



**Minutes of the
National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group (NSH SG) Meeting
22nd January 2015, 11:00 to 12:00 hrs
Via Audio**

Attendees:

Jacqui Jones	ONS
Hersh Mann	UK Data Service
Jan Thomas	ONS
Kate Bedford	HSCIC
Palvi Shah	ONS
Pete Brodie	ONS
Steve Ellerd-Elliot	MoJ
Becki Aquilina (Secretariat)	ONS

Apologies

Emma Wright	ONS
Siobhan Carey	BIS

1.0 Welcome and Introduction

1.1 Jacqui welcomed members to the meeting.

2.0 Review minutes and actions from 4th audio meeting (17th October 2014) – Jan Thomas

2.1 The previous meeting minutes were agreed. Some actions were complete but others are ongoing. Action 12 (para. 5.5) to collate ongoing business initiatives across the GSS and examine the crossovers is on hold for the time being. Palvi is initially looking at ONS initiatives and will be holding an ONS business workshop during February. Once these are identified, Palvi will then look at other business harmonisation initiatives across the GSS and will report her findings to the Steering Group.

3.0 Update of the SUF/Harmonisation Workshop Event (held 21st January) – Jan Thomas

3.1 The Harmonisation Team and Geography (ONS) and the Statistics User Forum held a joint workshop to capture some of the issues that users experience and the difficulties they face. The workshop generated a lot of discussion and brought a user perspective and dimension to the forefront that was perhaps missing before the workshop. One of the key messages arising from the workshop was the need to be liaising with Local Government more; this was also identified at the December NSHG meeting. The harmonisation team will produce a report of the workshop including an action plan to engage more fully with users using a variety of user groups and forums identified during the workshop.

3.2 The harmonisation team are grateful to the steering group for recommending interaction with users via the RSS. Feedback sheets were circulated at the workshop and initial responses received from users were very positive.

4.0 Steering the Communication Plan – Becki Aquilina

- 4.1 Becki gave an overview of the paper and explained the aim of the paper is to promote discussion which will feed into the first draft of the Steering Group's communication plan.
- 4.2 Some discussion took place regarding reaching users that are not currently liaising with Harmonisation for whatever reason. It was noted that Palvi will be presenting to the UK Statistics Authority Monitoring and Assessment Team Workshop on 26th January to raise awareness of the issues regarding harmonisation and to explore how to gain firmer support from assessors of official statistics.
POST MEETING NOTE: The Statistics Authority offered some suggestions (most of which we do already) but did not agree to change the assessment process.
- 4.3 Palvi is attending the GSS Quality Champion network meeting on 27th January. There are currently quality champions set up for ONS but the plan is to set up quality champions across the GSS. Palvi is coordinating with ONS Good Practice team and the Quality Centre to see if the quality champions could also talk about harmonisation rather than have a separate harmonisation champion across the GSS (whilst without becoming too burdensome).
- 4.4 The Harmonisation team and Data Collection Methodology (DCM) are holding a joint ONS business harmonisation workshop on 26th February. 30 people from across the ONS business change programme and business areas are attending.
- 4.5 It was noted that John Pullinger regularly blogs and it would be a good idea if John mentions his harmonisation is a 'no brainer' quote in one of his future blogs. The group felt it would be more beneficial if Harmonisation was communicated from a general GSS perspective as a GSS brand rather than a separate strand.

ACTION 1 – Harmonisation team to ask John Pullinger to mention harmonisation in a future blog.

- 4.5 The group were asked what communication could be achieved by the steering group and the NSHG during 2015. Steve suggested having a 2015 goal of 'make harmonisation part of the GSS voice'. It was suggested we need a vision and part of that vision should consider what needs to be done in 2015 and to reassess at the end of 2015.
- 4.6 It was noted that it would be useful to compile a list of individual contacts of those people that we are currently liaising with. This could be used as a measure/baseline for 2015 to help identify areas that are, and are not contacting the harmonisation team. This could include web analysis (by contact rather than department/organisation). The aim in 2015 would be to increase contact to the harmonisation team (by increasing the baseline).

ACTION 2 – Harmonisation to compile a list of contacts to be used as a baseline

- 4.7 The Good Practice team communicate on a number of different areas and face similar challenges to harmonisation in terms of communicating GSS issues. The Harmonisation team meet with the Good Practice team every six weeks and it was suggested that joint communication would be advantageous.

ACTION 3 – Harmonisation team to discuss joint communication with the Good Practice team.

- 4.8 The paper suggested a change to the approach to harmonisation from bottom up to a top down approach. Jacqui mentioned targeting presentations to Hops, John Pullinger and Ed Humpherson, possibly via the HoPs meeting (next HoPs meeting is 12th March) and by

presenting at conferences such as the next GSS Conference, and LARIA (Local Authority Research & Intelligence Association) conferences, were possible influencing key themes (via the organising committees). It was noted that having Harmonisation on its own as a theme may not work but tagging onto wider themes would work better (part of the GSS strategy for example or other initiatives). This will involve a certain amount of proactively looking for links rather than hoping it will be discussed as an agenda item.

ACTION 4 – Harmonisation team to contact the secretariat for HoPs meeting and other senior level groups to organise targeted harmonisation presentations (Pam Davies/Kieron Mahoney).

ACTION 5 – Harmonisation team to contact LARIA to organise targeted harmonisation presentations.

ACTION 6 – Harmonisation team to contact the organisers of upcoming GSS Conferences to influence the theme.

4.9 Harmonisation could use the 2015 Spending Review (SR15) as an enabler to cost saving efficiency measures. The theme group on efficiency could be contacted as a way in to influence people and highlight harmonisation as a type of efficiency. A further area to be considered is via the devolution agenda and the Smith Commission (to oversee the process to take forward the devolution commitments on further powers for Scottish Parliament). Roma Chappell and Helen Paterson are taking the lead on this for ONS. It was noted that if harmonisation is not considered within issues of devolution there will be a problems comparing data in the future.

ACTION 7 – Harmonisation team to contact the cost efficiency theme group (Paul Layland) to see how harmonisation can influence data providers.

ACTION 8 – Harmonisation to speak to Roma Chappell and Helen Paterson about potential harmonisation issues with devolution and legislation.

4.10 It was recognised that we are spending a lot of time and effort in pushing something that the National Statistician sees as a 'no brainer' and harmonisation should be imbedded and formalised. John Pullinger and Andrew Dilnot are visiting ONS Titchfield tomorrow (23/02/2015) for an open staff talk session and it would be a good opportunity to raise questions regarding this. The Harmonisation team gave John Pullinger an overview of harmonisation recently and he was very positive about the work.

ACTION 9 – Becki to raise Harmonisation question at John Pullinger and Andrew Dilnot staff talks.

4.11 The UK Data Service has used 'webinars' to run online meetings and Hersh suggested the use of online webinars as a communication tool that could be used to engage with users. The innovation lab (ONS) may have facilities to enable this.

ACTION 10 – Harmonisation team to look into the feasibility of using the innovation lab to conduct webinars.

4.12 Jacqui noted that there was a shift in direction and commitment that arose from the increased focus on statistical commentary and presentation which was encouraged by the National Statistician as key. Alongside this Andrew Dilnot raised 7 principles for statistical commentary. Almost overnight there was a change that everyone knew they had to follow. One of the reasons why it was successful was because of the commitment of the most senior people in the GSS. It would be an ideal opportunity for harmonisation to become more imbedded and linked to other standardisation processes. Although harmonisation is recognised within the Code of Practice, it is not enforced.

4.13 In summary, the key communication objectives for 2015 are to;
- Get senior GSS and user buy in and commitment

- Establish a base line in terms of who is contacting us and web metrics
- Increase contact with the harmonisation team

Becki will pull the communication plan together as discussed and will circulate within the next few days. Steering group members are asked to comment within one week of receipt.

ACTION 11 – Becki to draft the communication plan and circulate to steering group members for comment.

5.0 AOB, Items for next meeting and next meeting dates

5.1 The next meeting will be held on 4th March 2015 in Drummond Gate and will be a face to face meeting (2 hour meeting) between 14:00 – 16:00. The quarterly NSHG meeting will be held in the morning of 4th March and steering group members are welcome to attend (11:00 -13:30 at Drummond Gate – meeting room 3)

ACTION 12 – Secretariat to set up the next meeting and send invites.

Becki Aquilina
ONS Harmonisation Team
January 2015

ACTIONS FROM NSH SG MEETING – 22 January 2015

Action No	Para	Action	Responsible	Status
1	4.5	Harmonisation team to ask John Pullinger to mention harmonisation in a future blog.	Harmonisation team	
2	4.6	Harmonisation to compile a list of contacts to be used as a baseline.	Harmonisation team	
3	4.7	Harmonisation team to discuss a joint communication with the Good Practice team.	Harmonisation team	
4	4.8	Harmonisation team to contact the secretariat for HoPs meeting and other senior level groups to organise targeted harmonisation presentations (Pam Davies/Kieron Mahoney).	Harmonisation team	
5	4.8	Harmonisation team to contact LARIA to organise targeted harmonisation presentations.	Harmonisation team	
6	4.8	Harmonisation team to contact the organisers of upcoming GSS Conferences to influence the theme.	Harmonisation team	On-going
7	4.9	Harmonisation team to contact the cost efficiency theme group (Paul Layland) to see how harmonisation can influence data providers.	Harmonisation team	
8	4.9	Harmonisation to speak to Roma Chappell and Helen Paterson about potential harmonisation issues with devolution and legislation.	Harmonisation team	
9	4.10	Becki to raise Harmonisation question at John Pullinger and Andrew Dilnot Talk.	Becki Aquilina	Complete
10	4.11	Harmonisation team to look into the feasibility of using the innovation lab to conduct webinars.	Harmonisation team	
11	4.13	Becki to draft the communication plan and circulate to steering group members to for comment.	Becki Aquilina	
12	5.1	Secretariat to set up the next meeting and send invites.	Secretariat	Complete