

GSS Governance Statement

Introduction

1. The current GSS governance structure - our committees and ways of working - was established in November 2009 following a major review whose aim was to develop an effective system that enjoys the full support of Heads of Profession, Chief Statisticians and the National Statistician. No previous system of governance had been widely accepted as working in practice. The outcomes of that review were ratified by the HoPs Group in November 2009 and subsequently implemented.
2. At the time, the National Statistician undertook to carry out a review of the new governance arrangements after two years. That commitment was implemented in a 'light touch' review in summer 2011 that focused on refining the current structure and addressing any issues which had come to light during the past two years. The review concluded that no fundamental change to the existing governance structure was required.
3. The principles of a successful governance structure are one that:
 - enables effective and timely decision making;
 - provides appropriate support and advice to the National Statistician;
 - increases the effectiveness of HoP meetings;
 - increases HoPs' ownership of GSS professional and strategic matters; and
 - enables and supports the collective leadership of the GSS and involves a wider group of the GSS on GSS matters.

GSS Governance Structure

4. The current structure is summarised in the diagram at Annex 1.

Key Components

5. The HoPs Group is the principal policy-making committee operating with three key sub-committees – Statistical Policy and Standards Committee, People Committee and Theme Leaders alongside the Inter Administration Committee. Annex 2 contains the existing Terms of Reference for each of these committees.

Governing Principles

6. HoPs have adopted a series of governing principles which define the way that GSS Committees should function in practice -
 - i. All GSS Committees should delegate work down to 'task and finish' groups to progress wherever practicable.

- ii. Delegation should be of investigation and discussion but also decision making. Where a sub-committee can demonstrate a clear consensus, the process of discussion and decision taking should not be repeated at higher level committees. Important policy documents should be brought back to the HoPs Group for ratification as necessary.
 - iii. Issues for decision should be considered by one committee only before recommendations are forwarded to HoPs for ratification. Sub-committees can take particular issues direct to the HoPs Group when there is a matter of urgency or great interest.
 - iv. Where there is more than one layer, a sub-committee should report once only - to the committee above it. Thus, a committee below the three main sub-committees does not routinely need to report to the HoPs Group although it may present high profile issues to its meetings.
 - v. The scope of each committee should be clearly defined and set out in its terms of reference. It is expected to operate within scope (NSO will arbitrate to ensure that there are no gaps or overlaps). Any proposal to create a new sub-committee should be approved by the NSO, who will check that it does not overlap with an existing forum.
 - vi. A Committee should not be reactive. It should have forward work plans and observable, outcome-focused goals linked to the GSS Strategy.
 - vii. The secretariat for each committee will ensure that papers and agendas correspond to the agreed remit for that committee.
7. The GSS 2020 strategy provides a clear steer as to the strategic direction of the GSS. The achievement of its vision as, 'A collaborative community providing statistical data, analysis and advice used for the public good', should be supported by the work of the main GSS Committees, with well defined work plans, ensuring that the five main strands of the strategy are delivered efficiently. The delivery of the strategy is contingent upon each Committee taking ownership of that part of the strategy which best equates to its particular remit:
- People* - 'professionals with the right skills and experience to share knowledge to build capability' - delivery of this aim comes under the remit of the People Committee;
- Users* - 'routinely engaged users with clearly understood needs that drive improvements to products and services' - this is to be covered by Theme Leaders;
- Processes* - 'smart and efficient systems and methods which use technology to deliver fit for purpose statistics and advice in clear and accessible ways, whilst protecting confidentiality and minimising the cost to data suppliers' – the Statistical Policy & Standards Committee is the natural home for this strategic aim;
- Outputs* - 'statistical data and advice communicated clearly and accessibly to the broadest range of users' - this is being covered by the Presentation and Dissemination Committee;
- Community* - 'a proud GSS that works effectively together, within the European Statistical System and with others across government and externally, both in the UK home and abroad'- given the pivotal nature of this strategic aim it is being led by the People Committee supported by the International Committee.
8. The terms of reference for each of the Committees should reflect the need to support the delivery of the strategic direction that the GSS is committed to taking. Each Committee is also expected to have a defined work plan to drive forward its work and ensure delivery of the GSS strategy.

9. Membership of Committees including the role of Chair is expected to be rotated with reasonable frequency and should be included in terms of reference. Membership should draw on the full range of GSS talent and contributions by non-GSG staff should be encouraged where they have a contribution to make. It is each Committee's responsibility to ensure that necessary expertise is available to it to deal with issues as they arise and that members have sufficient influence to drive through subsequent action.

Use of 'Task and Finish' groups

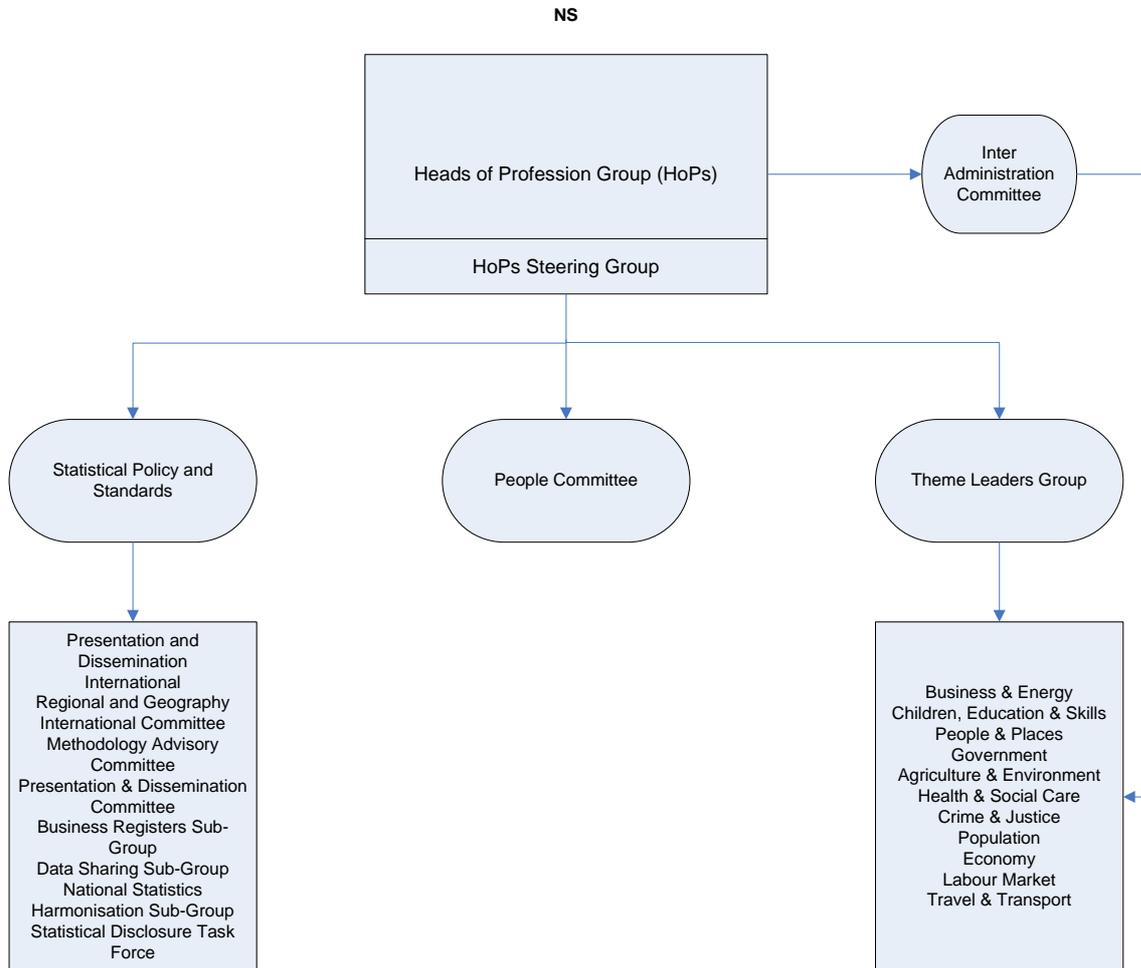
10. It is expected that Committees should make use of task and finish groups to progress specific pieces of work and present their findings for consideration. A task and finish group has the potential to draw on the full range of talent from across the GSS. It can also foster a greater sense of GSS identity - particularly amongst more junior grades. For it to function efficiently, a task and finish group needs to operate within a clearly defined timescale mandated by the Committee to which it reports. A task and finish group will have time-boxed work plans and a sun-setting clause in its terms of reference.

Membership of HoPs Group

11. The HoPs Group comprises all current Statistical Heads of Profession appointed by their department or agency. The three Chief Statisticians of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the Statistical Directors of the Office for National Statistics are also members of the HoPs Group.
12. HoPs are responsible for overseeing their own organisation's statistical functions, for meeting its statistical needs and for implementing the provisions set out in statistical legislation, both internally and across the UK statistical system. There is a Statement on the Roles and Responsibilities of a Head of Profession [<http://www.knowledgenetwork.gsi.gov.uk/statnet/statnet.nsf/db4a2b58a5eef0fc802578230069d628/c082b58c145e84a080257823003f4aa5?OpenDocument>] made available to HoPs on their appointment and to their Permanent Secretaries.
13. In the context of this Statement, HoPs are expected to both provide input to the development of wider policy and strategy on official statistics by actively participating in committees and task and finish groups, and by encouraging others in their organisation to do likewise.

Themes

14. The role of Themes is to coordinate planning and ensure deep engagement with the statistical user community. If Themes did not exist then in all likelihood something similar would need to be invented. Furthermore, the RSS Statistics User Forum organises its activities around Themes.
15. The list of Themes appears in the diagram at paragraph 4 above.



CURRENT TERMS OF REFERENCE BY GSS COMMITTEE

Heads of Profession Group

Purpose: It will provide professional guidance on the direction, governance and administration of the Government Statistical Service.

Accountable to: The National Statistician / Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)

Terms of Reference:

- To provide the GSS with professional and strategic guidance and leadership
- To provide high-level advice to the National Statistician
- To be a forum for the National Statistician to disseminate guidance and information to members
- To consider and endorse professional policies and strategies placed before it by the National Statistician, Heads of Profession, Chief Statisticians or its subsidiary bodies
- To endorse GSS-wide statistical plans and work programmes (not departmental or administration plans)
- To give HoPs an opportunity to network and share information
- To keep under review the operational arrangements for those parts of the UK Statistical Governance structure which relate to the GSS.
- To commission work from, or support the work of, other GSS committees.

Chair: National Statistician

Membership: Every Government Department, Agency or Devolved Administration which has appointed a formal Head of Profession for Statistics or Chief Statistician.

Secretariat: The National Statistician's Office, UK Statistics Authority

Frequency of Meetings: Quarterly.

Heads of Profession Steering Group

Purpose: To further the development of the GSS at the highest level, notably through ensuring the effective functioning of the Heads of Profession Group.

Accountable to: The National Statistician / Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)

Terms of Reference:

- Identify and propose strategic issues for discussion by HoPs.
- Comment on agendas for future HoPs meetings and discuss the substance of upcoming HoPs agenda items.
- Act as a sounding board for the National Statistician
- Facilitate co-operation between the National Statistician and GSS Departments on strategic issues, in order to formulate views before raising with HoPs.
- Discuss contentious issues in order either to make proposals to HoPs with the aim of achieving consensus or to refer them to other bodies (e.g. Cross-Government Committees) for further work.
- Monitor the functioning of HoPs and its subsidiary bodies.

Chair: National Statistician

Membership: A small sub-section of HoPs (6 – 8 members in total), nominated by HoPs and appointed by the Chair on a rotating basis for tenures of 2 years, initially tenures may have to vary to ensure consistency.

Secretariat: The National Statistician's Office, UK Statistics Authority

Frequency of Meetings: Normally quarterly, between HoPs meetings, otherwise as necessary

GSS People Committee

1. Purpose

1.1 The People Committee supports the National Statistician and GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) in providing a world class statistical service that is well-aligned to its strategic environment.

1.2 The Committee's outputs include: advice to the National Statistician's Office (NSO) on the development of people policies and practice, development of the GSS People Strategy, advice to HoPs on people issues for decision-making, and the development of key reference documents such as the GSG Competence Framework and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy.

1.3 The Committee works to improve the cohesion of all members of the GSS and to get the best out of the GSS as a whole, not just the Statistician Group (GSG). But it has a specific focus on the GSG in terms of recruitment, personal development, talent management, and retention – i.e. matters that for non-GSG members are mainly determined by departments.

1.4 Each year, the GSS People Committee develops a programme of work for approval by the National Statistician and HoPs, directly linked to broader GSS strategy. The approved work programme is published on *StatNet* and progress is reported to HoPs.

1.5 It is recognised that not all elements of the work may apply to all of the devolved administrations.

2. Ways of working:

2.1 In carrying out its work, the Committee will seek, through cross-administration and cross-departmental working, to:

- liaise as appropriate with the wider analytical community across government, other professional bodies, academic institutions, the international statistics community and other statistical organisations
- ensure that all actions clearly support the GSS' strategic priorities
- regularly review its priorities and maintain a realistic workload
- use resources as efficiently as possible,
- ensure that people across the GSS community have opportunities to get involved its work,
- ensure that the diversity of needs and views across the GSS are adequately taken into account, including those of the Devolved Administrations,
- liaise with, and support the work of, other GSS Committees,
- engage closely with the Devolved Administrations including to clarify where elements of the plan are not applicable to each administration and refer appropriate matters to the Inter-Administration Committee where no consensus has been reached

2.2 The Committee will normally meet for formal discussions on a quarterly basis. These meetings will focus on reconciling opinions, deciding actions, agreeing responsibilities, and ratifying recommendations for HoPs to approve (when appropriate).

2.3 Meeting papers should be distributed at least 10 working days in advance of the meeting date to allow adequate time for members to consult as appropriate and provide

comments in advance of the meeting.

2.4 Papers should include a section on 'Administrations and Departmental consultation' setting out the methods and results of consultations with administrations and departments and addressing intra administration and department implementation issues.

2.5 The Committee will seek to consider issues in the light of the need to coordinate action and policies, wherever possible, with the analytical professions across government. All papers should therefore include a section on 'Analytical Community – perspectives and coordination'.

2.6 Where subsidiary groups are set up by the Committee to carrying out actions, their composition should reflect the diversity of views across the GSS and be focussed on the timely delivery of well-defined product(s).

2.7 All GSS members are welcome to feed in their views on issues the Committee deals with through the Committee Secretary or their departmental representatives (see Membership list below).

2.8 The Committee will seek to review and evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of its Work Programme and the GSS People Strategy at least once a year.

2.9 The Committee will disseminate information on its activities to the GSS community at least after each meeting, with additional communications as appropriate. StatNet will be the preferred medium.

3. Roles of Members

3.1 All members are expected to work collaboratively, play an active role in delivering the Committee's Work Programme, and uphold its Terms of Reference. Where necessary, substitutes (agreed with the Chair in advance) are encouraged to attend Committee meetings.

3.2 In addition to the specific roles set out below, personal viewpoints of members may be considered by the Committee, being clearly identified as such by the member.

Constituency Representatives

- To form relationships with HoPs (or their nominees) in their constituencies (see Membership section for details).
- To develop an understanding of the features of their constituencies relevant to the Committee's work.
- To keep HoPs involved and interested in Committee matters as they develop.
- To ensure the Committee can fully understand administration and departmental perspectives by articulating, and synthesising where possible, a range of perspectives from their constituencies. Additionally, HoPs will have a further opportunity to comment on significant matters at a later stage.

Chair

- To manage and conclude Committee discussions at formal meetings and in correspondence.
- To provide overall leadership to the Committee and direct its work in line with strategic considerations and the views of the National Statistician and HoPs.
- To report to HoPs on People Committee activities and report back to the People Committee on relevant discussions and decisions by HoPs on people matters.

Chair and Committee Secretary (joint responsibilities)

- Systematic forward-planning of meetings, especially in respect of having realistic expectations and desirable outcomes.
- To ensure Committee is working in line with its Terms of Reference.
- To advise and guide task groups and others carrying out Work Programme actions.
- To ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the non-GSG part of the GSS community.
- To ensure Work Programme and supporting actions support the National Statistician's strategic priorities.

Committee Secretary (NSO)

- To oversee organisation of Committee meetings and report on progress with actions.
- To assist the Chair as required in preparing draft agendas, commissioning papers and actions.
- To write and disseminate Minutes and ad hoc communications from the Committee to the GSS community.
- To advise the Chair and members on relevant operational issues within NSO and SiGT in particular.
- To ensure papers are fit-for-purpose and are aligned to Committee's ToR
- To communicate to members about emerging people issues likely to require their consideration and consultation with their constituencies.
- To report on progress with the Work Programme and recommend amendments.
- Represent the views of individual GSS members in relation to specific issues (where they have been made known).
- To assist ONS (as the National Statistician's executive department) in GSS people policies and strategy implementation, working with the ONS representative on the committee.

National Statistician's Office Representative

- To advise the Committee on how its work can best support overall GSS strategy.
- To provide the National Statistician's perspective on people issues.
- To represent the non-ONS part of the UK Statistics Authority.
- To ensure the GSS People Committee's perspective is engaged with the ONS People Committee.

AS/ StO grade Representative

- To ensure the Committee can fully understand perspectives of AS/ StO grades by articulating, and synthesising where possible, a range of perspectives from this constituency.
- To work with established communities of AS / StO staff within the GSS to keep them informed about and engaged in People Committee issues.

HR Expert

- To advise the Committee on professional Human Resources issues, including legal and Cabinet Office perspectives.

Statistical Policy & Standards Committee

Purpose: The purpose of this Committee is to assist the National Statistician to fulfil her responsibilities to promote and safeguard the quality of official statistics, through the development and promotion of statistical policy, and through driving continuous improvement in methodologies, standards, and classifications.

Accountable to: The National Statistician and the Heads of Profession Group (HoPs)

Terms of Reference

Strategic

- To provide advice to the National Statistician in respect of her legal obligations relating to the development, maintenance and monitoring of statistical policies and standards.
- To oversee the development and promotion, and monitor the implementation and application, of statistical policies and standards relating to official statistics.
- To drive forward continuous improvement in the quality of official statistics, overseeing prioritisation, and monitoring implementation, of areas for methodological development.
- To encourage and support implementation of:
 - the Code of Practice for Official Statistics
 - other national and international standards and best practice
 - National Statistician's Guidance under the Code of Practice
 - Innovation in methodology and its application across official statistics
- To consider the need for policies and guidance that are required to assist the GSS in complying with the Code of Practice including those arising from the UK Statistics Authority Assessment Programme.
- To ensure that where policies and standards are to apply across the GSS they are developed to reflect the needs across the four nations and publicised/communicated to reflect the agreed geographical applications.

Operational

- To agree its annual work programme with the HoPs Group, provide a progress report to every meeting of the Group, and to ensure that statistical policies and standards relating to official statistics are presented for ratification to it.
- To address any ad hoc issues remitted to it by the National Statistician arising from discussions with the UK Statistics Authority.
- To liaise with, and support the work of, the Inter Administration and Human Resources Committees.
- To oversee the governance of its own Sub-Committees and Sub-Groups.
- To provide strategic direction to, and hold to account, the activities of the Sub-Committees and Sub-Groups that report to this Committee and any Taskforces convened to address specific issues on a strictly time-limited basis.
- To manage the Authority's Quality Improvement Fund.

Secretariat: The National Statistician's Office, UK Statistics Authority

Frequency of Meetings: Quarterly.

Inter Administration Committee

Purpose: The Committee works within the context of an Inter Administration Working Agreement between the UK Statistics Authority and each of the Devolved Administrations, which outlines the ways in which the four nations work together and cooperate on statistical matters.

Terms of Reference:

- To develop and promote a set of principles that will contribute to coherent, comparable and comprehensive 4 Nation statistics, taking due account of user needs, accessibility and metadata to assess comparability
- To promote policies, strategies and standards which facilitate the production of coherent and harmonised statistics across the administrations
- To consider and resolve inter administration issues that have not been able to be resolved elsewhere
- To 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
- To strengthen the user voice (with an emphasis on those users requiring UK-wide and international statistics)
- To share and promote good statistical practice across administrations
- To strengthen the links between Theme Leaders and the Committee, especially in respect of issues relating to comparability of statistics and the extent to which the devolved administrations are collaborating with Theme activities
- To identify international issues including meeting international requirements and arrangements for moving forward issues that would benefit sub UK international comparisons
- To raise issues with the UK Statistics Authority and/or Ministers as appropriate

Secretariat: The National Statistician's Office, UK Statistics Authority

Frequency of Meetings: Quarterly.

Theme Leaders Group

Purpose: To take an overview of the GSS planning system, to discuss issues that cut across GSS Themes, and to coordinate submissions from Theme Leaders to HoPs.

Accountable to: Heads of Profession Group and the national Statistician

Terms of Reference:

- To provide a forum for Theme Leaders to network and share information
- To identify and influence the potential for statistical development and innovation in cross-cutting areas
- To ensure the production of an annual summary of long-term priorities for each theme and ensure cross-cutting issues are reflected appropriately
- To ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the Themes
- To consider any statistical work programmes or plans placed before it by Theme leaders
- To monitor the efficiency of any complementary procedures for consulting users on programmes or plans
- To escalate issues to Heads of Profession where appropriate
- To address ad hoc issues remitted to it by the Heads of Profession Group, the National Statistician or other GSS Committees
- To commission work from, or support the work of, ad hoc Planning Task forces.