



Minutes of the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) Meeting
9th March 2016
1100 to 1330 hrs
ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ

Attendees:		Apologies:	
Charlie Wroth-Smith (Chair - delegated)	ONS	Emma Wright (Chair)	ONS
Andrew Martindale (audio – T'field)	ONS	Andrew Rosser	OFSTED
Andy Bates	ONS	Angela Potter-Collins	ONS
Ann Blake (audio - T'field)	ONS	Becky Tinsley	ONS
Becki Aquilina	ONS	David Matz	HO
Dawn Camus	BIS	Fiona Aitchison	ONS
Ellie Brodie - delegated by Tim Gibbs, (audio N'port)	ONS	Jana Kubascikova	ONS
Emily Knipe	ONS	Jason Bradbury	ONS
Fiona Massey (audio – N'port)	ONS	Julia Wilson	Scot Gov
Hugh Kerr (audio – NISRA)	NISRA	Karen Hurrell	EHRC
Ian Sidney	ONS	Kirsty MacLean	NRS
John Cummings – delegated by Matthew Tranter	DfT	Nazma Neesa	BIS
Kevin Sams (audio – HMRC)	HMRC	Nafeessah Ameerudden	BIS
Lisa Carter (audio – HMRC)	HMRC	Pete Betts	ONS
Lisa Walters (audio - Cardiff)	Welsh Gov	Richard Tonkin	ONS
Marina Wright – delegated by Jonathan Swan	ONS	Tom Anderson	ONS
Martin Ralphs	UKSA		
Martin van Staveren (audio – London)	MRS		
Matthew Steel (audio – N'port)	ONS		
Rob Green	DCLG		
Steve Cooley	ONS		
Steve Webster (audio – HSCIC)	HSCIC		
Suzanne Ellis	ONS		
Thomas Sims	DWP		
Mark Herniman (Secretariat)	ONS		

1.0 Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 Emma Wright was unable to attend the meeting at short notice. Charlie Wroth-Smith (Head of Classifications and Harmonisation Unit - ONS) chaired the meeting and welcomed members.
- 1.2 The following members have left the NSHG; Marie Haythornthwaite (ONS) and Pamela Spicer (ONS). Charlie thanked them for their contribution and support. The following new members were welcomed to the meeting: Andrew Martindale (ONS) – Topic Lead for Country of Birth and Migration, Andrew Rosser (OFSTED) – harmonisation champion, Fiona Massey (ONS) – Topic Lead for Economic Activity, Matthew Steel (ONS) – Topic Lead for Personal Well-being, Nazma Neesa (BIS) – Topic Lead for Educational Attainment (vice Karen Woolgar – maternity leave).

2.0 Review of the Minutes and Actions from the previous meeting, NSHG (15:4) 26 – Charlie Wroth-Smith

- 2.1 There were no comments arising from the minutes from the 9th December 2015 meeting and these were accepted as a true reflection of that meeting.
- 2.2 All actions are complete with one ongoing action. The following actions were commented on:

- Action 1 – a new cycle of three meetings per year for the NSHG will be put in place (March, July and November).
- Action 2 – ongoing as an example model of a Global Activity Limitation Indicator (GALI) question is not available.
- Actions 5, 6, 7 – the proposed revised definition for Ethnic Minorities have all been completed and will now be sent to the GSS SPSC for approval.

2.3 One member stated they had not seen the proposed revised definition for Ethnic Minorities and requested to be sent a copy of the paper.

ACTION 1 – Secretariat to send a copy of the proposed revised definition for Ethnic Minorities paper to Rob Green

3.0 Update on Harmonisation Work

a. GSS SPSC Meeting Report, Verbal Update – Charlie Wroth-Smith

3.1 POST MEETING NOTE provided by Emma. The last GSS SPSC meeting took place on the 7th January, where the regular update reports from NSHG and the NSH SG were presented.

3.2 The next GSS SPSC meeting will be on the 28th April and it is planned to present the revised definition for Ethnic Minorities for approval.

b. Review of the NSHG Workplan, NSHG (16:1) 01 – Mark Herniman

3.3 Mark gave an update of the workplan, explaining for the benefit of new members, the workplan contains the current programme of work and progress. There were no comments or questions.

c. Harmonisation of Administrative Data, Verbal Update – Steve Cooley

3.4 Steve presented his update adding a plan is being developed to take forward the work of harmonising administrative data, where possible. The plan includes establishing an Administrative Data Harmonisation Working Group.

d. Business Harmonisation, Verbal Update – Ian Sidney

3.5 Ian explained that Suzanne Ellis and himself are taking forward the work to harmonise business statistics where possible. Ian added there is a large piece of work looking at transferring the business surveys to electronic format with the aim to complete by March 2019. This will be a good opportunity to harmonise questions throughout the process.

e. Update on Good Practice Team & Harmonisation, NSHG (16:1) 02 – Martin Ralphs

3.6 Martin presented his report outlining three main areas of work; Task and Finish Group to review the standards, guidance and policy estate across the GSS, strengthening the collaboration between the Authority and the Harmonisation Team and promoting the ONS Data Programme.

3.7 An event is planned during April for ONS where some of the work of the Good Practice Team and Harmonisation Team will be showcased. Although this is aimed at output managers it could be useful for others as well. If successful, it is planned to roll this event out more widely in the future.

3.8 HMRC are doing some work to ensure they comply to the guidance around the Admin Data Quality Tool Kit and noticed there are no real practical examples of how to implement it in terms of publication. It was suggested that examples of how government departments have implemented the tool kit, which could then be appended to the guidance, would be useful. This is something the Good Practice Team have already raised with the Authority and are proposing to do this.

- 3.9 It was stated there are some existing examples of government departments applying the toolkit but these are not signed off as 'good practice' examples. Links to these examples can be supplied.

ACTION 2 – Marina Wright to contact Martin Ralphs with links of examples of government departments applying the toolkit

4.0 UK Census Consultation by Country, Verbal Update – Hugh Kerr, Ann Blake, Kirsty MacLean

Northern Ireland – Hugh Kerr

- 4.1 The Northern Ireland Census consultation was completed on the 17 December 2015. Agreement has been reached on the collection (or not) of all topics and some new ones; Income, Sexual Identity and Second Residence. A topic Consultation Workshop was hosted at NISRA on the 24 February 2016 and attended by each of the three statistical offices. The three main outputs from the workshop are; a topic statement paper, a joint research plan for challenging topics and an outputs working group.
- 4.2 NISRA published their 'You said' report on the Citizen Space website on 8 March 2016 and responses received in relation to the consultation may be viewed. The 'You said, we did' report will be published in early summer. After that the plans for the topic statement and the joint research will be taken forward.

England and Wales – Ann Blake

- 4.3 The response to the England and Wales Census consultation is being finalised. This will include a topic report for each of the 17 topics. There were 1095 responses to the consultation which all had to be reviewed. Responses will be published in May. There will be an overarching response that sets out the progress against all the topics and how the evaluation was conducted. It ties together the development and research plan that needs to be taken forward. Each of the topic reports will look at more depth into each topic, the responses received, the evaluation process and the development plan. When the consultation was launched it was done so using the principle of minimal change and whilst this is still the aim, some topics may require more development work. Some of the members of the NSHG topic group will be asked to help with this work.

Scotland – Kirsty MacLean

- 4.4 Kirsty was unable to attend the meeting but Ann was able to provide an update. Scotland's consultation closed in January and they are currently working through the responses received and beginning to think about their evaluation and what their next steps will be. Scotland are considering any required changes to their questionnaire.

5.0 Update on England and Wales Census Harmonisation of Topics, Verbal Update – Ann Blake

- 5.1 Ann explained how a workshop was held between England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to understand where harmonisation was important and how research can be joined up between the countries. NISRA are developing a joint research plan that will look at harmonisation across the UK, in terms of the topics. The NSHG topic groups will attempt to ensure harmonisation between the respective census's and other social surveys.

6.0 Presentation – Harmonisation Work of the Demographic Information Topic Lead – Emily Knipe

- 6.1 Emily's presentation focussed on her experience as a Topic Lead so that NSHG members could more fully understand the role of Topic Leads and some of the challenges faced, particularly the impact of the role on usual daily workload.
- 6.2 Gender Identity is one of the topics raised by respondents to the Census user consultation. ONS is currently in the process of forming their response to the consultation and there are a number of requests that need to be considered with regard to ONS responsibilities under the Equalities Act. Information is currently being gathered from across the world about different approaches to collecting information on both gender identity and non-binary option to the question on sex. Census is working with the demographic team in ONS to consider what their response will be. More information on this will be available once the response to the consultation is published.
- 6.3 It was suggested that it would be useful for someone from the English Housing Team to be represented on the Demographic Information topic group. Emily to discuss with Rob Green (DCLG) a possible representative from the English Housing Team.

ACTION 3 – Emily to talk to Rob Green directly after the meeting to discuss a representative from the English housing Team for the Demographic Information Topic Group

- 6.4 The Marital Status harmonised question needs to be reconsidered and it has been suggested an interim revised Harmonised Principle is developed with the Demographic Information Topic Group taking the lead to achieve this.
- 6.5 ONS is now the survey contractor for the National Survey for Wales (NSW) and the survey is being guided away from using harmonised questions by ONS. Because of this, NSW have asked if it is possible to find out when questions are being considered for revision as they need to be fed into the survey design around two years prior to them going into the field. In theory surveys should be using the harmonised versions of questions but there may be good reasons why this is not being done and in addition to this the Harmonisation Team are aware of a number of harmonised question that need updating. One example of being guided to use a non-harmonised question is the Marital Status question. It was suggested that the Topic Group for Demographic Information be expanded to include someone from the relevant team in ONS Social Survey Division so their thoughts are considered.

ACTION 4 – Chair to contact Lisa Walters with regard to ONS's stance on use of harmonised questions

ACTION 5 – Emily Knipe to contact ONS SSD for representation on the Demographic Information topic group

7.0 Presentation – Update on the NSHG Framework – Charlie Wroth-Smith, Becki Aquilina, Steve Cooley and Ian Sidney

- 7.1 Charlie, Becki, Steve and Ian gave the presentation on the work the Harmonisation Team has been doing on improving the NSHG framework. It was explained this was an attempt to overhaul the processes and documentation used as well as simplifying the way we work and communicate. Two of the main improvements are the revised Harmonisation Process and the NSHG Members Handbook.

- 7.2 Topic Leads thought the proposed NSHG handbook was very good and would make it much easier to understand their role and where it fits in with the NSHG and other members. Although not included in the proposed handbook at the moment, a link to the A-Z of Harmonised Principles will be included. Members were informed the handbook and the revised harmonisation process would be circulated for comment in the near future.

ACTION 6 – NSHG members to review the Members Handbook and the revised harmonisation process and send any comments to harmonisation@ons.gsi.gov.uk by the 25 March 2016

8.0 NSHG Topic Lead Updates, NSHG (16:1) 03 – Topic Group Leads

8.1 Benefits and Tax Credits – Thomas Sims

- 8.1.1 Thomas presented his report adding a recent Annual Questionnaire Consultation for the Family Resources Survey, where part of the process is a review of the questions by policy experts, had indicated there will be no further changes to the current harmonised questions for this topic. There were no comments.

8.2 Consumer Durables – Jana Kubascikova

- 8.2.1 Jana was unable to attend the meeting and had nothing to report for this period.

8.3 Country of Birth and Migration – Andrew Martindale

- 8.3.1 Andrew was only appointed Topic Lead for this group a few days ago so was unable to present an update.

ACTION 7 – Secretariat to send Andrew Martindale a list of last know topic group members and arrange a meeting with a member of the Harmonisation Team

8.4 Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour – Fiona Aitchison

- 8.4.1 Fiona was unable to attend the meeting but had submitted a report. There were no comments.

8.5 Demographic Information – Emily Knipe

- 8.5.1 Emily presented her report. There were no comments.

8.6 Economic Activity – Fiona Massey

- 8.6.1 Fiona was only appointed lead for this group recently so was unable to present an update.

ACTION 8 – Secretariat to send Fiona Massey a list of last know topic group members for this topic group and arrange a meeting with a member of the Harmonisation Team

8.7 Education – Nazma Neesa and Nafeessah Ameerudden

- 8.7.1 Nazma has taken over from Karen Woolgar who is on maternity leave. Nazma and Nafeessah were unable to attend the meeting but had submitted a report. There were no comments.

8.8 EILR – Angela Potter-Collins

- 8.8.1 Angela was unable to be at the meeting and had nothing further to report.

8.9 Health, Disability and Carers – Steve Webster

- 8.9.1 Steve presented a brief verbal update stating there is a proposed new Mental Health Survey aimed at children. The proposal will be out for tender later this year. He has a few new members in place for the topic group from Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) and the Department of Health (DoH) but needs additional members from other Government Departments.

ACTION 9 – Secretariat to contact Steve Webster for possible ONS topic group members

8.10 Housing and Tenure – Rob Green

8.10.1 Rob presented a brief verbal update stating he is part way through conducting a review of the current harmonised questions as he is aware that some questions are not used by all lead surveys.

8.11 Income – Richard Tonkin

8.11.1 Richard was unable to attend the meeting but had submitted a report. There were no comments.

8.12 Pensions – Tim Gibbs

8.12.1 Tim was unable to attend the meeting but was represented by Ellie Brodie. There was nothing to report for this period.

9.0 Any Other Business

9.1 The meeting was reminded there are now only three meeting per year, taking place in March, July and November. There will also be an annual Topic Lead's meeting which is planned to take place in June. Invites will be sent out soon.

10.0 Next Meetings

10.1 Dates of the next meetings are:

Wednesday 13th July 2016, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate, Meeting Room 3.

Wednesday 9th November 2016, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate, Meeting Room 3.

Annexes:

A. List of Actions

ACTIONS FROM THE NSHG MEETING – 9th March 2016				
Action No	Para	Action	Responsible	Status
1	2.3	Secretariat to send a copy of the proposed revised definition for Ethnic Minorities paper to Rob Green	Secretariat	
2	3.9	Marina Wright to contact Martin Ralphs with links of examples of government departments applying the toolkit	Marina Wright	
3	6.3	Emily to talk to Rob Green directly after the meeting to discuss a representative from the English housing Team for the Demographic Information Topic Group	Emily Knipe	
4	6.5	Chair to contact Lisa Walters with regard to ONS's stance on use of harmonised questions	NSHG Chair	
5	6.5	Emily Knipe to contact ONS SSD for representation on the Demographic Information topic group	Emily Knipe	
6	7.2	NSHG members to review the Members Handbook and the revised harmonisation process and send any comments to harmonisation@ons.gsi.gov.uk by the 25 March 2016	NSHG Members	
7	8.3.1	Secretariat to send Andrew Martindale a list of last know topic group members for this topic group and arrange a meeting with someone from the Harmonisation Team	Secretariat	
8	8.6.1	Secretariat to send Fiona Massey a list of last know topic group members for this topic group and arrange a meeting with someone from the Harmonisation Team	Secretariat	
9	8.9.1	Secretariat to contact Steve Webster for possible ONS topic group members	Secretariat	