

National Statistics Harmonisation Group Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Wednesday 23rd September 2015 at 11:00 to 1330 hrs
Followed by the Annual NSHG Workshop at 1400 hrs
Meeting Room 3, at ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ

	Timing	Agenda Item	Paper No	Presenter
1	1100 – 1110 hrs	Welcome and Introductions		Emma Wright
2	1110 – 1115 hrs	Review of Previous Minutes and Actions	The June NSHG Meeting was cancelled. Minutes from the March Meeting and reports from the cancelled June meeting were circulated. No comments were received.	Emma Wright
3	1115 – 1140 hrs	a) GSS SPSC Meeting Report	Verbal Update	Emma Wright
		b) Review of NSHG Workplan	NSHG (15:3) 13	Mark Herniman
		c) Update on Business Harmonisation	Verbal Update	Palvi Shah
		d) Update on Admin Data Harmonisation	Verbal Update	Becki Aquilina
		e) Update on Good Practice Team Work and Harmonisation	NSHG (15:3) 14	Martin Ralphs
4	1140 – 1200 hrs	The ESS Peer Review and Implications for Harmonisation (20 min)	Presentation	Emma Wright / Andy Bates
5	1200 – 1210 hrs	New IESS Framework (10 min)	NSHG (15:3) 15	Sean White
6	1210 – 1220 hrs	Admin Data Quality Assurance (10 min)	Presentation	Jonathan Swan
7	1220 – 1230 hrs	Revised NSHG Terms of Reference (10 min)	NSHG (15:3) 16	Mark Herniman
8	1230 – 1315 hrs	NSHG Topic Group Updates	NSHG (15:3) 17	Topic Group Leads
		Benefits and Tax Credits	No Report Received	Thomas Sims
		Consumer Durables	Nothing to Report for this Period	Jana Kubascikova-Mullen
		Country of Birth & Migration	Nothing to Report for this Period	Pamela Spicer
		Crime & Anti Social Behaviour	Report Received	Fiona Aitchison
		Demographic Information	Report Received	Emily Knipe
		Economic Activity	No Topic Lead at Present	TBC
		Education	Report Received	Karen Woolgar
		EILR	Report Received	Angela Potter-Collins
		Health, Disability and Carers	Report Received	Steven Webster
		Housing and Tenure	Nothing to Report for this Period	Rob Green
		Income	Nothing to Report for this Period	Richard Tonkin
Pensions	Report Received	Tim Gibbs		
9	1315 – 1325 hrs	AOB		Emma Wright
10	1325 – 1330 hrs	Next Meetings	Wednesday 9 th December 2015, between 1100 - 1330 hrs, ONS, Drummond Gate Office, London Wednesday 9 th March 2016, between 1100 - 1330 hrs, ONS, Drummond Gate Office, London	Emma Wright



National Statistics Harmonisation Group

NSHG Work Plan – September 2015

Executive Summary

1. The Harmonisation programme involves the harmonisation of survey questions, concepts, classifications and outputs in order to make survey results more comparable. This paper is regularly presented to the NSHG and summarises the harmonisation initiatives currently in progress together with an overview of the current work programme.
2. **Annex A** contains a table summarising the terms of reference for the group and progress against the activities from the last meeting, the main items of progress being reported below.

Current Work Programme

3. NSHG Terms of Reference

4. **Harmonisation Web pages** – The new look Harmonisation pages have now been published on the ONS website. The Harmonised Principles have been updated as the majority of them were still titled 'Harmonised Standard'. It was previously agreed these should now be referred to as 'Harmonised Principles'. Each of the Harmonised Principles has now been gone through and the term has now been changed, including anywhere it appeared in the main text of the document. The A-Z of Harmonised Principles has been updated to reflect this change as well and in future will only be available in soft copy, due to the expense of printing, unless there is a specific promotional need for hard copies.
5. **Sub topic groups** – There are now twelve topic groups reporting to the NSHG. In most cases, the work of these Topic Groups has been ongoing and the quarterly reports from these groups are presented at this meeting. A report has not been produced where the group has nothing to report for the reporting period. The current topic groups are:

- Benefits and Tax Credits
- Consumer Durables
- Country of Birth/Migration and Citizenship
- Crime and Anti Social Behaviour
- Demographic Information
- Economic Activity and Employment Status (no current topic lead)
- Educational Attainment
- Ethnicity, Identity, Language & Religion (EILR) and includes Sexual identity
- Health, Disability and Carers
- Housing and Tenure
- Income
- Pensions

Work is still progressing to produce the interim revised harmonised principle for this topic. The issue with the Social Fund question has been resolved and it was hoped the revised interim harmonised principle would be finalised and presented at the September NSHG meeting but this has not been possible.

A permanent lead for the Country of Birth, Migration and Citizenship topic group is still being sought, to take the work forward to produce the new harmonised principle covering this set of questions. In the meantime this is being looked after by a temporary lead.

After a long search a new lead is now in place for the Disability, Health and Carers topic group. Steve Webster from the Health & Social Care Information Centre has taken on the role and we welcome him to the NSHG. This topic group has been without a lead for just over two years.

A replacement lead is still being sought for the Economic Activity topic group. It has been suggested the new lead would come from either the Labour Force Survey, due to the LFS being the main measurement of employment and unemployment, or from the Labour Market Division within ONS. We would welcome any input from the membership on finding a suitable replacement.

A new lead is now in place for the Crime and Anti-social Behaviour topic group. Fiona Aitchison from the Crime Survey for England and Wales team at ONS has taken on this role and we welcome her to the NSHG.

Rob Green from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has replaced Hugh Mallinson as the DCLG representative on the NSHG and the topic lead for the Housing and Tenure topic group.

6. **Proposed Harmonisation Work** – Discussion are still taking place with the EHRC about guidance on best practise for defining ethnic minorities. As ONS currently has a style guide partly explaining this, it has been recommended to expand on this. When the proposal is finished it will be circulated around the NSHG to seek agreement and will eventually be included in the ONS Style Guide and on the ONS website for guidance.

We are still awaiting a response from the GSS SPSC with regard to how to proceed with the proposal by the ONS Measuring National Well-being programme for a fully harmonised principle for the suite of questions for Personal Well-being. Ordinarily the Harmonisation Process dictates what is required to do this but the Personal Well-being questions achieved National Statistics status in September 2014 and it is hoped that much of the process can be bypassed.

7. **UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank** – The Harmonisation Team continue to use and promote the use of the VQB. They recently had a meeting with Hersh Mann (UKDS), Louise Corti (UKDS) and Rob Dymond-Green at the University of Manchester to discuss 'Metadata Strategy and publication of ONS Harmonised variables' and to look at future improvements to the VQB; these included adding cognitive information, prominence, citations and version control using detailed metadata about questions providing the user with a greater experience and more information than previously presented. There are still ongoing issues with viewing all Census 2001/2011 questions on the VQB but we are working closely with the UK to resolve this.

<http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/variables>

8. **Raising the profile of Harmonisation and strengthening links** – The communication plan has been updated and aligned to the Steering Group communication plan. The quarterly newsletter has been revamped and circulated more widely. NSHG members have been reminded to think about how they can promote harmonisation within their department and to get in touch with their GSS Quality Champion (where one exists) to discuss how they can work together to promote harmonisation. Harmonisation Champions have been found for the following departments not represented on NSHG - HMRC, Health and Safety Executive and Office of Manpower Economics. The Harmonisation Team is meeting with Ed Humpherson (Director of Regulation at the UK Statistics Authority) and Statistics User Executive on 15 September to discuss harmonisation of UK statistics and has been reviewing some outputs undergoing National Statistics Assessment for compliance with harmonisation.

9. **Harmonisation Presentations/Roadshows** – Since the last meeting no roadshows/ presentations have taken place:

- Presentation to Statistical Development Group at Welsh Government - 10 June
- Presentations from Rachel Leeser (GLA)/Emma Emery (RSS), and James Gillan (NISRA) to the GSS Methodology Symposium - 1 July.

Future events planned are:

- Stand at GSS Conference - 17/18 Sept
- Presentation to ONS Business Statistics Microdata User Group - 18 Sept
- Stand and presentation to Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) London Network Event - 29 Sep
- Stand and discussion session at Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) North West Network Event - 14 Oct.

10. **NSH Steering Group** – The NSH SG met on 10th July and the meeting was mainly focused on the response to the ESS Peer Review; the report made 16 recommendations of which one is related to harmonisation. The Harmonisation team have produced a draft action plan to address the recommendation relating to harmonisation. Steve Ellerd-Elliott (MoJ) gave a harmonisation presentation to the HoPs meeting on 29th June: There was some discussion about why harmonisation is important, the impact of not harmonising and about the importance of comparability of statistics across the Devolved Administrations. Ed Humpherson sent Steve an email following on from the HoPs meeting to say that he would like the UK Statistics Authority assessments to highlight good practice as well as opportunities for further harmonisation. This meeting took place on 15th September.

The NSH SG then met on 10th September and agenda items were;

- Harmonisation Baseline document; produced in order to measure contact to and from users, to identify communication gaps and to increase contact over time.
- Governance of Business Harmonisation; the Steering Group suggested setting up a separate GSS FRIBS Task and Finish Group that include membership of various business user groups that have the authority to agree harmonised business principles and definitions. Once agreed it was suggested the principles are formally ratified by the GSS SPSC and HoPs.
- the NSH SG Communication Plan was discussed and further tactics were suggested
- Legal Entity Identifiers (LEIs); LEI's are derived and managed by the Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation. LEIs are a 20 digit alphanumeric code based on the ISO 17442 standard. The plan is that every business in the world would have LEIs and be registered. The Steering Group discussed the UK position on LEIs
- Draft action plan to address the ESS Peer Review Recommendations; some suggestions were made to be added to the action plan
- a presentation was given by Jon Johnson (Centre for Longitudinal Studies) and Louise Corti (UKDS) on how we can use the VQB further

The next meeting is expected to be in six months time

11. **Harmonising Business Statistics** – The Harmonisation Team will be working closely with ONS Data Collection Methodology (DCM) colleagues to harmonise business survey questions where possible on the Electronic Data Collection (EDC) programme over the next four years, now that the order of roll-out has been agreed. The Team has also been asked to facilitate a Working Group to coordinate ONS business surveys' move to a harmonised set of variables in line with Eurostat's Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics (FRIBS). The first meeting is on 12 October. The governance structure required for the formalisation of harmonised business statistics is under discussion.

12. **Harmonising Administrative Data** - The Harmonisation team are talking to a range of users to understand how we can influence harmonisation of administrative data. We are currently involved in the following groups/forums:

- Income admin topic group
- Health admin topic group
- Admin Data Requirements (ADR) Census Integrated Project Team (IPT)
- Admin Data Group User Forum
- Admin Data Collection (ADC) Census IPT
- Address Registers Census IPT

The team are planning on attending the Health Data Linkage workshop and conducting some admin data research using the ADRN. Emma Wright is the Admin data Champion for Methodology and the first meeting was held in July.

13. **Research** - The Harmonisation Team is developing some case studies to demonstrate the quantitative benefits of harmonisation - looking at examples of where harmonisation has been successful and also where it could have helped. The Team has also conducted some analysis to compare the harmonised inputs, outputs and interviewer instructions that exist, to identify the gaps and possible reasons for them. The Team will be contacting Topic Leads for further advice.

14. **Harmonisation and Social Media** - The harmonisation team are still active members of StatsUserNet and the GSS blog, but are looking for suitable articles to publish. An article has been planned to promote the upcoming uploading of 2001 and 2011 Census variables onto the VQB. It is planned that the Classifications and Harmonisation Unit will publish an article relating to their work once a fortnight. If members have harmonisation related work to promote or publicise please contact the harmonisation team.

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Annex A
NSHG Workplan – Review September 2015

Term of Reference			
1. To provide strategic direction for the design, development and maintenance of common statistical frames, definitions and classification for Statistics			
Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
Research project – Administrative sources A-Z of Harmonised Principles Harmonisation Web-pages Harmonisation Strategy and Implementation Plan NSHG Workshop NSH SG Business Harmonisation	June 2015 The A-Z of Harmonised Principles has undergone a very minor change to the way the document is indexed. It has been agreed that due to the cost of printing this will now only be available in soft format via the Harmonisation pages on the ONS website. The National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group will meet on the 10 th July 2015 to discuss the European Peer Review and how it can be used to promote harmonisation. The report from the Business Statistics Harmonisation Workshop has now been distributed to the workshop attendees and NSHG members.	September 2015 The published Harmonised Principles have been checked and corrected to ensure the term 'standard' has been replaced with 'principle' and some errors were noticed. The National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group met on the 10 th July 2015 and again on the 10 th September 2015. The next meeting will be in six months time. The Terms of Reference for the NSHG have undergone a minor revision to update stakeholder details and some content. These will be presented at the September NSHG meeting for agreement.	Harmonisation Team NSH SG Harmonisation Team
Term of Reference			
2. To be responsible for setting harmonised principles			
Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
NSHG Topic Sub Groups NSHG workshop to identify, review and prioritise harmonised standards	June 2015 The interim revised harmonised principle for Benefits and Tax Credits should be ready for the 23 rd September 2015 NSHG meeting. Topic leads for the Health, Disability and Carers and the Economic Activity Groups are still being sought. We have had a change of topic lead for the Housing and Tenure topic group (Rob Green replacing Hugh Mallinson).	September 2015 The interim revised harmonised principle for Benefits and Tax Credits will not now be ready for the 23 rd September 2015 NSHG meeting. Topic lead for Health Disability & Carers is now in place. New topic lead for Crime & Anti-social Behaviour has taken over the lead.	NSHG Topic Lead NSHG NSHG

Term of Reference			
3. To oversee the development of guidance to support the National Statistician’s Guidance on the CoP			
Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank will support the CoP by directing survey designers towards Harmonised Principles	<p>June 2015</p> <p>Arrangements still need to be put in place to add the 2001 and 2011 Census questions to be added to the VQB.</p>	<p>September 2015</p> <p>There are still ongoing issues with viewing all Census 2001/2011 questions on the VQB but we are working closely with the UK to resolve this. Users are guided towards this a source of harmonised</p> <p>The Harmonisation Team continue to use and promote the use of the VQB. A meeting was recently held at the University of Manchester to discuss 'Metadata Strategy and publication of GSS Harmonised variables' and to look at future improvements to the VQB</p>	<p>Harmonisation Team</p> <p>Harmonisation Team</p>
Term of Reference			
4. To be responsible for encouraging compliance to the Code of Practice			
Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
<p>UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank will support the CoP by directing survey designers towards Harmonised Principles</p> <p>Roadshows</p> <p>Harmonisation web-pages</p> <p>A-Z produced</p> <p>StatsUserNet community</p> <p>StatNet/GSSnet publications</p> <p>Other targeted articles (3Moons etc)</p>	<p>June 2015</p> <p>The Harmonisation Team will present to the Statistical Development Group at the Welsh Government 10th June 2015.</p> <p>Harmonisation related topics will be presented to the GSS Methodology Symposium on 1st July 2015.</p> <p>The issues with access for non GSI members of the NSHG to the NSHG meeting papers have now been resolved - these are no longer behind a password protected area of the GSS website.</p>	<p>September 2015</p> <p>The Harmonisation Team will present to the Local Area Research & Intelligence Association on the 29th September (London Network) and the 14th October (North West Network)</p> <p>The Harmonisation Team will have a stand at the GSS Conference taking place 17th to 18th September.</p> <p>The GSS website continues to be the main site for the promulgation of Agenda, papers and minutes for the NSHG meetings.</p>	<p>Harmonisation Team</p> <p>Harmonisation Team</p> <p>NSHG Secretariat</p>

Term of Reference
5. To act as a board for new and/or cross-cutting harmonisation projects

Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
<p>NSHG Topic Sub Groups NSHG Workshop Business Harmonisation Workshop Watching brief of Beyond 2011 administrative data and data linkage as future harmonised topic groups. Watching brief on future harmonisation topics: Alcoholic Consumption as part of the Health, Disability and Carers, Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS).</p>	<p>June 2015</p> <p>Further work on the harmonised definition for ethnic minorities is continuing and when completed will be distributed to the NSHG for comment and agreement.</p> <p>The business Statistics Workshop took place on 26th February 2015 and was well attended. It is hoped this will help to 'kick-start' and take forward the harmonisation of business statistics.</p>	<p>September 2015</p> <p>Work is still continuing on the harmonised definition for ethnic minorities and will be distributed to the NSHG for comment and agreement when complete.</p> <p>The Harmonisation Team will present to the ONS Business Statistics Microdata User Group on 18th September.</p> <p>The NSHG Workshop will follow the NSHG meeting on 23rd September. The theme for this year's workshop is 'The Roles and Responsibilities of NSHG Members and Design Setting'.</p>	<p>NSHG Topic Lead / Karen Hurrell</p> <p>Harmonisation Team</p> <p>Harmonisation Team</p>

Term of Reference
6. To promote the use of harmonised standards for collecting and reporting statistics, and ensure that user needs are met

Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
<p>Promote use of UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank Harmonisation Web-Pages A-Z of Harmonised Principles Promotional material and articles Harmonisation Roadshows Harmonisation in-box StatsUserNet community StatNet/GSSnet</p>	<p>June 2015</p> <p>There have been a steady number of queries received in the Harmonisation in-box since the last report. Topics include; Disability, Crime/Fear of Crime, Language, Health, National Identity, Ethnicity, Sexual Identity and Equality Monitoring</p>	<p>September 2015</p> <p>There have been 10 queries received into the Harmonisation In-box. These include queries on the following topics: Employment Status, Ethnic Classifications, EU & International Statistical Systems, Long-lasting Illness, Symbols in Tables, Gender Identity, Job Vacancy Statistics, and Ordering of Gender Categories.</p> <p>The harmonisation team are still active members of StatsUserNet and the GSS blog, but are looking for suitable articles to publish. If members have harmonisation related work to promote or publicise please contact the harmonisation team.</p>	<p>Harmonisation Team</p> <p>Harmonisation Team</p>



National Statistics Harmonisation Group

Good Practice Team Update - June to August 2015

Introduction

This paper provides a short update on Good Practice Team activities relating to harmonisation.

The Good Practice Team was set up in 2013 to work across GSS departments in promoting good practice in the production and dissemination of statistics. Our priority areas at present are communication of statistical information, working with users and the GSS data strategy. We are keen to support harmonised approaches and raise awareness of resources with GSS colleagues. The team is happy to work with the Committee to disseminate information across the GSS and feed back issues that colleagues raise with us.

Note on recent activities

There is little to report for the Good Practice Team this period in respect of harmonisation. The noteworthy items are:

1. The regular meetings with ONS Harmonisation, Quality Centre and Monitoring and Assessment continue to be a valuable resource in sharing information and exchanging ideas.
2. The GPT are continuing to work with the Royal Statistical Society around user engagement issues. We have set up a series of joint seminars in October looking at best practice in online communication of statistics. This could be an opportunity to promote harmonisation work or to raise awareness.
3. We are following Full Fact's [investigation](#) (see link below) of the type of contextual information that statistics need in order to be meaningful and used correctly. This may influence any updates made to our [guidance](#) (see link below) on the use of spreadsheets for presenting statistical data, published in October 2014.

Links:

'investigation' - https://fullfact.org/blog/2015/aug/typology_of_caveats-47373

'guidance' - <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/statistics/presentation-and-dissemination/releasing-statistics-spreadsheets/>

Nick Woodhil
GSS Central Team/SPPC
2nd September 2015



National Statistics Harmonisation Group

The New Integrated European Social Statistics Framework

Introduction

The United Kingdom is faced with a changing landscape in terms of the collection and delivery of social statistics to the European Commission (EC) over the next ten years. Much of the direction of change will come through the development of a new framework regulation covering social statistics from the EC that seeks to modernise the suite of social statistics collected by member states to better enable increased responsiveness to user needs, quality and efficiency. This is part of a wider modernisation programme for social statistics from the European Commission. The new framework regulation is referred to as Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) and presents a number of concerns for the UK in terms of the implications for increased burden in our statistical system.

Since April 2014, work has commenced in drawing up a framework regulation for an integrated system of social surveys. The scope includes not only the main pillars Labour Force Survey (LFS) and EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), but also the health requirements from EHIS (European Health Interview Survey), a time use survey (TUS), HBS (Household Budget Survey), AES (Adult Education Survey). The framework regulation refers to data sources and principles for statistics production, but does not include detailed variables or methodological issues that are instead dealt with through delegated or implementing acts.

The aim is to finalise discussions of the new framework regulation in 2015 through Directors of Social Statistics (DSS) meetings so that the framework regulation can be brought to the ESSC in late 2015, or more likely early 2016, before it goes to the Commission for adoption. Eurostat realistically expect lengthy discussions at the Council and the European Parliament so do not expect that it will be in place before 2018 (with the first year of data collection in 2019).

In all, three framework regulations are envisaged as part of the European Commissions' Modernisation Programme for Social Statistics. The first framework regulation (IESS – Integrated European Social Statistics) is the subject of this note and is designed to provide a unified legal base for the existing social microdata collections while enabling the future integration and improvements foreseen under the modernisation programme. IESS would also create a legal base for two existing surveys which are currently produced under 'gentlemen's agreement', the Household Budget Survey and the Time Use Survey.

The second framework regulation would cover population statistics including population and housing censuses, and the third framework regulation would cover the administratively-based statistics and accounts.

Timetable

The modernisation programme for social statistics allows for a stepwise approach moving forward in parallel in several areas. The following key phases and milestones can be identified:

Until IESS regulation is adopted	Transitional period: work on timeliness of SILC information, on deprivation indicators, on availability of poverty and social exclusion data at the regional level and of flows data for the labour market
2014-2017	<p>For social microdata collections: improvements to existing social microdata collections including joint plannings, standardized definitions and variables and harmonised quality criteria; development of IESS framework regulation and implementing measures and methodological developments for streamlining of social surveys.</p> <p>In parallel:</p> <p>Continuation of work on the use of administrative data including big data</p> <p>Preparation for 2021 Census, including adoption of new implementing measures under Regulation 763/2008.</p> <p>Methodological developments for post-2021 censuses and harmonisation of population definitions.</p>
2015	Consultation of ESSC on IESS
Q4 2015 or Q1 2016	Adoption of Commission proposal for IESS
2017 or 2018	Adoption of IESS by European Parliament and Council, with adoption of implementing measures by Commission shortly afterwards.
2020 onwards	Adoption by European Parliament and Council of a second framework regulation to support a new approach to continuous collection of population and census data based on harmonised definitions; and of a third framework regulation to cover mainly administratively based aggregated data collections and accounts

Implications for the UK – risks and opportunities

Opportunities

Many of the ideas behind the European vision and the plans for social surveys are favoured by the UK. The European policy agenda is evolving and it is important that social surveys meet emerging needs. To achieve this the EC is attempting to establish closer links between education and labour market statistics and to move towards the development of health information and improving timeliness of poverty and inequality data. Standardisation, simplification and harmonisation are also goals. The review of questions which will challenge existing demands and make room for items that are currently more policy relevant is in line with UK aims. The greater use of modularisation which would reduce work on the current system of ad hoc modules would provide benefits.

Core Social Variables

Core Social Variables are variables that are to be included in all social surveys. After the changes agreed by the DSS in 2013, there are currently 14 Core Social Variables (sex, age completed,

country of birth, country of citizenship, de facto marital status, household composition, country of residence, region of residence, degree of urbanisation, self-declared labour status, occupation in employment, status in employment, economic sector in employment, educational attainment). However, Eurostat is currently undertaking methodological work for three possible additional variables related to income, health and disability. The inclusion of these variables on surveys covered by IESS presents potential issues of increased burden on respondents and on the constituent surveys (most notably LFS). The positive side is that they would increase the range of data that could be available for users, for example DH and other health statistics customers including in the devolved administrations.

Risks

Although many of the principles within the regulation are acceptable for the UK, the potential additional costs on the UK Government and devolved administrations are most unwelcome and we are continuing to challenge Eurostat on the need for burdensome additional requirements.

There is also a lack of clarity on the timetable for much of the work. This is potentially a large wide ranging project with the expectation from Eurostat that much of it will be ready for implementation in 2018 or 2019. This is likely to put a huge resource strain on social surveys both in finance and capability.

ONS is also concerned about the possible increase in burden on social surveys. Response rates have been falling in recent years so ONS is against any increase in length of the survey. Although Eurostat aim to remove some questions and ask others less frequently to make room for new variables there is a danger that the UK might not be able to do this where there are national needs for variables. Moreover the main aim of the LFS is for labour market variables. The UK is concerned about increasing the scope for example in adding health and income variables.

Implications for the GSS/Devolved Administrations:

The work cuts across a number of the main policy departments such as DWP, DfE, DoH and devolved administrations as providers and is of keen interest to all members of the labour market theme group. This is a GSS problem not just an ONS one.

The UK believes that there are strong arguments for reducing costs and burden on NSIs in the proposals. We believe that this can be achieved without impacting on the stated aims of the modernisation of social statistics programme (indeed it can enhance them) and continuing through to the Europe 2020 Vision.

Some of the key areas of concern for the UK are listed below:

- The inclusion of income and health variables on the LFS – this is likely to increase burden and could impact on response rates;
- Reduction in the number of annual variables collected on LFS and EU-SILC is mentioned as a positive move towards reducing burden, but these annual variables may be particularly valued by national users so would need to be retained in the data collection;
- Proposed precision requirements for SILC and LFS could result in significant costs to increase sample size.
- Timeliness requirements for SILC in terms of data transmission deadlines will be difficult for the UK to achieve;

- Inclusion of HBS and TUS which are currently covered by gentlemen agreement will be costly for the UK, this is particularly true for the Time Use Survey;
- There is concern over the use and scope of delegated acts in the draft framework regulation – particularly in relation to data transmission, periodicity and changes to detailed topics. It is important to ensure that the EC does not have the power to change such elements of the IESS regulation without due consultation with member states;
- Discussions at Working Group level have been limited and have not fully discussed the modules and variables to be included (in particular at EU-SILC and LFS working groups). This raises concerns about the proposed timetable;

Issues for Discussion

- To raise awareness of the IESS Regulation and update the group on the latest version of the Regulation which is being discussed at a DSS meeting on 16th September (this was not available at the time of writing this paper)

Next Steps

- IESS Impact Assessment consultation to be completed by end of September
- DSS meeting 16/17th September – potentially the final version of the IESS Regulation before going to the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) in November or early 2016.

Sean White

Public Policy Division ONS

Date 01/09/2015



National Statistics Harmonisation Group

Revised National Statistics Harmonisation Group Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) were last updated in December 2011. Since then there have been changes to government department member names, changes to the governance of the NSHG and changes to the ONS directorate responsible for the Harmonisation Team. In addition to this and as the NSHG tasking has grown additional sections from the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics are now relevant to the work of the NSHG.

Issues for Discussion

The NSHG TOR has now been revised to include current government department membership names and to reflect the changes in the governance for the NSHG. The additional relevant sections from the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics have also been included in the TOR. The TOR is attached to this cover paper and members are asked to read the revised TOR with a view to agreeing it.

Next Steps

The NSHG is asked to formally agree the revised Terms of Reference. If no comments are received by 07 October 2015, it shall be assumed that members are content with the revised TOR. The TOR will then be published on the GSS website.

**NSHG Secretariat
Harmonisation Team
ONS**

September 2015



DRAFT Sep 2015 - National Statistics Harmonisation Group Terms of Reference

1. Remit of the National Statistics Harmonisation Group is to:

- provide strategic direction for the design, development and maintenance of common statistical frames, definitions, inputs and outputs for statistics. Within this, where appropriate, to provide options which recognise the requirements of different modes of data collection, different statistical systems and data needs and the differing requirements of the countries of the UK
- be responsible for agreeing and developing harmonised principles. Once agreed, all proposed harmonised principles to be forwarded to the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) and then the Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) for formal ratification
- promote and monitor the use of harmonised principles for collecting and reporting statistics that meet priority user needs, via NS harmonisation web-pages, the ONS Web Data Access Project, UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank and cross-government meetings/committees
- encourage compliance to the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (relevant sections detailed in **Annex A**)
- encourage compliance to the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics (relevant sections detailed in **Annex B**)
- act as a board for new and/or cross-cutting harmonisation projects
- report to the GSS SPSC on progress of harmonisation and any potential difficulties and sensitivities

2. Key objectives for the National Statistics Harmonisation Group are to:

- ensure an evidence based and collaborative approach to harmonised principles, based on high level of engagement between producers, users and other key stakeholders of statistics
- help producers and users to understand the best question to use in specific circumstances
- shape and support the development of a harmonisation strategy within National Statistics
- provide a corporate strategic direction for the development and use of harmonisation, and harmonised principles, recognising that varying statistical systems are in place across the UK and helping producers and users to understand the issues around the differences between constituent countries
- provide a corporate insight to the programme of harmonisation
- ensure support is given to the development of excellence in harmonisation, best practice and a coordinated approach to harmonisation
- ensure that harmonised principles and products take account of differing needs across the four UK nations with an overall aim of producing coherent and harmonised statistics across the administrations
- ensure National Statistics' business areas have the appropriate harmonised principles and infrastructure to conduct their work
- ensure harmonisation is recognised and included as a key element in the statistical process
- ensure that harmonised principles and products meet customers' priority needs and are delivered effectively
- develop and support guidance on use of harmonised principles in line with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice

- identify all relevant stakeholders for the planning/development of harmonised principles; monitoring the use of development and consultation plans to help ensure project milestones are met; costs/benefits considered; definition of user requirements is fit for purpose
- guide the processes, covering the identification, planning and development of new/revised harmonised principles as shown at **Annex C**

3. **The National Statistics Harmonisation Group is responsible for providing advice and guidance on:**

- shaping and implementing the strategy for harmonisation
- helping to shape the overall programme of harmonisation work
- corporate priorities affecting the work programme
- championing harmonisation widely within members' Departments, Devolved Administrations and business areas
- working with the Devolved Administrations and other National Statistics' business areas to ensure collaborations and communications are clearly defined and coordinated
- liaising with external and internal service providers, including professional organisations and international bodies, so that the partnerships are clearly defined and coordinated

4. **Outcomes**

- Clear strategic direction for the development and use of harmonisation.
- Every effort made to maintain an on-going list of stakeholders
- High level of buy-in from across the GSS and external stakeholders for the harmonisation agenda and harmonised principles
- Well focused programme of work which fulfils the vision and supports National Statistics strategic objectives.
- Improved coherence and integrated approach to the use of harmonised principles and relevant methodologies.
- Consistent corporate approaches and methods.
- High quality and responsive harmonisation service.
- A robust base to underpin all National Statistics.
- Best practice in use of harmonised principles and sound underpinning in terms of statistical methods.
- ONS, Devolved Administrations, Government Departments and business areas having an appropriate harmonisation infrastructure.
- Increased use of harmonised principles across data sources, including administrative sources.

5. **Meetings**

- The National Statistics Harmonisation Group will meet four times per year, or as necessary.

6. **Reporting**

- The National Statistics Harmonisation Group will report to the GSS SPSC.
- The National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group will provide working level guidance and direction.
- The GSS SPSC and then the HoPs will ratify the harmonised principles agreed by the NSHG. The ONS Harmonisation Team will coordinate the ratification process and escalate any conflicts in decisions.

7. Associated boards/groups/projects/external organisations linked to the NSHG

- Harmonisation topic groups
- Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) revision
- Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) revision
- International:
 - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe;
 - Eurostat.
- Member Government Departments and Devolved Administrations
- Themed Working Groups

8. Membership

Members representing the following Government Departments, Devolved Administrations and other interested bodies:

- Department for Business Innovation and Skills
- Department for Communities and Local Government
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Department for Education
- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
- Department for International Development
- Department for Transport
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department of Energy and Climate Change
- Department of Health
- Equalities and Human Rights Commission
- Home Office
- House of Commons Library
- Local Government Association
- Market Research Society
- Ministry of Justice
- National Health Service
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
- Social Research Association
- Scottish Government
- Welsh Government

Members representing the following ONS business areas:

- Data Collection Directorate
- Digital Services, Technology and Methodology Directorate
- Census Directorate
- Social and Analysis Directorate
- Survey Methodology and Statistical Computing Division (Chair).

List of Annexes

Annex A	Extracts from Statistical and Registration Services Act 2007
Annex B	Extracts from the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice
Annex C	Harmonisation Process Diagrams

Extracts from Statistical and Registration Services Act 2007

The following sub sections are directly taken from the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and are the most appropriately related to the work undertaken by the NSHG.

7. Objective

- (1) In the exercise of its functions under sections 8 to 21 the Board is to have the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good.
- (3) The Board is accordingly, in the exercise of its functions under sections 8 to 21, to promote and safeguard -
 - (a) the quality of official statistics,
 - (b) good practice in relation to official statistics, and
 - (c) the comprehensiveness of official statistics.
- (4) In this Part references to the quality of any official statistics includes -
 - (a) their impartiality, accuracy and relevance, and
 - (b) their coherence with other official statistics.

8. Monitoring and reporting of official statistics

- (1) The Board is to monitor the production and publication of official statistics.
- (2) The Board may report any concerns it has about -
 - (a) the quality of any official statistics,
 - (b) good practice in relation to any official statistics, or
 - (c) the comprehensiveness of any official statistics, to the person responsible for those statistics.

9. Definitions etc for official statistics

- (1) The Board is to -
 - (a) develop and maintain definitions, methodologies, classifications and principles for Official Statistics, and
 - (b) promote their use in relation to official statistics.
- (2) The Board may in particular for the purposes of this section give guidance and advice to persons responsible for official statistics.
- (3) The Board may publish guidance and advice given under this section.

10. Code of Practice for Statistics

- (1) The Board is to prepare, adopt and publish a Code of Practice for Statistics.

13. Duty to continue to comply with Code

- (1) The person producing any official statistics which are designated under section 12 as National Statistics must ensure that the Code of Practice for Statistics under section 10 continues to be complied with in relation to the statistics.
- (2) Failure to comply with subsection (1) in relation to any statistics means that the designation of the statistics as National Statistics may not be confirmed under section 14 (but no action shall lie in relation to any such failure).

30. National Statistician: advisory functions

- (3) If the Board rejects the advice of the National Statistician -
 - (a) in relation to the development and maintenance of definitions, methodologies, classifications and principles for official statistics, or
 - (b) as to the application to any statistics produced by the Board of any definition, methodology, classification or principle promoted by the Board under section 9, the Board must publish a statement of its reasons for doing so.

Annex B**Extracts from the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice**

The following sub sections are directly taken from the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics and are the most appropriately related to the work undertaken by the NSHG.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

Practices

1. Ensure that official statistics are produced according to scientific principles. Publish details of the methods adopted, including explanations of why particular choices were made.
2. Ensure that official statistics are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs, and that users are informed about the quality of statistical outputs, including estimates of the main sources of bias and other errors, and other aspects of the European Statistical System definition of quality.
6. Promote comparability within the UK and internationally by, for example, adopting common standards, concepts, sampling frames, questions, definitions, statistical units and classifications (including common geographic referencing and coding standards). Make the reasons for any deviations from standard models publicly available.

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers 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 (for example, on businesses, service providers, or the public) 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, rather than using statutory powers, wherever possible.
3. Promote statistical purposes actively in the design of administrative systems in order to enhance the statistical potential of administrative records.
4. Analyse the costs of proposed new data requirements (to data suppliers) against the potential benefits.
5. Evaluate existing data sources and estimation techniques before undertaking new surveys.

Principle 7: Resources

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

Practices

5. Seek to balance quality (for example, accuracy and timeliness) against costs (including both costs to government and data suppliers), taking into account the expected uses of the statistics.

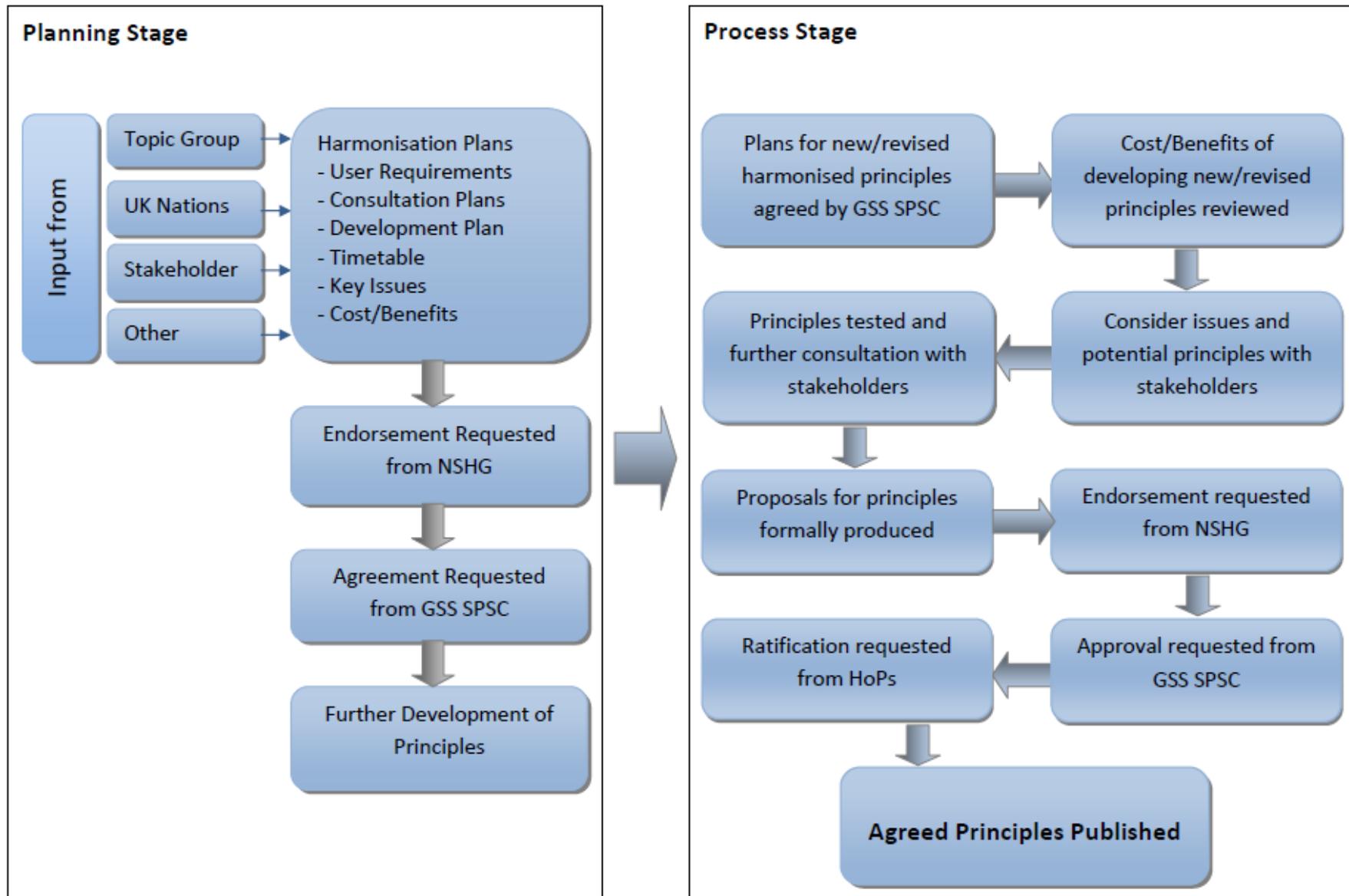
Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

Practices

1. Observe all statutory obligations and relevant codes of practice in relation to the protection of confidentiality and the handling of personal data.
2. Only base statistics on administrative data where the definitions and concepts are good approximations to those appropriate for statistical purposes.
3. Maximise opportunities for the use of administrative data, cross-analysis of sources and for the exchange and re-use of data, to avoid duplicating requests for information. Where possible, use common information technology and information management systems that facilitate the flow of information between producers of statistics.

HARMONISATION PROCESS



National Statistics Harmonisation Group
Combined Topic Group Report – September 2015

NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Benefits and Tax Credits
Thomas Sims
 No report received

NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Consumer Durables
Jana Kubascikova-Mullen
 Nothing to report for this period.

NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Country of Birth and Migration
Pamela Spicer
 Nothing to report for this period.

NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
Fiona Aitchison

Topic Lead	Fiona Aitchison
Topic Group Members	n/a
Reporting Period	June to August 2015

Summary Status <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<p>Work has begun on questionnaire development for the 2016/17 Crime Survey for England and Wales. No specific harmonisation issues are expected to arise from this.</p> <p>New fraud and cyber crime questions to be added to the CSEW in October 2015 are planned to be harmonised across surveys for Scotland and Northern Ireland once successfully implemented.</p>	
Progress made during this reporting period	
Product Name <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	Status
Work planned for the next reporting period	
Product Name	Status
Key Issues and Risks <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
Other Information <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	

NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Demographic information
Emily Knipe

Topic Lead	Emily Knipe
Topic Group Members	Nicola Haines, Vital Statistics Output Branch, Office for National Statistics (Maternity leave) Davie Hay, Department of Health Jos Ijpelaar, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Emily Knipe, Population Statistics Division, Office for National Statistics (Topic Lead) Karen Hurrell, Equality and Human Rights Commission Laura Wilson, Social Survey Division, Office for National Statistics Tony Whiffen, Welsh Government Yolanda Ruiz, Department for Communities and Local Government
Reporting Period	June to August 2015

Summary Status <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<p>Gender Identity: This will continue to be monitored through the Census consultation work.</p> <p>Same-sex marriage: This will continue to be monitored through the Census consultation work. Question design for the Census will help to inform changes that need to be made to the harmonised marital status question and output design. (Issues are mainly surrounding designing a question when there isn't a relationship matrix on the survey, wording- what we can and can't say, and issues when partners are living separately and how we capture this). LFS is able to capture same sex marriages and I have quality assured the cases coming through on the JS14 and OD14 datasets.</p> <p>Age bands: Harmonisation team approached me about the age bands that PSD use in their standard outputs. I did a small audit and have proposed a new harmonised standard which will be sent out for review shortly.</p>	
Progress made during this reporting period	
Product Name <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	Status
Work planned for the next reporting period	
Product Name	Status
Key Issues and Risks <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
Other Information <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	

NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Economic Activity
Lead TBC

The Harmonisation team is in the process of finding a new Topic Lead for this group.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Educational Attainment
Karen Woolgar**

Topic Lead	Karen Woolgar
Topic Group Members	Nafeessah Ameerudden, Tony Clarke, Michael Greer, Rachel Lloyd, Debra Leaker, Matthew Bollington, Jane Carr
Reporting Period	June to August 2015

Summary Status <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
The desk review is still being updated based on feedback from the Topic Group. There has been a delay in finalising the report due to resource constraints.	
Progress made during this reporting period	
Product Name <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	Status
Desk review of existing methods for qualifications capture	In progress
Identification of potential resources	In progress
Desk review of other related questions – e.g. age left full time education	Not started
Work planned for the next reporting period	
Product Name	Status
Desk review of existing methods for qualifications capture	
Identification of potential resources	
Desk review of other related questions – e.g. age left full time education	
Key Issues and Risks <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
Ongoing resource issues in BIS mean work to support this process continues to receive low priority	
Other Information <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	
Andy Blinston moved team and has been replaced by Nafeessah Ameerudden.	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Ethnic Group, National Identity, Language, Religion and Sexual Identity
Angela Potter-Collins**

Topic Lead	Ethnic group, National identity, Language, Religion and Sexual Identity
Topic Group Members	Angela Potter-Collins
Reporting Period	June to August 2015

Summary Status <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
Final story from the Census analysis programme was published in June 2015, titled the ethnicity and religion of the non-UK born population.	
Three articles on ethnicity, religion and language were produced for ONS Visual between June and July to coincide with the Census consultation.	

Providing guidance and advice on EILR topics (as well as sexual identity) continues.	
Still in discussion with the EHRC about guidance on best practise for defining ethnic minorities. As ONS currently has a style guide partly explaining this, it has been recommended to expand on this.	
Progress made during this reporting period	
Product Name <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	Status
As above	Complete
Work planned for the next reporting period	
Product Name	Status
As above	Ongoing
Key Issues and Risks <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
None	
Other Information <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	
None	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Health, Disability and Carers
Steve Webster**

Topic Lead	Steve Webster
Topic Group Members	Not clear who other members are; to be reviewed
Reporting Period	June to August 2015

Summary Status <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
Not aware of any current active work; having just taken on the role, intend to review the principles papers and research utilisation of harmonised questions in current surveys.	
Progress made during this reporting period	
Product Name <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	Status
N/A	
Work planned for the next reporting period	
Product Name	Status
Long lasting health conditions and illnesses questions	Review usage
General health and carers harmonised questions	Review usage
Key Issues and Risks <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
Key risk is limited resource to put into this work in a climate of reducing funding and staffing reprioritisation on BAU; however hoping to use existing UK wide health links to look at harmonisation across surveys.	
Other Information <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	
None	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Housing & Tenure**

Rob Green

Nothing to report for this period

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Income**

Richard Tonkin

Nothing to report for this period.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report
Pensions**

Tim Gibbs

Topic Lead	Tim Gibbs
Topic Group Members	Steve Dunstan(ONS) Joanna Bulman (ONS) Hazel Clarke (ONS) David Bovill (ONS) Elaine Chamberlain(ONS) Donncha Burke(DWP) Riaz Ali(DWP) Pauline Heather (DWP) James Forsyth – Harris (DWP)
Reporting Period	June to August 2015

Summary Status <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<p>Terms of reference Updated slightly to broaden scope</p> <p>Refreshing membership list Suggestions made to add new members</p> <p>Treatment of hybrids Continuing discussion from previous meetings- raising awareness of potential future need to collect information on DA schemes and opportunities to harmonise through group. Potential to extend discussion to TPR</p> <p>Flexibilities questions on FRS FRS survey team presented survey questions changes designed to capture effect of pension flexibilities. Group reviewed proposal and WAS team offered to compare data to asses question suitability.</p> <p>Admin data sources Proposal to extend subgroup on pensions to include admin data sources. Most business surveys already included in the sub-group. Membership positive about proposal.</p>	
Progress made during this reporting period	
Product Name <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	Status
Work planned for the next reporting period	
Product Name	Status
Key Issues and Risks <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
Other Information <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	