

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**Committee for Official Statistics**

**Minutes**

**Meeting of Thursday 17 July 2014  
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

**Present**

**Members**

Professor David Rhind (Chair)  
Dame Colette Bowe  
Professor David Hand  
Mr Ed Humpherson  
Mr John Pullinger

**Secretariat**

Mr Robert Bumpstead  
Mr Joe Cuddeford

**Other Attendees**

Ms Emily Gleeson (for items 2 and 3)  
Mr Jaime Hart (for items 5 and 6)  
Mr Richard Laux  
Mr Kieron Mahony  
Mr Sandy Stewart

**Apologies**

Sir Andrew Dilnot  
Mr Roger Halliday

**Declarations of Interest**

None

## **1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the National Statistician to his first meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS). Apologies were received from Sir Andrew Dilnot and Mr Roger Halliday. The minutes of the previous meeting of 29 May 2014 were agreed as a correct record. Progress with actions was reviewed.
- 1.2 The meeting heard about progress with the establishment of the Administrative Data Research Network. Related legislative issues were discussed. Officials in the Cabinet Office had been considering potential new data sharing legislation. The Wellcome Trust had coordinated a response to a draft EU Data Protection Regulation, which could severely restrict the use of data for research purposes unless amendments were made to the draft legislation. The Committee considered what further steps the Statistics Authority could take to influence the debate about the draft EU Regulation.

**Action: Mr Pullinger to consider further steps to influence the debate about the draft EU Data Protection Regulation.**

## **2. Draft Monitoring Review: Audit of Administrative Data [SA(COS)(14)28]**

- 2.1 Mr Humpherson introduced a draft Monitoring Review about the quality assurance and audit arrangements for administrative data. Subject to the Committee's comments and agreement, Mr Humpherson proposed that the report be published as an 'exposure draft' for discussion with a wide range of stakeholders.
- 2.2 The Committee welcomed the draft review and commended its authors. It was agreed that the report was likely to make a significant contribution to the field. The following comments were made in discussion:
  - i. The review contained useful guidance on how to ensure the quality of administrative data is understood, communicated, and improved. But it was important that people were not put off from using administrative data in innovative ways. It was suggested that the foreword of the report could be amended to make clear that administrative data was a tremendously rich source of information and insight.
  - ii. The foreword should recognise that while statisticians already have a theoretical, mathematical framework for talking about uncertainty with regards to surveys, such a framework was not yet as well developed for administrative data.
  - iii. Producers of economic and business statistics sometimes relied upon data extracted from corporate information systems. There was therefore an important relationship between statisticians and business regulators, which should be fully explored.
  - iv. A communications plan for the report was necessary to ensure wide engagement on the draft report.
  - v. The branding of this report as a 'Monitoring Review' should be reconsidered.
- 2.3 Subject to the consideration of the comments made by the Committee, it was agreed that the report could be published as an exposure draft.

**Action: Mr Humpherson to consider the Committee's comments and make arrangements for publication of the report as an 'exposure draft'.**

## **3. Emerging findings: Targets and official statistics [SA(COS)(14)28]**

- 3.1 Mr Laux introduced a summary of a Monitoring Review currently in development about the influence of targets on official statistics. The meeting heard that the proposed intention

was to provide advice to statisticians, and as such, the main audience for the review was limited and well-defined.

- 3.2 The Committee considered the wider importance and audience of this work. It was accepted that the creation of targets by politicians was a legitimate mechanism of public accountability. There was a highly relevant democratic role for the statistical service to provide a broad context to such targets, helping to set public debate in a wider statistical landscape. The proposed Monitoring Review should explore these issues. Due regard should also be given to the effects of target related incentives on behaviour and recording practice.

**Action: Mr Humpherson to take forward the review in light of the Committee's comments about the wider importance and audience of this work.**

#### **4. The UK's position in the European Statistical System [SA(COS)(14)29]**

- 4.1 Mr Mahony provided an overview of the development of a plan for the UK's position with respect to the European Statistical System (ESS).
- 4.2 It was agreed that it was important for the UK Statistics Authority and UK Government Statistical Service (GSS) to engage with the ESS in order to seek outcomes in negotiation which are in the UK's national interest. There was a need for a better understanding of the link between the uses made of statistics by EU policymakers and EU statistical regulations. This would allow for more successful challenge to the European Commission on priority-setting. There are currently no effective formal mechanisms for Member States to directly influence the Commission's statistical priorities.
- 4.3 The meeting heard that it was not currently possible to isolate the additional costs of EU statistical requirements over and above what is needed to meet UK purposes. Preliminary data collected from statistics producers indicated that EU statistical requirements applied to approximately 8 per cent of all UK official statistics. This number was higher for Office for National Statistics (ONS) outputs (approximately 30 per cent) and for outputs produced by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) (approximately 60 per cent).

**Action: Mr Pullinger and his office to take forward action with regards to the UK's engagement with the ESS, reporting to the Authority Board as appropriate.**

**Action: Draft text related to the statistics element of the Government's Review of the Balance of Competencies to be provided to the Authority Board prior to its submission.**

#### **5. Issues Raised with the Authority: Analysis of issues 2008 to 2014 [SA(COS)(14)30a]**

- 5.1 Mr Cuddeford and Mr Hart introduced an analysis of statistical issues raised with the UK Statistics Authority between 2008 and 2014. The meeting heard that a total of 402 substantive issues were raised with the Authority during the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2014. The analysis showed the number of issues raised by department and by source, and also provided a breakdown of the substance of the issues raised.
- 5.2 The Committee welcomed the increase in the number of issues raised by Members of Parliament. However, the number of issues raised by the devolved Parliaments was comparatively small. This indicated that there could be value in closer engagement with the devolved Parliaments.

- 5.3 The meeting noted that the data showed a welcome increase in the number of issues raised by members of the public. It was suggested that this could be used as a measure of success, as it indicated an increase in public awareness of the regulatory role of the Authority. Members of the Committee discussed ways that the Authority could be more open and accessible to members of the public who wished to raise concerns about statistics. Models used by other regulators, such as Ofcom and Ofgem, were considered and viewed as very valuable. It was suggested that there might be considerable value in such a highly accessible web-based public reporting mechanism, which would allow the Authority to identify 'spikes' in complaints worthy of escalation and analysis. This would necessitate an efficient filtering system to quickly identify and flag issues that were within the Authority's regulatory ambit.

**Action: Mr Humpherson and Mr Bumpstead to consider how to develop the Authority's arrangements for encouraging and processing concerns raised by the public via replicating the practice of other regulators or other means.**

- 5.4 The Committee noted that the number of issues raised with the Authority which concerned the use or misuse of statistics had steadily grown, and overall this was the most common type of issue raised. However, it was also noted that not all of these concerns were supported by the Authority's investigations.
- 5.5 The Committee welcomed the suggestions made in the paper to enhance the information collected about issues, such as by improving the outcome categories to include details about the Authority's judgement or action on the issue.

**Action: Mr Cuddeford and Mr Hart to implement the suggested enhancements to the information collected about issues.**

## **6. Issues raised since the last COS meeting [SA(COS)(14)30b]**

- 6.1 The Committee noted a paper which provided an overview to the Committee of recent issues raised with the Authority.
- 6.2 Members of the Committee considered the training that press officers at the Department for Work and Pensions had received in 2013. It was suggested that there might be a role for the Authority, perhaps via the Good Practice Team, to provide training for press officers.

## **7. The effect of cuts on Official statistics [SA(COS)(14)31]**

- 7.1 Mr Mahony introduced a paper which provided a summary of the effect of cuts on official statistics over time.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that information which simply showed the number of outputs that had been discontinued did not provide any indication of whether spending cuts had led to reductions in quality, such as smaller sample sizes, reductions in the frequency of publication, or reductions to the general capability of the statistical service to respond to the demands of the future.
- 7.3 It was agreed that the Authority should continue to monitor the effect of cuts on official statistics, and should report to the Authority Board on an exception basis.

## **8. Experimental Statistics [SA(COS)(14)32]**

- 8.1 Mr Laux introduced a paper about the use of the Experimental Statistics (ES) label, and consequent changes to the Authority's approach to the assessment and designation of Experimental Statistics.
- 8.2 The Committee endorsed the proposed principle that statistics labelled as ES could not be National Statistics at the same time. It was agreed that before the National Statistics designation could be confirmed, the producer body should have undertaken an evaluation of the ES and concluded in light of user contentment that the ES label should be removed.

**Action: Mr Laux to implement the new policy, working with the National Statistician's office as appropriate.**

## **9. Open Data Standards, Accessibility and Assessment [SA(COS)(14)33]**

- 9.1 Mr Laux introduced a paper about the Assessment team's stance on open data principles and their relation to compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
- 9.2 In endorsing the proposal for a less mechanistic approach to Assessment Report requirements about open data, the Committee reiterated that the Statistics Authority was in full support of the Government's open data policy. It was suggested that the Assessment team could refer to the Open Data Institute's principles for open data.

**Action: Mr Laux to implement the proposed less mechanistic approach to Assessment Report requirements about open data.**

## **10. A Perspective of the Government Statistical Service: Prototype of a new report [SA(COS)(14)34]**

- 10.1 Mr Mahony introduced a paper which provided a new presentation of current GSS issues, both strategic and operational.
- 10.2 The Committee welcomed the format of the report, but expressed a wish for more information on challenges to balance information on successes, and for more information on the Government Statistician Group.
- 10.3 Members of the Committee discussed more broadly the way that management information related to the GSS and ONS was to be presented to the Authority Board. Mr Pullinger suggested that this could be achieved with a single report, surfacing all key issues relating to the Authority Strategy, the ONS Strategy and the GSS Strategy.

## **11. Any other business**

- 11.1 Mr Stewart provided a verbal update on progress with ongoing monitoring work. Since the last meeting, a monitoring report on the geography of economic statistics had been published. A consolidated update on the recommendations from monitoring reports had also been published. Mr Stewart proposed a new approach for future tracking of recommendations, where progress would be reported against individual monitoring reports, with an annual summary. The Committee welcomed the suggested approach.
- 11.2 There was no other business.



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

***Agenda***

***Thursday 17 July 2014***  
***Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 10:30 to 13:00***

**Chair:** Professor David Rhind  
**Apologies:** Sir Andrew Dilnot

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 290514
2	Programme of Monitoring work on administrative data and targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Draft Monitoring Review: Audit of administrative data</li> <li>- Emerging findings: Targets and official statistics</li> </ul>	SA(COS)(14)28 Mr Ed Humpherson
3	The UK's position in the European Statistical System	SA(COS)(14)29 Mr Kieron Mahony
4	Issues raised with the Authority	SA(COS)(14)30
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis from 2008 to 2014</li> <li>- Issues raised since the last COS meeting</li> </ul>	Mr Jamie Hart and Mr Joe Cuddeford
6	The effect of cuts on official statistics	SA(COS)(14)31 Mr Kieron Mahony
7	Experimental statistics	SA(COS)(14)32 Mr Richard Laux
8	Open Data Standards, Accessibility and Assessment	SA(COS)(14)33 Mr Mark Pont
9	A Perspective of the Government Statistical Service: Prototype of a new report	SA(COS)(14)34 Mr Kieron Mahony
10	Any other business	





SA(14)28 – Programme of Monitoring work on administrative data and targets

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(14)28

***Programme of Monitoring work on administrative data and targets:  
Monitoring Review - Audit of administrative data  
Emerging findings - Targets and official statistics***

These documents will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The documents will be available at:

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



## SA(COS)(14)29 – The UK's position in the European Statistical System

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(COS)(14)29

***The UK's position in the European Statistical System***

The call for evidence for the statistics strand of the UK Government's Review of the Balance of EU Competencies is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/voting-consular-and-statistics-review-of-the-balance-of-competences>



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(14)30

***Analysis of issues raised with the Authority, 2008/09 to 2013/14***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an analysis of statistical issues raised with the UK Statistics Authority between 2008 and 2014.

**Recommendation**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
  - i. review the analysis and discuss any themes arising; and
  - ii. consider and comment on the suggested improvements to future issue monitoring and analysis and any other improvements that members would find useful (paragraph 19).

**Background**

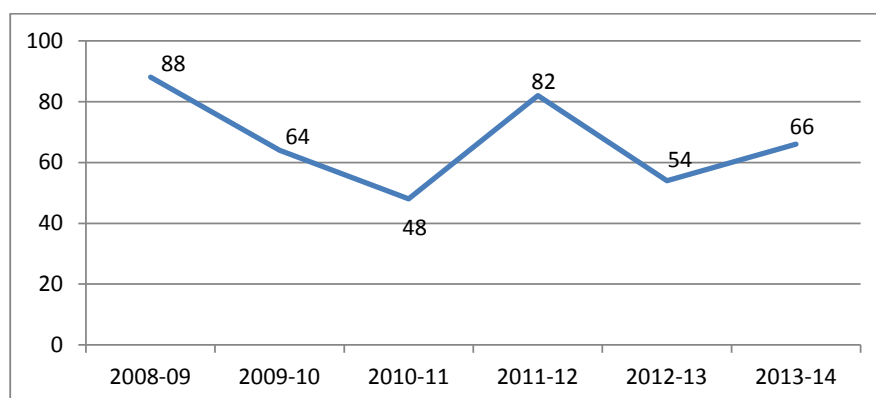
3. Each issue raised with the authority is recorded in summary in an "[Issues Log](#)" which is published on the Authority's website. The log demonstrates that our work is public, transparent and shows the range of issues that arise. Inclusion of an issue on the log does not necessarily mean that the Authority shares the concern.
4. This paper reviews the issues raised with the Authority between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2014. It will not include issues raised directly with ONS that have been subsequently dealt with by them. In addition, it does not include self-reported breaches of the Code of Practice notified to the Authority by statistics producers. These are included on a separate breach reporting log.
5. Currently, recurring issues or matters that are the subject of extensive correspondence on the same issue would not normally be recorded more than once. For example, the Authority received many representations about compliance with Census regulations, and the individual representations were not separately recorded on the Issues Log. Equally, where the Authority has previously given a public position on a particular matter, and further representations have been made on the subject, this would not normally be recorded again. Paragraph 19 considers whether we may wish to expand this practice in future.
6. All of the data presented is done so with the caveats that the method of recording issues has not been an exact science, and as some numbers are small, analysis should be treated as indicative.

## Discussion

### The total number of issues raised

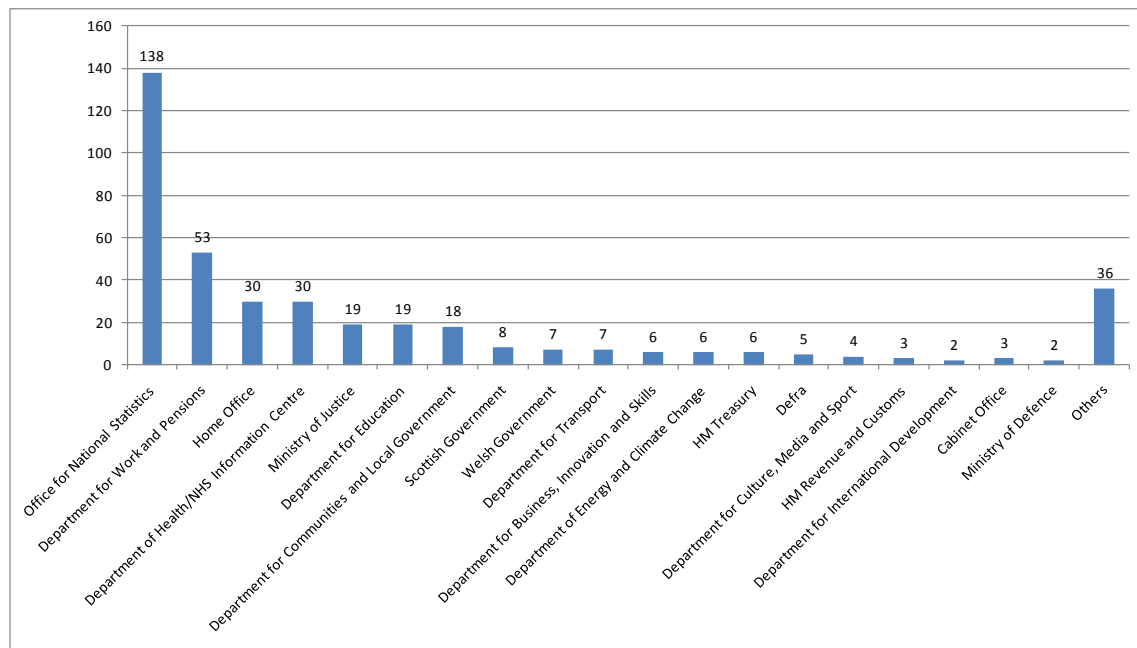
7. A total of 402 substantive issues were raised with the Authority, or otherwise brought to the Authority's attention, during the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2014.
8. The mean number of issues raised with the Authority per year is 67. In the first year of the Authority's existence a total of 88 issues were raised (this number was boosted by increased activity following the Authority's knife crime intervention), dropping to 48 by 2010/11, before rising in 2011/12 to 82. The increase in 2011/12 can be partly attributed to an increase in issues relating to ONS (from 16 issues raised in 2010/11 to 30 in 2011/12), which included issues with the ONS website, the methods used to calculate Consumer Price Indices and the reliability and presentation of estimates of UK Gross Domestic Product. In 2012/13 and 2013/14 the total number of issues has been close to the mean.

**Chart 1: Number of issues raised with the Authority, 2008/09 to 2014/15**



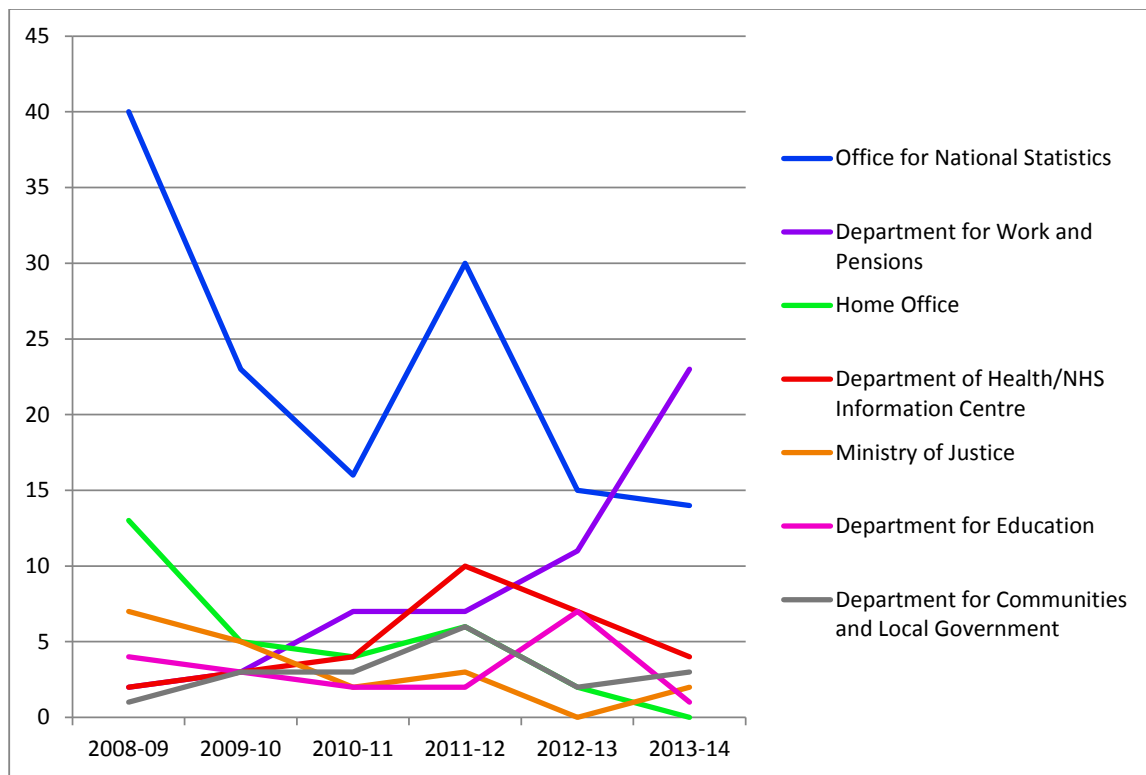
### Producer departments

9. Over the six year period, the number of issues raised which concern ONS statistics was 138, or 34 per cent of all issues raised. Several factors are relevant to this. ONS is, of course, the UK's national statistical institute and largest producer of official statistics in the UK. It is also the case that some issues relating to ONS are cases where misuse of statistics has occurred by other parties. Outside of the ONS, the Department for Work and Pensions has had the most issues attributed to it (53, or 13 per cent), followed by the Department of Health and the Home Office (30 each).

**Chart 2: Total number of issues raised, by producer department, 2008/09 to 2013/14**

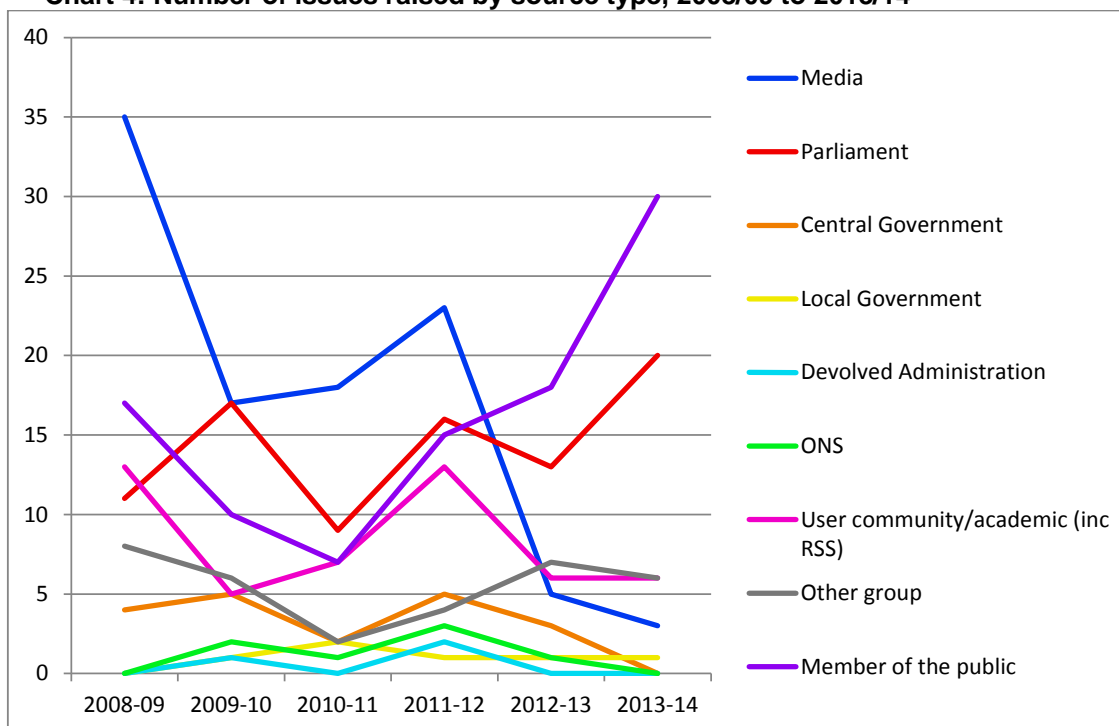
\*Others includes non-departmental bodies such as Mayor of London, Bank of England, and Local Government Association. None of these bodies had more than 2 issues raised about them.

10. Chart 3 overleaf shows the number of issues raised over time for the top seven departments. The number of issues concerning ONS statistics has remained reasonably high throughout the period between April 2008 and March 2014 although the number has decreased from 40 (45 per cent) in 2008/09 to 14 (21 per cent) in 2013/14.

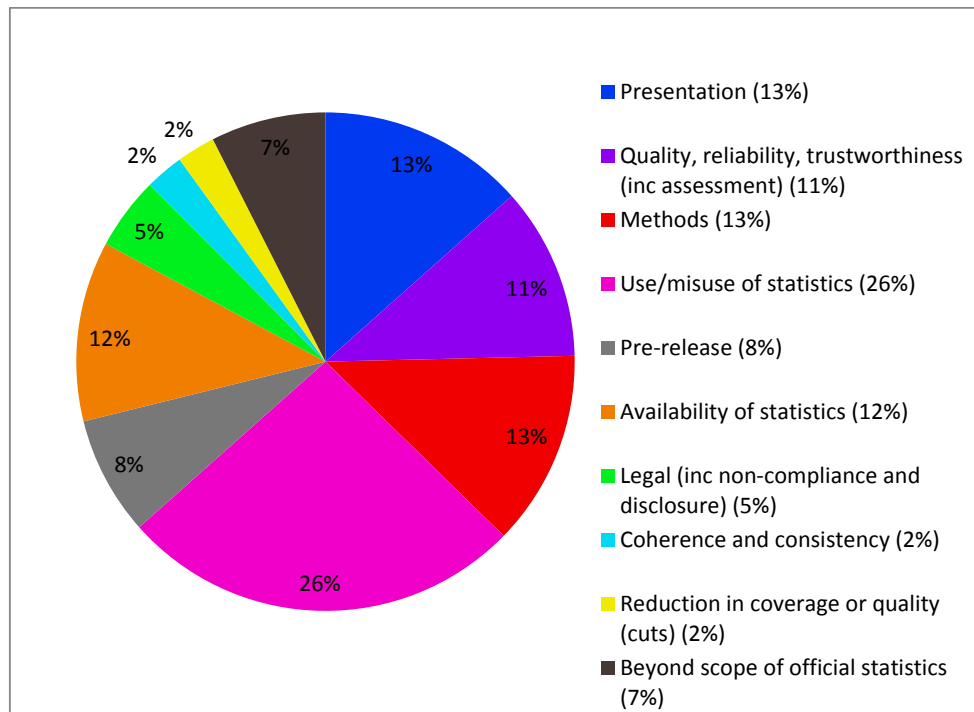
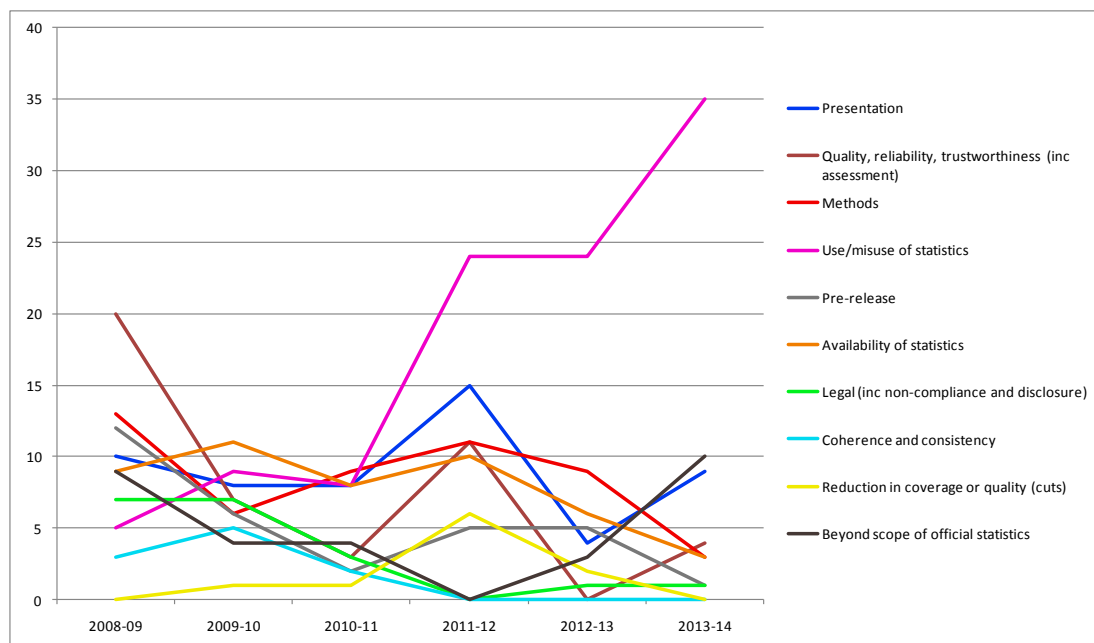
**Chart 3: Number of issues raised, by producer department, 2008/09 to 2013/14**Sources of issues raised

11. Issues are raised with the Authority by a range of sources, including the media, Parliament, Government and the public. Chart 4 shows that, initially, the media formed the largest individual source, raising 35 issues in 2008/09. In some cases this may have taken the form of journalists directly contacting the Authority, and in other cases Authority officials may have identified issues via media monitoring that warranted further investigation. Parliament and central Government also made up a large proportion of correspondents and these three groups combined provided at least 55 per cent of all issues in each of 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11. This figure dropped to 51 per cent in 2011/12, 37 per cent in 2012/13 and 35 per cent in 2013/14. This drop was driven by a decrease in the issues identified via the media, with a decrease from roughly a third from 2008-11 to around 5 per cent in 2013/14.
12. There is a clearly observable increase since 2010 in issues raised by individual members of the public. This increased from 7 in 2010/11 (7 per cent) to 30 (45 per cent) in 2013/14. This could indicate an increase in public awareness of the regulatory role of the Authority.
13. In its early years, particularly in 2008/09, the Authority placed more emphasis on internally identifying issues via media monitoring, investigating these and recording them on the issues log. Now, issues which we identify in the media are often also raised with us directly, for example by members of the public or Parliament. Where this occurs, we attribute this to the external source. This may explain some of the decrease in the number of issues recorded as being sourced in the media since 2008/09.



**Chart 4: Number of issues raised by source type, 2008/09 to 2013/14****Substance**

14. When an issue has been evaluated and dealt with, we record some information about the nature of the substantive issue. In some instances, cases may involve more than one substantive issue, in which case we make a judgement about what the primary issue is, and also record secondary issues as appropriate. The analysis overleaf focuses on the primary substantive issue. Chart 5 shows that the majority of issues raised relate to use/misuse of statistics (26 per cent). Presentation, quality and methods form the three next largest categories (13 per cent, 11 per cent and 13 per cent respectively) and these three themes also frequently arise in assessment reports.
15. The expected increase in issues relating to a reduction in coverage or quality due to cuts has not materialised. Though six issues were raised on reduction in quality during 2011/12, this decreased to two in the following year and none in 2013/14.
16. Chart 6 shows that the primary substance of complaints has changed over time. Use/misuse of statistics now covers the majority of complaints, having steadily grown from 5 issues (6 per cent) in the first year of the Authority's existence to 35 (53 per cent) in 2013/14. Issues relating to quality, reliability and trustworthiness have become less prevalent, decreasing from 20 (23 per cent) in 2008/09 to just 4 (6 per cent) in 2013/14.

**Chart 5: Primary substance of issues raised 2008/09 to 2013/14 (proportion)****Chart 6: Time series – Primary substance of issues raised 2008/09 to 2013/14 (number)**

Outcomes

17. All issues raised with the Authority are evaluated when they are received, and between 2008 and 2014, 30 per cent were briefly investigated by Authority officials, noted on the Issues Log, and a reply to that effect made. These can be seen in the table below as 'investigated and noted' cases. A further 7 per cent led to some informal action, such as a discussion between Authority officials and the relevant statisticians, or a phone call with a senior official or minister. Four per cent of issues were formally transferred to the relevant department to respond to the correspondent directly.
18. Just over a quarter of the issues raised with the Authority over the period resulted in a public statement by the Authority, typically in the form of a formal statement or published correspondence with the relevant departmental authority. Many of these responses are in the format of a formal letter from the Authority Chair to the person raising the issue, copied to the relevant department or minister. In some cases, an informal response is made and the correspondence is not published (32 per cent). This is usually the approach taken when an issue is outside the scope of official statistics, or it is felt that the case does not raise matters that would be of wider public interest, or the person raising the issue was a member of the public who has not given consent for the Authority to publish their response.

Outcome	Total	Percentage
Investigated and noted (i.e. no further action)	121	30
Investigated: informal action (e.g. discussion with department)	30	7
Issue passed to department for a response	18	4
Informal response (not published)	127	32
Formal response (published)	106	26
Total	402	100

Improvements to monitoring process

19. We would value the observations of the Committee on how to improve this issues monitoring service, and with that in mind we have made a few suggestions below to stimulate discussion:
- record all issues, even if already raised previously, to give a clearer picture of external interest in a particular area;
  - improve outcome categories to include details of the Authority's judgement or action, e.g. whether a complaint was upheld, whether the Authority made recommendations for change, or whether the issue was dismissed. We could also record who an intervention was directed towards (e.g. minister, shadow minister, media outlet, statisticians etc);
  - systematically record the impact of interventions alongside this data, for example whether there was a significant media coverage, parliamentary activity or a change in departmental behaviour as a result of the Authority's intervention; and
  - track the length of time the Authority takes to respond to an issue raised.

**Joe Cuddeford and Jamie Hart, Office of the Board and Chief Executive (OBC)**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A Analysis of issues raised with the Authority 2008-14**

**Annex A: Analysis of Issues raised with the Authority 2008/09 to 2013/14 SA(COS)(14)30**

<b>Producer</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Total</b>
Office for National Statistics	40	23	16	30	15	14	138
Department for Work and Pensions	2	3	7	7	11	23	53
Home Office	13	5	4	6	2	0	30
Department of Health/NHS Information Centre	2	3	4	10	7	4	30
Ministry of Justice	7	5	2	3	0	2	19
Department for Education	4	3	2	2	7	1	19
Department for Communities and Local Government	1	3	3	6	2	3	18
Scottish Government	1	0	0	5	1	1	8
Welsh Government	2	2	1	2	0	0	7
Department for Transport	2	0	1	2	1	1	7
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	0	2	0	2	0	2	6
Department of Energy and Climate Change	1	1	0	1	3	0	6
HM Treasury	0	1	0	0	1	4	6
Defra	0	0	2	0	0	3	5
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
HM Revenue and Customs	0	2	0	1	0	0	3
Department for International Development	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Cabinet Office	0	0	2	0	0	1	3
Ministry of Defence	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Others*	12	7	4	5	4	4	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>402</b>

\*Others includes non-departmental bodies such as Mayor of London, Bank of England, and Local Government Association. None of these bodies had more than two issues raised about them.

<b>Source</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Total</b>
Media	35	17	18	23	5	3	101
Parliament	11	17	9	16	13	20	86
Central Government	4	5	2	5	3	0	19
Local Government	0	1	2	1	1	1	6
Devolved Administration	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
ONS	0	2	1	3	1	0	7
User community/academic (inc RSS)	13	5	7	13	6	6	50
Other group	8	6	2	4	7	6	33
Member of the public	17	10	7	15	18	30	97
Internal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>402</b>

Issue type (primary)	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Total
Presentation	10	8	8	15	4	9	54
Quality, reliability, trustworthiness (inc assessment)	20	7	3	11	0	4	45
Methods	13	6	9	11	9	3	51
Use/misuse of statistics	5	9	8	24	24	35	105
Pre-release	12	6	2	5	5	1	31
Availability of statistics	9	11	8	10	6	3	47
Legal (inc non-compliance and disclosure)	7	7	3	0	1	1	19
Coherence and consistency	3	5	2	0	0	0	10
Reduction in coverage or quality (cuts)	0	1	1	6	2	0	10
Beyond scope of official statistics	9	4	4	0	3	10	30
Total	88	64	48	82	54	66	402

Outcome	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Total
Investigated and noted (i.e. No further action)	48	15	16	22	19	1	121
Investigated: informal action (e.g. discussion with department)	3	0	3	19	0	5	30
Issue passed to department for a response	0	7	0	2	0	9	18
Informal response (not published)	23	27	13	16	22	26	127
Formal response (published)	14	15	16	23	13	25	106
Total	88	64	48	82	54	66	402

National Statistic Theme	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Total
Economy	19	8	9	12	5	8	61
Population	15	9	9	6	2	4	45
Crime and Justice	13	12	6	10	3	3	47
Labour Market	5	10	9	10	8	18	60
People and places	8	6	2	11	5	8	40
Health and social care	3	5	4	11	10	4	37
Children, Education and Skills	5	5	3	6	9	1	29
Travel and Transport	4	1	2	3	2	2	14
Agriculture and environment	2	1	2	0	0	4	9
Business and Energy	2	0	0	3	3	0	8
Government	2	1	0	2	5	12	22
No theme	10	6	2	8	2	2	30
Total	88	64	48	82	54	66	402

Issues by month	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Total
April	8	8	3	5	9	4	37
May	3	4	2	6	3	3	21
June	9	6	3	6	3	7	34
July	6	11	3	9	3	7	39
August	8	6	5	7	1	5	32
September	5	2	3	6	4	2	22
October	6	5	7	3	5	6	32
November	4	5	3	8	2	7	29
December	5	2	8	4	2	6	27
January	7	3	2	10	6	9	37
February	19	4	3	13	9	8	56
March	8	8	6	5	7	2	36
Total	88	64	48	82	54	66	402





**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(14)31

***The effect of spending cuts on Official Statistics***

**Purpose**

1. This paper fulfils an action from the last meeting to provide a summary of the effect of cuts on official statistics over time.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee are invited to note this report and to indicate whether they wish to continue to receive such reports in the future and, if so, at what frequency.

**Discussion**

3. The Authority Board considered a paper *Responding to Cuts in Departmental Statistical Work* (SA(10)54) at their September 2010 meeting. The Board agreed that the Head of Assessment should follow up each significant cessation of a statistical output with a short report for the Authority to take a view, and report to Parliament as necessary, on specific cuts and the effect on overall official statistics' coherence.
4. The Committee for Official Statistics (COS) gave further consideration to this matter at its meeting of 10 December 2010 and decided to introduce a series of Statistical Expenditure Reports (SER) to exercise the Authority's duty to promote and safeguard official statistics. These reports were led by the Head of Assessment and considered a limited number of proposals for specific cuts by departments. There have been eight such reports since 2011 (see **Annex A**).
5. The information being collated by the National Statistician's Office (NSO) on actual and potential cuts to statistics from government departments has provided the basis on which the Authority has decided whether to commission a SER. The NSO's information has included details of all public consultations being conducted by departments whether for the purpose of determining the impact of a cut or some other purpose to aid their decision making. COS has received a report at each meeting since December 2010 from the NSO summarising the reported cuts, and all public consultations including those which may result in cuts, to statistical outputs.
6. An analysis of the cessations reported to the NSO is provided in Annexes B – D. **Annex B** shows the numbers of cessations by department and the reason(s) given for the cessation. **Annex C** shows the distribution of cessations over the period 2010 – 2014. **Annex D** is a list of departments which have not reported a cessation to the NSO.

**Kieron Mahony, National Statistician's Office, 9 July 2014**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A List of Statistical Expenditure Reports published by the Authority**

**Annex B Cessations of Official Statistics 2010 – 14 by department and reason**

**Annex C Cessations of Official Statistics by year**

**Annex D List of departments who have never reported a cessation**

## **Annex A List of Statistical Expenditure Reports**

These documents have been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To view these documents go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/statistical-expenditure-reports/index.html>



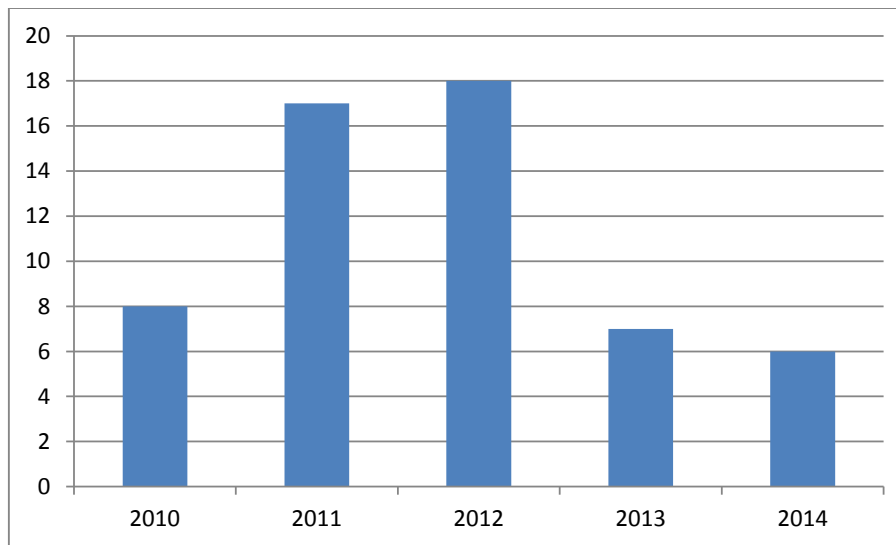
## Annex B Cessations of Official Statistics by department and reason given 2010 – 2014

Department	Total number of cessations	Reason for Cessation
Department for Education	7	Ministerial decision (2); resource saving (3); data available in a different format /elsewhere (1); no reason (1)
Department for Work and Pensions	7	Data no longer required (3); Data available in a different format/elsewhere (3); resource saving (1)
Health and Social Care Information Centre	7	Data no longer required (3); Data available in a different format/elsewhere (1); resource saving (2); No longer fit for purpose (1)
ONS	6	Resource saving (4); No longer meeting user requirements (1); lack of user interest (1)
Welsh Government	6	Data no longer required (2); resource saving (2); data quality issues (1); data available elsewhere (1)
Department for Communities and Local Government	4	Resource saving (2); data no longer available (1); ministerial decision (1)
Northern Ireland departments	4	Data available elsewhere (3); data quality issues (1)
Scottish Government	3	Lack of user demand (2); data no longer available (1)
Home Office	2	Reduction in detail (1); data no longer available (1)
Ministry of Defence	2	Data no longer required (1); resource saving (1)
Department of Health	2	Data no longer required (1); resource saving (1)
Department for Business Innovation and Skills	1	Lack of user demand
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	1	Data no longer required
Ministry of Justice	1	Data available elsewhere
HM Revenue and Customs	1	Lack of user demand

### Reasons for cessations

- i. Ministerial decision
- ii. Resource saving
- iii. No reason given
- iv. Data no longer required
- v. Data available in a different format/elsewhere
- vi. Data no longer fit for purpose
- vii. Data no longer meeting user requirements
- viii. Lack of user interest
- ix. Data quality issues
- x. Data no longer available



**Annex C. Distribution of Cessations over the period of 2010 – 2014****4.3**





## **Annex D List of departments which have not reported a cessation to the National Statistician's Office**

4.4

Cabinet Office

Department for Energy and Climate Change

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Department for International Development

Department for Transport

Food Standards Agency

Health and Safety Executive

HM Treasury

NHS National Services Scotland

Ofqual

Ofsted

Office for Rail Regulation

National Records of Scotland



SA(COS)(14)32 – Experimental Statistics

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(COS)(14)32

***Experimental Statistics***

5

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

The document is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.html>



## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(14)33

#### *Open Data Standards, Accessibility and Assessment*

6

#### **Purpose**

1. Following discussion at the Assessment Committee meeting in May 2014, this paper provides the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) with the Monitoring and Assessment team's emerging thoughts about the development of the Authority's stance on Open Data and its relation to Code compliance.

#### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee are invited to:
  - i. note the context against which Assessment Reports include Requirements relating to the Government's Open Data policy (paragraphs 3 to 7); and
  - ii. endorse the Team's proposal to adopt a new holding position re our default Requirement, and to develop further guidance on what we expect with regard to open data and accessibility (paragraphs 8 and 9).

#### **Discussion**

3. Since 25 July 2013, following a suggestion by the Assessment Committee chair, the Authority has included a standard (but evolving) paragraph in section 2 of Assessment Reports describing each set of statistics' compliance with the Government's Open Data policy, which was introduced in November 2012. We note the rating of the accompanying data against the five-star rating system proposed by Sir Tim Berners-Lee (see **Annex A** for details). The latest standard paragraph is:

"[Producer body] publishes [name of statistics] in [specify formats], with supplementary [specify what] published in [specify formats] formats. This equates to a level of [x] stars under the Five Star Scheme that forms part of the Open Standards Principles proposed in the Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential and adopted as government policy in November 2012. Five stars represents the highest star rating within the Scheme."

4. Where the level of at least three stars has not been achieved in relation to the statistics, a standard Requirement has been included in Assessment Reports in relation to Principle 8 practice 6, as follows:

"Publish the data associated with the [name of statistics] in an open format that equates to at least a three star level under the Five Star Scheme."

5. During the course of our assessments it has become clear that the Government's Open Data policy is not yet being fully implemented by statistical producer bodies; indeed, in some cases statistical teams do not seem to be aware of their organisations' Open Data policies. Furthermore, it also appears that users of statistics do not necessarily want data available in formats that would represent three stars (because for example their further use is better served by having formatted – rather than unformatted – spreadsheets). Additionally, as the

star rating covers only one dimension of accessibility, there is not a perfect correlation between it and all the factors that affect accessibility.

6. We note the recent Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) study into Open Data, and that the Government response to this report is still awaited. We also note Full Fact's submission to this study, which proposed an alternative rating system (see also the annex to this paper). In addition, the Open Data Institute's Open Data Certification system, which is based on a self-assessment by data producers, both public and private, focuses on what makes the data usable. The self-assessment results in certificates at one of four levels: raw, pilot, standard and expert.
7. We also recognise that our current approach – reporting on whether or not a statistical producer has met a particular point in a five-point scale – may have some downsides. It may appear to be mechanistic; it may convey that the Authority does not appreciate the public good that is served by Open Data and data accessibility more broadly; and it may not highlight statistical producers who ought to improve significantly to serve the public good, because we cannot capture the required improvements simply by reference to a higher grading in the five-point scale.
8. The environment around Open Data and our interpretation of the accessibility of statistics and data, is therefore complex overall, and in a period of change. We consider that it would be appropriate to continue to promote accessibility in its broadest sense, but without being too constrained to specific Requirements in relation to the five-star rating scheme, at least until such a time that the Government's response to the PASC study has been published. Once that is clearer, we propose to develop some Authority Standards on Accessibility (along the lines that we developed Standards for Statistical Reports and are currently developing Standards for the Audit of Administrative Data) to further articulate good practice in relation to Principle 8 of the Code of Practice. In the meantime, we propose to use the following form of words as our default Requirement when considering accessibility in Assessment Reports:
 

“[Producer body] should review, and update where necessary, the formats in which it publishes the data associated with its [name of statistics] in order to balance the needs of users and the government's Open Data policy”
9. In order to have the necessary evidence to hand as part of an Assessment, we will routinely collect details of each producer body's Open Data plans and strategies.

**Mark Pont and Richard Laux**  
**Monitoring and Assessment, July 2014**

#### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Five star ratings schemes**

## Annex A Five star ratings schemes

### Proposed by Sir Tim Berners-Lee

★	Available on the web (whatever format) <i>but with an open licence, to be Open Data</i>
★★	Available as machine-readable structured data (e.g. excel instead of image scan of a table)
★★★	as (2) plus non-proprietary format (e.g. CSV instead of excel)
★★★★	All the above plus, Use open standards from W3C (RDF and SPARQL) to identify things, so that people can point at your stuff
★★★★★	All the above, plus: Link your data to other people's data to provide context

(from <http://www.w3.org/DesignIssues/LinkedData.html>)

### Proposed by Full Fact

0 – Published, with tabular data provided as spreadsheets. Although this is equivalent to 2\* open data, in statistics it is a bare minimum. Statistics not published in this way would usually be in breach of the Code.)

1\* – Basic metadata included. For example, the geographic scope of statistics (e.g. UK vs England and Wales) and whether or not financial time series are inflation-adjusted.

2\* – The above, made available at a consistent URL (web address) with a consistent title or identifier and open machine readable standards used for data where applicable.

3\* – All of the above, but include explanation and caveats.

4\* – All of the above, but in addition to using open formats, use URLs to identify things using open standards and w3c recommendations so that other people can point at the data.

5\* – All of the above, but in addition to using open formats and URLs to identify things, link your data to other people's data to provide context.

(from <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/WrittenEvidence.svc/EvidencePdf/1720>)





**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(14)34

***A Perspective of the Government Statistical Service July 2014:  
 Prototype of new report***

**Purpose**

1. The Committee has asked that the National Statistician's Office (NSO) should revise its approach to the presentation of current Government Statistical Service (GSS) issues, both strategic and operational. The NSO has therefore developed a prototype of a new style of report for the Committee's consideration.

**Recommendations**

2. The Committee is invited to:
  - i. comment on the new report (at **Annex A**) and, in particular, identify what it likes and dislikes and whether there is other information about the GSS that ought to be included;
  - ii. note that a more detailed picture of the GSS is also in development; and
  - iii. indicate whether it wishes to continue the consideration of risks as a separate exercise or to amalgamate with the new report.

**Discussion**

3. Following consideration by the Committee at its May 2010 meeting of paper [SA(COS)(10)13] on *GSS Activity and Governance Arrangements*, regular updates have been provided to all meetings. These updates have been accompanied by a separate report on cessations of, and consultations about, official statistics.
4. At its meeting on 29 May the Committee discussed the reports of GSS Activities and agreed that it was time to give them a facelift. The overall aims are to:
  - i. give the Committee a more rounded view of the GSS at a given moment in time;
  - ii. stimulate discussion about issues that may warrant more in-depth consideration at a future meeting; and
  - iii. provide a succinct snapshot that can also be used quickly to assess how well the progress of the GSS as a community.
5. The prototype – provisionally entitled *GSS Brief* – is a combination of current issues, a forward look, recent successes and some metrics. It is a work in progress that would benefit from wider exposure beyond the Committee. Views about the format, contents and overall feel are invited from the Committee. It may also want to identify information that should be expanded or is missing.
6. If the Committee believes that the prototype should be developed, the NSO plans to introduce a timely process for gathering input from the GSS in order that the content is a better reflection of what is going on across the piece. The NSO will need to coach the GSS as to what and how to contribute to optimise the value of its production.
7. A more detailed 'Picture of the GSS' is, at the time of writing, at the planning stage. It will replace the information previously appended to the Cessations report about the numbers of statisticians broken down by grade and department. The Picture of the GSS is intended to provide a more detailed analysis of the information that the NSO has to hand about the

GSS and the Government Statistician Group (GSG). Information will be taken from the GSS maturity model, annual assurance reports, GSS people survey results and the GSG workforce database. It is planned that the first version of this will be available before the end of July.

8. The Committee reviews GSS risks every six months as required by the Statistics Authority's risk management policy. This process is currently separate from the general consideration of GSS activities reflected in the more frequent reports. It would be helpful if the Committee could indicate whether it wishes to continue with the status quo or to amalgamate the process with consideration of the new report.

**Kieron Mahony, National Statistician's Office, 10 July 2014**

#### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Government Statistical Service Dashboard, July 2014**

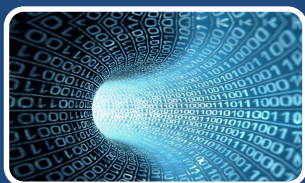
# Government Statistical Service Dashboard, July 2014

## 1. Hot Topics and Issues



### gov.uk lacking for statistical dissemination

- The gov.uk domain is unable to support data visualisations and interactive tools which are increasingly being developed by the GSS to accompany statistics releases. This is a real concern across the GSS, but Government Digital Service does not see it as a priority. To be raised by GSS at the Digital Leaders Forum.



### The data science agenda

- The GSS is working with the Cabinet Office data science project to achieve some quick wins for the profession. Quick wins are focused on raising the profile of the profession and exploiting opportunities for statisticians in data science.



### Capability in the GSS

- The statistical futures work programme pulls together all capability strategies and agendas into one place, paving the way for strengthening the profession and developing statisticians who have impact. The work will evolve further following discussions with the GSS People Committee on 30th July.



### Census of experimental statistics

- There is currently a focus on the number of Experimental Statistics produced by the GSS, which has been prompted by a review of the Authority's policy on their Assessment and Designation. NSO has obtained data from the GSS which will help to inform that review.

# Government Statistical Service Brief - June 2014

## 2. Horizon Scan



### Implementing the ESS vision

- Implementation plans for the European Statistical System vision are due to be agreed by heads of NSIs in September.
- UK was instrumental in driving the new vision.



### HSCIC HoP retirement

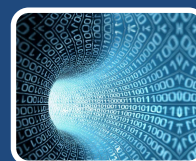
- The head of profession at the Health and Social Care Information Centre is retiring. This is expected to be in the autumn. NSO will liaise with HSCIC on recruitment for new HoP.



### Graphical Web Conference

- This global conference showcases new technologies for presenting visual information on the web. ONS is organising the 2014 conference, over 4 days in August. The event is being promoted across the GSS.

## 3. Successes



ONS Big Data Project presented at Heads of Analysis Conference attracted a great deal of interest from delegates.



GSS blog on communicating uncertainty shared extensively online, generating some good discussion and endorsement of GSS plans for improving communication in this area.



Successful event on improving health statistics, jointly hosted by NHS Scotland and the Authority. Around 100 people attended and feedback was positive.



## 4. Business as Usual

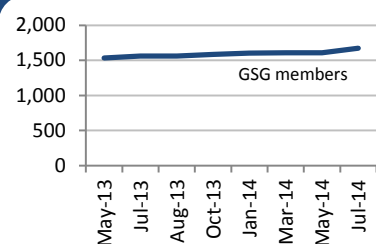


### People

#### Government Statistician Group members

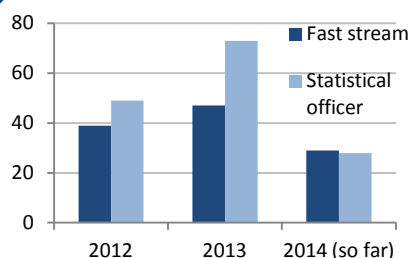
↑ Up by 7 per cent since last year (see chart)

↔ SCS members stable



#### Government Statistician Group recruitment

Recruited in 2014: 27 fast streamers, 31 statistical officers



### Users

#### Six current statistical consultations open

Covering HSCIC, MOJ, BIS and WG.

#### Consultation outcomes

Individual Income Series in Northern Ireland is due to be stopped.

#### Compliance with EU regulations

Non-compliant with 9 of the 290 data requirements in European regulations. UK is working with Eurostat towards full compliance.

#### Social media

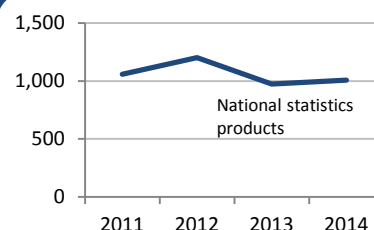
Number of department statistics teams using social media to engage users?  
Number of followers?  
Number of retweets?



### Products

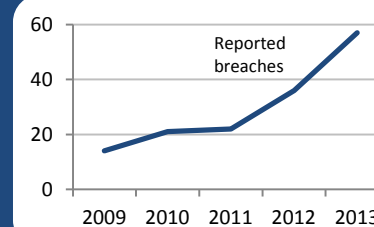
#### National statistics products

↑ Up by 33 since last year



#### Reported breaches of the Code

14 breaches reported in 2014 so far

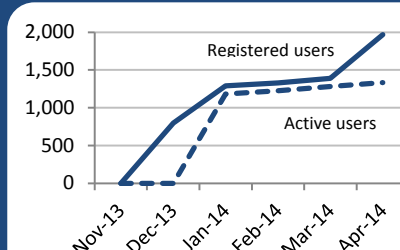


### Community

#### GSS community website usage

↑ Members up by 42% since last month

↑ Active users up by 4% since last month



#### Two GSS community events in last month

- GSS methodology symposium
- Heads of Analysis conference