

GSS Social Media Guidance

Introduction

This document has been produced to provide guidance and support for members of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) who are using - or considering using - Social Media channels in order to communicate Official Statistics. These guidelines were produced by a cross-GSS working group, which reported to the GSS Publishing and Dissemination Committee.

We hope that all of these guidelines prove useful but readers may particularly want to take note of the following sections:

- Case studies on current GSS use of **Twitter** (p9), **Facebook** (p12) and **YouTube** (p16)
- Checklist – what we recommend you should do before setting up a Social Media account (p4)
- What makes a good **Tweet** (p8), **Facebook post** (p11) or **YouTube post** (p15).

Background

In 2011, an average of 1 million UK users sign up to Facebook each month and 50% of UK users log in every day¹. The number of worldwide Twitter accounts increased from 75 million in January 2010 to more than 175 million in March 2011, resulting in 95 million tweets per day².

Social media websites dominate the online landscape and figures show that this phenomenon applies to users of all ages³. Figures also show that the UK leads the rest of Europe in average hours spent on social networking in all age ranges beyond 24⁴.

It is reasonable to suppose that some users of official statistics will expect to find information about statistical outputs on their channel of choice. The Web Dissemination Strategy for Official Statistics reflects this in saying that “Social and portable media use should be considered and used, where appropriate, to raise awareness and increase access to official statistics” (1.6)⁵.

UK and European context

The use of Social Media to disseminate statistics is in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics’ commitment to “Engage effectively with users of statistics to promote trust and maximise public value” (Principle 1: Practice 1)⁶.

¹ <http://www.clickymedia.co.uk/2011/03/uk-facebook-statistics-for-march-2011/>

² <http://www.browsermedia.co.uk/2011/03/30/2011-social-media-statistics-show-huge-growth/>

³ <http://www.comscore.com/2011/03/facebook-and-twitter-most-users-between-15-24-years-old/demographic-profile-share-of-european-visitors-to-facebook-twitter-and-linkedin/>

⁴ <http://www.comscore.com/2011/01/average-hours-spent-on-social-networking-per-visitor-across-europe/>

⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-guidance/web-dissemination-strategy-for-official-statistics.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>

This aim is also in line with the work of the European Statistical System (ESS), which has committed itself to support the use of social media by providing guidelines⁷. Readers may want to be aware of the ESS guidelines, as they offer some additional details not included in this document. Readers may also want to note the availability of a glossary of terms in the Web Dissemination Strategy for Official Statistics⁸.

Scope of these guidelines

Whilst many social media channels can boast impressive levels of use, no one channel provides global coverage. These guidelines advise that in addition to the publication of statistics on a departmental website, linked to from the Publication Hub, social media channels can form a vital part of statistics publishing strategy.

These guidelines will:

- provide advice for GSS members considering the use of social media to promote the release of official statistics and advice
- provide good practice examples in the use of some of the most commonly used types of social media.

These guidelines will not:

- cover personal usage of social media by members of the GSS. All civil servants should be aware of how the Civil Service Code applies to online participation⁹
- diminish publishers' legal obligations towards content published online e.g. copyright, defamation, data protection, FoI etc
- change the need to adhere to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics
- consider Social Media channels where there is no current example of their successful use in disseminating official statistics
- replace or amend relevant individual departmental standards relating to use of social media, including network limitations and acceptable use policies.

A listening approach

It is important to realise that social media websites are not simply another set of options to allow you to publish outputs but involve two way communication. Your first steps into social media should be to listen rather than talk. Conversations about your outputs are probably already taking place and there are easy (and free) ways in which you can find out about these. To start with, you can try going to any of these websites and entering a search term, for example, the name of a key output:

- <http://technorati.com/>
- <http://www.socialmention.com>
- <http://twitter.com/#!/search-home>
- <http://www.facebook.com/search.php>
- <http://www.youtube.com/results>

For a more co-ordinated long-term approach, you can set up a free dashboard showing online mentions of particular words or phrases, using websites like

⁷ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/pgp_ess/about_ess/guidelines/social_media

⁸ Available on Statnet here:

<http://www.knowledgenetwork.gsi.gov.uk/statnet/statnet.nsf/AllByUNID/24C82256D2294A6C802578D4003C16C2?OpenDocument&area=KANN-8CZHBL>

⁹ <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/resources/participation-online>

netvibes¹⁰. You should also talk to your Media Relations team about whether their media monitoring includes social media and, if so, whether they can alert you to mentions of your outputs.

Business case

Any business case for using social media should show that it:

- achieves an enhanced reputation of your organisation and of official statistics
- reaches a wider audience of users
- allows your users to interact with you

The following points can also be used in constructing a business case for the use of social media channels:

- Social media helps find and reach a bigger audience for your outputs.
- Some people will only search for information on their social media channel of choice. If there is not an official account on their channel of choice, users may choose to use information provided by unofficial providers.
- The presence of an official social media channel helps ensure that unofficial accounts (sometimes deliberately set up to look official) do not gain a lot of attention.
- Social media allows people to choose to receive updates from you (e.g. by allowing people to “follow” you on Twitter, people will be notified of your tweets).
- Social media is a quick method of communication and may allow you early notice of issues and concerns that would become more serious over time (e.g. people may use social media to tell you that something has stopped working on your website, or you may see concerns about one of your outputs expressed at an earlier stage).
- Social media allows people to give you feedback or express opinions and can be particularly useful for consultation exercises. As with all modes of consultation, you should make sure that responses to consultations made on social media are accessible where possible for transparency reasons, e.g. by providing links to social media channels (and details of consultation specific details like hashtags or Facebook posts) from the consultation page on your website.
- Social media is normally free to access and set up for publishers and for users. Although it will require staff time to administer, it represents an excellent return on investment when compared with other online content.
- Having social media accounts helps boost search engine rankings for content and for organisations. For example, a Twitter channel linking to news releases on your website will improve the chances of your news releases ranking towards the top of a Google search.
- Having social media accounts means that you are likely to pick up any discussions about your organisation on that channel. Social media therefore represents a monitoring tool as well as a publishing tool.
- Social media can assist with business continuity planning, in that it provides alternative channels for publishing updates. For example, in the event of service outages on your corporate website, you can update users via Twitter of the amount of time you expect the website to be offline.

NB: There are some details about the business case for Twitter accounts in the BIS strategy¹¹.

¹⁰ <http://www.netvibes.com/en>

Creating a social media account - Checklist

Please remember that not all communications challenges are solved by use of social media and there may be other approaches worth considering. Before setting up a social media channel, it is particularly recommended that you:

- i) Check the advice on using channels that feature non-statistical content
- ii) Define the communications objectives and audience
- iii) Decide on the content that will be included on your channel
- iv) Decide who will agree the content on your channel
- v) Create a moderation policy for your channel
- vi) Establish the resource that you will need to administer the channel
- vii) Ensure that everyone administering the channel is aware of an escalation procedure to use in the event of highly negative feedback
- viii) Create an exit plan that states under what circumstances the channel will be closed (this could relate to time periods, resource availability, organisational change etc.) and how users will be notified of this
- ix) Establish a plan to promote the new channel through existing channels so your current audience is made aware of your new channel
- x) Decide on a name for your channel.

i) Advice on sharing central social media channels

Care should be taken when using social media channels set up for more than the dissemination of official statistics related content. The UK Statistics Authority Assessment Team view is that statistical releases/messages/commentary should be kept strictly separate and independent from all media that contain policy/political comment. Departments wishing to use Twitter to disseminate official statistics would ideally ensure that they set up separate Twitter streams from those run centrally by their press offices. If you are unsure about what is best practice for your department, please discuss this with your Head of Profession and include these details in the written business case for the account.

ii) Communications objectives and audience

What is the objective of your channel? Are there particular groups that you are trying to communicate with? It's important to be clear about these issues as they will shape your approach to the channel – for example, your answers to the next point.

iii) Type of content

What type of content will you be publishing on your channel? Will it be text, video, audio or a mixture of all three? Will you be giving details of releases, events, or consultations? What language will your content use and how frequently will you be publishing content onto the channel? If you're not sure about the answers to these questions, try printing out a grid for the first month that the channel will be live and detailing your planned posts on this. If at any stage you fall below a post a week you should consider whether the channel is likely to look current to users viewing it. It's a good idea to give an idea of what service the channel will provide to users - including some idea of the frequency of posting - in your policy document. This ensures that users know what to expect when signing up to receive updates.

¹¹ <http://neilojwilliams.net/missioncreep/2009/how-to-write-a-corporate-twitter-strategy-and-heres-one-i-made-earlier/>

iv) Who will agree the content?

You should make sure that it is clear who has permission to post content to the channel and in what circumstances this content needs to be agreed or signed off by others.

v) Moderation Policies

Most social media channels will allow users to leave or make comments in some way. Some channels allow the account holder to switch off the ability for users to comment. It is not recommended that this is done, as it breaks with convention and gives the impression that the GSS does not wish to engage with users. Protocol 1 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics states that producers should “seek feedback from users on their experiences of the statistical service they receive, data quality, and on the format and timing of outputs”.

For channels where users can make comments, it’s important to have a moderation policy. This should be clearly visible to users and set out any situation in which you will remove or delete a user’s comment. It is never acceptable to delete comments that express negative views but do not fall into any of the categories for removing posts listed in your moderation policy.

There is formal government guidance on the moderation of online channels available from the Col¹². This includes a sample moderation policy at Annex 2.

With the exception of Facebook (where this is not possible) you should enable pre-moderation. This means that you will be able to check comments in order to moderate them against your moderation policy before they are published. Your moderation policy should outline how quickly users can expect their comments to be moderated and published.

On Facebook, because it is not possible to pre-moderate, you should ensure that the account is checked regularly. This should happen once every working day at a minimum. You can also use the Facebook blocking function to stop comments/posts containing certain words (e.g. obscenities) from appearing on your account.

vi) Resources

When you start using social media to disseminate outputs, your users will expect you to continue disseminating your outputs in this way. You should establish the level of resource that you will need to publish and monitor your channel(s), and what will happen in event of this resource not being available (e.g. through staff illness).

If you are unsure about resource implications, then it is recommended that you read the case studies in section two of this guidance or contact those responsible for administering other GSS Social Media channels for details.

You should also ensure that access details (e.g. username, password, URL) to the account are securely stored but available to several people so that the account can be accessed, for example, in the event of severe weather or during holidays. This may mean that you add the details of your accounts to your organisation’s business continuity plans.

¹² <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=380>

vii) Escalation procedures

Publishing content of any type carries with it the risk that there will be a highly negative or highly visible response to the published content. Staff administering social media channels should be aware of the procedure for escalating concerns over content posted on (or in response to) social media channels. This may involve contacting your Media Relations team, your senior management or GSS colleagues.

Caution is advised when responding to negative messages on social media. Responding to comments always risks drawing attention to them and it is often the case online that other users will come to your defence, creating a much more credible rebuttal.

The US Air Force has created a useful flowchart outlining how to deal with negative blog postings. This may help you consider these issues¹³.

viii) Exit plans

You should have an exit plan giving details of the events that will cause the channel to be closed and the amount of notice that users will be given of the closure.

ix) Promotion plans using existing channels

Using existing channels can be the most efficient method of notifying your users of the availability of your new channel. This can include giving details of your new channel on presentations at events, on your website, on forums and other special interest communities online, on other social media channels, on email signature files and on printed material like news releases or newsletters.

x) Channel name

The name you give your social media channel is important as it will frequently form part of the URL that you will use to publicise your channel. It will also determine how easily users of social media channels will be able to search for your account. When devising names, remember that most channels have a length limitation (for example, Twitter usernames can be no longer than 15 characters) and that users will expect your channel name to be consistent with any other channels that have been created. For example, if you have already created a channel at twitter.com/frogstatistics, then users would expect you to use facebook.com/frogstatistics when setting up a Facebook account. Col guidance¹⁴ suggests that “some consistency both with the Department’s website URL and across departments would help the citizen” when naming social media channels.

¹³ <http://www.globalnerdy.com/2008/12/30/the-air-forces-rules-of-engagement-for-blogging/>

¹⁴ <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=194>

Evaluating social media channels: Metrics

One of the key elements in evaluating the success of social media channels is the data about usage that can be acquired. It is important that this process should attempt to ensure that some sense of qualitative as well as quantitative success is reported. A large volume of poor content that is read by few people should not be allowed to score more highly than a few carefully targeted posts that are influential and well-read.

For social media channels, it should be possible to report on:

- The volume of material posted on the channel (e.g. number of tweets, posts, or videos).
- The number of times this material has been viewed. This is easy information to gather from YouTube and Facebook but is more difficult on Twitter, where the nearest metric is the number of people who click on the link(s) in a tweet to view further details. You can get these details by signing up to use a commercial link shortening service such as <http://bit.ly>.
- The number of users who have signed up to be notified of new material being posted on the channel in question. On Twitter, these people are called “followers”, on Facebook this is done by “liking” a page and on YouTube you can “subscribe” to a channel.
- The number of times content posted on your channel has been highlighted by someone. On Twitter, this usually happens by people re-tweeting your tweets, on Facebook people can “share” your posts with their friends and on YouTube websites can embed your video content on their webpage.
- Examples of engagement with users (e.g. comments or questions posted by users).

It is possible to get additional details of audience interaction with content from some Social Media channels. For example, YouTube’s “hotspot” tool can give you some precise details about users, such as the average time that viewers spend viewing your video before navigating away to another page.

You should ensure that you are clear on which metrics you are reporting and how frequently you will report on them, as well as any targets you set and what will happen in the event of these targets not being met.

Specific Social Media channels

In the next section some specific information is given about Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. There are other channels available and your decision to use a channel should take into consideration the aims and audience for the material you're publishing.

Twitter

Background information about how Twitter works can be found in these guides:

- Twitter's own guide at <https://business.twitter.com/basics/what-is-twitter/>
- "Twitter: A Quick Start Guide for People In And Around Government" by the Learning Pool: <http://www.learningpool.com/twitter-a-quick-start-guide-for-people-in-and-around-government/>
- A Kind of Digital's one page guide to Twitter: <http://kindofdigital.com/useful-stuff/what-is-guides/>

What makes a good tweet?

- If you're not sure, look at other similar Twitter accounts for ideas.
- Tweets can only be a maximum of 140 characters long but ideally you should allow room for others to re-tweet your tweet by placing "RT @youraccountname" in front of the text.
- Rather than try to pack a lot of information into a tweet, pick one key piece of information and then provide a link to further details.
- Try to include a 'hook' or something to grab people's interest at the beginning of the tweet.
- Avoid jargon or complicated vocabulary – you don't have space to define or explain terminology in a tweet.
- It's not possible to craft grammatically correct sentences and fit these into 140 characters, so accept that there will be some condensing of words. This doesn't mean that you have to descend into text speak but does mean using "more info:" rather than "further details are available from..."
- Provide links to further information where you can. If these links are to non-standard content, please indicate this, e.g. by putting "(PDF)" or "(video)" after the link. This is important as mobile devices can be caused to crash if users click on links to non-standard content.
- Use hashtags (#), but do so consistently. Keep a list of what you've used in the past if possible and check that others aren't using the same hashtag for a different subject by searching for the hashtag on Twitter first.
- If tweeting at other accounts, be sparing with tweets asking people to re-tweet or publicise your content. You don't want to look like you are spamming other Twitter accounts.
- If possible, ask someone else to check your tweet before you publish it. Always check that any links work before and after publishing.
- Avoid deleting posts. Some Twitter applications, particularly those for mobile devices, will download posts and store them offline so that you can't delete your tweet from these. If you are correcting a previous tweet, make this clear.

Twitter Case study – Welsh Government

What social media channel do these details relate to? (please give URL)

www.twitter.com/statisticswales | www.twitter.com/ystadegaucymru

How long have you been using this channel?

Since 13 June 2011

**What process did you go through to get agreement to set up this channel?
Was this difficult?**

See document showing our process for requesting a social media channel at Annex A.

How often do you post/add new material to your account?

For every output we publish there is a corresponding tweet. So we tweet at least 3 days a week.

What has been your most successful post?

31 August 2011 – 95 clicks on bit.ly link

How deprived is your area? #WIMD 2011 and Child Index 2011 published today.
#deprivation #statistics #Wales

Help with #WIMD 2011 – Results and guidance available #deprivation #statistics
#Wales

Do you create material for the account separately or take content that has already been created and repost this? (for example, do you automatically tweet the titles of your news releases or do you write a tweet with a link to the news release?)

We create a tweet for each output and link to the release.

Do you respond to questions/comments from users on your account? How often does this happen?

Yes. Only had one tweet we needed to respond to.

Are there any figures/metrics about this channel that you report to your management? (For example, do you report on the number of followers or retweets on a Twitter channel?)

We notify the management team of the number of followers and of any @mentions that are of importance.

Approximately how much resource does administration of this channel take on a day-to-day basis?

About 1hr a day depending on the number of outputs being published – includes checking of tweets, translation, creation of bit.ly and publishing of tweets.

Have you had to train staff in order to run this channel? If so, what training have you provided/procured?

Yes. Guidance was written on how to write a tweet and on how to publish tweets. Heads of branches attended a meeting to discuss the process for creating and clearance of tweets.

What would you say are the main benefits of being present on this channel?

Greater awareness of what outputs we publish.

What feedback have you had from statistics users about your channel?

A couple of @mentions saying they are pleased to see statisticswales on Twitter.

Have there been any problems or issues with the channel that would be useful for other GSS members setting up similar channels to know about?

Some of Twitter's email notifications don't always work. So have to regularly log into Twitter to check there are no questions that need to be answered.

What are your intentions for this channel in the future? Do you intend to continue as you are now, increase your activities or add functionality, or stop using the channel?

Continue as we are

Are there other social media channels that you would like to use in the future?

No

Would you be happy to include contact details for other GSS Members interested in setting up a similar Social Media Account? (If so, please give email address)

bill.bone@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Facebook

Background information about Facebook:

- “Guide to Facebook pages for Government Organisations” by the Learning Pool: <http://www.learningpool.com/guide-to-facebook-pages-for-government-organisations/>
- Facebook’s own guide for government organisations: http://www.facebook.com/FacebookPages#!/FacebookPages?sk=app_306873952657078

What makes a good Facebook post?

- If you’re not sure, look at other similar Facebook accounts for ideas.
- Posts on Facebook walls can only be a maximum of 420 characters long. Try to avoid the temptation to take the first paragraph from a release and think about creating some separate text for your Facebook page instead.
- When creating the text, the most important aim is to make the content appealing to a wide audience when they see the post (potentially in the middle of a lot of posts about other topics in their feed as well as on your Facebook page).
- Avoid jargon or complicated vocabulary – you don’t have space to define or explain terminology.
- Provide links to further information where you can. If these links are to non-standard content, please indicate this, e.g. by putting “(PDF)” or “(video)” after the link. This is important as mobile devices can be caused to crash if users click on links to non-standard content.
- If possible, ask someone else to check your post before you publish it. Always check that any links work before and after publishing.
- Avoid deleting posts. As with Twitter, some Facebook applications (particularly those for mobile devices) will download posts and store them offline so that you can’t delete your post from these. If you are correcting a previous post, make this clear.

Case study - NISRA

What social media channel do these details relate to? (please give URL)

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Northern-Ireland-Statistics-Research-Agency/131044496943228>

How long have you been using this channel?

It was launched on World Statistics Day (20.10.2010)

What process did you go through to get agreement to set up this channel? Was this difficult?

The process was :

1. Action to set up a Facebook page recommended in the NISRA Marketing Strategy and endorsed by NISRA Agency Board.
2. Decision to include as a World Statistics Day action, amongst others - Permanent Secretary and Minister subsequently briefed.
3. Authorisation given from central IT to allow access to Facebook on the machines of the 2 nominated editors in central Corporate Services who act as the 'posters' for all NISRA branches.
4. Designing of page was relatively straightforward for someone who is already familiar with Facebook.
5. Development of input proforma for branches followed by publicity events within NISRA.
6. Addition of blue Facebook 'like' button on main NISRA website.
7. Launch of page, ongoing publicity (university talks, career fairs etc.).

The process was more difficult than it should have been, and contrary to expectations, IT approval was not the difficult part. It was getting 'buy-in' from senior colleagues so that they would support the venture – many senior (older?) people do not use Facebook themselves, they do not trust it, and they didn't understand at first how it could be used to enhance the NISRA service. Also, many staff did not understand what we were trying to do, citing 'what was the point as we have no access in work'. Some branches have embraced the channel wholeheartedly as another way to reach out to users, and other areas still see it as 'extra work' and have not engaged – their statistics are therefore not highlighted on the page. The process of engagement with all stakeholders is ongoing, although we have achieved a pleasing 200 'likes' in the first year.

How often do you post/add new material to your account?

Branches submit proformas (detailing information they wish to be included) to the editors on an adhoc basis – when they have a new publication, newsletter or event – and corporate services itself uses the page to advertise recruitments, promote typical job profiles or links to other useful Facebook pages (RSS Getstats etc.). We try to post at least once a week.

What has been your most successful post?

The advertisement of the Assistant Statistician recruitment generated the most new 'likes' for the page. The most successful single post was the 2010 most popular baby names graphic.

Do you create material for the account separately or take content that has already been created and repost this?

Most of our posts link directly to the main NISRA website, but the advantage is that they show directly on Facebook newsfeeds without the person having to decide consciously to look at the NISRA website. Facebook, in addition, can hold the more 'quirky' photos relating to NISRA that would be out of place on the website (such as our staff participation in Community/Voluntary work).

Do you respond to questions/comments from users on your account? How often does this happen?

We can respond to any comments, but have never been required to do so, despite this being seen by others as the major risk which would have halted the project (the potential posting of negative comments on the page).

Are there any figures/metrics about this channel that you report to your management?

Not yet, but we will do so in future as the process and number of users beds in. Facebook gives business page owners a number of standard metrics we can report (views, shares etc.).

Approximately how much resource does administration of this channel take on a day-to-day basis?

It is very quick to post a link (only 5 minutes per link), so with only a couple per week, the timespend is negligible for such an immediate and widespread impact. The proforma for branches to detail what they want us to post on their behalf can also be completed in 5 minutes.

Have you had to train staff in order to run this channel? If so, what training have you provided/procured?

No – Facebook is very user friendly and easy to use.

What would you say are the main benefits of being present on this channel?

The NISRA Marketing Strategy recommended the setting up of a Facebook page to enhance our relationship with younger users especially, an objective of the Strategy being to increase the number of high quality recruits. We are currently running an Assistant Statistician recruitment exercise, and having publicised the page through university careers services, we noticed an increase in 'likes' during the 3 weeks of the advert. We posted the recruitment advert, profiles of young statisticians to 'put a face' to the job, and counted down to the competition closing date. We have achieved a 50% increase in the number of applicants since the last competition (mostly due, of course, to wider economic conditions).

Aside from the recruitment example, the main benefit is to get our NISRA publications directly onto the home pages of Facebook users, whether serious academic users, students or the general public. In particular, highlighting the countdown to the 2011 Census, and continuing to advertise up until, and after Census day, was a good use of the page and another way of keeping the Census in the public eye. We also highlight events on the page such as the regular NINIS seminars, and the recent International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS) conference held in Belfast during August. In future, we see the Facebook page as a useful vehicle for administering statistical user consultations.

In summary, the benefit is to present NISRA as a thriving community of individuals who are passionate about their work, rather than as a faceless government organisation. And it's free!!

What feedback have you had from statistics users about your channel?

None specifically, but we have noticed that some users re-post our links or invite their 'friends' to like our page.

Have there been any problems or issues with the channel that would be useful for other GSS members setting up similar channels to know about?

None

What are your intentions for this channel in the future? Do you intend to continue as you are now, increase your activities or add functionality, or stop using the channel?

NISRA fully intends to continue using Facebook and to increase the number of branches who are regularly engaging.

Are there other social media channels that you would like to use in the future?

NINIS already uses Twitter as well.

Would you be happy to include contact details for other GSS Members interested in setting up a similar Social Media Account? (If so, please give email address)

tracy.power@dfpni.gov.uk

Youtube

Online guidance:

- Col guidance: <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=345>

What makes a good YouTube video?

- Before considering creating video content, ask yourself “what is visually compelling about this subject?” Other channels exist for audio (e.g. audioboo) and PowerPoint presentations (e.g. SlideShare) so your video needs more compelling content than just a talking head. Some exceptions to this rule exist, for example, if the talking head is famous or is talking at a high-profile event, but the visual aspect is the most important issue to get right before you start.
- Make sure the sound is well recorded and not subject to interference. Users can forgive poor quality video much more easily than they can poor sound. Use radio microphones where possible or ask venues to allow you to take a sound recording from their PA system.
- Consider accessibility. YouTube has an excellent captioning tool that allows you to provide a script for your video that YouTube then turns into subtitles for your video that can be used by those unable to hear the audio track. You can also provide a link to a transcript in the comments section.
- Make sure that any captions, illustrations or graphics are simple and easy to view. Most people watch YouTube content in the standard small YouTube window and do not resize (e.g. to full screen size). This means that details, e.g. text on diagrams or graphs, are very difficult to read.
- Most YouTube users will not watch beyond 2-3 minutes of video. Keep your video to the absolute minimum length and consider dividing it into multiple videos if it exceeds 2-3 minutes. You can use the YouTube “Hotspot” tool to see at what points in your video users navigate away from the page.

Case study - ONS

What social media channel do these details relate to? (please give URL)

www.youtube.com/ONSstats

How long have you been using this channel?

Since January 2011

What process did you go through to get agreement to set up this channel? Was this difficult?

We created the material for upload first and got agreement for this. Once that had been agreed, the creation of the channel was straightforward and incurred no cost as we did the branding ourselves.

How often do you post/add new material to your account?

Usually several times a week.

What has been your most successful post?

Graduate earnings over the last decade (3,768 views)¹⁵.

Do you create material for the account separately or take content that has already been created and repost this? (for example, do you automatically tweet the titles of your news releases or do you write a tweet with a link to the news release?)

It's audio-visual content so has to be created separately although it is based on ONS releases. There is no data used that is not also published as part of the ONS release.

Do you respond to questions/comments from users on your account? How often does this happen?

We allow comments against individual videos and have had a small number of these. We've also had feedback through email and other social media channels. We respond to comments when required.

Are there any figures/metrics about this channel that you report to your management? (For example, do you report on the number of followers or retweets on a Twitter channel?)

Quantitatively, the number of new videos, the number of views for each new video and the number of overall subscribers. Qualitatively, we will report any high profile links, references or embedding of our content, any trends we spot in user comments and any detail that we spot using the YouTube "insight" tool.

Approximately how much resource does administration of this channel take on a day-to-day basis?

It's difficult to estimate this reliably. It takes a small amount of time to check for comments but the real time commitment is for creating the videos in the first place. This depends greatly on the type of video content. For the real video content produced for the National Well-being debate or the Martha Lane Fox interview, this can take several days of planning and execution. For the standard podcast, using some graphical material from Powerpoint, it will take around half a day to a day depending on how much content is used. Most of the content created is reused from what is put together for other parts of our publication process.

¹⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhQkk24pi5Y&feature=channel_video_title

Have you had to train staff in order to run this channel? If so, what training have you provided/procured?

Yes. We already had some staff with skills in the production of audio and video material but we have had to train additional members of staff in creating video and audio material.

What would you say are the main benefits of being present on this channel?

It presents our outputs in a different format and therefore makes our outputs more accessible to a wider audience. Also it allows other people to reuse our material and embed it within their reports of our statistics. That has happened on several occasions; most notably the Daily Mail embedding our video reports into the coverage of the latest labour market estimates. This allows us to reach out to people who would never otherwise find our interpretation of the key findings. Several videos have also been used in an educational role.

What feedback have you had from statistics users about your channel?

Generally positive. We have been given lots of praise for explaining the key messages in our statistics in a simpler format. Journalists have praised the content as it allows them to easily access the key messages in our publications.

Have there been any problems or issues with the channel that would be useful for other GSS members setting up similar channels to know about?

Access to the channel from our network, particularly for uploading content, has been difficult. We would recommend a full test of the publishing process using some test footage for anyone planning to publish material on YouTube for the first time.

What are your intentions for this channel in the future? Do you intend to continue as you are now, increase your activities or add functionality, or stop using the channel?

We intend to carry on developing the material that we publish on YouTube, for example providing our own in house interviews for the channel.

Are there other social media channels that you would like to use in the future?

We also have corporate Twitter and Facebook channels, have used Audioboo in the past and are currently assessing whether there are other channels that we should consider setting up accounts with.

Would you be happy to include contact details for other GSS Members interested in setting up a similar Social Media Account? (If so, please give email address)

Yes – social.media@ons.gsi.gov.uk

ANNEX A: Welsh Government (Statistical Directorate) process for requesting a social media channel

Social Media: Business case & commitments

Social Media channels such as Facebook and Twitter offer fantastic opportunities in extending engagement and audience reach. This is especially true for groups and demographics who don't interact with Government through traditional routes (formal consultations etc).

An unmaintained and ill-disciplined channel can hinder and harm reputation and engagement, however. Before your channel is sanctioned, you are asked to make clear your long-term strategy and plan to ensure your channel attains maximum value for both your communication aims and the end user.

This document is derived from core principles established in the wider Social Media Policy, which must be read and agreed to prior to submitting

Approval process:

This document forms part of a wider approval process, which involves:

- 1 – DG Head of Communications (HoC) to agree, in principle, to the idea of the proposed channel.
- 2 – Owner of proposed channel to work with Departmental Web Manager (DWM) / HoC to complete this document. Document then submitted to Central Web Team (CWT).
- 3 – CWT to analyse document to assess whether each section response meets required standard. If analysis reveals further work to be done, CWT and proposed channel owner / DWM to discuss where commitments can be clarified, improved and agreed. Owner to then re-submit following agreed changes for analysis, repeating process if necessary.
- 4 – Once document is finalised between CWT and channel owner, document then re-submitted to HoC for final approval.
- 5 – Once approval gained, CWT to work with channel owner / DWM in actioning launch of channel.
- 6 – Bi-monthly check against Evaluation submission to be made thereafter by DWM and submitted to CWT:
 - i) If agreed metrics not being met, proposals to improve or reposition approach to be submitted to CWT and HoC for approval. Without a plan to be submitted in this case, channel will be removed by CWT.

1. Overall rationale

- a. What are your overall communications objectives?

- b. What are the communications objectives you are seeking to meet through use of Social Media?

- c. Have you considered whether your aims can be achieved through earned space on existing channels rather than establishing a new one?

- d. What channels do you wish to use and why?

- e. Who are your target audience?

- f. How is this audience currently being communicated with?

- g. How will social media improve relations with this audience?

- h. Do you have a generic mailbox with which to register your channels?

- i. What are the prospective channel names, and are they available?

2. Content & strategy

- a. What type of content will be promoted on the channel? Images, links, videos, events, polls etc

- b. What are the aims of your content strategy? E.g. increased visits to site, sign-ups for a campaign etc

- c. What will be the frequency of content and how will you plan this?

d. How do you intend to interact with your audience to generate conversation and community?

e. How will the Welsh and English language pages be related?

f. What will the tone of voice be throughout?

3. Ownership

a. What is the anticipated life of the channel?

b. Please give details of responsibility for the channel, breaking down overall ownership, content creation, moderation and interaction roles?

c. How will responsibility be shared over weekends? It's important to ensure that inappropriate content is not left on the channel overnight.

d. Will there be resilience in place to ensure that the channel is always maintained? Give details

e. How will the channel's administrator be presented? (organisation, individual?)

4. Promotion

a. How will the channel be promoted?

b. What other channels will you use to promote the channel? Include details of planned co-operation with partner/stakeholder organisations.

c. How will you focus on your audience as opposed to focussing on your organisation?

5. Evaluation

- a. What targets will be set to quantify success/ROI?

- b. How often will targets be reviewed to see if they are being met?

- c. What action will be taken in the event of targets not being met?

- d. How will you evaluate whether or not you have a devoted and enthusiastic community?