

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Meeting of Friday 25 June 2010
Board Room, Statistics House, Islington, London**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Deputy Chair, Official Statistics)

Mr Richard Alldritt

Dr Colette Bowe

Mr Partha Dasgupta

Ms Moira Gibb

Ms Jil Matheson

Professor Steve Nickell

Mr Stephen Penneck

Professor David Rhind

Sir Jon Shortridge

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Mr Mervyn Stevens

Other Attendees

Mr Steve Newman (Chief Finance Officer, ONS) for items 6 to 8

Mr Richard Laux (Monitoring and Assessment) for items 10 to 12

Ms Caron Walker (National Statistician's Office) for item 14

Apologies

Lord Rowe-Beddoe (Deputy Chair, ONS)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Rowe-Beddoe.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and Matters arising from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 May 2010 were accepted as a true and fair account. There were no matters arising.

4. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs

Remuneration Committee

- 4.1 In Lord Rowe-Beddoe's absence, Sir Michael Scholar reported on the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 14 June 2010. The Committee had reviewed the outcomes of the pay moderating meetings for Directors and Deputy Directors and had endorsed the proposed levels of remuneration. The Committee also agreed remuneration for the Director General of Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Head of Assessment.

Office for National Statistics Board

- 4.2 In Lord Rowe-Beddoe's absence, Mr. Partha Dasgupta reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 14 June 2010. The Board had received a report from the Director General of ONS and had considered budget and Information Technology (IT) issues. The meeting had also received an update from the Chief Finance Officer on the National Audit Office (NAO) audit of the Authority's Resource Accounts for 2009/10.

Audit Committee

- 4.3 Professor Rhind reported on progress with the NAO audit of the Authority's Resource Accounts for 2009/10. The Audit Committee would be meeting with the external auditors following the meeting of the Authority Board. The Authority's draft Resource Accounts for 2009/10 and the NAO Audit Progress Report would be considered.

5. Census 2011

Ms. Matheson reported that the Census project was being reviewed by Cabinet Office officials as part of the Government's reassessment of on-going expenditure. The outcome of this review was not yet known.

6. Spending Review 2010 (SR10)

- 6.1 Mr Newman reported that, although written ministerial confirmation was still awaited, he had been advised by HM Treasury officials that the Authority's budget for 2011/12 and the years to 2014/15 would be the subject of the government's expenditure considerations in the Spending Review 2010 (SR10) in the autumn. The Authority would be required to make a submission on its expenditure proposals for the years covered by SR10. The amount that the Authority would be expected to reduce its expenditure in the years to 2014/15 had not yet been specified.
- 6.2 While the Authority recognised the constraints of the present economic situation there was nevertheless particular concern that the budget for 2011/12 was being re-opened at this time. This budget had been part of the Authority's initial five-year funding settlement aimed at underpinning its independence from the regular departmental spending round and ensuring financial certainty for the Census 2011.
- 6.3 The Authority agreed that, in the first instance, the ONS Board should consider expenditure and budget proposals for SR10 as a priority and that these should then be

considered by the Authority.

7. Spending Restrictions and Exemptions [SA(10)36]

- 7.1 Mr Penneck introduced a paper which updated the Authority on the restrictions on government expenditure which were announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 24 May 2010. These restrictions meant that in some instances approval for recruitment or expenditure was required by the Departmental Minister. As the UK Statistics Authority was a non-ministerial department, the Cabinet Office had agreed that the Chair of the Authority would take the role of the Minister in these instances.
- 7.2 The Authority Board considered and agreed processes for the approval of exemptions to the expenditure restrictions. The approval of the Chair of the Authority would be required for all external recruitment and any consultancy spend above £20,000. Submissions would first be considered by the Authority's Accounting Officer and the ONS Chair.

8. Issues arising from the Authority's 2009/10 Accounts

- 8.1 Mr Newman reported on developments with the NAO's external audit of the Authority's Resource Accounts for 2009/10. A draft NAO Audit Progress Report would be discussed at a meeting of the Audit Committee later that day.
- 8.2 In response to a recent direction from HM Treasury to government departments that combined annual reports and accounts should not be produced for 2009/10, the Authority intended to produce and lay its Resource Accounts for 2009/10 before Parliament before the Parliamentary Summer recess. This would fulfil the requirements of the *Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000*. In order to fulfil its statutory obligations under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* to report to Parliament and the devolved legislatures on its activities and findings during the year and its proposals for the forthcoming year, a separate Authority Annual Report 2009/10 would be produced. This would be laid before Parliament and the devolved legislatures and made available on the Authority's website.

9. Policy Developments

- 9.1 Mr Bumpstead provided an oral report on recent policy developments as they related to statistics. These included: correspondence with the Home Secretary regarding the Authority's Monitoring Report 5: *Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics* published on 24 May 2010; comment about crime trends, and; the release of statistics about public sector employment by the Cabinet Office. The Authority reviewed the quality and character of the latter release. It was agreed that the numbers in the release were official statistics and that the Chair would write to the Minister for the Cabinet Office in relation to these matters.
- 9.2 The Cabinet Secretary had confirmed that the revised *Ministerial Code* now included, at the request of the Authority, specific obligations upon Ministers to act in accordance with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* and to respect the professional independence of government statisticians. The Authority strongly welcomed this important development.

10. Evolution of Assessment [SA(10)37]

- 10.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which made some proposals about the Assessment process and on steps that might be taken to increase further the impact of Assessment findings. It was proposed that existing plans for the Assessment programme for the remainder of 2010 should remain unchanged but that beyond the current programme the Assessment process should be streamlined further. Other proposals included that the Assessment process should focus on the need for producers to demonstrate value

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for money and to provide evidence of enhanced engagement with users.

- 10.2 It was also proposed that a project should be set up to update the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, with the aim of bringing the *Code* and the Assessment process more closely together and making the *Code* as concise as possible. Work was already in hand between the Assessment team and the National Statistician's Office on agreeing a set of specific standards for statistical releases which would better support both the Assessment process and provide a framework for the implementation of Requirements of Assessment Reports.
- 10.3 The Authority welcomed this initiative and gave its general approval to these proposals.

11. Findings from the First Fifty Assessment Reports [SA(10)38]

- 11.1 Mr Laux presented a draft Monitoring and Assessment Note which summarised the findings from the first 50 Assessment Reports, prepared in the year to June 2010. The draft Note covered the findings from the Assessment of around 230 sets of National Statistics and was an update of the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Note 2(2010) which had been published in March.
- 11.2 The draft Note summarised areas of good practice and highlighted areas for improvement in order to inform the Authority Board, the National Statistician and producers of Official Statistics. These included a stronger focus on uses of statistics, in the context of producers demonstrating that value for money issues had been considered. The draft Note also reported on some improvements that had been made as an outcome of producers implementing Requirements in some of the early Assessment Reports.
- 11.3 The Authority welcomed this Note and agreed that, subject to some changes, it should be published in due course on the Authority's website and that this should be the next in a series of regular six-monthly updates on the findings from Assessments.

12. The Value of Statistical Commentary [SA(10)39]

- 12.1 Mr Alldritt presented a draft of an Authority statement on the value of statistical commentary. There was concern that the rapid evolution of on-line dissemination of data could lead to the assumption that the preparation of statistical commentary was no longer a priority for government statisticians and that, at a time of increasing pressures on resources, such commentary could be sacrificed.
- 12.2 The Authority agreed that the statement could usefully make further reference to the need for producers to put statistics into context and to provide suitable comparators and comments on trends. It was agreed that, subject to such changes, the statement should be published on the Authority's website and brought to the attention of the Government Statistical Service (GSS). It was also agreed that the statement should make further comment on the issues raised by electronic dissemination of statistics.

13. Grounds for not Making Official Statistics Fully Available [SA(10)40]

- 13.1 Mr Alldritt sought the views of the Authority on whether the principle that data collected by government should, subject to confidentiality and other considerations such as national security, be made available to the public should be upheld. The draft Assessment Reports on school-level statistics on attainment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had raised the question of whether there are reasonable grounds to withhold statistics from the public or make them available in such a way as to make judgements on performance more difficult.
- 13.2 The Authority discussed the complex issues and noted that its views would be

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considered further at the next meeting of the Authority's Assessment Committee.

14. World Statistics Day [SA(10)41]

14.1 Ms Walker presented a paper which explained the background to World Statistics Day and the preparations being made by the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) to observe this in the UK. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly had agreed that 20 October 2010 ('20-10-2010') should be designated as World Statistics Day. The UN had invited all government, non-government, national and regional organisations and all producers and users of statistics to observe this occasion in an appropriate manner. The need for any events organised by the GSS to keep costs to an absolute minimum was a major consideration.

14.2 The Authority was pleased to give its support to World Statistics Day and, subject to some suggested changes and the understanding that any arrangements would be cost neutral, endorsed in general terms the plans of the National Statistician's Office to mark this event. It was agreed that this occasion would provide an opportunity for the Authority to inform the public about the Census 2011, which would follow six months after World Statistics Day.

15. Any other business

15.1 There was no other business.

[n.b. Item 11 on the agenda - Consultation on Draft Statistics Order - was not discussed at this meeting because of lack of time and was carried forward to the next meeting]








UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Friday, 25 June, 2010

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

Chair: Sir Michael Scholar
Apologies: Lord David Rowe-Beddoe

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 210510 
2	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Remuneration Committee● ONS Board● Audit Committee	Oral Reports Sir Michael Scholar Mr Partha Dasgupta Professor David Rhind
3	Census 2011	Oral Report Ms Jil Matheson
4	Spending Restrictions and Exemptions	SA(10)36  Mr Stephen Penneck
5	Policy Developments	Oral Report Secretariat
6	Evolution of Assessment	SA(10)37  Mr Richard Alldritt
7	Findings from the First Fifty Assessment Reports	SA(10)38  Mr Richard Laux
8	The Value of Statistical Commentary	SA(10)39  Mr Richard Alldritt
9	Grounds for not Making Official Statistics Fully Available	SA(10)40  Mr Richard Alldritt
10	World Statistics Day	SA(10)41  Ms Caron Walker
11	Consultation on Draft Statistics Order	Oral Report Secretariat
12	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Friday, 23 July, 2010
Statistics House, Newport, 11:15 - 15:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(10)36

Spending Restrictions and Exemptions

Purpose

1. On 24 May the Chief Secretary to the Treasury announced a series of policies to restrict government expenditure. As a result, in some instances approval for recruitment or expenditure is now required by the Departmental Minister. In the case of the UK Statistics Authority, the Cabinet Office have agreed that the Chair of the Authority will take the role of Minister. The relevant policies are a freeze on external recruitment and a freeze on expenditure on consultancy above £20,000.
2. This paper proposes implementing a simple and effective process to address the recruitment freeze policy and ensure that posts are filled in a timely and effective manner.

Timing

3. Immediate.

Recommendations

4. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. agree that the Chair approves exceptions to the recruitment freeze policy;
 - ii. note that the proposed business critical areas currently under consideration are:
 - a. 2011 Census;
 - b. Information Management (IM) contractor replacement;
 - c. Social Survey Interviewer Field Force;
 - d. Business Data Division (casual staff at critical workload points), and;
 - e. non Civil Service posts (contractor / consultancy / fee paid / agency).
 - iii. approve the process for agreeing the exemptions for named business critical areas (see **Annex A**);
 - iv. agree the proposal that individual business cases for 'other' critical hard to fill posts are approved by the Director General for Office for National Statistics(ONS) (on the recommendation of the resourcing panel for ONS posts) and by the National Statistician (for non-ONS posts);
 - v. note that the ONS Board and the UK Statistics Authority will receive regular reports on the operation of the policy, and;
 - vi. note the wider Government spending restrictions arising from the Government efficiencies agenda (see **Annex B**).

Discussion

5. As part of the Government's plan to deliver £6.2 billion of savings in the current financial year, the Government has announced a number of measures, including an immediate freeze on external recruitment to the civil service, as well as significantly cutting the number of temporary staff.
6. It is recognised that some exceptions will be required to this basic policy in order not to prejudice the delivery of business, and the application of this policy has been delegated.

Eileen Heasman, Human Resources Division (ONS), June 2010

SA(10)36 Spending Restrictions and Exemptions

List of Annexes

Annex A Process for Approving Exemptions to the Recruitment Freeze

Annex B Government Spending Restrictions

SA(10)36 Spending Restrictions and Exemptions

Annex A Process for Approving Exemptions to the Recruitment Freeze

Stage	Approvals	Comments
1	UK Statistics Authority agrees the delegation for the approval of Business cases for external recruitment to the Chairman of the Authority Board.	<p>Agreement to:</p> <p>a) delegation to Sir Michael Scholar, and;</p> <p>b) the areas deemed 'Business Critical'</p>
2	Sir Michael Scholar receives Business Cases from Directors of those areas named as 'Business Critical' for consideration and approval for external recruitment as necessary.	<p>Directors will consider the longer terms plans and the anticipated requirement for external recruitment during the remainder of financial year for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census (Glen Watson); • IM (Paul Woobey); • Field Force and Business Data Division (Dennis Roberts), and; • Non Civil Service (Steve Newman on behalf of Procurement). <p>Directors will submit business cases to DG Office for coordination and management of process.</p>
3	On approval by Sir Michael Scholar, a) the Site Resourcing Panels will carry out the necessary activities to attract, recruit and appoint. b) Procurement will progress plan for non Civil Service requirements.	Resourcing panels will be responsible for ensuring that external recruitment should be exceptional and that all other solutions allowed within the policy are exhausted before external recruitment takes place.
4	Stephen Penneck (for ONS) and Jil Matheson (UK Statistics Authority) approve 'other' (than those named areas) individual business cases.	Where other exceptional and specific cases arise where a critical vacancy in another, not named area, cannot be filled through the permitted routes, the Resourcing Panel will request that the appropriate Director submits a Business Case to either Stephen Penneck or Jil Matheson for their approval to proceed to external recruitment.
5	ONS Board and Statistics Authority Board receive monthly monitoring reports.	

Annex B Government Spending Restrictions

1. Conduct centralised procurement for commodity goods and services to drive down prices.

Departments will be expected to use centrally agreed deals to ensure we get the best price when they buy standard goods and services and conduct new procurements on a joint basis to drive down prices further.

2. Implement an immediate freeze on all new Information Communications Technology (ICT) spend above £1 million and Information Technology (IT) project moratorium.

The freeze applies to all contracts and projects where ICT is a key element to deliver the service or outcome. It covers all new contracts, contract amendments and extensions, pilot projects, feasibility studies and proof of concept projects above £1 million in value. Exceptions will be approved by the Efficiency and Reform Group (ERG), whose board will be chaired jointly by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General.

We are preparing approval to renew the web hosting contract and the next stage of Retail Price Index /Consumer Price Index development projects, to the ERG. Other projects likely to be affected include the next stage of the Labour Force Survey development projects, any extensions to Project Flex, and work to improve data security and other work required by the Communications – Electronics Security Group (CESG).

In addition, we have been instructed to conduct a project review so as to encompass around 80 per cent of our IT expenditure. This includes major projects in the next section.

3. Review the Government's biggest projects, including ICT projects, to see where costs can be reduced or wasteful projects stopped altogether.

Central government will conduct a review of major projects including large ICT projects that will feed into the Emergency Budget (June 2010) and Spending Review (Autumn 2010). The review will be coordinated by ERG working with the Office for Government Commerce (OGC), the Treasury, Infrastructure UK, and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. The review will conclude whether projects will be allowed to continue to the spending review, be re-scoped or be stopped.

Census 2011 and Beyond 2011 are subject to a separate review and await the review's outcome.

4. With immediate effect, start renegotiating contracts with major suppliers across government to reduce costs.

This is a centrally led government initiative that may benefit Office for National Statistics (ONS) with lower costs.

5. Freeze all new advertising and marketing spend. Only essential campaigns will be allowed.

Tight central controls will ensure only essential campaigns will be allowed to continue which will need to be signed off by the ERG. The only probable implication for ONS is to Census advertising and marketing, as Census is subject to a separate review the impact of this restriction is unclear.

Annex B - SA(10)36 Spending Restrictions and Exemptions

- 6. Freeze on all new consultancy spend unless it is an operational necessity. Where spend is proposed, Ministerial sign-off will be required for £20,000 or above.**

As a Non Ministerial Department sign off will be Sir Michael Scholar.

- 7. Cut spend on civil service expenses including clamping down on first class travel and on the number of Government cars.**

Government Departments and Agencies across the Civil Service have been asked to review their policies on travel and expenses, to make sure public money and other resources are used properly and efficiently.

We are awaiting further guidance which will inform how we review and develop our travel and expenses policy positions, but we have been made aware that the guidance will include an assumption that all staff travel by rail in standard class.

- 8. Freeze civil service recruitment, except in important front line and business critical areas, and significantly cut the number of temporary staff.**

With immediate effect from 25 May we will not be making any new offers of employment. Those offers already made and accepted will stand. There will be no offers of employment made after 25 May. However, once we have clarity on business critical areas and 'frontline' staff, there may be some exceptions and these will be signed off by Sir Michael Scholar.

- 9. Conduct an immediate review to create a more simplified approach to civil service pay structures and terms and conditions.**

This review will be carried out centrally, but ONS will contribute.

- 10. Implement a programme to simplify Human Resource (HR) functions across Whitehall and, wherever possible, eradicate any duplication.**

ONS HR are continuing to work with the Next Generation HR Programme and will contribute to the discussions on HR Services across Government.

- 11. Stop the signing of any new property leases or lease extensions unless these are approved centrally.**

The ONS has a number of leased properties that are used by the International Passenger Survey (IPS) where we need to take on new leases or extend leases in order to maintain our presence at the site. OGC has already informed us that these renewals can go ahead.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(10)37

The Evolution of Assessment

Purpose

1. Following discussion at the Authority Board meeting on 21 May 2010, this paper makes, and explains, some proposals about the Assessment process and about steps that might be taken to increase the impact of Assessment findings.

Timing

2. There are different timings associated with the recommendations, as indicated below. However, early decisions on the main points would be helpful with a view to taking developments forward over the Summer.

Recommendations

3. The recommendations are discussed further in paragraphs 4 to 13 below. Members of the Authority Board are invited to agree to the following.
 - a) Retain current plans for 2010 - existing plans for the production of Assessment Reports, as previously discussed by the Board, should stand, at least until the end of 2010.
 - b) Clarify the Code on value for money - because the *Code of Practice* implies (but does not state explicitly) that producers of statistics are expected both to achieve and demonstrate good value for money, a statement should be prepared for the Authority website making this clear and announcing that the adequacy of arrangements for addressing value for money will henceforth be given more prominence in the Assessment process and reports (A draft Statement is attached at **Annex A**).
 - c) Amend the Written Evidence for Assessment (WEFA) an Assessment process - following from the point above, the specification for the WEFA, and the Assessment process, should be modified to enable Assessment Reports to say either:
 - that the Assessment team is content that the producer body has appropriate information, and arrangements in place, to monitor value for money, or;
 - that [some specified aspect] of the necessary arrangements do not seem to be in place and that this should be addressed, as a formal requirement, by the producer body.

This modification to the Assessment process could be operational in time to be apparent in Assessment Reports coming to the Board in October or November 2010. Whilst the formulation above is some way short of making a direct comment on whether value for money is being achieved, the Assessment team has reached the view that the two alternate statements above are as far as Assessment can reliably go in terms of commenting.

- d) Enhance contact with users - the Assessment process should be further developed to increase contact with users of the statistics as part of the Assessment process and obtain feedback from them. A paper proposing specific steps is in preparation and will be considered further at the Assessment Committee on 1 July 2010.
- e) More about methods - following some comments and questions (internationally and from the Royal Statistical Society (RSS)) about whether Assessment looks closely enough at the methods used to produce the statistics, and related aspects of quality, we are proposing to extend what is said in Assessment Reports to include more text explaining the nature of the assurance that Assessment offers and how methodology

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is expected to be reviewed outside the terms of Assessment Reports. A draft Note for inclusion in Assessment Reports is at **Annex B**. This is likely to amount to a slight raising of the bar. Where there is little evidence that methods have been carefully reviewed and explained, we would expect to include a Requirement linked to Principle 4 of the *Code*.

- f) An updated Findings Report - an updated 'Findings from Assessment' Report should be published before the Summer Recess and distributed to Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) as the first one was. A draft of this Report is on the agenda of this meeting [SA(10)38].
- g) Office for National Statistics (ONS) to lead response - in order to help the Government Statistical Service (GSS) respond positively to the findings from Assessment, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) may need to play a larger role in leading change, particularly in relation to improving the text of statistical releases – and thereby providing examples of good practice to which the Authority can refer. We therefore recommend that the Authority should invite ONS to take a more explicitly leading role.
- h) Focus on selected departments - further steps should be taken to focus dialogue on a selected group of Whitehall departments (rather than all departments equally), both at the HoP and senior management levels, to explain more fully the merits of the changes that the Authority wants to see and seek their agreement to support those changes. Candidates include Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Department of Health (DH).
- i) Update the Code - a project should be put in hand to update the text of the *Code of Practice* and further shorten it (by removal of duplication and excess detail). Depending on the outcome of informal discussions, this could be done without adding any new requirements to the *Code* (except clarification on value for money); or it could involve new material, though we would prefer to avoid that and have not received any representations to add more content. The aim would be to tie more closely together the *Code* and the Assessment process and signal a willingness to keep the *Code* short, relevant and up to date.
- j) Standards for releases – to better support both Assessment and the implementation of Requirements, a set of specific standards for statistical releases should be agreed between the Monitoring and Assessment team and the National Statistician's Office, published on the website and used as a framework for feedback to producers. A first draft, based on existing published work, is under discussion and will be brought to the Board in due course. The existence of these standards could be cross-referenced in a revised *Code*. The Assessment team has asked for these standards to be settled as soon as possible as it needs to make judgements about releases in every Assessment report.
- k) Costings to be prepared - it would further support the Assessment process if there were readily available figures for departmental expenditure on different aspects of statistical work (survey work, compilation of administrative data, methodological development, analysis and report writing and so on). Whilst there are real difficulties in compiling such data consistently, the current climate of resource pressures tips the argument in favour of trying to do this and we recommend that expenditure data should be put together as soon as possible – with the National Statistician's Office in the lead.
- l) Monitor and enhance the effectiveness (including impact) of Assessment - we informally monitor various aspects of the impact that our work has, but there is a case (especially if we are to be emphasising the Value for Money (VFM) of official statistics) for monitoring and seeking to enhance the VFM of our own work. **Annex C**

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sets out the types of evidence that we will gather in order to reach a rounded view about the effectiveness of Assessment, and some of the ways that we may look to improve our effectiveness.

Discussion

4. Over the past year, the Assessment team has produced some 50 Assessment Reports, most of which are now published or at an advanced stage in the approval process. These Reports cover some 220 sets of official statistics and, on the basis of various assumptions about capacity within the team and the use of the newer short format reports, we would expect to complete the full cycle of outstanding Assessments in 2012. We have considered whether a more targeted approach – perhaps involving a smaller number of full Assessment Reports and a large number of cases in which designation is simply awarded after the submission of evidence but without a report – would free up some Monitoring and Assessment capacity and allow the initial ‘catching-up’ exercise to be completed more quickly. However, we think this would reduce substantially the influence that the Assessment process currently has with producers and we think it would be better to maintain the current momentum for at least several more months (hence recommendation 3a above).
5. Whilst individual Assessment Reports continue to identify a variety of issues that need to be addressed by way of Requirements, there is nonetheless a lot of common ground among Assessments. An analysis of the over 300 Requirements included in the first 50 Assessment Reports is at **Annex D**. Whilst individual Requirements have mostly been addressed in sufficient measure to allow National Statistics designation to proceed (if only just, in some cases), and we understand that some further development work has taken place in anticipation of the Assessment process, the overall position is somewhat passive in relation to the main thrust of the messages from Assessment work. This is evidenced by the fact that the more recent Assessment Reports are making much the same observations as the early ones and we see only occasional signs that the messages are being taken on board by producer bodies. There are however a few notable exceptions where statistical branches have made real progress. It is this situation that has led us to propose (recommendation 3g above) that ONS should take more of a leading role; and at recommendation 3h that a target group of major departments should be identified for more intensive efforts.
6. There are obvious pressures on staff in government departments that might inhibit their ability fully to engage with the messages from Assessment. Ultimately those staff work for their departments, and addressing statistical communication with the outside world is often not high on departmental priorities. In contrast, cuts and economies, and corporate loyalty, are likely to be a much higher priority. The Authority’s influence will be greater if it underlines that *Code* compliance is entirely consistent with getting the best value for money from statistical work. Hence the proposals at recommendations 3b and 3c above.
7. There are some aspects of the Assessment process that could be developed further. One is that we often do not get a good response from users of statistics when we ask for views. We intend to find new ways to engage with them – hence recommendation 3d above. We are preparing a paper on this for the next meeting of the Assessment Committee.
8. We think there is a need to clarify in Assessment Reports the extent to which the Assessment process passes judgement on methodology and the methodological aspects of quality. The *Code* requires sound methods to be used and that steps be taken to ensure that quality meets user needs and is clearly explained. However the Assessment process cannot go deep enough to make detailed judgements on methods. It must

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therefore ask about whether and when the methods used have been subject to review and report accordingly. We think there is scope to introduce a fuller explanation of how far Assessment is going in offering endorsement of methods (hence recommendation 3e).

9. Some of the more obscure requirements of the *Code of Practice* either do not get considered explicitly in the Assessment process or are liable to inconsistent interpretation. We think this could be partly resolved by shortening and tightening some drafting in the *Code* and removing some ineffective or duplicate material. The Assessment team has identified some 40 or more, mostly small, changes it would like to see made to better support Assessment work. It is also desirable to be able to demonstrate that the Assessment process maps closely to the detail of the *Code*, given that National Statistics status is taken to mean fully *Code* compliant (hence recommendation 3i above).
10. There has been some concern that Assessment Reports give an overly negative impression to the reader. We are not sure whether this is true: a lot depends on the perspective of the reader. If the reader starts from the assumption that official statistics are often subject to inappropriate influences, then Assessment Reports, far from seeming negative, should provide substantial reassurance. We are planning to emphasise further that designation as National Statistics is a very strong endorsement and also to use the 'Findings from Assessment' Reports as a platform for positive comments. The National Statistician may also want to draw on the growing portfolio of Assessment Reports and designations as strong evidence of the professionalism of the service and the amount of independent scrutiny involved.
11. We frequently comment on the need to improve statistical releases but do not have an agreed set of specific standards for these releases. The Statistics Commission published in early 2008 a Report including a suggested list of such standards on which there has been little explicit dissent. We propose (at recommendation 3j above) that something on these lines, developed as necessary, be agreed and used as a framework for feedback to producers.
12. It would be helpful for the Authority Board to have available an overall picture of departmental expenditure on statistical work, broken down into broad categories. This would allow Assessment Reports to make reference to the scale of any particular statistical function in relation to the overall statistical resources within the department. It would also allow the Authority to make broad comments about the balance of statistical activities more generally and serve as a baseline so that we can track the impact of cuts. There are considerable practical difficulties to compiling such information consistently but the view of the Monitoring and Assessment team is that it is now needed. Hence recommendation 3k.
13. Whilst the recommendations in this paper are substantive they do not imply any radical change in either the Assessment process or its timetable or sequence. The role of Assessment is to offer assurance where it can and to point to things that should be improved (to achieve National Statistics status); and it is doing both of these things reasonably effectively. There has been little argument against the balance of the *Code*, or the balance of the Requirements in Assessment Reports. Neither statisticians, producer bodies nor external commentators have disagreed with the focus on promoting and documenting utility and value. We therefore conclude that the process is pushing the statistical service in a good direction and the main problem rests, not in Assessment per se, but with the absence of levers to get the diverse producer bodies to respond to the message (hence recommendation 3a above and also recommendations 3g, 3h and 3j).

List of Annexes

- Annex A Draft Statement for the Authority website**
- Annex B Revised Statement about Assessment and Designation to include in Assessment reports**
- Annex C Monitoring and enhancing the effectiveness of Assessment**
- Annex D An analysis of requirements from Assessment Reports**

**Annex A The interpretation of value for money requirements in the
*Code of Practice for Official Statistics***

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statement---value-for-money-requirements-in-code-of-practice.pdf>

Annex B Revised Statement about Assessment and Designation to include in Assessment Reports

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment Reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, Reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment Reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment Reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to 'seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews'.

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment Report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

Annex C Monitoring and enhancing the effectiveness of Assessment

What do we mean by effective?

1. We believe that the primary focus of Assessment is to help to make statistics and the statistical system more trustworthy – not, per se, to make the statistics more trusted. There is ample evidence to suggest that perceived trust in statistics is influenced by a range of non-statistical matters that are beyond the influence of statisticians and the remit of the Authority. Therefore we do not consider it appropriate to consider levels of public trust/confidence as indicators of the success of Assessment. In the short to medium term, Assessment may actually have a negative impact on public trust in statistics – but the Authority’s regulatory actions in themselves, and improvements stemming from Assessment, are consistent with the objective of improving trustworthiness. If a set of statistics is fully compliant with the *Code*, we are in effect saying that we regard it as trustworthy.
2. Effective Assessment will include:
 - changes in aspects of both the statistical production process and of the organisation within which the statistics are produced, that increase *Code* compliance;
 - confirmation that sets of National Statistics are fully compliant with the *Code*. In these cases Assessment will be confirming that production processes, and the environment in which statistics are produced, are trustworthy, and;
 - clear communication of our findings on compliance/trustworthiness to Parliament and the public.
3. A rounded view of ‘effective’ Assessment needs to take on the views of producers, users and commentators about the impact that Assessment is having on the trustworthiness of official statistics, and the statistical system.
4. However, identifying which improvements to statistics are attributable to the Assessment process itself is difficult. Some improvements will be made as a result of an individual Assessment within a department; others will be as a result of producers learning from Assessments carried out in other departments, or by making changes ahead of the Assessment of their statistics. Similarly, some positive changes may be made because of existing statistical improvement programmes, irrespective of the existence of the *Act*, the *Code* or Assessment.

Effectiveness to date

5. Despite these caveats, we might identify the following positive impacts of the Assessment/scrutiny process so far;
 - i. increasing awareness and understanding of the Authority’s views on good statistical practice;
 - ii. a raised profile for the Authority, and hence increasing public and parliamentary awareness that the UK statistical system is independently regulated in order to serve the public good;
 - iii. signs of an acceptance by the producer community of the need to develop statistical plans that take account of users’ needs;
 - iv. an acceptance, at least in the higher echelons of the Government Statistical Service (GSS), of the need to provide more informative and helpful commentary;
 - v. ministerial/policy officials concern to be ‘seen to do the right thing’;
 - vi. a number of specific improvements made to each of the set of statistics that have been assessed to date, in implementing the Requirements in Assessment Reports, and;

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- vii. the identification of the underlying issues from the Assessments conducted during 2009, with a view to their being addressed strategically.

Future monitoring of the effectiveness of Assessment

6. It would be helpful to gather the following types of evidence to help us to reach a rounded view about the effectiveness of Assessment.
 - i. *Number and nature of requirements and suggestions per Assessment Report.* We would expect the number of these to reduce over time and for the nature of them to change from more to less significant. For example, we might expect to see less frequent references to the need for producers to engage with a broader user base, and (more generally) Requirements that are more evenly distributed across the principles of the Code.
 - ii. *Proportion of Assessments that result in unconditional designation.* It would be expected that the number of these would increase over time as producers learn from their and other organisations' experience of Assessment.
 - iii. *Proactive behaviour prior to Assessment.* This may be evidenced by producers proactively seeking advice from the National Statistician, prior to Assessment, to ensure they are able to comply with the Code or at least are aware of areas that need improvement.
 - iv. *Positive feedback from producers about the process and the actions of the Assessment team* - it would imply that the relationship between the producer and the Assessment team has been positive and that the producers found the overall process positive, and might lead to producers promoting the process when speaking with other producers.
 - v. *Identification and uptake of 'best practice'.* If the Assessment team identifies activities or behaviours that it regards as particularly positive, this best practice might be adopted elsewhere.
 - vi. *Positive feedback from data users on the process.* This would imply that the users of statistics think the Assessment process is worthwhile in stimulating change that meets their needs.
 - vii. *Positive feedback from opinion formers.* Whilst we might not expect opinion formers to be aware of the details of Assessment, we might expect them to become aware of the Authority's activities, in particular that the Authority has processes to monitor and improve Code compliance, and we might expect them to be aware that these processes are consistent with the Authority's aims and objectives.
 - viii. *Adoption of similar processes in other countries* - on the basis that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Other than the peer review approach used across the European Statistical System a few years ago, we are not aware of any country that systematically and publicly monitors compliance with their *Codes of Practice*.

Enhancing the effectiveness of Assessment

7. On the basis of the preceding analysis, we believe that the effectiveness of Assessment could be enhanced by taking the following steps.
 - i. Continuing to support the National Statistician and the GSS in understanding the messages from Assessment, and helping them (as appropriate) to improve compliance with the Code – for example, by providing regular summaries of the issues emerging from recent Assessments.
 - ii. Continuing to identify best practice in the course of Assessments, and drawing attention to it.
 - iii. Communicating these messages about the Authority's findings to Parliament and the public.

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- iv. Seeking feedback from producers not only about progress in implementing Requirements (as we currently do) but also about any related changes arising from individual Assessments or the Assessment regime more generally – for example additional resource being made available, or improvements in governance arrangements – and about any concerns that they have about Assessment.
- v. Seeking views from users and external commentators about the extent to which they think that Assessment has impacted upon statistical products, and whether it has led to a more trustworthy statistical system – including via future surveys of opinion formers.
- vi. Publishing some material about each assessed set of statistics, drawn from the written evidence, via the Publication Hub to provide users with more information about the statistics.
- vii. Communicating better the ways in which Assessment contributes to meeting the Authority's objectives, and the benefits accruing from the Assessment regime.
- viii. Systematically recording the impact of Assessment, and reporting periodically to the Authority Board.

Annex D An analysis of Requirements from Assessment Reports

Introduction

Over 300 Requirements have been made in the 47 Assessment Reports published to date. This annex draws out some common themes, and proposes further analysis of the Requirements, along with analysis of Suggestions made.

Requirements made

Over half of the Requirements made in Assessment Reports have been made under Principles 1 and 8, and Protocol 2. This indicative analysis concentrates on those. The analysis has been conducted quickly, and the numbers of occurrences are approximate but they are certainly fit for the current purpose.

The largest group of Requirements is, unsurprisingly, around users – representing around 15 per cent of all Requirements made in Assessment Reports. The precise formulation of Requirements varies a little between Reports, particularly as the Assessment process has evolved. The three main Requirements about users are:

- Engaging better with users and documenting that engagement (26 Requirements)
- Documenting users' needs and experiences (14 Requirements)
- Taking users' views into account in statistical planning (5 Requirements)

The second largest group relates, equally unsurprisingly, to commentary and presentation of statistics. Again, three main Requirements dominate this group:

- General Requirements about improving commentary (16 Requirements)
- Better descriptions of operational context, targets etc (9 Requirements)
- Better presentation of statistics, charts etc (7 Requirements)

Other Requirements that have been made in this broad category relate to making a clearer distinction between statistical and policy releases (4 Requirements), reviewing the title of the output (3 Requirements), and using more consistent terminology in releases (3 Requirements).

Other Requirements that have been made frequently relate to:

- Publishing the name of the relevant statistician in the release (19 Requirements)
- Archiving data (10 Requirements)
- Reviewing or publishing pre-release access lists (9 Requirements)

Developing this analysis

The Assessment team sees potential in developing this analysis, to help improve the leverage applied by the Assessment process:

- Analysis of Requirements relating to all principles, and rationalisation of the indicative classification used here
- Identification of areas where we can standardise the phrasing of individual Requirements
- Thematic analysis of producers' follow up actions
- Equivalent analysis of Suggestions made in Assessment Reports

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***Draft Monitoring and Assessment Note:
Findings from the First Fifty Assessment Reports***

Purpose

1. This paper covers a draft Monitoring and Assessment Note summarising the findings from the first year of Assessments. This is an update of Monitoring and Assessment Note number 2(2010) which was published in March. We intend to publish this second Note in time to cross-refer to it in the Annual Report.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to comment on the draft Note attached at **Annex A** and approve its publication on the Authority's website.

Discussion

3. The draft Note summarises the findings from the first 50 Assessment Reports, prepared in the year to June 2010, covering around 230 sets of statistics. The purpose of the Note is to summarise the main areas of good practice and areas for improvement which were identified during Assessment, to inform the Board, the National Statistician and producers of Official Statistics. The Note includes a stronger focus on uses of statistics, in the context of statistical producers providing value for money. The Note also highlights some improvements that have been made in the light of producers implementing Requirements made in some of the early Assessment Reports.
4. We intend to produce an updated Note every six months, identifying emerging findings - and any changes in findings - as the process of Assessment becomes more embedded.
5. We propose to draw upon this Note for use in the Authority's Annual Report.

Monitoring and Assessment Team, UK Statistics Authority, June 2010

List of Annexes

Annex A Draft Monitoring and Assessment Note: Findings from the First Fifty Assessment Reports

Annex A Draft Monitoring and Assessment Note: Findings from the First Fifty Assessment Reports

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-4-2010---findings-from-the-first-50-assessment-reports.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

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*The Value of Statistical Commentary***Issue**

1. Informal discussions with Heads of Profession and others in government point to the possibility that the rapid evolution of the on-line dissemination of data, and initiatives such as data.gov.uk, may be leading some officials to assume that the preparation of statistical commentary is no longer a priority for government statisticians; and possibly best seen as a job for third party application developers – i.e. people who add value to raw data made available wholesale.
2. In times of financial pressure, this argument could gather momentum, regardless of the requirements of the *Code of Practice*. This paper sets out why the argument is wrong and why the preparation of good statistical commentary, linking the statistics to their likely uses, is ever more important and valuable. The wholesale publication of datasets should be seen as increasing, rather than reducing the need for considered written commentary.

Recommendation

3. A draft statement by the Statistics Authority is proposed (**Annex A**).

Timing

4. This issue could become a matter of contention. We therefore think that an early statement on the subject would be useful.

Discussion

5. Other than the statutory requirement to comply with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* (in effect a policy required of government), there is no specific government policy that bears directly on the question of the preparation of statistical commentary, though the National Statistician's Statement *Statistics Matter* does further support the Authority's position. And there are some specific provisions in the *Statistics and Registration Service Act* that might also be seen to support us – section 7 of the *Act* refers to "informing the public about social and economic matters" and "assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy". Tables of raw data do not do either. These provisions of the *Act* might reasonably be interpreted to require words alongside data. There are also some provisions in the *European Statistics Code* that point in a similar direction.
6. The most relevant explicit government policy is perhaps 'making public data public'. In practice this is widely taken to mean making complete databases available on-line so that individuals and organisations can develop supplementary products, including analysis and research papers. A 2009 policy document stated:

"By using new technologies and opening up the data government holds on itself, we can transform the accountability of government and public services. Ultimately, a more informed citizen is a more empowered citizen - able to use this information to shape the services that are delivered on their behalf. Greater openness and debate will also enhance democratic debate and strengthen the legitimacy of public decision making."

 Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government, December 2009.
7. Whilst this Statement refers to data about public services, the principle applies equally to all non-confidential information held by government.

8. The Authority has expressed support for the 'Making public data public' policy but we are also emphasising the role of the more conventional statistical release – or more exactly the content that is appropriate to such a release, whether there is a release as such, or not.
9. Historically, statistical releases were paper documents distributed to the press and interested experts. The more modern incarnation is a short web-based document containing links to detailed tables and datasets. Some releases have already changed from being reference works in themselves, to something more like a regularly updated guidebook, commenting on the statistics available and pointing the user to where the detailed data are held. Whilst the role of the statistical release may be changing, the components it contains are still essentially the same.
10. The textual content of releases can be divided into:
 - a) descriptive material (the geography and period to which the statistics relate, the method of their compilation, discontinuities or revisions, definition of terms etc.), and;
 - b) guidance to the user (narrative commentary drawing out the main messages, information on the policy context, why the statistics are collected, other data sources that may be relevant, cautions about the strengths and weaknesses of the data in relation to their likely uses and so on).
11. Publishing descriptive material alongside a summary of the key aggregates is a fundamental principle of good statistical practice. As well as drawing public attention to the availability of the statistics, it helps to ensure that the user is not misled by unexplained changes, allows the reader quickly to see the main figures in the context of earlier periods, and demonstrates openness on the part of government.
12. Guidance material in statistical releases is, in contrast, less standardised. Evidence from the Assessment Reports suggests it is sometimes less developed, and less helpful, than it might be. Whilst preparation of the descriptive information requires detailed knowledge of how the statistics were derived, preparation of written guidance is more subjective and requires professional skills and understanding of the subject matter rather than first hand experience of the systems that produce the statistics.
13. In many subject areas, the professional skills required to produce the guidance material exist outside government as well as inside. There are experts in universities and research bodies and in many public and private sector bodies. The Bank of England for example, produces extensive objective commentary on macro-economic statistics and their implications. Whilst the role the Bank plays is more an exception than a rule, the skills involved in preparing objective guidance are clearly not unique to government statisticians.
14. So, given that there are pools of external expertise, is it necessary for government statisticians to devote their time to preparing published guidance? Could it not be left to academics and other bodies to respond to whatever demand for guidance exists?

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15. There are, in fact, strong arguments why government statisticians should continue to produce such text, and indeed give more priority to doing so than is sometimes the case at present. The value of statistics depends on their use; and the users often need help to understand what they are being told. The marginal cost is low given that a certain amount of textual information is essential anyway, and other than in a few special cases, there is scant evidence that, if government statisticians did not perform this role, anyone else would do it. These arguments are developed further in the draft Statement at Annex A.

Head of Assessment, UK Statistics Authority, June 2010

List of Annexes

Annex A Draft Statement on *The Value of Statistical Commentary*

Annex A Statement on The Value of Statistical Commentary

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/the-value-of-statistical-commentary.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

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Grounds for not making official statistics fully available

Purpose

1. The draft Assessment Reports on school-level statistics on 'attainment' (results of national tests and examinations) in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have focused attention on the question of whether there are reasonable grounds either to withhold statistics from the public, or to make them available in ways that discourage and obstruct the use of the statistics for comparing one school with another, or for obtaining an overview of the patterns among schools.
2. This paper considers the issue as a question of principle with only occasional reference to the specifics of school examination results. The Board's decision on the matters of principle will then be reflected in the four Assessment Reports, including that for English schools and in a covering Monitoring and Assessment Note which will be published alongside the Assessment Reports. The meeting of the Assessment Committee on 1 July will agree any necessary amendments to the four Assessment Reports and the draft Note.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Authority Board are invited to make a decision on the questions of principle set out in this paper.

Timing

4. A decision on the questions of principle is needed at the Board meeting on 25 June if we are to proceed as planned with the Assessment Committee consideration of the four Assessment Reports.

Discussion

5. One complication with applying the principles in cases where the statistics are not regularly published is that it is often not entirely clear if the non-published statistics are properly regarded as National Statistics, or even official statistics. The producers might argue that they are merely one of many sets of unpublished management information and that the *Code* does not apply. In respect of the school level statistics on attainment, our view is that all the school level data should be regarded as official statistics. They are published as such in England, and if we were to apply the tests in the Authority's July 2009 statement on *Management Information, Research Data and the Use of Statistics in Policy Documents* then the corresponding statistics produced by the Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland administrations would, we believe, be strong candidates to be official statistics. The two tests are whether the data are used publicly in support of major decisions and whether they attract controversy when published and would, in the view of the Authority, be better treated as official statistics.
6. Assuming the statistics to be properly regarded as official statistics, the question of whether they are then subject to Assessment under the *Act* is still more complicated but has, in effect, already been settled pragmatically without any strong complaint from the producer bodies. The Assessment Committee will be invited to review that aspect again. If it were to be decided that Assessment does not apply, we could still publish our views, in a similar format, but designation as National Statistics would not be an option.

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7. On the basis that the Board agrees that Assessment is appropriate, the Board's decisions on the questions of principle do not necessarily have to be consistent with the *Code of Practice* as it currently stands. It would be possible to issue a clarification or amendment to the *Code* with a view to incorporating that amendment into a revised edition at a future date. However, consistency with the current *Code* may still be seen as desirable. The most relevant *Code* requirements are:
 - *Principle 8.3: Make statistics available in as much detail as is reliable and practicable, subject to legal and confidentiality constraints, offering choice and flexibility in the format according to the level of detail required by the user;*
 - *Principle 8.5: Ensure that official statistics are disseminated in forms that, as far as possible, are accessible to a range of different audiences, including those with disabilities, and;*
 - *Principle 8.6: Ensure that official statistics are disseminated in forms that enable and encourage analysis and re-use. Release datasets and reference databases, supported by documentation, in formats that are convenient to users.*
8. The phrase in Principle 8.3 'in as much detail as is reliable and practicable' raises the possibility of a producer body arguing that some statistics should not be published because they are not 'reliable'. However, the intention in the *Code* was to refer here only to statistical uncertainty or technical failure – for example, statistics from too small a survey, or one that went wrong in the field, would not have to be published. It was not intended to mean that a department could withhold statistics from publication on the ground that the statistics might, in its view, prove misleading. In the case of school attainment statistics, the figures are thus regarded as 'reliable'.
9. It has been argued by at least one producer body that Principle 8.3 is subordinate to the producer's judgement on the level of user demand. That would mean that the Authority would need to demonstrate that there is substantial demand for publication of the statistics (that have already been collected) before there would be any obligation to publish them. We reject that argument. User demand should influence the decision to collect the statistics in the first place. Once the statistics are available and being used inside government, they should be available to the public in a usable format. Our position here is consistent with the 'make public data public' policy.
10. Another argument that is put forward is that it is sufficient that each individual statistic (for example for any one school in the case of school attainment) can be found somewhere in a published document - there is no additional need for a statistical publication bringing them together. However, the *Code of Practice* is clear that this is not sufficient. All the practices under Principle 8 of the *Code* require that the statistics be published in a convenient format with suitable commentary and advice. In the case of school attainment, it is important - and a *Code* requirement - that the strengths and weaknesses of the figures be carefully explained.
11. There are some special circumstances where we would accept that data that might look like official statistics should not be published. Some management information (of a kind which we do not think needs to be treated as official statistics) and, probably, certain statistical information held by police, defence and security services where the information is regarded as secret in the national interest. In such cases, our position is not to regard the figures as being official statistics and therefore not covered by the *Code of Practice*. We have not said this clearly anywhere but it is consistent with the *Code* and our published statements.

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12. There are essentially three options open to the Board:
 - i. to accept the arguments that the statistics in question do not need to be treated as official statistics. In which case the Authority has no locus;
 - ii. to accept that there are circumstances under which public access to, and use of, official statistics should be prevented or inhibited by government so as to discourage misuse; and to amend the *Code* (at Principle 8.3) accordingly, and;
 - iii. to apply the *Code* as it stands, meaning that the statistics should be published with commentary etc as required by the *Code*.
13. In the case of school level attainment statistics, we cannot reasonably take the first option as the figures for England are already official statistics.
14. The second option would constitute a substantive change in the *Code* and require that the extent of likely misuse of statistics would have to be determined ahead of application of the rest of the *Code*. That would in turn require procedures and safeguards to ensure that the provisions were not used to prevent the publication of statistics on the grounds of inconvenience to the government of the day. The Head of Assessment's view is that this is too controversial a path to pursue and would be likely to spark criticism as well as contrasting uncomfortably with stated government policy on making public data public.
15. That leaves only the third option of applying the *Code* as it stands. It might be possible to argue that the statistics at school level are at a level of geographical disaggregation below that which needs to be published (in the same way that local crime statistics are not included in the main publications) but the approach taken in England where the individual school statistics have long been published, and accepted, as official statistics makes that argument look perverse. And 'school level' is not strictly a geography. It is rather the level of disaggregation at which the most important analyses can be carried out.

Head of Assessment, UK Statistics Authority, June 2010

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***World Statistics Day
20 October 2010***

Purpose

1. This paper explains the background to World Statistics Day, and the preparations in hand within the Government Statistical Service (GSS) (including the Office for National Statistics(ONS)) and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) to celebrate it in the UK.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority are invited to:
 - i. note and comment on the plans currently in place for observing World Statistics Day (WSD), and;
 - ii. consider whether they wish to participate in some of the planned activities, or even lead on additional activities, to raise further the profile of WSD and of official statistics.

Discussion

3. Following adoption of a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly on 3 June 2010, Wednesday 20 October 2010 ("20-10-2010") has been designated WSD. The idea in itself is not new; more than 100 countries have celebrated some form of statistics day, week or month in recent years to raise the profile of official statistics among data providers and users. This event is planned to be a one-off event to raise the visibility of the work of the official statistics community, and to help strengthen the awareness and trust of the public in official statistics. The theme of the event will be 'a celebration of the many achievements of official statistics and the core values of service, integrity and professionalism'. A WSD logo and website have been created by the UN.
[LINK --> <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/wsd/Default.aspx>]
4. The UN General Assembly has invited all government, non-government, international, national and regional organisations, the media and all producers and users of official statistics to observe WSD in an appropriate manner. The National Statistician is keen to mark the day and to use the opportunity for the ONS, GSS and RSS to work together to showcase their work and raise the profile of statistics. A small working group has been established for this purpose in ONS, and the National Statistician's Office has been working with this group and liaising with the GSS and RSS to develop an appropriate programme of activities.
5. The activities that have been chosen are those which, it is hoped, will mark the day in a positive way, raise the profile of official statistics and reach a good number of people, but at minimal cost. It is anticipated that the cost of the National Statistician/ONS activities will be less than £2000.
6. Current plans for National Statistician/ONS activities with an external focus include:
 - i. using a series of case studies on the value of official statistics on the National Statistician's pages of the UK Statistics Authority website and on the ONS website as a public 'count down' to WSD;
 - ii. news releases about the day, the importance of official statistics and the value they add to society;
 - iii. series of radio interviews (commercial and BBC stations) using past and present

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- case studies celebrating the value and importance of official statistics;
 - iv. offering an interview with the National Statistician to a major news programme e.g. Today, GMTV;
 - v. seeking coverage in specific programmes/journals;
 - vi. holding an open day at Newport for local school children (aged 15 to 16), on or around 20 October, focusing on the value of statistics, and;
 - vii. encouraging media coverage of events at the Newport and Titchfield sites.
7. Current plans for National Statistician/ONS activities with an internal focus include:
- i. using a series of ONS case studies on the intranet, and GSS case studies on Statnet, as a 'count down' to WSD;
 - ii. a programme of presentations for Newport and Titchfield staff (to which local RSS members and GSS staff will be invited). **Annex A** contains the current outline programme - Andrew Dilnot has agreed to be one of the speakers;
 - iii. exhibitions at both Newport and Titchfield sites to celebrate WSD and the importance of official statistics;
 - iv. a commemorative sculpture. The existing metal sculpture outside the entrance to the Newport office is very similar to the WSD logo; the design team plans to make some additions to the sculpture as part of a temporary 'make over' to commemorate WSD (see **Annex B**);
 - v. time capsules - bury (or mount in a glass wall cabinet) time capsules at the Newport and Titchfield sites. Suggested content to include material published on 20 October 2010, the content of the Retail Prices Index basket of goods, a survey questionnaire and the most recent copy of ONS.Life;
 - vi. restaurants at Newport and Titchfield are planning to offer a special WSD menu; for example, including the most popular dishes on each site and the most popular dishes across the world;
 - vii. celebratory cakes - a number of cakes will be designed and made to celebrate the day. Staff will be able to enter a draw to win one of the cakes to share with their colleagues;
 - viii. pre- and post-event coverage in ONS news channels, and;
 - ix. publicising any local RSS or GSS events that ONS staff might wish to attend.
8. GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) and Devolved Administrations' Chief Statisticians have been informed of the plans for WSD via various fora, including the Heads of Profession Group, Heads of Profession Steering Group and Inter Administration Committee. Some exciting ideas for marking the day are emerging as a result, but none have yet been confirmed. A paper setting out possible ideas for celebrating the day, and further encouraging HoPs to consider hosting activities in their own departments/administrations/locations, has recently been issued.
9. The RSS is keen to look beyond the official statistics focus of WSD and to see it as an opportunity to celebrate statistics and statistical achievement more generally. It is therefore planning to launch its campaign for statistical literacy - *getstats* - on WSD. Its current plans for observing WSD include the following:
- i. official launch of the new 10-year *getstats* campaign website and related social media activities;
 - ii. press release and other print and broadcast coverage (co-ordinated with National Statistician/ONS);
 - iii. early morning podcast of 'high profile figure' welcoming the RSS Campaign and WSD;
 - iv. communications from senior UK and overseas contacts welcoming WSD (and the RSS Campaign launch);
 - v. launch of network of international and UK member correspondents on statistical

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- literacy;
- vi. talk by international (New Zealand) speaker on new approaches to teaching statistics (to precede an international *CensusAtSchool* workshop at the RSS the next day);
- vii. *Significance* lecture: celebration of the RSS magazine *Significance* as an international publication;
- viii. showcase of case studies: international research and other international collaboration in which statisticians have played a role - in UN priority areas e.g. health, development (RSS is working primarily with International Statistical Literacy Project members);
- ix. programmed events across the country organised by members and wider network including talks, receptions and games;
- x. announcement of new RSS network competition focussing on ways in which statistical research has contributed to the world and society, and;
- xi. evening reception at the RSS, Errol Street, London (with a high profile host) for a range of new campaign contacts including sponsors, profiling the campaign's plans. Board members will be invited.

Caron Walker (National Statistician's Office) and Penny Hallett (Communications Division, ONS), June 2010

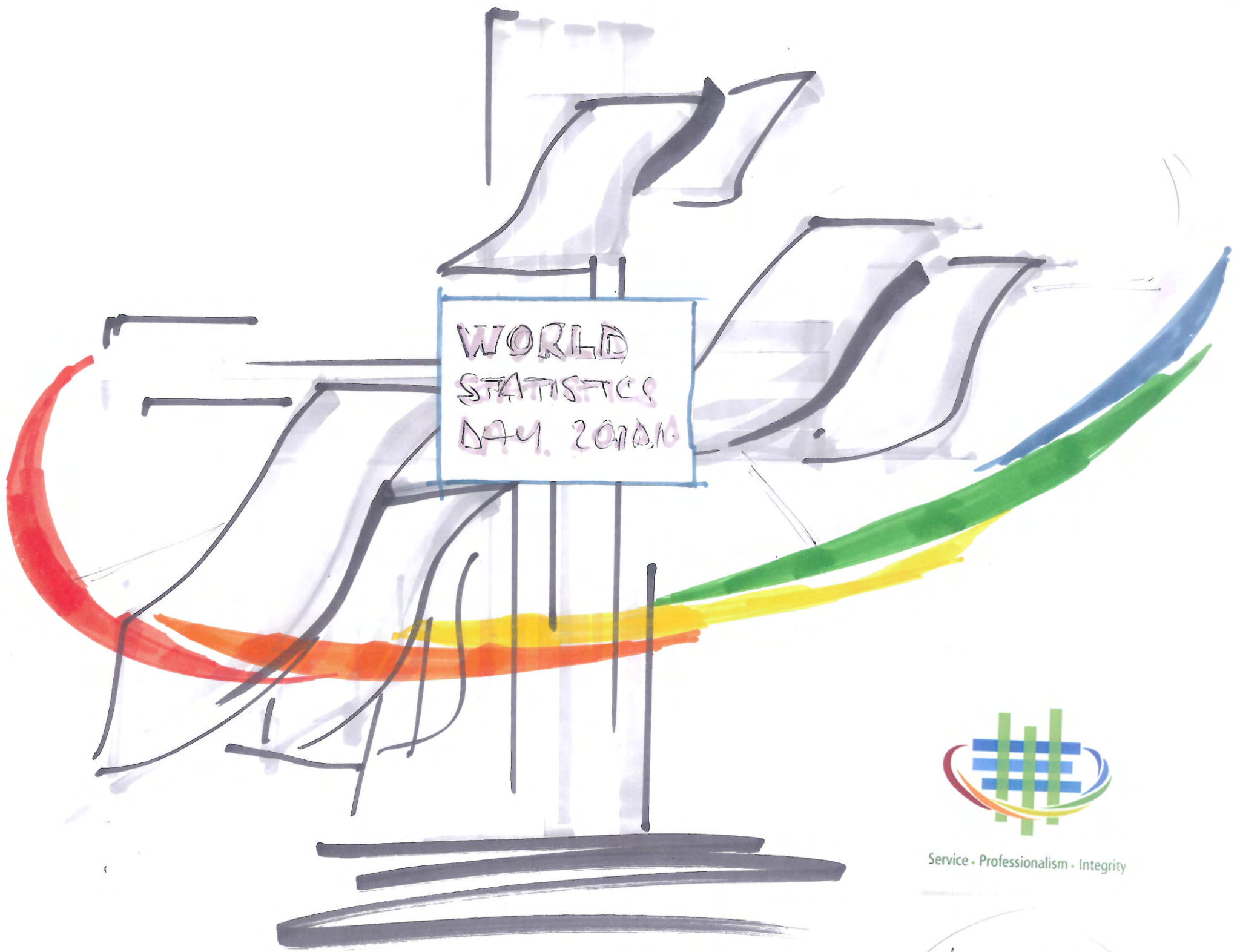
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Annex A Outline Programme for Presentations on World Statistics Day

Annex B Design for Temporary 'Make Over' of Newport Sculpture

Annex A Outline Programme for Presentations on World Statistics Day

Newport	Titchfield
We're living longer, are we living healthier? Tricia Dodd (Deputy Director, Centre for Health Analysis and Life Events)	Data Visualisation Alan Smith (Head of Data Visualisation Centre)
Census Publicity Campaign Oliver Doerle (Head of Census Publicity)	Title to be confirmed Andrew Dilnot (Chair of the Statistics User Forum)
Tales from the Field A Field Force Interviewer	Tales from the Field A Field Force Interviewer
History of the National Debt Joe Grice (Director of Economic, Labour, and Social Analysis Directorate)	History of a survey
Reserve: History of a survey	



Service • Professionalism • Integrity



WORLD STATISTICS DAY. GARLAND

This can be applied to the sculpture at Newport entrance 2 weeks before the day.

To be designed as a temporary fixture using permanent materials eg glass, metal, plastic, stone, perspex.

