

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Committee for Official Statistics

Minutes

Thursday 9 July 2009

Present

Members

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Chair)
Mr Richard Alldritt
Dame Karen Dunnell
Ms Moira Gibb
Ms Jil Matheson
Sir Michael Scholar

Other Attendees

Mr Richard Laux
Dr Martin Dougherty (for item 4)

Secretariat

Mr Rob Bumpstead
Ms Amanda Charles

Apologies

Professor Paul Wiles
Professor David Rhind

Declarations of Interest

None

1 Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 19 May 2009 were agreed as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.

2 Report from the Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)

- 2.1 Dame Karen Dunnell provided an oral report in her capacity as Head of the GSS.
- 2.2 The Committee heard about recent international meetings including: a meeting between ONS and the Netherlands Statistical Office; the National Statistician's attendance at an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) meeting in Geneva and; a European Partnership Group meeting.
- 2.3 Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) had met on 6 July. The meeting had been addressed by the Cabinet Secretary who had emphasised the importance and relevance of statistics to good government. The Cabinet Secretary had taken to the opportunity to put reported remarks about statistics being 'boring' in context and stress how, in fact, official statistics were both vital and exciting.
- 2.4 The HoPs meeting had also heard from the chief analyst at the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU). He had described the role of official statistics in measuring performance against Public Sector Agreement (PSA) targets, and in supporting the work of the National Economic Council and the objectives contained in the Government white paper *Building the Future of Britain*.
- 2.5 The committee heard about increasing demands upon statisticians for more frequent data provision (e.g. weekly claimant count information) to aid decision-making in the current economic climate.
- 2.6 GSS guidance had been issued about the use of administrative data in relation to official statistics and the distinction between official statistics and research. Further guidance for producers on interpreting and implementing the *Code of Practice* had been approved by the GSS Sources and Standards Committee. It would shortly be made available for producers to use, and for further comment. This included guidance on quality and methodology, confidentiality, and presentation and dissemination.
- 2.7 Agreement had not yet been reached within the GSS on guidance for planning. This issue would now be discussed again at a meeting of the National Statistician and National Statistics theme leaders at the end of July.

3 Report from the Head of Assessment

- 3.1 Mr Alldritt provided an oral report in his capacity as Head of Assessment.
- 3.2 The Committee noted that the first three Assessment Reports had been published on 24 July 2009. Six more assessment reports were due to be published later in July, following consideration by the Authority Board. Seven further assessment reports were due to be finalised in time for publication in September.
- 3.3 It was noted that the monitoring report *Improving Migration Statistics* had been published on the morning of the meeting (9 July). Related to this, a letter had been sent from the Authority Chair to the Minister for Housing regarding the need for a national address register. The Committee was passed a copy of a press notice issued by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) in support of the Authority's position.

- 3.4 Progress on the *Strengthening and Identifying the User Voice and Barriers to Trust in relation to Crime Statistics* monitoring reports was outlined. For the user voice report, tender exercises for the survey of opinion formers and the survey of public confidence in official statistics were being conducted. A draft interim crime report would be submitted to the project board in September.
- 3.5 The Committee also heard about plans for a further three monitoring reports; on prices, pre-release access and environmental statistics.
- 3.6 Good progress was being made in recruitment to the monitoring and assessment team with new staff recently taking up post in the Edinburgh and Newport offices.
- 4 The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum (SUF) [SA(COS)(09)19]**
- 4.1 Dr Dougherty introduced a paper which set out the future strategic direction of the RSS's SUF. Planned developments included a web-based communication hub for SUF user groups and interested individuals. The hub would provide a single point of interaction for all users. Through this gateway the RSS aimed to expand its membership and develop a subscription profile for data users. This approach, coupled with event based income generation, was intended to make SUF financially self-supporting by 2012.
- 4.2 The strategy also envisaged a unification of perspectives, with a single RSS voice encapsulating user and professional input. In order to gain momentum with this approach the creation of a consultative joint user-producer council was proposed. Countering the perspective that users were at present insufficiently included in the official statistics system was central to the Society's approach.
- 4.3 The Committee welcomed the proposals. The following points were made in discussion:
- i. an international comparative analysis of user organisation and representation would be useful;
 - ii. exposing user bodies more fully to the limitations and constraints placed upon government statisticians would promote enhanced understanding (i.e. funding, European regulations etc.);
 - iii. equally, making the internal decision-making processes and deliberations of government more transparent to external users would be beneficial. Setting out the rationale employed in statistical priority setting would improve transparency in particular;
 - iv. the concept of the 'citizen user' was central to the strategy - considering how best to represent this interest within formal structures was not straightforward, and;
 - v. another challenge was to reflect a genuinely UK-wide range of user voices. At the same time, it was recognised that to maximise effectiveness in delivering the SUF strategy it may be necessary to focus on a limited number of priority objectives.
- 4.4 It was agreed the proposed user-producer council and the Authority's role in this body should be considered further, both by the user voice project board and by the Board of the Authority. **Action: Secretariat to ensure the user-producer council proposal considered further by the Authority.**
- 4.5 The Chair also requested further information on progress toward making the SUF financially self-supporting when that was available. **Action: Secretariat/ Dr.Dougherty to revisit this subject at a future meeting of the COS.**

5 Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report [SA(COS)(09)20]

- 5.1 Dame Karen Dunnell introduced a paper which provided an update on the programme of GSS revitalisation set out in an earlier paper [SA(COS)(08)06] which the Committee had considered in summer 2008.
- 5.2 The committee heard that progress on planning in particular had been slower than hoped for, but that this was now a top priority. Milestones and deliverables for this aspect of the revitalisation programme would be developed. It was now thought less likely that a cross-GSS plan would be developed in time to feed into the spending review process.
- 5.3 Resourcing across the GSS was considered. In 2009 19 fast stream assistant statisticians had been recruited, compared with 10 in 2008. The Committee found the discrepancy with the number of fast stream economists recruited each year (approximately 200) disconcerting. While it was noted the GSS figures did not include Statistical Officers or analysts in related professions like researchers, the low intake of statisticians was not felt to be adequate. This was particularly so given the increased pressures on statisticians (i.e. see 2.5 above). There was a clear need to recruit talented staff.
- 5.4 Questions of the nature and extent of the membership of the GSS were further considered, including the distribution of assistant statisticians across different departments. It was agreed that these issues should be returned to. **Action: Secretariat/ONS to produce information paper on these issues for a future meeting.**
- 5.5 The meeting reviewed the scope of the revitalisation project, the National Statistician's vision, and the various work streams that comprised the project.
- 5.6 The committee was concerned that at present insufficient resource was devoted within ONS to this programme of work, and that significant upgrading of this capability was needed. The current staffing arrangements, following the departure of Mr Mike Hughes, were briefly reviewed. It was agreed that a paper setting out the current resource position, together with an 'ideal world' resource profile would be submitted to the next committee meeting. **Action ONS to produce paper on resources for GSS revitalisation to the next meeting of the Committee.**
- 5.7 In respect of the detailed revitalisation plans the following comments were made: more mention could be made of the Authority in general and the National Statistician's role as chief advisor to the Authority (as well as to government); reference to peer review could usefully be included under the description of 'what success would like' (page 29) in relation to standards and quality, and; reference to improved speed and breadth of public access to data, including raw data, could also be included as a component of success in respect of public confidence (page 31).

6 Authority Engagement with the Government Statistical Service

- 6.1 Mr. Bumpstead provided an oral update on Authority engagement activities with the GSS and plans to take forward previously agreed proposals [SA(COS)(09)15].
- 6.2 Various activities were in train. In particular a working group comprising HoPs, ONS and Authority members would be established and would meet after the summer break. A further update would be provided to a future meeting of the COS.

7 Criteria for the Removal of NS Designation and Changes to the Sequence for Assessment Reports [SA(COS)(09)21]

- 7.1 Mr. Alldritt presented a paper which set out a set of criteria for removing National Statistics designation. Under the proposals, if one or more of the three specified criteria were met National Statistics status would be withdrawn.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the criteria for de-designation of existing statistical products and non-designation of new statistical products should be the same.
- 7.3 It was agreed that while it was desirable to have explicit criteria, the specification as set out in the paper needed more work. In particular the Committee considered:
- i. whether or not certain principles or practices of the Code should be (or be seen to be) given more weight than others;
 - ii. the length of time which should be allowed for producers to implement requirements ('a few months' or an alternative formulation, and;
 - iii. whether de-designation on the grounds of failure to implement recommendations by authorities other than the Statistics Authority (for example the National Audit Office) should be considered as part of the criteria.
- 7.4 It was agreed that the criteria would be subject to further development and re-submitted to a future meeting. **Action: Mr Alldritt to consider options for revised criteria and bring to a future meeting.**
- 7.5 Comments were also invited on the revised sequence for approval of assessment reports (Annex B to the paper). It was agreed that step 10 should be re-worded to make clear that the 'quality assurance meeting' referred to was an internal monitoring and assessment team meeting.
- 7.6 The meeting understood that the proposed changes were essentially a tidying-up exercise and related to the process for producers receiving and commenting on reports prior to consideration by the Authority's Assessment Committee. **Action: Committee members to provide any comments to the secretariat by the end of July.**

8 Committee Business in 2008/09 and Forward Look [SA(COS)(09)22]

- 8.1 Mr. Bumpstead presented a paper summarising the issues considered by the Committee over the preceding year, given the occasion of the COS's first anniversary.
- 8.2 The paper set out how the committee's focus had been drawn particularly to issues around the scope of official statistics and aspects of the monitoring and assessment process. Less time had been devoted to looking at the GSS, the associated revitalisation project or issues from the user perspective.
- 8.3 The meeting considered the paper a useful synopsis of past activity. The following points were made in discussion about future agenda items:
- i. as process issues around assessment and scoping official statistics were progressively resolved, more time would allocated to other topics;
 - ii. chief among these was the GSS, including the work it does and whether the system as whole was producing the right statistics. Such a discussion should encompass questions of capacity and planning, and;
 - iii. equally, it would be important to ensure that the user perspective, and perspectives from beyond the Authority and government were considered.

8.4 The Chair gave notice that he would be reviewing committee membership in accordance with the points raised above. **Action: Chair to discuss further with Sir Michael Scholar/Authority proposals to broaden the membership of the COS.**

9 Any other business

9.1 There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on Wednesday 9 September at 2pm in London.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Committee for Official Statistics

Agenda

Thursday, 9 July, 2009

Board Room, Statistics House, London, 14:30 - 16:30

Chair: Sir Michael Scholar
Apologies: Professor David Rhind

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising	Meeting of 190509
2	Report from the Head of the GSS	Oral Report Dame Karen Dunnell
3	Report from the Head of Assessment	Oral Report Mr Richard Alldritt
4	The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum	SA(COS)(09)19 Dr Martin Dougherty
5	Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report	SA(COS)(09)20 Dame Karen Dunnell
6	Authority Engagement with the GSS	Oral Report Mr Rob Bumpstead
7	Criteria for the Removal of NS Designation and Changes to the Sequence for Assessment Reports	SA(COS)(09)21 Mr Richard Alldritt
8	Committee Business in 2008/09 and Forward Look	SA(COS)(09)22 Mr Rob Bumpstead
9	Any other business	

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)19

The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum

Purpose

1. To inform the committee of the future strategic approach for Royal Statistical Society Statistics User Forum.

Timing

2. Issues to be considered over the next six months

Recommendations

3. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
 - i. receive this paper for information, and;
 - ii. consider establishing a consultative joint user-producer council.

Discussion

4. The Royal Statistical Society established its Statistics User Community theme (RSS-SUC), and with it the Statistics User Forum (SUF), to provide effective means by which users and producers of Official Statistics can engage. Support from the Economic and Social Research Council and more recently the UK Statistics Authority is enabling the Forum to become the strategic voice for users of Official Statistics. The Forum currently has 37 member organisations representing a very wide range of users. Under the new chairmanship of Andrew Dilnot a number of opportunities and challenges lie ahead for SUF (see **Annex A**).

Improving SUF Communications

5. Over the next two years the RSS will develop a web-based communication hub for SUF user groups and interested individuals. The Hub will be the cornerstone of interaction and expression of opinion that will be collected and represented through the forum. This user owned 'Communities' approach is ideal for how the Forum is configured, giving great flexibility for groups to be established as required and stopped or merged when no longer needed. The hub will provide a single point of interaction for all user groups.

Ensuring an Enduring Legacy

6. Through this new user gateway the Society will expand its membership and develop a subscription profile for 'users of data'. Membership will be in two sections: individual users, represented on the Forum through its chair; and user groups and organisation members, directly represented through nominations. With this approach augmented by event based income generation and possible continued support from the UK Statistics Authority, the Society expects SUF to be self-supporting by the end of 2011.

Clarifying the User Base and Developing Future Strategy

7. An important challenge for SUF is developing appropriate representation and ensuring a strategic approach to its activities. It has been noted by SUF members that governmental users of Official Statistics are often perceived as internal clients to producers of statistics which can have the effect of blocking engagement with other users. This is a paradigm that SUF wants to replace with one that supports all users according to the public value of their intended use. To achieve this it is recognised that the forum must engage more closely with key government departments and develop mutual understanding and recognition of different perspectives and priorities. Approaches are now being made to key departments, such as the Cabinet Office, to achieve this.

A Cogent Producer-User Interface

8. Over time it is possible that the new membership approach for forum user groups and individuals within the RSS may lead to a unification of perspectives; a single voice from the Society on Official Statistics encapsulating professional and user input. To gain momentum with this approach, I would like to propose that a consultative joint user-producer council with a wide range of representation be established. The Statistics Authority might wish to consider this under the umbrella of its 'strengthening the user voice' project. Such a council would have access to information generated by the enhanced SUF user representation including government departments, and professional support from the Society. Likewise the Office for National Statistics and all producers of Official Statistics, under the leadership of the National Statistician, would have a formal route for user engagement covering all aspects of the business cycle for the producers of Official Statistics.
9. A user-producer council of this kind would be able to commission and capture ideas for enhancement to statistical services; provide a forum for discussion of the merits of those ideas; invite responses from the relevant producer bodies and draw attention to cases where the response seemed inadequate. By doing these things it would serve to promote public value by helping to get the most from all parts of the statistical service.

Dr Martin Dougherty, Executive Director, Royal Statistical Society, July 2009

List of Annexes

Annex A The Future of the Statistics User Forum

Annex A The Future of the Statistics User Forum

Background of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Statistics User Community theme and the Statistics User Forum

1. The vision is for the Statistics User Forum (SUF) to be the strategic voice of users of statistics, thereby promoting wider availability and use of UK Official Statistics.
2. The existing strategic aims are:
 - i. to ensure that SUF represents, and addresses the interests of, as wide a range of users as possible;
 - ii. to engage with producers of Official Statistics to secure changes in their policies and practices that will benefit users, and;
 - iii. to facilitate dialogue between users in order to share best practice, and identify and address cross-cutting issues, including the interfaces between academic, practitioner and commercial users.
3. From May 2009 the SUF will be led by Andrew Dilnot CBE, who has taken over the role of chairman. He is Principal of St Hugh's College and Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford. He is an economist and broadcaster, and was Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies in London from 1991 to 2002.

Forum Membership

4. The interests of Forum members are diverse and cover the broadest definition of statistics. User group memberships span the private, public, voluntary and academic sectors.
5. The Forum brings together over 30 user groups and organisations:
 - Association of Census Distributors
 - Association of Regional Observatories
 - Bank of England
 - British Society for Population Studies
 - British Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (BURISA)
 - Business Statistics User Group
 - Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
 - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
 - Confederation of British Industry
 - Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics User Group
 - Demographic User Group
 - Economic and Social Research Council
 - Financial and Economic Statistics User Group
 - Fire & Rescue Services User Group
 - Gender Statistics User Group
 - Health Statistics User Group
 - House of Commons Library
 - International Trade Statistics User Group
 - Joseph Rowntree Foundation
 - Labour Market Statistics User Group
 - Local Authority Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA)
 - Market Research Society
 - National Audit Office
 - National Council for Voluntary Organisations

SA(COS)(09)19 - The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum

- National Institute of Economic and Social Research
 - Office for National Statistics
 - Output Area Classification User Group
 - Royal Economic Society
 - Society of Business Economists
 - Sub-national Data User Group
 - Transport Statistics User Group
 - TUC
 - UK Data Archive
 - UK Statistics Authority
 - Water Statistics User Group
6. The Forum is targeting for SUF membership appropriate bodies among the 54 listed in the *Official Statistics Order 2009* (as a result of which they are subject to the *Code of Practice* and its requirement for user engagement).
7. Users have criticised Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other producers for their emphasis on government departments as their main customers. The Forum believes that representation by government departments as users would be of benefit in ensuring greater balance in producer focus. The Forum is seeking to establish this through the Cabinet Office in the first instance.
8. In addition, the following areas have been identified as priorities for recruiting or establishing user groups:
- the digital economy;
 - the environment, particularly relating to the management of natural resources;
 - energy production and use;
 - education, and;
 - housing.

Achievements To Date

Overview

9. The Forum has successfully brought together user groups and organisations involved in the former Statistics User Council and has significantly expanded its membership.
10. A collaborative culture has been developed in which groups work together on developing collective positions on key issues, as illustrated by the adoption of its over-arching priorities and their use in developing collective submissions to official consultations and parliamentary inquiries.
11. The Forum is recognised as representative of the diversity of the user community, and as a source of informed opinion. This is particularly exemplified by the inclusion of the Forum's joint committee with the National Statistician and senior colleagues (StatSUG) within the UK Statistics Authority's organisation chart, and by the repeated invitations for SUF to provide evidence to parliamentary inquiries.

SA(COS)(09)19 - The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum

Responses to Consultations and Parliamentary Inquiries

12. The Forum has coordinated collectively agreed responses to a number of consultations, along with providing evidence to parliamentary committee inquiries, including:

2008 - House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee: Official Statistics
2008 - Ministry of Justice Data Sharing Review
2007 - Office for National Statistics: Work programme 2008-2012
2007 - House of Commons Treasury Select Committee: Counting the Population
2007 - House of Commons Treasury Select Committee: Chancellor's departments
2006 - House of Commons Treasury Select Committee
2006 - HM Treasury: Independence of Statistics
2005 - Statistics Commission: UK datasets

Annual Conferences

13. Four Forum conferences have taken place:

2008 - Transforming Official Statistics to Serve Society
2007 - Statistics on income earnings and wealth. Where do they come from and why do we need them?
2006 - New statistics from administrative and customer files
2005 - Neighbourhood and Regional Statistics

14. The programme for the fifth annual conference is now being developed on a theme of measuring progress. This theme has been particularly chosen for its potential to allow the Forum to engage with users who have not traditionally attended user conferences, and address issues relevant to 'citizen users'.
15. Forum conferences have proven to be effective in attracting a diverse range of users and producers as indicated by the breakdown below. (Nb. based on the sector of the organisation given by delegates when registering).

User group/organisation	12%
Academic institution	9%
Local government	11%
Government agencies	13%
Other public sector	2%
ONS	13%
Other GSS	25%
Business and commerce	7%
Media	2%
Miscellaneous	6%

16. Papers, presentations and proceedings from these events form the basis of the developing web-based library of resources, accessible to all.

Other Conferences and Meetings

17. As well as its annual conferences the Forum has played a key role in facilitating other events at which users can address the issues affecting them, and reinforce and develop their networks (particularly outside of their user group area). As with the annual conferences, papers, presentations and proceedings from these events form the basis of the developing web-based library of resources, accessible to all. Twenty such events have been facilitated:

SA(COS)(09)19 - The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum

- May 2009 Location, Location, Location : Whither Geographical Information? (BURISA annual conference with SUF support)
- May 2009 Beyond 2011: Planning the future for socio-demographic statistics (SUF joint meeting with the ONS)
- March 2009 New developments in Health Information (HSUG with SUF support)
- January 2009 Workshop on priorities for statistics users (SUF)
- July 2008 New health information specialists (HSUG with SUF support)
- July 2008 Regional and local statistics (organised by ARO and ONS on behalf of SUF)
- June 2008 Using output area classification (OAC UG with SUF support)
- May 2008 All Change - How Can We Get Better Population Statistics to Plan Local Services (joint conference of BURISA and SUF)
- January 2008 ONS i-dissemination project (SUF)
- December 2007 Developments in statistical disclosure control (SUF with RSS Census Study Group)
- November 2007 New Health Information Specialists Conference (HSUG with SUF support)
- November 2007 Financial Statistics User Group (FSUG) Conference (with SUF support)
- October 2007 ONS Statistical Priorities and Engagement with the Statistics Board (joint Official Statistics Section and SUF)
- May 2007 Local versus National Information Systems - Who Wins? (BURISA annual conference with SUF support)
- May 2007 Census and statistical geographies: the way forward (joint SUF and Census Study Group)
- April 2007 Exploring the use and value of the ONS output area classification (OAC User Group with SUF support)
- January 2007 Improving access to Government datasets (SUF)
- November 2006 Exploring the use and value of the ONS output area classification (joint SUF and Social Statistics Section, from which the OAC User Group emerged)
- October 2006 Conference on Health Information (HSUG with SUF administrative support)
- April 2006 Statistics for small areas (SUF)

Programme Objectives 2009-11

18. The RSS recognises that recent developments present new challenges for the SUF. The Society is proposing a two-year programme to enable it to be redefined so it can effectively meet these challenges, and ensure that this important user-producer engagement can be sustained thereafter.
19. The proposed programme would result in further expansion of the Forum's communication networks and channels between users and producers, increasing the reach and power of the user voice in official statistics. To facilitate and support this work a comprehensive web-based user engagement hub with a library of resources and internet based discussion and consultation forums will be established.

Engagement

20. The passage of statistical legislation and the recent publication of a new *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* provide new and exciting opportunities for making the user voice heard and taking forward the user agenda. Principle 1 of the *Code* is 'Meeting user needs', under which statistics producers are expected, inter alia, to engage effectively with users; to investigate and document the needs of users of official statistics; and to publish information about users' experiences of statistical services.

SA(COS)(09)19 - The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum

21. In March 2009, the UK Statistics Authority Committee for Official Statistics agreed a specification for the *Strengthening the User Voice* Monitoring Report.
22. At the regular StatSUG joint committee in April 2009, the ONS indicated that its draft user engagement policy would soon be published, to which SUF had facilitated user involvement in the market research.
23. These two developments will further emphasise the requirements of user engagement, and are keenly anticipated by the Forum.

Specific Objectives

- i. maintain SUF as the strategic voice of users of statistics, enabling it to be the central pillar of a new and expanded user architecture, on which all can depend for authoritative and constructive advice;
- ii. draw in to this process more effectively the voices of the academic community, local government, the NHS, and the commercial and voluntary sectors to the extent that each can use official data in the public interest;
- iii. strengthen existing liaison arrangements with the UK Statistics Authority, ONS and wider GSS, including developing effective liaison arrangements with the devolved administrations;
- iv. ensure that the recommendations of the UK Statistics Authority's *Strengthening the User Voice* Monitoring Report and ONS user engagement policy are promptly and effectively implemented;
- v. assess successes and failures of official statistics against the criteria set out in the *Code of Practice* (and other relevant reports and policies), and disseminate this through a high profile annual report;
- vi. establish strategic partnerships with other bodies with shared objectives including the ESRC National Data Strategy; Horizon Scanning Centre (Government Office for Science); Local Government Association; the campaign group, *Straight Statistics*; and the Academy for Social Sciences;
- vii. provide a coherent, collective user response to relevant consultations, and enable individual groups and users to respond in their own right;
- viii. ensure user needs are fulfilled by ONS and GSS work programmes through engagement with the newly established planning groups;
- ix. make user expertise available to the project boards steering the monitoring and assessment work of the UK Statistics Authority;
- x. enable SUF to work with producers to ensure statistical products are readily accessible and understandable to the user community, and;
- xi. for SUF to be the chosen point of user engagement for the UK Statistics Authority and to support their role in guiding the development of Official Statistics.

Representation

24. SUF aims to address the interests of as wide a range of users as possible. The existing structure of individual user groups each covering a particular area of user interest (either sectoral – e.g. crime, health – or cross-cutting – e.g. gender, neighbourhood statistics) with the SUF as an umbrella body, on which each user group is represented with producers of official statistics present as observers, has served users well for many years. However, user groups differ considerably in their resources and level of activity, often depending on the time and effort expended by a few committed individuals.

SA(COS)(09)19 - The Future Direction of the Statistics User Forum

25. SUF recognises that there are users and user needs that are not being represented at present and that creativity is needed to extend the ways in which it operates in order to reach out to them. The Society is seeking to establish a membership package that will directly appeal to professional users, with the potential in the longer term of attracting 'citizen users'.

Specific Objectives

- i. work with the UK Statistics Authority to identify priority gaps in user representation and seek to fill them by continuing to establish new user groups and recruit existing groups/organisations to the SUF; or by encouraging the formation of flexible and scalable user networks (i.e. recognising that one size does not fit all);
- ii. adopt a policy statement for each of the SUF priorities (as identified by the January 2009 workshop) and implement an agreed action plan with measurable success criteria;
- iii. work with user groups to increase their effectiveness, providing event management and administration, and coordinating on-line discussion and consultation forums;
- iv. use the annual conferences, and other events, as a vehicle to engage users who have not traditionally been active within the user community;
- v. develop an SUF membership package that is attractive to individual users, including a means of direct representation of individual users within the Forum, and;
- vi. work with the media and organisations in civil and political society to prototype means of involving the 'citizen user'.

Communications Hub

26. The success of SUF and its Forum has particularly come through the exchange of knowledge and best practice, and through collaboration on addressing priority issues. Future success will depend on strengthening existing relationships and networks, and developing new ones.
27. A web-based communications hub, with appropriate functionality, has been identified as the most effective means of complementing Forum meetings and conferences and ensuring that the widest range of users can be engaged.

Specific Objectives

- i. develop the web-based communications hub as a library of resources and as a communications exchange;
- ii. use events to stimulate networking across the interfaces between practitioner, academic and commercial sector users;
- iii. adopt themes in consultation with users for each annual Statistics User Forum conference which are relevant to a wide range of statistics users, and;
- iv. identify cross-cutting issues and encourage cross-group working, including publication of a regular e-newsletter.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)20

Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report

Purpose

1. The Committee for Official Statistics considered and endorsed the vision, objectives and priorities of the Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) for 2009 and beyond at its October meeting. This paper summarises progress to date towards achieving that vision.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendations

3. The Committee for Official Statistics is invited to:
 - i. note and comment on the progress made to date, and;
 - ii. identify any area it sees as a particular priority for the next stage of the project.

Discussion

4. Paper [SA(COS)(08)06] was presented to the Committee on 13 October 2008. It set out the National Statistician's vision for a self confident and mutually supportive GSS providing high quality statistics, analysis and advice. Particular priority areas were identified as: leading and managing the GSS as a shared professional community; and the production of a government wide statistical plan that serves the public good and meets users' needs. The October paper also set out plans for a structured approach to this work which would see it managed as a project, focusing on a number of specific work streams that would take forward different aspects of the vision.
5. The work streams are listed in **Annex 1**. The original paper presented to the Committee in October is attached at **Annex 2** for completeness.
6. This was a long term vision but, to ensure good progress could be made in the short term, a staged approach was adopted with stage one of the project covering the period October 2008 to July 2009. This timing would enable the current National Statistician to provide an update on progress prior to her departure, and to hand over a solid foundation on which the new National Statistician could build.
7. A GSS Advisory Group was established to take a strategic overview of the project and to act in an advisory capacity. It would also help to identify synergies between different work streams and where appropriate make suggestions for change in relation to:
 - the development of policies;
 - the implementation of proposals, and;
 - their potential impact on the GSS.
8. As the project is now approaching the end of stage one, the project team is currently carrying out an 'end of stage' review, and will shortly present a full report of what has been achieved to date. This report will be shared with this Committee and the GSS Advisory Group, and with members of the GSS. It will also be used to help identify the priorities for the next stage of the project, which will be discussed with the new National Statistician in due course.

SA(COS)(09)20 - Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report

9. Early indications are that the project has made good progress. Some of the highlights to date include the following:
 - i. Statistical Planning - a new approach to Statistical Planning has been approved by Heads of Profession (HoPs) and the Committee for Official Statistics. The UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee has met and agreed terms of reference. Theme Leaders have been appointed and have been tasked with providing a narrative description for their theme;
 - ii. Data Sharing - the first data sharing order was successfully achieved early in 2009. This led to administrative data from the School Census carried out by the Department of Children, Schools and Families being shared with the ONS. As a result we launched the new data sharing guide *Stepping Stones* at the Leaders in Statistics conference in Bristol in April;
 - iii. The National Statistician's Guidance - The UK Statistics Authority published its new Code of Practice in January. Five task forces were set up to produce working guidance for the GSS. These covered Statistical Planning; Quality and Methodology; Confidentiality; Presentation and Dissemination; and Handling of Administrative Data. The drafts have been extensively discussed by HoPs. Guidance on the treatment of administrative data/management information and on the distinction between statistical and research outputs was issued to GSS and Government Social Research HoPs and to Permanent Secretaries at the end of June 2009. The remaining guidance will be approved by the GSS Standards and Policy Committee in July;
 - iv. Methodology, Standards and Quality - In June the prototype Quality, Methods and Harmonisation Tool was launched. This prototype tool will help statistics producers to assess their surveys and outputs. It asks the questions methodologists would ask if they were reviewing the statistics. It is focused on identifying good practice, as well as areas where improvements could be made, and on raising awareness. The intention is for this tool to become widely used across the GSS to help meet the requirements of the 2007 Act, and;
 - v. The Professional Community - We have made good progress with recruitment. Almost twice the number of candidates passed the 2009 Fast Stream recruitment process than were successful in 2008 (19 compared to 10). There has also been several rounds of Statistical Officer recruitment. Three successful conferences have been held: an Assistant Statistician/Statistical Officer conference in December 2008; the Leaders in Statistics conference in April this year; and the GSS Methodological Conference at the end of June 2009.
10. These and other work streams have also paved the way for further developments in future. For example:
 - **International** - the development of training modules to prepare GSS staff for involvement in international liaison and working group meetings, helping to strengthen UK leadership in Europe and its influence over international developments, and;
 - **Statistics in Decision Making** - work across departments and based on Capability Reviews has helped identify and develop case studies of good practice in the use of evidence in decision making, which will be shared across the GSS.

SA(COS)(09)20 - Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report

11. Despite the good progress made, there is still much to do to strengthen further the GSS and its impact and influence. Subject to the findings of the end of stage review and the views of the new National Statistician, priority areas for the next stage of the project may include:
 - development of the first National Statistician's statistical plan;
 - development of a strategy for the identification and development of future statistical leaders;
 - enhanced framework for broader training of GSS staff, and;
 - development and implementation of the international training modules.
12. The views of the Committee on possible priority areas would be welcome.

Caron Walker, National Statistics and International Division (ONS), June 2009

List of Annexes

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Annex 1 | Vision and Project Work Streams |
| Annex 2 | SA(COS)(08)06: Leadership of the GSS |

Annex 1 Vision and Project Work Streams

Extract from a statement by the National Statistician on the role of the Head of the GSS, which appeared in paper SA(COS)(08)06:

'My vision is of a self-aware and confident and mutually supportive GSS network providing a cohesive service, comprising high quality statistics, analysis and advice, to meet the needs of decision makers inside and outside government.'

To realise this vision, seven priority areas were identified and developed into work streams. The seven work streams were subsequently expanded to nine (the Role of Heads of Profession and the National Statistician's Guidance were added after paper SA(COS)(08)06 had been considered by COS). The work streams and their main aims were as follows:

- **The Professional Statistical Community** - to lead and manage the GSS as a shared professional community;
- **Statistical Planning** - to produce a government-wide statistical plan that demonstrably serves the public good, meeting user needs wherever possible;
- **Methodology, Standards and Quality** - to improve the methodology, standards and quality of official statistics, including their consistency, coherence, analysis and commentary;
- **Public Confidence in Official Statistics** - to improve public confidence in official statistics through development of the service, its governance, and improving the accessibility and presentation of statistics;
- **Use of Statistics in Decision Making and Operational Delivery** - to improve the use of statistics in decision making, and operational delivery, alongside other analytical evidence;
- **Data Sharing** - to support all parts of the GSS in exploiting the statistical potential of data held elsewhere in government by making data-sharing a matter of routine;
- **International** - to exert real and lasting influence over international statistical developments in line with agreed GSS perspectives;
- **The Role of Heads of Profession** - to enhance the position, role and influence of statistical Heads of Profession within the UK statistical system, and;
- **The National Statistician's Guidance** - to direct and coordinate the work of the 5 GSS Task Forces set up to deliver drafts of the 'National Statistician's Guidance on Implementing the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice'.

Annex 2 SA(COS)(08)06: Leadership of the GSS

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(08)06

Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS

Purpose

1. The Committee for Official Statistics considered the vision, objectives and priorities of the Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) for 2008 and beyond at its July meeting [SA(COS)(08)03]. This paper presents revised proposals in light of discussion at that meeting (Annexes A and B), together with a brief description of a project to oversee delivery (paragraphs 4 to 8 below).

Timing

2. Further discussion and endorsement at this second meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics will inform subsequent Committee business, and will enable the Head of the GSS to make timely progress.

Recommendation

3. The Committee is invited to:
 - i. endorse the revised vision, objectives, and priorities;
 - ii. commission, as it sees fit, any further work to describe the implications for members of the GSS in departments and the devolved administrations, and any barriers to implementation;
 - iii. considers ways in which the Authority might itself provide support.

Discussion

4. Seven priority strands of work (Annex A) have been identified for delivering the National Statistician's vision for the GSS. These strands have been set out in further detail (Annex B), by the relevant ONS subject matter experts. This includes the high level approach for delivery, plus the position on current progress of work. A project is being initiated to oversee delivery of these strands led by Caron Walker, Deputy Director responsible for the National Statistics and International Division (NSID) of ONS. Further information about the project can be made available.
5. Each strand will be formally defined and managed by a workstream manager, from initiation through to closure, via a workstream definition document. This will build on the current high level approach (Annex B), to ensure the following elements are defined and agreed in line with good practice project management:
 - i. explicit objectives including scope inclusions and exclusions, scope constraints and scope dependencies;
 - ii. measurable success criteria e.g. how will we know that all official statistics meet known user and quality needs and represent value for money?
 - iii. clear ownership, organisation and governance arrangements to support collaboration across ONS and the GSS;
 - iv. a plan for what is needed to deliver the scope, and who needs to be involved, from doing the work, through consultation and quality review, to final sign off;
 - v. a plan for identifying and managing risks, assumptions, issues, dependencies, and;
 - vi. regular, structured reporting processes.

SA(COS)(09)20 - Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report

6. Next step: Workstream definitions are being prepared during October as a foundation for consultation and engagement.
7. A project manager has been assigned to the project, who will work to Office for Government Commerce (OGC) standards and guidelines. In addition to the workstreams, this approach will provide:
 - i. a joined up plan where the synergies between workstreams are known and exploited, both in terms of scheduling, and prioritisation;
 - ii. an overall communications strategy and plan that seeks to overcome barriers, and supports a collaborative GSS approach;
 - iii. a single reporting, change control and escalation process for all workstreams, and;
 - iv. assurance that realistic plans are communicated for what is to be done, when, and by who; assurance that regular, accurate reports are delivered back to the Committee for Official Statistics on what has or has not been achieved.
8. Next step: A short Project Initiation Document (PID) will be prepared, including the plans and processes described above.

Background

9. The complementary roles of National Statistician, Chief Executive of the ONS and Head of the GSS are undertaken by one person. The former two roles are addressed in the Statistics Act, and this is therefore a timely opportunity to refresh the role of the Head of the GSS in the context of efforts to 'revitalise' the Service.
10. In the past, the absence of statutory authority over statistical activities in government departments and agencies has made it difficult for successive National Statisticians to influence the governance of statistics or statistical standards outside their own Offices. At the same time, a range of organisational and managerial issues* have forced them to focus on the operation of their own Office, arguably to the detriment of the wider statistical service.
11. While the Statistics Authority has the remit to "promote and safeguard the production and publication of statistics that serve the public good", the Head of the GSS has an important complementary role to play in advising the Authority and co-ordinating the response of all producers of official statistics to the Authority's requirements and guidance.
12. Decentralised statistical systems have real advantages over more centralised ones in providing a responsive and policy-relevant service. But we all recognise that it is not as easy for the decentralised service within UK Government to promulgate and enforce consistent standards and plan on behalf of the wider user community. As the Head of the GSS I want to lead work to build on the strengths, to tackle the challenges facing the UK Government's statistical system and strengthen the relationship on statistical matters between the four administrations in the UK. The following statement summarises the role that I intend to play.

Karen Dunnell, National Statistician
October 2008

SA(COS)(09)20 - Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report

* (Successive National Statisticians have dealt with the Pickford Review (1989), the merger of Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the Office for Population, Census and Surveys (OPCS) into ONS (1996), the launch of the original National Statistics system (2000), and the introduction of statistical legislation in the form of the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) and supporting Statutory Instruments).

List of Annexes

- Annex A** **Statement by the National Statistician on the Role of the Head of the GSS**
- Annex B** **Leadership of the GSS, Objectives and Priorities**

Annex A Statement by the National Statistician on the Role of the Head of the GSS

The Government Statistical Service comprises all those people and resources who contribute to the provision of official statistics in the UK and adhere to the National Statistician's Code of Conduct.

My vision is of a self-aware and confident and mutually supportive GSS network providing a cohesive service, comprising high quality statistics, analysis and advice, to meet the needs of decision makers inside and outside government. In order to realise this vision, my priorities are:

Leadership and management

- a. to lead and manage the GSS as a shared professional community;
- b. to produce a government-wide statistical plan that demonstrably serves the public good meeting users needs wherever possible;

Improvement

- c. to improve the methods, standards and quality of official statistics, including their consistency, coherence, analysis and commentary;
- d. to improve public confidence in official statistics through development of the service, its governance and improving accessibility to, and presentation of statistics;
- e. to improve the use of statistics and statistical analysis in decision making, alongside other analytical evidence;
- f. to support all parts of the GSS in exploiting the statistical potential of data held elsewhere in government by making data-sharing a matter of routine, and;
- g. to exert real and lasting influence over international statistical developments in line with agreed GSS perspectives.

There is synergy between a number of these priorities, and clearly they will all require sustained effort if they are to be realised - not least to overcome the effects of inertia, as well as structural barriers. I shall address these priorities by:

- chairing the GSS committees that provide leadership to the service and develop statistical policy;
- playing an advocacy role with opinion formers, representatives of external users, Heads of other Analytical Groups, Permanent Secretaries and Analytical Champions;
- reinforcing the role of HOPs in their employing organisations, supporting them on professional matters, and raising common/strategic issues at the highest levels of government;
- developing and promulgating standards and guidance across the full range of producers of official statistics, and supporting their implementation – in relation to user engagement, communication of statistics, access, dissemination and the quality of the statistics etc – consistent with the Authority's Code of Practice;
- co-ordinating recruitment and training, the sharing of specialist expertise, the development of statistical leadership, and international engagement across the GSS, and;
- strengthening and focusing the support to the GSS from a dedicated ONS team.

Annex B Leadership of the GSS Objectives and Priorities

Leadership of the GSS – The Professional Statistical Community

Objective

To lead and manage the GSS as a shared professional community

What success will look like

1. Sufficient numbers of effective and developed staff of all grades in place throughout the GSS – both Professional Statisticians and the wider GSS;
2. Statisticians developing their skills and competences in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of official statistics and to maximise their potential;
3. Future statistical leaders are identified and developed;
4. Statisticians are easily able to move throughout the GSS in order to develop their careers and to ensure the spread of skills and knowledge throughout the community;
5. Statisticians will have frequent opportunities to attend events in order to network with each other and other members of the analytical community, thus increasing their knowledge and improve their skills;
6. The Head of the GSS and her support staff will regularly consult with, and take into account the views of, other government departments;
7. GSS members will understand and strive for an agreed common purpose and collaborate effectively with each other and other analysts, and;
8. The GSS is recognised across government and beyond for its professional standards and contribution to public policy making.

Current position

1. The areas above are those identified in a paper produced for the Independence Professional Matters Steering Committee as necessary for the strategic management of the professional cadre of the GSS;
2. The GSS Human Resources Committee operates an annual work programme and is working towards developing areas 1 – 6 above, and;
3. The 2007 Ramsden Review of Professional Support Units recommended that the Statisticians in Government Team (SiGT) should be strengthened and employ a more strategic approach in developing the GSS. The Review recommended that the team should be headed by a more senior member of staff than at present in order to effect change across government. There was also a recommendation that the team be more outward facing, following the best practice of other units.

Deliverables/timescales/owners

1. Report on GSS HRC progress presented to HoPs each year and reported in GSS Annual Report;
2. Work agreed, developed and monitored by GSS HRC, which meets up to 6 times a year and comprises representatives from a number of government departments. It is chaired by John Custance of Defra and supported by staff in SiGT, and;
3. Greater linkage with issues in ONS is required. Issues concerning statisticians are developed separately in ONS and GSS and further co-operation between the two is required. This should be co-ordinated by a Director on behalf of Karen.

SA(COS)(09)20 - Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report

Barriers

1. Different individuals and departments within the community have conflicting views about issues because of different cultures and situations. This may impact on the ability to agree policies;
2. Departments within the GSS may not comply with centrally agreed policies if they feel that it is not in their interests to do so or if the policies are not appropriate for their needs, and;
3. Head of GSS needs to engage with stakeholders.

Views/positions of other stakeholders

1. Principal stakeholders are Heads of Profession. Their views may vary, especially those from the devolved administrations or the NHS Information Centre.

Resource implications

1. Whilst the GSS HRC work programme is addressing many of the recommendations of the Independence Professional Matters Steering Committee it is likely that additional resources will be required in order to deliver the proposals. In addition, further resources will be required to implement the recommendations of the 2007 Ramsden Review. Provisional estimates are that 3 additional posts are required in SiGT (1 x G6, 1 x G7, 1 x AO).

Leadership of the GSS – Statistical Plans

Objective

To produce a government-wide statistical plan that demonstrably serves the 'public good', meeting user needs wherever possible.

What success will look like

1. regular evaluation and review of procedures that ensure plans remains relevant;
2. an approach to planning that enjoys the trust and confidence of its stakeholders, which will in turn lend legitimacy to the plans, decisions and direction of the statistical service;
3. regular and open engagement with all stakeholders at the right time to be of most influence (e.g. CSR), to provide the information necessary to determine user needs, both short-term and long-term, and;
4. effective prioritisation processes.

Current Position

1. The National Statistics planning process is characterised by the following:
 - i. a lack of strategic direction;
 - ii. the National Statistician having no authority to direct departmental resources other than for her own;
 - iii. it has proved virtually impossible to produce coherent plans across the disparate government departments;
 - iv. Devolved administrations have and need their own planning and governance arrangements;
 - v. Confusion between planning within UK Government and inter administration issues resulting in neither set of issues being planned effectively, and;
 - vi. Theme Working Groups have not played the role that had been expected, in this regard.
2. This has contributed to some high profile instances where we have 'failed' our stakeholders. Recent examples include:
 - i. the inability of producers of migration statistics to meet the needs of policy makers, resulting in the National Statistician setting up a special task force, and;
 - ii. the unannounced cuts by ONS to the sample size of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, which resulted in an outcry amongst users.

Deliverables/Timescales/Owners

1. New governance and planning arrangements for the Government Statistical Service (GSS). Senior cross-government committees will be introduced, chaired by the National Statistician, to provide strategic direction to statistical planning activity, and to influence departmental planning. These committees will be introduced during 2008/09;
2. A new top level inter administration committee to provide strategic direction on inter administration issues;
3. New guidance on best practice to ensure adequate levels of user engagement across the GSS. To be introduced across the GSS during 2009/10;

SA(COS)(09)20 - Leadership and Revitalisation of the GSS - Progress Report

4. Complementary statistics plans aimed at providing:
 - i. A response to the challenges posed by the UK Statistics Authority;
 - ii. a high-level strategic plan for the UK statistics system, published every 3 - 5 years which will focus on cross-cutting issues;
 - iii. annual statistics plans for each administration and for inter administration issues focusing upon short-term priorities, innovations and developments. New planning arrangements will be developed during 2008/09 with a view to delivering coherent annual statistics plans for the period 2009/10, and;
 - iv. Departmental and Thematic plans within UK Government for 2009.
5. An approach to accounting across the GSS that will help us identify statistical service costs and thus prioritise our work – 2008-09;
6. Develop stakeholder satisfaction survey/response mechanisms - 2009;
7. Develop some metrics (2009) to determine the success or otherwise of the other key objectives:
 - i. anticipate and plan for the major challenges to be faced;
 - ii. provide value for money;
 - iii. produce relevant and trusted statistics;
 - iv. increase the influence of statistics in decision making, and;
 - v. provide effective feedback mechanisms for stakeholders.

All deliverables are the responsibility of NSID, accountable to the National Statistician and HOPs/Chiefs other than issues within devolved administrations.

Barriers

1. the decentralised nature of the UK statistics system, in which HoPs serve two masters - policy colleagues operationally, and the National Statistician professionally;
2. a weak GSS brand throughout government, with statisticians have little influence within their departments, and the National Statistician's influence with fellow Permanent Secretaries being limited, and;
3. the distance between ONS and policy colleagues.

Views/Positions of other stakeholders

1. UK Government users want to see evidence of a priority setting process based on sound financial decisions - particularly the Bank of England and HMT – and also want their needs to be given highest priority;
2. non-Government users have expressed for some time their view of the need for a more transparent process, where their views expressed are considered and discussed, even if not acted upon, and;
3. The Statistics Authority has expressed a need to improve stakeholder engagement so there is a need for us to respond.

Resource implications

The resource implications for improved planning processes are negligible. This is all about working smarter with the resources currently at our disposal.

Leadership of the GSS – Methodology, Standards & Quality

Objective

To improve the methodology, standards and quality of official statistics, including their consistency, coherence, analysis and commentary.

What success will look like:

1. All official statistics to meet known user needs, at an identified level of quality required for their purposes, and represent value for money;
2. Programme of high level quality assurance by self assessment of methodology, standards including classifications and harmonised definitions and quality;
3. Programme of in-depth quality assurance of methodology, standards and quality;
4. Monitoring of (2) and (3) to identify and disseminate best practice;
5. Maintenance, extension and promotion of methodological best practice and standards for official statistics;
6. All official statistics outputs to have published quality output measures, and;
7. All official statistics processes and outputs to have associated documentation.

Current position

1. The status is not known on the prevalence of known user needs knowledge across the GSS;
2. A GSS self assessment checklist (GSSSAC) has been previously developed and piloted. With some modification it could be used as a tool for high level quality assurance by self assessment of methodology, standards and quality;
3. National Statistics Quality Reviews were previously put on hold. A programme of in-depth quality assurance now needs to be initiated. The approach could focus on problems areas identified by GSSSAC;
4. There has been little central monitoring and collation of previous reviews especially in relation to methodology, standards and quality;
5. Methodological best practice and standards are currently disseminated via the web;
6. There are no central records about the production and dissemination of quality output measures across the GSS, and;
7. There are no central records about the prevalence of process and output documentation across the GSS.

Deliverables/timescales/owners

1. Initiation of high level quality assurance by self assessment using GSSSAC. GSSSAC could include self assessment of known user needs, statistical methods and processes, standards, compliance with the code of practice, documentation, quality measures, methods of analysis, statistical commentary and possibly burden costs. The Quality Centre (ONS) could initiate, oversee, monitor, collate, and disseminate best practice. To begin in 2008;
2. Further work is required in defining quality assurance, developing a programme of in-depth quality assurance of methodology, standards and quality, and collating official statistics information on the prevalence of process and output documentation, and;
3. Government departments and devolved administrations to produce and publish quality output measures as defined in the GSS Quality Guidelines.

Barriers

1. GSS commitment and competing priorities particularly in the face of weak user demand in some areas;
2. Staff resources;
3. Delays in collating evidence to identify and disseminate best practice and lack of central expertise, and;
4. Failure to identify what best practice is, particularly where there are practical limitations to what can be achieved.

Views/positions of other stakeholders

1. The UK Statistics Authority is likely to view the above proposals positively as they align with their own objectives. They may ask for evidence of reviews covering methodology, standards and quality of official statistics during designation assessments, and;
2. Other stakeholders are likely to view high level self assessment positively as a key activity in preparation for designation reviews. They may regard the in-depth quality assurance as an unnecessary overhead.

Resource implications

This has resource implications for all producers of statistical outputs but work aligns with preparation for designation assessments and the objectives of the UK Statistics Authority (to promote and safeguard (a) the quality of official statistics, (b) good practice in relation to official statistics).

ONS has recently created a GSS Methodology Consultancy Service to support the GSS in improving methodology, standards and quality.

There are also significant resources implications for the Quality Centre in ONS.

Leadership of the GSS – Public Confidence in Official Statistics

Objective

To improve public confidence in official statistics through development of the service, its governance, and improving the accessibility and presentation of statistics

What success will look like

1. improvements in the key indicators derived from the Omnibus PCOS module and Scottish Social Attitudes Survey- %s believing that our figures are accurate, %s believing that figures are compiled without political interference, and overall assessment of the range of statistical series asked about;
2. improvements in the assessments of official statistics and the quality of the service, provided by a panel of non-governmental opinion formers;
3. improvements in the assessments of official statistics and the quality of the service, provided by government departments in their SLA reports;
4. improvements in the proportion of broadly positive press coverage, and;
5. a fully operational, highly-functional Publication Hub, and new style press conferences – and external recognition of this separation of statistical releases from policy comment, plus parallel arrangements in devolved administrations.

Current position

1. Public confidence in official statistics is low, and the latest module shows results almost identical to those in 2004. Key aggregates (2008) are:
 - a. % believing that figures are compiled without political interference (20%), and;
 - b. % believing that official statistics are generally accurate (26%).
2. The views of opinion formers were explored by MORI on behalf of the Statistics Commission on 2004. Whilst the results were not quantitative, they do lend themselves to a summary assessment, and were a key input to the PCOS strategy. Follow up activity could include establishing a panel of opinion formers, which would help explore changes over time;
3. Press coverage is not currently monitored. But by doing so, and classifying references as positive/neutral/critical, baselines could be established. This would also help identify the views expressed in specific media outlets, and views by topic, and;
4. Although a cross-GSS group developed a PCOS strategy in 2006 – founded on improved communication, better engagement with stakeholders, improved accessibility, quality improvement – it has not been systematically implemented in UK Government. Despite the changes in the organisation of statistics since 2006, the key elements of the strategy still appear to be relevant. It needs to be driven forward by Karen and on her behalf.

Deliverables / timescales / owners

1. An annual report to the Authority, summarising the latest information gleaned by the above means, and progress in implementing the strategy itself;
2. The Authority, and in the first instance, the Official Statistics committee, would take ownership of the results, and would provide strategic guidance on priorities;
3. A Publication Hub fully operational by 2009, and;
4. The whole process should be coordinated by the Director of NSPG, on behalf of Karen. The different strands in the PCOS strategy need to be owned by the relevant Deputy Director, and this work should feature in their Performance Agreement.

Barriers

1. This is a challenging objective, and it has to be recognised that external events can negatively influence the public's views of official statistics. Nevertheless, the Head of the GSS cannot duck the challenge;
2. Establishing a panel of opinion formers, and;
3. Adversarial political system and critical media.

Views / positions of other stakeholders

1. The Authority is likely to view the above proposals positively, as they are consistent with the Authority's own objectives, and;
2. Other stakeholders, inside and outside government, are likely to welcome the opportunity to pipe their views directly to producers.

Resource implications

Little additional resource is required. The activities described above should be implemented at a working level by Stakeholder Engagement Branch as part of its new remit in relation to the ONS Stakeholder Engagement strategy (though recognising that this work on Karen's behalf would have a GSS-wide focus).

Running the PCOS module in alternative years would cost, on average, about £15k per annum.

Leadership of the GSS – use of statistics in decision making and operational delivery

Objective

To improve the use of statistics in decision making, and operational delivery, alongside other analytical evidence.

What success will look like

1. That big decisions taken by key stakeholders are guided by official statistics;
2. That policy makers will routinely use evidence and analytical expertise and techniques throughout the policy cycle;
3. That all policy departments will appoint a senior analyst or analytical champion on departmental boards;
4. That civil service businesses will routinely use evidence and analytical expertise when evaluating the effectiveness of their operational delivery;
5. That all analytical professions will engage with stakeholders to ensure clear messages reach the decision makers, and;
6. That decision makers proactively seek enhancements in the evidence base and make such demands of the GSS.

Current position

1. Varying levels of knowledge of the uses made of statistics across the broad range of stakeholders – this makes it difficult to assess impact;
2. The capability reviews have shown that there is a mixed position in departments. Out of 17 departments assessed 3 have urgent development needs in the category 'basing choices on evidence' and 3 have development needs. 11 have been assessed as strong or well placed;
3. Some departments have appointed or are planning to appoint cross disciplinary heads of analysis;
4. Support for the initiative from the Head of the Civil Service;
5. Analysis and Use of Evidence is one of the core Professional Skills for Government skills required of all civil servants of Grade 7 and above. This requires staff to recognise the need for using evidence when devising policy or managing operational delivery and understanding that evidence;
6. Heads of all Professions are currently considering the use of greater professional evidence, and;
7. In Scotland a cross disciplinary heads of analysis structure has existed for some time.

Deliverables/timescales/owners

1. Improved methods of engagement with all stakeholders in place by 2009;
2. The heads of the analytical professions, including the National Statistician, are now meeting regularly to discuss how these issues should be tackled and propose ways forward. GSS HoPs should discuss the forward agenda of the Heads of Analytical Profession meetings;
3. The professional analytical support teams also meet regularly in order to support the Heads of Analysis;
4. Annual conference developed for analytical heads of professions and analytical champions;
5. Report produced on 2007 survey of analysts, and;
6. Areas to be developed include improving the use of evidence in departments, improving the allocation of analytic resources and joining up across professions.

Barriers

1. Lack of understanding of stakeholder needs;
2. Permanent Secretaries need to be convinced of the importance of this work and appoint board level analysts or analytical champions;
3. Some confusion in departments about the roles of different analysts;
4. No additional resources in analytical support teams to develop this work;
5. Policy advisors may not want evidence to get in the way of a good policy, and;
6. It is frequently the case that policy makers and/or analysts do not fully understand the full potential of the analytical contribution and processes to identify this are imperfect. So the contribution is often well short of what it might be.

Views/positions of other stakeholders

1. All analysts are generally supportive of the initiative. The trick will be to persuade policy makers and other non analysts of its importance. Better processes for collaboration will be needed.

Resource implications

1. At present this work is being done within existing resources by staff in the existing analytical support teams. However because of the size of SiGT most of the work is carried out by staff in the other teams. Additional staff resources at, say, G6 level, would enable the statistician community to have more influence on the agenda.

Leadership of the GSS – Data Sharing

Objective

To support all parts of the GSS in exploiting the statistical potential of data held elsewhere in government by making data-sharing a matter of routine.

What success will look like

1. Full exploitation of the existing legal and policy framework for sharing data for statistics;
2. Where the existing legal framework is found to be inadequate, an orderly flow of secondary legislation successfully laid before Parliament to allow data sharing between ONS and public authorities;
3. Culture of data sharing for statistical purposes embraced by Ministers and GSS, expressed through a common policy;
4. Ethical oversight of data sharing is in place and is contributing to public confidence in data sharing for statistics, and;
5. Statistics Authority (Annual) Report(s) able to reflect the above and that, in turn, is commended by Parliamentary Committees to whom it reports.

Current position

1. List of strategic priorities developed by GSS, approved by Statistics Authority and presented to Minister for the Cabinet Office;
2. Political interest in improving migration & population statistics has created momentum amongst relevant Departments (eg DWP, HMRC, DCSF);
3. Reducing administrative burden on businesses by sharing of HMRC data on a longer timescale but also capable of arousing Ministerial interest;
4. Other more routine data sharing (eg business data from ONS to DETINI and BoE, JUVOS data from DWP to ONS) at different stages of development, and;
5. Governance of data sharing and confidentiality under review.

Deliverables/timescales/owners

1. Annual Report by GSS to Statistics Authority and thereafter to Parliament(s);
2. High level Steering Group now established and chaired by Director of NSPG. Other key members include Director of Sources and Director of Demography and Regional Statistics. Will fit into other plans for governance of GSS and Statistics Policy Committee, and;
3. Preparation of proposals to be jointly owned by Deputy Directors of National Statistics & International Division and of Administrative Sources & Integration Division.

Barriers

1. High profile privacy and data security concerns;
2. Political support is essential to help to foster a culture across government that data sharing for statistical purposes is a good thing;
3. Head of GSS needs to respond to emerging statistical and analytical needs by encouraging early consideration of data sharing;
4. Need to be wary of Govt Departments being unwilling to cooperate unless data sharing is two-way, and;
5. Head of the GSS to ensure a co-operative approach to data sharing that serves the wider public good is not subsumed by competing departmental pressures and priorities.

View/positions of other stakeholders

1. Statistics Authority support essential and expected to be forthcoming, and;
2. Principal other stakeholders are Govt Departments across administrations (and their Ministers) who vary in attitude to data sharing. Early wins with key Departments like DWP and HMRC may create an improved climate.

Resource implications

1. No present need for additional resources for strategic activity in relation to data sharing as present level of activity able to be supported by NSID/ASID;
2. Operational aspects would bring resource implications in terms of determining IT requirements, security standards, appropriate training etc, and;
3. A new political imperative (on a similar scale to improving population & migration statistics) would place a severe strain on those resources.

Leadership of the GSS - International

Objective

To exert real and lasting influence over international statistical developments in line with agreed GSS perspectives

What success will look like

1. Official membership of influential European and international statistical organisations/bureaux - United Nations Statistical Committee (UNSC), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Committee on Statistics (C/STAT), European Partnership Group (PG), Eurostat Statistical Programme Committee (SPC), and Director Generals of Institutes of National Statistics (DGINS);
2. Active participation in these organisations (plus others including International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Labour Organisation (ILO), and European Council) to provide a coordinated and strategic GSS input. This is achieved by engaging with stakeholders, promoting cooperation, ensuring effective contributions (including work on definitions, methodology and legislation), challenging the status quo, and shaping the future direction of international statistical policy;
3. Enabling an effective GSS contribution to statistical capacity building programmes in developing countries;
4. Championing the use of "international best practice" across the GSS, including the implementation of the European Statistical Code of Practice and its underlying principles;
5. Promoting the sharing of international information and experience across the GSS and encouraging the healthy exchange of GSS staff with international counterparts;
6. Recognising, understanding and solving statistical pressures and conflicts which arise between national, European, and global statistical systems, and;
7. The UK Statistical System enjoying a strong reputation internationally for its expertise, pro-activity and influence.

Current position

1. The National Statistician is an official member of UNSC bureau, OECD C/STAT, European PG, Eurostat SPC, and DGINS;
2. The National Statistician actively participates - but with greater resources, more emphasis and priority could be given to challenging current thinking and influencing development in line with GSS wants and needs;
3. Some coordination of Commonwealth Statistical Conference takes place (re travel fund) and we have some interaction with DFID. ONS has no financial commitment to engage in statistical capacity building, and recent headcount/resource pressures have minimised commitments to get involved. DFID are considering how to call upon ONS expertise more effectively;
4. Some activity through Peer Review process and via GSS International Committee. More could be done here – possibly in the context of Assessment;
5. Improved coordination through GSS International Committee and some isolated examples of international exchange. More could be done here, and;
6. The National Statistician is aware of tensions, mainly through active participation in high-level international events. Issues are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Deliverables/timescales/owners

1. UNSC meets for one week every February in New York. OECD C/STAT meets for two days every June alternating between Paris and Geneva. European PG currently meets in Voorburg (the location of the Chair) around four times a year. SPC also meets around four times year, usually in Luxembourg. DGINS is hosted annually by National Statistical Institutes across the EU. Participation at these events usually involves the National Statistician, the DfID HOP, and the Director of NSID. Additionally, appropriate GSS representation is sought for DGINS. International Relations Branch coordinates all briefing and logistics;
2. As above;
3. Deliverables: Guidance on how GSS can improve its statistical capacity building programmes. Timescales: TBC. Owners: National Statistician, HOPs and NSPG;
4. Deliverables: High level of compliance with ESCOP across GSS through good performance at Peer Review, and by means of Assessment. Timescales: TBC. Owners: National Statistician, HOPs and NSPG;
5. Deliverables: More exchange of staff across GSS staff internationally (and clear strategy for this). Continuing and strengthening GSS International Committee. Timescales: TBC. Owners: National Statistician, HOPs and NSPG (with some HR involvement), and;
6. Deliverables: Strategies to handle events and problems that arise. Timescales: n/a. Owners: National Statistician, HOPs and NSPG.

Barriers

1. Ensuring continuity of membership when National Statistician changes;
2. National work pressures preventing honouring of international commitments;
- 3, 5 Time. Financial commitment. Resource levels, and;
- 4, 6. No significant barriers.

Views/positions of other stakeholders

1. Other NSIs welcome UK's membership of, and active participation in, international statistical organisations. The UK statistical system is regarded as unusual (and of interest) in the extent of its decentralisation and devolution, and is well regarded for its commitment to quality, methodological development and (since the Statistics Act) its innovative governance, and;
2. DFID would welcome more engagement with GSS.

Resource implications

1. Travel and subsistence. Not significant;
2. As above;
3. Likely to generate net income but needs to be underwritten. Diversion of resources from national to international activity can be beneficial for staff morale, retention and development but - in an environment where there is little spare national capacity - may cause short-term deterioration to national work programmes;
4. Not significant;
5. Greater exchange of staff will incur up front costs, and;
6. Not significant.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)21

***Criteria for removal of National Statistics designation
and changes to the sequence for Assessment Reports***

Purpose

1. This paper covers two separate points of clarification in relation to the production of Assessment Reports.

Timing

2. Pressing. A decision on the criteria for the removal of National Statistics designation is required so as to enable consistency of approach in future Assessments. A separate decision on changes to the sequence for the production and publication of Assessment Reports in light of recent experience is also required.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to agree the proposed criteria for removal of National Statistics designation and changes to the sequence for the production of Assessment reports.

Discussion

Criteria for removal of National Statistics designation

4. The first three Assessment Reports, now published, all offer what might be called 'conditional designation' as National Statistics. That is, the statistics are allowed to carry the National Statistics designation but certain actions to ensure closer compliance with the *Code of Practice* are required by a specified date. The reports explain that this is to avoid confusion. Strictly speaking we have judged those statistics to be below the standard of the *Code* but not by such a degree to justify the immediate removal of the National Statistics designation.
5. This raises the question of under what circumstances the Authority would decide to remove the National Statistics designation with immediate effect. The *Act* says:

"If .. the Board determines that the Code continues to be complied with in relation to any statistics already designated as National Statistics ... it must confirm their designation as National Statistics; but otherwise it must cancel their designation."

6. Thus, the *Act* assumes that cancellation of the National Statistics designation is a proper outcome of an Assessment Report.
7. Where an Assessment Report does remove the National Statistics designation, it will be necessary to state reasons why a 'conditional designation' was not considered appropriate. The Assessment Team has therefore drafted the attached short statement to be included on the website (**Annex A**).

SA(COS)(09)21 - Criteria for de-designation and changes to Assessment Report sequence

8. It sets out criteria against which the case for removal of the National Statistics designation would be considered. We would further propose that in any case where the decision is taken to remove the designation, the Assessment Report should refer directly to these criteria, explaining how they had been interpreted in relation to the specific set of statistics. The 'Requirements for designation' section should then set out clearly the remedial action that would allow the National Statistics designation to be restored; these should map directly to the criteria for removal of the designation.
9. Departments have made clear to us that they will regard the removal of the National Statistics designation as a serious matter and they are thus likely to challenge any such decision rather than focus on the improvement actions. Bearing this in mind and also that the Authority's influence over statistics is reduced if we remove the National Statistics designation, we may prefer to keep statistics in the National Statistics fold if we reasonably can. However, we need to be prepared to follow through on the removal of the designation where that is warranted.
10. In passing, we note that there may be instances when we assess a non-National Statistic against the *Code*, as required by section 12 of the *Act*, and we need to decide whether to recommend 'conditional' designation, or whether we think we should decline to designate them as National Statistics. We would be influenced by the second and third criteria in Annex A.

Sequence for producing Assessment Reports

11. In the light of experience with the first few Assessment Reports, some amendments are proposed to the sequence for assessment which is published on the website. The revised version is attached at **Annex B**.
12. The main changes are to remove the first few steps which were about drawing up a programme rather than individual assessments and to bring forward consultation with the producer department and National Statistician to the step before consideration by the Assessment Committee. Otherwise the changes are minor drafting points. It is important that the Sequence document is kept up to date as it is consulted by producer bodies during the production of reports.

Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment, July 2009

List of Annexes

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Annex A | Draft Statement for Authority website - Criteria for the cancellation of the National Statistics designation |
| Annex B | Sequence for the production and approval of Assessment Reports |

Annex A Draft Statement for Authority website - Criteria for the cancellation of the National Statistics designation

Section 14 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* states that:

“If .. the Board determines that the Code continues to be complied with in relation to any statistics already designated as National Statistics... it must confirm their designation as National Statistics; but otherwise it must cancel their designation.”

While the Statistics Authority will consider each case on its merits, it will give particular weight to three grounds for removal of the National Statistics designation:

- not adequately addressing an earlier recommendation made by the Statistics Authority, or made by another authoritative body where the Statistics Authority endorses that earlier recommendation;
- non-compliance with the requirements of the *Code of Practice* that relate to Impartiality and objectivity (Principle 2) and Integrity (Principle 3) where remedial action seems likely to take more than a few months to complete, and;
- non-compliance with other requirements of the *Code* such that this has a substantive impact on the published statistical outputs and remedial action seems likely to take more than a few months.

In any case where the National Statistics designation is removed, the Assessment Report will set out steps that, when completed, will result in the restoration of the National Statistics designation without a further Assessment being conducted.

Annex B Sequence for the production and approval of Assessment Reports

These steps are the normal sequence for individual assessments. In some circumstances steps may be skipped or combined where this is acceptable to the producer body.

1. Following consideration by the Authority Board, the Assessment Team publishes the Assessment schedule on the website[<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/current-assessments/index.html>], writes to statistical Heads of Profession (the Assessment Specification Letter), and seeks information from them about users and other stakeholders;
2. The Assessment Team that will write the report arranges a meeting with the Head of Profession and staff to ensure understanding of the process and of the template for written evidence;
3. The Assessment Team writes to selected users, including a link to the user questionnaire;
4. The Assessment Team publishes a web note inviting comments on the set of statistics to be assessed;
5. The Written Evidence for Assessment (WEfA) arrives from the producer body;
6. Questionnaires, and any other comments, are received from users. In some circumstances the assessment team leader may arrange a meeting with one or more users to better understand their perspectives;
7. The Assessment Team produces a summary of the issues raised by users;
8. The Assessment Team reads the evidence and prepares a first draft compliance chart against each of the 74 requirements of the Code. (The compliance chart is a working document, not part of the report);
9. The Assessment Team drafts Section 2, the Summary of findings of the Assessment Report;
10. A quality assurance meeting takes place involving the Assessment team leader, and specified senior managers. The aim of this is to challenge and probe the draft Summary in the light of the evidence provided and then formally agree the Summary as the Assessment Team's initial assessment. A question schedule for bilateral discussion between the Assessment Team and the producer body will also be agreed;
11. Face to face discussion, as necessary, of the agreed points (essentially the draft summary and any points on which the evidence was deficient) between the Assessment Team and the producer body;
12. A brief note of this meeting is prepared and agreed;
13. The summary is then revised as necessary, the remaining parts drafted, and the draft Assessment Report is made available to the National Statistician and the producer body to offer written comment. (Generally the producer body will be given at least five working days to comment);
14. The same version of the Report is presented to the Assessment Committee, along with any written comments provided by the producer body or the National Statistician. This material will normally be considered at one of the regular meetings of the Committee but may be taken in correspondence if timing necessitates that, and;
15. The Report is then revised as agreed by the Assessment Committee and submitted to the full Authority Board. The Authority Board will then either approve it for publication or ask for further work.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

SA(COS)(09)22

***Committee Business in 2008/09
and Forward Look***

Purpose

1. This paper presents a summary of the main issues considered by the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) in its inaugural year, together with an update on the latest position. The paper also provides a suggested list of topics that the Committee may wish to consider over the coming year.

Recommendation

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
 - consider the range of issues brought for its consideration during the preceding year and note progress made, and;
 - consider and comment on the list of suggested areas for future committee business (paragraph 10).

Discussion

3. The Committee for Official Statistics first convened under the Chair of Professor Adrian Smith in July 2008 and met again under the Chair of Sir Michael Scholar in September of that year. Following the appointment of Professor Sir Roger Jowell to the Authority, the Committee has so far met four times in 2009, in January, March, May and July.
4. The topics considered by the committee may be grouped into five broad areas:
 - i. leadership and revitalisation of the GSS, including statistical planning across the GSS;
 - ii. the scope of official statistics in relation to both producers and products;
 - iii. the user perspective;
 - iv. monitoring and assessment, and;
 - v. other specific statistical topics.
5. The table at **Annex A** summarises all the main papers considered by COS, when they were considered and progress made since they were considered.
6. In addition, the Committee has received oral reports from both the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment as standing items on the agenda of each meeting. It has also received periodic reports about the work of three high-level government committees, the GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) meeting, the GSS Inter-Administration Committee (IAC), and the cross-analytic Strategy and Planning Committee (SPC).
7. An overview of the work of the COS thus far shows that it has been very heavily involved in considering aspects of the Monitoring and Assessment process and, to a degree, issues around the scope of official statistics. It has provided advice to the Authority Board on both these topics.

SA(COS)(09)22 - Committee Business in 2008/09 and Forward Look

8. Issues around the user perspective have also been considered, although the majority of this work is now generally taken forward within the framework of the relevant Monitoring Project *Identifying and Strengthening the User Voice*. Voices and views from the statistical system beyond the ranks of Government have been substantively considered on one previous occasion (with a further one paper to be considered on the agenda of this meeting).
9. The Committee initially considered the National Statistician's plans to revitalise the GSS, including plans to improve statistical planning in 2008, but has not considered these topics so far in 2009 (a progress report is on the agenda of this meeting). Issues around the communication and presentation of statistics, across the system, have been considered in high-level form but not substantively in their own right.
10. The following are therefore suggested as a possible steer for Committee business in 2009/10:
 - i. more time allocated to fulfilling the challenge and support function in respect of the National Statistician and GSS reform;
 - ii. in particular to review the steps that will continue to be taken to develop the system for statistical planning and consider longer-term planning developments;
 - iii. also to review specific measures to improve communication of statistics to the user, particularly around written text;
 - iv. broaden the base of views considered by the Committee (and therefore feeding in to the Authority Board) by commissioning regular items from non-Government user interests reflecting their priorities and experiences;
 - v. receive regular reports from user groups and committees to accompany those received from senior GSS committees, and;
 - vi. devote less time to (mainly procedural) issues around Monitoring and Assessment as these are progressively resolved, and more to consider the impact of Monitoring and Assessment and the Authority more broadly on the statistical service.
11. In addition, the Methodology Consultancy Service provided by ONS for the GSS and the (lack of) a National Address Register have also been recently considered. The Committee has indicated that it will wish to return to both these subjects in the autumn.
12. Members of the COS may also wish to consider future business in relation to the committee's Terms of Reference (TOR). An extract from the Committee's TOR, showing the Committee's roles and responsibilities is at **Annex B**.

Secretariat, July 2009

List of Annexes

Annex A **Summary of COS Business 2008/09**
Annex B **COS Role and Responsibilities**

Annex A Summary of COS Business 2008/09

Issue/Owner/COS role	Summary	Objectives and Outputs
<p>1. Leadership and revitalisation of the GSS, including planning.(National Statistician) COS to provide challenge/support role</p>	<p>Papers describing the <i>UK Statistical System</i> (08)02 and the <i>Leadership of the GSS</i> (08)03 were considered in July 2008. Revised versions were endorsed in September (08)06 and (08)07. In addition, plans for a <i>New System for Statistical Planning</i> (08)09 were also considered in September 2008.</p> <p>Taken together, these papers set out the National Statistician's vision for the GSS and a programme of work to deliver this. The project was divided into seven priority strands of work and collectively known as GSS revitalisation, managed by Caron Walker</p>	<p>Objectives of the work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a government-wide statistical plan that serves the public good, meeting user needs wherever possible (National Statistician's plan) and reformed governance of the system (ii) improvements in the consistency, coherence, analysis and commentary of official statistics (iii) improvements in public confidence in statistics through development of the service, and improvements in accessibility and presentation (iv) greater exploitation of data through data sharing between departments (v) to improve the use of statistics in decision making and operational delivery making <p>Progress report on the agenda of this meeting.</p>
<p>2. The scope of official statistics (Secretariat/ Authority/National Statistician) COS to ensure Authority meets obligations under the act and to conduct 'ground-clearing' work in relation to defining the Authority's locus, and to advise the Authority in relation to the coverage of official statistics.</p>	<p>The Act requires the Cabinet Office to consult the Authority in respect of Orders setting out which bodies may produce official statistics, and a <i>Second Official Statistics Order</i> was considered in October (08)08. COS also considered how the Authority would meet its obligations in respect of the <i>Statutory Listing of Official Statistics</i> (09)16.</p> <p>Issues around defining an official 'statistic' and the Authority's locus to intervene on such issues have been considered in <i>Defining Official Statistics</i> (08)10, discussion around <i>Management Information Ahead of Statistical Release</i> (09), and draft <i>Authority Advice to Organisations that Produce or Use Official Statistics</i> (09)07.</p>	<p>The Authority is on course to fulfil its statutory obligation to produce an annual list of National Statistics and a list of Official Statistics that have been produced by organisations specified in the Official Statistics Orders. Two orders have been passed in the UK parliament.</p> <p>The National Statistician, the relevant GSS taskforce and the head of the GSR have produced guidance in respect of these issues. The Authority's own guidance is due to be considered for publication at its July meeting.</p>

SA(COS)(09)22 - Committee Business in 2008/09 and Forward Look

<p>3. The User Perspective (Secretariat/ Authority/National Statistician) COS to advise the Chair and Board of the Authority on engaging with users and influencing producers of official statistics to ensure that official statistics meet the needs of the full range of users</p>	<p>The discussion around <i>Meeting the Needs of Users</i> (08)04 and <i>Identifying and Responding to the User Voice</i> (08)05 led to the establishment of the Strengthening the User Voice Project (see below).</p> <p>Issues around user engagement were also considered in relation to Leadership of the GSS (see above).</p> <p>COS considered <i>Priorities for 2009: Issues Raised by the RSS</i> (09)02 in detail and will further consider a paper prepared by the Chief Executive of the RSS about the <i>Future Evolution of SUF and User Engagement</i> (09)19 at this meeting.</p>	<p>The Authority's work on the users, and uses of, official statistics has been channelled through the work of the <i>Strengthening Identifying the User Voice</i> project and forthcoming Monitoring Report.</p> <p>The User Voice Monitoring Report is due to be published in the winter.</p>
<p>4. Monitoring and Assessment (Head of Assessment) COS to commission/review Monitoring reports and make recommendations to the Authority, and to consider other aspects of the Assessment process.</p>	<p>In March COS considered MR 4 <i>Improving Migration Statistics - Draft Interim Report</i> (09)05 and a specification for <i>Strengthening and Identifying the User Voice</i> (09)06.</p> <p>Aspects of the process of Assessment (and designation) considered include <i>Information Gathering for Assessment and Designation</i> (09)03, the <i>Management of Assessments</i> (09)09, <i>Streamlining the Assessment Process</i> (09)12, <i>Protocol on the Production of Monitoring and Assessment Notes</i> (09)13 and the <i>Approval Process and Criteria for de-designation</i> (09)21 (on the agenda of this meeting).</p>	<p>Programmes of work in relation to Monitoring and Assessment are published and updated on the Authority's website, along with guidance for producers. By July 2009 nine Assessment reports will have been completed and published, together with one Monitoring Report.</p>
<p>5 Other Statistical Topics (Various) COS to consider ad-hoc topics in respect of its role to advise the Authority in relation to promoting the quality, coverage and comprehensiveness of official statistics in general.</p>	<p>Substantive items considered by the COS which do not readily fall into the above categories include (the lack) of a <i>National Address Register</i> (09)14 and the role of the <i>ONS Methodology Consultancy Service and Quality Improvement Fund</i> (09)10.</p> <p>Finally, the Committee has also considered relevant sections of the Authority Annual Report.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Annex B COS Role and Responsibilities

[Extract from Terms of Reference]

Role and responsibilities

3. The role of the Committee for Official Statistics is to provide strategic direction and oversight for the official statistics system. It will consider the *Statistical Service* in its entirety. That is to say, the allocation of resource to statistical work, the production of statistics and the dissemination of those statistics.
4. The Committee will seek to ensure that official statistics are planned and produced in order to serve the public good and hence to inspire confidence and trust in them. The Committee's remit therefore includes:
 - i. promoting and safeguarding the impartiality, accuracy, relevance, coherence and comprehensiveness of official statistics;
 - ii. promoting and safeguarding good practice in relation to official statistics in accordance with the Code of Practice;
 - iii. monitoring and improving public trust and confidence in official statistics, and;
 - iv. supporting the Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)/ the National Statistician in developing and implementing policies in pursuit of these objectives.
5. Specific responsibilities of the Committee include, to:
 - i. advise the Chair and Board of the Authority on the coverage and comprehensiveness of official statistics, including the scope of official statistics and the capacity of the statistical system;
 - ii. advise the Chair and Board of the Authority on engaging with users and influencing producers of official statistics to ensure that official statistics meet the needs of the full range of users;
 - iii. advise the Chair and Board of the Authority on matters related to public confidence and trust in official statistics, including measurement and monitoring;
 - iv. provide an oversight and a challenge function to the vision, objectives and priorities of the Head of the GSS, and, to the annual statistical work programme produced by the National Statistician; provide support in the implementation of this agenda across Government Departments, including support in working with Permanent Secretaries;
 - v. consider published Assessment compliance reports (that is reports which designate National Statistics status) and promote the implementation of improvement actions that strengthen compliance and enhance the official statistics system, and;
 - vi. commission, review, and revise Assessment Monitoring reports (that is reports which consider broad system issues but do not designate National Statistics status) and recommend these reports to the Chair and Board of the Authority.