quantitative systems and sources within organisations which can be drawn upon for both administrative/management/operational purposes as well as statistical purposes, and to which the principles and rules in this Guidance apply.

The UK Statistics Authority, however, expect government officials to go several steps further. The third Protocol attached to their *Code of Practice* requires officials to publish a 'SAS' which identifies not only those administrative/management systems which are already used in the production of Official Statistics, but also those systems which have the potential to be so used.

In addition, and for each system used to produce Official Statistics, the Authority expect officials to describe the arrangements made to:

- a. take account of the effect of administrative changes on the resultant statistics;
- b. provide statistical staff with access to the data for statistical purposes;
- c. audit the quality of the source data, and;
- d. ensure the security of the statistical processes that draw on such systems.

**Annex B**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)08

***Statistics Authority Comment on Management Information  
and the use of Statistics in Policy Documents***

**Purpose**

1. This paper builds on an earlier paper [SA(09)03] discussed at the January meeting of the Authority Board. The Annex is a draft document for the Authority's website on the circumstances under which the Authority would expect to comment on a) the public use of 'management information', defined as any numerical data that government departments etc. do not regard as being Official Statistics, and b) the use of statistics in policy documents, defined as any document or statement that is not a statistical report. It is best to address these issues together as the statistics that appear in policy documents are often an undifferentiated mix of Official Statistics and management information.

**Timing**

2. It would be helpful to have a statement, or document, on the website as soon as we can so that we can point members of the Government Statistical Service (GSS), and others who want to know what our role is, to it.

**Recommendations**

3. Authority members are invited to comment on the criteria and arguments set out in the **Annex**. A final decision on the text of this document will need to await work in this area being undertaken by a GSS working group – as mentioned in the letter of 16 January from Sir Gus O'Donnell to the chair of the Public Administration Committee.

**Discussion**

4. The *Code of Practice* applies to the production, management and dissemination of Official Statistics. It contains very little of direct relevance to the public use of statistics after publication, or about good practice in relation to statistical data (management information) which departments etc. do not regard as being Official Statistics.
5. The Authority's broad role as set out in the *Statistics and Registration Service Act* requires it to consider the question of whether management information should instead be treated as Official Statistics. There is also an expectation, reflected in general terms in our own Code and in international ones, that the GSS or the Authority will comment on any misuse of statistics after publication. Thus we need to consider, and make clear, the circumstances under which we will do so.
6. Implicit in whatever position we take on such matters will be certain principles of good practice for producers of statistics that might eventually be turned into a small number of imperative statements in the style of the *Code of Practice* and, subject to consultation, ultimately included as a further Protocol to the *Code*. However, this is for consideration in the longer term. The more pressing need is to set out the criteria that the Authority will use in deciding whether to make public comment.

## Annex B – SA(09)22 – Management Information in Official Statistics

7. The Board considered at its January meeting the merits of some form of consultation on our position on these points. One option would be to publish a document on the lines proposed as soon as we can but also invite comments. One area that is likely to attract some comment is the position we are taking on the statistical results of 'research'. The draft takes the line that statistics from research work should be treated as Official Statistics unless it has been agreed with the National Statistician or the Statistics Authority that they should not be, or it is self-evident that the results are not the sort of information that Parliament or the public would regard as 'statistics'. To make this viable in practice we would need to put in place a process for securing such agreement.
8. One example which illustrates why this is important relates to special aggregations of raw statistical data – that is material which will be aggregated in a different way to create Official Statistics, for example crime data held by the police. As in the recent knife crime case, the department may prepare special aggregations of some raw data as a piece of research and then publish those figures without regard to the *Code of Practice*. Our position is that such special aggregation should normally be treated as Official Statistics. This view is unlikely to be seen as controversial outside government but is more controversial inside government, where the boundary around 'statistics' has historically been driven more by whether the figures are part of the regular production of statistics, than by considerations of whether statistical principles should be observed. Our position thus threatens long accepted demarcation lines around research work and statistics.

**Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment, February 2009**

### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A(1) - Draft Document-Statistics Authority Comment on Management Information and the use of Statistics in Policy Documents**



**Annex A(1) Statistics Authority Comment on Management Information and the use of Statistics in Policy Documents**

This document has been published on the Authority's website.

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statement---management-information--research-data--and-the-use-of-statistics-in-policy-documents--22-july-2009.pdf>□□□□□□□□□□

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)23

***UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2008-09***

**Purpose**

1. This paper covers a contents page (**Annex A**) and full draft text for volume 1 (chapters 1 to 5) of the UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2008-09 (**Annex B**).

**Timing**

2. The Annual Report will be submitted for approval by the Authority's Audit Committee at its meeting on 16 June. Final sign off by the Accounting Officer is required in early July so that the Report may be laid before Parliament prior to the Summer parliamentary recess. Arrangements are in hand to lay the report before the devolved legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Recommendation**

3. The Authority is invited to consider and comment on the text of volume 1 (Chapters 1-5) of the Annual Report at **Annex B** with a view to its approval.
4. Volume 2 (chapter 6 - resource accounts) of the report is in preparation. It will be submitted to members of the Authority in early June via correspondence.

**Discussion**

5. The process and timetable for approval and publication of the Annual Report was agreed by the Authority at the meeting of 16 December 2008 [**SA(08)48**]. Accordingly the:
  - i. Board of the Authority discussed drafts of Chapters 1 and 2 at the meeting of 17 April [**SA(09)21**];
  - ii. Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board considered an outline draft of Chapter 3 at the meeting of 2 April [**SA(ONS)(09)15**] and then a full draft via correspondence [**SA(ONS)(09)16**] in May;
  - iii. Committee for Official Statistics reviewed outlines of Chapters 1, 2 and 4 at the meeting of 10 March [**SA(COS)(09)08**], and then a full draft of Chapter 4 via correspondence [**SA(COS)(09)18**] in May;
  - iv. Audit Committee discussed an outline of Chapters 5 and 6 at the meeting of 2 March [**SA(ADT)(09)07**].
6. Please note that text in [red brackets] is currently awaiting confirmation or further information.

**Alex Elton-Wall, Secretariat, UK Statistics Authority, May 2009**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A: Annual Report Contents Page**

**Annex B: Draft Volume 1 - UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2008-09**

SA(09)23 – UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2008-09

**Annex A and B – Annual Report Contents Page and Draft Volume 1 –  
UK Statistics Authority Annual Report 2008-09**

The UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2008-09 will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in July 2009.

Reports are available at:

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

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)24

***Progress Report on the Assessment Programme***

**Purpose**

1. This paper reports the progress of the programme of initial assessments, noting emerging issues and ways that the Monitoring and Assessment Team will deal with them.

**Timing**

2. For consideration by the Authority at its May 2009 meeting.

**Recommendations**

3. The Authority is invited to:
  - i. note progress to date of the assessment programme;
  - ii. suggest comments about the format required for regular reporting, and;
  - iii. agree the attached note for publication on the Authority's website (**Annex A**).

**Discussion**

4. Progress on the assessment programme will be reported to the Authority each month. We expect that the format of this report will evolve as the work progresses, and would welcome the Authority's views on the format and content of such reports.

Scope

5. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has confirmed its request for an assessment of *Energy Sector Indicators*. This is now included in the programme, with the aim of completing this assessment by the end of June 2009.
6. This change is reflected in the proposed update for the Authority's website, attached as the Annex to this report. DECC have indicated that they may also wish to nominate *Fuel Poverty Statistics* for assessment, once a strategic review of fuel poverty has been undertaken later this year.
7. Office for National Statistics (ONS) has requested an assessment of its forthcoming output *'Wealth in Great Britain: Main Results from the Household Assets Survey 2006-2008'*.
8. The initial programme of 15 assessments (the assessment of children looked after by local authorities will comprise four separate assessments) is now as follows:
  - i. Migration Statistics (Office for National Statistics);
  - ii. Road Freight Statistics (Department for Transport);
  - iii. Road Casualty Statistics (Department for Transport);
  - iv. Prison Population Projections (Ministry of Justice);
  - v. Statistics on International Development (Department for International Development);
  - vi. Official Development Assistance/Gross National Income ratio (Department for International Development);
  - vii. Enrolments at Schools and in Funded Pre-School Education in Northern Ireland;
  - viii. Recorded Crime in Scotland;
  - ix. Children looked after by local authorities (separate publications for each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland);
  - x. Statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse);
  - xi. Energy Sector Indicators (Department of Energy and Climate Change), and;

## SA(09)24 - Progress Report on the Assessment Programme

- xii. Wealth in Great Britain; Main results from the Household Assets Survey 2006-2008 (Office for National Statistics), forthcoming

### Progress

- 9. A draft report for the assessment of drug treatment statistics is currently under discussion. This first assessment will be considered by the Committee for Official Statistics (Assessment) at its meeting on 19 May.
- 10. The assessment of *Wealth in Britain* will be scheduled for later in the year.
- 11. As of 8 May, progress on the remaining 13 assessments is as follows:
  - i. initial meetings have been held for all assessments;
  - ii. consultation with users and suppliers is underway for ten assessments, and;
  - iii. Written Evidence for Assessment forms (WEFAs) have been returned for four assessments, with the remainder due by the end of May.

### Issues to note

- 12. The submission of written evidence has been mixed. In some cases, WEFAs are delayed and producers are suggesting difficulties in meeting our timetables, which are deliberately slightly relaxed for the initial assessments. In other cases, WEFAs have arrived on time. Notably, the Scottish Government estimated two days and three days as the time taken for completion of its two WEFAs; which accords with our expectations.
- 13. A separate paper will be presented to the Committee for Official Statistics on 19 May covering proposals for streamlining the assessment process.

**Mark Pont, Monitoring and Assessment Team, May 2009**

### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A: Text of Authority Statement on revisions to the Initial Programme of Assessment**

## SA(09)24 - Progress Report on the Assessment Programme

### **Annex A - Text of Authority Statement on revisions to the Initial Programme of Assessment** □ □

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

The Programme of Assessment is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/programme-of-assessment/index.html>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)25

***Monitoring Report Update***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents information on the current status of the three ongoing monitoring reports: *Improvements in Migration Statistics*, *Strengthening the User Voice* and *Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics*.

**Recommendation**

2. The board is invited to take note of the progress being made with the monitoring reports.

**Discussion**

*Improvements in Migration Statistics*

3. The interim report was published on 7 April, followed by an open meeting to discuss the issues raised in the report, on 22 April. The meeting was fully subscribed with nearly 60 attendees from a wide range of backgrounds. Positive feedback was received from users and producers on this approach to reviewing the interim report. Particular issues on migration statistics were raised in a helpful discussion and these are being considered in the preparation of the final report.
4. A review of literature on migration statistics, commissioned by the Authority, has been prepared by Professor Phil Rees and colleagues. It is in the process of being reviewed by the project board and several key users, and will form the final monitoring report. Discussion is also being held with the Departments of Health and Communities and Local Government. Preliminary findings from the Assessment of Office for National Statistics (ONS) migration statistics which is currently underway will also be considered.
5. The final report is scheduled to be published in July. Revised recommendations will be considered by the Project Board and then circulated to Authority members.

*Strengthening the User Voice*

6. The specification for this report was approved by the Committee for Official Statistics at its meeting on 10 March.
7. The project board for the report has been agreed and the first meeting is due to be held on 13 May. Professor Sir Roger Jowell is chairing the project board. Papers have been circulated to the project board before this meeting on:
  - a. the definition of a user of statistics;
  - b. decision-making in the Government Statistical Service;
  - c. the specification for the series of interviews with selected opinion-formers (ISOF) (which will be put out to tender once the board has given its comments), and;
  - d. a possible survey on public confidence in Official Statistics.

## SA(09)25 - Monitoring and Assessment Monitoring Report Update

### Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics

8. The outline specification for this report was approved by the Authority Board at its meeting on 20 February.
9. The project board has been agreed and the first meeting is due to be held on 13 May. Partha Dasgupta is chairing the project board. Papers have been circulated to the project board before the first meeting, including a context setting paper outlining the background to the monitoring report.

**Monitoring and Assessment Team, UK Statistics Authority, May 2009**



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)26

***Monitoring and Assessment Resources***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides information about the planned resourcing of the Monitoring and Assessment Team.
2. In light of discussion at the April Authority Board meeting, the primary purpose of this paper is to indicate the human resources expected to be available for the Monitoring and Assessment work programme.
3. Please note that a revised business plan, setting out the objectives and planned activities for the Central Office as a whole will be presented to the June meeting of the Authority.

**Recommendations**

4. Members of the Authority are invited to consider and comment on the information provided in this paper.

**Discussion**

5. The Monitoring and Assessment Team has at present an allocation of about 16 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, located in three sites, London, Newport and Edinburgh. Within this allocation, recruitment of four staff in Edinburgh is in train with interviews and job offers in hand currently.
6. The team is on course to be fully staffed by the end of July 2009. This team will have some additional support from the rest of the Central Office, for example on handling papers, arranging meetings and dealing with telephone calls. There will also be funding available for contracted support - either from individual consultants or research organisations. At the moment there are no specific plans for using contracted support for Assessment work, though this will be considered as the work evolves. Contracted work is already used within the Monitoring work programme and it is likely that some entire Monitoring Reports will be contracted out (for example the one on the adequacy of environmental statistics). The contract budget for 2009-10 is £355,000.
7. The Monitoring and Assessment Team is organised to work flexibly with no strict boundaries between jobs focused on Assessment reports and jobs focused on Monitoring and casework (letters, complaints about statistics etc). The working assumption is that Assessment activities will take up roughly 70% of staff time in the first two full years of Assessment work (summer 2009 to summer 2011); with the remaining 30% divided between research for Monitoring Reports, casework and support for committees. The split of the work in terms of individuals' responsibilities varies, but the plan is for Assessment work to be concentrated in Newport and Edinburgh and casework to concentrate in London. The arrangements for Monitoring Reports will be decided report by report.
8. A typical assessment is likely to be led by a Grade 7 with support from one of the Senior Executive Officer (SEO) or Higher Executive Officer (HEO) level analytical staff. The support staff will work on more than one assessment at a time, while the Executive Officer (EO) will supply administrative assistance across the team. Each assessment also requires quality assurance input from the Grade 6 (G6 - Mark Pont) and/or Grade 5 (G5 - Richard Laux or Neil Jackson) to ensure consistency of approach across the

## SA(09)26 - Monitoring and Assessment Resources

programme. Once the set-up phase is over, the Head of Assessment will advise on priorities for Assessment, monitor standards and progress against plans but will normally be directly involved in the preparation of Assessment reports.

9. The split of staff by grade and site is given in the table below.

Staff in Post	London	Newport	Edinburgh
SCS	1		1
G6		1	
G7	3	2	
SEO*	1	1	
HEO*		1	
EO		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Vacancies			
G7		0.5	2
HEO*			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>5</b>

\* statistical, research and analytical specialists

10. The present allocation for staff resource is £1.275 million for the year 2009/10. Including the allocation of £355,000 for external consultancy to support the work of the team makes a total combined salary allocation of £1.630 million.
11. Monitoring and Assessment also works with the other staff of the Central Office in various ways. Casework and formal correspondence in particular provides close links to the Secretariat (see paper **[SA(09)27]** on the agenda of this meeting for a discussion of issues raised with the Authority in 2008/09 and processes for dealing with them). The secretariat also provides the Authority's website, communications, financial and other corporate services.
12. The secretariat's current staffing complement is 7.8 FTE, spread across the Newport and London sites, with a budget allocation of £510 thousand. It is difficult to give a meaningful estimate of the proportion of this resource devoted to Monitoring and Assessment, but it is significant.

### Future Resourcing of the Assessment Programme

13. The structure of the Monitoring and Assessment Team may evolve as more experience of assessment is gained, but it is a sustainable approach given the plans in hand for streamlining the assessment process.
14. The ongoing streamlining and resourcing of the Assessment programme is the subject of a separate paper which is due to be considered by the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) at the meeting on 19 May. The paper will consider the lessons learnt from the first assessment, and the early plans for ensuring a successfully completed assessment programme within five years - by March 2014.

## SA(09)26 - Monitoring and Assessment Resources

15. In brief, the paper proposes grouping the assessments into 300 to 400 separate exercises which will in turn be divided into a first (priority) group and a second group for which the Assessment process will be lighter and quicker. This implies:
  - a. 300 to 400 assessments over five years but with most of the time given to the priority group, and;
  - b. about 13 FTEs (G7 and below) devoting 70% of their time to Assessment, roughly equivalent to 24 person-days per assessment exercise.
  
16. The next step, following discussion at COS, will be to establish a further work programme for the coming year, with timescales, milestones and deliverables. This will be the subject of a paper to a subsequent meeting of the Authority.

**Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment, May 2009**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)27

***Issues raised with the Authority 2008-09***

**Purpose**

1. This paper reviews the substantive issues raised with the UK Statistics Authority, or otherwise brought to the Authority's attention, between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009. It does not include issues raised directly with the National Statistician or the Office for National Statistics (ONS) that have been subsequently dealt with by them. It includes issues raised directly with the Secretariat. The paper provides a brief analysis of the themes arising, and a description of the internal systems for managing the investigation of these issues.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the UK Statistics Authority are invited to:
  - i. note current arrangements for the investigation of issues raised with the Authority;
  - ii. review and comment on the analysis of the issues raised during 2008-09 identifying whether this is useful and/or how the analysis might be further enhanced and improved. A summary is presented at paragraphs 3 to 7, the full analysis is attached at **Annex A**, and;
  - iii. note the published summary of issues raised with the Authority in 2008-09 (**Annex B**).

**Discussion**

3. A total of 99 substantive issues were raised with the Authority, or otherwise brought to the Authority's attention during the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009. 41 issues originated in the three months following the media coverage of the Authority's intervention regarding the publication of the Home Office factsheet on knife crime in December 2008.
4. Around one-third of the substantive issues raised during 2008-09 originated with the media, either journalists raising issues directly with the Authority or highlighting issues that warranted further investigation to ascertain what, if any, Authority intervention or action was required. Members of the public also raised a number of issues with the Authority during the year, typically through correspondence. The vast majority of issues were dealt with through correspondence, either formal correspondence in the form of a letter from the Authority Chair or a Deputy Chair (or referred to the National Statistician for answer), or dealt with at official-level within the Authority Secretariat or Monitoring and Assessment Team. Around one-fifth of issues investigated during the year resulted in a public statement by the Authority.
5. A significant number of issues raised with the Authority concerned release practices; questioned the trustworthiness, quality or reliability of Official Statistics (individual sets of statistics or Official Statistics more generally); or sought clarification on the appropriate designation of certain statistical products. The ways in which Official Statistics are communicated, and issues concerning statistical methodology or technical questions were also among the leading themes of the issues raised with the Authority in 2008-09.
6. 40 issues investigated or reviewed during the year involved statistics produced by ONS, explained in part because the ONS is the UK's national statistical institute and biggest producer of Official Statistics in the UK, and also because the Authority has responsibility for governance of the ONS. A further 12 issues concerned statistics

produced by the Home Office. Seven issues raised with the Authority concerned statistics produced or commissioned by arm's length bodies not currently deemed as producers of Official Statistics as set out in legislation. Almost one-quarter of the issues raised with the Authority in 2008-09 involved statistics in the 'Economy' theme. A further 15 issues involved 'Population' and 14 issues concerned 'Crime and Justice' statistics.

7. Origin of Issues

Issues regarding the production and publication of Official Statistics, the scrutiny of Official Statistics produced in the UK, the governance and oversight of ONS, and the Monitoring and Assessment work programme of the Authority, can be raised with the Authority, or brought to the attention of the Authority, in a number of ways. These include:

- i. correspondence to the Authority Chair (or other non-executive members of the Authority) by letter, email, or telephone;
- ii. correspondence to the Head of Assessment or Authority officials by letter, email, or telephone, and correspondence to the National Statistician passed to the Authority Secretariat to co-ordinate a response;
- iii. issues raised in the media, in some cases judged by the Authority Chair to be worthy of investigation;
- iv. breaches of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and pre-release access arrangements investigated by the Monitoring and Assessment Team, and;
- v. issues raised in a parliamentary (UK Parliament or a devolved legislature) context but not otherwise the subject of formal correspondence or significant media attention.

8. Systems for Recording

Almost all issues raised with the Authority, or brought to the Authority's attention, are recorded centrally by the Authority Secretariat on an "Issues Log". The Issues Log includes the date on which the issue was raised, a summary description of what the issue is regarded to be, and supporting information to enable the Secretariat to monitor the process for investigation, maintain a complete record of the correspondence, including where an issue is referred to the Monitoring and Assessment Team and/or ONS and/or a Government Department for opinion or advice. A version of the Issues Log, containing the date and summary description, is published on the Authority's website and updated routinely. Anecdotal information suggests that the website version of the Issues Log is welcomed as an indication of the types of issues raised with and, where relevant, investigated by the Authority.

9. Administration

A weekly internal casework report is produced, summarising new issues raised during the preceding week, noting progress with current issues being investigated, and recording those issues where investigation has been completed (including a note in respect of those issues to be revisited and an indication of when they should be revisited). The report is discussed at a weekly casework conference involving the principal officials, chaired by the Head of Assessment. The report and conference are used to review progress and next steps, and allocate responsibility for investigation where appropriate. Issues which require the input of the National Statistician and/or the wider Government Statistical Service are passed to the National Statistician's private office so as to co-ordinate.

SA(09)27 - Issues raised with the Authority 2008-09

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A Interim Analysis of Issues raised with the Authority 2008-09**

**Annex B Published Issues Log for the year 2008-09**

## **Annex A Interim Analysis of Issues raised with the Authority 2008-09**

Additional information about each of the issues raised with the Authority during the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009 has been applied to each issue in respect of:

- i. the source of the issue (i.e the type of correspondent);
- ii. the procedure by which the issue raised was investigated by the Authority;
- iii. the type (substance) of the issue;
- iv. the (lead) department responsible for the statistics mentioned in the issue;
- v. the National Statistics theme group under which the statistics mentioned in the issue may fall;
- vi. the outcome of the Authority's investigation, and;
- vii. whether or not the issue raised concerned statistics that are wholly devolved.

An analysis has been undertaken and the summary findings, including indicative totals, are outlined below. The totals may be revised in light of further analysis of the background and outcome to each issue, in particular where issues raised recently are resolved in the coming weeks.

### **1. Source**

Issues raised with the Authority, or brought to the Authority's attention, are categorised according to the following broad source types:

- i. media (**35 issues in 2008-09**);
- ii. public (**18 issues**);
- iii. government (**15 issues**);
- iv. user and academic community, including the Royal Statistical Society (**12 issues**);
- v. Parliament (**11 issues**); and,
- vi. pressure groups, trade associations, charities (**8 issues**).

### **2. Procedure**

Issues are reviewed and investigated, and allocated to one of four types of investigative procedure. The detailed procedures for investigation vary according to which category is allocated to the particular issue concerned. The four procedures are:

- i. Formal Casework Procedure - the procedure for investigating issues of public concern, as agreed by the Authority in November 2008 [SA(08)41]. An issue arises which, in the view of the Authority Chair, warrants immediate investigation. The advice of the National Statistician is sought within 48 hours of the issue being raised, followed by separate advice from the Head of Assessment. The Authority Chair decides on the appropriate course of action, if any, after discussion with other Authority members as required (**7 issues**);
- ii. breaches of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and pre-release access rules, and cases where a breach of the *Code* (or pre-release rules) is suspected but for which no information is available or forthcoming (**8 issues**);
- iii. formal correspondence - an issue is raised with the Authority through formal correspondence with a member of the Authority, or is otherwise brought to the Authority's attention, which the Authority intends to respond to, once investigated, through formal correspondence (**35 issues**), and;
- iv. issue reviewed and noted, and where necessary dealt with by correspondence at official-level (email, telephone or letter) (**51 issues**).

3. Type

The substance of issues raised are categorised according to the following types:

- i. the principles and practices governing the release of Official Statistics **(23 issues)**;
- ii. trustworthiness, quality, or reliability of statistics, including issues of designation of statistics currently beyond the scope of Official (or National) Statistics **(20 issues)**;
- iii. the clarity of the communication of Official Statistics **(14 issues)**;
- iv. methodological or technical aspects regarding the coverage and classification of Official Statistics **(13 issues)**;
- v. legal or quasi-legal issues, including legal requirements (e.g. Census, business surveys), and issues relating to the disclosure of personal information **(10 issues)**;
- vi. lack of availability of Official Statistics **(10 issues)**;
- vii. issue does not relate to Official Statistics, their production and publication **(9 issues)**, and;
- viii. the coherence and consistency of Official Statistics, including geographical (UK or sub-national) consistency and coherence with non-Official Statistics **(3 issues)**.

4. Departmental Responsibility

The department (or lead department) responsible for the production and publication of the Official Statistics concerned in respect of each issue, or who *would* have responsibility for their production were the statistics produced, is identified in each case. The lead departments with the largest number of issues raised during 2008-09 were:

- i. Office for National Statistics **(40 issues)**;
- ii. Home Office **(12 issues)**;
- iii. Ministry of Justice **(5 issues)**;
- iv. Department of Health **(5 issues)**, and;
- v. Department for Children, Schools and Families **(4 issues)**.

Seven issues raised with the Authority in 2008-09 concerned statistical information or analysis produced (or commissioned) by arm's length bodies beyond the scope of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* and the *Official Statistics Orders*.

5. National Statistics Theme

Each issue is categorised according to the relevant National Statistics (NS) "theme", or the theme most likely to be relevant in the case of statistics that are not currently NS. One of the key aims of NS is to enhance their coherence and relevance produced across the 30 and more departments and agencies in the Government Statistical Service through 11 National Statistics Theme Groups.

Each theme group is chaired either by a Head of Profession for Statistics or his/her representative. The groups have responsibility for a specific area of statistical production, for example 'Economy', 'Crime and Justice'. They bring together statistical representatives from each of the Government Departments, Agencies and Devolved Administrations which have an interest in that particular topic. The role of the groups is to develop and implement coherent work plans for the NS products which fall within their scope. They also play an important role in monitoring the quality of each of the statistical outputs within their remit.



## SA(09)27 - Issues raised with the Authority 2008-09

The themes with the highest number of issues raised with, or brought to the attention of, the Authority in 2008-09 were Economy, Population, and Crime and Justice:

- i. Agriculture and Environment (**2 issues**);
- ii. Business and Energy (**4 issues**);
- iii. Children, Education and Skills (**5 issues**);
- iv. Crime and Justice (**14 issues**);
- v. Economy (**22 issues**);
- vi. Government (**2 issues**);
- vii. Health and Social Care (**7 issues**);
- viii. Labour Market (**5 issues**);
- ix. People and Places (**8 issues**);
- x. Population (**15 issues**), and;
- xi. Travel and Transport (**4 issues**).

One issue related to the cross-cutting National Statistics theme of 'Equality and Diversity'. A further ten issues were not directly attributable to any one particular NS theme group.

### 6. Outcome

The outcome or action taken in respect of each issue raised with the Authority is categorised according to the following schema:

- i. issue investigated and reviewed, *either* no significant further action taken or response through communication (typically email or telephone) with the correspondent at official-level and note taken of the substance of the issue concerned (**50 issues**);
- ii. formal response from the Authority to the correspondent (**21 issues**);
- iii. public statement by the Authority (e.g. Monitoring and Assessment Note, news release, published correspondence) (**19 issues**);
- iv. informal discussion with the responsible department and/or issue passed to department to determine action required, if any (**5 issues**);
- v. formal response from the Authority to the correspondent, and copied to the responsible department (**2 issues**), and;
- vi. issue investigated and reviewed, and included in a revised work programme for Monitoring and/or Assessment (**2 issues**).

### 7. Wholly Devolved Statistics

Three issues raised with the Authority in 2008-09 concerned Official Statistics that are wholly the responsibility of the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland.

Subject to the wishes of Authority members, additional information about individual issues raised with the Authority during 2008-09 could be included, and likewise for 2009-10 and subsequent years. Two additional categories of information have been considered, and Authority members are invited to give their views.

8. Media interest/wider Impact

The level of media interest in the issue, and the Authority's response, if any. This may also take account of the wider impact of the Authority's response. Most issues attract no or low levels of media interest/wider impact:

- i. no media interest/no impact;
- ii. low media interest/low impact;
- iii. medium media interest/medium impact, and;
- iv. high media interest/high impact.

9. Resource Implications

The resource implications for the Authority in the investigation or review of issues raised tend to vary considerably depending on the precise nature of the particular issue concerned. Some issues have no resource implications, typically because they are reviewed briefly and noted, whereas others are particularly resource intensive, involving combinations of the Authority Chair, other Authority members, Authority officials, press officers, and professional statisticians working in government:

- i. no resource implications;
- ii. low resource intensity;
- iii. medium resource intensity, and;
- iv. high resource intensity.

**Annex B - Published Issues Log for the year 2008-09**

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

To see the document go to:

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

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(09)28

### ***Performance Measures for the Authority***

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper sets out a framework for developing a range of measures against which the UK Statistics Authority's performance relative to its objectives can be assessed.

#### **Timing**

2. Agreement of these proposals will allow for their incorporation in the 2008/09 Annual Report. Public performance measures are expected by the Treasury Spending Team, and the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) may wish to discuss this topic when the Authority appears to present its annual report before Parliament in the Autumn.

#### **Recommendations**

3. Members of the Authority are invited to:
  - i. confirm the Authority's high-level objectives as discussed at paragraphs 8 to 9;
  - ii. agree the following methods be used to measure the Authority's performance against these objectives:
    - a. self-assessment of delivery against statutory and other commitments, including a self-assessment of the outcomes of interventions made by the Authority;
    - b. a study comprising interviews with selected opinion formers to gain an independent appraisal of the Authority's performance;
    - c. a sample survey of the general population to gain a broader measure of public feeling, and;
  - iii. set out in summary form this approach to Performance Measurement to the Treasury Spending Team and in the Authority's Annual Report and agree that these methods are used to develop a range of performance indicators over the coming year.

#### **Discussion**

##### *Aims and Objectives*

4. The *Statistics Act* provides the Authority's statutory objective in very broad terms. The Authority:

*"...is to have the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of Official Statistics that serve the public good [section 7 'Objective', subsection 1]"*
5. The legislation does not prescribe how success in achieving this statutory objective should be defined, but does provide some further explanation. In relation to Official Statistics the Authority is to promote and safeguard 'quality' (including 'impartiality, accuracy, and relevance', and 'coherence with other Official Statistics'), 'good practice' (including 'accessibility') and 'comprehensiveness'. 'Serving the public good' should relate to the *use* made of Official Statistics in 'informing the public about economic and social matters' and 'assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy' [section 7, subsections 2 to 5].
6. The concept of 'trust', although not itself appearing in the text of the *Act*, is also widely and closely associated with the government's intentions in framing the legislation, and the preceding decade of 'statistical reform'. For example, '*Statistics: A Matter of Trust*' Government Consultation Paper (1998) '*Building Trust in Statistics*' White Paper (1999), '*Legislation to Build Trust in Statistics*' Statistics Commission Report (2004), '*Official*

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*Statistics: Value and Trust'* Statistics Commission Report (2008) etc.

7. Whether couched in terms of improving, boosting, restoring, (re)building, renewing, resuscitating or reviving, a lack of 'trust' in Official Statistics has been routinely cited by Ministers, Parliamentarians and commentators as *prima facie* evidence of both the shortcomings of the previous statistical system and the need for a new body such as the Authority to remedy them. As such, trust is hard-wired into the Authority's mission. '*Building Trust in Statistics*' is the Authority's present strapline and letterhead.
8. Over the course of the year the Authority has evolved a set of high level aims and objectives to reflect both the letter and spirit of the legislation, and against which its performance may be measured. The UK Statistics Authority aims to make sure that:
  - i. the right range of statistics are produced;
  - ii. high and consistent professional standards are maintained;
  - iii. Official Statistics are well explained, including strengths and weaknesses - leading to better decision-making in the public interest, and;
  - iv. by so doing trust in the statistical system is enhanced, in terms of quality, political independence and impartiality.
9. These aims translate into the following concomitant objectives or tasks, to:
  - i. support the National Statistician in improving statistical planning (decisions on what statistics will be produced and in what form) taking systematic account of user needs;
  - ii. use its scrutiny powers to ensure high and consistent professional standards across all producers of Official Statistics;
  - iii. liaise with the statistical service to help improve communication of statistics and related advice to users, and;
  - iv. build confidence in the statistical service, and in the Authority, among those people who use and comment on Official Statistics.
10. This may be condensed to three themes: right statistics, right standards, right explanation, which combined are intended to achieve a trustworthy and trusted statistical service. In simplest formulation this may be expressed: plan + produce + explain = trust.

### Performance against Aims and Objectives

11. A basic requirement of the Authority is to complete the tasks directly given to it in the legislation: i.e. to consult upon and produce a Code of Practice, to take action when there are infringements of the Code, devise and conduct a programme of assessment, publish annual lists of National and Official Statistics, produce an Annual Report and Accounts and so on.
12. In addition to these requirements, a measure of the Authority's performance is also clearly its ability to deliver the outputs it has committed itself to produce. These include Monitoring Reports and Assessments, together with subsidiary tasks such as publication of the proceedings of its meetings. In particular, output indicators will be developed for the progression through the programme of first Assessments together with a target date for completion [SA(09)28 on the agenda of this meeting refers].
13. Completion of these tasks can be mapped back to the four principal aims and objectives set out above. For example, Assessment reports may be considered as most relevant to the second aim - 'statistics produced to the right standards', while the production of a Code of Practice cuts across all the first three and so on.

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14. These measures are necessary, objective, and factual, but fundamentally limited. At the core of appraising the Authority's performance against its objectives must be an assessment of what *effect* its activity and outputs are having - on the statistical service, on the statistics it produces and the uses those statistics are put to. That is to say, how the Authority has made a *difference*.
15. It is common cause that there are no straightforward or simple ways in which to achieve this. A question often asked at meetings addressed by members or staff of the Authority is "how will you measure your success?" in achieving the objectives, as stated. The topic has been extensively discussed at these events, at Authority meetings and at a special session of the Royal Statistical Society's conference in September.
16. From these deliberations, three potential mechanisms have emerged by which the Authority's performance in achieving its high-level objectives might be measured: self-appraisal, appraisal by experts or opinion formers with an interest and knowledge in the field of Official Statistics; and surveys of the general population. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, but taken as a combined package may represent the best way of evaluating the outcomes of the Authority's actions.
17. Some principal interventions that the Authority has made in 2008/09 have been considered previously. The term 'interventions' as used here includes statements and public appearances made by the Chair and other members of the Authority, formal correspondence with Ministers and others, and recommendations or suggestions made in the portfolio of Assessment products.
18. Over time it will be possible to track the course of those interventions, monitor the outcomes of them and assess the extent of causality between the two. For example, the Chair's intervention on the publication of knife crime fact sheet can be said to have led to new Cabinet Office guidance for all officials working with statistics, which was clear, broad and assertive and underscored the Authority's aims, legitimacy and reach in realising the implementation of the *Code* beyond statisticians working in the Government Statistical Service.
19. A second example is the Authority's action in response to an issue raised with it about the coherence and quality of House Price Indices. Consideration of this matter at the Authority meeting in December 2008 led to a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Justice which was accepted and is now being implemented by a group under the auspices of the National Statistician.
20. The same principle of self-assessment can be applied to the range of Authority activities: gathering evidence for where recommendations have been implemented or interventions acted upon and the planning, production or communication of statistics thereby improved.
21. The proposed study of opinion formers will bring an element of independent appraisal to this exercise. The Authority and its sub-committees have considered proposals on this topic previously and the work is being taken forward as part of the *Strengthening the User Voice* project. In summary, the study proceeds from the view that success must also be measured in relation to the views and expectations of external stakeholders on either the quality of the statistical service itself or the effectiveness of the Authority in its scrutiny role. The views of these people are fundamental to a broader strategy.
22. Individuals within different stakeholder groups - Parliament, Ministers, government departments, users, academics, professional groups, external commentators and the

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news media among others - will be interviewed and their views on the Authority's performance against its stated objectives collected. These can serve to inform the Authority's own assessment of its performance.

23. It should be acknowledged that these individuals will also have their own views about the criteria by which a successful statistical service should be judged and about how well the service scores against those criteria. However, to the extent that the Authority is able to build and maintain the confidence of these individuals, the study would serve as a pragmatic and impartial measure of successful performance. In these terms, it could be said that more success is achieved when more people in the stakeholder community think the service is successful.
24. In practice, a relatively small number of individuals from within the various stakeholder groups may be expected to lead opinion. With responsibility for oversight of the Authority PASC is pivotal to Parliamentary opinion, but a number of other voices in both the Commons and the Lords are also influential. Similarly, there are a relatively small number of journalists and broadcasters whose views on the statistical service are widely influential within the news media. And a similar argument might be made in relation to the academic community. The user community is, by its nature, likely to be more diverse and more specific in its opinions but again there will be some more and less influential voices.
25. The *User Voice Project Board* is due to meet for the first time on 13 May, chaired by the Authority's Deputy-Chair with responsibility for Official Statistics. It will consider further proposals for implementing the work. The interviews would be conducted and analysed by an independent survey organisation, and repeated over time to provide measures of both level and change. The Statistics Commission/MORI report (*Official Statistics: Perceptions and Trust - 2005*) provides an example of this approach and some lessons to be learnt.
26. A sample survey of the general public's views of the Authority and official statistics has some clear advantages over interviews with opinion formers and experts: through systematic sampling and professionally recognised survey methodology it provides quantitative empirical evidence on which to measure performance; it tackles perceptions of the public, and; it provides continuity with what have, at least in the past, been seen as a test of trust in official statistics.
27. Three surveys of *Public Confidence in Official Statistics* have so far been conducted in 2004, 2005 and 2007 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in collaboration with the Statistics Commission. The results of these surveys were widely quoted in the news media and by Parliamentarians during the passage of the Bill, particularly the figure that 'only one in six' trusted Official Statistics.
28. However, this in itself points to some of the difficulties inherent in these exercises. The question put to respondents actually asked whether they 'trusted the government to use figures honestly when talking about its policies'. The existence of 'spillover' between perceptions of trust in politicians and government on the one hand and trust in Official Statistics on the other has longer been recognised, and disaggregating them is problematic.
29. Another challenge with the use of population surveys to measure organisational performance is the pre-existing level of awareness of that organisation. A cardinal rule of good survey design is to ask respondents only those questions which they are capable of answering. Those respondents who have never heard of the UK Statistics Authority, let alone its objectives or actions, obviously cannot be asked about its performance in

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any direct sense. And, the results of such surveys could be seen from one perspective as either themselves further undermining of trust as evidenced by the Metro newspaper report in March 2008 that 'Official Statistics show that the public don't trust Official Statistics'.

30. The debates around measuring public confidence or trust in statistics forms a considerable literature and are not further rehearsed here. Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that surveys of this kind have no value, rather that they have to be conducted and interpreted with great care, and can only form part of a wider set of indicators. Good question design can ameliorate some of these problems, and the survey will provide information of the type and kind not available anywhere else. There is also a risk that to disregard this tool completely could be interpreted as lack of interest public trust, or worse. But the survey's main purpose is to enable long term trends to be measured.
31. In conclusion these three measures: self-assessment of actions and interventions attributed to outcomes; interviews with experts and opinion formers, and surveys of the general public, may all been seen to have the potential to provide useful information which can be considered against the Authority's objectives, and used to measure its performance in relation to them.

**Rob Bumpstead, UK Statistics Authority, May 2009**



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)29

***Correspondence with PASC: Migration and Workforce Statistics***

**Purpose**

1. This paper covers a recent letter from Sir Michael Scholar to the Chair of the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) further to evidence given by the Authority to the Committee on 26 March 2009.

**Timing**

2. For information

**Recommendation**

3. Authority members are invited to note the correspondence

**Discussion**

4. The Authority Deputy Chair (Office for National Statistics (ONS)), Lord Rowe-Beddoe; the National Statistician, Karen Dunnell; and the Head of Assessment, Richard Alldritt, gave evidence to the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee on 26 March 2009 to assist the Committee in its inquiry into the publication by ONS of migration and workforce statistics in February 2009, and subsequent media criticism. The Authority's evidence was preceded by evidence given by the Home Office Minister for Borders and Immigration, Phil Woolas MP, accompanied by the Deputy Chief Executive of the UK Border Agency, Jonathan Sedwick.
5. During the session, the Committee discussed the ONS releases of 11 February and 24 February, and the Monitoring and Assessment Note published by the Authority concerning the 11 February release. There was some discussion about the content of the 24 February release, including a series of remarks by Mr. Woolas. The National Statistician confirmed that ONS was currently reviewing all of its press releases.
6. Sir Michael's letter (**Annex A**) provides clarification for the Committee that, given a review of ONS press releases is ongoing and the conclusions set out in the Monitoring and Assessment Note on the 11 February release, the Authority does not feel it is necessary to prepare a separate report on the 24 February release, although invites the Committee to discuss the matter further with the Authority should it so wish.

**Secretariat, UK Statistics Authority, May 2009**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A Letter from Sir Michael Scholar to Tony Wright MP**

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**Annex A - Letter from Sir Michael Scholar to Tony Wright MP**

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

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/sir-michael-scholar-to-tony-wright-mp---8-may-2009.pdf>