

GSS STATISTICAL POLICY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes

Thursday 7 July 2016

UK Statistics Authority, Drummond Gate, London

Present

Tricia Dodd	Chair
Mike Batley	Health
Pete Brodie	ONS
Rob Bumpstead	UKSA (guest for item 6)
Joe Cuddeford	UKSA
Steve Ellerd-Elliott	Justice
David Fry	Communities and Local Government
Johanna Hutchinson	UKSA (guest for item 5)
Tim Knight	Work and Pensions
Will Laffan	UKSA (guest for item 7 and 8)
Richard Laux	UKSA (guest for item 5)
Martin Ralphs	ONS (guest for item 7)
Rob Reeve	Secretariat
Markus Sova	Secretariat
Jennet Woolford	ONS

Observers

Victoria Leadbetter	UKSA
---------------------	------

Apologies

Pam Davies	ONS
Roger Halliday	Scottish Government

1. Welcome, minutes and matters arising

1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. The following updates were made.

- i. This was to be Tricia's last SPSC meeting, the Committee was notified that the chair successor was yet to be appointed. The Committee would be kept up to date with developments.
- ii. Tom Knight (deputy HoP of MoD) would join the Committee as a member at the next meeting.
- iii. Welcome to the observer (Victoria), members were reminded they could bring observers to future meetings provided they let Rob Reeve know in advance.
- iv. Tricia was due to meet the National Statistician to discuss GDS following an action of the previous meeting.

2. Actions arising from the last meeting

2.1 All actions of the previous meeting were complete or in hand.

3. Points arising from Summary Reports from Sub-Committees

3.1 Markus Sova provided the Committee with update of the SPSC sub-committees.

- i. Business Register Group – the last meeting was in April, the Joined up business index (JUBI) alpha phase had been completed and was now in pre beta enhancement phase.
- ii. Methodology Advisory Committee – the last meeting was in May, the since the meeting the methodology symposium had taken place which was noted to be well attended and had some of profile speakers.
- iii. National Statistics Harmonisation Group – the group was commissioning a GSS business harmonisation task and finish group. Those interested to join should contact Charlie Wroth-Smith.
- iv. Presentation and Dissemination Committee – the PDC were rolling out a *discovery* phase on the dissemination of Government statistics. The work was in collaboration with GDS and GSS departments.
- v. The Committee discussed compendiums, the discontinuation of social trends and how the space now sits with digital dissemination for edited digest of social statistics.
- vi. Regional and Geography Committee – the Committee had not had a meeting since November, a recap on the April report was provided. It was noted that the evolving devolution agendas will have implications for the production and dissemination of sub-national statistics, including increasing demand for regional and local data.
- vii. The European Statistical System Committee will vote on plans to extend to the NUTS regulation to formalise classification and typologies used by the European Commission in September. While Brexit might change things on a legal perspective the definitions will remain.
- viii. Statistical Services Committee – the Committee's last meeting was in April and currently in a transitional period awaiting Guy Goodwin's replacement.

4. Quality Champion Workplan

4.1 Mike Batley presented a paper on the Quality Champion Group workplan. The meeting heard the background of the work carried out by the group and the push to improve quality through analytical insight. It was noted that the work of statisticians is varied

and fluid and there was a need to encourage the GSS to work flexibly and in accordance with the latest best practice.

- 4.2 The meeting heard that following a quality champion's network meeting a list of things to consider and future priorities was developed. The meeting was invited to suggest the size and scope of the future work the quality champions should undertake, the following suggestions were made.
- i. Continue to encourage the engagement of quality assurance with focus on making sure the basics are imbedded and ensuring quality assurance evidence is provided before statistical sign off.
 - ii. Revisit the definitions of quality – ensure that quality is not diluted by the demand for timely (perhaps incomplete/unready) data.
 - iii. Provide examples to show how the quality of statistics influences many aspects of government to hit home value.
 - iv. Get involved with the Authority's quality review process and perhaps take part in presentations.
 - v. Create quality flying squads to address short term issues across the GSS and to promote good practice.
 - vi. Encourage informal peer review of quality, e.g. Program sharing.
 - vii. Build on the workshops that the Good Practice Team have done and include the quality champion messages.
- 4.3 The meeting discussed how the quality champion's network should have a mandate to implement a standardised toolkit and get quality champions to interact with other departments. It was noted that the quality landscape comprised of a number of initiatives such as: Quality champions, NSQRs, regular QRs, GPT, M&A and the methodology review. Clarity around these initiatives related would be helpful. It was suggested that HoPs also have a role here to push support and ensure the topic did not drift.

5. Code of Practice stocktake

- 5.1 Richard Laux updated the Committee on the Code of Practice stocktake. The stocktake aimed to look at responses from user engagement across the GSS last year and how it functions in the current statistical landscape eight years after publication.
- 5.2 The Committee heard that the stocktake's five emerging themes had led to a formal review of the Code.
- i. Clarity of Scope – broadening the scope of the official statistics banner.
 - ii. Engage with digital age.
 - iii. Adding value - build trust and increase public value of statistics.
 - iv. Assessment - trade off of quality and timeliness.
 - v. Bring the code to life - use case studies to explain content of the Code.
- 5.3 It was noted that version two of the Code would be developed over the summer and could be signed off in autumn 2016 following a formal consultation. Some suggestions of what version two of the code would include were as follows:
- i. increased focus on value and trustworthiness through collaboration between Independent Regulation and Evaluation Office (IREO), Regulation and Authority Board;
 - ii. consider the declassification of some National Statistics with less public value; and
 - iii. deeper dives into the monitoring and assessment of methodology.
- 5.4 The Committee discussed the proposed review and made the following comments:

- i. Would there be any risk of losing useful sections of the code?
- ii. What is the plan to persuade the board to subscribe to the proposed changes?
- iii. The key principles should stay the same as they still stand up.
- iv. There have been cultural and technological changes since the Code had been written, the statistical community is now more mature and the Code is well embedded. Decisions to change the Code should be thoroughly considered before making adjustments.

6. National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee

- 6.1 Rob Bumpstead introduced the work of the National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee (NSDEC). The meeting noted the Committee had been in operation for over a year. Although most work had come in from ONS and GSS, NSDEC had recently undertaken projects from the Welsh and Scottish Government, and projects external to the public sector. A key driver to formation of the Committee was to increase public assurance in the context of data sharing between departments and new/ innovative uses of data. The main aims of NSDEC were to ensure statistical projects are carried out in an ethical way and for the public good.
- 6.2 The meeting discussed how new challenges have arisen from the increased use of data and increased public scrutiny around data ethics it had brought. Teams that had taken projects to NSDEC for ethical consideration felt that the Committee added value and offered a degree of challenge without providing a tick box exercise.
- 6.3 The meeting discussed how NSDEC is currently not mandatory. A concern was raised around projects that had not requested ethical advice and subsequently caused issues. It was noted that if any projects are contentious the National Statistician should be informed.
- 6.4 Other ethics committees were operating across the GSS, it was suggested that NSDEC should link up to integrate and share perspectives. It was noted that NSDEC has a board range of backgrounds within the Committee and had also been collaborating with GDS as well as the Turing Institute.
- 6.5 Members of SPSC were invited to inform their own departments of NSDEC and were welcomed to bring any project to the Committee if they wished to gain ethical advice. The meeting noted that the NSDEC could benefit from further promotion. Ian Cope offered to write a blog on the GSS website to spread awareness.

Action: Ian Cope to write a blog on NSDEC and post on the GSS website.

7. Policies, Standard and Guidance

- 7.1 Martin Ralphs provided the Committee with an update on the Policies, Standards and Guidance: Task and Finish Group. The meeting heard that four of the seven tasks that the group had set out in the terms of reference were completed; the remaining three tasks would be completed as the online policy portfolio (policy store) goes live.
- 7.2 The next step for the group was to audit a prioritised list of policies and gradually upload them to the policy store. The meeting acknowledged that the remit of the group was to manage GSS wide policies; therefore policies may require adaptation to be fully relevant to particular departments, with help from colleagues across the GSS.
- 7.3 The Committee welcomed the update from the T&FG and endorsed the governance on policies and new policy store that was proposed. The meeting raised a concern around how the policies will be prioritised for review and availability of resource to take

on the work. It was noted that policy owners/ authors will be informed of the review of policies and the appropriate person will be responsible provide an updated version or recommend retirement of the policy if applicable. CPS would orchestrate the necessary work.

- 7.4 The Committee queried on the next steps of the task and finish group's work, comments included:
- i. How will policies on the store be easily identifiable, will topics overlap and how will the key words be implemented for indexing?
 - ii. What will be the process to review the policies once the policy store is live and who will be responsible?
 - iii. Should there be a prioritisation of policies to be reviewed and how will policies be archived if they are out of date?

8. Data Policies Update

- 8.1 Will Laffan provided an update of the work undertaken on the ONS data policies review. The objective of this work was to increase use of the methods and processes encouraging: compliance with the code, ethical values and using best practice.
- 8.2 The meeting heard that the data policies page on the GSS website was in the final stage of integration for disclosure control, providing supplementary information and permitting access for research. The data policies page would be published the following week. It was noted that data sharing, especially out of ONS, will have to be approved; the example of the enhanced business register was used.
- 8.3 The Committee discussed whether this work will have a knock on effect in other government departments as the work undertaken was primarily carried out by the ONS. The Committee requested prior sighting of the page before publication to provide comment.

Action: Will Laffan to share the a link with the Committee on the data policies work

9. AOB

- 9.1 The Committee discussed the future meetings and forward agenda. It was noted that the Secretariat would provide the dates and locations as well coordinate items on the agenda for future meetings. Items on the implications of Brexit and a deep dive on the harmonisation group's workplan were agreed for the next meeting.

Action: Secretariat to plan future dates of meetings until the end of 2017

- 9.2 The meeting agreed that members of the Committee should be rotated every three years or so (one member rotating every other meeting). It was noted that someone from the devolved administrators should always be on the Committee.
- 9.3 The next meeting was to take place at Drummond Gate on 18 October.

Actions table

Actionee	Action	Progress
Ian Cope	To write a blog on NSDEC and post on the GSS website.	In progress
Will Laffan	To share the a link with the Committee on the data policies work	Complete – Link shared
Secretariat	To plan future dates of meetings until the end of 2017	Complete – Invitations to meeting have been sent up to July 2017