

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Meeting of Monday 22 October 2012
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Mr Andrew Dilnot (Chair)
Professor David Rhind
Professor Sir Adrian Smith
Mr Richard Alldritt
Dr Colette Bowe
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Dame Moira Gibb
Dr David Levy
Ms Jil Matheson
Sir Jon Shortridge
Mr Glen Watson

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Mervyn Stevens

Other Attendees

Ms Tricia Dodd, ONS and Mr Ross Young, UK Statistics Authority for item 7

Apologies

None

1. Apologies

- 1.1 There were no apologies.
- 1.2 Members of the Authority Board were saddened to learn of the death of Mr Frank Nolan, ONS Deputy Director for Methodology.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes, matters arising from the previous meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 September were accepted as a true and fair account.
- 3.2 Ms Matheson reported that her guidance to producers of official statistics about reporting breaches of the Code of Practice relating to release practices - a draft of which had been considered in draft at the last meeting of the Authority - had been published.
- 3.3 There were no other matters arising.

4. Authority Chair's Report and Priorities

- 4.1 The Chair reported on his recent activities which included:
- i. the ONS site in Titchfield, where as part of his visit he had reviewed progress with delivering improvements to the ONS website;
 - ii. the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), where he had met with departmental statisticians and the Permanent Secretary; and
 - iii. the Bank of England to discuss ONS statistical outputs.
- 4.2 The meeting noted that ONS had held a seminar on 16 October on the 'productivity conundrum', and that a further article giving explanations and preliminary analysis had been published on the ONS website to coincide with this event. The meeting requested that ONS provide the Authority with plans for further engagement with stakeholders regarding this issue.

5. Report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board

- 5.1 Professor Sir Adrian Smith reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 12 October. The Board had received an update on programmes and projects, and had considered three Internal Audit reports. Proposals by the Administrative Data Task Force to create national Administrative Data Research Centres and the possible implications for ONS were also discussed. The meeting was informed that the Cabinet Office had written to all government departments requesting proposals for change in response to the Civil Service Reform Plan.
- 5.2 The ONS Board had received a presentation of the 'value engineering' approach as applied to an assessment of each of ONS's statistical outputs. The Board had commended this as a tool which provided good management information. The Authority Board agreed that a further demonstration of its application should be given to a future meeting. Progress with the Web Development Access project was considered. The ONS Board would return to the matter in December and report back to the Authority Board.
- 5.3 The Authority Board noted that, while initial results from the 2011 Census had been released by ONS in respect of England and Wales and by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) for Northern Ireland, National Records

Scotland had yet to publish outputs from the Scottish census. It was agreed that, in fulfilment of the Authority's statutory obligations to report to the Scottish Parliament on statistical issues, the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment team should consider the delay to outputs from the Scottish census.

6. Price Indices Update [SA(12)48]

6.1 Ms Matheson reported that her public consultation on options for improving the Retail Price Index (RPI) had been launched on 8 October, with a closing date of 30 November. A public meeting would be held on 26 October in London, with a similar event to be held in Edinburgh.

6.2 The annual report of the Consumer Prices Advisory Committee (CPAC) would be published on the CPAC pages of the ONS website in due course. This report would include updates on changes being made to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in respect of owner occupier housing (OOH) costs.

7. Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and Wales [SA(12)49]

7.1 Ms Dodd and Mr Young introduced a paper which included recommendations to minimise the extent of pre-release access to the ONS statistical releases *Crime in England and Wales*. The list of 139 pre-releases access recipients had been inherited from the Home Office when responsibility for the publication of these statistics had transferred to ONS earlier in the year, and was currently one of the biggest lists for pre-release access to ONS statistics.

7.2 In endorsing wholeheartedly steps aimed at minimising pre-release to crime statistics before the next release, the Authority agreed that the National Statistician should, within the limitations of the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, develop a framework for reducing and limiting pre-release access to statistical outputs in a consistent way. It was agreed that, as a first step, the National Statistician would write to the Permanent Secretaries of government departments to explain this initiative, and that further National Statistician's guidance should be issued to the Government Statistical Service (GSS) on what evidence would be required to meet the criteria for pre-release access.

8. Update on Monitoring [SA(12)50]

8.1 The meeting considered a paper which provided an update on progress with monitoring work and made proposals regarding the process for the production of future monitoring reviews. The paper also included two outlines for monitoring reviews and two draft monitoring review reports.

8.2 Following discussion it was agreed that statistical producers should be consulted on outline monitoring reviews at the earliest opportunity, but that there should be no other changes to the established approval process for monitoring work and reports at this stage. The meeting also agreed that:

- i. the report of the monitoring review on the quality of statistics about Welfare to Work schemes should be published in due course, subject to agreed amendments;
- ii. a further draft of the report of the monitoring review of statistics about the future should be submitted to a future meeting; and
- iii. the outlines of monitoring reviews on the ONS International Passenger Survey and school-level examination results should be published on the Authority's website, following comments from Authority Board members to be submitted via correspondence.

9. Update on Assessment [SA(12)51]

9.1 Mr Alldritt reported on current and planned assessment work. The expectation was that there would be three or four Assessment Reports (ARs) produced each month for the foreseeable future. The meeting confirmed 'National Statistics' designation for the following nine sets of statistics:

- i. AR 81: Short Term Economic Output Indicators (Office for National Statistics);
- ii. AR 95: Construction Price and Cost Indices (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills);
- iii. AR 161: Statistics on Household Resources (Department for Work and Pensions);
- iv. AR 169: Statistics on Regional Economic Performance (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills);
- v. AR 177: Statistics on Immigration (Home Office);
- vi. AR 179: Statistics on Defence Inflation (Ministry of Defence);
- vii. AR 180: Statistics from the Annual Business Survey (Office for National Statistics);
- viii. a further one of the remaining three outputs assessed in AR 207: Statistics on Adult Social Care in England (Health and Social Care Information Centre); and
- ix. one of the outputs assessed in AR 232: Statistics on Education and Training in the UK and Vulnerable Children in England.

(In total 9 Assessment reports, covering 15 outputs)

10. Authority Strategy

10.1 The Authority Board discussed its strategic direction, challenges, opportunities and priorities for the next few years, and how these might best be presented in an overall strategy document. The Authority's high-level risk register was also reviewed.

10.2 Following a full discussion, the Authority agreed that the Secretariat should draft a strategy document for the next three to five years based upon the initial discussion of its strategic priorities, and that this should be submitted to the next meeting for consideration. This would then be published in the New Year and shared with the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC).

10.3 The meeting noted that the current strategy documents for the Government Statistical Service (GSS), *GSS 2020: Building the Community* and the *ONS Vision to 2015: A Strategy for Improvement* would be reviewed in the light of the Authority's developing strategy.

11. Any other business

11.1 There was no other business.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Monday, 22 October, 2012
Board Room, Drummond Gate, 11:15 - 15:00

Chair: Mr Andrew Dilnot

Apologies:

Part 1 11:15 to 12:45

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 200712
2	Authority Chair's Report	Oral Report
3	Report from ONS Board	Oral Report Professor Sir Adrian Smith
4	Price Indices Update	SA(12)48 Ms Jil Matheson
5	Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and Wales	SA(12)49 Secretariat
6	Update on Monitoring	SA(12)50 Mr Richard Alldritt
7	Update on Assessment	SA(12)51 Mr Richard Laux
8	Any other business	

Part 2 12:45 to 15:00

9	Authority Strategy	Discussion
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Next Meeting: Tuesday, 27 November, 2012
Segensworth Road, Titchfield, 11:15 - 15:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)48

Price Indices Update

This document has been published on the Office for National Statistics website.

The document is available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/user-engagement/consultations-and-surveys/national-statistician-s-consultation-on-options-for-improving-the-retail-prices-index/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)49

Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and Wales

Purpose

1. The Authority is invited to consider the minimisation of pre-release access to the ONS statistical release *Crime in England and Wales*. Responsibility for its production and publication has now transferred to ONS. This release currently has one of the biggest lists of recipients for any release. In addition, there are significant contextual factors which may result in a large number of additional requests for pre-release access.
2. This paper covers a more detailed paper prepared by the ONS Crime Statistics and Analysis Division at **Annex A**.

Timing

3. Urgent. ONS intends to review the pre-release access list for crime statistics following their transfer from the Home Office in April 2012. The timing has become more urgent because of the forthcoming election of Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012 which is likely to prompt a large number of additional requests for pre-release access.

Recommendations

4. Members of the Authority Board are invited to consider the recommendations set out in Annex A to minimise pre-release access to these statistics.

Discussion

5. The Authority continues to take a robust line in respect of pre-release access to official statistics. In the Authority's Monitoring Report reviewing the statutory arrangements for pre-release access, published in 2010, the Authority recommended that the maximum period for pre-release access should be reduced to no more than three hours, with less being the norm; and that the number of people who are granted pre-release access to official statistics, and the number of statistical releases to which pre-release access applies, should both be reduced significantly. The Authority has expressed the view that it remains dissatisfied with the present arrangements across the UK, and would wish to see the Authority given responsibility for determining them throughout the UK administrations.
6. During the course of recent meetings with Ministers and senior officials, the Chair has expressed the view - in line with the Authority's 2010 report - that the Authority is continuing to look for pre-release access to be minimised, both in the number of people granted pre-release access and the number of releases to which privileged pre-release access is granted. During oral evidence to the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee in September 2012, the Chair made a number of observations about pre-release access and highlighted various cases where extensive pre-release access was granted, including the statistical release *Crime in England and Wales*, to which around 140 people are given pre-release access ahead of publication.
7. At the invitation of the Minister for the Cabinet Office, in due course the Chair may write to the Minister setting out those statistical releases where excessive pre-release access continues to be granted, inviting the Government to review both the policy on pre-release access and for departments to seek to minimise pre-release access still further in respect of those statistical releases identified.

SA(12)49 - Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and Wales

8. Responsibility for the compilation and publication of National Statistics on crime in England and Wales transferred from the Home Office to ONS on 1 April 2012. Consequently, under the provisions of the *Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008*, the National Statistician is now the person responsible for determining pre-release access to these statistics.
9. **Annex B** is an extract from the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.
10. **Annex C** provides the current list of those granted pre-release access to crime statistics for England and Wales.

Secretariat, October 2012

List of Annexes

Annex A	Review of Pre-Release Access to Crime Statistics
Annex B	Extract from the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008
Annex C	Pre-Release Access to Crime Statistics for England and Wales

Annex A Review of Pre-Release Access to Crime Statistics

Purpose

1. This paper seeks a steer from the Authority on the future handling of pre-release access (PRA) to National Statistics on crime for England and Wales.

Timing

2. Urgent. ONS intends to review the PRA list for crime statistics following their transfer from the Home Office. The timing has become more urgent because of the election of Police and Crime Commissioners on 15 November 2012 which may prompt further requests for pre-release access.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the issues associated with the release of crime statistics;
 - ii. note ONS's intention to review the number of persons granted pre-release access to crime statistics with a view to significantly reducing their number;
 - iii. support pre-release access being withdrawn from police forces; and
 - iv. agree that such access should also be refused if requested by Police and Crime Commissioners.

Discussion

4. Responsibility for the compilation and publication of National Statistics on crime for England and Wales transferred from the Home Office to ONS on 1 April 2012. Prior to the transfer to ONS, pre-release access lists were agreed and monitored by the Head of Profession for Statistics at the Home Office.
5. On transfer, it was agreed with the then ONS Director General that ONS should continue with the existing practice for pre-release access to ensure a smooth transition and pending any review of the access list. At the same time, ONS flagged with the Head of Profession at the Home Office that it was likely that ONS would want to review the list in line with current ONS practice once the work had been transferred and had bedded down. Six months on, ONS has now been reviewing our business practices to ensure they comply with standard ONS procedures.
6. Pre-release access to the crime statistics is granted in accordance with the rules and principles set out in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (see extract at Annex 1). In summary, the Act specified that pre-release access may be granted where to deny it would significantly impede the ability of "eligible persons" to respond to questions, or make statements, about the statistics at, or shortly after the time, of publication of their release. The Act defined "eligible persons" to include:
 - i. a Minister of the Crown;
 - ii. the head of a government department;
 - iii. a member of the Welsh Assembly Government;
 - iv. a person 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
 - v. a person who needs pre-release access in order to advise a person referred to above.
7. The Act further stated that pre-release access should be granted if the public benefit likely to result from such access outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from such access. The Act also states that pre-release access should be restricted to the minimum number of persons consistent with the need for such access.

Annex A - SA(12)49 - Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and Wales

8. *The list of eligible persons granted pre-release access to crime statistics is large, by the standard of other official statistics, with 139 eligible persons outside ONS granted such access (see Annex 2). This, in part, reflects the fact that the statistics cover a wide range of crimes and thus a large number of policy areas. Access is currently also granted to all chief constables in England and Wales and to one statistical contact in each of the 44 forces (the 43 territorial forces plus British Transport Police). The crime statistics include force level breakdowns of police recorded crime figures supplied by forces. Prior to the release of these official statistics, the forces have access to their own and other forces' provisional monthly management information figures. However, pre-release access allows them access to the final reconciled statistics, and associated commentary that accompanies the statistics in their final form, and they have argued that they are 'eligible persons' to respond to questions or make statements about the statistics, as defined by the Act.*
9. On 15 November 2012, the policing landscape will change with the elections of local Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in each of the 42 police force areas outside Greater London (the Mayor of London is the PCC for London). While chief constables will continue to have operational independence, PCCs will be responsible for holding them to account and will have powers to:
 - i. set and update a local police and crime plan;
 - ii. set the force budget and local council tax precept; and
 - iii. appoint, and where necessary dismiss, the chief constable.
10. ONS anticipates that, once elected, PCCs may request pre-release access to the crime statistics and, if granted, this would potentially extend the list by a further 84 names. ONS's view is that we would wish to avoid such a large number of extra people receiving pre-release access and we therefore intend to refuse any requests.
11. As suggested by the Chair of the Authority in a recent Public Administration Select Committee hearing, the comparative length of the existing pre-release access list already risks being detrimental to public trust. While recognising the argument that having reconciled figures and final national comparators might be useful for police forces and Commissioners, and that locally they may on occasions have to field questions following their publication, ONS feels that the public benefit of having so many individuals with pre-release access is unclear especially given the fact that monthly management information on police recorded crime is available to prepare "lines to take" in advance of the release of the National Statistics.
12. Therefore, ONS is minded to review the list with a view to:
 - i. removing pre-release access to police forces on the basis that they already have access to timely management information which should allow them to prepare for any questions that might arise from the release of the National Statistics;
 - ii. consistent with a) above, to refuse any requests for pre-release access to the statistics from PCCs;
 - iii. To take this opportunity to review the remaining list with the aim of reducing significantly the number of Ministers and their policy advisors given pre-release access.

Annex A - SA(12)49 - Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and Wales

13. There is likely to be some adverse reaction from the above stakeholders by taking this firm line on the pre-release access arrangements and we are seeking confirmation that the Authority Board is supportive of the intended approach. If so, ONS will review the list with the above changes in mind, discuss the changes with stakeholders and then write shortly to officials, where appropriate, and police forces informing them that they will no longer receive pre-release access to these statistics.

**John Flatley, Crime Statistics and Analysis Division, ONS.
October 2012**

SA(12)49 –Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and
Wales

Annex B – Extract from the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008

Links to Official Statistics Orders are published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see published documents about Official Statistics Orders go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/producers-of-official-statistics/index.html>

SA(12)49 – Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics: Crime in England and Wales

Annex C Pre-Release Access to Crime Statistics for England and Wales

This document is published on the Office for National Statistics website.

The document is available at :

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=Pre-Release+Access+to+Official+Statistics%3A+Crime+in+England+and+Wales>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)50

Update on Monitoring

Monitoring Reports and Briefs are published on the UK Statistics Authority website at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)51

Update on Assessment

Assessment Reports and Programme of Assessments are published on the UK Statistics Authority website at:

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