

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Meeting of Friday 25 February 2011
Board Room, London**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)

Lord Rowe-Beddoe (Deputy Chair, ONS)

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Deputy Chair, Official Statistics)

Mr Richard Alldritt

Dr Colette Bowe

Mr Partha Dasgupta

Ms Moira Gibb

Mr Stephen Penneck (from item 7)

Professor David Rhind

Sir Jon Shortridge

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Mr Mervyn Stevens

Other Attendees

Mr Neil Jackson (Monitoring and Assessment) for items 4 to 6

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

Apologies

Ms Jil Matheson

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1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms Matheson.

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 held on 28 January 2011 were accepted as a true and fair account. There were no matters arising.

4. Report from Assessment Committee Chair

4.1 Professor Jowell reported on the meeting of the Assessment Committee held on 4 February 2011. Five draft Assessment Reports had been considered and the Committee had recommended that two of these should be further discussed by the Authority Board, and these would be considered later in the meeting.

4.2 The meeting had also considered proposals for the treatment of experimental statistics in Assessment. It was agreed that the Authority should publish a statement about how these statistics would be handled (now published).

5. Assessment Reports for Approval [SA(11)08]

5.1 The Head of Assessment, Mr Alldritt presented a summary of the following Assessment Reports which he and the Assessment Committee recommended be published:

- i. Assessment Report 97: Statistics on English Local Authority Capital Expenditure and Receipts, and Revenue Expenditure and Financing;
- ii. Assessment Report 99: Statistics on Vital Events in Scotland; and,
- iii. Assessment Report 101: Statistics on Population, Demography and Households in Wales.

5.2 It was agreed that all of these Assessment Reports should be published.

5.3 It was noted that 96 Assessment Reports had been published to date (June 2009 to February 2011), which covered 448 sets of statistics.

6. Draft Assessment Reports: 100 [SA(11)09] and 98 [SA(11)10]

6.1 Mr Alldritt introduced the following draft Assessment Reports which had been considered at the meeting of the Assessment Committee on 4 February, when it had been agreed that these should be considered further by the Authority Board:

- Assessment Report 100: National Accounts; and,
- Assessment Report 98: Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland.

6.2 The meeting agreed that these Assessment Reports should be published, subject to agreed amendments.

7. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs

Committee for Official Statistics

7.1 Professor Jowell reported on the meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics held on 4 February 2011. The meeting had considered three draft Statistical Expenditure Reports (SERs) and the further development of the Authority's monitoring of changes to statistical outputs would be considered later in the meeting.

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- 7.2 The Committee had received reports from the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Presentation and Commentary Taskforce on progress in improving the communication of statistics and from the GSS Inter-Administration Committee (IAC) on how the comparability of statistics across the four nations of the UK might be improved.

Office for National Statistics Board (ONS)

- 7.3 Lord Rowe-Beddoe reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 11 February 2011. This meeting, which has been held in Titchfield, had received a report from the ONS Census Director on preparations for the Census and the Board had visited the Census business area to be briefed on Census operations.
- 7.4 The ONS Board had considered a report from the Director General of ONS and had reviewed management and financial information. The meeting had approved a statistical work programme, which would be considered by the Authority Board later in the meeting, and had considered a draft business plan for ONS.
- 7.5 The Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell had visited ONS in Newport on 31 January. Sir Gus had held a question and answer session with staff and visited front line business areas.

8. Census 2011

- 8.1 Mr Penneck reported on progress with the Census since the last meeting. The report of an independent review of coverage assessment, adjustment and quality assurance had been published, together with a response from ONS.
- 8.2 The Census awareness campaign had been launched on 21 February and this had included several television and radio interviews for the ONS Census Director and other Census staff. The launch had also been marked by the screening of Census information films on prime-time television.
- 8.3 The meeting noted progress and the oral report from Lord Rowe-Beddoe on the recent visit of the ONS Board to Census operations in Titchfield.

9. ONS Statistical Work Programme [SA(11)11]

- 9.1 Mr Penneck introduced a paper which set out the proposed ONS statistical work programme for the period 2011/12 to 2014/15. This programme had been approved under delegated authority by the ONS Board at the meeting on 11 February.
- 9.2 The proposals had been made in the light of the reduced financial resources allocated for the next four years under the Government's Spending Review 2010 (SR10) and they reflected the strategic direction for ONS over that period. The proposed statistical work programme took into account user needs based on the public consultation carried out at the end of 2010 and was the subject of on-going discussions with key stakeholders.
- 9.3 The meeting endorsed the ONS statistical work programme and noted that this would be reflected in a draft business plan for the Authority that the Board would consider in due course.

10. Considerations for Public Interventions by the Statistics Authority [SA(11)12]

- 10.1 Mr Young presented a paper which invited the Authority to consider how it might respond to requests for clarification regarding the considerations that inform decisions to intervene about the misuse or misrepresentation of official statistics. Following the Chair's recent letters to Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of Newham regarding local authority finance information and Rt. Hon. Andy Burnham, Shadow Secretary of State for

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Education regarding school sports statistics, there had been requests for an explanation of the Authority's policy with regard to public intervention.

10.2 Following discussion, it was agreed that the Secretariat should draft a statement for consideration.

11. Learning the Lessons of Assessment in ONS [SA(11)13]

11.1 Mr Penneck updated the Authority on the lessons learnt by ONS from the first 20 Assessment Reports of ONS statistics and on how ONS was seeking to improve its compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

11.2 ONS aspired to be at the forefront of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) in terms of compliance with the Code and, although ONS still had some way to go, good progress had been made in recent months, particularly in improving statistical commentary and documenting user needs and methodology. Further work was aimed at changing the culture within ONS and embedding compliance with the Code in ONS business processes.

11.3 The meeting noted the progress ONS was making in moving towards fuller compliance with the Code of Practice and agreed that the ONS Board should continue to monitor developments in this regard.

12. The Authority's Response to Reductions in Statistical Expenditure [SA(11)14]

12.1 Mr Bumpstead advised the meeting that the first three Statistical Expenditure Reports (SERs) would be published in due course. These were largely retrospective reviews of the impact of changes to statistical outputs. The Authority Board and the Committee for Official Statistics had already recognised the merits of making earlier interventions in certain circumstances.

12.2 Statistical Heads of Profession had previously been asked to inform the National Statistician at the earliest opportunity about plans to discontinue publication of statistics and, on the basis of early notification of proposed changes, it should be possible for the Head of Assessment to make recommendations to the Authority Chair where an early response by the Authority might be appropriate.

12.3 It was agreed that the Authority would publish a statement on its general approach to monitoring and responding to changes in statistical services and on the circumstances under which it might consider an early intervention regarding such changes.

13. Draft Monitoring Brief: The Impact of the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Function [SA(11)15]

13.1 Mr Alldritt presented an initial draft of a Monitoring Brief on the impact of the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment function. The Authority had been informed at its previous meeting of the intention to prepare a Monitoring Brief which reported on the impact of the Assessment process after the first hundred Assessment Reports.

13.2 The Authority noted the draft and agreed that a further draft should be submitted in due course. Alongside the Monitoring Brief, a business case relating to the future of Monitoring and Assessment should be produced.

14. The Statistics Authority's International Context [SA(11)16]

14.1 Mr Alldritt presented a paper which looked at the international context for statistical governance and at the opportunities that the Authority might pursue in engaging with Statistical Councils in other countries. A number of international events had been attended on behalf of the Authority over the previous three years and the Authority

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Chair and the Head of Assessment had attended a meeting of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) in December 2010 at the invitation of the ESGAB.

14.2 The meeting noted these developments and agreed that the Secretariat should produce a regular update report for the Authority on developments in the international statistical system and on the costs and benefits of further engagement at an international level. Further consideration would be given to establishing a budget for the Authority's international role.

15. Any other business

15.1 The Chair reported that the Cabinet Office would be advertising shortly for a successor to him as Chair of the Authority when his appointment ended on 31 August.

15.2 The meeting noted that Ms Jill Leyland, Vice President of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) had written to the Chair on 22 February setting out some further issues that the RSS wanted the Authority to consider with regard to the Retail Prices and Consumer Prices Indices (RPI and CPI) and that the Chair would be replying in due course.

15.3 There was no other business.

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Agenda

Friday, 25 February, 2011

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

Chair: Sir Michael Scholar

Apologies: Ms Jil Matheson

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 280111
2	Report from Assessment Committee Chair	Oral Report Professor Sir Roger Jowell
3	Assessment Reports for Approval AR100: National Accounts AR98: Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland	SA(11)08 SA(11)09 SA(11)10 Mr Richard Alldritt / Mr Neil Jackson
4	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Committee for Official Statistics● ONS Board	Oral Reports Professor Sir Roger Jowell Lord Rowe-Beddoe
5	Census 2011	Oral Update Mr Stephen Penneck
6	ONS Statistical Work Programme	SA(11)11 Mr Stephen Penneck
7	Considerations for public interventions by the Statistics Authority	SA(11)12 Secretariat
8	Learning the lessons of assessment in ONS	SA(11)13 Mr Stephen Penneck
9	The Authority's Response to Reductions in Statistical Expenditure	SA(11)14 Mr Richard Alldritt
10	Draft Monitoring Brief: The impact of the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment function	SA(11)15 Mr Richard Alldritt
11	The Statistics Authority's International Context	SA(11)16 Mr Richard Alldritt
12	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Friday, 25 March, 2011
Statistics House, London, 11:15 - 15:00

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SA(11)08

Assessment Reports for Approval

Purpose

1. This paper provides a summary of current and planned Assessment activity.

Recommendation

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. consider and comment on the summary below;
 - ii. agree that the Assessment Reports listed at paragraph 4 should be published; and
 - iii. confirm designation of the statistics at paragraph 7.

Summary

3. Two Assessment Reports (ARs) are included on the agenda of this meeting for fuller discussion.
 - AR100: UK Annual and Quarterly National Accounts [SA(11)09]
 - AR98: Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland Statistics [SA(11)10]
(In total 2 Assessment Reports, covering 6 outputs)
4. The following three Reports do not raise any matters of substance that the Head of Assessment and the Assessment Committee wish to raise with the Authority Board. They have been circulated to Board members electronically.
 - AR97: Statistics on English Local Authority Capital Expenditure and Receipts, and Revenue Expenditure and Financing (Department for Communities and Local Government)
 - AR99: Statistics on Vital Events in Scotland (General Register Office for Scotland)
 - AR101: Statistics on Population, Demography and Households in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government)
(In total 3 Assessment Reports, covering 35 outputs)
5. A change has been made to AR101 (Statistics on Population, Demography and Households in Wales) subsequent to the version considered by the Assessment Committee. Requirement 1, to 'publish the papers on comparisons of sub-national population and household projections' methods across the UK' has been revised to 'work with Office for National Statistics (ONS), the General Register Office for Scotland and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to identify and document the impact that differences in projection methods may have for users'. This change was made in light of emerging findings from other related assessments for Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. The Assessment team considers that the papers referred to in the previous version of Requirement 1 did not go far enough to explain what the differences in methods mean in practice for users. The revised Requirement has been shared with the producer.
6. Overall, 96 Assessment Reports have been published to date (June 2009 to February 2011), covering 448 sets of statistics. Twelve Reports have been published since the last Authority Board meeting:
 - AR85: Statistics on National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals Entering the UK (Department for Work and Pensions)
 - AR86: Statistics on Scottish Community Care (Scottish Government)
 - AR87: Statistics on Short-term Migration for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics)
 - AR88: Statistics on Local Government Finance in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government)

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- AR89: Statistics on Transport in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government)
 - AR90: Statistics from the Survey of Carers in Households in England (NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care)
 - AR91: Statistics on patient experience in England (Department of Health)
 - AR92: Consumer Trends (Office for National Statistics)
 - AR93: Statistics on UK Trade in Goods (HM Revenue and Customs)
 - AR94: Statistics on the Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income (Office for National Statistics)
 - AR95: Construction Price and Cost Indices (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills)
 - AR96: Statistics from the General Lifestyle Survey (Office for National Statistics)
(In total 12 Assessment Reports, covering 38 outputs)
7. Overall, the National Statistics designation of 155 statistical outputs assessed in 45 Assessment Reports has been confirmed to date (June 2009 to February 2011). Confirmation of designation is recommended for two further sets of statistics.
- AR62: Statistics on Transport in Northern Ireland (Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland)
 - AR44 Insolvency Statistics (Insolvency Service)
(In total 2 Assessment Reports, covering 4 outputs)

Secretariat, UK Statistics Authority, February 2011

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SA(11)08

Assessment Report – Statistics on English Local Authority Capital Expenditure and Receipts, and Revenue Expenditure and Financing

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

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-97---english-local-authority-capital-expenditure-and-receipts--and-revenue-expenditure-and-financing.pdf>

Assessment Report – Statistics on Vital Events in Scotland

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

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-99---statistics-on-vital-events-in-scotland.pdf>

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***Assessment Report – Statistics on Population, Demography and
Households in Wales***

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

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-101---statistics-on-population--demography-and-households-in-wales.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(11)09

Assessment Report – UK Annual and Quarterly National Accounts

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-100---uk-annual-and-quarterly-national-accounts.pdf>

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SA(11)10

Assessment Report – Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-98---government-expenditure-and-revenue.pdf>

The Authority's business plan for the years 2011/12 to 21014/15 will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The Report will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/what-we-do/corporate-information/annual-report-and-resource-accounts/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(11)12

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

The document will be available at:

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

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SA(11)13

Learning the lessons of assessment in Office for National Statistics

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update to Board Members on the lessons Office for National Statistics (ONS) has learnt from its first 20 Assessment Reports of ONS statistics and explains how ONS is improving its compliance with the Code. A related paper was presented at the ONS Board in December 2010 [SA(ONS)(10)81] and this paper builds on the discussion and comments received.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. comment on ONS's response to the issues identified from the assessment process to date; and
 - ii. suggest any further areas of work and improvement that ONS should focus on in 2011/12.

Discussion

3. ONS aspires to be at the forefront of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) in terms of Code compliance and sharing lessons from the assessment process. We recognise that we have some way to go, but we have made good progress in recent months. Since the introduction of assessment, 20 assessments of ONS statistics have been published (as of 17 February 2011). ONS is consistent with other areas of the GSS in that all assessments of ONS statistics to date have resulted in 'conditional designation' as National Statistics. In September 2010, I commissioned a review into the way ONS was responding to assessment, to ensure that we are learning the lessons from assessment and using the Code to improve our service to users.
4. Table 1 at **Annex A** illustrates the specific practices of the Code where we are seeking improvement and concentrating our resources. The remainder of this paper explains how we are addressing these issues.

Embedding the Code and Changing the ONS Culture

5. We recognised early on that we had much to gain from strengthening ONS corporate guidance, coordination and through championing the Code and the benefits of the assessment process. This is being achieved by:
 - i. making the ONS Statistical Head of Profession central to the ONS assessment process;
 - ii. requiring ONS business areas to complete Written Evidence For Assessments (WEFA) on behalf of ONS and not in respect of their output, division or directorate;
 - iii. educating staff that assessment is not something to be afraid of, but a process that can improve the quality, use and understanding of our statistics;
 - iv. the creation of a small central team to coordinate, monitor and guide ONS business areas through the assessment process, share best practice, and identify corporate issues arising from assessment. In addition, the team acts as a point of liaison between ONS, the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and Monitoring and Assessment team; and
 - v. working with the Monitoring and Assessment team and the NSO to ensure that ONS not only learns lessons from our own assessments, but also from assessments in the wider GSS.

6. We are realising early benefits of having a more coordinated process for assessment. We have developed consistent corporate responses, respond in a coordinated manner to the pre and post-assessment process and are monitoring progress towards meeting ONS assessment requirements using a high level timetable. A further benefit is the management information the team is producing, enabling the sharing of best practice and common issues associated with the assessment process.

Learning the lessons of Assessment

7. Table 1 in Annex A summarises the Practices of the Code in which ONS has the highest number of Requirements and a more detailed table is contained in Table 2 of the same Annex. The following section of the paper highlights, for each of the Practices in Table 1, the way we are addressing our shortcomings, learning the lessons of assessment and improving the overall quality of ONS outputs. A more detailed summary of the ONS response is contained in **Annex B**.

Practice 4.2 - Ensure that official statistics are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs, and that users are informed about the quality of statistical outputs.

8. Many of the assessments required ONS to provide clearer information on quality, draw users' attention to changes in definitions or signpost them to similar statistics produced by Scotland and Northern Ireland. In many cases, this information is available in publications, and it has been possible to meet the assessment requirements by providing links to methodological reports from the statistical bulletin or by redrafting sections of the bulletin more clearly.

Practice 8.2 - Prepare and disseminate commentary and analysis that aid interpretation, and provide factual information about the policy or operational context of official statistics. Adopt formats for the presentation of statistics in graphs, tables and maps that enhance clarity, interpretability and consistency.

9. The Assessment Reports to date have requested that we improve the quality of our commentary and analysis. As well as the commentary, ONS has been tasked to improve the context of its statistics, to aid interpretation and improve the comparability of our data with other data sources.
10. We are improving our statistical commentary through the Publishing Strategy and Standards Committee (PSSC). It has been tasked to review all ONS statistical releases, identify ONS areas of best practice and ensure that the quality of ONS statistical releases not only adhere to the Code but are continually improved.

Practice 1.2 - Investigate and document the needs of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform.

11. Assessment has asked ONS to improve further the way we document the uses, publish information on user experiences and improve user engagement. In response to the Requirements ONS published its user engagement strategy on the ONS website and reviewed its key account management processes. To improve our knowledge of uses we have introduced online surveys, 'Twitter' accounts and improved the management information of user enquiries, so that users can be contacted and alerted to new releases and changes to statistics. The recent consultation on our work programme will add significantly to our knowledge of users, and will be documented and published.

Practice 4.1 - Ensure that official statistics are produced according to scientific principles. Publish details of the methods adopted, including explanations of why particular choices were made.

12. The assessment process has identified that ONS has a wealth of information on its

methods but some are restricted to internal use within ONS, while others are not easily accessed. The assessment process has shown that these documents and publications add considerable value to our statistics in terms of quality, trust and user understanding. In many of the requirements, it has been requested that these documents are made public, that we improve access or highlight their availability and rewrite them to cater for a wider group of users.

Practice 2.4 - Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours.

13. We have a number of assessment reports with the requirement to "Ensure all releases are issued at 9.30am on the day of release". Our current website capacity prevents multiple releases being released simultaneously at 9.30am, requiring lower priority releases to be published a minute or so later. ONS has been granted a temporary exemption to the Code until the new website is launched on 30 April 2011. After this date, the new ONS website, the new simplified authoring process and our increased capacity to release statistics, will enable ONS to meet Protocol 2.4 of the Code. In the meantime, ONS will work as closely in line with the Code as possible, by ensuring that the number of releases delayed past 9.30am is minimised.

Summary

14. Although we were initially slow to respond to the challenges of Assessment, we are now beginning to realise the benefits. A recent release by the Life Opportunities Survey has been identified as an example of good practice by the Monitoring and Assessment team, and part of our response to the assessment of statistics on pensions (AR 65) has been used as an exemplar in assessments of wider GSS statistics.

15. In 12 months time, ONS aspires to be in a position to offer more examples of best practice to the GSS and be held as an exemplar for the way it is managing and learning the lessons of assessment. To achieve this, ONS will continue with the areas of action outlined in this paper, working positively with the Assessment team and embedding the Code further into our day-to-day processes.

Stephen Penneck, Director General ONS, February 2011

List of Annexes

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Annex A | Number of Requirements in Assessment Reports of ONS statistics (as of 9 February 2011) |
| Annex B | Detailed comments on ONS prioritised Requirements |

Annex A Number of Requirements in Assessment Reports of ONS statistics (as of 9 February 2011)

Table 1 - Summary of Practices of the Code with the highest number of Requirements for ONS

Number of Requirements	Practice
21	Principle 4.2 – “Ensure that official statistics are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs, and that users are informed about the quality of statistical outputs...”
16	Principle 8.2 – “Prepare and disseminate commentary and analysis that aid interpretation, and provide factual information about the policy or operational context of official statistics. Adopt formats for the presentation of statistics in graphs, tables and maps that enhance clarity, interpretability and consistency.”
14	Principle 1.2 – “Investigate and document the needs of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform.”
14	Principle 4.1 – “Ensure that official statistics are produced according to scientific principles. Publish details of the methods adopted, including explanations of why particular choices were made.”
12	Protocol 2.4 – “Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours.”

Table 2 - Detailed Table of Requirements

Principle Protocol	Total OHS		Practices	Total number by practices
	Number	Percentage		
Principle 1: Meeting user needs Includes protocol 1 total %	36	22.83	1	8
			2	14
			3	2
			4	3
			5	9
Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity	8	4.35	1	0
			2	1
			3	0
			4	4
			5	0
			6	2
			7	0
			8	0
			9	1
Principle 3: Integrity	0	0.00	1	0
			2	0
			3	0
			4	0
			5	0
			6	0
			7	0
Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality	50	27.17	1	14
			2	22
			3	3
			4	0
			5	3
			6	7
			7	1
Principle 5: Confidentiality	0	0.00	1	0
			2	0
			3	0
			4	0
			5	0
			6	0
Principle 6: Proportionate burden	6	3.26	1	4
			2	0
			3	0
			4	1
			5	1
Principle 7: Resources	4	2.17	1	0
			2	1
			3	0
			4	2
			5	1
			6	0
			7	0
Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility	39	21.20	1	8
			2	17
			3	0
			4	6
			5	4
			6	1
			7	3

<p>Protocol 1: User engagement</p> <p>% included in principle 1 total %</p>	6	0.00	1	1
			2	0
			3	0
			4	2
			5	0
			6	0
			7	3
<p>Protocol 2: Release practices</p>	27	14.67	1	3
			2	4
			3	1
			4	10
			5	0
			6	3
			7	5
			8	1
			9	0
<p>Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes</p>	8	4.35	1	0
			2	0
			3	3
			4	0
			5	5

Annex B Detailed comments on ONS prioritised Requirements

Practice 4.2 - Ensure that official statistics are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs, and that users are informed about the quality of statistical outputs.

1. Examples of the issues identified in ONS Assessment Reports to date:
 - i. "...flagging local authority estimates where there are higher levels of uncertainty to *give users some indication of quality*" (AR 8)
 - ii. "...*communicate clearly* the falling response rates on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the *implications for data quality*" (AR 34)
 - iii. "... draw attention to the fact that certain statistics published in the pink book are provisional estimates and *provide information on where the most up-to-date estimates can be found*" (AR 45)
 - iv. "... *draw users' attention to the change in the statistics* due to the change in definition of e-commerce" (AR 56)
 - v. "...*signpost users to similar statistics produced* for Scotland and Northern Ireland, and related statistics produced by the Department for Education (DfE)" (AR 68)
 - vi. "... *improve information about the quality of the statistics*, including estimates of the main sources of bias and estimates of sampling error" (AR 80)
2. ONS has addressed a number of the issues above to the satisfaction of the Monitoring and Assessment team, for example in the case of AR 34 simple improvements to the way we provide links and access to reports more prominently on the ONS website or in the case of AR 45 by providing a general statement within the introduction of the Pink Book and specific references included in the Trade in Service and Foreign Direct Investment methodological section. In response to the requirement in AR 56 ONS redrafted the note to make it clearer to users and the redrafted version was incorporated into the e-commerce release published by ONS on 26 November 2010.

Practice 8.2 - Prepare and disseminate commentary and analysis that aid interpretation, and provide factual information about the policy or operational context of official statistics. Adopt formats for the presentation of statistics in graphs, tables and maps that enhance clarity, interpretability and consistency.

3. Examples of the issues identified in ONS Assessment Reports to date:
 - i. "... ensure that Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) is published with *commentary, analysis and supporting information that meets user needs* and is at least of equal standard to that currently published alongside the Average Earnings Index (AEI)" (AR 19)
 - ii. "... *analyse users' views* about the recently revised Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, and the other labour market outputs, *to ensure their relevance and clarity of presentation*" (AR 34)
 - iii. "... *provide commentary and contextual information that aid the interpretation* of the statistics published in Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics and UK Trade in Goods analysed in Terms of Industries" (AR 45)
 - iv. "... implement ONS's plan to add commentary to Transport Travel and Tourism (MQ6) and review the commentary in Travel Trends with a view to expanding it to include, for example, *more discussion of trends over time*" (AR 47)
 - v. "... include in future releases *some commentary about the UK's position relative to the rest of the EU*" (AR 56)
 - vi. "... review the commentary in the adoption statistics bulletin to *ensure that it enables appropriate interpretation of the data*" (AR 68)
 - vii. "... include *factual information about the policy or operational context* of these statistics" (AR 73)
 - viii. "... improve the *explanatory commentary and contextual information* in the Retail

Sales bulletin *to aid user interpretation* (AR 80)

4. A specific response to one of the requirements above can be seen in response to AR 34 where following an analysis of user views, ONS has improved the relevance and clarity of its releases and ensured that releases are relevant and clear in presentation. A recent release by the Life Opportunities Survey has been identified as an example of good practice by the Monitoring and Assessment team in the way it conveyed the results via an 'Easy Read' and the release was available on audio formats.
5. To improve the overall quality of statistical commentary across ONS, the Publishing Strategy and Standards Committee (PSSC) has been tasked to review all ONS statistical releases, identify ONS areas of best practice and ensure that the quality of ONS Statistical Releases not only adhere to the Code but are continually improved. The review has begun in earnest in partnership with the NSO and Monitoring and Assessment. The main challenge ONS has to overcome is encouraging ONS statisticians to comment on the uses of the data as people perceive that this risks our independence, for example some business areas were unsure about how ONS should comment on how its statistics are used to measure government performance. To address this and improve ONS's standards PSSC will produce guidance (including examples of good practice) to support business areas in meeting these standards. A draft set of guidance will be discussed at the March meeting of PSSC.

Practice 1.2 - Investigate and document the needs of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform.

6. Examples of the issues identified in ONS Assessment Reports to date:
 - i. "... *document the uses* of Services Producer Prices Index (SPPI) data clearly on the website" (AR 25)
 - ii. "... investigate and *document the uses* of these statistics and user needs; *publish information about users' experiences* of these statistics" (AR 45)
 - iii. "... take steps to *engage more effectively with the wider user community* in order to develop a more complete understanding of their needs, and make those steps known (AR 47)
 - iv. "... take steps to develop a *more complete understanding of the use made of the statistics*, the needs of current and potential users, and user views on the service provided. Publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the beneficial use of the statistics" (AR 56)
 - v. "... Take steps to *develop a greater understanding of the use made of adoption statistics*; publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics" (AR 68)
7. ONS published its 'User Engagement Strategy' on the ONS website following a period of public consultation. ONS business areas have been using this as a basis for their engagement plans. The findings from the work programme consultation and good practice from across the wider GSS have added further to our understanding.
8. ONS solutions developed in response to documenting the use made of our statistics include a review of our 'Key Account Management' processes. In the case of improving our knowledge of uses, business areas have developed online surveys for known users and for unknown users have used their output landing pages to publicise the survey and establish user views on our statistics. Other examples include establishing 'Twitter' accounts e.g. e-commerce and increased cross divisional working amongst similar output areas to improve the understanding of the use of the statistics. As part of the new ONS website, plans exist to improve our understanding of the users and use of our statistics. Finally, ONS has improved its management information of enquiries to business areas,

so users can be contacted and alerted to new releases and changes to statistics.

Practice 4.1 - Ensure that official statistics are produced according to scientific principles. Publish details of the methods adopted, including explanations of why particular choices were made.

9. Examples of the issues identified in ONS Assessment Reports to date:

- i. "... publish *details of the methods adopted* in the production of these statistics" (AR 56)
- ii. "... publish *information about the methods and quality* of the adoption statistics and ensure that it is clearly signposted in the bulletin and data tables" (AR 68)
- iii. "... *improve the documentation on methods*, to make it more coherent and include explanations of why particular choices were made" (AR 80)
- iv. "...*improve the accessibility of information on ONS's website about the methods used* to produce the Index of Production and publish more detailed information about these methods" (AR 81)
- v. "... *publish investigations* into further reducing the time lag between the reference period and publication" (AR 87)

10. The assessment process has identified that ONS has a wealth of information on its methods but its restricted to internal use within ONS. The assessment process has shown that these documents and publications add considerable value to our statistics in terms of quality, trust and user understanding. In many of the Requirements, it has been requested that these documents are made public, that we improve access or highlight their availability and rewrite them to cater for a wider group of users.

Practice 2.4 - Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours.

11. ONS has a number of Assessment Reports with the Requirement to "*Ensure all releases are issued at 9.30am on the day of release*". Our current website capacity prevents multiple releases being released simultaneously at 9.30am. ONS has been granted a temporary exemption to the Code until the new website is launched on 30 April 2011. After this date, the new ONS website, the new simplified authoring process and our increased capacity to release statistics, will enable ONS to meet Protocol 2.4 of the Code. In the meantime, ONS will work as closely in line with the Code as possible, by ensuring that the number of releases delayed past 9.30am is minimised.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

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A Statement has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To view the Statement go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/reductions-in-government-statistical-functions.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(11)15

A Monitoring Brief will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The document will be available at:

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

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

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The Statistics Authority's International Context

Purpose

1. This paper looks in general terms at the international context for statistical governance and raises the question of how much, and what kind of, engagement with international bodies, other statistical councils (the collective term used by the United Nations (UN) for national bodies such as the Authority) and statistical offices, the Authority should be seeking.

Timing

2. As the work of the UK Statistics Authority becomes better known world-wide, there are some opportunities that the Authority could pursue.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Board are invited to decide how much value there would be in the Authority promoting internationally aspects of our governance model and also our reports and views. Conclusions on this point will inform decisions on how much effort we should devote to such activities and how they should be focused, and whether those efforts should be intensified.
4. A number of international events have been attended on behalf of the Authority over the last three years. The Board is invited to consider the suggested broad approach for the future outlined at paragraph 18.
5. It is also proposed that the Secretariat produce a regular update report on developments in the international statistical system for the Authority Board, perhaps every six months.

Discussion

6. This paper is about the Authority in its scrutiny, or statistical council, role. The international involvement of producers of official statistics is well established and operates on an essentially inter-governmental basis. The Authority is not, and should not be, seen as representing the UK Government. The same argument applies to other statistical council bodies and this partly explains why their international engagement is much more limited.
7. There is a long established and elaborate network of national statistical offices, international offices (such as those at the UN, Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)). The umbrella to all of these is the UN Statistics Commission which meets each year in February. The UK government is represented by the National Statistician and colleagues. It is common for staff from national embassies etc. also to be involved.
8. More recently, the EU has established two governance-type bodies with a Europe-wide perspective. These are the European Statistics Advisory Committee (ESAC), currently chaired by Denise Lievesley, and with a focus on the customer view for Eurostat's outputs and activities; and the European Statistics Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) which is responsible for arrangements relating to the propriety etc of European statistics including the European Statistics Code of Practice. The Chair and the Head of Assessment attended a meeting with ESGAB in December 2010. ESGAB does not normally comment directly on statistical arrangements in individual member states but it has made clear in a recent report that it would wish to see other EU countries having

arrangements such as those in the UK and France.

9. In parallel, there is an international academic statistical community whose focus is not primarily on official statistics but which is large enough to have sub-communities with particular interest in such areas. The biggest player is the International Statistics Institute (ISI) which is a worldwide individual member organisation for professional statisticians. It in turn supports a number of subsidiary structures such as the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS). Both the ISI and IAOS organise international conferences.
10. The ISI conference in 2009 in South Africa was a major event with several thousand people attending and a very broad focus. There were spin-off conferences and events on matters including the governance of official statistics and statistical ethics. The IAOS conference in Chile in 2010 was another large event though not on the same scale. There was a parallel event hosted by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) on statistical governance. The Authority presented papers at the ISI conference and the two governance events. The papers and reports on the meetings are available.
11. The next ISI and IAOS conferences are in Ireland in August 2011. The Authority is preparing three papers for the ISI Conference on topics including measuring trust in official statistics, the nature of statistical services in 20 years time and the role of official statistics in supporting democratic processes. At present there are no plans for the Authority to be directly represented at the IAOS conference on 'the demography of ageing'.
12. The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) also hosts an annual international conference on a smaller scale to the ISI and the Authority has contributed to these in recent years including keynote papers by the Authority Chair. Whilst the RSS has no formal link to the ISI, the latter hosts events at its conferences for professional societies at the national level and there is thus another community of learned professional societies.

Dialogue with Statistical Councils

13. The UN Handbook of Statistical Organisation, designed for national governments, is supportive of the role of Statistical Councils. Richard Alldritt's paper for the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) meeting in Chile argued that the UN's perspective on the role of statistical councils was out of date and needed to be further developed. It also made the case for statistical councils around the world to share information about what they are and how they operate, possibly via a central website. Whilst these views received a lot of support at the meetings in South Africa, the mood in Latin America was more ambivalent – one representative said 'a council is something we set up when we do not want to do anything' and a UN representative said, in effect, that the countries of the LAC had all the statistical laws and councils they needed but neither was particularly influential. In considering future engagement with other national and international structures, it is important to bear in mind that there are some deep cultural, as well as structural, differences that tend to impede effective dialogue.
14. The potential benefits of international dialogue to the Authority are nonetheless considerable. At one extreme, the UK model for statistical governance might not survive in the long term if it is seen as an isolated, unusual and unhelpful experiment by other countries and the international bodies. That is not so far from the initial starting position in 2008. The involvement of non-executives in the oversight of statistical functions is increasingly common around the world but is often seen as a threat to the practical

authority of the head of the national statistical office and tightly controlled. It is uncommon for a non-executive statistical council to have its own staff or to have statutory powers of review. Since 2008, we have won some friends and even a few admirers elsewhere; most notably the support of ESGAB and Eurostat and kind words from our counterparts in France. But it would be fair to say the Authority model is still regarded with caution and curiosity by some prominent individuals on the international stage. So there is a case for continuing to explain and promote the UK approach simply to address misunderstanding and mistrust.

15. More positively, the UK model is seen by some individuals and groups, particularly those who have a user interest in official statistics, including people involved with other national statistical councils, as offering a template that could be adapted to their national structures. A Canadian statistician asked at one event if the UK model might have helped to avoid the recent resignation of the head of Statistics Canada over Census issues. The possibility that an Authority-like body could help to defend a national office from political pressure is increasingly recognised. And the value of a Code and Assessment process as a way of strengthening central influence in decentralised statistical systems is also a subject of interest to national and international offices. To the extent that the Authority might be able to help other countries, or international communities, to strengthen their arrangements, and be given some credit for doing so, the UK statistical system could come to be seen as a leading model worldwide. That in turn would strengthen the influence of the Authority within the UK structure and assure its future.
16. In a less specific way, being seen to turn up for international events, present papers and take part in debate and marginal discussions lends credibility and confidence to the UK model. 'Who was there' is often the first approximation to who has influence and something to say. There is a degree of scepticism about the worth of national systems that do not send a representative when matters of governance and propriety are being discussed.
17. At the same time, promoting the Authority's model and role on the international stage could risk diminishing the perceived authority of the National Statistician and other prominent UK voices in intergovernmental discussion. The heads of national statistical offices will usually prefer to do business with their national counterparts and may not welcome parallel engagement with the Statistics Authority.
18. Taking these messages together, the following approach is proposed:
 - i. The Authority should not actively seek to engage with the UN Statistics Commission or individual national statistical offices except at the invitation of those bodies or at the request of the UK government and after due consideration. The one exception to this being the written advice issued by the UN about the role of Statistical Councils. On that, we might write directly to the Director General of the UN Statistics Division proposing some revision of the UN Handbook of Statistical Organisation, and making that letter more generally available via our website.
 - ii. We should welcome and promote contact with statistical council bodies in other countries wherever we can find ways to do that. This includes contact with ESGAB and ESAC at the European level and with Eurostat in relation to those functions. There is also at least one United States body, such as the Committee for National Statistics (CNSTAT) which is part of the National Research Council of the US National Academies in Washington, whose work has some strong parallels with that of the Authority. The goal of shared information on the work of statistical councils around the world should be pursued where opportunities present but with the focus on Europe and the developed world, plus a few leading countries in Africa and Latin

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- America.
- iii. We should take the opportunities offered by ISI, IAOS and RSS conferences, and any similar events, to promote awareness of the Authority and find out about governance developments elsewhere. This will typically involve offering papers that touch on both broad questions and the UK model.
 - iv. We should engage with international statistical offices, such as OECD, UNECE, UNESCO, and Eurostat (and bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) to the extent that they have an interest in ensuring consistent and high statistical standards. Their explicit support for the Code and Assessment approach could be of real value to us.
 - v. We should continue to draw Assessment Reports and other Authority reports to the attention of as many interested parties abroad as we have email addresses for.
19. This overall approach would typically require the preparation of perhaps two to four papers for international conferences a year, along with attendance at one or two such events and ongoing dialogue with Eurostat and the EU advisory bodies, plus some correspondence. OECD and Eurostat run peer review processes that assess national statistical systems against formal criteria. Where invited, we might wish to contribute to that as well. That level of commitment is not trivial but is manageable within current resources and proportionate to the likely benefit to the Authority.

Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment, February 2011