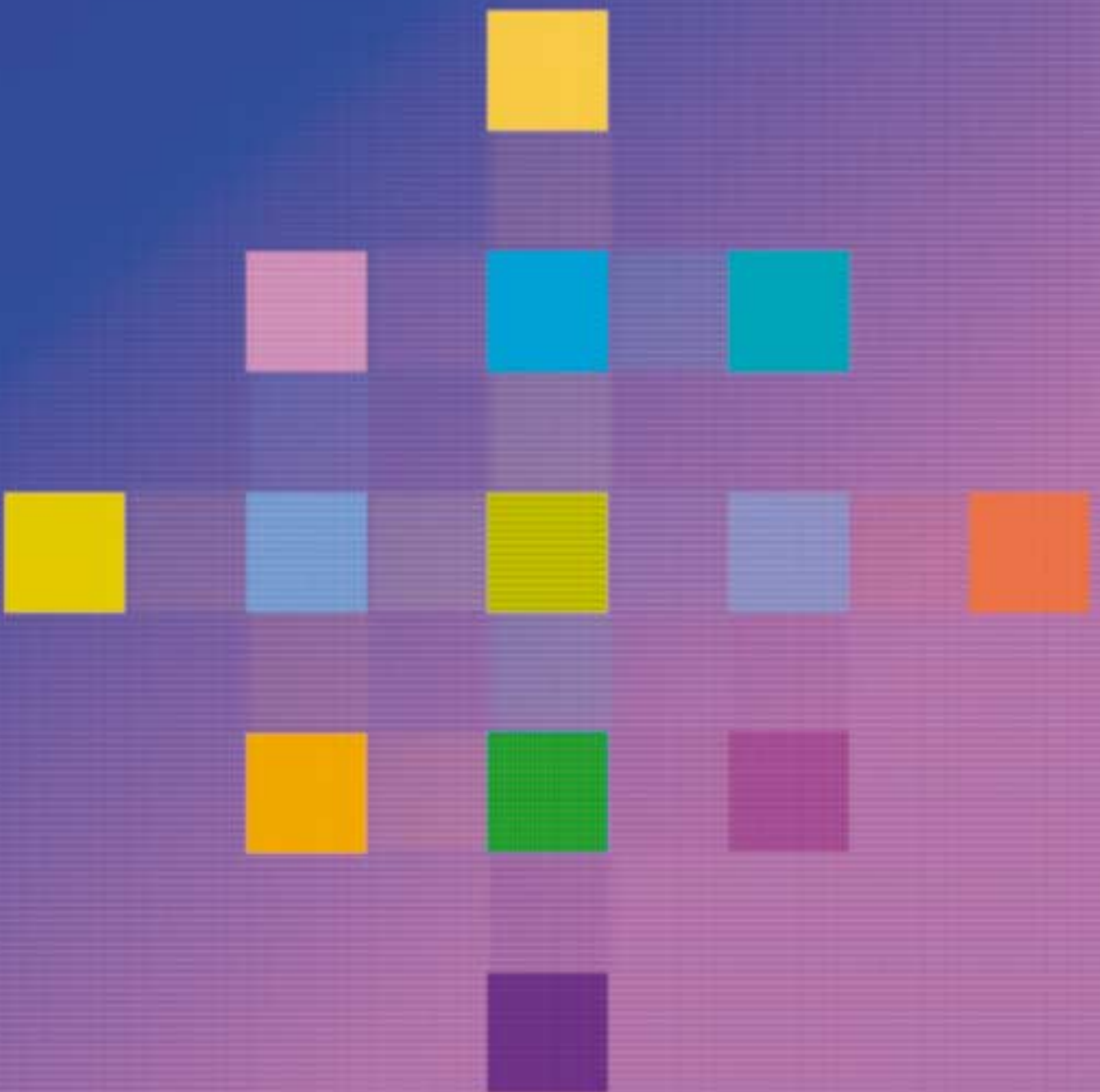


# National Statistics Code of Practice

## Statement of Principles



# **National Statistics Code of Practice**

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## Statement of Principles

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#### **A National Statistics publication**

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the *National Statistics Code of Practice*. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

Navigate through this document by using Bookmarks, Thumbnails, or Links from the Contents listing below. There are more sub-categories in the Bookmarks than there are in the Contents listing. Prevent the printing of these instructions by unchecking 'Annotations' in the print dialogue box.

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## Summary of principles

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**The knowledge that advances the government, business and people of the United Kingdom will be founded on National Statistics of quality and integrity, available when needed.**

National Statistics will be valued for –

Relevance

Integrity

Quality

Accessibility

– produced in the interests of all citizens by

Protecting confidentiality

Balancing the needs of users against the burden on providers

– enhanced through

Integration, accumulation and innovation

Efficiency in costs, fairness in prices

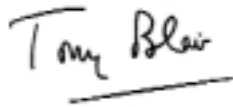
## Preface by the Prime Minister

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I know from my own experience the central role of good statistics in making possible well-informed public debate and good responsive government. Statistics provide most of our evidence for making decisions and judging performance. This makes it crucial for our statistics to be reliable and relevant.

It is important for our statistics to be good. But it is just as important for the statistics to be trusted by all those - Government, the Opposition parties, pressure groups, citizens - involved in debating policy. The alternative is that debate degenerates into disputes about the facts, with the risk that the process of making decisions and monitoring delivery may be compromised. That is why I support the setting of high quality standards for National Statistics as vital both for improving the quality of, and strengthening public confidence in, UK statistics.

In particular, I am pleased to endorse this *Statement of Principles* for the *National Statistics Code of Practice*, and to urge both producers and users of statistics across the public sector to take steps to ensure that these principles are put into practice. The development of this *Code* was one of the main commitments in the White Paper *Building Trust in Statistics* and its implementation will make a vital contribution to enhancing the quality, integrity, relevance and efficiency of official statistics. This *Code* will provide a firm foundation for establishing the UK as a world leader in the provision of official statistics based on high professional standards, openness and trust.



**Tony Blair**  
Prime Minister  
September 2002

## Foreword by the National Statistician

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Statistics are everywhere. They shape our understanding of ourselves and society. Priorities in our health needs, change and opportunity in the economy, the state of our schools, conservation of the environment – our grasp of all these issues, among many others, and our ability to address them, requires statistics.

The quality of National Statistics has a direct impact on national life. It affects decisions made in both the public and private sectors, made on behalf of organisations large and small, as well as individuals. It is vital that the quality of official statistics rests on strong foundations, and that this is seen to be true. If statistics are to be used to the greatest advantage, they must be widely and immediately trusted.

The first step in producing statistics of integrity is successful data collection. Every day we ask individuals and institutions to provide us with information that is private to them and not otherwise available to government. If we are to ensure the data we are given are honest and useful, we must sustain the confidence of providers, and to do that we must constantly assure the public of our integrity and independence.

Through trust in National Statistics, participants will see that data collection is necessary, that they do not risk being identified and that there is a clear benefit, to themselves and others, personally and as citizens, from the production of relevant and trustworthy statistical information. Confidence in National Statistics will allow democratic debate to focus on what the data have to say, rather than on how they were produced.

There are a number of laws and regulations providing authority for National Statistics. They serve a variety of purposes and were not drafted either to be coherent or complementary or to follow a consistent set of principles. This *Code of Practice* will help the National Statistician to make decisions where the issue is not currently clear in law.

Civil Servants are bound to protect information received by them in confidence and to observe, for example, the Data Protection Act. The *Code of Practice* is explicit on the requirements of handling private information. In order to reinforce these obligations, anyone involved in producing National Statistics at the Office for National Statistics will be asked to sign a specific and binding undertaking to protect the confidentiality of data providers.



The trust of those who use statistics and the confidence of those providing data are built on the professionalism of the statistical service. The creation of this *Code of Practice* is an opportunity to emphasise our commitment to the training and development of the people involved in producing official statistics, and we have dedicated a protocol of the *Code* specifically to this issue.

The trust that comes from years of consistent good practice can generate a reservoir of goodwill that becomes an ideal basis for the enhancement of statistical activity. This *Code*, and the principles within it, provide the foundation on which this trust will be honoured.



**Len Cook**  
National Statistician  
September 2002

## Structure and scope of the Code of Practice

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### Genesis and aims

The reorganisation of official statistics in the UK began with two command papers, *Statistics: A Matter of Trust*, and *Building Trust in Statistics*, both published by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In June 2000 there followed the *Framework for National Statistics*. These documents set out the need for definitions and standards to apply to official data and drew the guidelines for the roles of the Minister for National Statistics, the National Statistician, departmental Heads of Profession for Statistics, as well as for National Statistics and the Statistics Commission.

### National Statistics

The *Framework for National Statistics* states that –

*The primary aim of National Statistics is to provide an accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive and meaningful picture of the economy and society to support the formulation and monitoring of economic and social policies by government at all levels.*

To meet this and other aims, the *Framework* recognised that National Statistics must be underpinned with explicit principles of purpose that can be elaborated into detailed rules of practice.

In general, official statistics will be National Statistics where the operational control of collection and processing is managed by statisticians and where those processes comply with the *Code of Practice*. The following are also likely to be included –

- **Management and financial information** where the process of compilation has undergone statistical validation to ensure the principles of the *Code* are met.
- **Analyses and compilations** where statisticians compile the most appropriate measures from those available.
- **Statistical compendia** where the component series have been previously published and the objectivity of the selected content is assured by the relevant Head of Profession for Statistics.
- **Research studies** prepared in compliance with the *Code*.
- **Published policy advice and analysis** that relies almost exclusively on statistical information.

The scope of National Statistics is currently decided by means of negotiation. Heads of Profession for Statistics in government departments have responsibility for initiating the process. The National Statistician has responsibility to ensure the statistics are of sufficient quality and otherwise comply with the *Code of Practice*. The Minister of the relevant department has final authority. Details of changes will be published in the *National Statistics Annual Report*.

### Key roles and institutions

The following are summaries of the roles as established by Ministers in the *Framework*.

The **Chancellor, as Minister for National Statistics**, is responsible for the appointment of the chairman and members of the Statistics Commission and the National Statistician, and for maintaining and developing the co-ordinating structure, including the *Framework for National Statistics*.

**Departmental Ministers** must ensure that their Heads of Profession for Statistics have the authority and resource to maintain their output in accordance with this *Code* and that the National Statistics they produce are free from political interference.

The **National Statistician** has overall responsibility for the integrity of National Statistics. Subject to the terms of the *Framework*, the National Statistician has final authority within government in the UK on professional statistical issues including protection of confidentiality and privacy, methodology, format of release and conformity with the *Code of Practice*.

**Departmental Heads of Profession for Statistics** are responsible to the National Statistician for the quality of National Statistics produced by their departments.

**In devolved administrations** the Minister responsible for statistics, departmental Ministers, the Chief Statistician and the Heads of Profession play broadly similar roles.

For more detail please see Annex A.

The **Government Statistical Service** comprises a wide range of people across most departments of government who contribute to statistical products. Headed by the National Statistician, the GSS sets standards in professional competence, including qualifications and training.

The **Office for National Statistics** is the UK government's main survey-taking body. It has a responsibility to develop and maintain at an operational level both the integration and integrity of GSS outputs. All ONS statistics are National Statistics. ONS provides leadership for the link with international statistical bodies, actively contributing to the development of international standards, particularly within the European Union.

The **Statistics Commission** concerns itself with quality, priorities and procedures to provide assurance to Ministers that National Statistics are

trustworthy and responsive to public needs. It gives independent advice on National Statistics, with its advice being made public.

### Purpose

Statistical work in the UK is decentralised. This ensures that statistics are close to policy in such vital and diverse areas as health, education, employment and crime. It also makes it all the more important to document the standards of best practice by which the statistical service operates – in other words to have a uniform code of practice that can apply across the whole of the GSS.

### Application

It can be difficult for citizens to distinguish between different types or standards of official statistics. Building trust in National Statistics depends on building trust in all other government statistics, and vice versa.

The National Statistician will therefore work with Heads of Profession and Chief Statisticians to promote the use of the *Code* as a model for all public sector statistical work. This will focus on the principles of guaranteed confidentiality, objective methodology, quality processes, transparent release practices and value for money.

### Structure

The *Code of Practice* as a whole will be set out in two parts. The current document sets out key principles and high level standards. This will be supported by a series of protocols that will provide practical frameworks for the application of the *Code* across all significant areas of activity relevant to National Statistics. The *Code* will be underpinned by detailed procedures to be implemented as relevant to different departments.

### Interpretation

Interpretation of the *Code* will be a matter for the professional judgement of the National Statistician, Heads of Profession and Chief Statisticians acting in unison as appropriate.

### Compliance

A code of practice must be consistently applied – if necessary enforced – if it is to be meaningful. For this reason the National Statistician, who has overall responsibility for the *Code* across the UK and for compliance within the UK government, is independent of Ministers and has the right of direct access to the Prime Minister and to First Ministers on issues of professional integrity.

Heads of Profession and Chief Statisticians carry responsibility for compliance with the *Code* within their own spheres, referring to the National Statistician as appropriate.

Where compliance issues arise, they will be detailed in the *National Statistics Annual Report*.

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## The principles within the Code of Practice

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### 1. Relevance

*National Statistics will inform significant decisions in government, business and the wider community, and in so doing contribute to the quality of national life.*

- (a) National Statistics will meet the needs of government, business and the community, within available resources.
- (b) Users' views are essential in ensuring the relevance of National Statistics. Development and implementation of policy and programmes will be based on effective consultation.
- (c) Through the processes of consultation, the National Statistician will develop a view of how National Statistics can best provide a balanced, comprehensive picture of changing social and economic conditions, relevant to the mix of needs that are important now and in the future.
- (d) The *National Statistics Work Programme* will reflect the needs of stakeholders and bring together the key elements of statistical work across government. Performance will be set out in the *National Statistics Annual Report*.
- (e) The planning framework, user consultation and priority-setting process for National Statistics will be transparent, with responses to consultations published whether or not they are adopted.
- (f) The National Statistician, recognising users' needs, will be responsible for co-ordinating the international dimension of the *Work Programme*.

### Protocols

*Consultation Arrangements Between the National Statistician and UK Government Ministers*

*User Consultation*

### References

*National Statistics Annual Report*

*National Statistics Work Programme*

Quality review programme

## 2. Integrity

*National Statistics will gain public trust through being produced using objective and transparent methods.*

- (a) The practices and production of National Statistics will be free of political involvement.
- (b) The selection of statistical sources, methods and procedures is a professional responsibility and will be based on scientific principle and best international practice, taking into account cost implications to government and providers.
- (c) All methods used to produce National Statistics, and the reasons for their use, will be publicly available, including any managerial direction impinging on professional conclusions.
- (d) There will be no commercial protection of any methodology used in the production of National Statistics, regardless of the status of any agency involved.
- (e) Involvement in the production of National Statistics will not be used for personal or commercial gain.
- (f) Substantial methodological changes will be announced before the release of statistics based on the new methods.
- (g) Producers of National Statistics reserve the right to respond, in an impartial manner, to any misunderstandings or misleading interpretations of their outputs.
- (h) National Statistics will be released separately from statements by Ministers about the figures. Ministerial statements will not be released before the statistics.

### Protocols

*Consultation Arrangements Between the National Statistician and UK Government Ministers*

*Quality Management*

*Release Practices*

*Revisions*

*Data Access and Confidentiality*

### 3. Quality

*National Statistics will be fit for purpose and of high quality.*

- (a) Professional competence will underpin all National Statistics activity, enhanced through training, research and reference to best international practice and professional expertise.
- (b) The provision of National Statistics will be effectively managed.
- (c) A culture of evaluation will be systematically fostered, including peer group appraisal and comparative benchmarking.
- (d) Producers of National Statistics will support the development and use of standard practices.
- (e) Processes and methods used to produce National Statistics will be fully documented.
- (f) Knowledge of National Statistics will be sustained by quality measures, regularly published.
- (g) A thorough review of key outputs, at least every five years, using outside expertise where appropriate, will contribute to quality assurance and improvement.
- (h) The National Statistician will report annually on the quality of official statistics.

Protocols

*Professional Competence*

*Quality Management*

References

*National Statistics Annual Report*

Quality review programme



#### 4. Accessibility

*Access to National Statistics will be fair and open.*

- (a) National Statistics will promote equality of access.
- (b) Data will be presented to a standard that clearly and accurately expresses the contents to the widest possible audience, with choice and flexibility in the format where possible.
- (c) Final responsibility for the content, format and timing of release of National Statistics will rest with Heads of Profession (in devolved administrations, the Chief Statistician) acting in consultation with the National Statistician.
- (d) Where privileged early access is determined by Ministers, details will be documented and publicly available.
- (e) Release arrangements will be open and pre-announced. Release will be orderly and as early as possible after compilation.
- (f) Timing will not be influenced by the content of the release or set in such a way as to create a presumed advantage to any particular group or individual.
- (g) As much detail as is reliable and practicable will be made available, subject to legal and confidentiality constraints.
- (h) People involved in producing National Statistics will listen to and respond openly to all enquiries, including from the Statistics Commission and Parliament, and make all records open to scrutiny on request subject to resources and legal and confidentiality constraints.

Protocols

*Data Presentation, Dissemination and Pricing*

*Release Practices*

*Revisions*

## 5. Protecting Confidentiality

*Where data are collected or used for statistical purposes, we guarantee to protect confidentiality.*

- (a) The National Statistician will set standards for protecting confidentiality, including a guarantee that no statistics will be produced that are likely to identify an individual unless specifically agreed with them.
- (b) Data provided for National Statistics will only be used for statistical purposes.
- (c) Everyone involved in the production of National Statistics will be made aware of their obligations to protect provider confidentiality and of the legal penalties likely to apply to wrongful disclosure. These obligations will continue to apply after completion of service.
- (d) Data identifying individuals will be kept physically secure. Access will require authorisation and will only be allowed when the Head of Profession is satisfied the data will be used exclusively for justifiable research and that the information is not reasonably obtainable elsewhere.
- (e) Where information identifying individuals must be given up by law, it will be released only under the explicit direction and on the personal responsibility of the National Statistician.
- (f) The same confidentiality standards will apply to data derived from administrative sources as apply to those collected specifically for statistical purposes.
- (g) Respondents will be informed of the main intended uses and access limitations applying to the information they provide to statistical inquiries.

Protocol

*Data Access and Confidentiality*

**6. Balancing the needs of users against the burden on providers**

*Costs of compliance will be kept to an acceptable level and data collected only when the benefits of a statistical survey exceed the cost to providers.*

- (a) The costs of complying with statistical surveys will be planned, managed and reported each year.
- (b) New statistical surveys will not duplicate existing sources. The costs of compliance will be taken into account in survey design.
- (c) Compliance in household surveys will be sought primarily by persuasion.
- (d) Compulsory acquisition of data may improve the quality of National Statistics and result in a lower response burden on the population as a whole. Where there is statutory authority for data to be acquired by compulsion there will be clearly defined processes and penalties for dealing with non-compliance.
- (e) A continuous effort will be made to develop techniques that reduce the burden on providers.

Protocols

*Customer Service*

*Managing Provider Burden*

## 7. Enhancement through integration, accumulation and innovation

*National Statistics will emphasise coherence and common standards to maximise the value of available statistical and administrative sources.*

- (a) Statistical data will be treated as valuable and irreplaceable, with their value increasing through widespread and long-term use.
- (b) Common statistical frames, definitions and classifications will be promoted and used in all statistical surveys and sources.
- (c) The value of administrative data in producing National Statistics will be recognised, and statistical purposes should be promoted in the design of administrative systems.
- (d) Statistical systems will be designed in ways that maximise the potential to add value through data integration.
- (e) National Statistics will archive material likely to be of historical interest, subject to security, confidentiality and statutory obligations.

### Protocols

*Data Management, Documentation and Preservation*

*Data Matching*

*Data Access and Confidentiality*

*Statistical Integration*

### **8. Efficiency in costs, fairness in prices**

*National Statistics will strive to be efficient and to provide value for money in both its costs and its prices.*

- (a) As far as reasonably possible, the price of National Statistics products will not be a barrier to access.
- (b) Surveys and processing systems will as far as possible be designed with sufficient flexibility to withstand changes to user needs.
- (c) Appropriate opportunities to reduce costs will be actively sought, including economies of scale, data integration, methodological and system development.
- (d) Costs and benefits will be monitored in the light of evolving statistical priorities, and the National Statistician will report on them regularly.

Protocols

*Customer Service*

*Data Presentation, Dissemination and Pricing*

*Managing Provider Burden*

*Quality Management*

## Annex A

### Roles and responsibilities

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(extracts from the *Framework for National Statistics*)

#### Role of National Statistician

The National Statistician has overall responsibility for the professional statistical quality of all outputs comprising National Statistics and ensuring that all outputs are produced in accordance with the standards set out in the *National Statistics Code of Practice* and supporting protocols.

The *Framework for National Statistics* states that the National Statistician will...

- establish the planning framework for National Statistics and the appropriate National Statistics committee structure for delivering planning and management functions, and make appointments to these committees;
- produce a coherent high-level programme for National Statistics that reflects the needs of users and which brings together the key elements of statistical work programmes across government, and present this programme to the Statistics Commission;
- establish quality assurance processes for National Statistics including a programme of thorough reviews of key outputs at least every five years with the involvement of external expertise;
- be responsible for definitions and methodology of National Statistics within the framework of international agreements and conventions, and within the restrictions of administrative systems. In the case of the RPI special arrangements apply: the National Statistician will take the lead in advising on methodological questions concerning the RPI but the scope and definition of the index will continue to be matters for the Chancellor of the Exchequer;
- establish and maintain mechanisms for taking into account the views of users and providers of data in the priority setting process;
- as appropriate will establish advisory committees and make appointments to them;
- promote high quality statistical outputs through systematic evaluation and research, and facilitate access to those outputs;
- promote the integrity and validity of National Statistics, understanding of statistical issues, and the use and interpretation of statistics;

- develop and maintain a professional code of practice for producers of National Statistics and, as necessary, resolve any issues concerning interpretation of the Code of Practice;
- within the framework of departmental statistical work programmes, and the agreed broad coverage of departmental outputs, have responsibility for the professional integrity of those outputs comprising National Statistics, including responsibility for the timing of their release, and for the content and format of that release, taking into account the views of users;
- set professional standards for National Statistics, including standards for release arrangements and quality assessment, and has the authority to determine whether or not a statistical output meets those standards;
- have the right of access to the Prime Minister, through the Head of the Home Civil Service, on matters concerning the integrity and validity of official statistics including on resources where he/she believes they impact on the integrity and validity of official statistics;
- provide guidance in the National Statistics Code of Practice on ways efficiency can be optimised, and report on efficiency improvements in the annual report on National Statistics;
- estimate the compliance costs to businesses and local authorities of responding to statistical enquiries and seek to minimise the burdens on those who supply data for National Statistics or other statistical purposes;
- promote EU/international co-operation on statistical matters and ensure an effective contribution is made to international statistical developments including work on definitions and methodology;
- have responsibility to fulfil UK statistical obligations to the European Union and international bodies;
- act as Head of the Government Statistical Service and be responsible for maintaining central personnel and staff development functions to ensure the availability of skilled professional statisticians across government, and promote the application of the National Statistics Code of Practice for all statistical work in government;
- facilitate and promote the development of statistical methodologies, classifications and standards, and information systems;
- facilitate and promote dissemination and marketing arrangements for National Statistics;

- resolve interdepartmental disputes over issues of statistical integrity or methodology;
- make available to the Statistics Commission information required by the Commission to perform its duties;
- work with Heads of Profession in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to meet users' needs and to promote comparable statistics across the UK – in particular, this will be essential for statistics required to be submitted on a UK basis to the EU or international bodies;
- work with Heads of Profession across the UK to ensure effective sharing of statistical information between the UK government and the devolved administrations in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding and the associated Concordat on Statistics;
- prepare an annual report on the performance of National Statistics to the Chancellor, as Minister for National Statistics;
- appear before Parliamentary Committees as requested to answer questions about National Statistics and respond openly and honestly on all professional statistical matters.

### Roles in the devolved administrations

In recognition of the special and distinct arrangements that exist in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the responsibility for professional and managerial leadership will belong in part to the Chief Statisticians in the devolved administrations, whereas for UK Government Departments it is the National Statistician that carries all of these roles.

Within each of the devolved administrations, responsibility for these functions, activities and responsibilities is as follows:

#### Scotland

The Framework Document states that in respect of National Statistics produced by or for the Scottish Executive, the Chief Statistician in consultation with the National Statistician and Heads of Profession will:

- establish the planning framework for National Statistics in the Scottish Executive;
- produce a Scottish Statistics plan, consistent with and co-ordinated with the UK plan, that reflects the needs of users and which brings together the key elements of statistical work programmes across the Executive. This Plan will be made available to the Statistics Commission;



- co-ordinate and promote implementation of National Statistics policies and procedures within the Scottish Executive;
- establish and maintain mechanisms for taking into account the views of users and providers of data. Where providers of data also supply UK departments appropriate liaison arrangements with the National Statistician will be put in place;
- promote and ensure adherence to the National Statistics Code of Practice and other standards for National Statistics; and, as necessary, resolve any issues concerning interpretation of the Code of Practice in the Scottish Executive;
- estimate the compliance costs to businesses and local authorities of responding to statistical enquiries and minimise the burdens on those who supply data for National Statistics;
- within the UK framework, promote EU/international co-operation on statistical matters and ensure an effective contribution is made to international statistical developments;
- maintain central personnel and staff development functions for statistical staff within the Scottish Executive /GROS and by agreement other agencies, to ensure the availability of skilled professional statisticians;
- facilitate and promote dissemination and marketing arrangements for National Statistics in the Scottish Executive;
- promote effective working between departments and agencies and resolve interdepartmental disputes over issues of statistical integrity and methodology;
- make available to the Statistics Commission any information it requires to perform its duties;
- work with the National Statistician and counterparts in Wales and Northern Ireland to promote comparable statistics across the UK and to maintain statistics required to be submitted on a UK basis to the EU and international bodies;
- prepare an annual report on the performance of National Statistics to the Minister for Finance, which will be made publicly available.

## Wales

The Framework Document states that in respect of National Statistics produced by or for the National Assembly, the Chief Statistician in the National Assembly, in consultation with the National Statistician, will:

- establish and maintain the planning framework for National Statistics in the National Assembly;
- produce an annual Assembly Statistics Plan, consistent with the UK plan, that reflects the needs of users and brings together the statistical work programmes within the Assembly. This Plan will be made available openly and will include a full report on performance against previous plans;
- co-ordinate and promote National Statistics policies and procedures within the National Assembly;
- establish and maintain mechanisms for taking account of the views of users and providers of data;
- promote and ensure adherence to the National Statistics Code of Practice and other standards for National Statistics; and seek to resolve any issues concerning interpretation of the Code of Practice in the National Assembly;
- estimate the compliance costs to business and local authorities of responding to statistical enquiries and seek to minimise the burdens on those who supply data for National Statistics or other purposes;
- within the UK framework, promote EU/international co-operation on statistical matters and ensure an effective contribution is made to international statistical developments;
- maintain central personnel and staff development functions for statistical staff within the National Assembly, to ensure the availability of skilled professional statisticians;
- manage dissemination and marketing arrangements for National Statistics;
- make available to the Statistics Commission any information it requires to perform its duties;
- work with the National Statistician and counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland to promote comparable statistics across the UK and to maintain statistics required to be submitted on a UK basis to the EU and international bodies.

### Northern Ireland

The Framework Document states that for National Statistics produced by or for the Northern Ireland administration, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Chief Executive will carry out a number of functions similar to the National Statistician, but at the Northern Ireland level. He/she will, by agreement with the Northern Ireland Office, and in consultation with Northern Ireland Departments and, where appropriate with the National Statistician:

- establish and maintain the planning Framework for National Statistics for Northern Ireland;
- keep under review the organisation of statistical functions consistent with the objectives of National Statistics;
- produce an annual NI Statistics Plan consistent with the UK Plan, that reflects the needs of users and brings together statistical work programmes across NI Departments;
- co-ordinate and promote National Statistics policies and procedures within NI;
- maintain central responsibility for the development and deployment of statistical staff within NI;
- establish and maintain mechanisms for taking account of the views of users and providers of data;
- promote and ensure adherence to the National Statistics Code of Practice and other standards for National Statistics; and seek to resolve any issues concerning interpretation of the Code of Practice in NI;
- estimate the compliance costs to business and local authorities of responding to statistical enquiries and seek to minimise the burdens on those who supply data for National Statistics or other purposes;
- within the UK framework, promote EU/international co-operation on statistical matters;
- manage dissemination and marketing arrangements for National Statistics;
- make available to the Statistics Commission such information as it requires to perform its duties;
- work with the National Statistician and counterparts in Scotland and Wales to promote comparable statistics across the UK and to maintain statistics required to be submitted on a UK basis to the EU and international bodies.

## Role of Heads of Profession for Statistics in Departments

The Framework Document states that Heads of Profession for Statistics in Departments will ...

- prepare the statistical work programmes for their Departments in consultation with the National Statistician and support the National Statistician in devising and delivering a coherent programme for National Statistics;
- have responsibility for co-ordinating their departmental statistical programmes and promoting within the department the implementation of National Statistics policies;
- promote the use of statistical information and advice in departmental decision-making;
- support user consultation and take account of users' views;
- implement quality assurance processes for National Statistics produced by their Department, including thorough and timely reviews of key outputs, with the involvement of external expertise;
- observe the National Statistics Code of Practice and other standards for National Statistics and promote their use in departments;
- have a responsibility to the National Statistician for the professional quality of their work;
- advise on and promote best practice in statistical work throughout their departments and, with the National Statistician, safeguard the integrity of, and public confidence in, the statistical work and all National Statistics produced in their departments;
- promote the professional independence of the department's statistical work, the propriety and impartiality of its decisions, the quality of its outputs and the integrity and validity of its statistics and commentaries;
- have a duty to refer matters related to the professional integrity of National Statistics produced by their departments to the National Statistician and, with the National Statistician's help where appropriate, to address these;
- protect the confidentiality of people and organisations from the unauthorised disclosure of information held about them by their departments for National Statistics or other statistical purposes;
- have responsibility for meeting the service, quality and efficiency standards set by Ministers;

- estimate the compliance costs to businesses and local authorities of responding to statistical enquiries and seek to minimise the burdens on those who supply data to their departments for National Statistics or other statistical purposes;
- promote the use of departmental administrative systems for statistical purposes, and pursue these within a National Statistics context;
- ensure an appropriate departmental input to the development of policy and strategy on National Statistics by participating in interdepartmental committees and working groups, and by encouraging others in their departments to do so;
- advise on the recruitment, training and development, posting, appraisal, promotion and retention of statistical staff in the department; and serve on or otherwise ensuring appropriate representation on, all recruitment, promotion and other boards for statistical staff;
- facilitate and promote dissemination and marketing arrangements for National Statistics;
- work with the National Statistician and other Heads of Profession to promote comparable statistics across the UK;
- contribute to the annual report on the performance of National Statistics prepared by the National Statistician.

### Role of Ministers

#### The Framework Document states that Departmental Ministers...

- are accountable for the statistical activities of their department and for the resources allocated to it, but will not normally become involved in the operational aspects of statistical work;
- determine the policy and resources framework within which the statistical work in their Department operates and set performance targets for National Statistics;
- decide the scope of National Statistics and departmental statistical programmes and resources having regard to the comments of the Statistics Commission on the proposed National Statistics programme;
- contribute to the response co-ordinated by the Minister for National Statistics to views expressed by the Commission on departmental elements of the high level programme for National Statistics and on specific issues related to the statistical work in their departments;

- ensure that their Department operates in accordance with this Framework for National Statistics and that National Statistics produced by their department are free from political interference;
- ensure that their Head of Profession has the authority to maintain and demonstrate the integrity of their output in accordance with the National Statistics Code of Practice;
- determine which individuals should have access to National Statistics produced by their Department in advance of their release, having first consulted the National Statistician;
- set challenging efficiency standards;
- approve compliance plans and survey programmes after having assured themselves that the surveys included in the plans are justified and properly controlled;
- co-ordinate responses to the Commission on cross-departmental statistical issues where their department has a clear responsibility for such co-ordination;
- authorise Heads of Profession for statistics and their staff to make a full professional contribution to National Statistics activities and authorise access to all data within their control for statistical purposes across government subject to confidentiality considerations and statutory requirements;
- within the context of the Memorandum of Understanding and the associated Statistics Concordat, provide the devolved administrations with as full and open as possible access to statistics, and will work to promote comparable statistics across the UK.

#### Role of Ministers in the Scottish Executive

- Within the Scottish Executive the Minister for Finance will be responsible for co-ordination of National Statistics, and for the maintenance and development of the co-ordinating structure of National Statistics, including those provisions of the Framework pertaining to the Scottish Executive. The Minister will work with, and agree action with, the UK Minister for National Statistics in line with the Memorandum of Understanding. The Minister will produce a co-ordinated response to the Statistics Commission's views on matters relating to the Scottish Executive and make this available to the Minister for National Statistics and to the Scottish Parliament if it wishes;
- Departmental Ministers in Scotland will have responsibilities equivalent to those of UK departmental Ministers.

#### Role of Assembly Secretaries in the Welsh Assembly Government

- Within the Welsh Assembly Government, the Finance Secretary will be responsible for co-ordination of National Statistics and for the maintenance and development of the co-ordinating structure, including those provisions of the Framework pertaining to the Welsh Assembly Government. The Finance Secretary will work with, and agree action with, the UK Minister for National Statistics in line with the Memorandum of Understanding;
- The Finance Secretary will produce a co-ordinated response to the Statistics Commission's views on matters relating to the Welsh Assembly Government and make this available to the Minister for National Statistics;
- Other Assembly Secretaries will have responsibilities equivalent to those of UK departmental Ministers.

#### Role of Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive

- The Minister for the Department of Finance and Personnel in the Northern Ireland Executive will be formally responsible for the co-ordination of National Statistics in Northern Ireland Departments, including those provisions of the Framework pertaining to Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will exercise similar responsibilities for the Northern Ireland Office;
- The Minister for the Department of Finance and Personnel will produce a co-ordinated response to the Statistics Commission's views on matters relating to official statistics produced by Northern Ireland Departments and make this available to the Minister for National Statistics;
- Other Ministers will have responsibilities broadly analogous to those of UK Departmental Ministers.

#### Role of the Statistics Commission

The Statistics Commission will...

- ensure that it is able to assess the needs of users;
- consider and comment to Ministers on the high-level programme for National Statistics, drawing on the views of users and suppliers, taking account of: (i) the resources available for National Statistics; (ii) the compliance costs of providers of raw data; and (iii) the management needs of organisations required to supply raw data. Proposals by the Commission for modification of the National Statistics programme will be accompanied by a compliance cost assessment;

- advise Ministers of areas of widespread concern about the quality of official statistics, so that Ministers can take these considerations into account in determining priorities and making decisions about National Statistics;
- comment on the application of the National Statistics Code of Practice and other procedures designed to promote statistical integrity;
- comment, as necessary, on the arrangements for promoting professional standards across all official statistical work;
- comment on the quality assurance processes of National Statistics, as well as being able to carry out spot checks on departmental or other audits of National Statistics, to advise the National Statistician of any areas of concern that merit review and if necessary to carry out or commission its own audits;
- respond to ad hoc requests from the Minister for National Statistics for advice on any matters related to National Statistics subject to resource constraints;
- review the need for statistical legislation after two years and report back to the Minister for National Statistics, and keep the legislative framework under review thereafter;
- take account of compliance costs of responding to statistical enquiries and the need to secure value for money when commenting on the proposed annual statistical work programme;
- secure effective communication channels between the Commission and the Minister for National Statistics, and between the Commission and the National Statistician;
- advise Ministers on the effectiveness of the arrangements to ensure the consistency and co-ordination of statistics on a UK-wide basis following devolution, as appropriate, and establish working relationships with devolved administrations as it, and they, see fit;
- submit an annual report to the Minister for National Statistics commenting on the annual report of the National Statistician and on the way the Commission has fulfilled its remit.



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## Annex B

# Fundamental principles of official statistics in the Region of the Economic Commission for Europe

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Adopted during the 47th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in the Palais of Nations, Geneva, on 15th April 1992

### **The Economic Commission for Europe**

Bearing in mind that official statistical information is an essential basis for development in the economic, demographic, social and environmental fields and for mutual knowledge and trade among the States and peoples of the region,

*Bearing in mind* that the essential trust of the public in official statistical information depends to a large extent on respect for the fundamental values and principles which are the basis of any democratic society which seeks to understand itself and to respect the rights of its members,

*Bearing in mind* that the quality of official statistics, and thus the quality of the information available to the Government, the economy and the public depends largely on the co-operation of citizens, enterprises and other respondents in providing appropriate data needed for necessary statistical compilations,

*Recalling* the general provisions and standards adopted to this end by the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention of the Council of Europe of 28th January 1991 for the Protection of Individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data, the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Final Declaration of the Bonn Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe,

*Recalling* the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations active in statistics to establish standards and concepts to allow comparisons among countries,

*Recalling* also the International Statistical Institute Declaration of Professional Ethics,

Having taken cognisance of the consensus reached within the Conference of European Statisticians on the need to define the principles governing the activities of the official statistical agencies in the region and in the member States,

Adopts the present resolution:

- Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information.
- To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.
- To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.
- The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.
- Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.
- Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.
- The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.
- Co-ordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.
- The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.
- Bilateral and multilateral co-operation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

## Reference documents

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*Statistics: A Matter of Trust*  
(Green Paper) Cm 3882  
The Stationery Office, 1998  
ISBN 0-10-138822-5

*Building Trust in Statistics*  
(White Paper) Cm 4412  
The Stationery Office, 1999  
ISBN 0-10-144122-3

*National Statistics Annual Report*  
Published annually by the Stationery Office

For print copies of the above publications, please contact:

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**book.orders@theso.co.uk**  
**www.clicktso.com**

For copies of -

*Framework for National Statistics*  
ISBN 1-85774 382 2

*National Statistics Work Programme*

please contact:

National Statistics Information and Library Service  
Office for National Statistics  
Cardiff Road  
Newport, South Wales  
NP10 8XG  
020 7533 5888  
**info@statistics.gov.uk**

Copies of these documents and of *Initial Scope of National Statistics* (statistics originally included in National Statistics) and the *Concordat on Statistics Between the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations* can be found at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>, where further information on the National Statistics Quality Review Programme is also available.

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“The primary aim of National Statistics is to provide an accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive and meaningful picture of the economy and society ...” - *Framework for National Statistics*

To meet this and other aims, the *Framework* recognised that National Statistics must be underpinned with explicit principles. It is these which are published in the present volume, the *National Statistics Code of Practice - Statement of Principles*.

“Confidence in National Statistics will allow democratic debate to focus on what the data have to say, rather than on how they were produced,” - Len Cook, National Statistician.

“This Code will provide a firm foundation for establishing the UK as a world leader in the provision of official statistics based on high professional standards, openness and trust,” - Tony Blair, Prime Minister.

