

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Meeting of Thursday 27 November 2008
Board Room, Statistics House, Islington**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)

Lord Rowe-Beard (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 Steve Nickell

Professor David Rhind

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Mr Mervyn Stevens

Other Attendees

Mr Richard Laux and Mr Mark Pont (Monitoring and Assessment, UK Statistics Authority)

- items 6 - 8

Apologies

Mr Steve Newman

1. Chair's opening remarks

1.1 The Chair welcomed Professor Sir Roger Jowell to his first meeting as Deputy Chair (Official Statistics) of the Authority.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Mr Steve Newman.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest (but on item 11.1 Professor Rhind reminded the meeting that he is a member of the Court of the Bank of England).

3. Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting on 23 October 2008 were accepted as a true and fair account of that meeting.

4. Reports from Committee Chairs

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board

4.1 Lord Rowe-Beddoe, Deputy Chair (ONS) gave a report on the meeting of the ONS Board held earlier that day. He reported that the meeting had received updates on the ONS Transformation and IT modernisation programmes and that the ONS Board had been pleased to note that ONS had been re-accredited as an Investor in People (IiP). Lord Rowe-Beddoe also reported that there were to be some structural changes in the ONS in January 2009 and that this should facilitate more efficient working with the ONS Board.

5. Responding to Issues of Public Concern [SA(08)41]

5.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which proposed a process which would be followed when issues of public concern over official statistics were raised with the Authority. The Authority agreed that the process outlined in the paper should be adopted. It was also agreed that the Secretariat should develop the process into a protocol and that the National Statistician should communicate the agreed process to the Government Statistical Service.

6. Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Report on the Consultation and the Principles and Procedures for Assessment [SA(08)42]

6.1 Mr Alldritt presented a paper which included a draft of the Code of Practice and explained that, when published together with a response to the consultation exercise, would constitute Monitoring Report 2 of the Authority. The Code of Practice would also be published as a stand-alone document.

6.2 The meeting discussed in detail each of the Principles and Protocols in the draft Code and, subject to some amendments, instructed that the Code of Practice should be published as Monitoring Report 2 of the Authority in early January 2009. The intention to publish the detailed comments from respondents to the consultation on the Authority's website was noted.

7. The Assessment and Designation Process [SA(08)43]

7.1 Mr Pont presented a paper which set out proposals on how the Authority might approach its initial programme of assessments, starting in February 2009. The paper considered designation categories and how outcomes in terms of delivering improvements to National Statistics might be measured. Two draft statements for publication on the Authority's website which described the assessment process and designation were also set out.

7.2 The meeting considered the proposals for this process and agreed to their implementation for the initial programme of assessments and that they should be reviewed subsequently by the Authority in the light of actual practice. It was also agreed that the statements on the Assessment process and Designation should be published on the Authority's website.

8. Monitoring Report 3: Priorities for designation as National Statistics [SA(08)44]

8.1 Mr Laux introduced a paper which included a draft of the Authority's Monitoring Report 3: Priorities for designation as National Statistics. He explained the rationale and process that had been followed in identifying the initial group of thirteen official statistics that it was proposed should be the subject of the Authority issuing Section 16 notices under the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007).

8.2 The Authority approved the publication in early January 2008 of Monitoring Report 3 and agreed that the Report should include the current list of National Statistics as an annex to that report. The Authority also instructed that notices under Section 16 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) be issued in respect of the thirteen sets of statistics identified in the Report.

9. Census 2011

9.1 Ms Dunnell gave an oral report on the progress of the Census 2011. She advised the Authority that work was progressing well. The meeting considered progress with procurement issues, stakeholder engagement, the independent security review and on the development of a national address register.

9.2 The Census White Paper would be published on 11 December and a Parliamentary process would follow. The Authority suggested that ONS should publish a Questions and Answers briefing for public information to coincide with the publication of the White Paper. It noted that there was to be a further Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Gateway review of the project in January 2009 and that an ONS project had been initiated to begin to analyse the case for and against carrying out a Census in 2021 or 2016.

10. The Authority's Annual Report 2008-09

10.1 Mr Bumpstead advised the Authority of their statutory obligations to produce an Annual Report and Accounts. Planning in conjunction with ONS officials had started in order that this could be published in July 2009. The Authority agreed that there would be a single Annual Report and Accounts covering the whole of the Authority's remit and that outline plans for this should be submitted to the next meeting of the Authority on 19 December 2008.

11. Any other business

11.1 The Chair reported to the Authority on his recent meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England. The Authority agreed to consider how it might best engage further with the Bank of England and HM Treasury.

11.2 It was agreed that the Authority's governance arrangements should be reviewed after a year of operation and that to this end there should be an initial discussion at an Authority meeting in the New Year.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Thursday, 27 November, 2008

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

Chair: Sir Michael Scholar

Apologies: Mr Steve Newman

1	Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 231008
2	Reports from Committee Chairs	Oral Report Lord Rowe-Beddoe
3	Responding to Issues of Public Concern	SA(08)41 Secretariat
4	Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Report on the Consultation and the Principles and Procedures for Assessment	SA(08)42 Mr Richard Alldritt
5	The Assessment and Designation Process	SA(08)43 Mr Mark Pont
6	Monitoring Report 3: Priorities for Designation as National Statistics	SA(08)44 Mr Richard Laux
7	Census 2011	Oral Report Ms Karen Dunnell
8	The Authority's Annual Report	Oral Report Secretariat
9	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Friday, 19 December, 2008

Statistics House, London, 11:15 - 12:45

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)41

Responding to Issues of Public Concern

Purpose

1. This paper proposes a structured process to guide how the UK Statistics Authority might respond to issues raised with it.

Timing

2. If agreed these arrangements may be implemented with immediate effect.

Recommendations

3. Authority members are invited to:
 - i. consider and comment on the merits of the proposals (paragraphs 7 to 9), and;
 - ii. consider whether the proposals meet the stated objectives (paragraph 5).

Discussion

4. At its meeting on 23 October 2008 the Authority discussed how it could best respond to infractions of the Code of Practice - perceived or actual - and to other issues raised with it. The meeting also discussed the respective roles of the Head of Assessment and the National Statistician in advising on that response. In particular, issues which required a response in the short-term were considered, together with situations which led to proposals for a monitoring report or note.
5. It was agreed that a consistent approach to managing the Authority's responses was essential. The approach should further the Authority's objectives of building public trust in official statistics and promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It should also seek to preserve the integrity of the role of the National Statistician as Head of Profession, protect the independence of the Authority's assessment and scrutiny function and ensure that the Authority's other obligations including those specified in the Statistics Act are met. Finally, the approach should mitigate the risk to the Authority's reputation of not being seen to respond to issues of concern.
6. To meet these objectives the following process is proposed. It applies to a situation where the Authority receives a request for comment or action on an issue of pressing public concern about any aspect of the production or publication of official statistics. The process may be broken down into three stages: identification; investigation, and; resolution.
7. *Identification.* An issue is raised with or by the Chair or passed to the Chair of the Authority via the Authority Secretariat or otherwise. If the issue merits further attention the Chair invites the National Statistician to investigate the matter and provide advice within a maximum of 48 hours, although in some circumstances the Chair may require a response much sooner. The Authority informs the originator of the enquiry (if outside the Authority) that the matter is under investigation.
8. *Investigation.* The National Statistician, as head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS), works with the appropriate official as necessary, normally the departmental Head of Profession (HoP), to provide an account of the issue. The account and any related advice is passed to the Chair and Deputy Chairs. The Head of Assessment will then advise the Chair and Deputy Chairs on the matter. This advice is provided in confidence.

9. *Resolution.* The Chair decides on a proposed course of action and may consult the other non-executive members of the Board to seek agreement as necessary. If agreement is reached, the action is implemented and the Authority publicly announces its view and intentions. These might include publishing a Monitoring note, commissioning a Monitoring and Assessment review, issuing a public statement from either the National Statistician, Monitoring and Assessment team or Chair, or taking no further action. If agreement is not reached, the matter may be tabled for discussion at the next meeting of the Authority.
10. The intent of these arrangements is not to restrict or curtail the roles and responsibilities of the Head of Assessment, the National Statistician or other members of the Board. Rather, these measures are designed to organise these roles in sequence and establish due process, ensuring that the Authority's responses are the product of inclusive deliberation and are thus both consistent and authoritative.
11. For these arrangements to function optimally in practice some corollary actions are also required.
 - i. The Chair, National Statistician and Head of Assessment should establish lines of deputisation for their responsibilities when they are unavailable.
 - ii. The National Statistician, as head of the GSS, should establish lines of deputisation (or escalation) for individual HoP when they, in turn, are unavailable.
 - iii. This policy should be promulgated across producer departments and bodies so that members of the GSS recognise the Authority's requirements, particularly as to timeliness, and are enabled to meet them by their Permanent Secretaries and Ministers as necessary.
 - iv. The secretariat will manage an alert system to ensure that wherever issues originate - for example within the Authority itself, the GSS, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Parliament or the media - they are brought to the Chair's attention at the earliest opportunity.
12. Inevitably there may be occasions when a response is required more rapidly than these procedures will allow in which instance the Chair may need to expedite the process accordingly.

Background

Responsibility for Functions

13. The Statistics Act established the Statistics Authority (Board) and its statutory postholders. Extracts from the Act relevant to this paper are presented at Annex A.
14. In summary, the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment are officers of the Authority appointed by the crown and the non-executive directors of the Board respectively (section 5(1-3)). The National Statistician is the Authority's Chief Executive, and the Authority may have other employees as required, including "the staff in the executive office of the National Statistician involved in the production of statistics, as well as the Board Secretariat and those working on assessment of National Statistics" (Explanatory Notes 14).
15. The Authority is set an overall objective in relation to official statistics that serve the public good (section 7) and given a number of functions to enable it fulfil this objective (sections 8 to 21). These include 'Monitoring and reporting of official statistics' (8), developing, maintaining and promoting definitions, methodologies, classifications and standards for official statistics, which can be summarised as 'professional matters'

(section 9), assessment of official and National Statistics (principally sections 12 and 14) and sections relating to the production of statistics (principally 20 and 21).

16. The functions relating to professional matters and production are explicitly ascribed to the National Statistician's Executive Office (section 32 'National Statistician: executive functions'). The functions relating to Assessment are explicitly ascribed to the Head of Assessment (section 33 'Head of Assessment'). The principle of separation between the production and assessment of statistics is set out in section 34(3). Elsewhere in the Act the Head of Assessment is excluded from membership of the Executive Office (section 33) and specific prohibitions are placed upon the involvement of producers in Assessment (section 31(3), section 34(1-2)).
17. The functions set out at section 8 'Monitoring and reporting of official statistics' are not explicitly ascribed to an individual office or postholder. In particular, responsibility for the Authority's duty to "monitor the production and publication of official statistics" (section 8(1)) is not further specified.
18. However, the Authority's function to report concerns it has about the 'quality', 'good practice' or 'comprehensiveness' of official statistics (section 8(2)) relates by inference to the 'Advisory functions of the National Statistician' described in section 30. Here, the National Statistician is defined as the Board's 'principal advisor' on 'quality', 'good practice' and 'comprehensiveness' (section 30(1)) mirroring the wording of the earlier section 8(2). The Board is to have 'regard' to the National Statistician's advice in these matters (section 30(2)).
19. The Act further discusses advice that the National Statistician may give in regard to definitions, methodologies, classifications and standards in official statistics (section 30(3)) , mirroring the wording in the earlier section 9 on professional matters. It is in these matters that, if the Board rejects the National Statistician's advice, it must publish its reasons for doing so.
20. Finally, the Act contains the provision that the Board may direct the National Statistician not to exercise a particular function, or, as to how a function should be exercised. There is no equivalent provision in relation to the Head of Assessment.

Description of Monitoring Function

21. While the Act describes in some detail what the production and assessment functions may and may not comprise, it contains no further advice on what a monitoring and reporting function might look like in practice. The Explanatory Notes shed some light on the intentions of the Bill. These explain that the monitoring role:

"draws on the duties established by the *Framework for National Statistics* for the Statistics Commission (which advised Ministers of areas of widespread concern and the quality of official statistics) and of the National Statistician (who produced a high-level programme for National Statistics, that the Statistics Commission had to comment on". (Explanatory Notes 51).
22. Since the appointment of the Head of Assessment the Authority has discussed the monitoring function at its meetings. In June 2008 '*Priorities for Assessment Reports*' [paper SA(08)23] set out the idea of issue reports which could cut across many statistics and departments. This was approved and priority topics agreed. The prospective reports were the subject of an Authority news releases issued on 4 July which introduced the term 'Monitoring Reports'.

24. Monitoring and Assessment notes have been a more recent innovation. Following discussion at the September Authority Board the first Monitoring and Assessment note was published on 7 October, concerning the Retail Sales Index. A second note about hospital waiting list statistics will be published in November 2008. [To see both these documents go to:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring-and-assessment-notes/published-notes.html>]

Secretariat (Statistics Authority), September 2008

List of Annexes

Annex A - Extracts from the Statistics Act

ANNEX A – EXTRACTS FROM THE STATISTICS AND REGISTRATION SERVICE ACT 2007

3. Members

- (1) The Board is to consist of executive and non-executive members.
- (2) The non-executive members are to be—
 - (a) the chairman, appointed by Her Majesty, and (b) at least five other persons appointed by the Minister for the Cabinet Office.
- (3) Before appointing any person under subsection (2)(b) the Minister for the Cabinet Office must consult the chairman.
- (4) The persons appointed under subsection (2)(b) must include—
 - (a) one person who is appointed by the Minister for the Cabinet Office after consulting the Scottish Ministers,
 - (b) one person who is appointed by the Minister for the Cabinet Office after consulting the Welsh Ministers, and
 - (c) one person who is appointed by the Minister for the Cabinet Office after consulting the Department of Finance and Personnel for Northern Ireland.
- (5) The Minister for the Cabinet Office may, after consulting the chairman, designate one of the non-executive members appointed under subsection (2)(b) as deputy chairman.
- (6) The executive members are to be—
 - (a) the National Statistician (see section 5), and
 - (b) two other employees of the Board, appointed by the non-executive members.
- (7) A person may not be both a non-executive member of the Board and an employee of the Board.

5. Executive members and other staff

- (1) The Board is to have—
 - (a) an officer known as the National Statistician, and
 - (b) an officer known as the Head of Assessment.
- (2) The National Statistician is to be—
 - (a) appointed by Her Majesty, and
 - (b) employed by the Board on the terms and conditions of his appointment (which may include provision relating to dismissal).
- (3) The Head of Assessment is to be—
 - (a) appointed by the non-executive members of the Board, and
 - (b) employed by the Board on the terms and conditions of his appointment.
- (4) The Board is to have such other employees as it may appoint.
- (5) The persons appointed under subsection (4) are to be employed on the terms and conditions of their appointment.
- (6) The Board may only appoint persons under subsection (4) with the approval of the Minister for the Civil Service as to numbers and terms and conditions of employment.
- (7) Service as an employee of the Board is service in the civil service of the State.
- (8) The employees of the Board who are appointed members of the Board under section 3(6)(b) are to hold office as members in accordance with the terms and conditions of their appointment as members.

7. Objective

- (1) In the exercise of its functions under sections 8 to 21 the Board is to have the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good.
- (2) In subsection (1) the reference to serving the public good includes in particular—
 - (a) informing the public about social and economic matters, and
 - (b) assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy.
- (3) The Board is accordingly, in the exercise of its functions under sections 8 to 21, to promote and safeguard—
 - (a) the quality of official statistics,
 - (b) good practice in relation to official statistics, and
 - (c) the comprehensiveness of official statistics.
- (4) In this Part references to the quality of any official statistics includes—
 - (a) their impartiality, accuracy and relevance, and (b) their coherence with other official statistics.
- (5) In this Part references to good practice in relation to official statistics includes ensuring their accessibility.

8. Monitoring and reporting of official statistics

- (1) The Board is to monitor the production and publication of official statistics.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The Board may publish its findings or any report under this section.

9. Definitions etc for official statistics

- (1) The Board is to—
 - (a) develop and maintain definitions, methodologies, classifications and standards for official statistics, and
 - (b) promote their use in relation to official statistics.
- (2) The Board may in particular for the purposes of this section give guidance and advice to persons responsible for official statistics.
- (3) The Board may publish guidance and advice given under this section.

10. Code of Practice for Statistics

- (1) The Board is to prepare, adopt and publish a Code of Practice for Statistics.
- (2) The Board may at any time revise the Code and, if it decides to do so, must publish the Code as revised.
- (3) In preparing or revising the Code the Board must consult—
 - (a) the Scottish Ministers,
 - (b) the Welsh Ministers,
 - (c) the Department of Finance and Personnel for Northern Ireland, and
 - (d) such other persons as it thinks fit.

12. Assessment

- (1) At the request of the appropriate authority the Board must, in accordance with this Part, assess and determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics under section 10 has been complied with in relation to any official statistics.

- (2) If under subsection (1) the Board determines that the Code has been complied with, it must designate the statistics as “National Statistics”; but otherwise it must decline so to designate them.
- (3) A request under subsection (1) may not be withdrawn.
- (4) The person responsible for any official statistics in relation to which an assessment is being made under subsection (1) must provide the Board with such information about the statistics as it may reasonably require.
- (5) The Board must publish the results of any assessment under subsection (1).
- (6) The Board may in exercising its functions under subsection (1) take into account information or advice received from any person.
- (7) In subsection (1) the “appropriate authority” in relation to any official statistics is a Minister of the Crown, subject to the following—
 - (a) the National Statistician is the appropriate authority in relation to statistics produced by the Board;
 - (b) the Scottish Ministers are the appropriate authority in relation to official statistics not produced by the Board which are Scottish devolved statistics;
 - (c) the Welsh Ministers are the appropriate authority in relation to official statistics not produced by the Board which are Welsh devolved statistics;
 - (d) any Northern Ireland department is the appropriate authority in relation to official statistics not produced by the Board which are Northern Ireland devolved statistics.
- (8) For the purposes of this Part, any official statistics designated as National Statistics before the commencement of this section shall be regarded as having been so designated under this section.

14. Re-assessment

- (1) The Board must, in accordance with this Part, assess and determine whether the Code of Practice for Statistics under section 10 continues to be complied with in relation to statistics already designated as National Statistics under section 12.
- (2) If under subsection (1) the Board determines that the Code continues to be complied with in relation to any statistics already designated as National Statistics under section 12, it must confirm their designation as National Statistics; but otherwise it must cancel their designation.
- (3) The person responsible for any official statistics in respect of which an assessment is being made under subsection (1) must provide the Board with such information about the statistics as it may reasonably require.
- (4) The Board may in exercising its functions under subsection (1) take into account information or advice received from any person.
- (5) The Board must publish the results of any assessment under subsection (1).
- (6) The designation of any statistics as National Statistics may not be cancelled except pursuant to a determination under subsection (1).

15. Programme of assessment

- (1) The Board must prepare and publish a programme for the assessment and re-assessment of statistics under sections 12(1) and 14(1).
- (2) The Board may at any time revise the programme and, if it decides to do so, must publish the programme as revised.

30. National Statistician: advisory functions

- (1) The National Statistician is to be the Board's principal adviser on—

- (a) the quality of official statistics,
 - (b) good practice in relation to official statistics, and
 - (c) the comprehensiveness of official statistics.
- (2) The Board must have regard to the advice of the National Statistician on those matters.
- (3) If the Board rejects the advice of the National Statistician—
 - (a) in relation to the development and maintenance of definitions, methodologies, classifications and standards for official statistics, or
 - (b) as to the application to any statistics produced by the Board of any definition, methodology, classification or standard promoted by the Board under section 9, the Board must publish a statement of its reasons for doing so.
- (4) Where the Board publishes a statement under subsection (3), it must as soon as possible thereafter lay a copy before Parliament.

31. National Statistician: executive functions

- (1) The National Statistician is also to be the chief executive of the Board.
- (2) The National Statistician may, subject as follows, exercise any of the functions of the Board (including functions of establishing committees under section 35 and delegating functions to such committees).
- (3) The National Statistician may not exercise the functions of—
 - (a) determining under section 10 whether to adopt a code as the Code of Practice for Statistics or to revise the Code, or
 - (b) determining under section 12(1) or 14(1) whether any official statistics comply with the Code.
- (4) The Board may direct the National Statistician—
 - (a) not to exercise a particular function, or
 - (b) as to how he should exercise a particular function.
- (5) In the event of a vacancy in the office of National Statistician, his functions under this section and section 32 may be exercised by such one of the other executive members of the Board as the Board may direct.

32. Executive office

- (1) The National Statistician must establish an executive office of the Board to assist him in his exercise of—
 - (a) the function of the Board under section 9(1)(a) (development and maintenance of definitions, methodologies, classifications and standards for official statistics),
 - (b) the function of the Board under section 20 (production of statistics),
 - (c) the function of the Board under section 21 (retail prices index),
 - (d) the function of the Board under section 22 (statistical services), and
 - (e) any other function of the Board which he may exercise under section 31(2).
- (2) The executive office is, subject to this Act, to consist of—
 - (a) the National Statistician (who is to be its head),
 - (b) the other executive members of the Board, and
 - (c) such other employees of the Board as the National Statistician may assign to it.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (1) the National Statistician may delegate any function of the Board referred to in that subsection to any other member of the executive office.
- (4) The delegation of a function by the National Statistician under subsection (3) does not prevent him from exercising the function himself.

33. Head of Assessment

- (1) The Head of Assessment is to be the Board's principal adviser on the exercise of its functions under sections 12(1) and 14(1).
- (2) The Board must have regard to the advice of the Head of Assessment in the exercise of those functions.
- (3) The Head of Assessment—
 - (a) if an executive member of the Board, may not exercise functions of the National Statistician under section 31(5),
 - (b) may not be a member of the executive office of the Board under section 32(2)(b) or (c), and
 - (c) may not in any other way take part in the production of statistics by the Board.

34. Separation of functions

- (1) The National Statistician may not take part in any assessment or determination of the Board under section 12(1) or 14(1) in relation to statistics produced by the Board.
- (2) The following may not take part in any assessment or determination of the Board under section 12(1) or 14(1)—
 - (a) an executive member of the Board, not being the National Statistician or Head of Assessment;
 - (b) a person assigned to the executive office of the Board under section 32(2)(c).
- (3) The Board must seek to secure that, so far as practicable, employees who take part in the production of statistics should not be engaged in advising the Board on the exercise of its functions under sections 12(1) and 14(1) in relation to those statistics.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)42

***Code of Practice for Official Statistics:
Report on the Consultation and the Principles and Procedures for Assessment***

Purpose

1. This paper presents the draft Monitoring Report 2 (report on the consultation) including the revised Code of Practice and Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment.

Timing

2. It is intended to publish the Report, along with the finalised 'stand alone' Code of Practice, on 6 January 2009. To achieve this timetable we are aiming to send the report to printers at the start of December.

Recommendations

3. The Authority is invited to:
 - approve the draft Report including the revised Code and Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment (Annex A), and;
 - note the planned schedule for publication of the Report and Code including the publication on the Authority's website of respondents' detailed comments (paragraph 13).

Discussion

4. The Authority's consultation on the draft Code of Practice and the draft Principles and Procedures for Assessment concluded on 30 September 2008. A brief overview of consultation responses was provided at the Authority's 23 October 2008 meeting.
5. The Monitoring and Assessment team has analysed the responses received and has concluded that the consultation:
 - was effective, having identified broad agreement with the Code and its principles and having raised a range of improvements to the Code and the Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment (the Statement), and;
 - indicated no obvious significant problems with the future implementation of the Code, or the application of the Statement.
6. Part 3 of the draft Report summarises the issues raised by respondents and presents the Authority's own views.
7. Major changes and enhancements to the Code are set out below.
 - i. The ten principles identified in the version of the Code consulted upon have been reduced to eight, by consolidation.
 - ii. A number of the principles have been re-labelled, and the principles consequently rephrased.
 - iii. The list of 104 practices identified in the previous version of the Code has been reduced to 76, again by consolidation.
 - iv. The wording of many of the practices has been tightened up.
 - v. A few new practices have been added, to address previous omissions – on topics such as timeliness, and revisions.
 - vi. The principles have been re-ordered so that they are broadly in line with the

- statistical production process.
- vii. The principle and practices relating to Confidentiality have been extensively re-drafted.
 - viii. The protocol on 'User Consultation' has been re-focused on the broader topic of 'User Engagement'.
 - ix. The revised Code now contains requirements relating to government statements issued alongside statistical releases (at Protocol 2 and at Principle 3, Practice 1).
8. In addition, some small drafting changes have been made to the text of the Statement and some additions have been made to the material on 'procedures'.
 9. It is proposed that a complete set of respondents' comments be published as a document on the Authority's website at the same date that Monitoring Report No. 2 ('the Report') is published - 6 January 2009.
 10. A draft of the 'stand alone' Code, will be published in a compact (A5) format, together with the Report on 6 January 2009. The only difference from the text of the Code as it appears in the report on the consultation will be that the stand alone version will have a different Foreword from the Authority Chairman and a different title on the cover - it will just say *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.
 11. The Code will be complemented by detailed guidance, to be published by the National Statistician. The Monitoring and Assessment Team is discussing with ONS officials a process to ensure consistency of message.
 12. As previously agreed, the Authority will respond directly to the comments from the devolved administrations and send them the finalised Code text ahead of publication. Draft letters have been prepared which will be agreed with the Chairman and sent in early December.
 13. A schedule for the remainder of the process is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Timetable for the Code publication process

Timing	Action required
28 Nov.	Final changes to the Code
1 Dec.	Send to printers
1 Dec.	Write to Devolved Administrations replying to their responses, including the draft Code
8 to 10 Dec.	Proof-reading
15 Dec.	Draft note for web on comments received and changes made, final amendments to printers
6 Jan.	Publication (circulation/distribution) and Press Notice
6 Jan.	Publication on web of feedback note

Monitoring and Assessment Team, October 2008

List of Annexes

Annex A - Report on the Consultation and the Principles and Procedures for Assessment - This document will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website on 6 January 2009

Annex A: Report on the Consultation and the Principles and Procedures for Assessment

This document will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website on 6 January 2009

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)43

Assessment and Designation Process

Purpose

1. This paper presents initial proposals for the Assessment and Designation process, for consideration by the Authority. It provides further details in addition to those in the 'Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment' that accompanies the Code of Practice (Code), and should be read alongside that document. These processes will be applied to the initial assessments agreed at the Authority's October meeting [paper SA(08)36]. Following those assessments, we will evaluate the effectiveness of the process and develop it as necessary.

Timing

2. It is planned to conduct the first assessment in February 2009.

Recommendations

3. The Authority is invited to endorse:
 - i. the broad approach to the initial tranche of assessments described in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8;
 - ii. the proposed designation categories (paragraph 11);
 - iii. plans to measure the success of assessments (paragraphs 14 and 15), and;
 - iv. two draft statements for publication on the Authority's website describing the assessment process and designation.
4. Further papers will follow in the New Year on issues such as the 2009-10 Assessment Programme, and the principles for grouping outputs together for efficient assessment.

Discussion

5. These proposals are informed by two trial assessments of Ministry of Justice statistics and the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) General Household Survey. The trials took place under the auspices of the ONS Independence Programme prior to the establishment of the Authority.
6. In outline, the stages of the assessment process are set out below.
 - Announce assessment and have meetings with relevant people from the work area. Agree detailed schedule for the assessment with Heads of Profession (HoPs).
 - HoPs will arrange the completion of self-assessment questionnaires relating to the statistics in question and the environment in which they are produced. HoPs will also supply specified relevant additional material, and be asked to provide contact details for users, potential users, data suppliers and other stakeholders.
 - Users and potential users will be invited to complete questionnaires to elicit their experiences relating to the statistics in question.
 - The Assessment Team will analyse the documentation, relevant reports, statistical releases, local policies etc., and will decide the extent to which it needs to probe further. The team will then meet with statistical producers and data suppliers, as it sees fit, to ensure that it fully understands the material it has assembled, and to explore any aspects of Code compliance in further detail.
7. The team will then produce a brief report of findings and recommendations, using a standard template, presenting:

SA(08)43 - The Assessment and Designation Process

- a summary of what it has identified as good and less good practice within the statistical area, with reference to the Code;
 - a statement of the extent of compliance with the Code, and recommendations for or against continued designation;
 - any improvement actions the Team considers necessary for the public good, and;
 - a brief account of the Team's assessment of practice against each of the Code's principles and protocols.
8. The Assessment Team will discuss the draft report with producers to check for factual accuracy, before producing a final report for endorsement by the Authority's Board. If the producer body wanted to make a statement relating to the assessment, we would offer to provide a link on our website alongside, but clearly separate from, our assessment report.
9. The process will be designed to minimise burdens on producers and on the Assessment Team. With producers, we will aim to avoid scheduling their inputs at the busiest times in their statistical production cycle. We will seek to use as standard an approach as is feasible to data collection and reporting to minimise burdens on all concerned.
10. A draft statement describing this process is set out at Annex A.
11. Three outcomes of the assessment/designation process are proposed:
- i. *designation* - meets the standard required to be designated as National Statistics
 - ii. *designation 'pending'* - the standard was missed but only in specific aspects which the Assessment Team believes can be readily remedied. In such cases the assessment will be completed and designation recommended once remedial action has been taken within an agreed timescale (for example three months), and
 - iii. *no designation* - significant non-compliance with the Code
12. A draft statement describing these outcomes further is set out at Annex B.
13. The nature of designations is that they are made based on the evidence available at the time of the assessment. The Authority will expect departments to report material changes to activities that could have an impact on designation to the Assessment Team, and the Authority may choose to re-assess statistics at any time.
14. Conceptually, the success of the Assessment Programme needs to be judged in terms of the improvements to the statistical system which flow directly or indirectly from the assessment process. Indirect beneficial influence would arise, for example, when a report on one area of statistics led to changes across several areas.
15. While it will be possible to identify some of these improvements, quantifying their net beneficial impact is problematic. We will aim to record improvements that have been made to procedures, and try to identify whether the Assessment Programme should be given some of the credit for them. This will enable us to give a considered, qualitative judgment of success. We will aim to do that annually.

Mark Pont, Monitoring and Assessment Team, November 2008

List of Annexes

Annex A: Draft Statement for the Authority's website summarising the assessment process published 2 December 2008

Annex B: Draft Statement for the Authority's website on designation published 2 December 2008

Annex A: Draft Statement for the Authority's website summarising the assessment process

This document was published on 2 December 2008

To see the document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-process.pdf>

ANNEX B: Draft Statement for the Authority's website on designation

This document was published on 2 December 2008

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/designation-as-national-statistics.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(08)44

***Monitoring Report 3:
Priorities for Designation as National Statistics***

Purpose

1. To approve the text (currently in advance draft form) of Monitoring Report 3 and to agree a list of products for notification under section 16 of the Statistics Act.

Timing

2. It is intended to publish this review in January 2009, alongside the Code of Practice and its accompanying Report on the Consultation and the Principles and Practices for Assessment.

Recommendations

3. Subject to editing and to further information and factual corrections from producer organisations, the Authority is invited to:
 - i. approve publication of Monitoring Report 3: *Priorities for Designation as National Statistics* as set out in the annexes;
 - ii. agree to issue notices under section 16 of the Statistics Act in respect of the thirteen sets of statistics in paragraph 26 of the report;
 - iii. agree to write to Ministers about the further statistics in paragraph 27 of the report, in the terms expressed in that paragraph, and;
 - iv. agree to publish the current list of National Statistics as an annex to the report.

Discussion

4. The purpose of this review was to:
 - produce a list of those undesignated official statistics that can be readily identified;
 - recommend relevant products from the list for notification under section 16 of the Statistics Act (which states that the Authority must notify Ministers when it is of the view that an official statistic should be assessed against the Code of Practice), and;
 - explain how other statistics (not covered in the report) will be identified and considered in the future.
5. The report from the review also provides an opportunity to publish the current list of National Statistics, as required by section 18 of the Act.
6. The Authority considered a progress report at its last meeting [paper SA(08)(37)]. An initial list of statistics for section 16 notification was included in that report. The producers of those statistics have since been contacted in order to obtain their comments on the proposed notification. In most cases they have been supportive of notification, although they have flagged up that there is uncertainty around future plans for several products.
7. The following changes have been made to the section 16 recommendations as a result of comments received:
 - the Workplace Employment Relations Survey has been removed from the list because plans for the next survey (in 2010) are still provisional at this stage. It will be considered again at the next review;
 - the Health Profile of England has similarly been deferred pending an evaluation by

the Department of Health. They will be considering the continuing need for the product in the light of similar information that is likely to be provided elsewhere;

- the Witness and Victim Experience Survey has been moved to the list of statistics in paragraph 27 of the report, because this is a relatively new survey and the Ministry of Justice is intending to seek designation in about a year's time, once outputs are being produced on a routine basis.
8. Paragraph 27 of the draft report identifies seven further products that are of similar importance, but the producer has already indicated that they intend to approach Ministers about seeking designation within the near future, once any remaining quality or other issues have resolved. We propose to write to Ministers to draw attention to the fact that we are aware of internal discussions about these products, stating that we will await the outcome before considering the case for notification.

Steps to be taken after publication

9. Ministers will be notified about each of the thirteen statistics and a copy of the notification laid before Parliament. Under section 16(3) of the Act they are obliged either to reply stating that they intend to request an assessment, giving a timetable; or that they do not intend to request an assessment, giving a reason. A copy of each Minister's statement must be laid before Parliament. Where Ministers consent to an assessment, the date they provide will be factored into the Monitoring and Assessment Team's work programme.

Jill Barelli, Monitoring and Assessment Team, November 2008.

List of Annexes

Annex A - Text of monitoring report 3: *Priorities for Designation as National Statistics*
Due to be published 6 January 2009 on the Authority website.

Annex B - Current* list of National Statistics: This is referred to as Annex 1 in the monitoring report.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/uk-statistical-system/statistics/statistics-types/index.html>

Annex C - Annotated list of other official statistics: This is referred to as Annex 2 in the monitoring report.

Due to be published 6 January 2009 on the Authority website.

***Note:** The present list of National Statistics (April 2008) will be replaced by an updated version in the published Monitoring Report.

Annex A: Text of monitoring report 3: *Priorities for Designation as National Statistics*

Due to be published 6 January 2009 on the Authority website.

Annex B - Current* list of National Statistics

This is referred to as Annex 1 in the monitoring report.

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