

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Committee for Official Statistics

Minutes

Meeting of Thursday 24 January 2013
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London

Present

Members

Professor David Rhind (Chair)
Mr Richard Alldritt
Dr Norman Caven
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Mr Andrew Dilnot
Professor David Hand
Ms Jil Matheson

Secretariat

Mr Rob Bumpstead
Mr Joe Cuddeford

Other Attendees

Ms Janet Dougharty (for item 3 via audio)
Mr Richard Laux

Apologies

Dr Colette Bowe

Declarations of Interest

None

1 Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.
- 1.2 The Chair reported that the Authority Board had been considering a revised strategy for the Statistics Authority. Following approval of the new strategy, the Authority Board would review the Authority's governance arrangements.
- 1.3 The meeting noted that progress had been slow with improving the Publication Hub. Discussions with the Government Digital Service would continue, and other options to improve the Publication Hub would be considered.

Action: National Statistician to report developments with the Publication Hub to the next meeting.

- 1.4 The Committee heard that the European statistical peer reviews were expected to take place towards the end of the year, but precise details had not yet been announced.

Action: National Statistician to report developments with the European statistical peer reviews to the next meeting.

- 1.5 Mr Alldritt reported that the Department for Work and Pensions had decided to continue publishing statistics on income related benefits take-up, and so the Monitoring and Assessment team no longer planned to produce a Statistical Expenditure Report (SER) on this. Work was still in hand to produce an SER into the Department for Communities and Local Government's decision, in September 2012, to cease the publication of regional statistics.
- 1.6 Ms Matheson provided an update on the outcome of her consultation about options for improving the Retail Price Index (RPI). The Monitoring and Assessment team would now consider whether the RPI could continue to be designated as National Statistics. The Authority would also undertake a wider review of the governance arrangements and structures supporting the production of price indices.

2 Activities of the Government Statistical Service [SA(COS)(13)01]

- 2.1 Ms Matheson introduced provided the Committee with an update of Government Statistical Service (GSS) activities from November 2012.
- 2.2 The meeting considered the inherent difficulties in producing an estimate of the costs of producing official statistics in the GSS.
- 2.3 The Committee noted the developments regarding arrangements for arm's length bodies and that a paper on this would be provided to the next meeting.

3 Update on the Quality Improvement Fund [SA(COS)(13)02]

- 3.1 Ms Dougharty provided an update on the outcomes of successful bids submitted to the Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) during 2011/12 and on the current projects funded in 2012/13.
- 3.2 The following comments were made in the discussion.

- i. the access to expertise that the QIF provided was valuable, particularly for departments with limited resources for methodological work;
- ii. some bids for funding were unsuccessful as they did not meet the criteria; for example, work that was considered to be 'business as usual';
- iii. there was a risk that initiatives such as the QIF could have diminishing returns over time, as the most needed or effective ideas would be realised in the first years. There was therefore a need to keep the programme under review;
- iv. the fund had so far been operating a demand-driven model. There could also be value in the top-down allocation of funds to areas identified as priorities by the Authority;
- v. the value of awards of very small sums (e.g. £5,000) was questioned: it could be considered as indicating that host departments placed very low importance on statistical developments and it seemed unlikely that such small sums had system-wide benefits; and
- vi. departments often provided matched resources to support QIF bids and it would be useful to have information about the resources contributed by departments in the next update.

3.3 The Committee generally welcomed the work of the QIF. It was suggested that the QIF was a good example of how a coordinating central body could be effective, and mention could be made of its work – including some case studies – in the Authority's Annual Report.

Action: National Statistician's Office to provide QIF case studies for inclusion in the Authority's Annual Report.

4 Quality Assurance in the GSS [SA(COS)(13)03]

4.1 Ms Matheson reported on plans to deliver quality assurance across the GSS, including a new initiative for all Heads of Profession (HoPs) to provide written Annual Assurance Reports (AARs) on quality, and a series of in-depth National Statistics Quality Reviews (NSQRs) of high-profile statistics.

4.2 The Committee considered the new AARs in the context of other quality initiatives that HoPs were asked to participate in, including the provision of information in the Written Evidence for Assessment (WEFA) document, self-assessment using the Quality and Methods Harmonisation Tool, the new NSQRs, and European peer reviews. It was suggested that a holistic view should be taken to identify any overlap, or opportunities for reducing burden on HoPs.

4.3 The meeting heard that there were plans to revise the WEFA in the near future, and that HoPs were expecting this to be a significant revision.

Action: Head of Assessment to report back on plans to develop the WEFA.

4.4 There were currently no new plans for 'dipstick testing' of the AARs. The Committee suggested that there should be. Assessment would continue to play a role in ensuring appropriate processes for quality assurance were in place for individual sets of statistics. Further consideration was needed regarding the publication policy for AARs.

Action: National Statistician to report back to the next meeting on the publication policy for AARs.

5 Statistics for the Scottish Referendum [SA(COS)(13)04]

- 5.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which summarised current work regarding the provision of official statistics to inform the debate around the referendum on Scottish independence.
- 5.2 The Committee considered the Authority's work in this context. There was a part of the statistical debate, regarding comparability, that could be addressed by a proposed Monitoring Review. However, the wider statistical debate was likely to be complex and strongly contested, for example the question of how much corporation tax was generated in Scotland. The Authority could be called upon in future to act as referee in the wider statistical debate, as could other bodies such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies.
- 5.3 It was agreed that the Authority should consider hosting a non-partisan public event to explore the statistical issues in this area. In addition, the Authority could issue a public statement about how it intends to respond to issues raised in the run up to the referendum.

Action: Secretariat to schedule a Board discussion of statistical issues related to the Scottish referendum.

6 Monitoring Work Programme [SA(COS)(13)05]

- 6.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a note which covered the current work programme for Monitoring work for 2013-14.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed the prioritisation of the proposed topics. It was suggested that the Monitoring and Assessment team should present to the Authority Board further recommendations for prioritisation.
- 6.3 The relationship between the topics and the Authority strategic objectives was discussed. There was a balance to be struck between topics that would appeal to a technical audience, and topics that would have wider impact.
- 6.4 The meeting considered the nature of the proposed topics, which currently reflected a series of immediate concerns. There were also wider strategic questions for the statistical service, and it was suggested that some Monitoring resource could be invested in considering the big statistical issues of the future. For example, there could be a role for Monitoring to consider whether the UK's statistical infrastructure was sustainable given changing demands. Collaboration with the National Statistician's Office in this regard was an option.
- 6.5 It was agreed that a paper should be provided to the Authority Board, taking stock of the Monitoring programme. This paper could usefully provide a narrative, telling the story of Monitoring, what the next two years of Monitoring work would be about, and what Monitoring was trying to achieve. The narrative could form a framework for the individual topic areas to slot into.

Action: Head of Assessment to provide a paper on Monitoring to the March meeting of the Authority Board.

7 Good Practice Team – Interim Report

- 7.1 Ms Matheson provided a summary of progress with the first three months of the Good Practice Team (GPT) pilot.

- 7.2 The meeting welcomed the developments and noted that the early indicators were promising. The team currently comprised three very experienced members of staff and there was a question about whether the initiative would be sustained with different personnel. It was important that longer-term initiatives were embedded alongside the work of the GPT as it was not possible for the GPT to address all issues on a routine basis.

8 Cuts to Official Statistics [SA(COS)(13)06] and Statistical Expenditure Reports

- 8.1 Ms Matheson provided an update on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics, and on public consultations relating to those statistics. Two cessations of statistics had been reported since the last update: NHS Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff statistics produced by the Health and Social Care Information Centre, and statistics about participation in full-time education and vocational training by 16 and 17 year olds, published by the Department for Education in Northern Ireland. The Committee did not consider that a Statistical Expenditure Report (SER) was warranted in either case.
- 8.2 The meeting noted that ONS was currently consulting on proposals to cease publication of 13 sets of financial statistics. The Committee reiterated the principle that the Authority could choose to commission a Statistical Expenditure Report (SER) with regards to ONS statistics in exactly the same way that it could for any other department i.e. the department had no say in whether such a report was produced. The Committee would further consider the need for an SER on ONS financial statistics at the next meeting.

9 Analysis of Breach Reports [SA(COS)(13)07]

- 9.1 Mr Laux introduced a paper which presented an analysis of breaches reported to the Authority.
- 9.2 The Committee discussed the way the reports were described on the website, which could give the impression that the reports represented the entirety of breaches of the Code of Practice. In most cases, the reports referred only to self-reported breaches of release practices. It was noted that, in a sense, every Requirement in each Assessment report represented a breach of the Code, but these were not included in the breach reports. It was agreed that the description of the breach reports should be reviewed with a view to clarifying this point.

Action: National Statistician's Office to review the description of breach reports and report back on conclusions and actions.

10 Any other business

There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on 21 March in London.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Committee for Official Statistics

Agenda

Thursday 24 January 2013
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 10:30 to 13:00

Chair: Professor David Rhind

Apologies: Dr Colette Bowe

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 131112
2	Activities of the Government Statistical Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The costs of producing National Statistics 	SA(COS)(13)01 Ms Jil Matheson
3	Update on the Quality Improvement Fund	SA(COS)(13)02 Ms Janet Dougharty
4	Quality Assurance in the GSS	SA(COS)(13)03 Ms Jil Matheson
5	Statistics for the Scottish Referendum	SA(COS)(13)04 Secretariat
6	Monitoring Work Programme	SA(COS)(13)05 Mr Richard Alldritt
7	Good Practice Team – Interim report	SA(COS)(13)08 Ms Jil Matheson
8	Statistical Expenditure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Cuts to official statistics 	SA(COS)(13)06 Ms Jil Matheson
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Statistical Expenditure Reports 	Oral update Mr Richard Alldritt
10	Analysis of breach reports	SA(COS)(13)07 Mr Richard Laux
11	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Thursday 21 March 2013
Drummond Gate, London, 14:00 to 16:30

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)01

Activities of the Government Statistical Service – November 2012 to December 2012

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) with an update of Government Statistical Service (GSS) activities from November 2012 to December 2012.

Recommendations

2. The Committee is invited to note the summary of GSS activities for this period.

Discussion

Costs of the GSS

3. A note about the inherent difficulties in providing an accurate estimate of the costs of the GSS, and proposals for steps to move the issue forward, is at **Annex A**.

Review of arrangements for arm's length bodies

4. The questionnaire for phase two of the arm's length bodies review was despatched at the end of November. The responses will be analysed in January and recommendations will be included in a report to the Heads of Profession Steering Group on 18 February 2013. It is planned to present the findings of the full review to the Committee at a subsequent meeting.

GSS Themes

5. In December, Heads of Profession (HoPs) agreed changes to the structure of GSS theme groups. The new structure aims to improve the coherence of the theme groups and will lead to better cross-departmental working by statistics producers.

Comparability Task and Finish Group

6. The Inter Administration Committee (IAC) has established a Task and Finish Group under the chairmanship of Roger Halliday, Chief Statistician in Scottish Government, to identify what comparable, coherent and quality statistics are available across the four nations. It is proposed that the group will identify any gaps or shortcomings in the availability of comparable statistics with economic statistics as a priority. The group has been asked to work with pace and report by May 2013.

Capability

Raising Professional Standards

7. Work is in hand, within ONS and Southampton University, to develop short refresher training events for professional staff and managers (including recruitment and promotion assessors) on analytical techniques as detailed in the new Statistician Competence Framework (SCF). These will be ready for piloting by the end of March, thereafter rolled out on a 'first come, first served' basis (initially in London) to the waiting audience. Meanwhile the recent surge in recruits continues to supply delegates for mandatory induction training. The GSS People Committee is formulating proposals for an updated recruitment and promotion strategy, linked to the requirements of the SCF, to go live by April 2013 for new recruits, and April 2014 for internal promotions.

Government Statistician Group (GSG) Fast Stream Recruitment

8. Round one of the 2013 Fast Stream recruitment programme is about to conclude and results will be available towards the end of January. For round two in the spring, we are developing a marketing strategy which should result in a greater number of applicants and (hopefully) successful candidates.

Statistical Officer Recruitment

9. Work continues during January and February to recruit statistical officers to vacant posts in GSS departments. Recent marketing activity through online sites and social media has created a large number of candidates to interview in both London and Newport. Following a recent, dramatic increase in the number of new recruits, we are now close to meeting the demands of HoPs for new recruits.

GSS Data Strategy

10. Work is progressing well on producing a data strategy for the GSS. An outline of the strategy has been produced (**Annex B**) which summarises the issues that will be dealt with by the strategy. The data strategy will be discussed in more detail at the Committee's meeting in March.

International

Reform of the European Statistical Law

11. The UK has secured amendments in Council which ensure devolved and decentralised statistical systems are recognised and protected, yet at the same time the statutory role of the Head of the National Statistical Institute (NSI) is significant and strengthened. The means of ensuring cross-EU compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice is still being negotiated.
12. Following the Authority Board's consideration of the issue in December 2012, the UK is continuing to support compulsory Commitments on Confidence signed by governments. These oblige the development at the national level of the necessary means to ensure compliance (i.e. the current UK system should suffice) with oversight by the European Statistics Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), rather than the Commission. There is a lot of resistance to the overall concept in other Member States.
13. In addition, an amendment is being considered that secures national flexibility in enacting a right to access to administrative data. However, the European Parliament is expected to pull negotiations in the direction of more robust legal requirements.

UK Compliance with EU Regulations

14. In late December the Commission contacted UK Government about their intention to commence infraction proceedings with respect to our failure to supply data according to National Accounts legislation. ONS is working on a solution to avert further escalation. The recently strengthened process for managing and monitoring GSS compliance will be further reviewed in light of this possibly more assertive approach of the Commission to compliance with key economic data regulations. A paper for a future COS meeting is being prepared on GSS preparedness for compliance with the Annual Work Programme.

United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) meeting

15. The annual Commission meeting will take place at the end of February. Discussions will take place on the responses of the global statistical system to developments in:
 - i. the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;
 - ii. national accounts;
 - iii. environmental-economic accounting;
 - iv. environment statistics;

- v. international trade statistics;
- vi. agricultural statistics;
- vii. international comparison programme;
- viii. gender statistics;
- ix. crime statistics;
- x. health statistics;
- xi. coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system;
- xii. regional statistical development in Africa;
- xiii. developing a statistical-spatial framework in national statistical systems; and
- xiv. Rio +20 and new sustainable development goals.

HMG's Review of Balance of competences between UK and EU

16. The Authority Board will be discussing a paper on the GSS's approach in February.

Breaches Guidance

17. Revised guidance for reporting and dealing with breaches of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, agreed by the Authority Board, has been published on StatNet. The new breach reporting template contains helpful advice regarding completion and two additional documents contain answers to frequently asked questions and advice on how to avoid some of the most common breaches.

Quality assurance across the GSS

18. The Authority and Parliament are now seeking further assurance regarding the quality of UK official statistics, especially given changing user requirements and developments in international best practice. In response to this, NSO have initiated a project to seek assurances from HoPs across the GSS on the quality of the official statistics they produce. Further details are available in a separate paper on the agenda for this meeting [SA(COS)(13)03].

National Statistician's Office, January 2013

List of Annexes

- Annex A Cost of the Government Statistical Service**
- Annex B GSS Strategic Framework for Data**

Annex A Cost of the Government Statistical Service

Purpose

1. This note provides information about the inherent difficulties in providing an accurate estimate of the costs of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and proposes steps to move the issue forward.

Recommendations

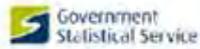
2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) are invited to note the present position.

Discussion

3. The GSS comprises a number of organisations - UK Government departments and agencies and the three devolved administrations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). While the National Statistician provides professional leadership, the GSS is a federation without an overarching hierarchy or administrative control. Each organisation in this decentralised system is responsible for its own expenditure on statistics.
4. The UK statistical system is more flexible than centralised statistical offices in other countries. Instead of a single budget for a single national statistical office, requiring the costs of producing one set of statistics to be traded off against the costs of producing another, the 200 or so organisations that produce UK official statistics take their decisions about priorities and funding with a large measure of autonomy. This means that each organisation has the freedom to decide whether to invest in statistical data rather than other work, analytical or otherwise. The advantage of decentralisation is that Departments have their finger on the pulse of public policy issues and this translates into awareness of user need.
5. This arrangement presents risks as well as advantages. An organisation that produces official statistics may not regard a particular set of statistics as a priority for itself, despite the fact that users, whether within or outside government, have a need for them.
6. To mitigate against the risk, the National Statistician's Office (NSO) collates data on cessations of statistics that include limited information about financial impact; these are regularly reported to the Committee. This information would be of more value if a reliable estimate of the overall costs of the production of official statistics were available.
7. The NSO has made previous attempts to collect information from Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs), but its quality has been poor due to departmental financial systems not being designed for this kind of exercise. The NSO has been able to collect a good deal of data about the numbers and salaries of professional statisticians but other costs such as IT and communications did not appear to be comprehensive or accurate.
8. Obtaining this information about the cost of official statistics and its trend is a priority for the National Statistician. In preparation for the current series of enquiries by the Public Administration Select Committee, the NSO wrote to HoPs in August 2012 with a fresh request for this information using a more refined approach. HoPs were asked to identify separately the costs (both people and other) of data collection, production and analysis.
9. The NSO will follow up this exercise and, working with a group of HoPs, develop a scheme for regular reporting.
10. As a separate exercise the NSO is also researching the costs of running statistics offices in other EU member states in an attempt to establish a comparator. The Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) is also expected to shortly begin its study on 'budgeting for statistics across government'.

National Statistician's Office, 17 January 2013

Annex B GSS Strategic Framework for Data

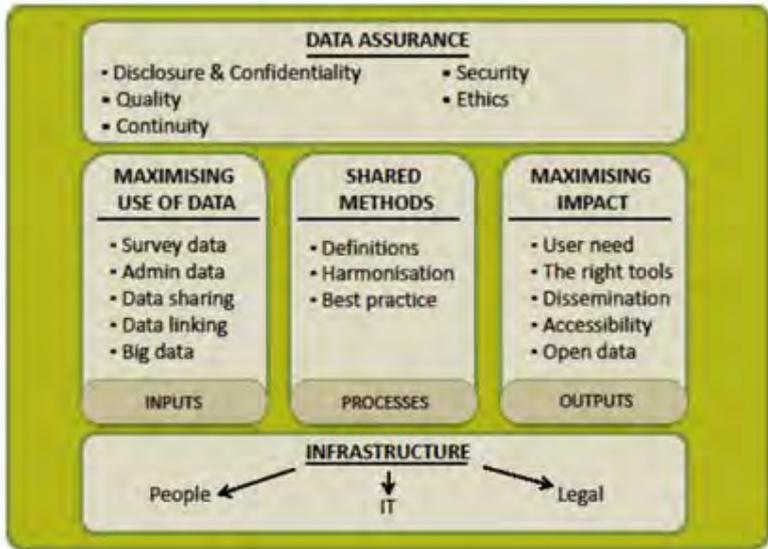


GSS Strategic Framework for Data

VISION

Strengthened use and impact of data for the public good through shared methods, infrastructure and collaboration.

PILLARS



UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)02

Benefits Generated by the Quality Improvement Fund 2011/12

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the outcomes of successful bids submitted to the Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) during 2011/12 and lists the ongoing projects funded in 2012/13.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note the following.
 - i. The benefits that have resulted from the projects funded by QIF, both to those commissioning the project and the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS). Details of the funded projects in 2011/12 are included in **Annex A**. The final reports for these projects have been published on the GSS intranet (StatNet);
 - ii. That a short review of the operation of the QIF was carried out in 2012 and a paper was submitted to the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) in September 2012 providing an overview of QIF since its introduction in 2009. Relevant excerpts from this paper are included at **Annex B**. The review concluded that the QIF was continuing to serve a useful purpose in enabling a range of departments to take forward methodological work which they might otherwise have struggled to resource. It recommended that the criteria under which the bids were assessed should remain largely unchanged for the next round but that this should be revisited in 2013 to ensure that QIF continued to reflect the Authority's key priorities.

Discussion

3. Since 2009 the Authority has made provision for a budget of £250,000 per annum to support GSS quality improvements. The Quality Centre within the ONS Strategy and Standards Directorate manages the fund on behalf of the Authority and decisions on the allocation of funding are made by the GSS SPSC, chaired by the National Statistician. The agreed funding criteria are at **Annex C**.
4. During 2011/12 two bidding rounds were conducted resulting in a total of 12 successful bids.
5. Of the 12 projects, 11 ran within time and budget. The project that overran was delayed due to resource issues within ONS, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Methodology Advisory Service (MAS). It was agreed that this work would be completed during this financial year.
6. Eight of the projects successful in obtaining QIF funding were in preparation for, or as a result of the Authority's designated assessments. The other projects related to work that tackled generic GSS issues. All work undertaken had wide applicability across the GSS. The majority of the money allocated was used to buy- in methodology expertise from the MAS and associated travel and subsistence expenditure.
7. The benefits of the 2011/12 QIF projects include improved methodology for a range of statistics including:

- i. Ministry of Justice court statistics;
 - ii. Northern Ireland surveys (NI Passenger Survey and Domestic Tourism Survey; Integrated Business Survey System; Access to Finance Survey);
 - iii. ONS Longitudinal Social Surveys (Labour Force Survey, Household Asset Survey, General Lifestyle Survey and the Life Opportunities Survey);
 - iv. Department for Transport's Bus Fares Index;
 - v. Northern Ireland Construction Output Statistics; and
 - vi. BIS Building Material Statistics.
8. Other benefits include:
 - i. implementation of geography policy for National Statistics;
 - ii. further guidance around dominance and disclosure rules to ensure consistency with GSS standards;
 - iii. evaluation of reliability and coverage of Balance of Payments estimates;
 - iv. reviewing and updating benchmarking methodology; and
 - v. delivery of GSS Quality Task Force developed training in Quality management.
9. The outcomes of these projects have been disseminated via the GSS intranet (StatNet) and individual project dissemination activities have included presentations at various conferences and to universities, information trusts, etc. Outcomes have also been shared on departments' own websites and knowledge sharing has been undertaken widely within departments and across the GSS.
10. Some of the challenges experienced by projects included:
 - i. the complexity of the work was unclear in the early stages;
 - ii. resource issues within departments and MAS resulting in delays to timetable; and
 - iii. infrequent progress updates between MAS and departments; and
11. Sixteen projects are currently ongoing. The outcomes and benefits resulting from these projects will be reported in due course. Details of these projects are at **Annex D**.

**Janet Dougharty, Department for Communities and Local Government
Chair of the Quality Improvement Fund sub-committee January 2013**

List of Annexes

Annex A	Table illustrating QIF projects 2010/11
Annex B	Excerpts from the GSS SPSC paper on the benefits of QIF
Annex C	Tables illustrating ongoing projects funded in 2012/13
Annex D	Current criteria for QIF bids (2013/14)

Annex A Table illustrating QIF projects 2010/11

More information and links to individual project reports are available to members of the GSS via the GSS intranet pages (StatNet).

Bid and Bidding Dept	Bid Amount	Outcomes Achieved	Process for dissemination
1. Quality assuring Ministry of Justice (MoJ) data linking methodology and increasing capability to analyse the new linked datasets (MoJ)	£24,960	Fully	Various published articles when the project has moved its linked data into regular production (proposed Sept 2012)
2. Standardisation of edit and imputation, grossing and estimation procedures for a new Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Northern Ireland integrated business survey IT system and other surveys; QA of SIC07 conversion for short-term output indicators. (DETINI)	£19,300	Partly – One small part of the project overran; due to be completed by March 2013	Via various seminars, conferences and user groups during 2012.
3. Implementation of geography policy for National Statistics based on the workplace (ONS)	£20,000	Partly – Further research to be done on impact of using workplace building blocks on workplace statistics.	2011 Census Geography Prospectus AGI Conference 2012 Geography Services User Forum
4. Improving the management of survey samples (ONS)	£45,000	Fully	Via Longitudinal survey user group meetings at RSS (late 2012)
5. Method review of the Department for Transport's Bus Fares Index (DfT)	£25,000	Fully	Reports sent to head of CPI/RPI at ONS. Published report on DfT website for wider users.
6. Dominance and disclosure rules (HM Revenue and Customs)	£5,000	Fully – Although timetable delayed somewhat	Reports published on HMRC website; disseminated via Stats Head of Profession Team;

7. Review of benchmarking methodology (ONS)	£10,000	Fully	Via 2012 GSS Methodology Symposium and 2012 Joint Statistical meeting (paper and presentation)
8. Delivery of the GSS Quality Task Force developed training course across GSS departments. (ONS)	£22,500	Fully	Training rolled out across the GSS; including sessions in London, Leeds, Scotland Northern Ireland and Wales. Additional support provided to delegated trainers across GSS. Regular updates provided to relevant committees.
9. Northern Ireland Construction Output statistics – calculation of quality measures including standard errors and coefficients of variation around the main construction output measures (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA))	£5,300	Fully	Via lunchtime seminar programme at NISRA offices
10. Northern Ireland Tourism Surveys (NISRA/DETINI)	£22,500	Fully	Via lunchtime seminar programme at NISRA offices
11. Building Material statistics methodology improvements (BIS)	£29,706	Fully	Report published on BIS website and StatsUserNet

Projects failed to completely achieve expected outcomes due to resource issues and delays in contracts

Bid and Bidding Dept	Bid Amount	Reasons
12. Evaluation of reliability and coverage of Balance of Payments estimates for Trade in educational services (ONS/BIS)	£12,000	Project start was initially delayed and then key staff left BIS/MAS resulting in the work not being finished. The project will complete by the end of this financial year and the benefits disseminated in due course.

Annex B Excerpts from the GSS SPSC paper on the benefits of QIF

Overview of QIF funding 2009 – 2012

Since 2009, a total of 116 bids have been submitted from a wide range of government departments and agencies. (Please note that the ONS Quality Centre receive approximately £5,000 per annum to administer the fund. These administrative bids and funding are not included in any totals.)

Of the 116 bids, 60 were successful in obtaining funding. A breakdown of the bids by government departments is provided below. The total amount of funding received by each department is also shown.

Some brief analysis of the type of work that the successful funding has enabled departments to undertake is set out below. For further information on any of the individual bids please consult the QIF pages on StatNet.

Of the 60 bids awarded funding:

42 related to developing or improving methodologies
7 specifically related to issues of disclosure control
5 were to fund cross-GSS training
4 were specifically in terms of quality measurement and reporting
2 related specifically to issues around publishing statistics

QIF bids by Department

Department	Total number of bids submitted	Number of those that were successful	% success	Total amount of funded bids
ONS	29	13	45%	£255,198
Northern Ireland (Departments include NISRA, DETINI and Department of Finance and Personnel, Northern Ireland (DFPNI))	24	13	54%	£152,282
Scotland (General Register Office (GRO), Scottish Government (SG))	13	7	54%	£108,031
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	8	4	50%	£52,008
Department of Health (DH) (including NHS Information Centre)	6	2	33%	£29,654
Welsh Government (WG) (in conjunction with other departments)	5	1	20%	£25,000
Department for Transport (DfT)	4	4	100%	£56,775
Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	4	4	100%	£61,880
ONS (in conjunction with other	4	3	75%	£79,618

departments)				
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)	4	2	50%	£42,500
HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)	4	2	50%	£7,000
Defence Analytical Services Agency, Ministry of Defence (DASA)	4	1	25%	£25,000
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)	2	2	100%	£45,760
Ofsted	2	0	0%	n/a
Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (in conjunction with other Depts.)	1	1	100%	£7,500
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)	1	1	100%	£10,000
HM Treasury	1	0	0%	n/a

Annex C Tables illustrating ongoing projects funded in 2012/13

1. Scoping study to develop a set of Economic Accounts for Northern Ireland	DFPNI	£15,000
2. Bayesian methods in compiling population and migration estimates from administration data sets	GRO	£8,250
3. Northern GSS learning and development initiative	HSE	£7,500
4. Scottish Population Surveys centralised weighting project	OCS	£18,488
5. Supporting the GSS to implement the new quality reviews	ONS	£24,600
6. Statistical Disclosure Control for cross-sector linked datasets	SG	£12,196
7. Reported road casualties – data accessibility project	DfT	£5,920
8. Training in methods and new software for seasonal adjustment	ONS	£7,150
9. Statistical disclosure control support for the GSS	ONS	£27,972
10. Measurement of Fraud and Error – Improving our estimator and confidence intervals	DWP	£6,936
11. London GSS learning and development initiative	ONS	£7,500
12. Quality assessment of two sampling frames for household surveys	ONS	£29,955
13. Methodology for improved estimates of construction and demolition, and industrial and commercial waste	WG	£25,000
14. Improve quality and usability of ONS/GSS microdata outputs for research	ONS	£38,000
15. Taking part and active people survey integration	DCMS	£10,000
16. Technical advice on standardising edit and imputation, outlier detection, grossing and estimation and macro and micro quality assurance procedures, including the use of score-based selective editing for a new Integrated Business Survey (IT) System.	NISRA	£5,000

Annex D Current criteria for QIF bids (2013/14)

In November 2011, the UK Statistics Committee for Official Statistics (COS) reviewed the arrangements for the QIF. The committee said that the QIF projects had brought beneficial improvements to the methods used in the production of the statistics. Further benefits could be found in projects that sought to directly address the two main issues identified during assessments: improving the commentary accompanying statistics, and improving producers' understanding and analysis of the use made of statistics.

In line with the COS observations the Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) has agreed criteria for assessing all submitted QIF bids. Bids should relate to one or more of the following:

- UK Statistics Authority priorities;
- address Code compliance issues highlighted in UK Statistics Authority assessment reports; particularly around improving the commentary accompanying statistics, and improving producers' understanding and analysis of the use made of statistics;
- require expertise to be bought in from an external source.

All bids must ensure they demonstrate wider applicability across GSS, including detail on how the knowledge will be shared and implemented across other Departments.

Funding will not be awarded for work that is considered to be 'business as usual', or for the temporary promotion of staff (with the back-filling of posts), which is viewed as a departmental subsidy.

Funding is not permissible for projects or programmes that have been allocated a specific budget. Quality should be built into this work and not considered as an "add-on". The minimum threshold for bids is £5,000 and all bids should be for one-off projects with a clear end date.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)03

Quality assurance across the GSS

Purpose

1. This paper reports plans by the National Statistician's Office (NSO) to provide the National Statistician with evidence to answer questions about the quality of UK official statistics produced across the Government Statistical Service (GSS). The paper summarises ONS plans to address quality assurance and highlights the need for a wider GSS process, consistent with the ONS approach.
2. The paper also provides an update on the Annual Assurance Report (AAR) to be compiled by Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) and discusses the status of National Statistics Quality Reviews (NSQRs).

Recommendations

3. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note:
 - i. the latest position on reporting the quality of official statistics across the GSS; and
 - ii. the implications and benefits of HoPs' annual assurance reporting to the National Statistician.

Discussion

4. Principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics – *Sound methods and assured quality* – states that 'statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices....', and that 'quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.'
5. HoPs also have an obligation, as defined in the statement of their roles and responsibilities, to:
 - i. improve and maintain the quality and relevance of National Statistics and other official statistics;
 - ii. be accountable to the National Statistician for the quality of statistical outputs within their organisation, including the methodologies used in their production; and
 - iii. monitor the quality and comprehensiveness of the statistics produced by their organisation and implement regular quality assurance processes, including thorough reviews of outputs where appropriate.
6. All legacy National Statistics have been assessed for compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Assessment reports to date have not included a review of the methods used to produce the statistics or any detailed evaluations of methodologies. Instead they provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and highlight any substantial concerns about quality, as well as describing aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses principle 4 of the Code.
7. The Authority and Parliament are now seeking further assurance regarding the quality of UK official statistics, especially given changing user requirements and developments in international best practice. The quality assurance of statistical methods and processes is a role for HoPs and output managers with HoPs being responsible for managing the quality of their outputs and reporting back to the National Statistician (and indirectly to the Authority).

Plans to deliver and report quality assurance across the GSS.

8. ONS has committed to conducting a prioritised rolling programme of self assessment reviews of the quality and methods of its outputs (using a new version of the Quality and Methods Harmonisation Tool), starting in early 2013. It will also conduct a small number of in-depth reviews of its highest profile outputs (based on a redesigned version of the former NSQRs).
9. There is a requirement for a GSS process, consistent with the ONS approach, but flexible enough to take account of local circumstances and priorities. NSO have initiated a project to fulfil this need and will monitor and support its implementation. Tim Andrews alerted HoPs to these new quality assurance requirements at the HoPs Group meeting on 10 December 2012. This is a substantive agenda item for discussion at the next GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee on 31 January 2013.

Annual Assurance Report (AAR)

10. This new initiative requires all HoPs to give written assurances to the National Statistician on the quality of official statistics within their jurisdiction and to report on performance against their own documented roles and responsibilities. It was formerly called the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The reporting template, provided in Annex A for information, has been circulated to all Statistical Heads of Profession. The deadline for return to the NSO is the end of February 2013. The results of Section 3 of this report will form the baseline measure for current quality assurance and review processes across the GSS. These will be analysed and subsequently monitored by NSO.

National Statistics Quality Reviews

11. The original programme of NSQRs started in 2000 and ran until 2008. Fifty reviews were conducted over two phases (2000-2005 and 2005-2008) across a range of topics and departments. They provided in-depth methodological assessments of the quality of official statistics and were resource intensive and time consuming to conduct, typically taking over six months (full time equivalent) to complete. The NSQRs, their recommendations and their implementation plans were all published. The reviews were suspended in 2008 when the statutory Assessment process came into force.
12. In December 2012, ONS announced the re-establishment of a programme of tailored NSQRs for its highest profile outputs, the details of which are yet to be finalised.

National Statistician's Office, January 2013

List of Annexes

Annex A Template for HoPs Annual Assurance Report to the National Statistician

Annex A Template for HoPs Annual Assurance Report to the National Statistician**Annual Assurance Report to the National Statistician 2012/13**

NAME	
DEPARTMENT	

Please provide in no more than 300 words per section your assurance to the National Statistician on each of the following objectives outlined in the Statement of the Role and Responsibilities of a Statistical Head of Profession

1. Overseeing the efficient and effective operation of your organisation's statistical work

In the report you should describe:

- a) how the official statistics operation is set-up within your organisation including whether it extends to arm's length bodies
- b) your main achievements in 2012/13 supporting policy and departmental operations and in widening the use made of statistics by external users
- c) details of any relevant ad hoc work you have conducted in the last 12 months
- d) your role in ensuring how your organisation has the capability to deliver fit for purpose statistics and analysis

2. Improving and maintaining public confidence in National and official statistics

In the report you should describe:

- a) what you do to ensure that your whole organisation and its statistics comply with the Code of Practice and, for 2012/13, whether you have faced any compliance issues and how you dealt with them
- b) how you promote the professional independence of statistics and safeguard integrity
- c) your strategy for protecting the confidentiality of data collected for statistical purposes, from unauthorised disclosure
- d) your role in ensuring compliance with Pre-Release Access rules and principles
- e) how you control the publication of management information

3. Improving and maintaining the quality and relevance of National Statistics and other official statistics

In the report you should:

- a) describe your current quality review process [including an explanation of the tools used to conduct reviews (for example, 6Sigma; QMHT, StatNet guidance)]
- b) indicate how many self-assessment reviews you have conducted in 2012/13 [provide links to reviews] and describe on what basis these were selected
- c) indicate how many in-depth methodological reviews you have conducted in 2012/13 [provide links to reviews] and describe on what basis these were selected

- d) describe what assurances you can give in relation to the quality of the data that is used in the production of your statistics
- e) describe the feedback (positive/negative) about your statistics and how you have acted on it

4. Playing a key role in statistical planning and statistical coordination

In the report you should describe:

- a) the extent of collaboration you have with stakeholders, especially in other analytical professions
- b) what you do to promote the production of comparable statistics across the UK
- c) how you have engaged with users in 2012/13
- d) how you promote the use of administrative data for statistical purposes
- e) your department's Statistical Work Programme (and provide a link to it) and how you involved users in its development

5. Contributing to the formulation of statistical policy

In the report you should describe:

- a) the extent to which you and your staff have participated in statistical policy development in the last 12 months (indicating membership of any GSS Committees, task and finish groups etc)
- b) how you have engaged with others in your department about these policy development activities over the same period

6. Supporting data sharing for statistical purposes

In the report you should describe:

- a) how you have encouraged data sharing for statistical purposes in 2012/13

7. Maintaining and improving the statistical competency of both the GSS and your organisation through recruitment, training and development

In the report you should describe:

- a) what you have done to promote a learning culture including CPD within your organisation in 2012/13
- b) your organisation's compliance with GSS Recruitment and Promotion Guidance
- c) your approach to talent management/succession planning
- d) your organisation's participation in these activities more widely

8. Managing relationships with Arm's Length Bodies

In the report you should describe:

- a) how you have managed relationships with ALBs in 2012/13 (including an indication of the frequency and level of support provided)

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS
Statistics for the Scottish Referendum

SA(COS)(13)04

Purpose

1. This paper summarises current work regarding the provision of official statistics to inform the debate around the referendum on Scottish independence.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) are invited to consider the Authority's work in this context.

Discussion

3. The Scottish Government intends to hold a referendum of the Scottish electorate on the issue of independence from the United Kingdom in the autumn of 2014. A proposed parliamentary bill, likely to be put forward in 2013, will set out the arrangements for this referendum.
4. In light of this, there have been calls for the statistical system to respond to the user need for statistics to inform the debate about Scottish independence. Specifically:
 - i. At the June 2012 meeting of COS, the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) raised the need for official statistics to inform the debate on Scottish independence. The meeting agreed that there was an important role for the Authority and the RSS in this regard, that the issues were complex, and that they required further consideration.
 - ii. At the November 2012 Authority Board, the meeting considered the third study in Public Administration Select Committee's (PASC) current programme of work on statistics, concerning the regions and nations of the UK. It was suggested that there could be a need for an external institution to produce a compendium of statistics that relate to the debate on Scottish independence.
 - iii. At an oral evidence session before PASC on 12 December 2012, at which the Authority Chair and National Statistician gave evidence, the Committee asked what specifically would be done to inform the debate about Scottish independence. During the discussion, Andrew Dilnot informed the Committee that it was useful to have the user need for such statistics clearly spelt out, and that he, and the National Statistician, would discuss what might be done to fulfil that need.
 - iv. At the December 2012 Authority Board, a proposal for a monitoring review about statistical indicators for the four nations of the UK was considered. It was agreed that it would be helpful for COS to consider other work in train across government before proceeding with this work.
5. Cabinet Office guidance on engagement with the Scottish Referendum states that no planning should be made by departments with the assumption that there would be an independent Scotland. There are however now a range of initiatives currently in train across government that are relevant. These initiatives are described in the following paragraphs.

Whitehall programme of work

6. A committee led by HM Treasury with Cabinet Office has initiated a programme with 13 different work streams. The explicit aim of this work is to provide evidence and arguments for Scotland staying within the UK. The broad themes that these work streams cover are set out as follows.
 - i. The UK's position in the world: its currency and monetary policy; financial services; and membership of the EU and international institutions.
 - ii. The protection of UK citizens: its defence capability; and the way it secures its borders.
 - iii. The economic benefits of the UK: its economic performance; its public services; its welfare system; and its shared energy sector.
7. Further information about this work can be found in an interview with the director of the Scotland Office, Alun Evans, which was recently published in Civil Service World.

Scottish Government work

8. The Scottish Government is conducting a parallel piece of work to that of the UK government. This has 16 work streams with the explicit aim to provide evidence for why Scotland should become independent.

Government Statistical Service Inter-Administration Task and Finish Group

9. This group is chaired by Roger Halliday, Chief Statistician in Scotland. It has representatives from all constituent countries of the UK, with a secretariat from the National Statistician's Office. It met first in December 2012 and plans to report in April 2013.
10. The aim of the group as set out by the Inter-Administrative Committee (IAC) is to ensure that it is clear where comparable statistics between the four nations of the UK are available and where statistics are not comparable.
11. The group will report to the IAC and will:
 - i. identify key sources and datasets, in particular for economic statistics, and bring together information on whether they are comparable or not comparable across the nations of the UK;
 - ii. where appropriate, to identify useful wider international comparisons;
 - iii. engage with the National Statistics Theme Groups to assist with ensuring coherence and coordination where there is a legal or strong user requirement;
 - iv. review the publication timetables for these key statistics to assess whether they can be adjusted so that comparable statistics are available at the same time; and
 - v. agree ways of handling communication about non-comparable statistics.
12. At the first meeting of the group it was recognised that, in the time available, the group would not be able to cover all themes and agreed to concentrate on one, or possibly two. On the basis of this work they would then recommend how other themes may address the issues in their areas.

Proposed Monitoring Review: The Comparability of Statistical Indicators for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

13. Proposals for a Monitoring Review into the comparability of statistical indicators for the four administrations have been submitted by the Monitoring and Assessment team to

the Assessment Committee, which will consider them at its meeting of 24 January 2013 [SA(AC)(13)05].

14. The Monitoring and Assessment team also plans to conduct a re-assessment of Government Expenditure in Scotland (GERS) statistics, which is pertinent to the Scottish independence debate.

Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR)

15. The OBR has begun to publish forecast Scottish receipts from a number of taxes, which the Government intends to devolve to the Scottish Parliament from April 2015 onwards. This includes forecasts of Scottish income tax, landfill tax, stamp duty land tax and aggregates levy receipts. At this stage, HM Treasury notionally assign these forecast receipts to the Scottish Budget to show how much of what is currently grant funding would be replaced by tax, although the Scottish Budget would not vary as tax receipts vary until the devolution of these taxes is fully implemented. OBR report that they are not able to produce a Scottish macro-economic forecast to drive the Scottish tax forecast as the macro-economic data that are needed are generally not available at a Scottish level or is only available with a long lag. Instead the methodologies they use are generally based on Scotland's historic share of the relevant UK tax stream.
16. The Scottish Government has announced consultations on replacement taxes for stamp duty land tax and landfill tax and intends to legislate during the 2012/13 session of the Scottish Parliament. Once final decisions have been made on these new taxes, OBR will produce forecasts based on the new tax regimes.
17. Regardless of the referendum this will impact on the public finances which ONS publish monthly.

Possible work by ONS

18. ONS is currently gathering information about the various related initiatives across government. It then plans to consider whether there is a possible role for ONS in filling gaps to meet user needs for statistics to inform the debate on the Scottish referendum. A deputy Director has been assigned to lead this work.

Secretariat, January 2013

SA(COS)(13)05 – Monitoring Work Programme

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(COS)(13)05

Monitoring Work Programme

A Monitoring work programme has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

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

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)08

Progress Update: The first three months of the Good Practice Team

Purpose

1. This paper provides a summary update to the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) on progress with the first three months of the Good Practice Team (GPT).

Recommendations

2. Members of COS are invited to consider and comment on the summary. Detailed findings are due to be considered further by a meeting of the Authority Chair, National Statistician and Head of Assessment to be held following to this meeting of COS.

Discussion

3. The GPT pilot began on 1 October 2012 aiming to promote good practice across the GSS, with a particular focus on communicating statistics and engaging users.

Work with departments

4. The GPT has worked with 10 Departments, offering support on commentary or user engagement. It has spent about a third of its time working directly with statistical teams to improve specific releases, usually through providing iterative, detailed comments and advice. This process is effective, but can be resource intensive. To date, the team has helped improve 15 statistical releases in this way (some are still to be published).
5. The team has had monthly progress meetings with Jil Matheson, Richard Alldritt and Richard Laux. These meetings have provided an invaluable opportunity to discuss each release that the team has worked on, confirming that we do all agree what 'good' looks like. The team has passed detailed feedback arising from these discussions back to the producer of each release.

Other initiatives

6. At the outset, the team identified other initiatives that it could try, to leverage improvements to commentary or user engagement. It has progressed nine of these initiatives, including training, peer review and seminars. It is too early to say how effective each has been, but signs are encouraging, particularly in terms of the potential impact compared with the resource input by the team. For example: leading assistant statisticians through a peer review exercise has produced constructive comments on 17 releases, which assistant statisticians are now starting to take onboard.
7. The team has spent less time working directly with departments on user engagement (about 10 per cent) but has identified the main barriers to improvement and expects that some of the wider initiatives referred to above will begin to address some of the barriers.

Building links

8. Through its work, the team has begun to build strong links across the Government Statistical Service (GSS). Rather than meeting resistance in departments, the team's input has been welcomed and departments have approached the team for advice and assistance, although the team has often had to work hard to keep up momentum and ensure departments deliver – which has taken the work of the team beyond the ‘advice’ that NSO has provided in the past. The links that the team has established have enabled it to encourage and direct work that is already going on within the GSS, draw on existing good practice, promote joined up working across departments and help examples of good practice travel.
9. This overarching view of the GSS and working-level engagement has enabled the team to identify cross-cutting issues. The team has recorded details about each ‘intervention’, including the barriers it has faced, with a view to being able to conclude what works best in different scenarios and to identify issues that cut across the work of the GSS. Initial findings are discussed below. The team’s flexibility means that it is well-placed to respond quickly to these issues, or other priorities as necessary: we see this as a key strength.

Allocation of the team's time

10. The team has comprised three staff at Grade 7 level (one part time, four days a week). The team has kept an approximate record of the time it has spent on different activities. The split for the first three months is summarised below:

Activity	Per cent
Helping Departments with statistical releases	32
Helping Departments with user engagement	9
Identifying good practice	5
Producing guidance / advice	12
Preparing training material	4
Organising / running Assistant Statistician peer review exercise	6
Organising Royal Statistical Society (RSS) event for voluntary sector users	3
Other promoting good practice, including through StatNet	6
Planning / administration	23

Emerging findings and issues

11. The team gets a sense that perhaps the tide is turning on commentary. We are hearing about departments trying new ideas. HM Revenue and Customs has involved its communications team to help it redraft its releases. ONS has set up a Statistical Products working group to take forward improvements in commentary and generalise these across the organisation. Some of the team's activities will build on this: especially the Assistant Statistician peer review exercise and the training. It is not so clear that there is the same momentum on user engagement yet. In part and in places this may reflect genuine difficulties getting users to engage / users' willingness to engage.

Barriers to good commentary

12. Barriers to good commentary include:
 - i. existing releases are aimed at a technical audience (or no specific audience at all);
 - ii. lack of understanding of what 'good' commentary looks like - linked to first point, not understanding which audience to pitch the release at;
 - iii. poor writing skills - some statisticians struggle to write clearly and plainly. We have found this can be the case (but not always or exclusively) when releases are drafted by more junior staff - for example by statistical officers;
 - iv. lack of topic expertise, for example where statisticians work on multiple releases on different topics;
 - v. inexperience or lack of skill interpreting data - in the past they've always just churned out the same numbers and that has been sufficient;
 - vi. apathy; and
 - vii. lack of confidence to make changes to the way releases are written, either because it involves stepping out of comfort zones, or because it may unsettle users / department policy side.
13. It is relatively straightforward to improve commentary in specific releases, by working with departments and providing comments and advice on draft releases. However, the team found that the impact it could have varied depending on which barriers it encountered. Lack of writing skill greatly limited the rate and level of improvement that we could make. In such cases, the improvements we facilitated could be resource intensive and tended to bring releases 'above the line' rather than make them examples of good practice. By comparison, lack of confidence ('would this be the right thing to do?') was easier to address and led to more notable improvements. Identifying and promoting good practice - being able to point to improvements that we have assisted and the benefits that the improvements have brought about - helps build confidence and also gives the team credibility.

Barriers to good user engagement

14. Barriers to good user engagement include:
 - i. seeing it as a 'worthy' but not useful activity;
 - ii. focus on internal users - often those who have requested or funded the statistics;

- iii. lack of time;
 - iv. lack of belief or knowledge that there are interested users with meaningful views to contribute, other than the core (often internal) users; and
 - v. possible genuine difficulty getting users to engage.
15. Progress to address the barriers on user engagement has been slower and it has been more difficult to get traction. It has proved more difficult to identify a 'way in', and improvements usually require input from departments over a longer period of time: it is not as tangible as sitting down and redrafting a release. The team has developed training for new entrants, is organising a seminar to share good practice and has collaborated with the RSS and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) to organise an event focussing on voluntary sector users. Over the coming months it expects to see some outcomes from its current work with the Ministry of Defence (MOD), HMRC, the Department for Education and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, improving how they engage with users.

Next steps

16. The team will continue working with departments to improve commentary and user engagement until end March 2013. The Project Board will meet to evaluate the Pilot on 2 April.

Tim Andrews, National Statistician's Office, 17 January 2013

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)06

***Update on the impact of cuts on statistical inputs and outputs, and
monitoring statistical capability***

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics, and on public consultations relating to those statistics.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note the latest position on cuts and consultations.

Discussion

3. Since the last report to the Committee on 13 November 2012, the National Statistician has been notified of two cessations of statistics as follows:
 - i. The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) has informed the National Statistician of the discontinuation of the NHS Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff return. This has been suspended since September 2011 due to the Department of Health's fundamental review of NHS Data Collection. The response to the review is still pending.
 - ii. The Department for Education in Northern Ireland is to cease publishing the statistical release on participation in full-time education and vocational training by 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland, with immediate effect. A public consultation was held which only received one response. It is noted that the source data for the publication is still available and could be run on an ad-hoc basis if required. In addition, a number of sources of similar information are available.
4. Further information about these cessations including the outcome of consultations can be found at **Annex A**. Historical information about cessations by department up to December 2012 can be found at **Annex B**.
5. Members of the Committee may wish to note that, following consultation, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has concluded that it will continue publishing the National Statistics publication "Income Related Benefits: Estimates of Take-Up". A response to the consultation was published in December 2012 which outlines the plans for future publications.
6. There have been seven notifications of statistical consultations to the National Statistician's Office (NSO) since the last update to the Committee. One of these is notable:
 - A joint consultation (Department for Education (DfE) and DWP) was launched on 15 November following the Government's announcement on developing better measures of child poverty. A number of potential dimensions are proposed: income and material deprivation, worklessness, unmanageable debt, poor housing, parental skill level, access to quality education, parental health and family stability. The NSO has commissioned ONS Methodology Advisory Service and relevant Heads of Profession for their views, prior to a response being submitted by the National Statistician.

7. There are currently five live statistical consultations along with two closed consultations not previously reported to the Committee (**Annex C**).

Monitoring Statistical Capacity

8. Following the recent recruitment exercises that have been carried out for departments the National Statistician's Office has been carrying out a census of all its professional (GSG) members as at the end of December. At this point in time, the total number of professional staff is still being compiled, along with validation of the returns received from departments.
9. It is therefore not possible to provide the Committee with an accurate count by departments at this point. However, it is expected that the total figure will be about 1,450 in active statistical roles, considerably up on previous returns. More detailed analysis will be provided for the March meeting.

National Statistician's Office, January 2013

List of Annexes

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| Annex A | Cuts notified to the National Statistician since the last update |
| Annex B | Cuts previously reported to COS |
| Annex C | New consultations about cuts and changes to statistics |

Annex A Cuts notified to the National Statistician since the last update

This table summarises cuts to official statistics that have been notified to the National Statistician as of 11 January 2013 since the last update was provided in November 2012.

Details	Description of statistics	Reasons for cessation or reduction	Details of consultation/ impact on users	Cost/benefits assessment	Status
<p>NHS Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff return</p> <p>Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)</p> <p>Ceased from 30 September 2011 until further notice</p>	<p>Aggregate data about bank work performed by Nurses and Midwives.</p>	<p>The future of all central collections from the NHS are under review, with the default position being that all collections should be ceased unless it is possible to provide a strong case for their continuing. (Note – the recommendation within the consultation document is that this collection be discontinued).</p> <p>HSCIC, in line with other public sector bodies is seeing its funding for core business being reduced and as such has to prioritise work to the reduced resources available.</p> <p>HSCIC has assessed the quality, strategic value and amount of added value of the different data collections and datasets. There are several drawbacks to the bank nursing aspect of the non-medical workforce census which do not apply to other workforce collections.</p> <p>The bank return is a manual collection and both its completion in the NHS and the processing of the returns at the HSCIC are very resource intensive.</p> <p>There is no equivalent bank survey for other aspects of the NHS workforce where bank working is applied.</p>	<p>The proposal to suspend this collection was subject to discussion with, and the agreement of, the Department of Health followed by a short consultation undertaken through the HSCIC website to seek views from all users. Specifically, all contacts and relevant networks associated with this collection were alerted to the consultation process by email. The timescale for this consultation (four weeks) was short in recognition of both that i) the current proposal is for suspension only and ii) that collection's long term future is being considered as part of the Department of Health Fundamental Review of NHS Data Collections, the consultation for which ended on 22nd November 2011, and the Government response to which is currently pending publication.</p> <p>Following the publication of the note on the HSCIC website regarding the ongoing</p>	<p>Negligible.</p> <p>Loss of this data has been assessed to have a minor impact on those tables which include figures in totals, and on some rows of the associated summary tables on the NHS Workforce census publication.</p> <p>The consultation received 45 responses from 44 different organisations. All of the respondents supported the proposal to suspend the collection with the exception of one who, whilst unable to actively support the suspension, accepted the proposal.</p> <p>ONS has accepted the proposal to suspend the collection and agreed to work with the HSCIC to develop a more robust data source for the long term.</p>	<p>Confirmed – suspension for 2011 and 2012 only at this time.</p> <p>The return is subject to the Fundamental Review of NHS Data Collections and therefore the long term future of this collection will be covered by that Review, but the publication of the response to this review is still pending at the time of the 2012 annual collection, and is not expected to be published until later in 2012.</p>

			<p>suspension of the Bank Nursing and Midwifery return no further comments have been received from data suppliers or customers.</p> <p>The HSCIC remain in discussions with the DH regarding the long term future of this data collection and the DH are content for the continued suspension pending the outcome of the Fundamental Review of Data returns.</p>		
<p>Participation in full-time education and vocational training by 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland</p> <p>Dept for Education, Northern Ireland</p> <p>Date of cessation: 4 December 2012</p>	<p>The statistical release reports on numbers of 16 and 17 year olds in full-time education and vocational training in Northern Ireland on an annual basis, providing both overall totals and totals by type of participation.</p>	<p>Change in customer focus – the Northern Ireland Executive’s Programme for Government (PfG) 2008-2011 contained a Public Sector Agreement (PSA) target in relation to participation in full-time education and training. No similar target is contained in the current PfG covering the period 2011-2015, in part reflecting the move towards more flexible education provision for those beyond compulsory school leaving age and reflecting the shift in emphasis towards reducing the numbers of young people who fall into the NEETs category, Part of the “Pathways to Success” strategy aimed at helping this group will include the development of a tracking system which will produce robust data.</p> <p>Emerging data issues - there is no single database in Northern Ireland of school students and those in further education or training. Also there is currently no unique identifier, so it is not possible to directly combine information from the three sources that are used to compile the information used in the release. In addition there is an overlap between the FE data and the</p>	<p>A public consultation was conducted for a period of 12 weeks during late summer and the autumn. The consultation was listed on both the DE and DEL websites.</p> <p>Additionally, all policy branches within the two departments; all NISRA branches, NI Assembly researchers and the relevant Assembly Committees, were written to directly, informing them of the consultation.</p> <p>The consultation has been completed with only one response received.</p>	<p>Cost Benefit</p> <p>In DE there would be no cost savings in terms of data collection although time taken to prepare the publication would account for approximately 5 statistician days. In DEL, the equivalent saving would be approximately 10 statistician days.</p> <p>Quality</p> <p>The source data used in the publication is still available and analysis could be run on an ad hoc basis, if required.</p> <p>A number of sources of similar information exist. The main ones are: i) Information on participation in school - Information on</p>	<p>Confirmed.</p>

		<p>training data, as a large number of trainees undertake their training in a FE environment. This creates the possibility of double-counting.</p> <p>Developments over the past few years mean that it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure that a robust estimate of those participating in full-time education or training can be made. DE and DEL statisticians have concluded that it is becoming increasingly difficult to assess whether the data are fit for purpose in this area.</p> <p>Both DE and DEL Ministers have agreed to the cessation of the publication.</p>		<p>the numbers of pupils in Year 13 and 14 in schools is available on the DE website; ii) Information on participation in further education; iii) Information on participation in training; iv) Information on those not in employment, education, or training (NEET)</p>	
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Annex B Cuts previously reported to COS

Department	Statistics	Date of cessation
Department for Communities and Local Government	The Place Survey	July 2010
	Local Government Key Facts Card: England	November 2010
	Citizenship Survey	March 2011
	Official Statistics on Supporting People	May 2011
	Changes to DCLG Statistics – Regional Outputs	October 2012 for outputs without PRA. Outputs with PRA – throughout 2013.
Department of Culture Media and Sport	Target Group Index statistics on arts attendance	31 October 2011
Department for Education	Schools Providing Access to Extended Services Statistics	October 2010
	Parental experiences of services provided to disabled children Statistics	November 2010
	Diploma Learning England	November 2011
	School Destinations of Secondary School Pupils Resident in London Boroughs	September 2011
	Behaviour in schools	1 April 2012
Department for Health	Health Profile of England	Last publication March 2010
	Mortality Monitoring: Life Expectancy and all-age-all-cause mortality, and mortality from selected causes - overall and inequalities	Last publication October 2011
	Mortality Monitoring: Infant Mortality and inequalities	Last publication December 2011
Home Office	Statistics on post-decision reviews on asylum applications, applications for asylum support, and asylum appeals.	25 th August 2011
	Basic Command Unit level recorded crime and detection statistics	April 2012

HM Revenue and Customs	Business Payment Support Service	Last publication July 2011
Ministry of Defence	RAF Pocket Brief	April 2012
	Civilian Staffing by agency, trading fund and location	February 2012
NHS Information Centre	Prescription Cost Analysis statistics	July 2012
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	Northern Ireland Abstract of Statistics Online	16 June 2012
Welsh Government	1. Health Visitors, District Nurses and Other Community Nurses 2. NHS Day Care 3. Community Psychiatric Nurses and Community Learning Disability Nurses	October 2010
	New Deal Statistics	November 2010
	Welsh Short Term Output Indices	Within weeks if that decision is made by Ministers
	Local Authority Education Expenditure	Suspended for 2010/11 year.
	Affordable housing provision – collection of information from registered social landlords	2012/13
	NHS staff vacancies	1 March 2012
Scottish Government	1. Children Educated outwith Schools 2. Placing Requests 3. Teacher and Educational Psychologists Vacancies 4. Pre-Appeal SQA Examination Results 5. Expenditure on Schools 6. Budgeted School Running Costs 7. The Independent School Census	November 2010
	Various changes to Scottish Government	2012 onwards

	Surveys	
Department for Work and Pensions	New Deals and the Flexible New Deal programme statistics	March 2011
	Tax Benefit Model	8 June 2011
	National Insurance Number Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals entering the UK	August 2012
	Vacancies handled by Jobcentre Plus	Autumn 2012
Office for National Statistics	Quarterly dividends inquiry	5 March 2012

Annex C New consultations about cuts and changes to statistics

This table summarises the consultations that have been notified to the National Statistician in the period 15 November 2012 – 11 January 2013 or have been discovered by the National Statistician's Office undertaking periodic trawls of departmental websites.

The list demonstrates that GSS statisticians are actively reviewing the need for continued statistics with users in order to improve efficiency, as well as responding to reductions in resources in the current public sector financial climate.

Details of consultation	Description of consultation	Consultation Ends
<p>Consultation on the Measures of Human Capital Producer: ONS Opening date: 7 December 2012</p>	<p>Human capital is a driver of economic growth and if measured accurately can ensure a better understanding of the dynamics of an economy. Since the publication of estimates of Human Capital in 2011, ONS has already engaged with experts in this area and this consultation poses a number of questions on possible developments to the way ONS measure human capital and also to better understand how estimates of human capital will be used. The consultation document looks at and requests feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology • Future development • Uses of human capital estimates • Other comments <p>The consultation document sets out a series of questions to aid responses in the areas identified above.</p>	<p>28 February 2013</p>
<p>Review of Cancer Incidence and Survival Statistics: User Consultation Producer: ONS Opening date: 18 December 2012</p>	<p>ONS is reviewing its cancer incidence and survival outputs to ensure that they continue to meet users' requirements. As part of this exercise ONS are carrying out a user consultation to determine how National Statistics on cancer incidence and survival should be developed in the future.</p> <p>The consultation document outlines items that could be included in cancer incidence and survival outputs. Responses to the consultation will inform future planning decisions on the outputs that ONS should prioritise.</p>	<p>20 February 2013</p>
<p>Consultation on measuring child poverty Producer: DWP/DfE Opened: 15 November 2012</p>	<p>In the Summer the Government announced it would consult on developing better measures of child poverty which include income but provide a more accurate picture of the reality of child poverty today.</p> <p>DWP/DfE has launched a joint consultation 'Measuring Child Poverty' which asks how they can best reflect the reality of child poverty using a multidimensional measure. A number of potential dimensions are proposed: income and material deprivation, worklessness, unmanageable debt, poor housing, parental skill level, access to quality education, parental health and family stability. Views are being sought on the specifics of each</p>	<p>15 February 2013</p>

	dimension as well as whether other dimensions should be included.	
<p>Consultation to cease publication of the remaining 13 FinStat series</p> <p>Producer: ONS</p> <p>Opening date: 14 November 2012</p>	<p>Following consultation in December 2010, ONS decided to cease production of compendiums which included the monthly Financial Statistics publication. Work that followed this decision identified 13 series that were not available through other sources so ONS continued to publish them.</p> <p>ONS is proposing that future dissemination of the remaining 13 series (two monthly series sourced from the Bank of England, and 11 quarterly HM Revenue and Customs series) ceases in February 2013.</p> <p>This consultation provides details of this proposal. It is important that this decision is made with input from those that currently use these data.</p>	13 February 2013
<p>Future dissemination strategy for the publication of National Statistics from the Occupational Pension Schemes Survey</p> <p>Producer: ONS</p> <p>Opening date: 10 December 2012</p>	<p>ONS has developed proposals for the future dissemination of results from the Occupational Pension Schemes Survey (OPSS), with the aim of improving the presentation for users.</p> <p>The results of the OPSS have previously been published in the form of a Statistical Bulletin and a longer annual report. The annual report, last published in 2012, and containing results on the 2011 survey, will no longer be produced. This consultation aims to identify the themes that users found most useful within the annual report. The main proposal is to produce, over a period of time following publication of the Statistical Bulletin, complementary, focused pieces of analysis (referred to as 'short stories') to reflect the parts of the annual report that were of most interest to users.</p>	31 January 2013
<p>Review of nomenclature of units for territorial statistics (NUTS) 2012</p> <p>Producer: Scottish Government</p> <p>Opening date: 5 November 2012</p>	<p>The Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) is a set of geographical boundaries set and regulated by the European Union. The core purpose of NUTS boundaries is the reporting of regional statistics to Eurostat, however those statistics are often used to inform regional policy development and determine regional funding allocations. Eurostat are carrying out a review of NUTS boundaries. The purpose of this consultation is to help inform the Scottish Government's response to this review and to ensure that stakeholders views are taken into account before submitting proposals.</p>	14 January 2013
<p>Consultation on Proposed Changes to United Kingdom Defence Statistics – Chapter 7 (Sustainable Development, Military Aid to the Civil Authorities and Conflict Prevention)</p> <p>Producer: MOD(DASA)</p>	<p>United Kingdom Defence Statistics (UKDS) is an annual compendium publication which provides a wide range of statistics on Defence. UKDS is a National Statistic publication which has been produced by Defence Analytical Services and Advice since 1992.</p> <p>Following assessment by the UK Statistics Authority MOD was required to undertake a detailed review on several chapters including Chapter 7, MOD has reviewed the chapter and is now looking to implement changes in response to the recommendations of the review. The consultation document outlines the proposals and sought user's views.</p>	30 November 2012

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(13)07

An Analysis of Breaches of the Code of Practice Reported to the Authority

Purpose

1. This paper presents some initial analyses of breaches reported to the Authority.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to consider what action they might like to see taken regarding breaches of the Code of Practice.

Discussion

3. Breaches of the Code of Practice are reported to the Authority by producer bodies. Paper [SA(COS)(12)24] updated the previous guidance, and required that:

"breaches of the Code in relation to official statistics (whether designated as National Statistics or not) must be reported to the National Statistician if at least one of the following criteria is met.

- i. Statistics are not made equally available to all (Principle 2, practice 3).
 - ii. Statements or comments based on prior knowledge of the statistics are published ahead of the publication of the statistics (Principle 3, practice 1).
 - iii. The professional independence of statisticians is challenged (Principle 3, practices 2 to 4).
 - iv. Unpublished information is used for personal gain (Principle 3, practice 7).
 - v. Confidential (disclosive) information is inadvertently/inappropriately made available outside the producer body (Principle 5, practices 1, 2, 5, 6).
 - vi. Statistical reports have been released contrary to Protocol 2 of the Code, including where the content of a statistical report has been made public, or available to anyone not essential for statistical production who are not on the relevant pre-release access list (Protocol 2)."
4. These criteria reflect a range of clear individual events, which are easy to identify and report. In a way, every Requirement in an Assessment Report represents a breach of the Code of Practice, but they tend not to be single events, so are treated somewhat differently than breaches reported through this system.
 5. Since the establishment of the Authority in 2008, we have published 92 separate breach reports. Our current system of breach reporting was first established towards the end of 2008. Two breaches were reported to us relating to 2008, 14 for 2009, 21 for 2010, 23 for 2011 and 32 for 2012. In addition, ONS has reported separately those occasions where it has failed to publish statistics at 9.30 am, largely as a result of difficulties with both its former, and new websites, and that is not included within this analysis. By way of context, it is our view that breach reporting is inconsistent across the Government Statistical Service (GSS), and that many breaches remain either undetected within the producer body itself (for example, when someone not on the pre-release access list receives access to the statistics before their publication, but this is neither declared, nor acted upon), or are not reported to the Authority. The gradual increase in reported breaches over time, for example, may reflect better awareness of the breach reporting process, or more complete reporting, rather than genuine increases in the number of breaches. (Reducing inconsistency of breach reporting was part of the motivation for us to update the guidance and for the National Statistician's Office (NSO) to promote it to

producers across the GSS.) The figures should, in general, be considered as the tip (albeit possibly quite a large tip) of the iceberg, rather than a comprehensive report of breaches. Furthermore, on some occasions a single breach report covers more than one set of statistics or more than one time period.

6. Having introduced those caveats, we have undertaken a quick textual analysis of the breach reports. For ease, we have tried to identify a single main reason for the breach, and a single main theme for any remedial action taken. It is often somewhat difficult to do this unambiguously, so it should be borne in mind that a fuller analysis might classify some breaches differently. On the basis of our initial analysis, some of the key features arising from an early indicative analysis of the 92 breach reports published to date by the Authority are as follows.
 - i. ONS was responsible for around a quarter of breaches reported. The remainder were quite evenly spread across the main government departments and the devolved administrations, with a few breaches reported by arm's length bodies. Other than ONS, most of the main statistical producers report around one or two breaches per year on average. **Annex A** shows the detailed breakdown.
 - ii. Most of the breaches reported to us reflect failures relating to the orderly publication of statistics. 17 related primarily to statistics being published before their scheduled release time, and 19 related to statistics not being published until after the scheduled release time. Of those relating to pre-release access, 15 involved the sending of statistics, by the producer body, to someone who was not eligible for pre-release access, and 31 cases involved legitimate pre-release recipients forwarding (either accidentally or deliberately) the statistics on to others who did not have legitimate pre-release access. (The Committee should note that on these occasions, the law was broken in addition to the Code of Practice being breached.)
 - iii. In terms of actions taken following breaches, in 79 cases, procedures were changed, additional guidance drawn up, or supplementary training was given. On 11 reported occasions, the dominant change reported was to computer systems.
7. It is clear that while there are significant uncertainties around the detail of this analysis, most breach reporting relates to release practices. This is not entirely unsurprising as a failure to release statistics at 9:30 am or the inadvertent disclosure of statistics to unauthorised persons are the most clearly identifiable breaches of the Code.
8. NSO has already offered additional help and support to those organisations that have had the highest number of breaches. We consider that NSO should continue its current programme of raising awareness of the importance of Code compliance within the GSS, and to support the GSS in complying with the legislation and the Code. In doing so, NSO might want to carry out a more detailed and thorough analysis of breaches reported to date than has been possible for this paper. This could include analysis of the impact of each of the breaches on the trustworthiness of the official statistics system. The analysis presented here would also appear to be a substantial body of evidence that could be presented to Parliament in support of changes to pre-release access arrangements.

Monitoring and Assessment Team, January 2013

List of Annexes

Annex A Table of number of number of breaches by producer body and year of breach

Annex A

Producer body	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Office for National Statistics	1	2	5	7	6	21
Ministry of Defence	0	1	2	1	4	8
Health and Social Care Information Centre	0	1	0	3	2	6
Welsh Government	0	0	2	3	1	6
Department for Work and Pensions	0	0	0	0	5	5
Scottish Government	0	2	3	0	0	5
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills	0	1	1	2	0	4
Department for Communities and Local Government	0	1	3	0	0	4
Department of Health	0	1	0	1	2	4
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	1	0	0	1	1	3
HM Revenue and Customs	0	0	0	0	3	3
Office of Rail Regulation	0	0	1	2	0	3
Department for Children, Schools and Families	0	2	0	0	0	2
Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland	0	0	1	1	0	2
Ministry of Justice	0	1	0	0	1	2
Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency	0	0	0	1	1	2
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute for Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	1	1
British Trust for Ornithology under partnership contract with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	0	0	0	0	1	1
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and The Student Loans Company	0	1	0	0	0	1
Department for International Development	0	0	1	0	0	1
Forestry Commission	0	0	1	0	0	1

General Register Office for Scotland	0	0	1	0	0	1
HM Treasury	0	1	0	0	0	1
Home Office	0	0	0	1	0	1
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills	0	0	0	0	1	1
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	0	0	0	0	1	1
Scottish Funding Council	0	0	0	0	1	1
Skills Funding Agency in partnership with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	2	14	21	23	32	92