

**Minutes of the UK Statistics Authority Meeting
20 June 2008**

Lord Clerk Register's Meeting Room, Edinburgh

Present

UK Statistics Authority – Non-Executive Members

Sir Michael Scholar (Chair)
Professor Adrian Smith (Deputy Chair – Statistics)
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Ms Moira Gibb
Professor David Rhind

UK Statistics Authority – Executive Members

Mr Richard Alldritt
Ms Karen Dunnell

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Ms Celia Reed
Mr Mervyn Stevens

Chief Statistician for Scotland

Mr Rob Wishart (To Item 4)

Apologies

Lord Rowe-Beddoe (Deputy Chair – ONS)
Sir Alan Langlands
Mr Steve Newman
Professor Steve Nickell

Chair's opening remarks

1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting

3. The minutes of the previous meeting on 16th May 2008 were accepted as a true and fair account of that meeting. There were no matters arising.

Inter-Administration Committee [SA(08)20]

4. Ms Dunnell and Mr Wishart reported on the issues for the Authority that devolution presented and on progress being made towards developing a systematic mechanism for managing inter-administration issues. Ms Dunnell presented a report from the inaugural meeting of the Inter-Administration Committee (IAC) and Terms of Reference for that committee. The Authority was pleased to note the progress that had been made and requested that the IAC develop and publish a framework to support the delivery, wherever appropriate, of coherent, comparable and comprehensive Four Nations statistics as soon as possible. Ms Dunnell agreed to make the IAC minutes available to the Authority, and, to commission a short report setting out current Inter-Administration issues from each Theme Working Group

Action: Ms Dunnell

Consultation Document on the Code of Practice [SA(08)21]

5. Mr Alldritt presented a revised draft of the Consultation Document on the Code of Practice and recommended that this was published in July. The Authority reaffirmed its commitment to the consultation process and that responses to the consultation would be considered at two Authority meetings in autumn/ winter 2008. It was agreed that, while certain core issues would remain constant, the Code of Practice would nevertheless be kept under review. The Authority approved the publication of the Consultation Document, subject to consideration of various suggested textual amendments. This should be done before the next Authority meeting. **Action: Mr Alldritt**

Census 2011 White Paper [SA(08)22]

6. Ms Dunnell presented a draft of the Census 2011 White Paper to the Authority for approval and updated the Authority on progress on the Census procurement contract. The Authority was fully satisfied by her report that an appropriate procurement process had been followed and on the basis of legal advice received from Treasury Solicitors that sufficient safeguards were in place both contractually and in criminal law to safeguard the ownership and confidentiality of census data. The Authority agreed that the Census White Paper should be sent to the Cabinet Office in line with the timetable for publication of the White Paper, subject to consideration of final suggested amendments. **Action: Ms Dunnell & Chair**

Priorities for Assessment Work Programme [SA(08)23]

7. Mr Alldritt presented a paper which made recommendations for the Authority's initial assessment work programme. The Authority endorsed the concept of 'issue' and 'designation' reports. It was agreed that assessments for designation as "National Statistics" should not be done against the existing Code of Practice but rather that some initial pilot assessment work using the draft new Code should commence as soon as was practicable. The Authority also agreed an initial programme of issue reports. This programme of work should be published. **Action: Mr Alldritt**

Engaging External Stakeholders [SA(08)24]

8. Mr Alldritt presented a paper which described ongoing work to formulate a stakeholder engagement strategy. A substantive paper would be presented at the Authority's July meeting. **Action: Mr Alldritt**

Migration & Population Statistics

9. Ms Dunnell reported on progress that had been made by way of cross-departmental co-operation on delivering improvements to the quality of migration and population statistics. She advised the Authority that priorities had been agreed on data sharing issues and that resource had been secured to ensure delivery of this project. The Authority noted these developments but was concerned at the lack of progress with regard to the delivery of a definitive national address register and endorsed fully the initiative to resolve this as a matter of priority.

Pre-Release Access

10. Mr Alldritt advised the Authority that the Cabinet Office would be laying the Pre-Release Order before the UK Parliament before the summer recess. The Authority agreed that it should publish its own position with regard to pre-release access to coincide with the laying of the Order. **Action: Secretariat**

Review of agreed actions / Forward look

11. The Authority agreed that full consideration of the issue of risk be made at the next Authority meeting. The Secretariat should draft appropriate discussion material. **Action: Secretariat.**

12. The Chair proposed and Professor Rhind seconded that Mr Alex Jablonowski should be appointed to the Audit Committee. This was approved by the Authority.

13. The Authority agreed that draft Terms of Reference for the Committee on Official Statistics (COS) and the Audit Committee should be considered for approval at the Authority's next meeting.

**Agenda – UK Statistics Authority Meeting
Friday 20th June 2008**

Lord Clerk Register's Meeting Room, Edinburgh , 10 am - 1 pm

Chair: Sir Michael Scholar

**Apologies: Allan Langlands, Steve Nickell, Lord Rowe-Beddoe,
Steve Newman**

Agenda

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|----|--|--|
| 1 | Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting | <i>Speaker</i> |
| | Declarations of interest | |
| 2 | Inter Administration Committee
<i>For note and comment on the arrangements and plans for this Committee</i> | SA(08)20

Karen Dunnell &
Rob Wishart |
| 3 | Consultation Document on the Code of Practice
<i>To approve the draft Consultation Document and to recommend its urgent publication</i> | SA(08)21

Richard Alldritt |
| 4 | Census 2011 White Paper
<i>For consideration by the Authority before it goes to Cabinet Office</i> | SA(08)22

Karen Dunnell |
| 5 | Priorities for Assessment Work Programme
<i>To agree priority issues for Authority reports</i> | SA(08)23

Richard Alldritt |
| 6 | Engaging External Stakeholders
<i>To note and discuss the proposals</i> | SA(08)24

Richard Alldritt |
| 7 | Recent Issues around Migration Statistics
<i>Oral reports</i> | Karen Dunnell &
Richard Alldritt |
| 8 | Pre-Release Access
<i>Oral reports</i> | Richard Alldritt |
| 9 | Review of Agreed Actions/Forward Look | Sir Michael Scholar |
| 10 | Any other business | |

**Next Meeting: Friday 11th July, 11.30 am to 3.00 pm
Board Room, UK Statistics Authority, Newport**

Inter-Administration Committee on StatisticsPurpose

1. This paper provides members of the Board of the UK Statistics Authority with a brief introduction to the genesis of, and immediate focus for, the recently established Inter-Administration Committee on Statistics

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendations

3. Board members are invited to note the arrangements and plans set out below.

Discussion

4. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 presented the opportunity to review existing Government Statistical Service (GSS) operations and to develop more effective governance and planning mechanisms for the official statistics system. The Board decided at its meeting on 21 February 2008 that it did not want to create its own sub-committee on devolved administration matters and felt that this aspect of the Authority's operations should be considered by the full Board of the Authority. To support the Authority's goals, the National Statistician has therefore established the Inter-Administration Committee (IAC) as part of her new governance arrangements for the GSS, to develop a systematic mechanism for addressing inter-administration issues.

5. The IAC is chaired by the National Statistician, with membership comprised of the Chief Statisticians in the three devolved administrations, the ONS Director General of Statistics, the ONS Director of National Statistics and Policy and appropriate GSS Heads of Profession as issues dictate. The secretariat is supplied by ONS.

6. The IAC's remit is to:

- produce a framework for coherent, comparable and comprehensive Four Nation statistics;
- develop a prioritised programme to address issues of coherence and comparability;
- consider UK government statistics needed for devolved purposes in reserved policy areas, and devolved statistics needed for UK purposes. This could include cost sharing practices, and;
- consider and influence the development of statistical policies and plans.

7. To achieve this the IAC will work closely with:

- the UK Statistics Authority - to ensure adequate information flows exist in both directions to advise and inform on issues;
- Users - to ensure effective mechanisms of engagement and empowerment;

- GSS Committees - particularly the Work Planning, Professional Issues Committees, and Thematic Planning Groups, to influence and advise GSS planning and policy development.
8. Draft terms of reference are attached at Annex A.

First Meeting

9. The IAC met for the first time on 12 May 2008. Issues addressed are set out below, and work will continue over the summer to progress these:
- finalise its terms of reference, particularly in relation to how it will interact with the other GSS committees, actual or planned;
 - address the obligations of Section 20 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act, whereby ONS has to seek approval from Ministers in the Devolved Administrations to publish statistics on devolved matters;
 - discuss the developing Framework for Scottish Official Statistics;
 - identify the options relating to the updating/replacement of the existing Concordat on Statistics that forms a part of the UK Government's Memorandum of Understanding for the Devolved Administrations;
 - develop a new inter-administration working agreement;
 - commission Thematic Planning Groups and cross-government function groups to consider inter-administration issues - to inform an IAC prioritised programme.

Future Agenda

10. At its next meeting in September 2008 the IAC will discuss:
- Concordat - feasibility of revising the existing one; likely content of a complementary new working agreement between the four nations;
 - Section 20 - finalise proposals that will enable ONS to address the obligations placed upon it by the Act;
 - Frameworks - proposals for the purpose and content of frameworks to be developed for each administration and a possible core UK-Wide Framework;
 - Priorities - a list of the key issues that the IAC should seek to influence/address;
 - Role of the National Statistician in the Devolved Administrations.

Mike Hughes (ONS Director National Statistics and Policy)
Rob Wishart (Chief Statistician Scottish Government)
June 2008

Draft Terms of Reference for the Inter-Administration Committee on Statistics

Purpose

1. The Committee will work within the context of a four-nations agreement between the UK Statistics Authority and each of the Devolved Administrations, which outlines the ways in which the four nations will work together and co-operate on statistical matters.

Role

2. The Committee's responsibilities will include the following:
- develop a conceptual framework for coherent, comparable and comprehensive 4 Nation statistics, taking due account of user needs, accessibility and metadata to assess comparability
 - develop, consider and promote policies, strategies and standards which facilitate the production of coherent and harmonised statistics across the administrations
 - liaise with, and support the work of, other GSS committees
 - consider UK government statistics needed for devolved purposes in reserved policy areas, and devolved statistics needed for UK purposes. This could include cost sharing practices
 - strengthen the user voice (with an emphasis on those users requiring UK-wide and international statistics)
 - share and promote good statistical practice across administrations
 - identify international issues including meeting international requirements and arrangements for moving forward issues that would benefit sub UK international comparisons
 - escalate issues to the UK Statistics Authority and/or Ministers as appropriate

Membership

3. Membership of the Committee will consist of:
- National Statistician - Chair
 - Chief Statisticians in Devolved Administrations
 - Director General for Statistics, ONS
 - Director National Statistics and Policy Group, ONS
 - ONS Director with Key Account responsibility for DAs
 - Head of Profession for Statistics in Other Government Departments (x2)
4. The secretariat will be provided by National Statistics and International Division, ONS.

Meetings

5. The Committee will meet quarterly.

IAC Secretariat,
May 2008

Consultation on the Code of Practice

Purpose

1. This paper presents a revised draft consultation document on the Code of Practice and the related principles and procedures for Assessment (Annex A).

Timing

2. Pressing. Once approved by the Authority, it would be desirable to publish the consultation document as soon as possible so that the consultation period may begin and the time elapsed before eventual adoption of the new Code is minimised.

Recommendation

3. Authority members are invited to approve the draft consultation document and agree that it be published as soon as practicable.

Discussion

4. The Authority considered a draft consultation document on the Code of Practice and related procedures at its previous meeting [SA(08)19]. This paper outlined the nature the consultation process, proposals for dissemination, origins of the Code, areas of potential comment and risks. In summary:

- a 12 week public consultation is required under Cabinet Office guidelines and inferred from the Statistics Act;
- the consultation document will be the first published report of the Authority. It is planned to disseminate hard copies to a wide range of stakeholders, publish on the Authority's website and issue a press notice, with the added benefit of further raising the Authority's profile;
- the draft Code is based on the Statistics Commission's *Proposals for a Code of Practice for Official Statistics (2007)* which was subject to an earlier consultation. These proposals were based on the existing National Statistics Code of Practice (2002) but considerably shortened and adapted to a form suitable to supporting Assessments. Its development was informed by, and consistent with, the European Statistics Code of Practice (2005);
- past experience has indicated that relatively few substantive responses might be expected but that comments were likely to be received on a diverse range of issues. The invitation to comment on six identified areas may prompt views, perhaps particularly in regard to the section entitled 'the Code and policy statements' (paragraphs 33 to 35);
- the main risk to the Authority is that the process for consultation, adoption and implementation of the Code may be seen as too slow. Mitigation measures include good communication with stakeholders on

what the Authority is doing and why; publishing the consultation document swiftly; and identifying issues on which reviews could be conducted without the text of the Code having been formally agreed. (This is the subject of paper [SA(08)23] on the agenda of this meeting).

5. The Authority endorsed the proposed approach and further agreed that the Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) be informally consulted on the proposals. The draft consultation document was circulated on a restricted basis to HoPs on 19 May and discussed with the Head of Assessment at the HoPs meeting of 2 June.

6. The object of this exercise was not to materially alter the draft Code prior to publication but instead to give HoPs sight of the document in respect of their professional responsibilities. It also acted as a further quality assurance exercise. Accordingly, the draft has not been extensively revised but has been adapted in a small number of areas, principally to:

- include a new section in the introduction about the Publication Hub (paragraph 36);
- include a new section in the introduction about statistics produced from administrative sources (paragraph 40) and an additional question to respondents as to whether Protocol 3 on this topic should be expanded (paragraph 12.vi);
- include references to the Chief Statisticians in the Devolved Administrations alongside the National Statistician where appropriate (for example Principles 5.5 and 8.8)
- refer to arrangements in the Devolved Legislatures where appropriate (for example refer to both the UK and Scottish pre-release Orders);
- remove some of the summary sections from the introduction to reduce the overall length of the consultation document.

7. Other helpful and informative comments were received and they will be carefully considered in the context of the consultation process as a whole. Many of these were too detailed to be incorporated into the draft Code but will be useful inputs to the formulation of the supporting guidance.

Richard Alldritt
Head of Assessment
June 2008

DRAFT AS AT 29 MAY 2008

Code of Practice for Statistics and the
Principles and Procedures of
Assessment:

A consultation document

UK Statistics Authority

May 2008

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Foreword by Sir Michael Scholar

Introduction

Part 1: The Code of Practice for Statistics

Part 2: The Statement of Principles and Procedures of Assessment

Annexes

1: The National Statistics Code of Practice and Protocols – Main principles

2: International Statistics Code of Practice – Main principles

3: About the UK Statistics Authority

4: Written consultation code of practice

Foreword by Sir Michael Scholar, Chair of the UK Statistics

Authority

Official statistics are a vital resource for government and society. They influence many decisions in government, and in both public and private services, that affect all our lives. They also provide the citizen with a window on the work and performance of government and in this way play a central role in the processes of democracy.

The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 established new statutory arrangements under which the production and publication of these statistics are now governed. It created the UK Statistics Authority and it gave us, among other powers, the authority to determine a Code of Practice and specific powers to assess the compliance of official statistics against that Code.

The Code of Practice and the assessment of compliance will be among the most crucial tools in enabling us to pursue our statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good – in short, to achieving our task of rebuilding trust in statistics. The Code is also fundamental to defining the common principles that we expect to be observed by the different bodies that produce official statistics.

The draft Code in Part 1 of this consultation document is broad in its coverage and is designed to apply not just to those involved in statistical work but to all who work within organisations that produce official statistics, from those who advise government ministers to press offices. This broad coverage reflects the pattern of international codes such as the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice, and the draft is consistent with these. It is also consistent with the existing National Statistics Code of Practice which it will replace – there is no change in the essential values.

I believe our proposals are well thought out and coherent. However, the Statistics Authority will be happy to consider further changes or additions to the proposals if the response to the consultation suggests that this would help to promote confidence in the statistical service. Please let us know what you think

signature

Sir Michael Scholar

Introduction

1. A consultation document in 1998, *Statistics: A Matter of Trust*, described the Government's aims for statistics in the following way:

“Quality needs to be assured. Official statistics must be sufficiently accurate and reliable for the purposes for which they are required ... the production and presentation of official statistics needs to be free from political interference, and to be seen as such, so that the objectivity and impartiality of statistics is assured”.

2. HM Treasury's consultation document *Independence for Statistics: A Consultation Document*, published in March 2006 set out plans for legislation and quoted the text above, saying that these objectives remained the Government's aim. The UK Statistics Authority endorses the sentiment but notes that the statistical service is more than just the figures themselves. Of course the figures must be as accurate and reliable as they reasonably can be, and free from any political interference, but they must also be planned to meet the future needs of society and communicated in ways that are as helpful as possible to those who rely on them to inform their decisions – and in some respects that is all of us. The draft Code of Practice in this consultation document reflects this broad interpretation of these aims.
3. In the UK, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the central statistics office. However, the ONS represents just one part of the statistical system and, in practice, statistical production occurs across a wide range of government departments, the devolved administrations and other public bodies, covering all areas of activity (including the economy, employment, population, crime, education and health). This decentralised system offers real benefits in terms of support to policy work in government but it also creates challenges in organisation and management that are different from those faced by more centralised national statistical offices around the world. The Code of Practice has been drafted with the UK's decentralised system in mind.
4. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 ('the Act'), requires that the UK Statistics Authority (the 'Statistics Board' in the Act) should consult on the content

of a Code of Practice for Statistics and the principles and procedures that it will adopt in exercising its duty to assess compliance against the Code.

5. More specifically, section 10 of the Act requires the Statistics Authority to 'prepare, adopt and publish a Code of Practice for Statistics'. In preparing the Code, the Authority must consult Ministers in each of the devolved administrations and 'such other persons as it thinks fit'.
6. Section 12 of the Act requires the Authority, at the request of Ministers in the Cabinet Office and the Devolved Administrations, to assess and determine whether the Code of Practice has been complied with in relation to any official statistics. Where the Authority determines that the Code has been complied with, it is required to designate the statistics as 'National Statistics'. Otherwise it must decline to designate them.
7. Once statistics have been designated as 'National Statistics', the body responsible for their production is under a statutory duty (section 13 of the Act) to continue to comply with the Code. The Authority must re-assess from time to time whether those statistics continue to be Code-compliant. The formal wording of the Act states that the duty to comply with the Code rests with the 'person producing the statistics'. In practice, however, we interpret this to mean the organisation as a whole. The Code does not distinguish between statistics according to which officials are involved in their production.
8. It is evident from these formal provisions that the Code will play a central role in the fulfilment of the Authority's statutory objective of ensuring that official statistics serve the 'public good' (section 7). Once the Code has been adopted, the Authority will keep its operation under review and propose amendments as necessary. Any such amendments will be subject to further consultation.

Principles and procedures

9. In carrying out the functions of assessment and designation, the Act (section 17) requires the Authority to prepare and publish a statement of:
 - the principles to which it will have regard, and
 - the procedures which it will adopt.

The Authority is further required in preparing this statement to consult Ministers in the devolved administrations and such other persons as it thinks fit.

10. This consultation document is in two parts:

Part 1 explains the background to the Authority's proposals for the Code of Practice and sets out the draft text.

Part 2 sets out the draft Statement of Principles and Procedures relating to the assessment and designation functions.

11. The Annexes contain background information on the existing National Statistics Code of Practice and relevant international codes.

OPEN CONSULTATION

12. The UK Statistics Authority welcomes views on the draft Code of Practice (Part 1) and the principles and procedures for assessment (Part 2). In particular:

- i. Does the draft Code achieve the right balance between accessibility and conciseness, on the one hand, and suitable guidance and prescription on the other?
- ii. Should the Code include more detail about the circumstances in which confidential statistical data might be disclosed - perhaps in a Protocol - or do you think it would be more appropriate to address this in published guidelines?
- iii. Which Principles in the Code should be given most emphasis in making decisions about the possible designation of National Statistics?
- iv. The concept of 'experimental statistics' has enabled official statisticians to involve users and stakeholders in the development of statistics and as a means to build in quality at an early stage. How should 'experimental statistics' be treated under the Assessment regime?

- v. With reference to the discussion of departmental policy statements issued alongside statistical releases, should the Code include the requirements outlined at paragraph 35?
 - vi. Should the protocol concerning administrative sources be expanded to cover a wider range of issues, as discussed at paragraph 40.
13. The consultation period begins with the publication of this document and will run for at least 12 weeks. Please ensure that your response reaches us by **5 September 2008**.
14. Responses to the consultation should be sent to:
- UK Statistics Authority
 - Statistics House
 - Islington
 - London
 - EC1R 1UW
15. This document can also be found on the UK Statistics Authority website: [\[link\]](#)
16. When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.
17. All written responses will be made public on the Statistics Authority's website unless the author specifically requests otherwise. In the case of electronic responses, general confidentiality disclaimers that often appear at the bottom of e-mails will be disregarded for the purpose of publishing responses unless an explicit request for confidentiality is made in the body of the response.
18. Even where confidentiality is requested, if a request for disclosure of the consultation response is made in accordance with the freedom of information legislation, and the response is not covered by one of the exemptions in the legislation, the Statistics Authority may have to disclose the response in whole or in part.

Consultation criteria

19. The consultation is being conducted in line with the Code of Practice on Consultation, which contains six key criteria governing a written consultation. These are set out in Annex 5.

PART 1:

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

20. There has been a formal code of practice for UK official statistics for over ten years but it has evolved over that time; the most recent version, *the National Statistics Code of Practice*, was published in stages from 2002. That code takes the form of a set of broad principles and 12 associated protocols. More information about it can be found at Annex 1.

21. In October 2007, the Statistics Commission (since wound up under the terms of the Statistics and Registration Service Act), published a report, *Proposals for a Code of Practice of Official Statistics*¹. This argued for a shorter and simpler Code more suited to supporting the assessment function provided for in the Act. The report built on proposals which the Commission issued for consultation in December 2006, and which received a number of substantive responses from national and international experts and organisations. In all, 16 organisations and individuals responded to that interim report:

- Audit Commission
- Office of Public Sector Information
- Committee on Standards in Public Life
- Economic and Social Research Council
- The National Archives
- Scottish Executive
- The Information Centre for Health and Social Care
- Bank of England
- Royal Statistical Society
- The Royal Society
- Ian Maclean, Chair of the Business Statistics User Group
- Joaquin Almunia, European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs
- Herve Carre, Director-General European Commission
- Donal Garvey, (former) Director General, Central Statistics Office, Ireland
- Ivan Fellegi, Chief Statistician of Canada
- Brian Pink, Government Statistician, New Zealand

¹ Link to web version of report

22. All the respondents welcomed the proposals for a revised Code of Practice. For example:

- 'We support the Code's central aim to strengthen public confidence in UK official statistics. We also strongly agree that longstanding public trust needs to be fostered through... a statutory code which is seen to be respected.'
(*Committee on Standards in Public Life*)
- 'This is an excellent document, thoughtful, well organised and clear.'
(*Ivan Fellegi, Statistics Canada*)
- 'The ESRC fully supports explaining the principles and practices of the Code in lay terms and recognises the extended usability of the Code that will ensue'. (*Economic and Social Research Council*)

23. A full account of the responses and the amendments made in response to them is given in the Statistics Commission's October 2007 report.

European Statistical System

24. In 2005 the European Statistical System (ESS) - the partnership of Eurostat and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the Member States - endorsed a new European Statistics Code of Practice – see Annex 2. At the same time the European Commission outlined a strategy to implement and monitor compliance with the Code. This strategy, supported by the Statistical Programme Committee, is characterised by self-assessment (of compliance against the Code) and NSI reporting, reinforced by peer reviews to help identify areas in which NSIs and Eurostat should take steps to improve their compliance. Economic and Finance Ministers of EU Member States endorsed the ESS's approach to improving the independence, integrity and accountability of the national and Community statistical authorities.

25. The first round of peer reviews is now complete, and all reports have been published by Eurostat. Further steps, possibly including a strengthening of the Code of Practice, will be outlined in an implementation report by Eurostat to be presented to the European Parliament and to the Council in November 2008.

26. The detail of the subject of this consultation document, a Code of Practice for Statistics, has been informed by and is consistent with the European Code.

Indeed, we have adopted a structure broadly similar to the European model, which elaborates a number of high level principles, each of which is amplified by a series of more detailed indicators. In the European context this approach has served the peer review process well, and we believe that it will lend itself equally to UK Statistics Authority's Assessment and Designation function.

27. In developing the Code on behalf of the Authority officials have held high level discussions with Eurostat experts, and we have taken into account the broad areas in which the European Code is likely to evolve.

The nature of the draft Code

28. The Statistics Authority agrees with the view expressed by the Statistics Commission in its October 2007 report that the new statutory framework would require a code that, whilst covering much the same ground as the existing National Statistics Code of Practice, should be different in some respects:

- It should be shorter, simpler and more imperative in style – both so that individuals might find it easier to understand and remember, and also so that bodies that produce statistics would more readily be able to tell if their practices were compliant.
- As far as possible, it should provide an unambiguous and structured basis for independent assessment.
- It would benefit from being closer in style, structure and content to the European Statistics Code of Practice, introduced in 2005, compliance with which is expected of all EU national statistics offices and other producers of European statistics (see Annex 2).
- It should be drafted to apply to all bodies that produce official statistics not just to statistical staff or to the statistics themselves.
- It should not set out exceptions and exemptions in the text of the Code. Instead, another mechanism should be adopted for agreeing and documenting necessary exceptions and special cases. This change substantially shortens the Code.

29. The draft Code is based on an edited version of the existing National Statistics Code, so it is not fundamentally different. There are however some additional principles and practices, mostly based on concepts in the European Code. Among the aspects which differ from the existing Code are:

- The requirement on producer bodies under Principle 2 to investigate and document the use made of official statistics and the types of decisions they inform, and the key areas of emerging demand and unmet need. Investigation of these issues is an important contribution to planning and quality assurance.
- The inclusion of a principle on resources (Principle 10). This follows the model of the European Code and is appropriate where the Code will apply to a number of largely autonomous organisations.
- The requirement that exceptions and exemptions to the application of the Code will be by agreement with the UK Statistics Authority.
- The inclusion of three new Protocols containing fuller guidance on (i) release practices, (ii) consultation and (iii) the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes. This third protocol addresses an aspect of statistical work that is of growing importance and it is desirable that the Code should set out how the Statistics Authority will seek to ensure that the use of such sources is being managed in the public interest.
- The removal of the 12 protocols to the existing Code which, other than where they are adequately covered in the revised Code, will be further developed and treated as supplementary guidance notes, but not as integral parts of the Code.

Structure and future revision

30. The draft Code consists of a preamble setting out some contextual points, ten principles and the three protocols referred to above. Each principle is supported by a statement of related practices but where a practice supports several principles, it is not normally repeated.
31. The principles are expected to remain stable over time but the statements of practices may be revised from time to time, as may some of the detail in the protocols. The Statistics Authority will consult publicly on any future revision to the Code.
32. The principles and protocols are intended to be both self-explanatory and readily understandable.

The Code and policy statements

33. The draft Code requires that ministerial or policy statements – of the kind which government departments commonly issue separately from, but at the same time as, the release of statistics – should not precede the release of statistics to which they refer (Principle 1, Practice 1). The intention here is that the Code should preclude any such statement, including background verbal statements to journalists or embargoed press releases, before the statistics are in the public domain. This would apply whether the statement contained the actual figures or just speculative comment about what they might show.
34. However, the Statistics Commission suggested in its report that consideration should be given to including in the Code some basic standards for departmental statements issued in parallel to the release of statistics.
35. **We are therefore inviting views** on whether the Code should include a requirement that policy statements relating directly to statistics (and issued at the time of first release of those statistics) should:
1. Contain a prominent link to the statistical release;
 2. Be clearly labelled as a policy statement (or ministerial statement) and be readily distinguished from a statistical release;
 3. Should meet basic professional standards in the use of statistics within the policy statement (for example statistics should be cited accurately, charts should be drawn in an accurate and impartial way).

The Publication Hub

36. At the request of the Authority, ONS staff working with colleagues from across the GSS have developed a new website, called the Publication Hub [add link]. This is intended as a portal to all releases of National Statistics, and serves two important purposes:
- To improve accessibility - helping users find statistical releases from a single, central location. Users will not need to know which organisation produces a particular statistical series, or follow Machinery of Government changes. At the same time, revised 'themes' will be introduced, again to enhance the user experience.

- To reinforce the separation of policy comment and statistical releases – consistent with the preceding section.

Pre-release access

37. Pre-release access is defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act as ‘access to the statistics in their final form prior to publication’. Section 11 of the Act explicitly prevents the Code from dealing with ‘any matter relating to the granting of pre-release access to official statistics’, which will instead be determined by Orders (secondary legislation) made under that section. With this exception, there are no specific constraints on the content of the Code.
38. The Act however states that ‘the Code shall apply in relation to any official statistic as if it included any rules and principles provided for in relation to those statistics’. What this means is that the Code has to be read as if the rules and principles relating to pre-release access were part of it – and thus the assessment process will take account of compliance with those rules regardless of the fact that they are not set out in the Code. This is explained further in Part 2.
39. Because pre-release access is defined in the Act to refer only to statistics in their final form prior to publication, the question of the treatment of statistics *before* they reach that final form remains a matter for the Code of Practice. Thus there are references in the draft Code to principles governing access to statistics before publication. These references do not apply to statistics in their final form.

Administrative Sources

40. A large and growing proportion of official statistics are produced from data originally collected for administrative purposes, such as school records, hospital records and payment of benefits. The draft Code includes, for the first time, a set of requirements (Protocol 3) concerning practical issues that arise from using such sources. We would welcome views on whether the protocol should be expanded to cover a wider range of issues and, if so, what it should require producer bodies to do in addition to the points already included.

Draft for consultation

Code of Practice for Statistics

Preamble

- i. Official statistics² are fundamental to good government, the delivery of public services and decision-making in all sectors of society. They are also essential to democracy, providing Parliament and public with a window on society and the economy, and on the work and performance of government.
- ii. Such statistics are produced by a large number of public bodies. Observance of a common Code of Practice by all such bodies is central to maintaining a unified statistical service that meets the needs of government and the wider community and is both trustworthy and trusted.
- iii. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 requires that the UK Statistics Authority (the 'Statistics Board' in the Act) prepares and publishes a Code of Practice and assesses compliance against the Code. Official statistics assessed as compliant with the Code are designated National Statistics. The Act requires that bodies which produce National Statistics must ensure that the Code continues to be observed in relation to those statistics.
- iv. This Code is consistent with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics³ and the European Statistics Code of Practice⁴.
- v. The Code applies to all public bodies that produce official statistics, some of which are outside the civil service. The Code is, however, consistent with the civil service core values⁵ of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. In relation to statistical work, these should be interpreted as follows:
 - Integrity** – putting the public interest above organisational, political or personal interests
 - Honesty** – being truthful and open about the statistics and their interpretation
 - Objectivity** – using scientific method to collect statistics and basing statistical advice on rigorous analysis of the evidence
 - Impartiality** – acting solely according to the merits of the statistical evidence, serving equally well all aspects of the public interest.
- vi. The Code contains ten principles and, in relation to each, a statement of associated practices. It also contains three more detailed protocols - on practice in relation to the release of statistics, on consultation, and on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. The Code has been framed to support the assessment of compliance both by the bodies that produce the statistics and independently by the UK Statistics Authority.

² Official statistics are as defined in Section 6 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007

³ *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, UN Statistics Division, United Nations 2006

⁴ European Statistics Code of Practice: For national and community statistical authorities, Eurostat, 24 February 2005

⁵ The Civil Service Code, 6 June 2006, Cabinet Office.

- vii. The requirements of the Code are specific but there will often be a need for interpretation and professional judgement. The National Statistician and the Head of Assessment⁶ will provide supplementary advice and guidance to assist producers of statistics.
- viii. Some practices set out in the Code are relevant to more than one principle. In the interests of conciseness, the practices are not normally repeated under different principles. That does not mean they are less relevant where not cited explicitly.
- ix. Under some circumstances it may be appropriate for the UK Statistics Authority to agree exemptions or exceptions to the practices, though not the principles. Bodies that produce National Statistics and are aware of a need for an exemption should make a case to the Head of Assessment. Details of all exceptions and exemptions that are agreed will be made public.
- x. The Code has the effect of placing different obligations on different groups of officials within bodies that produce official statistics: those with direct responsibility for statistical functions have obligations in relation to professional independence and for quality assurance; other officials need to ensure an environment in which statistical production and professional independence are supported.
- xi. It is implicit in the Code that, within those bodies that produce official statistics, there will be sufficient managerial separation between officials responsible for National Statistics and other staff of the organisation to ensure clear lines of accountability for observance of the Code.
- xii. The Code employs the phrase 'production, management and dissemination of official statistics' to refer to the entire statistical process from the decision to collect or compile data through to providing advice to the user.

⁶ The Head of Assessment is a statutory office holder with authority as set out in Section 33 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

Principle 1: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

Practices

- 1) Issue statistical reports separately from any other statement or comment about the figures and ensure that no statement or comment is issued to the press or published ahead of the statistics.
- 2) Ensure that those producing such reports are protected from any political pressures that might influence the presentation of the statistics.
- 3) Follow all statutory obligations and internationally endorsed guidelines governing the collection of data, confidentiality, privacy and release.
- 4) Release National Statistics in accordance with the Protocol on Release Practices (Protocol 1).
- 5) Produce, and make publicly available, assessments of user satisfaction in relation to key outputs and services.
- 6) Keep records of feedback from users, including complaints, and make these records available on request, together with what action was taken.
- 7) Inform the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment about complaints which relate to professional integrity, quality or standards whether or not they can be resolved directly.
- 8) Implement controls to ensure that individuals do not abuse the trust placed in them for personal gain.
- 9) Enable Departmental statistical experts to comment publicly on statistical issues.

Principle 2: Relevance

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

Practices

- 1) Under the guidance of the UK Statistics Authority adopt systematic statistical planning arrangements, including transparent priority-setting, that reflect the obligation to support all uses that serve the public interest.
- 2) Report annually to the UK Statistics Authority on progress against statistical plans.
- 3) Investigate and document the needs of users of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform, and the key areas of emerging demand and unmet need. Take these into account in the planning process and report the results.
- 4) When changes are contemplated to official statistics, consult users effectively. Consultation should follow the Protocol on Consultation (Protocol 2).
- 5) Adopt common statistical sampling frames, questions, definitions, statistical units and classifications (including common geographic referencing and coding standards) to promote comparability across official statistics. Make the reasons for deviations from standard models publicly available.
- 6) Adopt international standards, concepts, definitions and classifications to promote international comparability wherever practicable and support the development of those standards through effective engagement with international organisations.
- 7) Where time series data are revised, or changes are made in methodology or coverage, consistent historical data should be produced wherever possible, taking into account user requirements.

Principle 3: Sound methodology and assured quality

Methods for the production, management and dissemination of official statistics should accord with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practice and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed concepts of statistical quality.

Practices

- 1) Ensure that official statistics are produced according to scientific principles and to a level of quality that meets user needs. Make publicly available detail of the methodologies adopted, including explanation of why particular choices were made.
- 2) Adopt quality assurance procedures that assess each statistical product against user requirements, and in terms of how they harmonise with other products. In doing so, draw on all available sources of expertise.
- 3) Support centrally managed reviews of statistical products including reviews of standards and classifications.
- 4) Seek to achieve continuous improvement in the statistical and managerial processes underlying all statistical products.
- 5) Identify any potential sources of statistical bias in estimates and provide users with an evaluation of the extent and direction of bias wherever practicable.
- 6) Maintain back-up arrangements to minimise the risk of loss or corruption of statistical resources, proportionate to the importance of each resource.
- 7) Manage official statistics in accordance with relevant public records legislation and codes of practice on records management.

Principle 4: Value for money

The resources allocated to statistical work should be used optimally to deliver outputs that meet the needs of users inside and outside government.

Practices

- 1) Monitor expenditure against business plans and demonstrate effective stewardship of funds allocated to statistical work.
- 2) Seek to balance quality against costs (including both costs to government and providers), taking into account the expected uses of the statistics.
- 3) Make full use of shared statistical planning arrangements with other producers of official statistics both to minimise the risk of duplication in statistical production and to make it possible to use existing sources, in combination where appropriate, to meet user needs.
- 4) Plan statistical production in such a way that it adds value to other parts of the statistical system where possible.
- 5) Maximise opportunities for use of existing administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data. Where possible, use common information technology and information management systems which facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics. Where administrative sources are used for statistical purposes, follow the practices set out in Protocol 3.
- 6) Use project management techniques, risk management and business continuity planning in ways that secure value for money.
- 7) Ensure that the balance between resources committed to the production of statistics and resources for their presentation, dissemination and communication, is such as to encourage maximum use of official statistics in the public interest.

Principle 5: Communication

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be published in a form convenient to users and in as much detail as is practicable and allowed by confidentiality constraints.

Practices

- 1) 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.
- 2) Publish documentation on procedures followed in the production and dissemination of official statistics – in sufficient technical detail to allow users to understand how calculations have been made.
- 3) Announce substantial methodological changes well in advance of the release of statistics based on the new methods.
- 4) Provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released.
- 5) Release statistical work in progress, in whole or in part, where justified and approved by the National Statistician or Chief Statistician in Devolved Administrations. For example, 'experimental statistics'⁷ may be published in order to involve users and other stakeholders in their development. They must be clearly marked as such and explained in both technical and lay terms.
- 6) Correct errors discovered in statistical outputs, and alert stakeholders via the website or directly, where possible..

⁷ Experimental statistics are official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

Principle 6: Presenting statistics

The style and content of statistical reports should be balanced and impartial, and meet the needs of users.

Practices

- 1) Present statistics impartially and in ways that users find helpful.
- 2) Provide full and helpful commentary on the relevance and reliability of statistics in relation to the range of potential uses.
- 3) Prepare and disseminate analyses which aid interpretation and provide context, including analysis of the main findings.
- 4) Where it will help users, include factual information about the policy context of official statistics. However, statistical text and interpretation should not be subject to approval by anyone other than those responsible for the statistical product.
- 5) Release datasets and reference databases in formats that are convenient to the widest range of users supported by documentation.
- 6) Adopt formats for the presentation of statistics in graphs, tables and maps that provide clarity and consistency.

Principle 7: Accessibility

Official statistics should be equally and readily accessible to all users.

Practices

- 1) Make official statistics equally available to all and at the same time, subject to any rights to pre-release access established under the *Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008*.
- 2) Make access to official statistics as straightforward as possible by providing easy-to-use entry points and exploiting all appropriate means of dissemination, working with other producers and with organisations outside government as appropriate.
- 3) Release all regular statistical reports on the internet without charge to the user.
- 4) For any supplementary statistical services for which a charge is made, adopt clear pricing policies that comply with legislation and government policy.
- 5) Ensure that official statistics are disseminated in forms which enable those with disabilities to access them, as far as possible.
- 6) Publicise official statistics in ways that enable users to identify and access information relevant to their needs.
- 7) Assess user satisfaction with the form and timing of official statistics outputs and the publicity provided for them – following the Protocol on consultation (Protocol 2).
- 8) Ensure that official statistics are made publicly available in forms that enable and encourage re-use.
- 9) Deposit official statistics with the relevant national archive in accordance with relevant legislation. Deposits should be accompanied by information about their purposes, design and methodology to aid their re-use.

Principle 8: Confidentiality

Information identifying a particular person (including a body corporate) that is collected or used for statistical purposes should be strictly protected and not subsequently used for non-statistical purposes, except as provided for in legislation and authorised by the National Statistician or Chief Statistician in the Devolved Administrations.

Practices

- 1) Make a public commitment that no statistics will be released that reveal personal information (except as provided for in the Statistics Act, other legislation related to statistics or where specifically agreed with the individual). Notify all respondents to statistical surveys accordingly at the time of data collection.
- 2) Take into account the potential for indirect disclosure⁸ and the implications of that disclosure for the individuals concerned when deciding whether to release statistics.
- 3) Inform respondents of the main intended uses and access limitations applying to the information they provide in response to statistical surveys.
- 4) Develop and apply methods for the management of data that are sufficient to maintain the guarantee of confidentiality to data providers, recognising users' needs for high quality statistical research and results.
- 5) Keep data (that identify personal information) collected for statistical purposes secure and ensure that they are used exclusively for statistical purposes.
- 6) Restrict access to data identifying personal information to the minimum number of staff necessary to the production of official statistics and ensure that they have been trained in their obligations to protect confidentiality. Require anyone to whom such access is provided to sign a declaration that makes clear their obligations to protect confidentiality and this Code, and that provides them with information about how those obligations shall be upheld. Maintain records of these declarations.
- 7) Only allow access to confidential data to a third party (a contractor for example) after a written agreement has been signed that sets out how the data are to be processed and for what statistical purposes, and that the third party will follow all the requirements of this Code of Practice. Keep records of any such access.
- 8) Should a situation arise in which the law requires information identifying an individual, which has been collected for statistical purposes, to be made available for other purposes – such as police enquiries – the information may only be provided on the written authorisation of the National Statistician or Chief Statistician in the Devolved Administrations.

⁸ In this context, 'indirect disclosure' refers to the possibility that otherwise non-disclosive material could reveal confidential information if subsequently put together with, possibly as yet unpublished, information from another source. For example, local crime statistics might be put together with information subsequently disclosed in court.

Principle 9: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data providers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

Practices

- 1) Report annually the estimated costs (on businesses, service providers, the public etc) of responding to statistical surveys and strive to develop methods that will reduce the costs to individual organisations or people.
- 2) Seek participation in statistical surveys through informed consent wherever possible, and exercise statutory authority for data to be acquired by compulsion only when there are clear benefits in doing so.
- 3) Promote statistical purposes in the design of administrative systems so that maximum use can be made of them for statistical purposes, thus reducing the need to carry out separate data collections.
- 4) Carry out analysis of the costs of proposed new surveys to data providers against the potential benefits of conducting them, and repeat these analyses periodically for regular surveys.
- 5) Wherever possible draw on existing data sources (including in combination) and data estimation as alternatives to new surveys.

Principle 10: Adequate resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code.

Practices

- 1) Ensure that statistical services have the staff, financial and computing resources to produce and disseminate official statistics to the standards of this Code – and in so doing meet the needs of users.
- 2) If changes in resource allocation to particular statistical activities are under consideration, ensure that users are consulted before decisions are made. Include in budgets specific resources for user consultation.
- 3) Ensure that the allocation of resources matches the requirements of the work programme that emerges from the planning process, and that an adequate audit trail is maintained and made publicly available.
- 4) Use an appropriate competence framework to set the requirements of statistical posts and the development needs of staff.
- 5) Ensure that posts which require professional statistical skills (as set out in the relevant competence framework) are filled by individuals who have been appointed through external or internal schemes that specifically assess such skills to common standards.
- 6) Support staff in their continuing professional development to maintain and extend their statistical knowledge and skills.

Protocol 1. Protocol on release practices

The practices set out below are designed to ensure that statistical reports are released into the public domain in an orderly manner that gives equal access to all – subject to the arrangements detailed in the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders 2008⁹ - and promotes public confidence.

- 1) Release statistics as soon as they, and any accompanying commentary and analysis, are judged ready so that there is no opportunity, or perception of opportunity, for the release to be withheld or delayed.
- 2) Maintain a rolling **Timetable of Statistical Releases** for a year ahead. This should state the month of release as early as practicable and the exact release date no less than four weeks in advance.
- 3) Release all National Statistics via the Publication Hub¹⁰.
- 4) Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday to maintain consistency and permit time to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours
- 5) Ensure that, the responsibility for the format and content of statistical reports rests with the relevant statistical Head of Profession and ensure that the name of that person appears in each report for which he or she is responsible.
- 6) Draw public attention to any change to a pre-announced release date and explain fully the reasons for the change at the same time.
- 7) Limit access before public release to those people essential to production and publication, subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access made under the Statistics and Registration Service Act (which may allow pre-release access to a wider range of people). Maintain records of all who have access prior to release.
- 8) Ensure that no indication of the content of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication. Report to the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment immediately any accidental or wrongful release and initiate immediate investigation of the circumstances.
- 9) Do not give journalists, or others, embargoed access to statistical reports except where the UK Statistics Authority has authorised that to do so is in the public interest. Such embargo arrangements shall be regarded as exceptional and reported to the relevant Parliament or Assembly by the UK Statistics Authority.
- 10) **Market-sensitive statistics** – special arrangements apply to market-sensitive

⁹ Reference / web link to be added refer to BOTH UK and Scottish orders

¹⁰ Description and web link to be added.

official statistics. Any attempt to profit from pre-release access to these statistics is liable to criminal prosecution. For the purposes of the Code the following are currently identified as market sensitive:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| • Index of production | Retail sales |
| • Index of services | Public sector |
| finances | |
| • Producer prices | UK trade |
| • Consumer price indices | National accounts (all |
| measures) | |
| • Labour market statistics | Balance of payments |

11) **In releasing market-sensitive statistics**, producer organisations will:

- Provide the date of release at least six months in advance.
- Should the need arise, require anyone given pre-release access to make a signed declaration that they have only used the information for the specific purpose for which they were given such access, and that they have not passed it to anyone else.

Protocol 2. Protocol on consultation

- 1) Unless a specific agreement already exists, contact user groups and discuss with them the best means of obtaining views before consultation starts.
- 2) Alert users as information about consultations becomes available.
- 3) Balance the importance of the issue and the likely impact of user views against the time and resources available so as to obtain good value for money from the consultation process.
- 4) Inform the National Statistician and Chief Statisticians in the Devolved Administrations about any formal consultations in order to avoid duplication and to make widest possible use of ideas, comments and other materials that are offered in responses.
- 5) Work with other producers of official statistics to co-ordinate consultations in order to give participants the best opportunity for effective input and to minimise the burden placed upon them.
- 6) Make all consultation documents publicly available.
- 7) Be clear in the documentation about who is being consulted, about what, and for what purpose.
- 8) Express the issues as simply and concisely as possible; and in non-technical language where possible.
- 9) Make a timetable for each consultation publicly available and ensure that each part of the process is given sufficient time for those interested to participate fully and properly.
- 10) Offer a variety of means of participation including, as appropriate, web sites, email, telephone, written submissions and face to face meetings.
- 11) Follow relevant central guidance on how consultations should be conducted.
- 12) Exploit the many mechanisms available, including:
 - Formal consultation documents (which should set out and summarise the key issues);
 - Issuing a discussion paper to interested parties;
 - Listening events such as conferences, roadshows and seminars. Events held by professional bodies, user groups and other organisations can provide valuable opportunities;
 - Meetings, correspondence and phone calls with groups or individuals;
 - Internet mailing groups.
- 13) Put individual responses into the public domain unless anonymity is requested.
- 14) Make publicly available the records of decisions and actions following a consultation, together with explanations for them.

Protocol 3. Protocol on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

This guidance requires all public bodies that produce official statistics from administrative sources to observe certain general practices and to prepare an Administrative Sources Statement which should be subject to consultation with the National Statistician before finalisation. This will set out how a range of practical matters are to be handled. Further advice on the form of such statements will be issued by the UK Statistics Authority. In the interests of clarity, some statements of practice from elsewhere in the Code are repeated below.

- 1) Observe all statutory obligations and relevant codes of practice and codes of conduct in relation to the protection of confidentiality and the handling of personal data.
- 2) Observe the relevant requirements of the European Statistics Code of Practice:
 - “Where European statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for the administrative purpose must be a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes”
 - “Administrative sources are used wherever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information”
 - “Proactive efforts are being made to improve the statistical potential of administrative records and avoid costly direct surveys”
- 3) Maximise opportunities for use of existing administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data. Where possible, use common information technology and information management systems which facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics.
- 4) Promote statistical purposes in the design of administrative systems so that maximum use can be made of them for statistical purposes, thus reducing the need to carry out separate data collections.
- 5) Ensure that no action is taken within the producer body, or public statement made, that would tend to undermine confidence in the independence of the statistics when released.
- 6) Prepare an **Administrative Sources Statement** which identifies the following:
 - Details of the administrative systems currently used in the production of official statistics.
 - Procedures to be followed within the organisation to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative systems are contemplated. Such changes should normally be subject to consultation with the National Statistician.
 - Information on other administrative sources that are not currently used in the production of official statistics but have potential to be so used.
 - Arrangements for providing statistical staff, whether inside the producer body or elsewhere in the statistical service, with access to administrative data for statistical purposes.
 - Arrangements for reviewing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes.
 - Arrangements to ensure the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data.

7) Consult the National Statistician before finalisation of the Administrative Sources Statement and address any points raised so that the National Statistician is able to assure the UK Statistics Authority that the statistical work based on administrative sources is being conducted in ways that promote the public good.

Part 2: Draft statement of principles and procedures relating to the assessment and designation functions

Introduction

Section 17 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act requires the Statistics Authority to prepare and publish a statement of –

- (a) the principles to which it will have regard, and
- (b) the procedures which it will adopt'

in exercising its functions under sections 12(1) and 14(1) of the Act – these are the functions of assessment and re-assessment of statistics against the Code of Practice.

Comments are invited on the text of the draft statement which follows.

Text of the draft statement

Statement of principles and procedures relating to the assessment and designation functions

This statement covers:

- the aims of the Authority's assessment function;
- the principles and standards which the Authority will adopt when assessing official statistics;
- the procedures and methods which the Authority will follow ;

Aims of assessment

In accordance with Section 7(3) of the Act, the aim of the assessment function is to promote and safeguard the quality of official statistics, good practice in relation to official statistics and the comprehensiveness of official statistics. “Official” statistics include those designated as “National” statistics.

The assessment function will further aim (i) to identify and report publicly on matters of concern in relation to official statistics in pursuit of Section 8(2) of the Act; and (ii) to enhance the quality of the statistical service over a period of time.

Principles of assessment

Assessments will be conducted in accordance with the following five principles:

- 1. Risk-based** - focusing assessment resources on those statistics which are seen to present the greatest risk to the reputation of official statistics;
- 2. Proportionate to need** - taking account of the concerns of users of statistics;
- 3. Cost-effective** - making use of existing documentation where available, and not placing unnecessary burdens on producers of statistics;
- 4. Transparent** - operating in an open manner which inspires confidence in the Authority's work;
- 5. Consistent** - applying the same principles and standards in all cases.

Assessment reports will also be:

- Prepared in accordance with the civil service core values¹¹ of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality;
- Completed within a reasonable timescale;
- Informed and evidence-based - reflecting the views and needs of users of statistics and other external stakeholders, and taking account of all the available information, comparing the evidence against published standards and criteria;
- Aimed at producing proposals and recommendations which promote and support improvement;
- Relevant and accessible - reporting findings and conclusions fairly, clearly, and openly and in a manner which is useful to, and understood by, producers, users and the public.

Assessment procedure

Assessments will:

- Take place in accordance with a published programme, though ad hoc assessments may be required from time to time in order to report on matters of public concern;
- Be based, at least in part, on correspondence and discussion with the managers responsible for the statistics;
- Take account of self-evaluation evidence from the responsible managers;
- Involve an opportunity for users of the statistics and other stakeholders to contribute to the assessment and explicitly consider any such contribution;
- Be shown to the relevant producer body in draft form prior to publication, in order to ensure factual accuracy;
- Be published as soon as practicable after completion and include any substantive response from the producer body to the report in draft form;
- Present clearly the assessment team's conclusions in relation to the degree to which the statistics comply with the Code of Practice; the nature of any improvements needed; and a recommendation to the Authority as to whether the statistics should be designated as 'National Statistics'.

Evidence

Self-evaluations will be conducted using a standard template and this will form the starting point for discussions between the assessment team and managers. This information will be supplemented by:

¹¹ Cabinet Office, Civil Service Code (June 2006)

- any previously published reviews of the statistics;
- any other relevant information acquired by the assessment team at any time; and
- any information submitted by users or stakeholders.

The Authority's annual reports to the UK Parliament and devolved legislatures will list all of the assessments conducted in the previous year with their conclusions as well as those planned for the coming year.

Notification

Managers in the producer body will normally be notified at least three months in advance of a planned assessment by means of updates to the Programme of Assessment which the Authority will publish in accordance with Section 15 of the Act. Exceptions to this notification period will be explained publicly by the Statistics Authority.

ANNEXES

Forthcoming

2011 Census White Paper

Purpose

1. To ask the UK Statistics Authority members to sign-off the draft of the White Paper before submission to the Cabinet Office Minister for approval by the Domestic Affairs Committee and Welsh assembly Ministers.

Timing

2. The aim is to submit the White Paper to the Cabinet Office Minister on 25 June for subsequent submission to the Domestic Affairs Committee. This would allow the White Paper to be published and laid before Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales on 27 November 2008. Scotland and Northern Ireland are also working to the same timescale.

3. The timetable for key remaining milestones to meet this deadline is set out at Annex A.

Recommendations

4. The Authority is invited to consider the attached draft with a view to signing off and submitting to the Cabinet Office Minister on 25 June.

Discussion

5. The 2011 Census White Paper will serve to prepare the way for Parliamentary debates on the secondary census legislation required by the Census Act. It sets out the proposals for the 2011 Census and is published at this time in order to give Parliament sufficient time to consider the proposals prior to the Census Order and subsequent Census Regulations.

6. UK Statistics Authority recently reviewed the 6th draft of the White Paper. The 7th draft is attached. It has been Quality Assured within Census Division. In addition comments have been received within ONS from the UK Census Committee, Legal Services Branch, Communications Division, Finance and Planning, Centre for Demography, Social and Public Services Analysis and Reporting, Methodology, and Geography.

7. Externally comments have been sought from Cabinet Office, Departmental Statistical Heads of Profession, General Register Office Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, and the Welsh Assembly Government. Permanent Secretaries have been given a presentation about the Census proposals to support them in providing briefings to Ministers.

8. As a result of this consultation and Quality Assurance process there have been some changes to the 6th draft. None of the changes significantly

alter the content of the White Paper. Changes made to the version sent to you on 23 May include:-

- Executive Summary - shortened paragraphs on consultations and data collection
- Chapter 2 - list of consultation events added to
- Chapter 3 - expanded information about uses made of some questions and additional explanation about need for new questions
- Chapter 6 - reference to ensuring meeting Government-wide standards relating to information risk management and data security
- re-ordering of some paragraphs
- throughout - reviewed references to UK Statistics Authority/ONS and made changes where appropriate.

8. Further substantive changes to this draft are not anticipated. A preface and foreword will be added in July.

Census Division (ONS)
June 2008

ANNEX A

2011 CENSUS WHITE PAPER TIMETABLE

20 June	Prepare draft and briefing for consideration by UK Statistics Authority on 20 June.
4-12 June	Prepare briefing/submission for Domestic Affairs Committee
13 June	Briefing and final draft to UKSA
20 June	Sign-off final draft and briefing by UK Statistical Authority
25 June	Draft to Communications Division for layout design and to Welsh translators
25 June	Submission from UK Statistical Authority to CO Minister
1 July?	Submission from Cabinet Office Minister to Domestic Affairs Committee/Welsh Minister
7 July	Submission from Welsh Minister to other Welsh Assembly Ministers
14-30 July	Preface (Minister/ Welsh Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery) and Foreword (Chair of UK Statistical Authority) agreed
4 August	Preface and Foreword to Welsh translators
30 August	Format and design agreed
30 August	Welsh translation agreed
5 Sept	Comments from Domestic Affairs Committee/Welsh Assembly Ministers
6-15 Sept	Comments incorporated into revised draft
16 Sept	Revised draft to Welsh translators
30 Sept	Translation of revised draft agreed
15 Oct	Final camera-ready copy completed
16-21 Oct	Final draft sign-off by UKCC/UK Statistical Authority
31 Oct	Briefing and submission with final draft to Minister/Welsh Minister
7 Nov	Domestic Affairs Committee/Welsh Assembly Ministers approval

- 10-22 Nov** Copies printed/web version prepared
- 7-22 Nov** Press release/Census news alert prepared
- 22 Nov** Submission to Minister on PQ and Parliamentary statement
- 27 Nov** White Paper published/Press release/Press Conference/Web release

13 June 2008

Priorities for Assessment Reports

Purpose

1. This paper considers candidate issues for early reports from the UK Statistics Authority and proposes some as priorities. It also considers how the future work programme for the Assessment team might be developed more generally.

Timing

2. It would be helpful to publish, before the Parliamentary summer recess, details of an initial Assessment work programme containing a small number of reports, or investigations, that the Assessment team will lead on behalf of the Authority. This will serve to establish our intentions and provide early warning to those who may be involved later in the year.

Recommendation

3. Authority members are invited to consider the candidate issues listed in Annex A and agree priorities and suggest additions to the list. The list will be maintained for future reference and updated on an on-going basis. It is proposed that four or five of these issues are selected for early review and that these topics are included in an initial published programme of work. Five such issues are suggested at paragraph 12 below. Once an initial programme of work is in hand, informal consultations with external stakeholders will be set in train to help inform the future evolution of the work programme.

Discussion

4. We plan to distinguish between two main types of Assessment reports:
- *'Designation'* reports leading to National Statistics designation of a particular set of statistics (a requirement of the legislation, see below) and;
 - *'Issue'* reports which may cut across many statistics and departments or focus on a specific matter of public interest or concern.
5. As well as identifying the first set of Issue reports, the initial programme of work will identify some sets of National Statistics to be assessed against the Code of Practice. These will be proposed in a subsequent paper. We will also consider further whether there should be any linkage between the selection of subjects for Issue reports and the sets of statistics for Designation reports.
6. The Statistics Act requires the Authority to publish a programme for the assessment and re-assessment of statistics under sections 12(1) and 14(1). This refers to what we have labelled as Designation reports. All existing and candidate National Statistics must be assessed against the Code; and National Statistics status either confirmed or denied.
7. It is not an absolute requirement that Designation reports wait on finalisation of the Code of Practice. The Act permit Assessments to be conducted under the present Code of Practice in the interim (section 19). One option would be to produce

one or two early designation reports using the present Code, depending on capacity in the team and progress with establishing the new code. An advantage of this approach would be to permit the possibility of earlier production of these reports. A disadvantage would be the likely difficulty in putting the current code to a purpose for which it was not designed. Another option could be to conduct the Assessment against the draft Code with the agreement of the producer Department.

8. The Act also states that the Authority "may at any time produce a report about any matter relating to the exercise of its functions" (section 27(3)). These reports on broader topics are what we have labelled as Issue reports.

9. In drawing up suggestions for the initial set of issues, the Head of Assessment has consulted Board members and had informal discussions with some other stakeholders. Concerns raised in correspondence with the Chair of the Authority, other comment made in various meetings and in media coverage have also been reviewed. The findings are summarised at Annex B.

10. A suggested set of more objective considerations has been developed to help inform priorities. They are:

- Profile - the level of public awareness of the statistic or issue. For example, a statistic which is well known to the general public and attracts a lot of media attention, such as crime statistics or the RPI;
- Importance - the impact of the statistics. Population statistics will score highly against this criteria as they are a key denominator for many other statistics, though they do not have the same public profile as crime statistics.
- Concern - the level of public concern or debate about the reliability of the statistics. This is the most dynamic criterion as it reflects current levels of concern and this will vary over time.
- Obligations - Parliament may direct or encourage the Authority to review a certain issue or topic. The recent TSC report *Counting the Population* contains specific actions for the Authority in respect of Migration statistics. (Government may also invite the Authority to review a particular issue on occasion).
- Resources - The resources and budgets available to the Assessment team. We think that in the remainder of the 2008-09 financial year the Assessment team may be able to initiate up to three Issue reports but it is unlikely that any will be completed by the end of the financial year given the priority that must be accorded to producing the final report on the Code of Practice. It should however be possible to complete at least one Designation review and set several more in train.

11. Another important consideration is the standing that the Authority wants its published reports to have. We are assuming that the Issue reports should be prepared in such a way that they will be widely seen among influential commentators as authoritative and of high intrinsic quality. The project management arrangements will therefore need to be designed to deliver a consistently high standard. The practical implications of this - in terms of process, resources and timing - will be considered further in a paper for the July meeting of the Authority.

12. Taking these various factors into account, the following are suggested as possible candidates for the highest priority issues:

- Communicating inflation and prices: with reference to concerns that the RPI/CPI statistics may mislead public debate on the cost of living. With a

view, in particular, to recommendations about improving communication of such information.

- Review of official statistics not currently designated National Statistics: with a view to recommendations on statistics to be produced in accordance with the Code of Practice in future.
- Progress in improving migration and population statistics: with particular reference to the recent TSC report. With a view to either reassuring interested parties that no more can reasonably be done, or making proposals for further steps.
- The adequacy of existing mechanisms for identifying longer-term priorities: for the statistical service as a whole ('horizon-scanning') with a view to making recommendations to strengthen that aspect of planning.
- Barriers to trust in relation to crime statistics: with possible reference to the forthcoming Crime and Communities Review. With a view to recommendations that will lead to greater trust in the statistical output, building on the review of crime statistics carried led by Adrian Smith in 2006/07.

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13. A fuller list of candidate issues, together with some explanatory points is presented at Annex A.

Richard Alldritt
Head of Assessment
June 2008

Annex A - Candidates for Statistics Authority Issue Reports

The issues below are described only briefly. The first stage of any investigation would be to produce a draft specification setting out in some detail the focus of the work, the resources required, the timetable and nature of the intended report or other output.

The first report of the Authority will be the consultation on the Code of Practice and it is likely that the second report to be published will be the final report on the Code of Practice. It is suggested that perhaps a further three reports or investigations might be put in train, though not necessarily completed, in 2008-09.

- 1. Improving the public perception/understanding of the RPI/CPI statistics**
- with particular focus on communication and dissemination.
- 2. Review of official statistics not currently designated National Statistics**
– Section 16 of the Statistics Act places a duty on the Authority as follows: where the appropriate authority has not requested the Authority to assess whether the Code of Practice has been complied with, and the Authority is of the view that it would be appropriate for it to do so, then the Authority must notify the appropriate authority accordingly. In other words, the Authority must notify government departments and other producer bodies of any case where it thinks official statistics should be treated as National Statistics but they are not currently so treated. In order to do this effectively, an initial review of all those official statistics not designated as National Statistics would be desirable. The output from this would include proposals for further statistics to be included within National Statistics (and thus to be assessed against the Code).
- 3. The way forward on migration statistics** – the problems with migration statistics are already acknowledged in government but there would be scope to review whether everything that can be done is being done. The work is given added impetus by the recent TSC report.
- 4. Mechanisms for horizon-scanning and long-term planning** - the subject of this review would be to examine the capacity of the statistical system to identify and respond to changes in statistical demand over time.
- 5. Enhancing trust in crime statistics** – what progress has been made in implementation of the recommendations of the Smith Review and the Statistics Commission review of crime statistics and what further steps are now needed to deal with public confusion/concern. This could usefully focus on a particular area of crime statistics, perhaps violent crime, to give the review focus and a base from which to then draw more general conclusions.
- 6. The use of official statistics to measure performance against major government targets** – There have been several reports in this area including ones by the Public Administration Select Committee (2003) and ones by the Royal Statistical Society and the Statistics Commission. The issue would be whether sufficient note has been taken of the recommendations of these earlier reports.
- 7. Future of the Census** - the issue is what more needs to be done to settle the post-2011 strategy.
- 8. House price indices** – the adequacy of available house price information to inform policy and wider decision-making in society.

9. **Environmental statistics** – in the face of global warming and other environmental concerns, is there adequate statistical information available to guide policy and inform the public.
10. **Statistical coherence between the four UK administrations** – the issue for review is the nature of the processes that should be followed to ensure that there is harmonisation of statistical practice where this is justified by user need – but without infringing the autonomy of the devolved administrations.
11. **Adequacy of regional economic statistics** - what progress made with implementation of the 2004 Allsopp Report (which was accepted in full by ministers), explanation of any lack of progress and further steps now needed.
12. **Progress on the measurement of government output and productivity** - the Atkinson report was published in January 2005. In the light of the work undertaken thus far, the issue is what further work should now be done. A review might also look at what other countries are now doing in this field given the EU dimension.
13. **Classification procedures** – a review of the processes involved in deciding statistical classifications – in particular classification to the public or private sector of business enterprises and services. The issue for review is whether these processes could be made more transparent to increase public confidence in them.
14. **Quality of statistical commentary/analysis** – the issue is whether the published commentary and advice that accompanies the statistics meets user needs; and whether it could be improved in a way that would serve the public interest. The Statistics Commission report – *Releasing Official Statistics: A Review of Statistical First Releases* (March 2008) – makes a number of proposals in this area.
15. **Consultation with users of statistics** – a review of the adequacy and impact of consultation with users of statistics ahead of major decisions affecting statistical products.
16. **Funding and planning of statistical services in government** – the aim of the review would be to map out all the distinct channels through which statistical work in government is currently funded and make recommendations on how best to co-ordinate planning/funding decisions. The review could be broadened to cover 'Governance Arrangements for Official Statistics' and so could also consider leadership, Ministerial arrangements, the role of Heads of Profession and so on.
17. **Publication Hub** - a review of progress and development plans once the Hub has been in operation for a reasonable amount of time, perhaps six or nine months, to ensure it aligns with the Authority's objectives and meets the needs of users.

Annex B - Overview of recent issues for the UK Statistics Authority

This Annex provides an overview of the issues which have been brought to the Statistics Authority's attention over recent months based on the correspondence received, media reporting of statistics and reported breaches of the existing code of practice. The list is only partial to the extent that we do not yet have in place mechanisms for systematically monitoring media stories for UK-wide statistics.

Correspondence

The principal issues raised in correspondence have been:

- Population and migration statistics: specifically the quality of mid-year population estimates and in particular at local level. Concerns have also been raised about the adequacy of the methodology for estimating migration.
- Census 2011: specifically the adequacy of the Census design; stakeholder concerns over the fourth page funding and the Census questions; and the adequacy of address registers to support the Census.

In addition individual correspondents have raised the following issues:

- Quality of the CPI in particular at the regional level;
- Perceived misuse of statistics in the case for a third runway at Heathrow;
- Concerns about operational arrangements at the NHS Information Centre;
- The timetable for the development of the Code of Practice;
- Stakeholder views and concerns about the Assessment and Designation function.

Media reporting

Since 1st April, the media have written critical stories about a number of ONS statistics (we are seeking to develop a systematic media monitoring facility for the statistical service as a whole). These stories have run in multiple newspapers over several days:

- Consumer and Retail prices – the predominant concern being that the CPI and RPI do not reflect reality;
- Retail Sales – ONS data accused of being simplistic and unbelievable;
- Population and Migration – concerns over data quality linked to the publication of the TSC *Counting the Population* report;
- Consumer Spending – concerns that ONS data are out of step with other competing indicators;
- The Integrated Household Survey – criticised for being intrusive;
- Delay to the publication of Households Below Average Income accused of being politically motivated;
- Errors in Pension Trends criticised.

Reported breaches of the Code of Practice

- Retail Sales data – inadvertently released on the ONS website;
- Motoring Offences and Breath Test statistics (Ministry of Justice) - unauthorised access given to a Telegraph reporter;

- Insolvency Statistics (Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) – press release inadvertently emailed to three news outlets the day before publication.

Engaging External Stakeholders

Purpose

1. This paper addresses the need for some documentation to support our engagement with external stakeholders and invites discussion ahead of preparation of this material.

Timing

2. A substantive paper on this topic will be prepared for the Authority's July meeting.

Recommendations

3. Board members are invited to note and comment on the proposals set out below.

Discussion

4. The Strategy Workshop held in Titchfield on 16 May considered, among other things, how we might best engage the wide range of user interests and other stakeholders with whom an ongoing dialogue will be central to the achievement of our aims. Arising from this two documents will be prepared for the Authority's consideration:

- A broad statement of the purpose of the Authority, and what it is seeking to *deliver* in terms of maintaining and improving the statistical service as a whole, for publication on the Authority's website and use in other public statements.
- A set of short statements of the Authority's initial positions on a range of important questions - to serve as guidance and aide memoire for Authority members and staff and so help ensure that communication is focussed and consistent. It will be for further consideration whether this should be published in its entirety on the website.

5. In preparing these statements and proposed positions, we will aim to draw on work already done by ONS and the GSS. One helpful document is at **Annex A**. This sets out the conclusions of a group from across the GSS, including and Statistics Commission, which examined in 2006 the question of how to raise public confidence in official statistics following surveys which showed confidence to be low. Although the main focus was on action that ONS might take, and some of the conclusions are quite detailed, the conclusions still have relevance to the broader questions.

6. Earlier meetings of the Authority have considered matters of communication and concluded that there would be virtue in holding open meetings from time to time and in considering whether individual non-executive members of the Authority might look out for the concerns of particular interest groups. Authority members are invited to consider how we might take forward these and related ideas. The Secretariat is looking at the possibility of organising an event for external interest groups in the autumn which would primarily be for them to put forward issues that they want the Authority to examine.

7. More generally, there is a question about how best to coordinate the respective roles in stakeholder engagement of the various elements that make up the UK Statistics Authority i.e. non-executive Authority members, the Authority's staff in the secretariat, the ONS Executive Management Group, ONS Key Accounts Team, ONS staff and so on. A successful strategy will require a degree of coordination. Some discussions about this are taking place but it would be helpful to share views as to how far we should seek to coordinate what each group does.

8. An account of current ONS stakeholder activity is presented at **Annex B**, following a request at the meeting of 18 March.

Richard Alldritt
June 2008

Conclusions of Group to Investigate Improving Public Confidence in Official Statistics 2006

1. Improve communication infrastructure and capability

1.1 Improve the NS website

- Existing ONS developments (i-dissemination project) and investigation of the use of an e-mail alerting system to be focused on improving accessibility and to be assessed accordingly
- ONS to improve the links from the NS website to OGDs sites.
- ONS to liaise with owners of other GSS websites, for example to rationalise content, improve linkages, and improve search facilities.

1.2 Improve the quality/coherence of statistical releases

- Guidelines to be introduced to help producers provide appropriate statistical commentary. This should include the communication of reliability.
- GSS releases to be made in a more co-ordinated fashion, for example through a single press office or parallel press offices. The data would be produced by the individual departments but would follow an agreed template. The ability to link to OGDs websites needs to be improved to allow simultaneous release of data on both the producing department's site and on the National Statistics website.
- A common description of the types of releases to be agreed e.g. 1st release provide more technical information about the data, but news releases written more in a format that journalists can just lift the information and insert into an article.
- The number of styles and formats used across the GSS should be reduced to provide commonality and strengthen the image of the GSS.

1.3 Improve communication skills

- Review GSS competence framework; consider relative importance of, and what is meant by, 'communication'; produce guidance for the GSS
- Emphasise media training for statisticians

2. Develop and maintain effective relationships with opinion formers

2.1 Engage with Opinion Formers

- Identify the top opinion formers who can influence the public reputation of official statistics. The list should include members of the media, lobbyists, special interest groups, policy colleagues, other analytical groups in government, special advisors and key members of the educational system. Develop a detailed schedule of contacts – for the GSS (National Statistician and HOPs), Governing Board, RSS and Statistics Commission - with these opinion formers. An obvious topic to begin to engage upon is that of Independence; another is the nature of statistics, estimation and uncertainty; another is the implication of limited resources for quality
- Develop and implement a media engagement strategy, reflecting the media's ability to influence not only the public's opinion but the opinion of Ministers and other colleagues in the media. As part of this strategy, develop links with editors of local press with a view to providing them with ideas and content for stories, and ensure they are given as much information as the broad sheets.

- Extend ONS' user engagement strategy across the GSS, to step back and listen more to the opinion formers, stakeholders and users.
- Develop and implement a rebuttal strategy consistent with a desire to improve public confidence

2.2 Improve the statistical literacy of key groups

- The GSS, working with the RSS, to contact the various establishments providing journalism courses with a view to providing modules covering statistics that can be given on the courses. The courses should include information on statistics, methodologies and the sources of data. The introduction of the modules will improve statistical literacy, but also provide a link between journalists and the people providing the statistics. Important to work with the other key analytical groups in government (especially GSR and GES) in doing so, to avoid viewing statistics in isolation.
- The RSS should consider offering a prize to journalists for the best statistical presentation
- Develop a plan to improve statistical knowledge in mainstream education. One element of this might utilise a format like that used for Census 2001, providing lesson plans and nuggets of information for schools.

2.3 Improve relationship management skills

- Review GSS competence framework; consider relative importance of, and what is meant by, 'relationship management'; produce guidance for the GSS. Important that this covers the full range of relationships, including Ministers (to be fully relevant to the wider GSS beyond ONS).

3. Modernise product range

3.1 Develop high profile and interesting products

- The use of web nuggets to be rolled out across the GSS, with all departments producing them.
- Re-work existing material for other uses – one size does not fit all
- Identify partners with whom statisticians within the GSS can collaborate when producing outputs for a mass audience. This will improve the skills within the GSS and will provide insight into what issues are affecting users and are of interest to them. House of Commons library staff have expertise in ensuring the coherence and accessibility of statistical analysis, for example.
- As part of the media engagement strategy, plan to provide journalists with topics/ideas for stories and then provide the information required in a format that can be lifted directly into an article.
- As part of the media engagement strategy, consider trying to get information in the various Metro newspapers around the country. The Metro is now the most read paper and it is thought to be looking for small news items to publish.
- Develop a strategy to improve the way in which data are marketed, possibly entering into partnership with a marketing/promotions company. The cost of this could be spread across the GSS.
- Ask for staff ideas for innovative products (such as notebooks for journalists, with interesting statistical facts on each page)

3.2 Develop and promote a clear brand /kite-mark across the GSS

- Develop and market brands associated with National Statistics and the GSS as part of work on Independence
- Improve and standardise the service received by users - how the phones are answered, how long replies will take, who provides radio interviews, greater access to data on the websites - when they contact the GSS. Perceptions of an organisation are formed based on the quality of the service received.
- Consider the costs/benefits of adding pictures to the website alongside datasets, so users can put a face to the product.

Purpose

1. This paper provides a summary of the current position on management of stakeholder relations by ONS and, in part, the wider GSS.

Recommendation

2. For information.

Background

3. ONS has extensive arrangements for interfacing with its stakeholders. Activity falls in to five broad categories:

- Key Accounts;
- User Groups;
- Advisory Boards/Groups;
- GSS/Heads of Profession, and;
- Professional Bodies.

Key Accounts

4. The concept of Key Accounts (KA) was introduced by ONS in 2004 to ensure effective liaison on data issues with those departments/organisations who are major users of, or suppliers to, ONS statistics, or both. The KA relationships are underpinned by Service Level Agreements and each customer provides an annual assessment of ONS performance. Regular formal half-yearly meetings are held with the KA customers, chaired by the relevant ONS Director, in addition to the regular dialogue at working level. The KAs are managed centrally by a dedicated support team in NSPG. Existing KAs are as follows:

- Bank of England - Colin Mowl
- HM Treasury - Colin Mowl
- Department of Health - Joe Grice
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) - Joe Grice
- Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) - Caron Walker
- Devolved Administrations - Guy Goodwin
- Home Office - Guy Goodwin
- Communities and Local Government (CLG) - Guy Goodwin
- Economic and Social Research Council (ERSC) - Jil Matheson

User Groups

5. There is a multiplicity of user groups at working level for the many business activities across the office. For example, all the household surveys have cross-departmental user groups and there are a number of user groups covering different aspects of the Census. Also, the existing National Statistics Theme Working Groups are expected to hold regular discussions with external users, typically through the Statistics Users Forum (SUF) user group in the relevant domain.

6. The SUF is the primary route for high-level discussions with external users and the National Statistician holds quarterly meetings with them. SUF cannot be

regarded as representative of all external users but it is gradually increasing its coverage of the user community.

7. The main interface with Local Government is through the Central and Local Government Information Partnership (CLIP), chaired by the Head of Profession for Statistics in CLG. The aim of this forum is to facilitate discussion of central government's data needs from local government and, in turn, how central government can assist local government's information needs. CLIP also has a family of topic Sub-Groups.

8. Relations with the Devolved Administrations have evolved in recent years but we have now established a new high level committee chaired by the National Statistician to oversee all relevant issues. Scottish Government has a well established user consultation machinery called ScotStat, with an overarching Board, and a range of topic related committees and groups drawing on representatives from data users and data providers in Scotland. Similarly, Northern Ireland has a Statistics Advisory Committee and the Welsh Assembly Government organises the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee with representatives from local government, health and other public service organisations.

Advisory Groups

9. In recent years ONS has established advisory groups comprising departmental representatives and external experts/users, to assist in the development of particular issues. Current examples are groups on measurement of public sector productivity, demography, and methodology.

GSS Heads of Profession

10. The Heads of Profession Committee has existed for many years as the Head of the GSS's means of consulting with and taking forward professional issues with the GSS. Although this forum will continue in a consultative capacity, proposals have already been agreed by the UK Statistics Authority Board to strengthen governance and coherence in the GSS domain by the creation of two new committees chaired by the National Statistician:

- Cross-Government Professional Issues Committee
- Statistics Work Planning Committee, reporting to the Board's Official Statistics Committee.

Professional Bodies

11. Relations with professional bodies – particularly the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) – are more informal. But the door is always open when either side has issues to discuss.

Review

12. The Director General for Transformation, Rolande Anderson, is currently reviewing ONS's approach to stakeholder engagement.

**Mike Hughes (Director National Statistics and Policy, ONS)
June 2008**