

**Minutes of the UK Statistics Authority Meeting  
16th May 2008**

**Present**

**UK Statistics Authority – Non-Executive Members**

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)

Lord Rowe-Beddoe (Deputy Chair – ONS)

Professor Adrian Smith (Deputy Chair – Official Statistics)

Mr Partha Dasgupta

Ms Moira Gibb

Sir Alan Langlands

Professor Steve Nickell

Professor David Rhind

**UK Statistics Authority – Executive Members**

Mr Richard Alldritt

Ms Karen Dunnell

Mr Steve Newman

**Secretariat**

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Mr Allan Smith

Mr Mervyn Stevens

**Apologies**

None

### **Chair's opening remarks**

1. The Chair, Sir Michael Scholar, welcomed Mr Richard Alldritt to the Authority as the Head of Assessment. In response Mr Alldritt said how delighted he was to be a member of the Authority but recognised that at the same time he was also a servant of the Authority and that he would be speaking to each of the members of the Authority individually about the service that the Secretariat should be providing.

### **Declarations of interest**

2. There were no declarations of interest.

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

3. The minutes of the meeting on 18th April 2008 were accepted as a true and fair account of that meeting.

### **Matters arising**

4. **Blue Book** - Clarification was sought as to whether all those with an interest in the Blue Book were being consulted as appropriate. The Board understood that while the needs of the two principal users (HM Treasury & the Bank) had been the highest priority, the ONS would be liaising with other users as to what will be delivered.

5. A position statement would be issued on 23 May. The Board agreed that this statement needed to be clear on what was going to be delivered and where changes have been made from the original specifications.

6. **Census 2011** - The Authority discussed its role in relation to award of the main procurement contract. Because the contract amount was beyond ONS and Authority delegated spending limits it would be for HM Treasury to approve. The Board delegated authority to MS Dunnell to decide on this matter subject to HM Treasury approval.

7. A paper would be presented to the June meeting of the Authority on the Census White Paper. The meeting briefly discussed deficiencies with the present address register and political risks associated with the award of the Census contract.

### **Consultation on the Code of Practice**

8. Mr Alldritt presented the paper on the consultation on the Code of Practice. There was a need to get the Code published in order to expedite the timetable to allow assessment to start.

9. The Board noted that the Code was based substantially on work done by the Statistics Commission but included additions. The paper did not propose any preliminary discussion with government departments. Instead, comments from government departments would be considered alongside all other contributions.

10. Following discussion it was agreed that the draft Code would be shared with Heads of Profession (including those covering the devolved administrations) before the meeting of GSS (Government Statistical Service) HOPS on 2 June but that this should not delay the start of the formal consultation process. It was not expected that the draft would be materially altered. It was agreed that any comments made by the GSS in advance of the formal consultation be made publicly available.

11. Authority members should send any drafting comments on the draft Code and consultation document to Mr Alldritt as soon as possible.

12. In reference to migration statistics the Board requested that they be fully briefed on what was to be released by ONS later in May.

### **Strategy Workshop**

13. The meeting of the Authority continued with a strategy workshop which was facilitated by Robert Smith from Stanton Marris. The Authority considered the future direction of the Authority, engagement with stakeholders, the roles and responsibilities of individual members of the Authority, the corporate governance framework and the priorities for the Authority.

**Agenda – UK Statistics Authority Meeting 16th May 2008**  
**Room 1103/1105, Office for National Statistics, Titchfield, 11.10am - 3.30pm**

**Session 1 Authority Business - 11.10 to 11.30**

**Chair: Sir Michael Scholar**

**Apologies: None**

**Agenda**

- 1 Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting
- 2 Declarations of interest
- 2 Consultation on the Code of Practice and related procedures SA(08)19
- 3 Any other business .

***Consultation on the Code of Practice and related procedures*****Purpose**

1. This paper discusses the UK Statistics Authority's consultation on the Code of Practice. It presents a draft consultation document on the Code of Practice and the related principles and procedures for Assessment (Annex A) and considers the process for agreeing and disseminating the document.

**Timing**

2. Pressing. It would be desirable to issue the consultation document as soon as practicable once the Authority has agreed upon its form and content.

**Recommendation**

3. The Statistics Authority is invited to:

- decide the process for agreeing and disseminating the consultation document;
- consider and provide initial comment upon the draft consultation document itself.

**Discussion***Consultation process*

4. The Statistics Act requires the Authority to 'prepare, adopt and publish' a Code of Practice (Section 10.1 of the Act). In preparing the Code, the Authority must consult ministers in each of the devolved administrations and 'such other persons as it thinks fit' (S10.3). There is no absolute requirement to issue a public consultation document but it is the simplest way of ensuring that everyone, in Government and outside, has the same opportunity to comment.

5. The Authority is similarly required to consult on 'the principles to which it will have regard, and the procedures it will adopt' in carrying out the functions of assessment and designation (S17.1). The draft consultation document is in two parts. The first deals with the Code, the second with the principles and procedures.

6. Cabinet Office guidelines stipulate that public consultations should be held over a minimum period of 12 weeks. There will then need to be a further period of several weeks to assimilate the responses and agree and produce a final report.

7. The next meeting of the Authority at which the draft code could be discussed is due to be held on 20 June. Subject to further editing required in response to comments, the Statistics Authority Secretariat would then seek to issue the consultation document at the earliest date it could. Allowing for the consultation period and time for production of a final report, the agreed Code might then be published in November.

8. Prior to publication of the final report, Authority members would have a further opportunity for substantive discussion of the draft Code and the responses to the consultation.

*Dissemination*

9. The consultation document will be the first published report of the Authority. It is proposed to send a substantial number of paper copies under cover of a letter from the Chair to ministers and other stakeholders in the UK and internationally. This will have the added benefit of further raising the Authority's profile. The report will also be made available on the Authority's website and a press notice issued at the same time.

#### *Draft Consultation Document*

10. As the consultation document explains, the draft of the Code for consultation is closely based on the one in the Statistics Commission report *Proposals for a Code of Practice for Official Statistics* (October 2007). This was based in turn, on an earlier interim report for consultation which elicited responses from 16 UK and international stakeholders. The main omission from the responses to that consultation was government departments which decided as a matter of policy not to respond to the Statistics Commission report ahead of the legislation.

11. The Statistics Commission's 2007 draft was itself based on the current National Statistics Code of Practice and Protocols but substantially shortened and adapted to a form more suited to supporting assessment. Its development was also informed by, and consistent with, the European Statistics Code of Practice which was introduced in 2005.

12. The current draft is not, however, exactly the same as the Statistics Commission draft. It contains a new section (Protocol 3) on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes. There are also a few additional points and some more minor amendments in the drafting. This is recognised in the draft consultation document.

#### *Pre-release access*

13. We understand that the Pre-release Access Order (2008) is expected to be laid before Parliament in early June and to come into force in late summer. The current draft (Protocol 1 in particular) makes provision for the existence of the Order.

14. As set down in the Act, the Order is to cover only pre-release access to statistics 'in their final form prior to publication'. This means that the Code must cover pre-release access to statistics before they reach their final form. This is addressed in Protocol 1. To avoid confusion over the distinction between the Order and the Code this issue is explained in the introductory text of the document (paragraphs 48 to 50).

#### *Potential areas of comment*

15. Different stakeholders are likely to raise different points. Overall, based on experience of previous exercises we might expect a relatively small number of substantive responses consultation. However, we would expect the invitation to comment in the section headed 'The Code and policy statements' (paragraphs 45 to 47) to prompt views. This is one of five particular areas where views are specifically sought (paragraph 12).

16. Principle 10 of the draft Code 'Adequate resources' may also raise comment in government departments, as perhaps may the Code's position in relation to the Devolved Administrations (DAs). The current draft does not contain any special arrangements for the DAs, but rather treats all official statistics producers equally.

17. The preamble to the Code states (at xi.) that "It is implicit in the Code that,

within those bodies that produce official statistics, there will be sufficient managerial separation between officials responsible for National Statistics and other staff of the organisation to ensure clear lines of accountability for observance of the Code". We believe the meaning of this is clear enough but it may cause some reflection in departments where the lines of accountability for statistical work are not so well defined.

#### *Risks*

18. The main risk to the Authority is that the timetable outlined above makes it vulnerable to the charge it is acting too slowly. Assuming the Code is ready by the end of October formal assessments against the code might begin toward the end of the year. The first Assessment reports of this type would therefore be published before the end of the financial year.

19. Measures to mitigate this risk include:

- review the timetable to identify any aspects which could be shortened;
- develop a clear communication strategy to inform stakeholders what the Authority is doing and why;
- identify one or two issues on which reviews could be conducted without the text of the Code being agreed (this could be the subject of a paper for the June meeting of the Authority).

Richard Alldritt  
Head of Assessment  
8 May, 2008

DRAFT AS AT 8 MAY 2008

**Code of Practice for Statistics and the Principles and Procedures of Assessment:**

**A consultation document**

UK Statistics Authority  
May 2008

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Foreword by Sir Michael Scholar

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**Part 2:** The Statement of Principles and Procedures of Assessment

**Annexes (not included in this draft)**

- 1: The National Statistics Code of Practice and Protocols – Main principles
- 2: International Statistics Code of Practice – Main principles
- 3: About the UK Statistics Authority
- 4: Written consultation code of practice

## **Foreword by Sir Michael Scholar, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority**

Official statistics are a vital resource for government and society. They influence many decisions in government, and in both public and private services, that affect all our lives. They also provide the citizen with a window on the work and performance of government and in this way play a key role in the processes of democracy.

The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 established new statutory arrangements under which the production and publication of these statistics are now governed. It created the UK Statistics Authority and it gave us, among other powers, the authority to determine a Code of Practice and specific powers to assess the compliance of official statistics against that Code.

The Code of Practice and the assessment of compliance will be among the most crucial tools in enabling us to pursue our statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good – in short, to our task of rebuilding trust in statistics. The Code is also fundamental to defining the common principles that we expect to be observed by the different bodies that produce official statistics. The draft Code in Part 1 of this consultation document is broad in its coverage and is designed to apply not just to those involved in statistical work but to all who work within organisations that produce official statistics, from those who advise government ministers to press offices. This broad coverage reflects the pattern of international codes such as the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice, and the draft is consistent with these. It is also consistent with the existing National Statistics Code of Practice which it will replace – there is no change in the essential values.

I believe our proposals are well thought out and coherent. However, the Statistics Authority will be happy to consider further changes or additions to the proposals if the response to the consultation suggests that this would help to promote confidence in the statistical service. Please let us know what you think

Sir Michael Scholar

## Introduction

1. A consultation document in 1998, *Statistics: A Matter of Trust*, described the Government's aims for statistics in the following way:  
"Quality needs to be assured. Official statistics must be sufficiently accurate and reliable for the purposes for which they are required ... the production and presentation of official statistics needs to be free from political interference, and to be seen as such, so that the objectivity and impartiality of statistics is assured".
2. The Treasury consultation document *Independence for Statistics: A Consultation Document*, issued in March 2006 set out plans for legislation and quoted the text above, saying that these objectives remained the Government's aim. The UK Statistics Authority endorses the sentiment but notes that the statistical service is more than just the figures themselves. Of course the figures must be as accurate and reliable as they reasonably can be, and be free from any political interference, but they must also be planned to meet the future needs of society and communicated in ways that are as helpful as possible to those who rely on them to inform their decisions – and in some respects that is all of us. The draft Code of Practice in this consultation document reflects this broad interpretation of the aims.
3. In the UK, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the central statistics office. However, the ONS represents just one part of the statistical system and, in practice, statistical production occurs across a wide range of government departments, the devolved administrations and other public bodies, covering all areas of activity (including the economy, employment, population, crime, education and health). This decentralised system offers real benefits in terms of support to policy work in government but it also creates challenges in organisation and management that are different from those faced by more centralised national statistical offices around the world. The Code of Practice has been drafted with the UK's decentralised system in mind.
4. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 ('the Act'), requires that the UK Statistics Authority (the 'Statistics Board' in the Act) should consult on the content of a Code of Practice for Statistics and the principles and procedures that it will adopt in exercising its duty to assess compliance against the Code.
5. More specifically, section 10 of the Act requires the Statistics Authority to 'prepare, adopt and publish a Code of Practice for Statistics'. In preparing the Code, the Authority must consult Ministers in each of the devolved administrations and 'such other persons as it thinks fit'.
6. And section 12 of the Act requires the Authority, at the request of Ministers in the Cabinet Office and the Devolved Administrations, to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice has been complied with in relation to any official statistics. Where the Authority determines that the Code has been complied with, it is required to designate the statistics as 'National Statistics'. Otherwise it must decline to designate them.
7. Once statistics have been designated as 'National Statistics', the body

responsible for their production is under a statutory duty (section 13 of the Act) to continue to comply with the Code. And the Authority must re-assess from time to time whether those statistics continue to be Code-compliant.

8. It is evident from these formal provisions that the Code will play a central role in the fulfilment of the Authority's objective of ensuring that official statistics serve the public good. Once the Code has been adopted, the Authority will keep its operation under review and propose amendments as necessary. Any such amendments will be subject to further consultation.

### **Principles and procedures**

9. In carrying out the functions of assessment and designation, the Act (section 17) requires the Authority to prepare and publish a statement of:

- the principles to which it will have regard, and
- the procedures which it will adopt.
- It is further required in preparing this statement to consult Ministers in the devolved administrations and such other persons as it thinks fit.

10. This consultation document is in two parts:

**Part 1** explains the background to the Authority's proposals for the Code of Practice and sets out the draft text.

**Part 2** sets out the draft Statement of Principles and Procedures relating to the assessment and designation functions.

11. The Annexes contain background information on the existing National Statistics Code of Practice and relevant international codes.

## OPEN CONSULTATION

12. The UK Statistics Authority welcomes views on the draft Code of Practice (Part 1) and the principles and procedures for assessment (Part 2). In particular:

1. Does the draft Code achieve the right balance between accessibility and conciseness, on the one hand, and suitable guidance and prescription on the other?

2. Should the Code include more detail about the circumstances in which confidential statistical data might be disclosed - perhaps in a Protocol - or do you think it would be more appropriate to address this in published guidelines?

3. Which Principles in the Code should be given most emphasis in making decisions about the possible designation of a National Statistic?

4. The concept of 'experimental statistics' has enabled official statisticians to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage. How should 'experimental statistics' be treated vis-a-vis Assessment?

5. With reference to the discussion of departmental policy statements issued alongside statistical releases, should the Code include the requirements outlined at para 47?

13. The consultation period begins with the publication of this document and will run for at least 12 weeks. Please ensure that your response reaches us by **5 September 2008**.

14. Responses to the consultation should be sent to:  
UK Statistics Authority  
Statistics House  
Islington  
London  
EC1R 1UW

15. This document can also be found on the UK Statistics Authority website: [link]

16. When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

17. All written responses will be made public on the Statistics Authority's website unless the author specifically requests otherwise. In the case of electronic responses, general confidentiality disclaimers that often appear at the bottom of e-mails will be disregarded for the purpose of publishing responses unless an explicit request for confidentiality is made in the body of the response.

18. Even where confidentiality is requested, if a request for disclosure of the

consultation response is made in accordance with the freedom of information legislation, and the response is not covered by one of the exemptions in the legislation, the Statistics Authority may have to disclose the response in whole or in part.

### **Consultation criteria**

19. The consultation is being conducted in line with the Code of Practice on Consultation, which contains six key criteria governing a written consultation. These are set out in Annex 5.

## **PART 1:**

### **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS**

20. There has been a formal code of practice for UK official statistics for over ten years but it has evolved over that time; the most recent version, *the National Statistics Code of Practice*, was published in stages from 2002. That code takes the form of a set of broad principles and 12 associated protocols. More information about it can be found at Annex 1.

21. In October 2007, the Statistics Commission (since wound up under the terms of the Statistics and Registration Service Act), published a report, *Proposals for a Code of Practice of Official Statistics* ( [Link to web version of report](#)). This argued for a shorter and simpler Code more suited to supporting the assessment function. The report built on an interim one which the Commission issued for consultation in December 2006, and which received a number of substantive responses from national and international experts and organisations. In all, 16 organisations and individuals responded to that interim report:

Audit Commission  
Office of Public Sector Information  
Committee on Standards in Public Life  
Economic and Social Research Council  
The National Archives  
Scottish Executive  
The Information Centre for Health and Social Care  
Bank of England  
Royal Statistical Society  
The Royal Society  
Ian Maclean, Chair of the Business Statistics User Group  
Joaquin Almunia, European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs  
Herve Carre, Director-General European Commission  
Donal Garvey, Director General, Central Statistics Office, Ireland  
Ivan Fellegi, Chief Statistician of Canada  
Brian Pink, Government Statistician, New Zealand

22. All the respondents welcomed the proposals for a revised Code of Practice. For example:

'We support the Code's central aim to strengthen public confidence in UK official statistics. We also strongly agree that longstanding public trust needs to be fostered through... a statutory code which is seen to be respected.'  
(*Committee on Standards in Public Life*)

'This is an excellent document, thoughtful, well organised and clear.'  
(*Ivan Fellegi, Statistics Canada*)

'The ESRC fully supports explaining the principles and practices of the Code in lay terms and recognises the extended usability of the Code that will ensue'.

23. A full account of the responses and the amendments made in response to them

is given in the Statistics Commission's October 2007 report.

### **European Statistical System**

24. In 2005 the European Statistical System (ESS) - the partnership of Eurostat and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the Members States - endorsed a new European Statistics Code of Practice – see annex 2. At the same time the European Commission outlined a strategy to implement and monitor compliance with the Code. This strategy, supported by the Statistical Programme Committee, is characterised by self-assessment (of compliance against the Code) and NSI reporting, reinforced by peer reviews to help identify areas in which NSIs and Eurostat should take steps to improve their compliance. Economic and Finance Ministers endorsed the ESS's approach to improving the independence, integrity and accountability of the national and Community statistical authorities.

25. The first round of peer reviews is now complete, and all reports have been published by Eurostat. Further steps, possibly including a strengthening of the Code of Practice, will be outlined in an implementation report by Eurostat to be presented to the European Parliament and to the Council in November 2008.

26. The detail of the subject of this Consultation Document, a Code of Practice for Statistics, has been informed by and is consistent with the European Code. Indeed, we have adopted a structure broadly similar to the European model, which elaborates a number of high level principles, each of which is amplified by a series of more detailed indicators. In the European context this approach has served the peer review process well, and we believe that it will lend itself equally to Assessment and Designation.

27. In developing the Code on behalf of the Authority my officials have held high level discussions with Eurostat experts, and we have taken into account the broad areas in which the European Code is likely to evolve.

### **The nature of the draft Code**

28. The Statistics Authority agrees with the view expressed by the Statistics Commission in its October 2007 report that the new statutory framework would require a code that, whilst covering much the same ground as the existing National Statistics Code of Practice, should be different in some respects:

It should be shorter, simpler and more imperative in style – both so that individuals might find it easier to understand and remember, and also so that bodies that produce statistics would more readily be able to tell if their practices were compliant.

As far as possible, it should provide an unambiguous and structured basis for independent assessment.

It would benefit from being closer in style, structure and content to the European Statistics Code of Practice, introduced in 2005, compliance with which is expected of all EU national statistics offices and other producers of European Statistics (see Annex 2).

It should be drafted to apply to all bodies that produce official statistics not just to statistical staff or to the statistics themselves.

It should not set out exceptions and exemptions in the text of the Code. Instead, another mechanism should be adopted for agreeing and documenting necessary exceptions and special cases. This change substantially shortens the Code.

29. The draft Code is based on an edited version of the existing National Statistics Code, so it is not fundamentally different. There are however some additional principles and practices, mostly based on concepts in the European Code. Among the aspects which differ from the existing Code are:

The inclusion of a principle (Principle 10) on resources. This follows the model of the European Code and is appropriate where the Code will apply to a number of largely autonomous organisations.

The requirement on producer bodies under Principle 2 to investigate and document the use made of official statistics and the types of decisions they inform, and the key areas of emerging demand and unmet need. Investigation of these issues is an important contribution to planning and quality assurance.

The requirement that exceptions and exemptions to the application of the Code will be by agreement with the Statistics Authority.

The inclusion of three new Protocols containing fuller guidance on release practices, on consultation and on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes. The latter protocol addresses an aspect of statistical work that is of growing importance and it is desirable that the Code should set out how the Statistics Authority will ensure that the use of such sources is being managed in the public interest.

The removal of the 12 protocols to the existing Code which, other than where they are adequately covered in the revised Code, will be further developed and treated as supplementary guidance notes, but not as integral parts of the Code.

## **Structure and future revision**

30. The draft Code consists of a preamble setting out some contextual points, ten principles and the three protocols referred to above. Each principle is supported by a statement of related practices but where a practice supports several principles, it is not normally repeated.

31. The principles are expected to remain stable over time but the statements of practices may be revised from time to time. The Statistics Authority will consult publicly on any future revision to the Code.

## **The ten principles**

32. The main principles of the draft Code are stated below with brief explanation. Each principle is supported in the draft Code by a number of 'practices'. There are also three more detailed protocols as explained below.

### Principle 1: Integrity

**At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.**

33. This fundamental principle reflects the statutory objective of the UK Statistics Authority to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. In this context, the concept of the 'public interest prevailing' in the principle equates to 'serving the public good' in the statement of the objective in the Act. In practice, the principle requires that the public interest in the preparation of official statistics should be carefully explored and evaluated and must not be subordinated to any other interest.

#### Principle 2: Relevance

**The planning, production and dissemination of official statistics should be managed so as to meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business and the wider community. As far as possible, official statistics should be internally consistent, consistent over time, and comparable between producers.**

34. This principle emphasises that official statistics should be planned to meet the needs of decision-makers inside and outside government. Different producers of official statistics should work together to ensure that their statistical outputs are consistent.

#### Principle 3: Sound methodology and assured quality

**Methods for the production, management and dissemination of official statistics should accord with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practice and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured following centrally determined procedures which take account of internationally agreed concepts of statistical quality.**

35. This principle stresses that not only must statistical methods be consistent with statistical best practice, they must be fully documented and that the quality of the statistics should be monitored in a consistent way across the whole of the statistical service.

#### Principle 4: Value for money

**The resources allocated to statistical work should be used optimally to deliver outputs that meet the needs of users inside and outside government.**

36. This principle should be read in consultation with Principle 10, Adequate Resources (which requires that the bodies which produce official statistics should ensure that the work is resourced – in terms of staff and financial resources – at a level consistent with achieving the standards expected of the Code). Principle 4 further requires that all the resources available be used optimally – for example that existing administrative sources be used where possible and through working closely with other producer bodies.

#### Principle 5: Communication

**Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be published in a form convenient to users and in as much detail as is practicable and allowed by confidentiality constraints.**

#### Principle 6: Presenting statistics

**The style and content of statistical reports should be balanced and impartial, and meet the needs of users.**

#### Principle 7: Accessibility

**Official statistics should be equally and readily accessible to all users.**

37. Principles 5, 6 and 7 all relate to the way in which statistics, and associated commentary and information about how they have been produced, are made available to the user. Principle 5 covers the statistics themselves and information about methods and procedures followed. Principle 6 relates more to the analyses and textual material that accompany statistics. Principle 7 covers a range of steps required to ensure that all users have, as far as practicable, the same access to the information.

#### Principle 8: Confidentiality

**Information identifying a particular person (including a body corporate) that is collected or used for statistical purposes should be strictly protected and not subsequently used for non-statistical purposes, except as provided for in legislation and authorised by the National Statistician.**

38. The protection of the confidentiality of personal information collected for statistical purposes is a core tenet of international good practice and a requirement of the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It is of course also an obligation under the Data Protection Act and other UK legislation. The practices which support this principle require the highest standards to be maintained within all bodies that produce official statistics.

#### Principle 9: Proportionate burden

**The cost burden on data providers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.**

39. The collection of statistical data through censuses and surveys represents a burden on those who provide the information. In the case of businesses and public bodies this constitutes an addition to their running costs. Principle 9 and the supporting practices are designed to ensure that no unnecessary or unjustified burdens are imposed, regardless of any legal authority to collect the information.

#### Principle 10: Adequate resources

**The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code.**

40. See the comments under Principle 4 above.

### **The three protocols**

41. Included within the Code of Practice are three protocols of release practices, consultation and the use of administrative sources.

#### **Protocol 1. Protocol on release practices**

42. The practices associated with this protocol are designed to ensure that statistical reports are released into the public domain in an orderly manner that gives equal access to all and promotes public confidence. The practices are consistent with the arrangements for handling pre-release access under the Pre-Release Access Order (Reference/summary to be added)

#### **Protocol 2. Protocol on consultation**

43. This protocol promotes good practice in carrying out consultation on statistical services.

#### **Protocol 3. Protocol on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes**

44. This protocol covers ground not previously included in the National Statistics Code of Practice. It requires all public bodies that produce official statistics from administrative sources to observe certain general practices and to prepare an Administrative Sources Statement which will set out how a range of practical matters are to be handled.

### **The Code and policy statements**

45. The draft Code requires that ministerial or policy statements – of the kind which government departments commonly issue separately from, but at the same time as, the release of statistics – should not precede the release of statistics to which they refer (Principle 1, practice 1). The intention here is that the Code should preclude any such statement, including background verbal statements to journalists or embargoed press releases, before the statistics are in the public domain. And that this would apply whether the statement contained the actual figures or just speculative comment about what they might show.

46. However, the Statistics Commission suggested in its report that consideration should be given to including in the Code some basic standards for departmental statements issued in parallel to the release of statistics.

47. **We are therefore inviting views** on whether the draft Code should include a requirement that policy statements relating directly to statistics (and issued at the time of first release of those statistics) should:

1. Contain a prominent link to the statistical release;
2. Be clearly labelled as a policy statement (or ministerial statement) and be

readily distinguished from a statistical release;

3. Should meet basic professional standards in the use of statistics within the policy statement (for example statistics should be cited accurately, charts should be drawn in an accurate and impartial way).

### **Pre-release access**

48. Pre-release access is defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act as 'access to the statistics in their final form prior to publication'. Section 11 of the Act explicitly prevents the Code from dealing with 'any matter relating to the granting of pre-release access to official statistics', which will instead be determined by an order made under that section. With this exception, there are no specific constraints on the content of the Code.

49. The Act however states that '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'. What this means is that the Code has to be read as if the rules and principles relating to pre-release access were part of it – and thus the assessment process will take account of compliance with those rules etc regardless of the fact that they are not set out in the Code. This is explained further in Part 2.

50 Because pre-release access is defined in the Act to refer only to statistics in their final form prior to publication, the question of the treatment of statistics *before* they reach that final form remains a matter for the Code of Practice. Thus there are references in the draft Code to principles governing access to statistics before publication. These references do not apply to statistics in their final form.

# Draft for consultation

## Code of Practice for Statistics

### Preamble

i. Official statistics (footnote: Official statistics are as defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.) are fundamental to good government, the delivery of public services and decision-making in all sectors of society. They are also essential to democracy, providing Parliament and public with a window on society and the economy, and on the work and performance of government.

ii. Such statistics are produced by a large number of public bodies. Observance of a common Code of Practice by all such bodies is central to maintaining a unified statistical service that meets the needs of government and the wider community and is both trustworthy and trusted.

iii. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (footnote: requires that the UK Statistics Authority (the 'Statistics Board' in the Act, *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, 26 July) prepares and publishes a Code of Practice and assesses compliance against the Code. Official statistics assessed as compliant with the Code are designated National Statistics. The Act requires that bodies which produce National Statistics must ensure that the Code continues to be observed in relation to those statistics.

iv. This Code is consistent with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (footnote: *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, UN Statistics Division, United Nations 2006) and the European Statistics Code of Practice (footnote: *6 European Statistics Code of Practice: For national and community statistical authorities*, Eurostat, 24 February 2005)

v. The Code applies to all public bodies that produce official statistics, some of which are outside the civil service. The Code is, however, consistent with the civil service core values (footnote: The Civil Service Code, 6 June 2006, Cabinet Office). of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. In relation to statistical work, these should be interpreted as follows:

**Integrity** – putting the public interest above organisational, political or personal interests

**Honesty** – being truthful and open about the statistics and their interpretation

**Objectivity** – using scientific method to collect statistics and basing statistical advice on rigorous analysis of the evidence

**Impartiality** – acting solely according to the merits of the statistical evidence, serving equally well all aspects of the public interest.

vi. The Code contains ten principles and, in relation to each, a statement of associated practices. It also contains three more detailed protocols - on practice in relation to the release of statistics, on consultation, and on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. The Code has been framed to support the assessment of compliance both by the bodies that produce the statistics and independently by the UK Statistics Authority.

vii. The requirements of the Code are specific but there will often be a need for interpretation and professional judgement. The National Statistician and the Head of Assessment (footnote: The Head of Assessment is a statutory office holder with authority as set out in the Statistics and Registration Service Act) will provide supplementary advice and guidance to assist producers of statistics.

viii. Some practices set out in the Code are relevant to more than one principle. In the interests of conciseness, the practices are not normally repeated under different principles. That does not mean they are less relevant where not cited explicitly.

ix. Under some circumstances it may be appropriate for the UK Statistics Authority to agree exemptions or exceptions to the practices, though not the principles. Bodies that produce National Statistics and are aware of a need for an exemption should make a case to the National Statistician in the first instance. Details of all exceptions and exemptions that are agreed will be made public.

x. The Code has the effect of placing different obligations on different groups of officials within bodies that produce official statistics: those with direct responsibility for statistical functions have obligations in relation to professional independence and for quality assurance; other officials need to ensure an environment in which statistical production and professional independence are supported.

xi. It is implicit in the Code that, within those bodies that produce official statistics, there will be sufficient managerial separation between officials responsible for National Statistics and other staff of the organisation to ensure clear lines of accountability for observance of the Code.

xii. The Code employs the phrase 'production, management and dissemination of official statistics' to refer to the entire statistical process from the decision to collect or compile data through to providing advice to the user.

## Principle 1: Integrity

**At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Issue statistical reports separately from any other statement or comment about the figures and ensure that no statement or comment is issued to the press or published ahead of the statistics.
- 2) Ensure that those producing such reports are protected from any political pressures that might influence the presentation of the statistics.
- 3) Follow all statutory obligations and internationally endorsed guidelines governing the collection of data, confidentiality, privacy and release.
- 4) Release National Statistics in accordance with the Protocol on Release Practices (Protocol 1).
- 5) Produce, and make publicly available, assessments of user satisfaction in relation to key outputs and services.
- 6) Keep records of feedback from users, including complaints, and make these records available on request, together with what action was taken.
- 7) Inform the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment about complaints which relate to professional integrity, quality or standards whether or not they can be resolved directly.
- 8) Implement controls to ensure that individuals do not abuse the trust placed in them for personal gain.
- 9) Enable Departmental statistical experts to comment publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of official statistics

## Principle 2: Relevance

**The planning, production and dissemination of official statistics should be managed so as to meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business and the wider community. As far as possible, official statistics should be internally consistent, consistent over time, and comparable between producers.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Under the guidance of the National Statistician, adopt systematic statistical planning arrangements, including transparent priority-setting, that reflect the obligation to support all uses that serve the public interest.
- 2) Report annually to the UK Statistics Authority on progress against statistical plans.
- 3) Investigate and document the needs of users of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform, and the key areas of emerging demand and unmet need. Take these into account in the planning process and report the results.
- 4) When changes are contemplated to official statistics, consult users effectively. Consultation should follow the Protocol on Consultation (Protocol 2).
- 5) Adopt common statistical sampling frames, questions, definitions, statistical units and classifications (including common geographic referencing and coding standards) to promote comparability across official statistics. Make the reasons for deviations from standard models publicly available.
- 6) Adopt international standards, concepts, definitions and classifications to promote international comparability wherever practicable and support the development of those standards through effective engagement with international organisations.
- 7) Where time series data are revised, or changes are made in methodology or coverage, consistent historical data should be produced wherever possible, taking into account user requirements.

### Principle 3: Sound methodology and assured quality

**Methods for the production, management and dissemination of official statistics should accord with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practice and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed concepts of statistical quality.**

#### *Practices*

- 1) Ensure that official statistics are produced according to scientific principles and to a level of quality that meets user needs. Make publicly available detail of the methodologies adopted, including explanation of why particular choices were made.
- 2) Adopt quality assurance procedures that assess each statistical product against user requirements, and in terms of how they harmonise with other products. In doing so, draw on all available sources of expertise.
- 3) Support centrally managed reviews of statistical products including reviews of standards and classifications.
- 4) Seek to achieve continuous improvement in the statistical and managerial processes underlying all statistical products.
- 5) Identify any potential sources of statistical bias in estimates and provide users with an evaluation of the extent and direction of bias wherever practicable.
- 6) Maintain back-up arrangements to minimise the risk of loss or corruption of statistical resources, proportionate to the importance of each resource.
- 7) Manage official statistics in accordance with relevant public records legislation and codes of practice on records management.

#### Principle 4: Value for money

**The resources allocated to statistical work should be used optimally to deliver outputs that meet the needs of users inside and outside government.**

##### *Practices*

- 1) Monitor expenditure against business plans and demonstrate effective stewardship of funds allocated to statistical work.
- 2) Seek to balance quality against costs (including both costs to government and providers), taking into account the expected uses of the statistics.
- 3) Make full use of shared statistical planning arrangements with other producers of official statistics both to minimise the risk of duplication in statistical production and to make it possible to use existing sources, in combination where appropriate, to meet user needs.
- 4) Plan statistical production in such a way that it adds value to other parts of the statistical system where possible.
- 5) Maximise opportunities for use of existing administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data. Where possible, use common information technology and information management systems which facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics. Where administrative sources are used for statistical purposes, follow the practices set out in Protocol 3.
- 6) Use project management techniques, risk management and business continuity planning in ways that secure value for money.
- 7) Ensure that the balance between resources committed to the production of statistics and resources for their presentation, dissemination and communication, is such as to encourage maximum use of official statistics in the public interest.

## Principle 5: Communication

**Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be published in a form convenient to users and in as much detail as is practicable and allowed by confidentiality constraints.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Make statistics available in as much detail as is reliable and practicable, subject to legal and confidentiality constraints, offering choice and flexibility in the format according to the level of detail required by the user.
- 2) Publish documentation on procedures followed in the production and dissemination of official statistics – in sufficient technical detail to allow users to understand how calculations have been made.
- 3) Announce substantial methodological changes well in advance of the release of statistics based on the new methods.
- 4) Provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released.
- 5) Release statistical work in progress, in whole or in part, where justified and approved by the National Statistician. For example, 'experimental statistics' (footnote: Experimental statistics are official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage) may be published in order to involve users and other stakeholders in their development. They must be clearly marked as such and explained in both technical and lay terms.
- 6) Correct and publicise errors discovered in statistical outputs.

## Principle 6: Presenting statistics

**The style and content of statistical reports should be balanced and impartial, and meet the needs of users.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Present statistics impartially and in ways that users find helpful.
- 2) Provide full and helpful commentary on the relevance and reliability of statistics in relation to the range of potential uses.
- 3) Prepare and disseminate analyses which aid interpretation and provide context, including analysis of the main findings.
- 4) Where it will help users, include factual information about the policy context of official statistics. However, statistical text and interpretation should not be subject to approval by anyone other than those responsible for the statistical product.
- 5) Release datasets and reference databases in formats that are convenient to the widest range of users.
- 6) Adopt formats for the presentation of statistics in graphs, tables and maps that provide clarity and consistency.

## Principle 7: Accessibility

**Official statistics should be equally and readily accessible to all users.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Make official statistics equally available to all and at the same time, subject to any rights to pre-release access established under the Statistics and Registration Service Act.
- 2) Make access to official statistics as straightforward as possible by providing easy-to-use entry points and exploiting all appropriate means of dissemination, working with other producers and with organisations outside government as appropriate.
- 3) Release all regular statistical reports on the internet without charge to the user.
- 4) For any supplementary statistical services for which a charge is made, adopt clear pricing policies that comply with legislation and government policy.
- 5) Ensure that official statistics are disseminated in forms which enable those with disabilities to access them, as far as possible.
- 6) Publicise official statistics in ways that enable users to identify and access information relevant to their needs.
- 7) Assess user satisfaction with the form and timing of official statistics outputs and the publicity provided for them – following the Protocol on consultation (Protocol 2).
- 8) Ensure that official statistics are made publicly available in forms that enable and encourage re-use.
- 9) Deposit official statistics with the relevant national archive in accordance with relevant legislation. Deposits should be accompanied by information about their purposes, design and methodology to aid their re-use.

## Principle 8: Confidentiality

**Information identifying a particular person (including a body corporate) that is collected or used for statistical purposes should be strictly protected and not subsequently used for non-statistical purposes, except as provided for in legislation and authorised by the National Statistician.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Make a public commitment that no statistics will be released that reveal personal information (except as provided for in the Statistics and Registration Service Act or specifically agreed with the individual). Notify all respondents to statistical surveys accordingly at the time of data collection.
- 2) Take into account the potential for indirect disclosure<sup>10</sup> and the implications of that disclosure for the individuals concerned when deciding whether to release statistics.
- 3) Inform respondents of the main intended uses and access limitations applying to the information they provide in response to statistical surveys.
- 4) Develop and apply methods for the management of data that are sufficient to maintain the guarantee of confidentiality to data providers, recognising users' needs for high quality statistical research and results.
- 5) Keep data (that identify personal information) collected for statistical purposes secure and ensure that they are used exclusively for statistical purposes.
- 6) Restrict access to data identifying personal information to the minimum number of staff necessary to the production of official statistics and ensure that they have been trained in their obligations to protect confidentiality. Require anyone to whom such access is provided to sign a declaration that makes clear their obligations to protect confidentiality and this Code, and that provides them with information about how those obligations shall be upheld. Maintain records of these declarations.
- 7) Only allow access to confidential data to a third party (a contractor for example) after a written agreement has been signed that sets out how the data are to be processed and for what statistical purposes, and that the third party will follow all the requirements of this Code of Practice. Keep records of any such access.
- 8) Should a situation arise in which the law requires information identifying an individual, which has been collected for statistical purposes, to be made available for other purposes – such as police enquiries – the information may only be provided on the written authorisation of the National Statistician.

<sup>10</sup> In this context, 'indirect disclosure' refers to the possibility that otherwise non-disclosive material could reveal confidential information if subsequently put together with, possibly as yet unpublished, information from another source. For example, local crime statistics might be put together with information subsequently disclosed in court.

## Principle 9: Proportionate burden

**The cost burden on data providers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Report annually the estimated costs (on businesses, service providers, the public etc) of responding to statistical surveys and strive to develop methods that will reduce the costs to individual organisations or people.
- 2) Seek participation in statistical surveys through informed consent wherever possible, and exercise statutory authority for data to be acquired by compulsion only when there are clear benefits in doing so.
- 3) Promote statistical purposes in the design of administrative systems so that maximum use can be made of them for statistical purposes, thus reducing the need to carry out separate data collections.
- 4) Carry out analysis of the costs of proposed new surveys to data providers against the potential benefits of conducting them, and repeat these analyses periodically for regular surveys.
- 5) Wherever possible draw on existing data sources (including in combination) and data estimation as alternatives to new surveys.

## Principle 10: Adequate resources

**The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code.**

### *Practices*

- 1) Ensure that statistical services have the staff, financial and computing resources to produce and disseminate official statistics to the standards of this Code – and in so doing meet the needs of users.
- 2) If changes in resource allocation to particular statistical activities are under consideration, ensure that users are consulted before decisions are made. Include in budgets specific resources for user consultation.
- 3) Ensure that the allocation of resources matches the requirements of the work programme that emerges from the planning process, and that an adequate audit trail is maintained and made publicly available.
- 4) Use an appropriate competence framework to set the requirements of statistical posts and the development needs of staff.
- 5) Ensure that posts which require professional statistical skills (as set out in the relevant competence framework) are filled by individuals who have been appointed through external or internal schemes that specifically assess such skills to common standards.
- 6) Support staff in their continuing professional development to maintain and extend their statistical knowledge and skills.

[Note: MAY NEED SMALL CHANGES TO REFLECT THE TERMS OF THE PRE-RELEASE ACCESS TO STATISTICS (PRAS) ORDER]

## Protocol 1. Protocol on release practices

**The practices set out below are designed to ensure that statistical reports are released into the public domain in an orderly manner that gives equal access to all – subject to the arrangements detailed in the Pre-Release Access to Statistics Order 2008 (footnote: Reference / web link to be added) - and promotes public confidence.**

1) Release statistics as soon as they, and any accompanying commentary and analysis, are judged ready so that there is no opportunity, or perception of opportunity, for the release to be withheld or delayed.

2) Maintain a rolling **Timetable of Statistical Releases** for a year ahead. This should state the month of release as early as practicable and the exact release date no less than two weeks in advance.

3) Release all National Statistics via the Publication Hub (footnote: Description and web link to be added).

3) Be consistent from one period to the next in release arrangements for recurring Releases.

4) Ensure that, subject to the ultimate approval of the National Statistician, the responsibility for the format and content of statistical reports rests with the relevant statistical Head of Profession and require the name of that person to appear in each report for which he or she is responsible.

5) Draw public attention to any change to a pre-announced release date and explain fully the reasons for the change at the same time.

6) Limit access before public release to those people essential to production and publication, subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access made under the Statistics and Registration Service Act (which may allow pre-release access to a wider range of people). Maintain records of all who have access prior to release.

7) Ensure that no indication of the content of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other external party, before publication. Report to the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment immediately any accidental or wrongful release and initiate immediate investigation of the circumstances.

8) Do not give journalists, or others, embargoed access to statistical reports except where the UK Statistics Authority has authorised that to do so is in the public interest. Such embargo arrangements shall be regarded as exceptional and reported to Parliament by the UK Statistics Authority.

9) **Market-sensitive statistics** – special arrangements apply to market-sensitive official statistics. Any attempt to profit from pre-release access to these statistics is liable to criminal prosecution. For the purposes of the Code the following are currently identified as market sensitive:

- Index of production
- Index of services

- Producer prices
- Consumer price indices
- Labour market statistics
- Retail sales
- Public sector finances
- UK trade
- National accounts (all measures)
- Balance of payments

10) **In releasing market-sensitive statistics**, producer organisations will:

- Give markets time to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours by issuing statistical reports at 9.30am on a weekday
- Provide the date of release at least six months in advance.
- Should the need arise, require anyone given pre-release access to make a signed declaration that they have only used the information for the specific purpose for which they were given such access, and that they have not passed it to anyone else.

11) Producer organisations will comply with the detailed guidelines prepared by the National Statistician, covering: content, formats, periodicity, timing, documentation, and branding.

## **Protocol 2. Protocol on consultation**

- 1) Unless a specific agreement already exists, contact user groups and discuss with them the best means of obtaining views before consultation starts.
- 2) Alert users as information about consultations becomes available.
- 3) Balance the importance of the issue and the likely impact of user views against the time and resources available so as to obtain good value for money from the consultation process.
- 4) Inform the National Statistician about any formal consultations in order to avoid duplication and to make widest possible use of ideas, comments and other materials that are offered in responses.
- 5) Work with other producers of official statistics to co-ordinate consultations in order to give participants the best opportunity for effective input and to minimise the burden placed upon them.
- 6) Make all consultation documents publicly available.
- 7) Be clear in the documentation about who is being consulted, about what, and for what purpose.
- 8) Express the issues as simply and concisely as possible; and in non-technical language where possible.
- 9) Make a timetable for each consultation publicly available and ensure that each part of the process is given sufficient time for those interested to participate fully and properly.
- 10) Offer a variety of means of participation including, as appropriate, web sites, email, telephone, written submissions and face to face meetings.
- 11) Follow Cabinet Office guidance on how consultations should be conducted.
- 12) Exploit the many mechanisms available, including:
  - Formal consultation documents (which should set out and summarise the key issues);
  - Issuing a discussion paper to interested parties;
  - Listening events such as conferences, roadshows and seminars. Events held by professional bodies, user groups and other organisations can provide valuable opportunities;
  - Meetings, correspondence and phone calls with groups or individuals;
  - Internet mailing groups.
- 13) Put individual responses into the public domain unless anonymity is requested.
- 14) Make publicly available the records of decisions and actions following a consultation, together with explanations for them.

### **Protocol 3. Protocol on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes**

**This guidance requires all public bodies that produce official statistics from administrative sources to observe certain general practices and to prepare an Administrative Sources Statement which should be subject to consultation with the National Statistician before finalisation. This will set out how a range of practical matters are to be handled. Further advice on the form of such statements will be issued by the UK Statistics Authority. In the interests of clarity, some statements of practice from elsewhere in the Code are repeated below.**

1) Observe all statutory obligations and relevant codes of practice and codes of conduct in relation to the protection of confidentiality and the handling of personal data.

2) Observe the relevant requirements of the European Statistics Code of Practice:

“Where European statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for the administrative purpose must be a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes”

“Administrative sources are used wherever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information”

“Proactive efforts are being made to improve the statistical potential of administrative records and avoid costly direct surveys”

3) Maximise opportunities for use of existing administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data. Where possible, use common information technology and information management systems which facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics.

4) Promote statistical purposes in the design of administrative systems so that maximum use can be made of them for statistical purposes, thus reducing the need to carry out separate data collections.

5) Ensure that no action is taken within the producer body, or public statement made, that would tend to undermine confidence in the independence of the statistics when released.

6) Prepare an **Administrative Sources Statement** which identifies the following:

Details of the administrative systems currently used in the production of official statistics.

Procedures to be followed within the organisation to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative systems are contemplated. Such changes should normally be subject to consultation with the National Statistician.

Information on other administrative sources that are not currently used in the production of official statistics but have potential to be so used.

Arrangements for providing statistical staff, whether inside the producer body or elsewhere in the statistical service, with access to administrative data for statistical purposes.

Arrangements for reviewing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes.

Arrangements to ensure the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data.

7) Consult the National Statistician before finalisation of the Administrative Sources Statement and address any points raised so that the National Statistician is able to assure the UK Statistics Authority that the statistical work based on administrative sources is being conducted in ways that promote the public good.

## **PART 2:**

### **Draft statement of principles and procedures relating to the assessment and designation functions**

#### **Introduction**

Section 17 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act requires the Statistics Authority to 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) of the Act – these are the functions of assessment and re-assessment of statistics against the Code of Practice.

*Comments are invited on the text of the draft statement which follows.*

#### ***Text of the draft statement***

#### **Statement of principles and procedures relating to the assessment and designation functions**

This statement covers:

- the aims of the Authority's assessment function;
- the principles and standards which the Authority will adopt when assessing official statistics;
- the procedures and methods which the Authority will follow ;

#### **Aims of assessment**

In accordance with Section 7(3) of the Act, the aim of the assessment function is to promote and safeguard the quality of official statistics, good practice in relation to official statistics and the comprehensiveness of official statistics.

The assessment function will further aim (i) to identify and report publicly on matters of concern in relation to official statistics in pursuit of Section 8(2) of the Act; and (ii) to enhance the quality of the statistical service over a period of time.

#### **Principles of assessment**

Assessments will be conducted in accordance with the following five principles:

- 1. Risk-based** - focusing assessment resources on those statistics which are seen to present the greatest risk to the reputation of official statistics;
- 2. Proportionate to need** - taking account of the concerns of users of statistics;
- 3. Cost-effective** - making use of existing documentation where available, and not placing unnecessary burdens on producers of statistics;

**4. Transparent** - operating in an open manner which inspires confidence in the Authority's work;

**5. Consistent** - applying the same principles and standards in all cases.

Assessment reports will also be:

- o Prepared in accordance with the civil service core values (footnote: The Civil Service Code, 6 June 2006, Cabinet Office) of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality;
- o Completed within a reasonable timescale;
- o Informed and evidence-based - reflecting the views and needs of users of statistics and other external stakeholders, and taking account of all the available information, comparing the evidence against published standards and criteria;
- o Aimed at producing proposals and recommendations which promote and support improvement;
- o Relevant and accessible - reporting findings and conclusions fairly, clearly, and openly and in a manner which is useful to, and understood by, producers, users and the public.

### **Assessment procedure**

Assessments will:

- o Take place in accordance with a published programme, though ad hoc assessments may be required from time to time;
- o Be based, at least in part, on correspondence and discussion with the managers responsible for the statistics;
- o Take account of self-evaluation evidence from the responsible managers;
- o Involve an opportunity for users of the statistics and other stakeholders to contribute to the assessment and explicitly consider any such contribution;
- o Be shown to the relevant producer body in draft form prior to publication, in order to ensure factual accuracy;
- o Be published as soon as practicable after completion and include any substantive response from the producer body to the report in draft form;
- o Present clearly the assessment team's conclusions in relation to the degree to which the statistics comply with the Code of Practice; the nature of any improvements needed; and a recommendation to the Authority as to whether the statistics should be designated as 'National Statistics'.

### **Evidence**

Self-evaluations will be conducted using a standard template and this will form the starting point for discussions between the assessment team and managers. This information will be supplemented by:

- o any previously published reviews of the statistics;
- o any other relevant information acquired by the assessment team at any time; and
- o any information submitted by users or stakeholders.

The Authority's annual report to Parliament will list all of the assessments conducted in the previous year with their conclusions as well as those planned for the coming year.

## **Notification**

Managers in the producer body will normally be notified at least three months in advance of a planned assessment by means of updates to the Programme of Assessment which the Authority will publish in accordance with Section 15 of the Act. Exceptions to this notification period will be explained publicly by the Statistics Authority.

## **ANNEXES**