

**Minutes of the UK Statistics Authority Meeting
19 September 2008
UK Statistics Authority Board Room, Newport**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)

Lord Rowe-Beddoe (Deputy Chair – ONS)

Mr Richard Alldritt

Mr Partha Dasgupta

Ms Karen Dunnell

Ms Moira Gibb

Sir Alan Langlands

Mr Steve Newman

Professor Steve Nickell

Professor David Rhind

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Mr Mervyn Stevens

Other Attendees

Mr Richard Laux (Monitoring and Assessment, UK Statistics Authority) for item 6

Mr Glen Watson (Census Director, ONS) item 7

Mr Ross Young (Head of Communications and Parliamentary Relations, UK Statistics Authority) for item 10

Apologies

None

1. Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 11 July 2008 were accepted as a true and fair account of that meeting. There were no matters arising.

4. Reports from Committee Chairs

4.1 ONS Board

Lord Rowe-Beddoe gave a report on the meeting of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board held earlier that day and informed the Authority that the ONS Board had agreed to meet 10 times during the year. A priority for the Board was the cost implications of the vacant accommodation within the ONS property portfolio in London. The Board were looking at ways to minimise these costs. Other issues considered included the future of web development at ONS and production of Blue Book 2008.

4.2 Risk Committee

Professor Nickell reported that the first meeting of the Risk Committee would be held on 30 September. Draft terms of reference had been circulated to members of the Authority. The Authority agreed changes to the membership of the Committee and the terms of reference, subject to an amendment. **Action: Secretariat**

4.3 Audit Committee

4.3.1 Professor Rhind reported that the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 10 September had considered the following:

- the latest report on ONS from Eurostat;
- the National Audit Office (NAO) Management Letter on the ONS Accounts for 2007-08;
- the cost to ONS of vacant office accommodation in London;
- information risk and the need to address this when reviewing the draft Statement of Internal Control for 2008-09, and;
- the future provision of internal audit services.

4.3.2 The Audit Committee had also considered reports from Internal Audit on HR Recruitment and Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery, both of which indicated room for improvement. The Audit Committee would be looking at these matters again later in the year to provide assurance that the agreed actions had been implemented.

4.4 Committee for Official Statistics (COS)

4.4.1 The Chair reported that Professor Adrian Smith had chaired a meeting of the COS on 22 July before relinquishing his position as Authority Deputy Chair (Statistical System) at the beginning of September.

4.4.2 At the meeting on 22 July the COS had considered the scope of its remit and had decided that as, an outcome of a monitoring report, the Committee would be looking at plans for official statistics across the board in time to inform the next and subsequent Spending Reviews. The Committee also considered the National Statistician's vision, objectives and priorities for the Government Statistical Service (GSS).

4.4.3 The Chair informed the meeting that due to the vacancy for a Deputy Chair he would be chairing the next meeting of the COS in October.

5. The Authority's Public Statements [SA(08)29]

Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which gave draft briefing notes for members and staff of the Authority on general policy issues. The Authority welcomed the draft and agreed that it should be extended to provide briefing on specific issues of public interest and that it should be periodically revisited in the future.

6. Management Arrangements for Monitoring Reports [SA(08)30]

6.1 Mr Laux presented a paper which set out the specifications and management plans for the delivery of the next four monitoring reports of the Authority (the first report being the draft Code of Practice and consultation document). These were:

- ii. Official Statistics Code of Practice – Report on the Consultation;
- iii. Review of official statistics not designated as National Statistics;
- iv. Progress on improving migration statistics;
- v. Long-term requirements for official statistics.

6.2 The Authority endorsed these plans. The Authority also considered whether a separate assessment designation report on migration statistics should be produced. It was agreed that a programme for assessment designation reports would be considered at the next Authority meeting. **Action: Mr Laux**

6.3 The meeting discussed whether the Monitoring and Assessment team might conduct rapid pieces of work on issues of prevailing public concern. The Authority agreed that, where there was some value in relation to trust in particular statistics, the Committee for Official Statistics might consider commissioning a piece of immediate and brief investigative assessment work.

7. Census 2011 Update [SA(08)31]

7.1 Mr Watson reported that the contract for data processing for the Census had been let with Lockheed Martin (UK) and that this had been announced at the end of August. Good progress was also being made on other key procurement activity and on developing an address register for the Census. The draft White Paper was being progressed with Ministers. Authority members were pleased to note progress and agreed to provide their thoughts and suggestions on current and future issues to the Chair and that these would be collated by the Secretariat. **Action: Authority members and Secretariat.**

7.2 It was agreed that Mr Watson would provide the Census communication strategy to the Authority members. **Action: Mr Watson and Secretariat.**

8. Data Sharing [SA(08)32]

Ms Dunnell presented a paper which reported on progress and plans for data-sharing between departments and ONS under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act*. The Authority was pleased to note progress and agreed that plans should be brought to fruition as swiftly as possible. **Action: Ms Dunnell**

9. Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics [SA(08)33]

Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which included a draft of a public statement of the Authority's position on pre-release access, in response to the Government's *Pre-Release Access Order* published in the summer. It was agreed that the Authority's statement should be published when Parliament resumed from the summer recess. **Action:**

Secretariat

10. Publication Hub Press Briefings [SA(08)34]

10.1 Mr Young presented a paper which described recent publication hub press briefings. Two press briefings had been held under the auspices of the Authority, relating to the release of annual Home Office crime statistics and an integrated release of migration and population statistics produced by the ONS, Department for Work and Pensions, and Home Office.

10.2 The intention of these events was to separate statistical releases from political comment. Despite some teething problems these had gone well and the response to the announcement of statistics in an apolitical setting had been favourable. The Authority welcomed this development.

10.3 It was agreed that further such briefings should be held for future statistical releases, although it was noted that presently none had been arranged. The National Statistician was leading work to identify opportunities. **Action: Ms Dunnell**

11. Any other business

11.1 The Authority discussed the assessments made by departments on ONS performance in 2007-08. It was agreed that ONS should seek to negotiate revised future service level agreements that reflected the establishment of the Authority as the new governing body. It would be desirable for these agreements to include a new, more consistent framework for feedback and assessment. Assessments should be sought from a wider range of customer organisations. **Action: Ms Dunnell**

11.2 The Chair reported on progress on the selection process for a new Deputy Chair (Statistical System). Possible changes to the corporate governance structure that would reinforce the two distinct functions of the Authority – governance of ONS and scrutiny of the statistical system - were discussed. It was agreed that these should be considered further when a new Deputy Chair was in post.

11.3 The Authority also discussed planning for Ms Dunnell's successor as National Statistician and agreed that the Chair would progress the matter. As part of this process it was agreed the job specification should be reviewed. **Action: Chair**

11.4 Logistical arrangements for future Authority meetings were considered and would be taken forward by the Secretariat. **Action: Secretariat.**

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Friday, 19 September, 2008
Statistics House, Newport, 11:30 - 15:00

Chair: Sir Michael Scholar
Apologies: None

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	
2	Reports from Committee Chairs	Lord Rowe-Beddoe Professor Steve Nickell Professor David Rhind
3	The Authority's Public Statements	SA(08)29 Mr Richard Alldritt
4	Management Arrangements for Monitoring Reports	SA(08)30 Mr Richard Laux
5	Census 2011 Update	SA(08)31 Mr Glen Watson
6	Data Sharing	SA(08)32 Ms Karen Dunnell
7	Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics	SA(08)33 Mr Richard Alldritt
8	Publication Hub Press Briefings	SA(08)34 Mr Ross Young
9	Any other business	

Next Meeting: **Friday, 23 October, 2008**
Statistics House, Newport, 11:30 - 15:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)29

The Authority's Public Statements

Purpose

1. This paper presents revised position statements, referred to as “public statements”, further to the discussions held at the Authority’s Board meeting in July [SA(08)27 refers]. At that meeting, the discussion indicated that further attention should be paid to the drafting of these positions statements, although the general direction of the statements was agreed to be broadly correct.
2. The revised positions set out in Annex A are designed to be a core set of public statements that evolve over time, serving as a reference document for all Authority members and staff for use when speaking to the press or external interest groups.

Timing

3. Once agreed, these statements will be circulated to Authority members for information and retention. Updated versions will be provided when required.

Recommendations

4. Authority members are invited to consider and comment on the public statements set out in Annex A of this paper.

**Secretariat (Statistics Authority)
September 2008**

List of Annexes

Annex A - UK Statistics Authority Public Positions - Revised Draft September 2008

ANNEX A – UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY PUBLIC POSITIONS – REVISED DRAFT SEPTEMBER 2008

These short statements have been agreed by the UK Statistics Authority as reflecting its current views on a number of matters relating to official statistics. They may be quoted as the Authority's views. This material will be updated from time to time.

A. Role of the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority will make sure that the right statistics are produced, that high professional standards are maintained, and that the statistics are communicated to those who need them in ways that lead to better decision-making in the public interest. In this way the Authority will enhance trust in the statistical system, both in terms of its quality, and its political independence and impartiality.

B. Top-level objectives

Implicit in the statement of the Authority's role set out above, are the following top-level objectives for the Authority.

1. Improving the planning of the statistical system;
2. Maintenance of high-level professional standards;
3. Communication of statistical information to those who need it to inform their decisions; and,
4. Building public trust in UK official statistics.

C. Main mechanisms available to the Authority so as to achieve these objectives

1. Direct responsibility for the Office for National Statistics as the UK's national statistical institute;
2. A statutory authority to report to Parliament and advise Government about any aspects of the statistical service and wider statistical system about which the Authority has concerns;
3. A statutory responsibility for the assessment of compliance with a clear-cut Code of Practice which the Authority itself has laid down; and,
4. The Code of Practice and the Authority's Assessment function covers all areas of statistical work across all parts of Government.

D. Public statements

Official statistics matter

Official figures inform decisions right across society; and those decisions affect the lives of us all – for example, funding for schools, hospitals, and local services, in determining economic and social policies, and in the commercial decisions of businesses. They are also essential to our understanding of our society, economy and the performance of government and public services.

UK statistical service is generally good

The statistical system is good by international standards but is highly decentralised and, while this has real advantages it also makes the assurance of common standards harder to

achieve. This is one reason for having the UK Statistics Authority, and a clear Code of Practice.

Reliability of statistics

Official Statistics are not like cricket scores - some are more reliable than others and always will be. The Authority will look at the weaker areas but even reliable statistics can mislead if not fully explained. The job of statisticians is not just about getting the figures right, it is increasingly about understanding the mass of data currently available, producing the best estimates they can and directly helping the user of statistics, and the wider public, to understand the figures.

Independence of statistical functions must be reinforced

The close managerial proximity of some statistical work to the policy functions of government bodies can inhibit, or be assumed to inhibit, the independence of the statistical product. We will use our assessment powers to review the managerial arrangements in all bodies that produce official statistics to ensure that statistics are produced in a professionally independent and impartial way.

The public can have confidence in the Authority

- The Authority's non-executive members are independent and experienced figures, and all its members are committed to its independence;
- The House of Commons Public Administration Committee provides parliamentary scrutiny and oversight of the work of the UK Statistics Authority;
- We are under a formal statutory obligation to operate in the public interest; and,
- Our independence will be visible in the reports we publish, and in the transparency of our work

The Authority will publish reports on things that matter

We currently plan to produce and publish, with the involvement of external experts and user interests, independent reports on the following topics during 2008 and 2009:

- The finalised Code of Practice for Official Statistics
- Statistics not currently included within 'National Statistics'
- Progress on improving migration statistics
- Longer term planning for statistics to meet society's needs
- The communication of inflation (and consumer prices)
- Barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics
- The adequacy of environmental statistics to inform public debate

Other topics may be added. In each case the Authority will involve relevant interest groups.

Code of Practice

A consultation document on a revised Code of Practice for official statistics was published in July 2008 and we will pay very close attention to points raised during the consultation period before finalising the Code in January 2009.

Assessment against the Code

We are required through legislation to assess the statistical work of all bodies that produce National Statistics against the Code of Practice and publish our findings. Assessment will help to ensure consistently high levels of standards of service, identify areas that need

attention and make constructive recommendations on them. By looking at whether the statistical system is meeting the needs of users of statistics and society, it will help, over time, to build trust in official statistics.

Comparison with Statistics Commission

Our processes will be more formal than those of the former Statistics Commission and, unlike the Commission, are supported by legislation. The Statistics Commission considered matters of public concern and published its findings. The Authority will also do that, with equal transparency, but we will not necessarily comment publicly on every issue raised with us.

Preventing political influence

In practice there is no substantive evidence to suggest that anyone influences the actual figures once the collection process is running, although we will always be alert to such concerns. But we need to separate the publication of official statistics from political comment on them, and check that decisions on what statistics are to be collected and published, the definitions used etc, reflect the needs of society overall and are not made to secure political advantage. We will also be looking to make sure that all users of statistics are being told everything they need to know about the statistics when they are issued, including their strengths and weaknesses. This is not so much a matter of hunting down wrong-doing as putting measures in place to ensure all producers of statistics follow the rules.

The Authority will address the need for greater trust

Trust is essential if the statistical system is to deliver maximum value. We want, first and foremost, to secure the trust of those people who depend on the statistics when taking decisions – in many cases this includes the general public. They need to be sure that the figures are the best the service can produce; and that they have been told everything they need to know about them so they can make informed decisions.

Public comment

All our reports will be published and will be frank and concise in their comments using plain English that is understandable to as wide an audience as possible. All breaches of the Code of Practice of which we become aware will be recorded publicly in our annual reports. We are *not* however looking to conduct a witch hunt in this regard – it is not a ‘name and shame’ exercise. Nor will we offer a running commentary on the quality of each statistical product as it is published. We will talk to journalists if they have concerns or issues to raise with us. Since September, many of the concerns and issues raised have been recorded publicly on our website. Sometimes we may pursue a matter without public comment – where we think it is best to hold discussions without a background chorus of media comment.

Challenging misleading political comment

We must accept political debate for what it is. Those involved select and interpret statistics liberally and we are not seeking to prevent them doing so. However, if there should be a case in which we believe the public is being substantially misled, we may investigate it and publish our findings.

Changing definitions and classifications

Statistics are often drawn from administrative sources – mostly records used by public services – and changes in definitions in administrative systems and recording practices can sometimes influence the trend in the statistical data. We will look out for such problems in conducting our assessments against the Code of Practice, taking on board the views of experts and users, and make recommendations where needed.

Pre-release access

We think that the provisions in the *Statistics and Registration Service Act* which allow

SA(08)29 - The Authority's Public Statements

government ministers to determine the rules which determine who should be allowed to see statistics, and for how long, before they are published are not the best way to promote and build public trust. However, now that these provisions are in set out in the legislation, it is more important that the powers that exist should be used to reduce pre-release access to the minimum, so as to limit any consequent damage that may be done to public trust. We will carry out our own review into pre-release access once the new arrangements have been operational for about 12 months.

Devolved administrations

The Authority is accountable to the UK Parliament and to the devolved legislatures, and will be seeking to ensure that there is the greatest possible consistency and coherence across the statistics of all four constituent countries of the UK. The Authority will also seek to ensure it conducts its assessment work, and produces its reports, in a way that is alert to devolved arrangements for the production of statistics and the needs of devolved administrations as users of statistics. The teams responsible for assessment work will be based in Newport, London and Edinburgh.

UK Statistics Authority

SA(08)(30)

Management arrangements for Monitoring Reports

Purpose

1. This paper seeks the Authority's agreement to proceed with projects to produce four reports in the Monitoring Report series - report numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5. (The first was the consultation document on the Code of Practice). Attached to the paper are the outline specifications for the four reports.

Timing

2. Routine - but it will be helpful to the Monitoring and Assessment team to have agreement at this meeting so that work can be taken forward in a coherent way over the remainder of the financial year.

Recommendations

3. The Authority are invited to comment on the format and content of the specifications. (These specifications are not intended to be completely fixed, they may evolve as the projects are taken forward).

Discussion

4. The four reports have the working titles:

2. *Official Statistics Code of Practice – Report on the Consultation*
3. *Review of official statistics not designated as National Statistics*
4. *Progress in improving migration statistics*
5. *Long term requirements for official statistics*

5. The specifications indicate the initial timetables and the proposed arrangements in terms of project board membership and engagement of external experts. Timetables in particular are likely to change as plans are developed and the resources of the Monitoring and Assessment Team are shared among the projects (and as Assessment and Designation activity ramps up).

6. However, we are planning to publish reports 2 and 3 simultaneously, shortly after Christmas – 6 January 2009 has been pencilled in for both. This will shape priorities for the work of the Monitoring and Assessment Team over the next few months. If necessary, extra time will be built in to the timetables for the other reports to accommodate this.

7. The scope of Report 4, *Progress in improving migration statistics*, has some distinctive features. One is that we propose that the project should include a formal Assessment of ONS' migration statistics against the Code of Practice - this is likely to be one of the first such Assessments, and certainly one of the most substantial to be conducted during 2008-09. (We anticipate it being a separate report in its own right but for the Monitoring report to draw on it in dealing with the question of whether it is right for the statistics to be National Statistics).

8. A second feature of this review relates to the need to access unpublished government information - papers relating to current plans etc. Whilst access to internal ONS papers by the Monitoring and Assessment Team is clearly a matter within the gift of the Authority, access to inter-departmental papers may require Ministerial agreement, which cannot be assumed even though the Statistics and Registration Service Act (referred to

as The Act in the following pages) does require producers of statistics to provide information in the case of a formal Assessment. If, in practice, such papers are not made available then the Monitoring and Assessment Team will have to proceed on the basis of the information it has, noting this issue in its Report. One possibility might be to agree that the Monitoring and Assessment Team will respect any reasonable request to protect government confidentiality with the Authority itself as the final arbiter.

9. Report 5, *Long term requirements for official statistics*, had originally been conceived as a review of the mechanisms for 'horizon scanning' to determine future statistical requirements. However, in the course of discussion at the Committee for Official Statistics in July, it was agreed that the need to have evidence about long term requirements was pressing, not least in the context of the next Comprehensive Spending Review, and it would therefore be better to include in the project a full-blown horizon scanning exercise. This makes the project considerably more ambitious than the original concept and we are proposing to recruit external consultants to assist. More details are given in the relevant specification.

10. The proposed membership, including non-executive members of the Authority of the project boards for Reports 4 and 5, is for further discussion. Subject to the views of Authority members, individuals will be invited to sit on the project boards. The responsibility of the project board will extend beyond publication of the report to include consideration, on behalf of the Authority, of responses to recommendations.

11. Each project will have a project manager and certain common requirements in terms of reporting to the relevant project board will be adopted.

12. The Head of Assessment will report on progress at each meeting of the Authority.

Monitoring and Assessment (UK Statistics Authority), September 2008

List of Annexes (specifications for Monitoring Reports 2 to 5)

Annex A - Report 2: Official Statistics Code of Practice - Report on the Consultation

Annex B - Report 3: Review of official statistics not designated as National Statistics

Annex C - Report 4: Progress in improving migration statistics

Annex D - Report 5: Long term requirements for official statistics

Annex A - Report 2: Official Statistics Code of Practice - Report on the Consultation

Background

1. The consultation document *Official statistics serving the public good* was published on 8 July 2008 with a closing date for responses of 30 September 2008. The document consulted on both a draft Code of Practice and the Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment.

Purpose of the report

2. The final report will announce, and publicise, the Authority's decision in accordance with section 10 of The Act which states that the Authority is to "prepare, adopt and publish a Code of Practice for Statistics".

3. The report will also announce and publicise the Authority's decision in accordance with section 17 of the Act which states that the Authority "must prepare and publish a statement of –

- (a) the principles to which it will have regard, and
 - (b) the procedures which it will adopt,
- in exercising its functions under sections 12(1) and 14(1)".

4. The Act further requires that in relation to both the Code and the Statement of Principles and Procedures, the Authority must consult Ministers in the devolved administrations. The report will therefore need to report on the consultation with the devolved administrations – and with others who have responded to the consultation.

Structure of the report

5. The report will:

- a. contain a short Foreword from the chair of the Authority, thanking the contributors and commending the Code etc;
- b. introduce the historical, statutory and international context for the Code and introduce the Statement of Principles and Procedures;
- c. provide further information as necessary to explain the Assessment process and what we are seeking to achieve through it;
- d. explain the arrangements for exceptions to, and exemptions from, the Code and for amending the Code or Statement of Principles and Procedures in the future.
- e. present the revised Code of Practice in its final form, to include the text of the final version of the Pre-release Access Orders which, in effect, form part of the Code (see s11(3) of the Act "the Code shall apply in relation to any official statistics as if it included any rules and principles provided for in relation to those statistics under" [the pre-release access orders]);
- f. report on the consultation exercise, listing the respondents who commented on the draft Code, summarising the points made and responding to them;
- g. present the revised Statement of Principles and Procedures;
- h. report on the consultation exercise, listing the respondents who commented on the Statement of Principles and Procedures, summarising the points made and responding to them.
- i. alongside the full report, free-standing printed copies of the Code (including the Pre-Release Access Orders) will also be prepared and circulated. This will have an edition number or date to indicate that it is subject to revision. It will also need a short free-standing introduction from the chairman of the Authority, distinct from the text of the main report.

Preparation of the report

6. Full project management arrangements may well hinder rather than contribute to progress on this exercise. The work will be led by Dave Hobbs and Richard Laux, overseen by Richard Alldritt. ONS will be invited to participate.

7. Preparatory drafting will start before the closure of the consultation but, as we are expecting most of the responses to arrive on or shortly after the closing date, most of preparation of the report will have to be done in October/November.

8. A paper will be prepared for the 23 October 2008 Authority board meeting listing all the comments received and identifying those that may require substantive discussion by the Authority board, or between the Authority and the respondent. For example, any substantive points from devolved administrations may require follow-up bilateral discussion or correspondence.

9. Subject to discussion at the 23 October meeting and any follow-up action, a draft of the final report will be submitted to the 27 November meeting with a view to finalisation and sending for printing on 1 December.

10. At the same time as the text is sent for printing, it will also be made available to key individuals in the devolved administrations and Whitehall departments as part of a quality assurance process and to avoid surprises. Further minor amendments can be taken in at the proof stage around 8-10 December.

11. These steps above should enable us to publish early in January (Tuesday 6 January is the target date) and be ready at that time to send copies of the report, and copies of the free-standing Code of Practice, to a large number of relevant bodies and to all who responded to the consultation. A short covering letter from the chair of the Authority will also be prepared.

12. A press notice will be issued but the new Code is unlikely to be seen as newsworthy unless its release coincides with another related story.

Annex B - Report 3: Review of official statistics not designated as National Statistics

Background

1. The Statistics and Registration Service Act defines those statistics and statistical reports that can bear the National Statistics label – essentially those already treated as National Statistics when the Act came into force and any others that Ministers invite the Authority to assess against the Code of Practice, subject of course to the assessment being positive and the National Statistics designation being granted.
2. The Act also defines a substantially wider set of statistics as official statistics and states (section 16) that “where in the case of any official statistics the appropriate authority has notrequested the Board to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics has been complied with, and the Board is of the view that it would be appropriate for it to do so, the Board must notify the appropriate authority accordingly”.
3. What this means in practice is that if the Statistics Authority believes that an area of statistical work should be assessed against the Code but it does not have a statutory right to make such an assessment, it must notify the relevant Minister, or other authority, of its views. The Authority must, in most cases, lay a copy of this notification before Parliament and the relevant Minister must then respond by making a statement and laying that before Parliament.
4. One special case is in relation to statistics produced by ONS where the ‘appropriate authority’ is the National Statistician. Any decision by the National Statistician not to seek National Statistics designation for a set of statistics requires a statement by the National Statistician to be laid before Parliament (section 16(6)). This clause indicates that in this part of Act, a clear distinction is drawn between the National Statistician (as producer) and the Statistics Authority (as a scrutiny body).
5. The Act also requires (section 18) that at least once a year, the Statistics Authority must publish a list of statistics designated as National Statistics. Preparatory work will be required to meet this requirement.

Nature of the report

6. The provisions above require the Authority to consider under what circumstances, or against which criteria, it would take the view that a set of ‘official statistics’ should be assessed against the Code. This exercise has now been carried out and the decisions taken are reflected in the attached text of a request for contributions from the Monitoring and Assessment Team to statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs).
7. The review report will list those official statistics not currently included as National Statistics which can be readily identified. A comprehensive list is not a realistic goal and would be out of date almost immediately. However a list of nearly 400 such statistical series or reports is already available and this will be used as the basis for the report.
8. Against each of the sets of official statistics identified in the list, the assessment of the relevant HoP against the criteria, the assessment of the Monitoring and Assessment Team, and the decision of the Authority on whether to make a notification (see paragraph 3 above) will be recorded. A decision not to make a notification at this time would not rule out doing so in the future.
9. The report will also explain how other statistics not covered in this report will be

identified and considered in a similar way in the future.

10. The report will further list all those statistical series currently designated as National Statistics in accordance with section 18 of the Act. This list will then be updated annually as an annex to the Authority's Annual Report.

Conduct of the review

11. The review will be conducted by the Monitoring and Assessment Team of the Statistics Authority who will seek the assistance of ONS officials and statisticians across all producer bodies. It has been set in train by writing to statistical HoPs asking for their assessments against the criteria.

12. There will not be a formal project board but the Head of Assessment will report progress with the review to each monthly meeting of the Authority board starting with the meeting in September 2008. The work will be led by Jill Barelli and Richard Laux.

13. Before the report is produced, the Monitoring and Assessment Team will meet with relevant HoPs to ensure we understand the information provided, and to ensure that we are aware of any changes that would be required by producers. The report will then be circulated in draft to all statistical HoPs on the understanding that they may offer written comments on behalf of their departments which will either be acted on or included verbatim in the report. We do not anticipate conducting bilateral discussions once the draft report has been circulated as to do so could both undermine the independence of the process and delay the report. Once the report is published however any outstanding differences of view will be the subject of bilateral discussion with the relevant producer body.

Timetable

14. We aim to publish this report alongside the final report on the Code of Practice (target date 6 January). To meet that timetable, it will need to be circulated in draft form no later than the end of October. With that in mind, it is proposed that an advanced draft be submitted for approval to the 23 October meeting of the Statistics Authority and the final report agreed at the meeting on 27 November.

E-mail to statistical HOPs, asking them to provide information about official statistics

Dear Head of Profession,

As I flagged up in my email of 5 August, the Statistics Authority has decided that one of its early priorities will be the production of a report on the subject of statistics not currently included within 'National Statistics' see [weblink removed]. In this context I would be very grateful if you could provide me with some information about the official statistics for which you are responsible. (I have included all HOPs in this circulation, as a stimulus to help produce a complete list of official statistics).

The latest list of these statistics that I have is here. [file removed - contains approximately 380 series]

The information that I am after is the answer to two questions, about each statistic/product.

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First, in your view how important is the statistic (in the context of it being considered as a potential candidate National Statistic)?

Second, how would you assess any concerns about the statistic/product?

For both questions I would suggest “1=low/minimal”, “2=medium”, and “3=high/serious”.

In order to try to achieve some comparability, and to try to make the task a little easier, here is a set of considerations which you might wish to bear in mind in answering the two questions.

Importance

1. Whether this set of statistics been used over the last few years in answering a PQ, or quoted in a Ministerial speech
2. Whether the statistic has been used in setting or calibrating any PSA (or related) targets; whether it is used in measuring progress against such targets
3. Whether the statistic is produced under statute
4. Whether the statistic is used in allocating public resources, or other significant operational decision making by your department or an agency
5. Whether the statistic has been used in the last few years to inform the development of a high profile policy
6. Whether the statistical product contains new data or analysis
7. Whether the publication of the statistic typically generates media reporting
8. Whether the statistic illustrates a topic that might be considered of significant public interest

Concern

1. Whether you are aware of any users' (including Ministers) reservations about the quality of the statistic or the production/governance
2. Whether the statistic has been the subject of media (including the specialist media) concern or speculation
3. Whether you, as Head of Profession, have expressed concerns or doubts about any aspects of the statistic

Needless to say, if there are exceptional circumstances relating to any set of statistics – such as them being discontinued shortly – it would be helpful to flag these up.

I would be grateful for responses by Friday 5 September.

The Monitoring & Assessment Team (of the Statistics Authority) will then review this material and will produce a draft report including recommendations for any official statistics which we think should be notified under s16(1)(b) of the Statistics Act. Whilst this will be based on (and indeed will include) the material you provide, we will of course make our own judgements. In making any recommendations we will doubtless need to return to some of you to ask for more information - including of course any changes that would be required. This would give us the opportunity to discuss the recommendations themselves too – we are keen to avoid surprises.

Richard Laux

Annex C - Report 4: Progress in improving migration statistics

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this review 'migration statistics' include statistics of international immigration in to the UK and emigration from the UK; estimates of numbers of such international migrants who have taken up residence over a period of time at geographical levels down to local authority area; numbers who have left each area; and estimates of the gross and net flows of population between local authority areas. The review will cover the estimation of related quantities to the extent that a clear user requirement is identified.
2. The review will cover estimates of international migration on the international definition and short-term migration.

Purpose of review

3. This review by the Monitoring and Assessment Team of the UK Statistics Authority is to assist the Authority in fulfilling its obligations under Section 8 of The Act. The Act states that:

The Board [Authority] is to monitor the production and publication of official statistics.

The Board may report any concerns it has about –

- a. *The quality of any official statistics,*
- b. *Good practice in relation to any official statistics, or*
- c. *The comprehensiveness of any official statistics,*

to the person responsible for those statistics

The Board may publish its findings or any report under this section.

4. The review will evaluate progress in an area of statistics which has been the subject of concern and public comment for a number of years. Most recently, reports by both the Treasury Select Committee and House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs have emphasised the need for improvements. This review will examine progress in improving the statistics in recent years, plans for further improvements, and the timeframes in which they can be expected to be delivered.

Background

5. In May 2006 the National Statistician Karen Dunnell established an Interdepartmental Task Force on Migration Statistics. The objective of the task force was to "recommend timely improvements that could be made to estimates of migration and migrant populations in the United Kingdom, both nationally and at local level." The Task Force developed plans for improvements to the statistics including many due to be delivered by early 2009.

6. In May 2008 the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee (TSC) report *Counting the Population*, made a series of recommendations – that the Authority should:

- establish as an immediate priority the provision of local population statistics that more accurately reflect the full range of information available about local populations and the effects of internal migration;
- replace the International Passenger Survey with a new Survey that is more comprehensive and more suited to the accurate measurement of international movements affecting the size of the resident population of the UK;
- set out the action that it will take to develop the Government's administrative databases to provide a more accurate and cost effective method of monitoring the population.
- set strategic objectives to ensure that the data currently gathered throughout the UK can be used to produce annual population statistics that are of a quality that will enable the 2011 Census to be the last census in the UK where the population is

counted through the collection of census forms.

and that Government should:

- consult the Statistics Authority and others to remove any outstanding obstacles to the production of a national address register.

7. On 23 May 2008, the Authority issued a News Release which included this statement:

“We recognise and share the Committee’s concerns about the length of time substantive improvements seem likely to take; and we are also concerned about whether enough is being done across government to provide ONS with the raw data needed to produce reliable estimates. We will therefore consider with a range of experts from inside and outside government what further specific steps should now be taken.”

8. In addition to the issues raised in the TSC report, the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs report *The Economic Impact of Immigration* in April 2008 identified ‘a clear and urgent need to improve the data and information about gross and net migration flows to and from the UK, and about the size, geographical distribution and characteristics of the immigrant stock.’

9. On 4 July the UK Statistics Authority announced that progress in improving migration statistics was one of the priority topics on which the Authority was planning to produce reports in 2008/09.

10. Meanwhile, in June 2008 the first meeting of an inter-Ministerial Working Group, charged with supporting the migration statistics work programme, was held.

Scope of review

11. The report will draw conclusions about the current adequacy of migration statistics; about the adequacy of plans for improving migration statistics (including the prospective value of the 2011 Census data); about progress against those plans; about any further steps that government needs to take; and about any need to improve the communication of the statistics and their reliability to users and the public. The conclusions will be based on:

- a. a review of official reports and statements published since 2003 about the need to improve migration statistics, and the current position in relation to those plans;
- b. a review of published reports from academic or other external sources on the topic of official migration or population statistics;
- c. an assessment of statistics of international migration published by ONS, in accordance with Section 12 of The Act;
- d. unpublished government documents relating to the adequacy of migration statistics and plans for their improvement, to the extent that these documents are relevant to the report (using as necessary the Authority’s power to require information at Section 12(4) of The Act);
- e. consultations with the devolved administrations both as customers of migration statistics and as producers of relevant estimates;
- f. discussions with relevant experts, local authority representatives, other user interests inside and outside government, the Royal Statistical Society, the Statistics Users Forum and other commentators;
- g. discussions with some international bodies and some national statistical institutes about their experience in measuring migration and the scope for internationally balanced statistics of inflow and outflow in relation to international migration;

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12. Priority will be given to the areas of concern raised by the TSC, the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs and any other areas governed by existing interdepartmental arrangements.

Conduct of the review

13. The review will be undertaken by the Monitoring and Assessment Team. The project manager will be Penny Babb. It is proposed that the project board will comprise:

- a. Professor David Rhind, non-executive member of the Statistics Authority, as Chair
- b. Richard Alldritt, UK Statistics Authority Head of Assessment
- c. Tim Allen, Head of Research, Local Government Association
- d. Professor John Salt, academic/research expert
- e. Guy Goodwin, ONS' Executive Director of Population, Health and Regional Analysis
- f. Janet Dougharty, Head of Profession for Statistics, Department of Communities and Local Government
- g. Richard Laux, UK Statistics Authority Assessment Programme Manager
- h. Penny Babb, UK Statistics Authority Assessment Project Manager

14. There will be at least two meetings of the project board, one in early October to initiate the review and one to discuss and approve a draft of the final report.

15. A draft of the report will be circulated to project board members, within the Authority, and to any other government department affected by the recommendations. Any comments received in response to the draft report will be either acted on or included verbatim in the final report.

Timetable

16. Work on the report will start following approval of the specification at the meeting of the Authority board on 19 September 2008.

17. The review will begin with clarification of current plans and progress, requesting information from producers only where it cannot be readily obtained from existing documentation. Meetings with experts and users of statistics outside central government will be arranged to take place from October - November 2008 and will be followed by meetings with officials responsible for source data and the production of estimates, and officials who use the data where appropriate [during December and January]. The Assessment of the relevant ONS statistics will take place in 2009, scheduled as far as possible to ensure coherence with the publication by ONS of migration statistics compiled under new methodologies. A report concentrating on draft Findings and Recommendations will be published before the end of March 2009 and the final report published before the end of June 2009.

Annex D - Report 5: Long term requirements for official statistics

Concepts

1. The needs of Parliament, Government and society for official statistics evolve over time. There are long lead times in delivering statistical information and advice on new subjects – for example the shift in the balance between manufacturing industries and the service sector in the UK has prompted a need for more statistical information on the latter. This has been developing for some 20 years and is not yet completed. The expansion of the European Union and other international developments led to a need for better statistics on migration and this may take another 10 years to address fully. Concern about the impact of global warming may lead to demands for more comprehensive statistical data to inform and monitor policy.
2. If future requirements are to be met in a timely fashion, they need to be spotted as early as possible and explored within government.

Purpose of review

3. This review by the Monitoring and Assessment Team of the UK Statistics Authority is to assist the Authority in fulfilling its obligations under Section 8 of The Act. The Act states that:

The Board [Authority] is to monitor the production and publication of official statistics.

The Board may report any concerns it has about –

- a. the quality of any official statistics,*
- b. good practice in relation to any official statistics, or*
- c. the comprehensiveness of any official statistics,*

to the person responsible for those statistics

The Board may publish its findings or any report under this section.

4. The review will address both the mechanisms needed for long term planning – we call this horizon scanning as it is about identifying the things that the statistical service will need to engage with in the future rather than planning for that engagement in any detail – and also to carry out an initial sweep of the horizon.
5. Such long range planning is of course iterative. Having formed some views and made recommendations about how the statistical service should respond, the process needs to be repeated at regular intervals with views and recommendations updated. Thus the mechanisms for ensuring effective iteration of the process are as important as the conclusions about future requirements of the first such formal horizon-scanning exercise.

Scope of review

6. The Monitoring report will:
 - a. review existing published reports from any source, in the UK or internationally, that point to likely future UK statistical requirements and comment on the level of confidence that Government should have in the requirements identified;
 - b. engage users of statistics, academics and other commentators to build consensus about the shape of future statistical requirements and record their views;
 - c. report on consultations with the devolved administrations about any aspects of long term statistical requirements that are specific to them;
 - d. review current plans to address future requirements and draw conclusions about the adequacy of current plans. This may require the documentation of current spending plans and major development priorities with a view to drawing some broad conclusions about how well they fit with perceived future requirements;
 - e. consider how in the UK, where many bodies are involved in the production and/or funding of official statistics, the different parties might be engaged in regular

horizon-scanning exercises so that coherent conclusions are reached and able to influence statistical planning in a coherent way;

- f. consider any implications of the conclusions for statistical skills and human resources – either in terms of the balance of skills or the identification of likely areas of shortage. Given the long training period of government statisticians, an early indication of future requirements is likely to be helpful.

Conduct of the review

7. In view of the very wide scope of the review, an expert panel will be established to guide the required research and take decisions on the substance of the final report. A smaller group with some members from the expert panel, including the chair, and also including staff of the Monitoring and Assessment team of the UK Statistics Authority, will serve as the project board.

8. Consultants will be engaged, following open tender, to manage the project and to submit a written report to the Authority. The Authority will publish that report with whatever covering conclusions it wishes to add following consideration of the report submitted to it. The project manager will be appointed by the consultants in agreement with the Head of Assessment for the UK Statistics Authority.

9. It is proposed that the project board should comprise:

- a. A non-executive member of the Authority as Chair, and also as chair of the larger expert group
 - b. The National Statistician or her representative
 - c. Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment
 - d. A representative of the Royal Statistical Society – possibly the chair of the RSS National Statistics Working Party
 - e. The chair of the Statistics Users Forum, or her representative
 - f. Richard Laux, Assessment Programme Director
 - g. [consultant] as principal consultant
 - h. [consultant], as project manager
- A member of the Monitoring and Assessment Team, as liaison with the consultants

10. The project board would be expected to meet at least three times; to initiate the review; to assess progress ahead of completion of a draft report; and to agree the final report.

11. The larger expert group should include all those above (except the liaison official) plus invited individuals from among the leading producer bodies (major government departments); at least one senior representative from a devolved administration; invited representatives from Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

12. A draft report will be circulated widely in government and to the expert group and other experts for comment before the conclusions and recommendations are finalised. All comments received will be published.

Timetable

13. The tender for the appointment of consultants will be issued before the end of 2008 and the appointment process will be completed by the end of February 2009. The review will run from March 2009 to July 2009 with an Emerging Findings report in May 2009 and the consultants report to the Authority submitted at the end of July 2009. The Authority will then circulate its own draft report incorporating the consultants' report in September 2009 and finalise its report in November 2009.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)31

Census 2011 Update

Purpose

1. This is an update on progress towards the 2011 Census. Further written or oral briefing on any of the issues covered can be provided.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendations

3. The Authority are invited to note for information.

Discussion

Recent announcements

4. A news release announcing the award of the data processing contract to Lockheed Martin UK was issued on 28 August. The Financial Times were the only paper to cover it. Glen Watson did a live interview on Radio 4's PM programme and there has been some subsequent online coverage. Coverage has been fairly balanced including measured quotes from Michael Fallon MP.

Progress on contracts

5. Data processing contract - Final approval was received on 31 July and after final negotiations, Lockheed Martin started working with ONS on 4 August. Contract signing took place on 21 August. Lockheed Martin UK has confirmed that the delay to the contract award date would not impact the costs or schedule set out in the best and final offer subject to a number of planning assumptions. Contract mobilisation work has now begun, with integrated project teams set up and operational. A detailed implementation plan is expected from Lockheed by 21 September.
6. Recruitment, pay and training contract - The statement of requirements will be issued in the week commencing 8 September to the short list of 5 suppliers with the highest pre qualification scores. This contract will also need to be approved by Treasury and Cabinet Office Ministers and a further OGC Gateway review will be needed prior to award.
7. Post back of Census forms - Following meetings with potential suppliers, two of the three have withdrawn as they will not be able to meet our requirements. Negotiations with Royal Mail have therefore commenced with a view to awarding a contract in November. The separate contract for the post out of Census forms will follow later and we expect a good competition.

Address Register development

8. The 2011 Census Address Register Steering Group met for the first time on 30 June. Director level representatives from various bodies attended, including Communities and Local Government, Local Government Association, Welsh Local Government Association, Royal Mail, Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Ordnance Survey and Cabinet Office. This was a successful first meeting with a high level of support for the strategy and plan ONS has put in place to create the address list needed for the Census.

9. An Information Sharing Agreement has since been agreed and signed by Ordnance Survey, IDeA and Royal Mail. This only covers the address register trial, but is a major breakthrough and could act as a model for a future national agreement.
10. A seminar was held on 29th July attended by 16 of the 24 Local Authorities involved in the trial, together with all the suppliers. The trial is going very well, with higher than expected address match rates between the competing address sources, meaning that most Local Authorities are being asked to help resolve fewer mismatches than we had anticipated.
11. A small scale, on the ground address checking exercise in Manchester was successfully completed at the end of July. Over 9,000 addresses were checked. Evaluation findings to follow.

EU Developments

12. The EU Council (Framework) Regulation prescribing the topics to be reported on in the 2011 round of European censuses was published on 13 July in the Official Journal of the European Union. An EU Census Working Group on 9/10 September will give Member States the opportunity to discuss draft regulations covering the content of outputs and metadata to be supplied to Eurostat, and the scope of the quality reports. ONS are fully involved.

Census White Paper

13. The submission of the draft White Paper to the Cabinet Office has now been sent from Sir Michael to Ed Miliband and comments from the Domestic Affairs Committee are being sought by 30 September to enable publication in late November.

Looking ahead to the end of the year:

User consultation

14. A regional road-show is being organised during November as part of the consultation on outputs from the 2011 Census and to provide an update on the progress of plans for the questionnaire, address register, field operations, stakeholder engagement and statistical disclosure control. There will be six meetings at venues around England and one in Wales. A joint meeting of Census Advisory Groups is also being arranged for October. A separate meeting of the Diversity Advisory Group has also been convened for the Autumn.

Questionnaire finalisation

15. The final version of the questionnaire for the October 2009 rehearsal will be agreed in October. It will be consistent with the draft White Paper. In preparation for publication of the White Paper, materials are being prepared to explain the rationale for including, or excluding, certain questions.

**Glen Watson, Census Division (ONS)
5 September, 2008**

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)32

Data Sharing : An Update on the Use of the Information Sharing Powers in the Statistics Act

Purpose

1. This paper informs the Authority about developments on the use of the information sharing powers in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (the 2007 Act).

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendations

3. The Authority is invited to:
 - (i) note the progress to date - particularly the plans for the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to disclose information from the School Census to the Authority. Draft regulations for access to specific data items are expected to be laid before Parliament in early October;
 - (ii) approve the general approach.

Discussion

4. The information sharing powers in the 2007 Act (sections 47 to 54) allow the Minister for the Cabinet Office (MCO) to make regulations to allow information to be disclosed by a public authority to the Authority or vice versa. Information shared under these provisions can only be used for statistical purposes. The agreement of the MCO and the relevant Minister with responsibility for the public authority is required before regulations can be laid before Parliament. Regulations are subject to affirmative resolution procedures by Parliament in Westminster and to similar procedures by the devolved administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
5. The Report of the Government Statistical Service Data Sharing Group underlined the benefits of having access to data from administrative sources to meet growing demands for better statistics to support resource allocation, policy formulation, evaluation and review, service planning and delivery. Administrative data will be essential if the Authority and the Government Statistical Service are to meet priority needs notably those associated with improving migration and population statistics, reducing the burden placed on respondents, and supporting policy development and implementation.

Recent Developments on Existing Priorities

6. There has been good progress on the first set of priority requirements identified by the GSS Data Sharing Group and in particular the proposed draft regulations to allow the Secretary of State (DCSF) to disclose information from the School Census to the Authority. He has already signalled his willingness to give formal consent to the making of these regulations and both he and the MCO have approved the supporting Business Case. The draft regulations are expected to be laid before Parliament in October and, if so, are likely to be on the statute book by the end of November. Once Parliamentary approval has been obtained and the regulations made, ONS will work with DCSF to effect the secure transfer of the specified data items.
7. A summary of progress on all the other high priority requirements is at Annex A.

Management of the Programme

8. Priorities for data sharing will continue to be overseen by the GSS Data Sharing Group, chaired by Duncan McNiven, Registrar General for Scotland, and any new proposals will be submitted to the UK Statistics Authority for approval. The work programme to progress Regulations for approved priorities will be overseen by ONS's Data Sharing Steering Group chaired by Dennis Roberts. Regular reports will be provided to the Authority on both aspects.

**Kieron Mahony, Legal Services Branch, National Statistics and International Division
(ONS)
2 September, 2008**

List of Annexes

Annex A - Summary of Progress on High Priority Requirements

ANNEX A - SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ON HIGH PRIORITY REQUIREMENTS

DEPARTMENT	SOURCE	PROGRESS	COMMENTS
INFLOWS OF INFORMATION TO UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY			
DCSF	School Census	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarisation with, and evaluation of, source completed. - Feasibility study to link and match data being planned - Drafting of regulation well advanced. - MCO's agreement to proceed obtained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal consent of SoS(DCSF) still to be obtained - Regulations expected to be laid before Parliament in early October - Regulations likely to be on the statute book by end of November
DWP/HMRC	National Insurance Data (Migrant Workers Scan) Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarisation with, and evaluation of, source completed. - ONS developing a business case. - Formal request made to HMRC - Familiarisation with, and evaluation of, sources underway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear whether Regulations will be required
HMRC	Value Added Tax data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarisation with, and evaluation of, source underway. 	
DWP	Joint Unemployment and Vacancies Operating System (JUVOS) Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ONS developing a business case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Source is familiar to ONS
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)	Student data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ONS developing a business case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Source is familiar to ONS
OUTFLOWS OF INFORMATION FROM UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY			
Bank of England	Interdepartmental Business Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drafting of regulation well advanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring the onward disclosure of data from the IDBR with owners of contributory sources
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Northern Ireland)	Interdepartmental Business Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work well advanced. - Ministerial agreement still to be obtained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulation will be made by DETI and approved by Northern Ireland Assembly.
DCSF	Labour Force Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarisation with, and evaluation of, source underway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No Regulations required for this disclosure

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)33

Pre-release access to official statistics

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the Government's progress with bringing into force secondary legislation on 1 December 2008 to provide for pre-release access to official statistics in their final form. The paper proposes a draft Press Notice for the Authority to issue at an appropriate point in the Parliamentary process. This paper also refers to the corresponding position in Scotland.

Timing

2. Routine. Authority members are invited to discuss the timing for the publication of the Press Notice. Options are set out in paragraph 10 below.

Recommendations

3. Authority members are invited to note recent developments, and to agree or amend the draft Press Notice set out in Annex A of this paper.

Discussion

4. The Government published its response to its consultation on pre-release access on 17 July 2008 in *Limiting pre-release access to statistics: the Government's response to the consultation exercise* (Cabinet Office, 2008). A draft Order was subsequently laid before Parliament on 21 July 2008 and requires the approval through a resolution of both Houses of Parliament. The draft Order is reproduced at Annex B.
5. The Secretariat have been advised that the draft Order will be debated in a House of Commons Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation on 4 November, although no date has yet been fixed for a similar date in Committee in the House of Lords.
6. Following these debates, the usual procedure is for a resolution recommending the Order to be "made", or to come into effect, to be put to both Houses without debate. If these resolutions are agreed, the Order will come into effect on 1 December 2008 as the *Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008*.
7. The Government's response to the consultation says little about why pre-release access can negatively impact on public trust in official statistics:

"Sometimes pre-release access is cited as a contributing factor to problems around trust and confidence in official statistics. The Government recognises there may be an issue of perception and is therefore committed to tackling any perception of ministerial interference in statistics." (page 8)

The Authority may wish to include a stronger message than this in its Press Notice.

8. The Authority was consulted on the Scottish Government's draft pre-release access order for Scotland. Sir Michael Scholar, on behalf of the Authority, responded to Scottish Ministers to meet their deadline of end August 2008. Copies of the Chair's letter were previously circulated to Authority members.
9. The most significant differences between the arrangements set out in the Order before the UK Parliament and the Scottish Government's draft order concern the maximum time allowed for pre-release access and the emphasis on reducing pre-release access in the UK order in contrast to the draft Scottish order which seems more to formalise pre-release access than aim to reduce it. The maximum

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time permitted in the *Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008*, which covers pre-release access in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, is 24 hours. The Scottish Government's consultation document proposed a maximum time of five days.

10. The Secretariat proposes that the Authority publish a Press Notice; draft at Annex A. The Press Notice might be published at any of these times: (1) the first sitting day after the Summer Recess, 6 October; (2) the day of first consideration in committee in either the House of Commons or House of Lords, whichever is the sooner; (3) the date on which the *Pre Release Access to Official Statistics Order* comes into force, anticipated to be 1 December.
11. In drafting the Press Notice, it was felt that it was not necessary for the Authority to comment on the precise drafting of the Order, but should instead put emphasis on the Authority's wish to see the Order having a beneficial impact on reducing pre-release access to statistics, both in terms of the maximum number of hours of pre-release access and the number of individuals granted privileged access to the statistics in their final form.

Secretariat, September 2008

List of Annexes

[Annex A - Draft Press Notice]

Annex B – *Pre-Release Access to Statistics Order 2008*

[ANNEX A – DRAFT PRESS NOTICE]

Note: This Press Release was released by the Statistics Authority on 21 October 2008 and is available on the Authority's website at the following address:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/news-releases/pre-release-access-to-official-statistics.pdf>

ANNEX B – PRE-RELEASE ACCESS TO OFFICIAL STATISTICS ORDER 2008

The Minister for the Cabinet Office makes this Order in exercise of the powers conferred by section 11(2), (4), (5) and (6) of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

In accordance with section 11(7) of that Act the Minister for the Cabinet Office has consulted the Statistics Board, Scottish Ministers, the Welsh Ministers and the Department of Finance and Personnel for Northern Ireland.

In accordance with section 65(5)(a) of that Act a draft of this Order has been approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

Citation and commencement

1. This Order may be cited as the *Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008* and comes into force on 1st December 2008.

Pre-release access

2. The Schedule sets out the rules and principles relating to the granting of pre-release access to official statistics that are not wholly Scottish devolved statistics, Welsh devolved statistics, or Northern Ireland devolved statistics.

PART 1

Generally applicable rules and principles

1. Pre-release access may only be granted in accordance with the rules and principles set out in this Schedule.
2. Only the person responsible may grant pre-release access.
- 3.— (1) The person responsible—
 - (a) may only grant pre-release access where to deny such access would, in the opinion of the person responsible, significantly impede—
 - (i) the provision of responses to questions or the making of statements about an official statistic at or shortly after the time of publication of that statistic; or
 - (ii) the taking of action before, at the time of or shortly after publication of that statistic;
 - (b) may only grant pre-release access to an eligible person;
 - (c) may only grant pre-release access if in the opinion of the person responsible the public benefit likely to result from such access outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from such access;
 - (d) is required to restrict pre-release access to the minimum number of persons consistent with the need for pre-release identified within paragraph (a);
 - (e) may, when deciding whether to grant pre-release access to an eligible person, take into account any failure by that person, in relation to a previous grant of pre-release access, to comply with paragraph 6, paragraph 7 or any conditions imposed by the person responsible;
 - (f) may grant pre-release access subject to conditions.
- (2) For the purposes of this paragraph “eligible person” means—

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- (a) a Minister of the Crown;
- (b) the head of a government department;
- (c) a member of the Scottish Executive;
- (d) a junior Scottish Minister;
- (e) a member of the Welsh Assembly Government;
- (f) a Northern Ireland Minister, including the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland;
- (g) a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly appointed as a junior Minister under section 19 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998(2);
- (h) a person who, in the opinion of the person responsible, is otherwise accountable to the public for the formulation or development of government policy or for the delivery of public services to which the statistic has direct relevance; or
- (i) a person who needs pre-release access in order to advise a person referred to in any of paragraphs (a) to (h).

(3) For the purposes of this paragraph, “government policy” includes the policy of the Scottish Administration, the policy of the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the policy of the Welsh Assembly Government.

4. Subject to paragraph 5, the person responsible may not grant pre-release access for a period in excess of 24 hours prior to the time set for the publication of an official statistic.
- 5.— (1) In exceptional circumstances only, the person responsible may grant pre-release access to—

- (a) an eligible person for a period in excess of 24 hours prior to the time set for the publication of an official statistic if in the opinion of the person responsible the public benefit likely to result from such access significantly outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from such access;
- (b) a person who is not an eligible person (either within the period of 24 hours prior to the time set for the publication of an official statistic or before this period) if an eligible person who has been granted pre-release access to an official statistic makes representations to the person responsible that pre-release access is needed for the purposes of paragraph 3(1)(a)(ii) in relation to that statistic.

(2) Where pre-release access is granted under sub-paragraph (1)(b), the person responsible must be satisfied that—

- (a) the public benefit likely to result from such access (including the timing of such access) significantly outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from such access; and
- (b) the person to whom pre-release access is granted is the appropriate person to take the action referred to in paragraph 3(1)(a)(ii).

(3) A person who receives pre-release access under sub-paragraph (1)(b) is an eligible person only for the purposes of paragraphs 6, 7 and 8.

(4) Where pre-release access is granted under this paragraph the person responsible must—

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- (a) publish the reasons for granting such access; and
- (b) inform the Statistics Board.

(5) For the purposes of this paragraph—

- (a) paragraph 3(1)(b) does not apply to sub-paragraph (1)(b),
- (b) paragraph 3(1)(c) does not apply.

6.— (1) An eligible person who receives pre-release access must not disclose—

- (a) the statistic,
 - (b) any part of a publication where that part includes that statistic, or
 - (c) any suggestion of the size or direction of any trend indicated by that statistic,
- until after the official statistic has been published.

(2) An eligible person who receives pre-release access must not use that access—

- (a) for personal gain;
- (b) to take any action (other than the preparation of responses or statements as referred to in paragraph 3(1)(a)(i)) for political advantage.

7.— (1) An eligible person who receives pre-release access must not use such access to change or compromise—

- (a) the content or presentation of the official statistic;
- (b) the timing of publication of the official statistic.

(2) This paragraph does not prevent an eligible person from communicating to the person responsible any numerical or typographical error in the composition or presentation of the official statistic.

8. The person responsible may only grant pre-release access to market sensitive official statistics to an eligible person (“P”) who has signed a declaration that P undertakes, in relation to any such statistics to which P is granted pre-release access, to comply with paragraphs 6 and 7 together with any specific conditions subject to which such access is granted.

9. The person responsible must publish—

- (a) a list of all official statistics at least annually to which that person has granted pre-release access;
- (b) at the same time as or prior to the publication of an official statistic a list of the job title and organisation of persons to whom the person responsible has granted pre-release access to that statistic; and
- (c) arrangements made by the person responsible to ensure compliance with this Schedule including, where appropriate, the role of the departmental Head of Profession for Statistics.

10.— (1) Nothing in this Schedule prevents access to official statistics in their final form prior to publication by a person directly involved in the production of the

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publication, whether electronic or in hard copy, by which such statistics are to be published providing such access is used only for those purposes.

(2) A person mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) is an eligible person only for the purposes of paragraphs 6 and 7.

11.— (1) Nothing in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 prevents an eligible person who receives pre-release access sharing such access to the official statistic with a person providing administrative support (of a type not within paragraph 3(2)(i) or 15(3)(k)) to that eligible person.

(2) A person providing administrative support under sub-paragraph (1) is an eligible person only for the purposes of paragraphs 6 and 7.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)34

***Release of National Statistics through press briefings
hosted by the UK Statistics Authority***

Purpose

1. This paper provides an account of two press briefings hosted by the UK Statistics Authority to facilitate the release of National Statistics outputs separate from ministerial or policy comment.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendations

3. None.

Discussion

4. The Authority recently hosted two press briefings to coincide with the release of various National Statistics outputs on the Authority's Publication Hub. The purpose of these events was to facilitate the physical release of National Statistics separate from ministerial or policy comment, and to provide the media with statistical briefing by professional statisticians in those departments responsible for the production of the statistics being released.
5. Authority officials were responsible for the co-ordination of logistical arrangements, although much of the day-to-day operational preparation was undertaken by COI News and PR who have provided the Authority's press office service since March 2008.
6. Our overall assessment is that both events went well, although there were unanticipated incidents, largely beyond the Authority's immediate control, which occurred at both. These were a breach of pre-release access rules at the first event and the unauthorised distribution of Ministerial comment at the second. Both had the potential to compromise the reputation of the Authority and undermine the rationale for these press briefings as set out in paragraph 4 above.
7. It was evident that the journalists present clearly understood that the purpose of the event was to provide for the separation of statistical presentation and release from ministerial and policy interpretation and comment (Although it should be noted both events were attended by the same cohort of home affairs correspondents.)
8. Media coverage of the release of the statistics coinciding with both events was judged to be broadly "balanced". No direct mention was made of the Authority or its role in hosting the press briefings. Substantial media coverage was given to the content of the statistical presentations which formed a large part of both briefings, and to the detailed statistical information contained in the statistical releases themselves.
9. Further information regarding both events is provided in Annex A.

Secretariat, September 2008

ANNEX A – SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: PRESS BRIEFINGS HOSTED BY THE UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY, JULY AND AUGUST 2008

1. The first press briefing was held on **17 July 2008** between 8.30am and 9.30am at Church House in Westminster to coincide with the release of the Home Office statistical bulletin *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08*. The venue was chosen because of its central location and its relatively close proximity to the Home Office so as to allow home affairs correspondents to attend a separate ministerial press conference starting at 10am. 27 correspondents attended, including most of the national broadsheet press and BBC News.
2. The briefing was chaired by Neil Martinson, Director of News at the Central Office for Information. COI News and PR currently provide the Authority's press office service.
3. The panel comprised: Karen Dunnell (National Statistician), Professor Paul Wiles (Chief Scientific Adviser, Home Office), David Blunt (Home Office Chief Statistician) and the lead statisticians for the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime statistics, Alison Walker and Chris Kershaw.
4. Professor Wiles made a detailed and well-received presentation about the statistics being released that morning, following which a question and answer session was held with panellists answering questions as required.
5. The event was operated on a "lock-in" basis where those attending had advance sight of the statistics being published at 9.30am but were not permitted to leave the building or communicate externally until the event concluded. Mobile phones were removed from correspondents on arrival.
6. The event was preceded by a 15-minute briefing attended by the panellists and Authority officials. At that meeting, a leak of the statistics was discussed. The leaked information was widely reported in the media that morning and it was an apparent clear breach of pre-release access rules. It was agreed that the National Statistician would immediately refer to this in her opening remarks and advise correspondents that she would be discussing the matter with Sir David Normington, Permanent Secretary at the Home Office. Subsequent to the event, the Home Office launched a leak inquiry. The Authority has not yet been advised on progress with, or the outcome of, that inquiry.
7. Media coverage of the statistics released that day was judged to be generally "balanced". The presentation made by Professor Wiles received extensive coverage and citation. Professor Wiles made available the text of his presentation which evidently made it easier for correspondents to quote from. Copies of the statistical bulletin, summary tables, and the slides from the presentation were all made available.
8. It was also apparent that some correspondents were using laptops for the purposes of taking notes and, following the event, it was agreed to explicitly advise correspondents at future events that laptops should only be used for taking notes and not for communicating via email or other means.
9. The second press briefing was held on **21 August** between 9.30am and 10.30am at 1, Great George Street, Westminster. The Church House venue used previously was not available due to refurbishment. Similar arrangements were put

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in place as for the 17 July event. 10 journalists attended, including correspondents from some broadsheet newspapers and BBC News.

10. The event was organised to provide a consolidated briefing on the release of 18 separate National Statistics outputs in the area of population and migration statistics, released by the Office for National Statistics, Department for Work and Pensions, and Home Office.
11. Most significant among these releases was the mid-year population estimates for 2007 released by the ONS. There was no lock-in arrangement since the event began at 9.30am alongside the online release of the statistics on the Publication Hub. ONS officials advised that they felt it not necessary given their previous experience of such consolidated releases of population and migration statistics.
12. The briefing was chaired by David Mencer (COI). The panel included: Guy Goodwin (ONS Director of Population Statistics), Jude Hillary (Head of Statistical Services, Department for Work and Pensions), and David Blunt (Chief Statistician, Home Office). Guy Goodwin made a detailed presentation on the mid-year population estimates and other key population statistics being released that day.
13. During the course of the event, it became apparent that a Home Office departmental press officer had distributed, without permission, a press notice containing a summary of Home Office statistics being released that day, alongside a substantial amount of ministerial comment. It further became apparent that this press notice had been distributed covertly before the event began at 9.30am.
14. Prior to the event, it had been agreed that press officers from each department involved could attend as observers, on condition they acted with discretion and did not provide briefing to journalists who were attending. These conditions were included as part of a comprehensive set of guidelines and protocols circulated to all panellists and observers prior to the event. By distributing the press notice before 9.30am, the Home Office press officer also breached pre-release access rules because the press notice contained detailed statistical information not yet in the public domain.
15. Authority officials discussed the matter with the press officer concerned and advised her that the Authority would make representations to her department. The National Statistician subsequently wrote to Sir David Normington on 22 August, and Sir Michael has recently spoken to Sir David on the telephone. The President of the Royal Statistical Society has written to Sir Michael to express his concern at the apparent breach of protocol and undermining of the independence of the event.
16. During the question and answer session which followed Guy Goodwin's presentation, several journalists remarked at the unauthorised distribution of the Home Office press notice and raised questions which alluded to the independence of the event having been compromised.
17. A number of correspondents also complained at the number of detailed statistical releases being made with no opportunity extended to them to brief themselves in advance of the presentation beginning. Several journalists requested that future events should use "lock-up" arrangements as had been used on 17 July. There were also complaints expressed that copies of the Home Office statistical bulletin

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Control of Immigration statistics, being published that day, were not available, preventing correspondents from having sufficient opportunity to pose detailed and informed questions on these particular statistics.

18. Media coverage of the statistics released on 21 August was also extensive and generally judged to be “balanced” in most cases. Again, there was no direct mention of the Authority’s role in hosting the event and facilitating a separation between statistical releases and the presentation of statistical information by professional statisticians, from ministerial and policy comment.
19. Authority officials and the National Statistician’s office are currently reviewing both events in more detail.
20. At present no further statistical press briefings of this kind have been arranged, although departmental Heads of Profession for Statistics are discussing statistical press briefings at their meeting in November.
21. Authority officials have established a workable model for future events of this kind should the Authority be required to host or facilitate them in future. Based on experience, guidance and good practice have been prepared, and lessons learned.