

# **UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

## **Minutes**

**Meeting of Friday 16 January 2009  
Board Room, Statistics House, Islington**

### **Present**

#### **UK Statistics Authority**

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)

Lord Rowe-Beedoe (Deputy Chair, ONS)

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Deputy Chair, Official Statistics)

Mr Richard Alldritt

Mr Partha Dasgupta

Ms Karen Dunnell

Ms Moira Gibb

Sir Alan Langlands

Professor David Rhind

#### **Secretariat**

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Mr Mervyn Stevens

#### **Other Attendees**

Mr Mike Hughes (ONS) for items 6 and 7

Mr Jon Simmons (ONS) for item 10

#### **Apologies**

Mr Steve Newman

Professor Steve Nickell



## Minutes of the UK Statistics Authority Meeting 16 January 2009

### 1. **Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mr. Newman and Professor Nickell.

### 2. **Declarations of interest**

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

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

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting on 19 December 2008 were accepted as a true and fair account of that meeting.
- 3.2 The Authority received updates from the Chair, Ms Dunnell and Mr Alldritt on what action had been taken since the last meeting on various statistical issues that had been raised with the Authority.
- 3.3 Mr Alldritt provided an update on progress with a Monitoring and Assessment Note about the *Presentation of Statistics in First Releases and Elsewhere*. It was agreed that the revised Note would be published on the Authority's website pending a period of a week for further comment.

### 4. **Reports from Committee Chairs**

#### **Committee for Official Statistics**

- 4.1 Professor Jowell reported on the meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics (COS) held on 13 January 2009. The Terms of Reference and membership of the Committee had been discussed and would be further considered as part of a review of the Authority's governance arrangements.
- 4.2 The meeting of the COS had discussed recent statistical issues of public concern, a draft questionnaire to be used as part of the process for assessment against the Code of Practice, and, the Authority's response to proposals made by the President of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) in a recent letter to the Authority Chair. The Authority welcomed Professor Hand's letter and agreed that it raised an important set of issues that merited the Authority's fullest attention.
- 4.3 The COS had also heard how a working group including representatives from government departments, the devolved administrations and the RSS had been established by the National Statistician to advise on the future of the Census beyond 2011. A paper on this topic would be considered by a future meeting of the Authority.

#### **Audit Committee**

- 4.4 Professor Rhind reported that a special meeting of the Audit Committee had been held on 13 January 2009 to consider and approve the submission for the Spring Supplementary Estimate 2008-09.

#### **ONS Board**

- 4.5 Lord Rowe-Beddoe gave a report on the meeting of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board held earlier that day. That meeting had considered the ONS Business Plan and Budget for 2009-10. The plan provided for continued work on the principal priorities identified by the ONS. Budget constraints would mean that some work on other new initiatives could not be taken forward in the coming year.
- 4.6 The ONS Board had also received updates on the Information Technology hardware replacement programme and the implementation on 1 January 2009 of

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management structure changes in ONS. The National Statistician continued to liaise with the Cabinet Office with regard to the development of an address register.

### **5. Priorities for Monitoring Reviews [SA(09)01]**

- 5.1 Mr Alldritt presented a paper which reported on the progress being made on the reviews being conducted by the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team and which considered priorities for future reviews. The meeting agreed that reviews on *Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics* and *Communication of Measurements of Inflation* were the next priorities for Monitoring Reviews.
- 5.2 The meeting also agreed a revised specification for the Monitoring Review on *Strengthening the User Voice*. The Authority would further consider which non-executive member would chair this Review.

### **6. Long Term Requirements for Official Statistics [SA(09)02]**

- 6.1 Mr Hughes introduced a paper which set out the National Statistician's proposals for a new system of planning for official statistics. A central element of this system were Thematic Planning Groups to consider statistical issues across departments. The output from these groups would feed into the considerations of the new top level Government Statistical Service (GSS) Statistics and Strategy Planning Committee which would in turn produce a National Statistician's Statistics Plan.
- 6.2 The meeting reviewed these proposals and suggested further consideration be given to: greater involvement of a wider range of users and particularly relevant subject experts from beyond Government; procedures for ensuring the transparency of the planning process; the need for continuing review, and; initial piloting work with two or three theme groups before full expansion of activities across all groups.
- 6.3 It was agreed that in view of these proposals the longer term planning of official statistics need not be the subject of a separate Authority Monitoring Review for the time-being.

### **7. Progress with Data Sharing Orders**

- 7.1 Mr Hughes gave an oral report on progress on data-sharing. An Order in respect of sharing the Department for Children, Schools and Families' School Census would be considered by both Houses of Parliament before the end of January.
- 7.2 Satisfactory progress was also being made in respect of data on migrant workers held by the Department for Work and Pensions and data on students held by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. The ONS were also sharing business survey data with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Bank of England.
- 7.3 The Authority was pleased to note the achievements that had so far been made and hoped that further progress would be made in 2009 with all due speed.

### **8. Management Information and Policy Statements [SA(09)03]**

- 8.1 Mr Alldritt presented a paper which considered issues around management information and the use of official statistics in policy statements, and, when the Authority could best make interventions on these matters.
- 8.2 It was agreed that further work on these issues was needed and that Mr Alldritt would develop the paper for consideration at the next Authority meeting.

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- 8.3 The meeting heard that a GSS Group under the chairmanship of David Frasier was also looking at these matters. It was agreed that any outputs from this group could also be considered at the next Authority meeting.

### **9. Notification of Requests for Assessment [SA(09)04]**

- 9.1 The meeting noted that, to coincide with the publication on 6 January 2009 of Monitoring Report 3, *Priorities for Designation as National Statistics*, letters had been sent to relevant Ministers in respect of the statistics identified in that Report. These constituted Notifications under Section 16 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007).

### **10. Launch of the Publication Hub Mark II [SA(09)05]**

- 10.1 Mr Simmons presented a paper which reported on progress on the development of the second release of the Publication Hub and on the delivery of a new ONS website.

- 10.2 The new Publication Hub website would soon be made publicly available and would include an improved release calendar, a new catalogue of National Statistics and an enhanced search facility. The Authority was pleased to note these developments.

### **11 Any other business**

- 11.1 Future business was considered and it was agreed that the Authority would further discuss objectives and governance arrangements at its meeting in March 2009.

- 11.2 There was no other business.



# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Agenda*

***Friday, 16 January, 2009***

***Board Room, Statistics House, London, 11:15 - 15:00***

**Chair:** Sir Michael Scholar

**Apologies:** Professor Steve Nickell, Mr. Steve Newman

Meeting of 191208

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting. Declarations of interest	
2	Reports from Committee Chairs	Professor Jowell Professor Rhind Lord Rowe-Beddoe
3	Priorities for Monitoring Reviews in 2009 (including Revised Specification for Monitoring Review on <i>Strengthening the User Voice</i> )	SA(09)01  Mr Richard Alldritt
4	Long Term Requirements for Official Statistics	SA(09)02  Mr Mike Hughes
5	Progress with Data Sharing Orders	Oral Report  Mr Mike Hughes
6	Management Information and Policy Statements - Draft Statement	SA(09)03  Mr Richard Alldritt
7	Notification of Requests for Assessment	SA(09)04  Mr Richard Laux
8	Launch of the Publication Hub Mark II	SA(09)05  Mr Jon Simmons
9	Any other business	

**Next Meeting:** Friday, 20 February, 2009

**Statistics House, Newport, 11:15 - 15:00**





**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)01

***Priorities for Monitoring Reviews in 2009***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents proposals for upcoming Monitoring Reviews to be undertaken by the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team during 2009.

**Timing**

2. If Authority members endorse the proposals, a suitable announcement will be published on the website as soon as possible.

**Recommendations**

3. Members of the Authority are invited to:
  - i. consider and comment on the proposal for work to be carried out during 2009 (paragraph 15);
  - ii. consider whether there are any additional topics that should be added to the list;
  - iii. note the timing of the proposed reports, and;
  - iv. commission from the Monitoring and Assessment Team, with input from Office for National Statistics (ONS), a draft Authority response to the note from the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) (see Annex C).

**Discussion**

4. The Authority published a list of intended and potential reports, firstly on 4 July 2008 (Annex A) and subsequently in more depth on 10 October 2008 (Annex B). The first three reports - the consultation on the Code of Practice, the Report on the Consultation, and Priorities for Designation as National Statistics - have been published. The fourth report, on progress with improving migration statistics, is still on schedule for publication in interim form in March 2009 and final form in June 2009.
5. The Monitoring and Assessment Team is now reviewing the upcoming reports that could be produced now that the first few reports have been published.

**Royal Statistical Society**

6. As an input to the planning process, the Royal Statistical Society has identified a range of issues for the Authority's attention. Many, though not all of these, will be addressed in the context of planned Monitoring Reports, and via Assessment work. (Note that the RSS letter will be discussed at the meeting of Committee for Official Statistics on 13 January. The Authority Board will be apprised of the outcome of the Committee's discussion).

**Identifiable themes emerging from the 'Issues Log'**

7. The Authority's secretariat has maintained an Issues Log since April 2008. The Monitoring and Assessment Team has identified a number of underlying themes, as follows:
  - i. the clarity of the communication of official statistics;
  - ii. methodological and technical concerns about coverage and classification;
  - iii. quality concerns, especially the coherence of official statistics (including with non-official statistics);
  - iv. concerns about release practices;

- v. legal or quasi-legal issues, including relating to the Census, and to disclosure;
  - vi. gaps in official statistics, and;
  - vii. third party commentary on particular sets of statistics.
8. The latest Issues Log is shown at Annex D.

Long-term planning

9. As discussed at the September meeting of the Authority [paper SA(08)30] and noted in the announcement made on 10 October, a monitoring report to consider arrangements for longer-term planning for official statistics was foreseen for the early part of 2009. However, the National Statistician has recently launched a new system for statistical planning, in discussion with Government Statistical Service (GSS) Heads of Profession (HoPs). This system is intended both to improve the planning mechanisms and to provide (and integrate) regular scans of the horizon. The Monitoring and Assessment Team considers that this activity supersedes the proposed Monitoring Report, and therefore suggests that it be withdrawn. However, there may still be a need for a formal Authority report prepared by the National Statistician on the UK's future statistical requirements and the development of the statistical planning infrastructure. Long-term planning is further considered in paper SA(09)02 on the agenda of this meeting.

The user voice

10. An additional priority has been added to the list of upcoming monitoring work, with the proposal of a report to evaluate the current status of user engagement and to identify ways in which the user voice can be strengthened. As discussed at the October Board meeting, a project specification for a further monitoring report on the user voice has been prepared (see Annex E). With the publication of the Code of Practice, which focuses heavily on the user perspective and pushes producers to engage with users to the extent that users wish, this report would provide the framework for such user engagement. It is therefore proposed that work on this report would be as soon as possible, with a view to publication by mid-2009.

Trust in crime statistics

11. In accordance with previous announcements, and the Authority's concerns about the release of knife crime statistics in December 2008, the Monitoring and Assessment Team aims to begin work on a monitoring report on the barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics, in the first quarter of 2009. This report would ideally be produced in time for the publication of annual crime statistics in mid-2009, though it may take longer.

Communicating the measurement of inflation

12. The Monitoring and Assessment Team aims to begin work on this monitoring report in the second quarter of 2009, with a view to publication by the end of the year. The issue remains topical; indeed the RSS has recently welcomed the proposal to undertake this work.

Resources

13. The Monitoring and Assessment Team has been building staff and expertise since the establishment of the Authority in April 2008. The team is currently spread over two sites, London and Newport, with a third team being recruited in Edinburgh. Monitoring work is being headed from the London office, by the three team leaders with high-level support from the Director of the Assessment Programme and the Head of Assessment. The Newport team is taking the lead on developing the assessment process. The Edinburgh team will be built up during the first half of 2009 and will focus primarily on Assessment and Designation although it will have an input to all Monitoring reports that have a devolution aspect.

14. On the basis of current resources, we believe that we have the capacity to focus on three monitoring reports at any one time, staggering the start-up and completion of projects to ensure that staff resources are available when necessary.
15. Consequently, we propose that the following work is carried out during 2009:
  - Publication of Monitoring Report 4 on Migration statistics during Q2
  - Start-up of two monitoring reports on '*Strengthening the user voice*' and '*Barriers to trust in crime statistics*' during Q1, aiming to publish during Q3
  - Start-up of a further monitoring report in Q2 on '*Communicating the measurement of inflation*', with a view to publication in Q4
  - Start-up of two more monitoring reports in Q3 on issues to be identified.

**Monitoring & Assessment Team, January 2009**

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A**    **Announcement on Authority Monitoring Reports, 4 July 2008**  
**Annex B**    **Announcement on Reports from the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team, 10 October 2008**  
**Annex C**    **Paper SA(COS)(09)02 '*Issues raised by the Royal Statistical Society*'**  
**Annex D**    **Issues Log as of 30 November**  
**Annex E**    **Specification for a monitoring report on '*Strengthening the user voice*'**



# Announcement

4 July 2008

## **Assessment Programme and Authority Monitoring Reports**

### **Assessment Programme**

Under the terms of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, the UK Statistics Authority is required to prepare a programme for the assessment and re-assessment of statistics under sections 12 and 14 of the Act.

A public consultation on the Code of Practice and on the principles and procedures that the Authority will adopt in conducting its assessment work will be launched on 8 July 2008 with responses required before 30 September 2008. The Assessment Programme will be published towards the end of the consultation period.

### **Authority Monitoring Reports**

The Authority also has a statutory function (section 8 of the Act) to monitor the production and publication of official statistics more generally and may publish its findings or any report.

We are developing initial plans to produce and publish reports under this section of the Act and will issue these as Monitoring Reports. They will be produced with the involvement of external experts and user interests, and will reflect the independent views of the Authority.

## Annex A - SA(09)01 - Priorities for Monitoring Reviews in 2009

We are currently planning to produce reports on the following topics during 2008-09:

- 1. The communication of measurements of inflation (and consumer prices);**
- 2. Progress with improving migration statistics;**
- 3. Statistics not currently included within 'National Statistics';**
- 4. Barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics**

And, over a longer timescale:

- 5. Arrangements for longer term planning for statistics to meet society's needs; and,**
- 6. The adequacy of environmental statistics to inform public debate and government policy**

Other topics will be added following informal consultation with users of statistics and other interest groups. In each case we will consult relevant interest groups as we develop, and then publish, the specification for the research which will support each report.

All the research activity will be managed by the Head of Assessment, a statutory office-holder under the Act who is required to work independently of the Office for National Statistics, the executive office of the Statistics Authority.

# Announcement

10 October 2008

## Reports from the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team

### Update No. 1

*Additional information further to the Announcement made on 4 July 2008*

#### **Authority Monitoring Reports**

The Authority has a statutory function under section 8 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* to monitor the production and publication of official statistics. The Authority will publish reports under this section of the Act and will issue these as Authority Monitoring Reports. They will be produced with the involvement of external experts and user interests, and will reflect the independent views of the Authority.

#### **Official Statistics Code of Practice**

Monitoring Report No. 1 was the consultation document on the draft Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment. The consultation phase began with the publication of the consultation document on 8 July 2008 and the consultation closed on 30 September. Further information regarding the consultation can be found at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/consultations/index.html>.

The Authority expects to publish Report No. 2 – its report on the consultation and the finalised Official Statistics Code of Practice – in January 2009.

#### **Statistics not currently included within “National Statistics”**

Monitoring Report No. 3 will be about statistics not currently included within “National Statistics”. The *Statistics and Registration Service Act* defines those statistics and statistical reports that can bear the National Statistics label – essentially those already treated as National Statistics when the Act came into force and any other official statistics that Ministers invite the Authority to assess against the Code of Practice, subject to the assessment being positive and the National Statistics designation being granted.

In addition, section 16 of the Act sets out that where the Statistics Authority believes that an area of statistical work should be assessed against the Code but it does not have a statutory right to make such an assessment, it must notify the relevant Minister, or other authority, of its views. The Authority therefore needs to consider under what circumstances, or against which criteria, it would take the view that a set of 'official statistics' should be assessed against the Code.

This Report will list those official statistics not currently included as National Statistics which can be readily identified. Against each of the sets of official statistics identified in the list, the views of the relevant Head of Profession for Statistics, the views of the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team, and the decision of the Authority on whether to make a notification to the relevant Minister will be recorded. The report will also explain how other statistics not covered in this report will be identified and considered in a similar way in the future.

The report will further list all those statistical series currently designated as National Statistics in accordance with section 18 of the Act. This list will then be updated annually as an annex to the Authority's Annual Report.

### **Progress with improving migration statistics**

Monitoring Report No. 4 will consider progress with improving migration statistics. For the purposes of this review 'migration statistics' includes statistics of international immigration into the UK and emigration from the UK; estimates of numbers of such international migrants who have taken up residence over a period of time at geographical levels down to local authority area; numbers who have left each area; and estimates of the gross and net flows of population between local authority areas.

Recent reports by both the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee (TSC) and House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs have emphasised the need for improvements. The Authority's review will examine progress in improving the statistics in recent years, plans for further improvements, and the timeframes in which they can be expected to be delivered.

The Authority's Report will draw conclusions about the adequacy of plans for improving migration statistics (including the prospective value of the 2011 Census data); about progress against those plans; about any further steps that government needs to take; and about any need to improve the communication of the statistics and their reliability to users and the public. Priority will be given to the areas of concern raised by the TSC, the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs and any other areas governed by existing inter-departmental arrangements. A report providing



emerging findings and recommendations will be published for comment before the end of March 2009 and the final report will be published before the end of June 2009.

### **Long-term requirements for official statistics**

Monitoring Report No. 5 will consider arrangements for longer term planning for official statistics to meet society's needs. The purpose of this review is to assist the Authority in fulfilling its obligations under section 8 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act*. The Report will review existing published reports from any source, in the UK or internationally, that point to likely future UK statistical requirements and comment on the level of confidence that Government should have in the requirements identified.

The Report will also seek to engage users of statistics, academics and other commentators to build consensus about the shape of future statistical requirements and record their views, and report on consultations with the devolved administrations about any aspects of long term statistical requirements that are specific to them.

This Report will review current plans to address future requirements and draw conclusions about the adequacy of current plans; consider how in the UK's decentralised statistical system, the different parties might be engaged in regular horizon-scanning exercises so that coherent conclusions are reached and can influence statistical planning in a coherent way; and consider any implications of the conclusions for statistical skills and human resources – either in terms of the balance of skills or the identification of likely areas of shortage.

Consultants will be engaged, following open tender, to manage the project and to submit a written report to the Authority. The review is expected to run from March 2009 to July 2009 with an *Emerging Findings* report published in May 2009 and the consultants' report to the Authority submitted at the end of July 2009. The Authority will then circulate its own draft report incorporating the consultants' report in September 2009, inviting comments which will then be published, and will finalise its report in November 2009.

### **Measures of inflation, trust in crime statistics, and adequacy of environmental statistics**

The scoping of work for the remaining three Authority Monitoring Reports that were announced on 4 July will continue throughout 2008-09:

- Report 6: The communication of measurements of inflation (and consumer prices);
- Report 7: Barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics; and

## Annex B - SA(09)01 - Priorities for Monitoring Reviews in 2009

- Report 8: Adequacy of environmental statistics to inform public debate and government policy

Further information regarding these Reports will be provided in due course.

If you have any enquiries about any of the Reports or work mentioned in this Announcement, please email [authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk), or write to us at: Monitoring and Assessment, UK Statistics Authority, Statistics House, Myddelton Street, London, EC1R 1UW

**Annex C**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

SA(COS)(09)02

***Priorities for 2009***

***Issued Raised by the Royal Statistical Society***

**Purpose**

1. This paper covers a letter from Professor David Hand, President of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) to Sir Michael Scholar, and suggests how the Authority might respond. The letter draws to the Authority's attention some 26 statistical issues that the RSS considers the Authority might address.

**Timing**

2. At its' meeting of 16 January, the Authority's Board will discuss a paper setting out proposals for Monitoring Review (MR) activity to be undertaken during 2009. The views of this Committee on the RSS's list of issues will be a valuable input to the Board's discussion.

**Recommendations**

3. Committee members are invited to:
  - i. consider the letter from Professor Hand (Annex C1), and;
  - ii. consider which issues might be regarded as priorities for Monitoring Reviews.

**Discussion**

4. Many of the issues raised by the RSS are related to the Code of Practice and will therefore be considered in Assessment reports; others are addressed by activity already undertaken, proposed or underway. However, some of the issues have the potential to be significant pieces of work for the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team, and a discussion of the priorities among these, alongside a discussion of existing ideas for Monitoring Reports, would help the Authority to develop a rounded forward agenda for MRs during 2009.
5. A brief summary of the Monitoring and Assessment Team's provisional response to the issues raised by the RSS is provided at Annex C2. Likely new ideas for future MRs are:
  - i. League tables (e.g. health, education)
  - ii. Progress implementing recommendations relating to education statistics (Statistics Commission Review)
  - iii. Progress implementing recommendations relating to regional economic statistics (Allsopp Review)
  - iv. Progress implementing recommendations relating to government output and productivity (Atkinson Review)

**Monitoring and Assessment Team, January 2009**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex C1 Letter from the President of the RSS to the Chair of the Authority  
05/01/09**

**Annex C2 Summary of the Monitoring and Assessment Team's provisional  
response to the issues raised by the RSS**



**Annex C1- Letter from the President of the RSS to the Chair of the Authority**

**THE ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY**

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Sir Michael Scholar  
UK Statistics Authority  
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5<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Dear Michael,

It has seemed appropriate to us for some time that the Royal Statistical Society should submit to you a list of issues it considers the UKSA might address. We have now put such a list together and this is attached. You and your colleagues are, of course, already aware of many of these topics, and indeed are already addressing some of them. It is also, of course, obvious that you cannot deal with everything straight away. Nevertheless, there is, I think, merit in sending you a comprehensive list of our current concerns. Among these we would like to emphasise the general points 1 to 7.

In your speech to our conference in Nottingham you said: "I see the relationship between the Royal Statistical Society and the UK Statistics Authority as having the potential to develop into an alliance of real strength and purpose. While our perspectives will sometimes be different, our goals in relation to official statistics are, I believe, very close."

We agree. To help this develop further I suggest that we consider some structure of regular meetings and other contact between the RSS, the UKSA and the National Statistician.

I look forward to hearing your views on this and, in the meantime, send my very best wishes to you and your colleagues for your endeavours in 2009. I am copying this letter to Karen Dunnell and to Richard Alldritt.

Yours sincerely

David Hand  
President

## List of statistical issues

### A. General issues

**1. The needs of users and other stakeholders** – While progress has been made in the last few years the GSS and producers of official statistics need to become more outward looking and engage with society in general. Without this they will neither provide data that truly “serve the public good” nor will they grow public trust as much as they should. It is important that independence is seen as an opportunity to put in place a new form of organisation where the needs of all users are identified and evaluated by the GSS and where the needs of potential future developments are properly assessed. We welcome the public statements that have been made recognising this, the importance placed on user engagement in the code of practice, and the papers presented to, and discussion at, the UKSA meeting of October 23. We look forward to real and significant progress.

We wish, however, to point out that engagement needs to occur at all levels including the very top, i.e. the UKSA itself. Now that the Authority has recruited most of its staff and developed its organisation we hope to see it start on a programme of active engagement with all stakeholders, giving a clear lead to the GSS as a whole.

It is good that the minutes of, and papers for, UKSA meetings are in the public domain. However, we would like to suggest that the Authority considers giving advance notice of topics it intends to consider, thus giving stakeholders the opportunity to submit issues and arguments relevant to these topics. The Authority might also like to consider whether part of its meetings could be open to the public.

It is also important to realise, and take account of, the fact that users have other demands on their time and priorities which may seem more immediately pressing than discussions with official statisticians. In part this arises from the normal pressures of day-to-day work but it also reflects the lack of general understanding of the importance of official statistics for society as a whole. This is not something which the UKSA can solve on its own but it will have a key role to play in generating a wider understanding of the importance of official statistics – not least as Authority members are people of some standing and influence. The RSS is of course willing to play its part in this, within the limits of its resources.

**2. The need for proper planning** - Official statistics should serve society as a whole, should be relevant and evolve as society and the economy evolves. These are areas where the UK statistical system has failed in the past and still sometimes fails (for example the slowness in the 1980s and 1990s to develop statistics to reflect the growing importance of the service sector to the UK economy; more recently the well-aided problems with population and migration statistics). The decentralised and devolved nature of the system has also hampered coordinated planning. We welcome the fact that one of the initial reports the UKSA is undertaking is to examine long-term arrangements for longer-term planning; the RSS will be happy to assist in any appropriate way.

It is, though, important that proper planning does not stifle creativity and innovation and that mechanisms are in place (eg a rolling five-year plan with annual review) to allow adaptation as needed.

**3. Communication and presentation** - Communication and presentation of statistics has also been a weak point of the UK statistical system in the past. Symptoms of this have included the much-criticised ONS website, turgid and unhelpful press notices, and at times a failure to communicate adequately with users. We appreciate that a number of efforts are underway to improve matters - notably work to improve the ONS website - and that the draft code of practice covers this element in some detail. We do, however, suggest that this aspect of statistics is kept under close review by the UKSA and that in the not too distant future it carries out a review of the extent to which actual practice is living up to expectations. In particular it will be absolutely essential that the improvements in the website currently underway do not stop once present plans have been implemented but that adequate resources are available, both for ongoing “day to day” improvements and for the further major developments that will inevitably be needed.

**4. Separation of statistical information from policy comment** - We consider that the mixing of policy and ministerial comment with statistical information and releases has been a major factor contributing to the low level of public confidence in UK statistics. We therefore welcome the initiation of the publications hub and look forward to seeing its full development. It is clear though from the recent incident regarding teenage admissions to hospital as a result of knife crime and the earlier incident at the presentation for media on immigration statistics at the Home Office in August 2008 that an educational effort is needed throughout government, and particularly with press offices, to ensure that this separation happens. We urge the UKSA to initiate this or to take other steps to ensure that the civil service as a whole undertakes this.

Selective use of statistics mixed with policy comment, in a way which does not add to public debate but confuses and constrains it, does not just occur when data are released (as one example, see the “fact-sheet” issued by the Home Office on the Tackling Knives Action Programme ([http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Tackling\\_Knives\\_Action\\_Prog1.pdf?view=Binary](http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Tackling_Knives_Action_Prog1.pdf?view=Binary))). We believe that there needs to be a concerted effort throughout government to use data in a form that enlightens rather than spins. As you are aware we have already written to Sir Gus O’Donnell on these lines and hope that the UKSA, within the limits of its mandate, will also press for this.

Pre-release access has also, we believe, been part of the problem. The Royal Statistical Society considers that the UK should seek to emulate best practice in other comparable countries where pre-release access to ministers and policy officials either does not exist or is limited to a few hours at most. We do not see the need for any pre-release access in the majority of cases and only the need for, at most, a short period such as two hours for a limited number of market-sensitive statistics. We are pleased to see that the UKSA has similar views. The proposed reduction of pre-release to 24 hours for UK statistics is a welcome improvement but does not, in our view, go far enough. The intention is that this will be reviewed 12 months after it comes into practice and we hope that that review will result in further tightening. We regret the decision of the Scottish Executive to retain pre-release access of up to 5 days for Scottish devolved statistics. We hope that the UKSA will continue to press for tighter pre-release practices and offer RSS support in this.

**5. The need for statisticians to understand the subject they are measuring** – This is an often overlooked issue but it is, self-evidently, crucial if statisticians are able both to make the best judgements in areas of uncertainty and to plan for the future. To some extent this will be easier for statisticians in policy departments since their day-to-day work is likely to involve the acquisition of some such knowledge but it should not be assumed that this is necessarily adequate. It is essential for statisticians in the ONS and other non-policy areas to be given the opportunity to develop appropriate knowledge and make the necessary expert contacts. (See also point 25 regarding ONS relocation.)

**6. Statistical coherence between the four UK administrations** – Users often complain about the lack of comparability. Processes need to be put into place to ensure that there is harmonisation of statistical practice where this is justified by user need – but without infringing the autonomy of the devolved administrations. Where there are well-founded differences, the GSS should make efforts to “bridge” between the different statistics.

**7. Defining National and other official statistics** – The concept of “national statistics”, central to the new arrangements, has not been adequately developed. There is substantial variation between departments in the proportion of statistics that are badged as “national” statistics and some striking anomalies. We welcome the fact that monitoring report number 3 will review all official statistics not currently designated as national statistics and will also consider whether to notify the relevant minister that they should be considered for national statistics status.

In addition to defining “national statistics” there is also a need to define “official statistics” given the increasing trend to outsource official statistics to agencies. It is, also, important that official statistics which are not “national statistics” are still produced to high quality standards. Finally, there is also a need to clarify the accessibility of information for all institutions that produce statistics including quasi-public bodies such as Northern Rock and the partially publicly-owned banks.

## **B. Issues of particular current concern**

**8. Inadequacy of population and migration statistics** - The problems are well known and we note that the UKSA will be reviewing this as its monitoring report no. 4.

**9. The need for a national address register** - for statistical purposes is well established. Previous efforts to set up a definitive register have failed, as highlighted by the Treasury Select Committee in its report “Counting the Population”. ONS is currently compiling a special register for the 2011 Census in England and Wales, buying information from the Post Office, Ordnance Survey, and the Local Government Information House. However, due to these three public bodies each defending their own intellectual property, this definitive register will not be available for any other purposes. The failure of public bodies to operate for the public good in England and Wales is in sharp contrast to Scotland, where a national address register is being created. There is a clear need for this issue to be tackled with vigour.

**10. 2011 Census** – The Statistics Commission and others have argued for 2011 to be the last of the current kind. High costs and high risks suggest that a different approach may offer better value for money. A clear strategy for the future needs to be established.

**11. Housing market** – the UK is badly in need of a coherent and comprehensive range of indicators for the housing market. This should include not only a definitive and comprehensive house price index available at appropriate levels of detail but also advance indicators such as prices at which dwellings are placed on the market. The UK Statistics Authority should also review whether there is adequate information about the mortgage market and the degree of financial pressure on householders.



**12. Measurement of inflation** - both the Consumer Price Index and the Retail Price Index have drawbacks. In addition there is a need to ensure that explanations of the various inflation series are communicated adequately to the public; this is particularly important at the moment. We welcome the fact that the communication of inflation is to be the subject of UKSA monitoring report no. 6 but would hope that this also looks at the compilation of the indices.

**13. Retail sales series** – while we accept that the official retail sales series is considerably more soundly based than the unofficial ones that are produced, the fact remains that there is a lack of confidence in it. This is particularly important at the moment, when retail sales will be a closely watched series as the UK passes through recession. If not already done, we recommend that efforts are made to discuss with key stakeholders, users and commentators to establish further the causes of discrepancies, to enable compilers of other series to accept where their series could be flawed and to ensure that there are not hidden flaws in the official series. The internet is, of course, likely to become increasingly important in this area.

### **C. Areas where the UK Statistics Authority should review whether actual or planned statistical information is adequate and appropriate.**

**14. Adequacy of environmental statistics to inform current debate** – We note and welcome the fact that this will be the subject of monitoring report no. 8.

**15. Crime statistics** – what progress has been made in implementation of the recommendations of the Smith Review and the Statistics Commission review of crime statistics and what further steps are now needed to deal with public confusion/concern. We note that Monitoring report 7 will cover barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics.

**16. League tables** – Concerns on league tables have been expressed by academic and other commentators with particular reference to those for education and health. It would seem appropriate for the UKSA to review these concerns and consider whether some form of general guidance should be issued.

**17. Educational Statistics** – The Statistics Commission made a number of recommendations regarding educational statistics in its report no. 26: School Education Statistics: User Perspectives (2005). It would be appropriate for the UKSA to review the extent to which these had been implemented.

**18. Adequacy of regional economic statistics** – What progress has been made with implementation of the 2004 Allsopp Report (which was accepted in full by ministers); further steps now needed.

**19. Progress following the Atkinson Report (January 2005)** - on the measurement of government output and productivity; what other countries are now doing in this field.

**20. Coverage of internet transactions.** We appreciate that the ONS and the GSS generally have taken steps to enlarge relevant surveys, such as retail sales, to cover internet transactions. However, a fast-developing field, such as this, needs to be kept under close review since it could affect data in ways which are not immediately obvious.

## **D. Issues relating to general statistical practice**

*Many of these issues are covered, explicitly or implicitly, by the draft code of practice but they are points that we believe the UKSA should keep under review.*

**21. Use of administrative records for statistical purposes** – following the provisions of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, it should be easier for government statisticians to access records, such as tax and benefit records, to produce better statistics. Priorities and mechanisms need to be established. We welcome the fact that the draft Code of Practice covers this issue while noting that the relevant protocol needs some further work (this letter is finalised prior to the publication of the definitive Code of Practice).

**22. Classification procedures** – Classification decisions, in particular classifications which could have a political impact such as the allocation to the public or private sector of business enterprises and services, need to be taken independently by the government statisticians without undue pressure or involvement from policy departments and should be consistent with international guidelines.

**23. Adequacy of documentation** - Processes need to be put in place to ensure an adequate standard of documentation of statistics both for public use and for the use of government statisticians themselves. This should include information regarding the degree of uncertainty attached to data.

**24. Outsourcing compilation of official statistics** – Solid guidelines need to be established on when, how and why statistical work is outsourced. In particular there are examples of some agencies being both the deliverer of services and the compiler of data relating to those services. This is clearly not desirable and, if essential, eg when data depend on management information, appropriate audit arrangements need to be put in place.

## **E. Other points**

**25. Pressures on ONS and the relocation to Newport** – We have been concerned for some time over the combination of pressures on the ONS: severe budget cuts; the demand of the modernisation programme; changes required by the new legislation; relocation. This is a huge amount of pressure to put on an organisation at any one time.

While we accept that there are benefits in the relocation to Newport we remain concerned over the potential loss of expertise, in particular over the impact on National Accounts and Balance of Payments data. These are highly complex areas in which statisticians only become truly expert after a number of years work; as such the risk is greater than for most other statistical series. The high profile of these series (which can only be enhanced in current circumstances) means that any resulting problems could seriously damage ONS's and the UKSA's reputation. (We note that quality problems with national accounts was no. 3 in the list of top level risks for ONS noted in the UKSA paper SA(08)25.)

In the longer term care will need to be taken that the move to Newport does not distance statisticians from users and other stakeholders including government policy makers, the Bank of England and major financial institutions.

**26. Statistics to serve democracy** – Over the long term consideration needs to be given to the production of statistics that inform the electorate on political issues at times of elections as occurs in, for example, Norway. To take one possibility: if and when a referendum on Scottish independence occurs, authoritative and unbiased information on government spending in different areas of the UK and regional sources of government revenue raising (including but not restricted to oil revenues) would be examples of data that could inform citizens throughout the UK. We appreciate though that this would be a high-risk initiative and would therefore need careful preparation.



**Annex C2 Summary of the Monitoring and Assessment Team's provisional response to the issues raised by the Royal Statistical Society**

The Authority's response to issues raised by the Royal Statistical Society will be published on the Authority's website when available here;

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/index.html>



## Annex D - SA(09)01 - Priorities for Monitoring Review in 2009



### Issues raised with the UK Statistics Authority Last updated: 30 November 2008

#### November 2008

24 November Best way to present the size of, and changes in, public sector employment  
20 November Continuing critical comment from the British Retail Consortium about official retail sales figures produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)  
18 November Lack of data on family breakdown provided in Indices of Social Exclusion  
11 November Adequacy of information contained in the ONS annual report for 2006/07 with respect to relocation and other plans to allow the reader to monitor progress against plans set out in earlier reports

#### October 2008

29 October Reliability of Department for Transport road accident and casualty data collected through STATS19 reporting system  
29 October Treatment of lending to Northern Rock in the UK national accounts  
28 October Classification of chemical and man-made fibres industries in the Index of Production and under the EU's classification system for economic activity (NACE)  
24 October Implications of the Authority's Code of Practice for the involvement of ministers and officials in decisions about the content of census questions  
23 October Correction of Home Office data on crimes of serious violence and the communication of reasons for a change in recording practices  
21 October Measures in place to prevent the presentation of misleading or inaccurate statistical evidence submitted by third parties to Government sponsored investigations, and publication of the interests of those submitting such evidence  
9 October Early release of Department of Health data on MRSA  
1 October Alleged breach of the Authority's draft Code of Practice regarding the early release of Scottish crime statistics

#### September 2008

30 September Classification of direct selling under the EU's classification system for economic activity (NACE)  
18 September Role of external experts in evidence-based policy making  
12 September Concerns expressed at Scottish ministerial claims regarding the effect of under-21 alcohol off-sales ban on anti-social behaviour  
3 September Implications for nations other than England by the linkage of administrative data as part of the migration statistics improvement programme  
3 September Legal mechanisms to provide for the disclosure of administrative data from Welsh authorities for linkage

#### August 2008

4 August Delay in publication of the Department for Work and Pensions statistical bulletin *Tax Benefit Model Tables*  
7 August Collection and release of data on Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) by the Department for Children, Schools and Families  
20 August Delay in publication of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) data on monthly property transactions and withdrawal of data published in July  
20 August Report of New Local Government Network on the future of the decennial census  
20 August Quality of ONS mid-year population estimates and progress of review to improve population and migration statistics  
26 August Media reporting of data on the number of older workers in "*Older workers losing jobs in credit crunch*"  
26 August Data published by the Department for Children, Families and Schools regarding inequality in schools  
28 August Circulation of Home Office press notice containing policy comment and statistical content of ONS and Home Office press briefing material distributed at a press conference hosted by the UK Statistics Authority  
29 August Confidentiality of census records in light of the award of 2011 Census contract  
29 August Quality of ONS statistics on retail sales and implications on levels of public trust in official statistics





## Annex D - SA(09)01 - Priorities for Monitoring Review in 2009

### July 2008

2 July	Analysis of data on overseas second home ownership in ONS statistical bulletin <i>Economic Trends</i>
4 July	Inclusion of contact details of relevant statisticians in departmental statistical bulletins
7 July	Analysis of Home Office data on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
7 July	Fawcett Society analysis of data on convictions for rape by police force area in England and Wales
8 July	Responsibility for maintenance of online archive of <i>Criminal Statistics</i> statistical bulletin and supplementary tables in light of changes in the machinery of Government
22 July	HM Treasury announcement of preparations for a change in the fiscal rules in advance of publication of statistics on public finances on 18 July

### June 2008

3 June	Methods of calculation of Gross Domestic Product
5 June	Attention drawn to parliamentary exchanges on 4 June regarding the use and misuse of statistics
6 June	Availability of input-output tables for economic modelling and importance to academic researchers
9 June	Criticism of the Office for National Statistics by local authorities regarding migration statistics
16 June	Delay in publication of the Department for Work and Pensions statistical bulletin <i>Households Below Average Income</i>
17 June	Request for views of the Authority regarding one of the preferred suppliers of services for the 2011 Census
20 June	ONS retail sales data and apparent differences between published data and analyst expectations
23 June	ONS assessment of Private Finance Initiative schemes and symmetric adjustment to debts and assets for on-book schemes
30 June	Quality of ONS data on retail sales

### May 2008

7 May	Low levels of public trust in official statistics, especially in measures of inflation
12 May	Attention drawn to media comment on the quality of official measures of inflation
27 May	Availability of official estimates of non-EU work-related migration

### April 2008

2 April	Accuracy of data on MRSA cases supplied in answer to a written parliamentary question (HC Deb 26.03.2008, c202w)
7 April	Availability of official estimates of non-EU work-related migration
7 April	Delay in publication of the Department for Work and Pensions statistical bulletin <i>Households Below Average Income</i>
10 April	Analysis of data published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport regarding the impact of the <i>Licensing Act 2003</i> on live music events
11 April	Non-inclusion of Bank of England statistics on the UK Statistics Authority Publication Hub
11 April	Implications for statistical quality in light of the recruitment policy of the Office for National Statistics
21 April	Content of questions asked in the Integrated Household Survey
28 April	Accuracy of the Consumer Prices Index as a measure of inflation

Issues may be raised with the UK Statistics Authority by contacting:

[authority.enquiries@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:authority.enquiries@statistics.gov.uk)

Or by post: UK Statistics Authority, Statistics House, Myddelton Street, London, EC1R 1UW



## Annex E

### Specification for a Monitoring Report on '*Strengthening the User Voice*'

#### Definitions

1. For the purposes of this review, the term "user of statistics" refers to bodies both inside and outside government, including government departments, local authorities, businesses, the voluntary sector and the general public; each to the extent that they use official statistics in ways that serve the public interest. Within this we include the use of official statistics by government to make policy, set targets and manage public services; the use by business in ways that promote efficient markets; and the use by the general public in judging the performance of government and public institutions and in democratic processes. The test we apply is whether the use to which the statistics are put can be seen to serve the public good, not whether the use is seen to be 'official'.

#### Purpose of review

2. The UK Statistics Authority's *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, places a number of requirements on organisations that produce official statistics in relation to understanding the needs of users of statistics. For example it says:  
*"Investigate and document the needs of users of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform"* and  
*"Provide information on the quality and reliability of statistics in relation to the range of potential uses..."*
3. This review aims to assess the current development of user engagement across a wide spectrum of users (and uses) and a wide spectrum of producer bodies.
4. We believe that a coordinated approach to improving communication between users and producers will both strengthen the user voice and increase understanding within government of the statistical needs of society. With more developed forms of engagement, users will more effectively be able to express their needs, provide feedback on the statistics being produced, and see their own requirements in the context of competing demands on the statistical service. At the same time, producers of statistics will be better able to prioritise, identify the most appropriate and relevant statistics to be produced, and balance the need to improve data

## Annex E - SA(09)01 – Priorities for Monitoring Reviews

against the need for better communication of, and access to, the statistical products already produced.

5. This review by the Monitoring and Assessment Team of the UK Statistics Authority is to assist the Authority in fulfilling its obligations under section 8 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, particularly the requirement to report in relation to good practice. The Act states that:

*“The Board [Authority] is to monitor the production and publication of official statistics.*

*The Board may report any concerns it has about –*

- a. The quality of any official statistics,*
- b. Good practice in relation to any official statistics, or*
- c. The comprehensiveness of any official statistics to the person responsible for those statistics*

*The Board may publish its findings or any report under this section.”*

6. The review will aim to
- raise awareness of the benefits of engaging in a systematic way with users, both in terms of serving the public good and providing incontrovertible evidence of the value of the statistical product. To this end, the review will consider the extent to which the production of official statistics currently takes account of the needs of users;
  - identify ways in which improvement in engagement between producers of statistics and users can be achieved;
  - identify ways in which the specific needs of different users can be communicated effectively and systematically to producers.

### Background

7. It is clear from dialogue with user groups and others, that users often feel that their voice is not currently being heard sufficiently clearly, and we believe that over time this may have negative consequences for all parts of the statistical value-chain, from funding, planning and delivery to ensuring public value.
8. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 identifies and formalises a very broad concept of the value of official statistics, stating in Section 7 that: *the Board [Authority] is to have the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good*]. The term "the public good" embraces a wide variety of uses, for example as

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outlined in a report, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*, published by the Statistics Commission in March 2007.

9. That report looked specifically at public and private sector organisations. It considered the extent to which official statistics influence decision-making and provided examples of specific uses. The report also looked at the public value derived from these uses and the implications for statistical planning and governance. As part of its conclusions, the report found that there was extensive and wide-ranging use of official statistics in decision-making in public, voluntary and private sector organisations in the UK. The report went on to identify some aspects of official statistics that require attention, including the more effective engagement of users, improved communication between producers and users, and better planning arrangements taking into account all users' needs which would help to maximise the public value of official statistics.
10. The 2008 Statistics User Forum Conference was entitled "Transforming official statistics to serve society". The conference noted that the statistical service needs to meet the needs not just of government but of all users. The conference aimed to provide a forum in which to identify the means by which such a statistical service can be achieved. This review will build on the conclusions of the conference, providing a systematic overview of these means.
11. It is generally recognised that there is no simple answer to improved engagement. Users of statistics can be difficult to identify clearly – for example because a decision-making process which is informed by official statistics may be shared by a number of committees or institutions, none of which sees itself as a significant user of statistics *per se*. It is thus unlikely that a single initiative would transform the engagement between such a diffuse user structure and the, sometimes diffuse, producer structure. It is more realistic to think in terms of a large number of smaller initiatives, which is why the review will begin by putting together an inventory of measures currently being taken as well as looking further afield for examples of other possible measures. The review aims in this way to map out possible paths towards better user engagement.
12. Furthermore, the process of improving engagement must be seen as iterative and self-reinforcing. Statistical producers need to be able to demonstrate that they are responding to the views and priorities that are being expressed by users. Therefore an important part of the review

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will be to highlight examples of where statistics production has changed to meet the needs of specific users and the benefits of these actions.

### Scope of review

13. The review will focus particularly on users outside government, as outlined above, as it is their needs which often seem difficult to ascertain with confidence and are therefore hard to factor in to planning and funding discussions.
14. The review will not produce an inventory of specific users' needs but will instead focus on examples of where these needs have not been influential and examples of where they have been communicated in an effective and systematic way. The review will aim to systematically draw together and analyse a variety of methods of user engagement.
15. The report will be prepared in four sections:
  - evidence of the need to further engage the user;
  - examples of methods already being taken to consult users, both nationally and internationally;
  - a review of the different methods of user engagement; and
  - the identification of examples of beneficial changes to products following user engagement.

### Conduct of the review

16. The review will be undertaken by the Monitoring and Assessment Team. The project manager will be Cathy Kruger. It is proposed that the project board will comprise:
  - A non-executive member of the Authority as Chair
  - The National Statistician or her representative
  - Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment
  - A representative of the Royal Statistical Society – possibly the chair of the RSS National Statistics Working Party
  - The chair of the Statistics Users Forum, or her representative
  - Richard Laux, Director, Monitoring and Assessment Programme
  - project manager
17. There will be at least two meetings of the project board, one in February to initiate the review and one to discuss and approve a draft of the final report.

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18. A draft of the report will be circulated to project board members, within the Authority, and to any other government department affected by the recommendations. Any comments received in response to the draft report will be either acted on or included verbatim in the final report.

### Timetable

19. It would be desirable for the Authority to be able to report on early initiatives in this area when it publishes its first annual report to Parliament in spring 2009.
20. Work on the report should therefore start following approval of the specification at the meeting of the Authority board on 16 January 2009. An interim report should be available by May 2009.





**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)02

***Long Term Requirements for Official Statistics***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents proposals for progressing the Authority's agenda in relation to improving statistical planning.

**Timing**

2. If these proposals are accepted the Authority may wish to delegate oversight of progress to the next meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics in March 2009.

**Recommendations**

3. The Authority is invited to agree that:
  - i. the proposal for a Monitoring Report of *Long Term Requirements for Official Statistics* to be conducted by the Monitoring and Assessment Team is not now taken forward, but that instead;
  - ii. the objectives of reviewing and improving planning mechanisms and conducting a 'horizon-scanning' exercise are to be delivered as part of the work programme of the National Statistician's new Strategy and Planning Committee.

**Discussion**

4. The Authority considered an initial programme of five Monitoring Reports in 2008, the fifth report being *Long Term Requirements for Official Statistics*.
5. This report had originally been conceived as a review of the mechanisms for horizon scanning to determine future statistical requirements. However, in the course of discussion at the Committee for Official Statistics in July, it was agreed that the need to have evidence about long term requirements was pressing, not least in the context of the next Comprehensive Spending Review, and it would therefore be better to include in the project a horizon scanning exercise too.
6. These proposals were considered and endorsed by the Board of the Authority at its meeting of 30 September 2008 [SA(08)30]. An extract from this paper is presented at Annex A for information. Due to the expanded scope of the project, it was agreed that external consultants would be recruited to assist in the work.
7. During this period plans to reform the committee structure of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) were in development, so as to better align the GSS with the aims and objectives of the Authority. Subsequently a new top-level GSS committee for UK Statistical Strategy and Planning chaired by the National Statistician was convened.
8. This committee met for the first time in December 2008 and considered proposals for a new system for statistical planning. These are presented at Annex B. To make best use of the resources available to the Authority and to avoid duplication of effort it is now proposed that the work originally envisaged for the Monitoring Review is subsumed within the work programme of the Strategy and Planning Committee.
9. The next step could be for the Committee for Official Statistics to review progress from the Strategy and Planning Committee.

**List of Annexes**

- Annex A** Extract from Authority paper SA(08)30 *Management Arrangements for Monitoring Reviews*
- Annex B** Paper submitted to the GSS Strategy and Planning Committee *A New System for Statistical Planning*

**Annex A - Extract from Authority paper SA(08)30 *Management Arrangements for Monitoring Reviews*, Annex D**

**Report 5: Long term requirements for official statistics**

Concepts

1. The needs of Parliament, Government and society for official statistics evolve over time. There are long lead times in delivering statistical information and advice on new subjects – for example the shift in the balance between manufacturing industries and the service sector in the UK has prompted a need for more statistical information on the latter. This has been developing for some 20 years and is not yet completed. The expansion of the European Union and other international developments led to a need for better statistics on migration and this may take another 10 years to address fully. Concern about the impact of global warming may lead to demands for more comprehensive statistical data to inform and monitor policy.
2. If future requirements are to be met in a timely fashion, they need to be spotted as early as possible and explored within government.

Purpose of review

3. This review by the Monitoring and Assessment (M&A) Team of the UK Statistics Authority is to assist the Authority in fulfilling its obligations under Section 8 of The Act. The Act states that:

*The Board [Authority] is to monitor the production and publication of official statistics.*

*The Board may report any concerns it has about –*

- a. the quality of any official statistics,*
- b. good practice in relation to any official statistics, or*
- c. the comprehensiveness of any official statistics,*

*to the person responsible for those statistics*

*The Board may publish its findings or any report under this section.*

4. The review will address both the mechanisms needed for long term planning – we call this horizon scanning as it is about identifying the things that the statistical service will need to engage with in the future rather than planning for that engagement in any detail – and also to carry out an initial sweep of the horizon.
5. Such long range planning is of course iterative. Having formed some views and made recommendations about how the statistical service should respond, the process needs to be repeated at regular intervals with views and recommendations updated. Thus the mechanisms for ensuring effective iteration of the process are as important as the conclusions about future requirements of the first such formal horizon-scanning exercise.

Scope of review

6. The Monitoring report will:

- a. review existing published reports from any source, in the UK or internationally, that point to likely future UK statistical requirements and comment on the level of confidence that Government should have in the requirements identified;
- b. engage users of statistics, academics and other commentators to build consensus about the shape of future statistical requirements and record their views;
- c. report on consultations with the devolved administrations about any aspects of long term statistical requirements that are specific to them;
- d. review current plans to address future requirements and draw conclusions about the

- adequacy of current plans. This may require the documentation of current spending plans and major development priorities with a view to drawing some broad conclusions about how well they fit with perceived future requirements;
- e. consider how in the UK, where many bodies are involved in the production and/or funding of official statistics, the different parties might be engaged in regular horizon-scanning exercises so that coherent conclusions are reached and able to influence statistical planning in a coherent way;
  - f. consider any implications of the conclusions for statistical skills and human resources – either in terms of the balance of skills or the identification of likely areas of shortage. Given the long training period of government statisticians, an early indication of future requirements is likely to be helpful.

Conduct of the review

- 7. In view of the very wide scope of the review, an expert panel will be established to guide the required research and take decisions on the substance of the final report. A smaller group with some members from the expert panel, including the chair, and also including staff of the Monitoring and Assessment team of the UK Statistics Authority, will serve as the project board.
- 8. Consultants will be engaged, following open tender, to manage the project and to submit a written report to the Authority. The Authority will publish that report with whatever covering conclusions it wishes to add following consideration of the report submitted to it. The project manager will be appointed by the consultants in agreement with the Head of Assessment for the UK Statistics Authority.
- 9. It is proposed that the project board should comprise:
  - a. A non-executive member of the Authority as Chair, and also as chair of the larger expert group
  - b. The National Statistician or her representative
  - c. Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment
  - d. A representative of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) – possibly the chair of the RSS National Statistics Working Party
  - e. The chair of the Statistics Users Forum, or her representative
  - f. Richard Laux, Director, Monitoring and Assessment Programme
  - g. [consultant] as principal consultant
  - h. [consultant ], as project manager
  - i. A member of the M&A team, as liaison with the consultants
- 10. The project board would be expected to meet at least three times; to initiate the review; to assess progress ahead of completion of a draft report; and to agree the final report.
- 11. The larger expert group should include all those above (except the liaison official) plus invited individuals from among the leading producer bodies (major government departments); at least one senior representative from a devolved administration; invited representatives from Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- 12. A draft report will be circulated widely in government and to the expert group and other experts for comment before the conclusions and recommendations are finalised. All comments received will be published.

Timetable

13. The tender for the appointment of consultants will be issued before the end of 2008 and the appointment process will be completed by the end of February 2009. The review will run from March 2009 to July 2009 with an Emerging Findings report in May 2009 and the consultants report to the Authority submitted at the end of July 2009. The Authority will then circulate its own draft report incorporating the consultants' report in September 2009 and finalise its report in November 2009.



**Annex B - Paper submitted to the GSS Strategy and Planning Committee A  
New System for Statistical Planning**

**GSS STPL(08)02**



**The UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee**

**A new system for statistical planning**

Issue

1. This paper provides an overview of the proposed new planning arrangements for the UK statistical service. These arrangements have been designed to meet the needs of the UK Statistics Authority and other stakeholders. They explicitly recognise the autonomy of government departments to conduct their own planning and for the Devolved Administrations to conduct their planning to meet their own needs, but it outlines a way in which priorities can be determined collectively and will mean that statistical plans are shaped by a better understanding of user needs and the strategic goals for the Government Statistical Services (GSS) as a whole.

Introduction

2. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 provides an opportunity to re-examine the planning processes used across the statistical service. Under the former National Statistics arrangements the planning processes had a number of weaknesses, namely:
  - the absence of a body to provide strategic direction/challenge role;
  - the difficulty in marrying the different processes of the UK Government and Devolved Administrations;
  - Variable levels of user engagement.
  - Theme Working Groups having responsibility but no authority – particularly to influence departmental/administration spending;
3. As a result, statistical planning tended to take place at a departmental or a devolved level, with departments working in relative isolation. Despite the best intentions of the GSS, no real attempt was made to ensure that individual plans fitted together into a coherent overall work programme, nor was action taken to address known gaps.
4. A National Statistics Work Programme was published at regular intervals but it tended to be an aggregation of existing departmental plans with no real value added. Although there were 12 Theme Working Groups, for a variety of reasons many outside of the groups control, these were used more as fora to exchange information rather than carrying out a planning role. As a result, they lacked the ability to act in a co-ordinated way and scan the horizon effectively, so that when a problem arose with the quality of migration statistics a couple of years ago, a bespoke taskforce was set up to take the issue forward, rather than making use the Population and Migration Theme Working Group as might be expected.

The UK Statistics Authority

5. Under the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) the UK Statistics Authority has a responsibility to monitor the production and publication of official statistics and report any concerns it has. The Authority has recently published a consultation document which sets out their proposals for a Code of Practice for

Statistics and details out how they intend to fulfil this obligation. Any new proposals concerning statistical planning will obviously need to be consistent with the proposals set out in this new code.

In Principle 2 of the draft Code, the Authority states:

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

They go onto to list the practices which producers should follow

- Under the guidance of the UK Statistics Authority adopt systematic statistical planning arrangements including transparent priority setting that reflect the obligation to serve the public good.
- Report annually to the UK Statistics Authority on progress against statistical plans.

In addition to this, Principle 4 of the draft code states that producers should:

‘Make full use of shared statistical planning arrangements with other producers of official statistics both to minimise the risk of duplication in statistical production and to make it possible to use existing sources, in combination where appropriate, to meet user needs’.

Furthermore, in his 4 September 2008 speech to the Royal Statistical Society Annual Conference, Sir Michael Scholar said:

*‘Since we live in such a fast-changing world, I feel it is vital that we have a coherent planning system for UK official statistics. Instead of a ‘scatter-gun’ approach, composed of numerous individual departmental plans, we need a more structured and informed method of planning across the statistical system.’*

6. It is therefore clear that the UK Statistics Authority expects statistical producers to act in a more joined up fashion and plan in a more systematic way than has happened to date and that producers will need to report their progress annually to the Authority.

#### An effective planning system

7. To be effective, planning needs to take place at a number of levels within the statistical system and an optimal planning system will seamlessly integrate both ‘top- down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches to planning and also bring together the plans developed in each of the four countries into a coherent overall UK plan. Such an approach will mean that all users are listened to, and will result in a roadmap for the future development of the statistical system. This will require a change in culture across the GSS and the adoption of a more corporate approach.
8. It is reasonable to expect the UK Statistics Authority to adopt a high level ‘top-down’ approach to planning, reflecting their remit for the statistical system as a whole. They can be expected to carry a large amount of horizon-scanning, in order to set strategies and anticipate future user requirements. As such, the Authority is likely to identify broad areas for improvement. For example, more needs to be done to bring together the large amount migration data produced across government or a wider set of poverty statistics need to be developed and



published. The timescales associated with implementing these improvements is likely to be expressed in years rather than months and the Authority may only publish a new work programme every three to five years.

9. At the same time, producers will be developing detailed 'bottom-up' plans to meet specific and identified user needs. These plans will often be concerned with making enhancements to existing datasets rather than developing entirely new products. Producer plans will be produced and updated regularly, sometimes annually and will be tied into the Spending Round.

#### A new system

10. Our proposal, is to establish a planning system that operates at a number of levels and which recognises the requirement for different sorts of interaction between producers and users. The key outputs of this process will be:
  - National Statistician's Statistics Plan: This will be a plan presented by the National Statistician which sets out a strategic view of how the UK statistical service intends to meet the challenges posed by the Authority, and reflecting the needs of users across the UK. This plan will draw on and bring together the key elements from the wide range of statistical plans and will draw attention to some key issues identified by the Inter-Administration Committee.
  - Producer Plans: As now, each department/administration will continue to prepare their own statistics plan based on engagement with their users. These plans will be informed, in part, by issues/challenges that the Authority and others have identified.

#### Key Principles

11. **Planning will be a continual process.** The statistical service must be responsive to an ever-changing landscape and track user needs. As such, planning will be an iterative process which is driven by, but not tied to, the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Plans will be reviewed and reported upon on an annual basis. A key element of planning between Spending Rounds will be to carry out horizon scanning to identify future user needs and then to develop realistic costings and project plans for new statistical developments which would meet these needs. These costings could then feed into the next Spending Round
12. **The planning process will respect actual lines of authority.** The UK statistical service is composed of a number of autonomous bodies and the planning process will recognise that Departments and Administrations have their own processes in place to meet their own and their users' needs. However, it will also be recognised that they do not operate in isolation and the needs of the statistical system as a whole will be an influence on the development of individual statistical plans.
13. **Planning will include a gaps analysis.** Part of the regular planning process at all levels, will be a consideration of what is not being produced – gaps analysis, as well as looking at ways in which existing statistics can be developed. All producers will be encouraged to consider the scope for integration and look for ways of making their statistics more comparable with outputs from other departments/parts of the system.

#### Committees and Process

14. For planning to be successful it will need to integrate both top-down and bottom-up planning as this will allow a cross fertilisation of ideas. The committee system has been designed to facilitate this with information following in both directions going from the UK Statistics Authority downwards but also upwards from statistical producers. (See diagram 1). It will be for the Devolved Administrations

to determine the extent of their involvement, outside of their work with the Inter-Administration Committee.

15. The UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee will be the lynchpin of the system and play a key role in bringing together the top-down and bottom-up influences and will be chaired by the National Statistician and will set the strategic direction for the GSS. Although it has no authority over departmental or devolved administration planning, its position allows it to take an across the board view and it will spend some of its time horizon scanning to identify potential needs. It will draw on producer plans and seek evidence that work is progressing to meet the strategic objectives/challenges identified by the Authority (or seek reasons why not). It will also seek evidence that cross-cutting opportunities are being identified and that there are plans in place to address known gaps and meet future user needs. It will also ensure that the plans being developed by the statistical system are aligned with those from the other analytical professions.
16. A key role for this committee will be to establish time limited planning groups and to commission from these groups, detailed costings and project timetables for any statistical developments which will be required to meet the objectives of the Authority. These costings could then be used as the basis for bids in future spending rounds but could also be used as levers by the Authority to encourage Departments to allocate more of their budgets to statistics.
17. This committee will also act as conduit for producers to feedback concerns to the Authority. It will be able to elevate any issues emerging from across the producer plans to the Authority to consider through the Authority's Committee for Official Statistics. It will also be able to remit issues which relate to devolved statistics to the Inter-Administration Committee for consideration and resolution.
18. It is also anticipated that producers may want to consult with the committee before making any substantial changes to its statistical outputs. For example, Office for National Statistics (ONS) may wish to consult with this committee before making any changes to survey sample sizes. Such a consultation would allow producers to get a much clearer idea of the impact of any proposed changes before they are made. Any concerns about proposed changes could be discussed formally with the UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee before they are introduced. This committee may seek the view of the Authority and this may lead to reprioritisation as a result.
19. The main output of this Committee will be the National Statistician's Statistics Plan. This plan will be presented by the National Statistician and it will set out a way forward to address those areas where a need for improvement has been identified. The detail underpinning this plan will be found in the separate producer plans and this material will be aggregated into a Theme plan by the Theme leaders.
20. The Statistics Authority's Committee for Official Statistics will provide some influence over statistical planning, though it has no power to exert any authority. It may well set a challenge role to the UK statistics system, following up issues identified by the Authority and seeking evidence that issues it has identified are being addressed, as are user needs more widely. It will also have a role to consider any issues identified and elevated from producer plans.
21. Planning Groups (PGs) will be another key element of the planning process and will provide substantial support to the UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee. These will be time limited groups set up by the UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee and commissioned to consider a specific area of statistics where problems have been identified and come up proposals for

improvement (like the Migration Statistics Taskforce). As part of their work, PGs will be expected to develop detailed, fully costed proposals for any new developments which they identify as being required. These costings could then be used as an input into the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

22. Planning Groups will draw on producer plans and the personal expertise of its members. Planning Group members will be seen as the experts in their field and bringing these people into a group will inevitably generate dialogue and expose issues which need to be addressed.
23. It will be up to the Devolved Administrations to determine the extent of their involvement with each PG although their participation would be extremely valuable for those PGs which deal with devolved issues, where demands for comparable data are greatest.
24. The building blocks of this planning process are the producer plans – the separate Departmental and Administration plans. All departments and the Devolved Administrations will be required to produce a statistical workplan and producers will engage with their stakeholders and plan accordingly. These plans may identify areas where joined-up planning is desirable and will seek to respond to Authority comments, or identify issues that the Authority might wish to consider.
25. The role of the Inter-Administration Committee will be to identify inter-administration issues and any new international requirements and to ensure that these are reflected in the National Statistician's Statistics Plan.

#### Next steps

#### Addressing known areas of need

26. It is not necessary for the GSS to wait for the Authority to identify areas where improvements are required. Producer plans for the period 2009/10 (or longer) could be tabled for discussion by the Inter-Administration Committee and the UK Statistics Strategy and Planning Committee early in 2009, with a view to publishing a Statistics Plan later in 2009, early 2010. It is proposed that attention is focused initially on those areas where it is already known that improvements need to be made and which are currently within the Heads of Profession sphere of operations. As such, this will not necessarily encompass the fully range of Official Statistics.

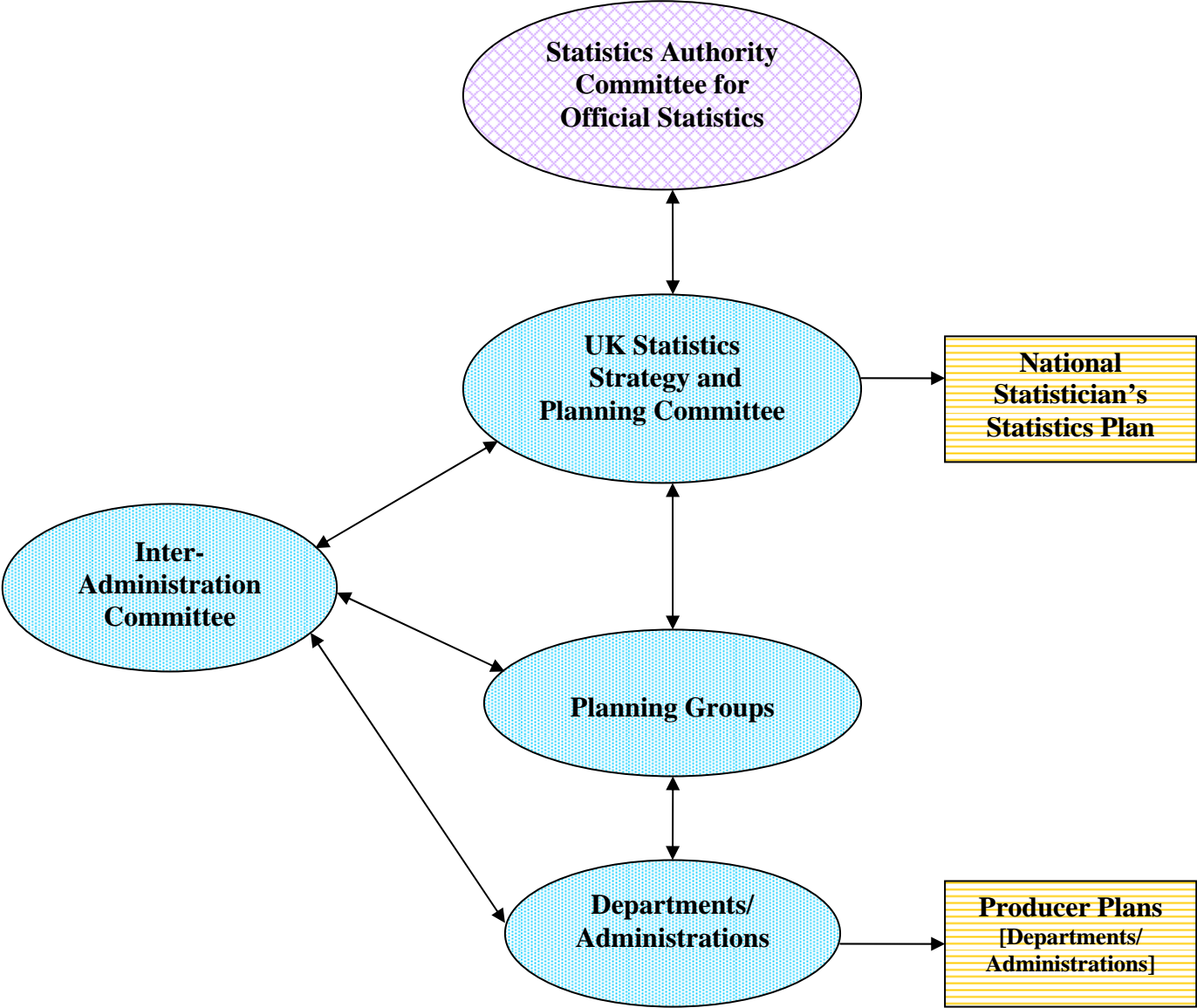
#### A narrative description of the Statistical System

27. The National Statistician has already identified the need for a one-off piece of work to produce a narrative description of the statistical system for the UK Statistics Authority. This description would help the Authority to build up a picture of the range of statistical activity carried out by the UK Statistical System, to determine which outputs are non-discretionary and required by statute or regulation and to allow it to get a feel for the amount of resources which are allocated to the statistical system and the distribution of these resources. It could also facilitate the identification of gaps/areas where statistics could be made more comparable.
28. Developing this narrative will require significant resources and the involvement of all of those bodies involved in statistical production within the UK. Much of the information required to produce this narrative already exists within Departmental statistical plans but it will need to be supplemented by additional material which will come from consideration of existing statistical frameworks and regulations and feedback from users and Theme Leaders will probably take this work forward. It is expected that one of the first actions taken by the UK Statistics

Strategy and Planning Committee will be to commission the production of this narrative.

**National Statistics and International Division, December 2008**

Diagram 1: Proposed Planning Process





**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)03

***Statistics Authority Intervention in the public use of Management Information  
and the use of Official Statistics in Policy Statements - Draft Statement***

This document will be published on the Authority's website in due course.  
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/index.html>





**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)04

***Notification of Requests for Assessment***

**Purpose**

1. This paper covers the text of letters sent to Ministers about certain statistics identified from the review of official statistics undertaken for Monitoring Report 3. These letters result from the decisions of the Authority on 27 November 2008 [SA(08)44] and 19 December [SA(08)45].

**Recommendations**

2. This paper is provided for information.

**Discussion**

3. The formal notifications under section 16 of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 are attached at Annex A. These will be laid before the House when Parliament returns after the winter recess. In response, Ministers must either confirm that they wish to request an assessment of the statistics and give a timetable, or decline to request an assessment and give their reasons.
4. The less formal letters at Annex B are about other statistics that the Authority considers to be important candidates for designation. These have not been notified under section 16 because producer bodies informed us that they were already intending to request assessments for these products. The letters draw the attention of Ministers to the statistics and state that such requests would be welcome.
5. We will be working with Office for National Statistics and statistical Heads of Profession to follow up other issues from the review - in particular, the need for a more comprehensive list of undesignated official statistics and for better information about each product.

**Jill Barelli, Monitoring and Assessment Team, January 2008.**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A: Text of Section 16 Letters**

**Annex B: Text of Other Letters**





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EC1R 1UW

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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP  
Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

6 January 2009

Dear Justice Secretary

**Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007: Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System; Judicial and Court Statistics; Statistics on the Implementation of the Freedom of Information Act in Central Government.**

This letter is notification under section 16 of the above Act, which states that:

- (1) Where in the case of any official statistics other than statistics produced by the Board:
  - (a) the appropriate authority has not under section 12(1) requested the Board to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics has been complied with, and
  - (b) the Board is of the view that it would be appropriate for it to do so, the Board must notify the appropriate authority accordingly.
- (2) Where the appropriate authority is a Minister of the Crown, the Board must lay a copy of its notification under subsection (1) before Parliament.

I understand that you are the appropriate authority for the above statistics. These statistics are not currently designated as National Statistics and are not therefore subject to formal assessment against the Code of Practice. Following a review of around 340 undesignated statistics, the Authority has decided to notify you that we are of the view that the above statistics should be assessed against the Code with a view to designation.

In accordance with subsections (3) to (5) of section 16 of the Act, I would be grateful if you could now provide me with one of the following:

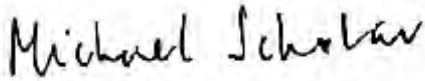
- (a) a statement that you intend to make a request for assessment under section 12(1), including a timetable for making the request **or**
- (b) a statement that you do not intend making such a request, giving your reasons.

## Annex A - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

A copy of this notification is being laid before Parliament in accordance with section 16(2) above. Section 16(3) of the Act requires that a copy of your statement in response to this notification should also be laid before Parliament.

I enclose a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this notification.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Copies to:

Sir Suma Chakrabarti, KCB

Tim Stamp

**Annex A**



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Islington  
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EC1R 1UW

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[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

---

**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP  
Secretary of State for International Development  
1 Palace Street  
London  
SW1E 5HE

6 January 2009

Dear Secretary of State

**Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007: ODA/GNI Ratio**

This letter is notification under section 16 of the above Act, which states that:

- (1) Where in the case of any official statistics other than statistics produced by the Board:
  - (a) the appropriate authority has not under section 12(1) requested the Board to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics has been complied with, and
  - (b) the Board is of the view that it would be appropriate for it to do so, the Board must notify the appropriate authority accordingly.
- (2) Where the appropriate authority is a Minister of the Crown, the Board must lay a copy of its notification under subsection (1) before Parliament.

I understand that you are the appropriate authority for the ODA/GNI Ratio. This set of statistics is not currently designated as a National Statistic and is not therefore subject to formal assessment against the Code of Practice. Following a review of around 340 undesignated statistics, the Authority has decided to notify you that we are of the view that the ODA/GNI Ratio should be assessed against the Code with a view to designation.

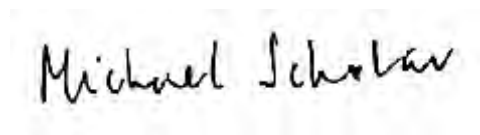
In accordance with subsections (3) to (5) of section 16 of the Act, I would be grateful if you could now provide me with one of the following:

- (a) a statement that you intend to make a request for assessment under section 12(1), including a timetable for making the request **or**
- (b) a statement that you do not intend making such a request, giving your reasons.

## Annex A - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

A copy of this notification is being laid before Parliament in accordance with section 16(2) above. Section 16(3) of the Act requires that a copy of your statement in response to this notification should also be laid before Parliament.

I enclose a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this notification.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Copies to:  
Minouche Shafik  
Dr Heidi Grainger

Annex A



UK Statistics Authority  
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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

6 January 2009

Dear Secretary of State

**Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007: Notification in relation to statistics on Gross Affordable Housing Supply; Council Housing Sales; Collection Rates for Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates; Housing Stock; Council Tax Levels Set by Local Authorities.**

This letter is notification under section 16 of the above Act, which states that:

- (1) Where in the case of any official statistics other than statistics produced by the Board:
  - (a) the appropriate authority has not under section 12(1) requested the Board to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics has been complied with, and
  - (b) the Board is of the view that it would be appropriate for it to do so, the Board must notify the appropriate authority accordingly.
- (2) Where the appropriate authority is a Minister of the Crown, the Board must lay a copy of its notification under subsection (1) before Parliament.

I understand that you are the appropriate authority for the above statistics. These statistics are not currently designated as National Statistics and are not therefore subject to formal assessment against the Code of Practice. Following a review of around 340 undesignated statistics, the Authority has decided to notify you that we are of the view that the above statistics should be assessed against the Code with a view to designation.

In accordance with subsections (3) to (5) of section 16 of the Act, I would be grateful if you could now provide me with one of the following:

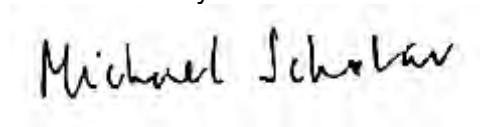
- (a) a statement that you intend to make a request for assessment under section 12(1), including a timetable for making the request **or**
- (b) a statement that you do not intend making such a request, giving your reasons.

## Annex A - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

A copy of this notification is being laid before Parliament in accordance with section 16(2) above. Section 16(3) of the Act requires that a copy of your statement in response to this notification should also be laid before Parliament.

I enclose a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this notification.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Copies to:  
Peter Housden  
Janet Dougharty



Annex A



UK Statistics Authority  
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[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP  
Secretary of State for Health  
Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

6 January 2009

Dear Secretary of State

**Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007: National Child Measurement Programme; Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet.**

This letter is notification under section 16 of the above Act, which states that:

- (1) Where in the case of any official statistics other than statistics produced by the Board:
  - (a) the appropriate authority has not under section 12(1) requested the Board to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics has been complied with, and
  - (b) the Board is of the view that it would be appropriate for it to do so, the Board must notify the appropriate authority accordingly.
- (2) Where the appropriate authority is a Minister of the Crown, the Board must lay a copy of its notification under subsection (1) before Parliament.

I understand that you are the appropriate authority for the above statistics, which are produced by the NHS Information Centre. These statistics are not currently designated as National Statistics and are not therefore subject to formal assessment against the Code of Practice. Following a review of around 340 undesignated statistics, the Authority has decided to notify you that we are of the view that the above statistics should be assessed against the Code with a view to designation.

In accordance with subsections (3) to (5) of section 16 of the Act, I would be grateful if you could now provide me with one of the following:

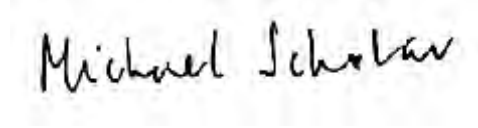
- (a) a statement that you intend to make a request for assessment under section 12(1), including a timetable for making the request **or**
- (b) a statement that you do not intend making such a request, giving your reasons.

## Annex A - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

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I enclose a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this notification.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a faint, light blue circular stamp.

**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Copies to:  
Tim Straughan  
Andy Sutherland

Annex B



UK Statistics Authority  
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[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

---

**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP  
Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

6 January 2009

Dear Justice Secretary

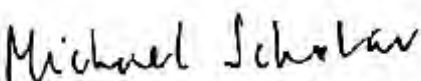
**Witness and Victim Experience Survey**

The UK Statistics Authority was established under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* with a remit to publish a Code of Practice for Statistics and to assess and determine whether official statistics comply with the Code. Those that do comply are designated as 'National Statistics'. Statistics that were already designated under the previous arrangements for National Statistics continue to be designated until such time as they are assessed against the new Code.

The Act requires the Authority to assess other official statistics against the Code of Practice when requested to do so, but the request must come from the relevant Minister, a Northern Ireland department or from the National Statistician (depending on which body produces the statistics). Section 16 of the Act provides that where no such request has been received, but the Authority considers that an assessment would be appropriate, it must notify the relevant Minister and lay a copy of its notification before Parliament.

My purpose in writing to you now is to draw your attention to the above set of official statistics, which is currently undesignated but which we judge to be an important candidate for National Statistics status. We are aware that its status is being considered within MoJ and that a request for designation may be forthcoming. Such a request would be welcome and we would not wish to pre-empt it by invoking the procedure set out in section 16 of the Act. We therefore look forward to hearing from you in due course.

For information, I am enclosing a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this letter. We will be reviewing undesignated statistics again towards the end of next year, and in some cases where we have not notified Ministers under section 16 on this occasion, we will consider the possibility of doing so again.

  
Sir Michael Scholar KCB

## Annex B - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

Copies to:

Sir Suma Chakrabarti, KCB

Tim Stamp

**Annex B**



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---

**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

6 January 2009

Dear Secretary of State

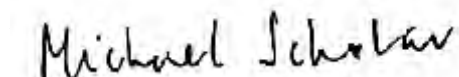
**House Price Index**

The UK Statistics Authority was established under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* with a remit to publish a Code of Practice for Statistics and to assess and determine whether official statistics comply with the Code. Those that do comply are designated as 'National Statistics'. Statistics that were already designated under the previous arrangements for National Statistics continue to be designated until such time as they are assessed against the new Code.

The Act requires the Authority to assess other official statistics against the Code of Practice when requested to do so, but the request must come from the relevant Minister, a Northern Ireland department or from the National Statistician (depending on which body produces the statistics). Section 16 of the Act provides that where no such request has been received, but the Authority considers that an assessment would be appropriate, it must notify the relevant Minister and lay a copy of its notification before Parliament.

My purpose in writing to you now is to draw your attention to the above set of official statistics, which is currently undesignated but which we judge to be an important candidate for National Statistics status. We are aware that its status is being considered within CLG and that a request for designation may be forthcoming. Such a request would be welcome and we would not wish to pre-empt it by invoking the procedure set out in section 16 of the Act. We therefore look forward to hearing from you in due course.

For information, I am enclosing a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this letter. We will be reviewing undesignated statistics again towards the end of next year, and in some cases where we have not notified Ministers under section 16 on this occasion, we will consider the possibility of doing so again.

  
Sir Michael Scholar KCB

## Annex B - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

Copies to:  
Peter Housden  
Janet Dougharty

Annex B



UK Statistics Authority  
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[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP  
Secretary of State for Health  
Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

6 January 2009

Dear Secretary of State

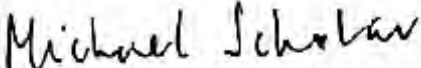
**NHS 'Referral to Treatment' Waiting Times; Accident and Emergency (A&E) Activity: Total Time Spent in A&E from Arrival to Admission, Discharge or Transfer and Waiting for Emergency Admission through A&E.**

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**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

## Annex B - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

Copies to:  
Hugh Taylor  
Gill Eastabrook



**Annex B**



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[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP  
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change  
3-8 Whitehall Place  
London  
SW1A 2HH

6 January 2009

Dear Secretary of State

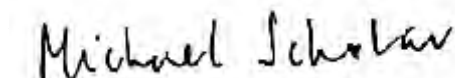
**UK Energy Sector Indicators; Fuel Poverty Statistics**

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My purpose in writing to you now is to draw your attention to the above sets of official statistics, which are currently undesignated but which we judge to be important candidates for National Statistics status. We are aware that their status is being considered within DECC and that requests for designation may be forthcoming. Such requests would be welcome and we would not wish to pre-empt them by invoking the procedure set out in section 16 of the Act. We therefore look forward to hearing from you in due course.

For information, I am enclosing a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this letter. We will be reviewing undesignated statistics again towards the end of next year, and in some cases where we have not notified Ministers under section 16 on this occasion, we will consider the possibility of doing so again.

  
Sir Michael Scholar KCB

## Annex B - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

Copies to:  
Moira Wallace  
Duncan Millard

Annex B



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[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health & Wellbeing  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

6 January 2009

Dear Cabinet Secretary

**Scottish Health Survey; Scottish House Condition Survey – ‘Key Findings’**

The UK Statistics Authority was established under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* with a remit to publish a Code of Practice for Statistics and to assess and determine whether official statistics comply with the Code. Those that do comply are designated as ‘National Statistics’. Statistics that were already designated under the previous arrangements for National Statistics continue to be designated until such time as they are assessed against the new Code.

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My purpose in writing to you now is to draw your attention to the above sets of official statistics, which are currently undesignated but which we judge to be important candidates for National Statistics status. We are aware that their status is being considered within the Scottish Government and that requests for designation may be forthcoming. Such requests would be welcome and we would not wish to pre-empt them by invoking the procedure set out in section 16 of the Act. We therefore look forward to hearing from you in due course.

For information, I am enclosing a copy of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and a copy of the report *Priorities for Designation as Official Statistics*, which sets out the background to this letter. We will be reviewing undesignated statistics again towards the end of next year, and in some cases where we have not notified Ministers under section 16 on this occasion, we will consider the possibility of doing so again.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar".

**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

## Annex B - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

Copies to:  
Dr Kevin Woods  
Rob Wishart

Annex B



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[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Kenny MacAskill MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

6 January 2009

Dear Cabinet Secretary

**Scottish Crime and Victimisation Survey**

The UK Statistics Authority was established under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* with a remit to publish a Code of Practice for Statistics and to assess and determine whether official statistics comply with the Code. Those that do comply are designated as 'National Statistics'. Statistics that were already designated under the previous arrangements for National Statistics continue to be designated until such time as they are assessed against the new Code.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar".

**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

## Annex B - SA(09)04 - Notification of Requests for Designation

Copies to:  
Robert Gordon  
Rob Wishart

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(09)05

***Launch of the Publication Hub Mark II***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides a brief update on the second release of the Publication Hub, and future Office for National Statistics (ONS) website developments.

**Timing**

2. Routine. The second release of the Publication Hub is currently planned for the end of January 2009.

**Recommendation**

3. Authority members are invited to note the contents of this paper. Screenshots of some pages from the new websites will be presented at the Authority meeting.

**Discussion**

4. The Director of the i-Dissemination Programme, Jon Simmons, wrote to Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) in all departments in October 2008 outlining the future plans for the Publication Hub and ONS websites. A copy of this letter is attached at Annex A.
5. Since writing, it has been necessary to delay the launch of the second release of the Hub from end-December to end-January due to problems in completing work to establish the web hosting environment in Fujitsu's data centre. HoPs were informed of this delay in December, and that we were aiming to relaunch the Hub on 29th January 2009.  
[Note: At the time of drafting, these issues are still not fully resolved]
6. The second version of the Hub will significantly enhance the functionality provided, introducing the new National Statistics catalogue, and much improved information on planned releases, along with back-office systems enabling all departments to update their publication release schedules and other information from their own IT desktops. The name of the Hub has been changed to the 'UK National Statistics Publication Hub', removing the word 'Authority' to avoid confusion with the Authority's own website and thereby making it easier for users to find the latter.
7. The Publication Hub has already improved the co-ordination and consistency in the way in which statistical releases are published across Government, most notably through the introduction of a standard 9:30am release time, clearer identification of National Statistics status, and the introduction of a standard statistical release page. These pages provide a standard structure and wording to announce new statistical releases, within the context of departments' own websites, ensuring that these statistical pages are free from any political comment or links, and that users are provided with the information which will help them to make best use of any new statistics.
8. The standard statistical release pages have already been adopted by many departments, but they are not being used consistently at present (ONS's own releases will not adopt all of the elements until the new ONS website is established in April). We are working with HoPs to ensure they move towards adopting this new approach as quickly as possible.
9. Once the Hub is relaunched, the ONS i-Dissemination team will then be concentrating on the development of the new ONS website, the back-office publication system ('Single Source Publishing'), and new systems for holding and publishing datasets over the internet (referred to within ONS as the 'Future of the Web' strategy).

10. The new ONS website and publication system will enable the office to produce statistical releases in a more accessible format, using web-first design principles and making it easier for users to find the information they are seeking. Staff in the ONS Communication Division are planning to introduce the new formats for ONS releases from April, and board members should begin to see these changes from then although initially some publications already underway will continue to emerge in the old styles. We also plan to migrate a large volume of existing publications in their current format so that these will not be lost to users.
11. Subsequent plans for the 'Future of the Web' should enable us to make much more of our data available to users directly, in a more accessible way, although it will take several years to roll any new systems out across all ONS business areas. The new systems we are designing aim to make data available through an on-line explorer, in order that users are able to construct their own tables and charts 'on the fly', or to download the data in a more consistent format to their own personal computers for further analysis.
12. We are also looking to introduce a more flexible interface for these data systems, enabling other web-users to link directly to ONS data and integrate it with their own data, something keenly supported by a variety of forward-thinking Government strategies such as the Cabinet Office 'Power of Information' strategy and the UK Location Strategy being led by Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We aim to use these new data systems for the 2011 Census results, something requested by our key Census data users, and hope to have pilot systems ready for testing this Spring, focusing initially on National Accounts datasets and the Population projections. These pilots will then provide the basis for a review by Census later in 2009.
13. The current i-Dissemination Programme is planned to conclude its initial work at the end of March 2009. Discussions are currently underway to establish how best to mainstream website development within ONS following this, and the appropriate level of funding to ensure this works and is able to continue. The future arrangements will aim to bring together all existing activity on website development relating to the Hub, main ONS website, Neighbourhood Statistics and Census.

**Jon Simmons, Director i-Dissemination (ONS), January 2009**

#### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A Letter from the Director for i-Dissemination to Statistical Heads of Profession**



**Annex A**

**Letter from the Director for i-Dissemination to  
Statistical Heads of Profession 17th October, 2008**

From: Jon Simmons

Director for i-Dissemination

Office for National Statistics

17<sup>th</sup> October 2008

cc ONS EMG

Heads of Profession

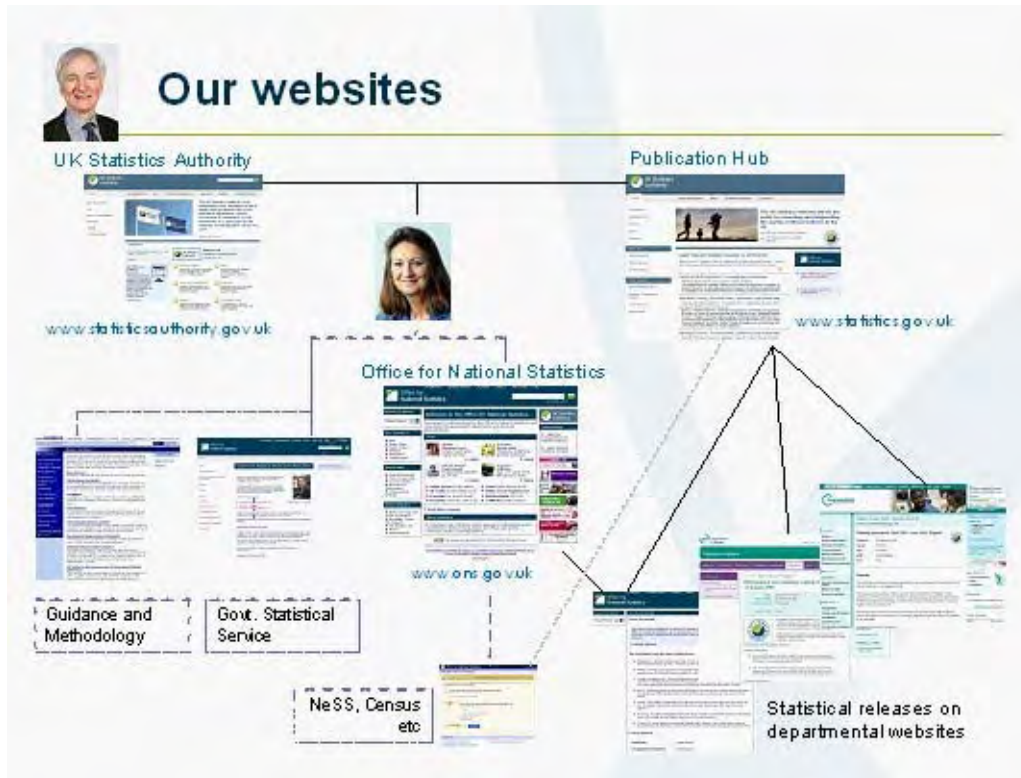
*An update on GSS i-Dissemination*

1. This note provides you with an update on some of the key developments relating to the Publication Hub. I will provide a further update at the next Heads of Profession meeting in November, but please share this note with your staff in the meantime.

*Publication Hub*

- 2 The Publication Hub has provided for the first time a one-stop-shop for statistics users where they can find each day links to all of the new National Statistics from across Government. It has promoted the independence and authority of national statistics and contributed to improving consistency in release practice across the UK statistical system. It has been accompanied by a new approach to media briefings, for example involving Home Office statisticians presenting crime statistics and migration statistics to the media away from their department. Departments are also now adopting a common format for the web pages announcing new releases, ensuring that statistics are presented in a more consistent way without policy or political comment.
- 3 Instead of being the sole repository for all national statistics, the Hub is in fact a complex system of hyperlinks to departmental statistics publication pages, maintained to a common standard, which take the user direct to the end product desired. The Hub front page (the 'what's new') is the home for only national statistics outputs and it is not intended to be diluted with many of the non-data products that are produced by the GSS whether these be methodological papers or corporate documents. If these additional non-NS outputs are planned, they can be announced through the Release Calendar and listed within the new National Statistics catalogue, where we will also be providing links to other official statistics and some non-GSS outputs.
- 4 By the end of this year ONS plans to launch a second and significantly enhanced release of the Publication Hub. The website will be redesigned and alongside the 'what's new' facility that has always been at the heart of the Hub we will introduce the new Taxonomy along with the catalogue of national statistics and other related statistical products; there will be the new searchable calendar for forthcoming releases; and of course, users will be able to search for information directly within the Hub. Your staff are already contributing information for all of these additions, and key users in each department are being invited to attend the training on the new systems for entering and updating Hub information.

- 5 The Publication Hub is part of a family of websites each of which support the key elements of the UK statistical system, and together will enhance the service we collectively provide to our users. The relationships between the current websites are illustrated below, but of course their design and content will change radically over coming months. Following the launch of the Hub, and prior to the full release of the new ONS website, much of the ONS content will still appear at a [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) URL, but this will change as we migrate the old content into the new website.



#### Release Calendar

- 6 The Release Calendar is being modernised, both to improve the functionality for users and to enable your staff to update content and dates from your own offices. We have agreed that it is desirable that all GSS producers of statistics announce their planned releases for 12 months ahead (at least month of release) reflecting the normal annual work programme. Unlike the 'what's new' section of the Hub, the Release Calendar can contain both National Statistics and other planned releases – but only national statistics should be identified as NS in order that they automatically be reported on the Hub at the point of release. Actual date of release should be added no less than 4 weeks before publication (6 months for market sensitive statistics). If that is not possible, an explanation can (and should) be provided for publication alongside the relevant calendar entry.
- 7 As with other parts of the Hub, Heads of Profession (or Divisional Directors in ONS) are responsible for approving all content – including dates, titles, summaries and associated metadata (this role can be delegated, but responsibility lies with the department not ONS or UK Statistics Authority). The GSS Publication Committee is likely to use this information to review long-term publication plans to look for further opportunities for greater coherence.

#### Statistical Release Pages

- 8 The concept of a standard statistical release page was introduced at the launch of the Hub, and the majority of departments have now adopted this standard format for the webpage that is, in effect, the holder for any information relevant to a particular

statistical release, including access to datasets and spreadsheets, archive material, basic meta data and contact information. The statistical release page can in some cases act as the binder for data releases, thus removing the need for a separate statistical bulletin or press release. It is the page to which the 'What's new' Hub entry, and other relevant links to a publication elsewhere on the Hub, will link.

- 9 Guidance on best practice for a standard statistical release page is in the guidance on the Publication Hub available on Statnet.

#### National Statistics Catalogue

- 10 The new catalogue sits under the themes and topics and will allow users to find information on the statistics produced by the Government Statistical Service, and to have confidence that the information they have found is comprehensive and of sound quality. Users should be linked directly to statistical sources relevant to that topic, and should not have to be diverted to an alternative website (unless it is for devolved matters). The catalogue pages should include links to other key statistics, including some of the 'official statistics' and a limited range of trusted sources from outside Government. The catalogue should therefore aim to provide a comprehensive access to good statistics on any topic, from whatever source.
- 11 The aim is to be externally-focused and cross-Government, not departmental or inwardly-focused. Content should be agreed with all relevant departments, in order to represent all of the interests and devolved governments as appropriate. Cross-cutting pages are available for genuinely cross-cutting topics (currently only two - i. Children and ii. Equality & Diversity).
- 12 Each page will normally have an SCS/G6 level lead, with responsibility for signing off content (HoPs should oversee if not directly responsible). Publication lists and relationships are dynamically generated from entries for the Release calendar. Other content/links can be amended from departmental desktops.

#### The Taxonomy

- 13 The new National Statistics taxonomy (NSCL) replaces the previous themes, and provides a comprehensive hierarchy of themes and topics which will underpin much of the NS Catalogue and Hub. The taxonomy provides for eleven NS themes, broken down into subjects and topics. Theme names will appear next to the publication titles on the Hub, the topics provide the structure for pages in the new Catalogue. Together, the taxonomy will provide a logical and structured route for the uninitiated to find our data.
- 14 The revised thematic structure is as follows (Themes, and subjects only):
- **Agriculture and Environment** [Agriculture, Forestry, Fish, Environment]
  - **Business and Energy** [Businesses, Energy, Production industries, Services]
  - **Crime and Justice** [Crime, Police, Justice, Offenders]
  - **Children, Education and Skills** [Children and early years, School and college education, Higher education and adult learning]
  - **Economy** [Personal Finances, National Accounts, Prices output and productivity, Government receipts and expenditure]
  - **Government** (*Replaces 'Other'*) [Central and local government, International affairs, Defence]
  - **Health and Social Care** [Health care system, Specialist health services, Health of the population, Social care]
  - **Labour Market** [People in work, People not in work, Job statistics]
  - **Population** [Births, Deaths, Families, Population change, Migration]
  - **People and Places** (*New theme*) [People, Housing and households, Planning, Communities, Fire and rescue]

- **Travel and Transport** [Roads, Other modes of transport]

The full taxonomy is available on Statnet, and all departments should adopt the new taxonomy immediately and ensure that their products are linked with the appropriate themes and topics.

And finally...

- 15 The new Hub is planned for launch just before Christmas, and it will require a short but intensive period of work as we finalise the website, prepare catalogue pages and release information, and train users from across the GSS. Thereafter, my hope is that we will all see the benefits from a much improved, automated and coherent National Statistics web presence.
- 16 In the new year, the focus of the i-Dissemination team will move to completing work on the new ONS website, new publication formats for ONS on-line publications, new internal publication workflow and templates, and prototypes for the new approaches to disseminating datasets using data cubes, an Application Protocol Interface (API) and a new data explorer.
- 17 I hope that this update is useful and informative. I will be discussing these developments again at the next Heads of Profession meeting on 3rd November, and would be happy to take any questions at that point.

With best wishes,

Jon Simmons