

# National Statistics Harmonisation Group Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at 11:00 to 1300 hrs  
Meeting Room 3, at ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ

	Timing	Agenda Item	Paper No	Presenter
1	1100 – 1105 hrs	Welcome and Introductions		Pete Brodie
2	1105 – 1115 hrs	Review of Previous Minutes and Actions	NSHG (14:3) 24	Pete Brodie
3	1115 – 1130 hrs	a) GSS SPSC Meeting Report	NSHG (14:4) 25	Pete Brodie
		b) Review of NSHG Workplan	NSHG (14:4) 26	Mark Herniman
		c) Census Update and Latest Plans	NSHG (14:4) 27	Paul Waruszynski
4	1130 – 1140 hrs	Proposal for Business Harmonisation Workshop	NSHG (14:4) 28	Palvi Shah
5	1140 – 1150 hrs	Progress on Harmonisation of Administrative Data	NSHG (14:4) 29	Becki Aquilina
6	1150 – 1200 hrs	Review of the 2011 Census Questions	NSHG (14:4) 30	Ellen Hewitt
7	1200 – 1210 hrs	Harmonisation and Consistency	NSHG (14:4) 31	Jan Thomas
8	1210 – 1220 hrs	Harmonisation on Social Media - Twitter	NSHG (14:4) 32	Steve Cooley
9	1220 – 1245 hrs	<b>NSHG Topic Group Updates</b>	NSHG (14:4) 33	<b>Topic Group Leads</b>
		Benefits and Tax Credits	Report Received	Caroline Smith
		Consumer Durables	Nothing to Report This Period	Jana Kubascikova-Mullen
		Country of Birth & Migration	Report Received	Pamela Cobb
		Crime & Anti Social Behaviour	No Report Received	Nicola White
		Demographic Information	Report Received	Emily Knipe
		Economic Activity	Nothing to Report This Period	Debra Leaker
		Education	Report Received	Karen Grierson
		EILR	Report Received	Angela Potter-Collins
		Health, Disability and Carers	No Report Received	TBC
		Housing and Tenure	No Report Received	Hugh Mallinson
		Income	Nothing to Report This Period	Richard Tonkin
		Integrated Household Survey	Report Received	Tim Vizard
		Pensions	Nothing to Report This Period	Tim Gibbs
10	1245 – 1255 hrs	AOB		Pete Brodie
11	1255 – 1300 hrs	Next Meetings	<p>Wednesday 4th March 2015, between 1100 - 1330 hrs, ONS, Drummond Gate Office, London</p> <p>Wednesday 3th June 2015, between 1100 - 1330 hrs, ONS, Drummond Gate Office, London</p>	Pete Brodie



**Minutes of the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) Meeting**  
**18<sup>th</sup> September 2014**  
**1100 to 1330 hrs**  
**ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ**

<b>Attendees:</b>		<b>Apologies:</b>	
Emma Wright (Chair)	ONS	Andy Bliston	BIS
Becki Aquilina	ONS	Angela Potter-Collins	ONS
Emily Knipe	ONS	Caroline Smith	DWP
Emma Bowditch	RSS	David Matz	Home Office
Jacqui Jones	ONS	Debra Leaker	ONS
Jan Thomas	ONS	Gerry Nicolaas	SRA
Jana Kubascikova-Mullen	ONS	Hugh Mallinson	CLG
Karen Hurrell	EHRC	Jane Carter	ONS
Lisa Walters	Welsh Gov	Jo Bulman	ONS
Marie Haythornthwaite	ONS	Julia Wilson	Scot Gov
Paul Waruszynski	ONS	Karen Grierson	BIS
Pete Betts	ONS	Kate Bedford	HSCIC
Sarah Martin	Scot Gov (via audio)	Lyndsey Melbourne	DfT
Steve Ellerd-Elliott	MoJ	Marie Willoughby	MoJ
Thomas Simms	DWP	Martin van Staveren	MRS
Tim Gibbs	ONS	Mary Gregory	DECC
Mark Herniman (Secretariat)	ONS	Nicola White	ONS
Michaela Morris (Secretariat)	ONS	Palvi Shah	ONS
		Pam Spicer	ONS
		Richard Tonkin	ONS
		Roger Morgan	DWP
		Samual Dickinson	DfT
		Siobhan Carey	BIS
		Tim Vizard	ONS
		Tom Anderson	ONS
		Tom Knight	DCMS

## 1.0 Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 Emma Wright welcomed members to the meeting, explaining she was standing in for Pete Brodie, who would usually chair this meeting. Emily Knipe (ONS, new topic lead for Demographic Information), Jana Kubascikova-Mullen (ONS, new topic lead for Consumer Durables), Marie Haythornthwaite (ONS, representative for Beyond 2011) and Sarah Martin (additional member for Scottish Government) were welcomed as new members to the NSHG. Emma also welcomed members of the National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group (NSH SG) and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) to the meeting.

## 2.0 Review of the Minutes and Actions from the Last Meeting, NSHG (14:2) 15 – Emma Wright

- 2.1 There was one request to re-word an action from the minutes of the last meeting. It was agreed Action No 15 be reworded to read “Julie Jefferies to prepare a paper on initial thoughts on the

issues related to 'Civil Partnerships' and 'Same Sex Marriage', for the next meeting". There were no further comments from the minutes and these were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting held on 4 June 2014.

- 2.2 There were 16 actions from the 4<sup>th</sup> June meeting. Action No 3, although complete in that the RSS has been contacted, Emma Bowditch still has some work to do to look for more examples of issues caused by a lack of harmonisation.
- 2.3 Actions No 14 & 15 are still ongoing and Emily Knipe stated that Action 15 is a higher priority for her team to look at. The remainder of the actions were complete.
- 2.4 The meeting was asked if there was representation on the NSHG from National Records of Scotland (NRS). The meeting was informed there was not but the Devolved Administrations were all represented. It was thought useful to have NRS representation and Sarah Martin agreed to discuss this with the NRS.

**Action 1 – Sarah Martin (and Julie Wilson) to discuss NSHG membership with National Records of Scotland and report back to the NSHG.**

### **3.0 Update on Harmonisation Work**

#### **a. GSS SPSC Meeting Report, Verbal Report – Emma Wright**

- 3.1 Emma gave a verbal update on the last GSS Statistical Policy & Standards Committee (SPSC) meeting, reminding membership that at the April 2014 GSS SPSC meeting the NSHG presented the revised Harmonisation Strategy and Governance paper. The SPSC suggested that evidence of the benefits of harmonisation should be included in the form of case studies. At that meeting the role of the NSH SG was recognised in raising the profile of harmonisation and it was agreed NSH SG membership should include senior statisticians and external experts.
- 3.2 At the SPSC meeting in July 2014, an update on these activities was presented including a case study from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and confirmation that membership of the NSH SG has been increased as suggested. Feedback from the SPSC was that we should include additional case studies with more granular detail (process details, outcomes and user reactions). It was also suggested we work with the UK Statistics Authority to promote harmonisation through the Code of Practice.
- 3.3 The revised Harmonisation Strategy will be presented to the October 2014 SPSC and a small number of HoPs for approval and sign off, once the case studies have been added. It will also be reported that the Harmonisation Team has met with Jane Carter of the Good Practice Team and Donna Livesey of the Assessment Team within the UK Statistics Authority. Jane has sent some useful reports as case studies and will include harmonisation within the next phase of activity under the quality banner. Donna has invited the Harmonisation Team to present at the Assessor Workshop planned for the Autumn and has indicated additional areas of the Code of Practice and the legislation that covers harmonisation. Both Jane and Donna agreed to raise awareness of harmonisation within their teams and to meet on a regular basis with the Harmonisation Team. There were no comments.

#### **b. Review of the NSHG Workplan, NSHG (14:3) 16 – Mark Herniman**

- 3.4 Mark gave an update of the workplan, explaining for the benefit of new members, the workplan contains the current programme of work and a table with progress against this programme of work which is updated on a quarterly basis.

3.5 In reply to a question about the Information Standards Board (ISB) and its role, the meeting was informed they advise on Education Statistics but at a much lower level than the harmonised principles and that this extended to standard and administrative data as well. The meeting was also told the ISB for Health closed in July 2014. There were no further comments.

**c. Census update and Latest Plans, NSHG (14:3) 17 – Paul Waruszynski**

3.6 Paul presented a report on the Census Outputs work, outlining the current and future planned releases. He also brought members attention to the two links in the Update Report, for the Summary of Output Releases over the Previous Year for England and Wales and the Summary of Census Releases over the Previous Year for the UK.

3.7 The meeting was informed some of the new tables being produced were part of the original user consultation but these were unable to be produced at that time. Any further user requirement for tables would now have to be done as a commissioned table and dealt with through the 'Commissioned Tables Team'. This additional work is chargeable and the rate varies depending on the difficulty of the tables. Once the tables are available they are published online. The UK Statistics Authority is also conducting a follow-up survey of key users and their opinions on the outputs. It was agreed it would be useful to make information available to the membership on this.

**Action 2 – Paul Waruszynski to send the Secretariat a link and information about where the Census commissioned tables are published online and also what is being done in terms of assessment of meeting user needs and benefits realisation.**

3.8 Marie Haythornthwaite informed the meeting there will be another Census in 2021 but the situation is less clear after that. Currently the Beyond 2011 Team (ONS) is looking at three strands of work; 1) Conduct a Census in 2021 which will be predominately online, 2) using administrative data the Government already collects together with a Census in 2021 to produce enhanced outputs, and 3) looking at what we do after 2021 including looking at how we can produce population estimates and other statistics, using just administrative and survey data.

3.9 Currently the Beyond 2011 Team is researching the administrative data in ONS and have started to negotiate with other departments for access to more data. In terms of the planning for this, an internal two day workshop is taking place in October and the Harmonisation Team has been invited to attend.

3.10 With regards to the harmonisation of administrative data, a question was asked if the Harmonisation Team has ever considered expanding the scope of this to include the cleaning of the data as there is concern this type of data is collected for different purposes and therefore may be cleaned in different ways. If this is not considered this could have an impact on the quality of the data. It was explained that in ONS any administrative data would be received by the Administrative Data Division but their plans on how to deal with this were unknown. In the longer term it would be ideal to work with data providers in an attempt to influence the way they harmonise the collection of the data. It was recognised this would be a large objective, especially when you consider these providers are not joined up.

3.11 In the short term it was felt the best way forward was to attempt to harmonise the metadata so at least data users could understand the data better. However there are differing views on this within the GSS and even with some departments. There is also a lot currently going on looking at quality of administrative data and a task force looking at third party data. It was stated a lot more could be done by departments helping each other in understanding the data. Members' attention was drawn to the Authority Exposure Draft on assessing and using administrative data which is available.

**Action 3 – Secretariat to provide a link in the minutes of this meeting to the Authority Exposure Draft for Quality Assessment of Administrative Data.**

- 3.12 It was suggested it would be interesting to have an update on the Scottish Census if someone from the NRS will be joining the NSHG. It was agreed this would be looked into.

**Action 4 – Sarah Martin to talk to colleagues within NRS to see if an update on the Scottish Census could be presented at the next NSHG meeting.**

**4.0 Paper for Approval, Analysis of Migration Data, NSHG (14:3) 18 – NSHG Secretariat**

- 4.1 Emma presented the paper on behalf of the Migration Reporting Working Group (MRWG), reminding the meeting it had been presented at the June 2014 meeting and members had been actioned to make any comment to the Secretariat so it could be approved at this meeting. Two comments were received. One suggested a reword on a sentence relating to fertility rates in the projections of the UK population. The other was a more general comment on the whole paper in that it appeared to present a list of problems but little in the way of clear practical guidance.
- 4.2 Both of these comments were notified to the MRWG. A reword for the first comment has been offered by the MRWG. With regard to the second comment it was suggested at the meeting maybe a flow diagram might help to more clearly identify the purpose of the paper. It was agreed the paper should be sent back to the MRWG with a recommendation that the inclusion of a flow diagram and a possible re-structuring may help to clearly highlight and recommend any guidance. It should then be re-submitted so it can be circulated by correspondence to NSHG members for approval.

**Action 5 – Secretariat to contact the MRWG with the feedback from the meeting and asking them to resubmit the paper so it can be circulated by correspondence to the NSHG, for approval.**

**5.0 National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group Update, NSH SG (14:3) 19 – Jacqui Jones**

- 5.1 Jacqui introduced the update report stating there is now increased wider membership at a higher level and that three meetings have already taken place. The purpose of these meetings was to review the membership, the Terms of Reference, the strategy and the governance of the group. The strategic direction of the group had also been discussed and a proposed direction drafted. It was also thought the strategic direction of both the NSH SG and the NSHG should be aligned. Since this update report had been written, there had been a further meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014, where it was agreed the NSH SG members would each take on a specific role to help meet the overall objectives of the group. Jacqui summarised by stating the group had agreed what they trying to achieve should be about coherence and comparability as this is key as far as users are concerned.
- 5.2 The NSH SG members were thanked for their support and the way in which this work was being pushed forward. There were no further comments.

**6.0 Update on Case Studies, NSHG (14:3) 20 – Jan Thomas**

- 6.1 Jan presented the update paper on the work the Harmonisation Team is currently doing, explaining the case studies are needed in order to support and demonstrate the benefits of the harmonisation work. When John Pullinger, the newly appointed National Statistician, recently

visited the Harmonisation Team, he was asking why people were not 'crying out' for our services as it's obvious they should already be doing this. Jan summarised by saying she was hoping for a bit more input from the topic leads with the topics that had been recently reviewed and by asking the membership for any further ideas for case studies they may have and encouraged all to think about this.

**Action 6 – NSHG members to report back to the NSHG, via the Secretariat, with any further ideas for case studies they may have.**

- 6.2 It was stated there will be a follow up event to the RSS Poverty Conference that took place earlier in the year. It was suggested there may be some more material there that may add to the poverty case study. It would be good for the Harmonisation Team to be invited in this.

**Action 7 – Emma Bowditch to discuss the coming RSS poverty event with Jan and forward dates and an invite.**

- 6.3 It was also suggested it would be useful for the membership to have sight of the paper being sent to the SPSC with the four case studies.

**Action 8 – Secretariat to circulate the paper for the SPSC with the four case studies to the NSHG membership.**

- 6.4 The meeting was informed that a review of all the surveys in Wales was currently being conducted in order to bring some of them together, to remove duplication and save costs. Scotland are about to do the same as well. It was suggested a look at the UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank (VQB) could help with the harmonisation of questions.

**7.0 Revised Harmonisation Strategy Implementation Plan, NSHG (14:3) 21, Jan Thomas (paper NSHG (14:3) 21A provided for background on the Strategy)**

- 7.1 Palvi was not able to be at the meeting at short notice. Her paper was presented by Jan Thomas who explained the paper covers revisions to the plan following the change in direction to 'harmonisation by default'. She added the paper is for information and approval and also invited to comment on the assumptions, dependencies, risks and the general approach we are taking to implement the strategy.

- 7.2 It was said it was very useful to have this alongside the more detailed workplan and maybe in the future we can review progress of the two alongside each other. It was recognised, with regard to administrative data, there is a risk that a topic may become harmonised and then policy and legislation changes may undo harmonisation work. This can not only happen with administrative data but also with social survey harmonisation. The risk of this is mitigated to some extent by the Harmonisation Workshops, where in alternate years the harmonised principles are reviewed and issues like this tend to be highlighted. Topic leads, as subject matter experts, also help to keep the harmonised principles current in the interim period.

- 7.3 The paper was agreed but it would be useful to return to the Implementation Plan periodically to ensure it is still current and to review progress against it.

**8.0 Governance of Administrative and Business Harmonisation, NSHG (14:3) 22, Jan Thomas**

- 8.1 Jan presented the paper explaining the background behind it and how it seeks the views of the NSHG on how best to formalise the agreement process of administrative and business

harmonisation. There is already a good management process in place for the harmonisation of social statistics and this paper outlines a number of approaches that could be used and presents a high level view of the 'pros' and 'cons' of each. Jan suggested option B, setting up NSHG sub-groups for business statistics and admin data, was the preferred option as far as the Harmonisation Team was concerned.

- 8.2 A question was asked if the admin and business harmonisation topics were new topics or if they were part of the existing topic groups. A list of business topic leads had previously been proposed and included some which were definitely business related and some which were also aligned to the social harmonisation topics. Organisations like the Bank of England would also need to be involved as they conduct their own surveys.
- 8.3 Beyond 2011 are looking at the use of any datasets to produce statistics and these would include social statistics. The issue is how the topics of the Census can be replicated with those of the administrative datasets.
- 8.4 It was recognised that ownership of any new sub-group formed was important, rather than the NSHG imposing ourselves on business data and admin data groups. It was further suggested it might make sense in the short term, to gain some momentum, to form these new sub-groups to get the process going and see how they fit in with the current structure. It was pointed out that admin data colleagues do not attend the NSHG meeting but that harmonisation is invited to attend their meetings and that we already work closely with Carolyn Watson's (ONS) team. It was recognised there were links, certainly within ONS, to set those groups up but advice may be needed from departmental colleagues on who within other departments should be included.
- 8.5 It was agreed Beyond 2011 could share a list of key contacts for admin datasets with the NSHG.

**Action 9 – Marie Haythornthwaite to share the Beyond 2011 Team's list of contacts for admin datasets with the NSHG.**

- 8.6 The meeting was reminded, with regard to admin data, of the importance of building links with the existing topic groups. This was highlighted recently when a Department of Education consultation document was picked up proposing revision of classifications on special education needs and disability. It looks likely that any possible harmonisation views would not have been taken into account as, unfortunately there isn't currently a topic lead covering disability.
- 8.7 It was suggested we should perhaps ask existing topic leads how they feel about picking up responsibility for related administrative variables and questions.

**Action 10 – Harmonisation Team to write to topic leads to get a consensus on their thoughts about responsibility for dealing with related administrative variables and questions.**

- 8.8 Members agreed option B was the most sensible one to take and should be reviewed after 12 months as to whether having the separate sub-groups still makes sense. Once initial thoughts have been made into the membership of the groups, the Harmonisation Team should write a proposal to the NSHG, stating this is what is proposed and asking for suggestions for anyone else who should be included. Progress will be reported back at the next meeting.

**9.0 NMSG Topic Lead Updates, NSHG (14:3) 23 – Topic Group Leads**

**9.1 Benefits and Tax Credits – Thomas Simms**

- 9.1.1 Thomas Simms represented Caroline Smith (DWP) at the meeting. He explained there were still issues with the Social Fund question and how it is split. A new draft version of a question

has been drafted and comments have been received from the ONS Family Resource Survey (FRS) Team and the ONS Data Collection Methodology (DCM) Team. Comments are still awaited from NATCEN. There were no comments.

## 9.2 **Consumer Durables – Jana Kubascikova-Mullen**

9.2.1 As Jana has just taken responsibility for the topic group, there was nothing to report this period for this group.

## 9.3 **Country of Birth and Migration – Pamela Cobb (took over WEF 16 Sep 14)**

9.3.1 The Chair explained a new lead for this group has just been appointed. Pamela Cobb, who works in the Migration Statistics Unit of ONS, will be at the next meeting in December.

## 9.4 **Crime and Anti Social Behaviour – Nicola White**

9.4.1 Nicola was unable to be at the meeting and had nothing to report for this period.

## 9.5 **Demographic Information – Emily Knipe**

9.5.1 Emily presented her report, highlighting the situation with the 'marital status' question and the need to decide between having an extended 'marital status' question or leaving the 'marital status' question as is and then having a follow up question on 'same sex marriage'. There are no changes needed to be made for 'Civil Partnerships', due to results of the recent review confirming these are still relevant. User needs for separate data on 'same sex marriages' are being looked into as the recent Vital Statistics Outputs Branch consultation suggests this is needed (it is also needed within ONS). When the questions are drafted they will be presented to the NSHG.

## 9.6 **Economic Activity – Debra Leaker**

9.6.1 Debra was not able to be at the meeting and did not provide a report. The Chair asked the Harmonisation Team to contact Debra as there may well be some tie in to the Business Harmonisation activity.

**Action 11 – Harmonisation Team to contact Debra Leaker as there may well be some tie in to the Business Harmonisation activity.**

## 9.7 **Education – Karen Grierson**

9.7.1 Karen was not able to be at the meeting. Her report was presented by the Secretariat. There were no comments but the following action was agreed.

**Action 12 – Education topic lead to contact Data Collection Methodology (DCM) in ONS with regard to the potential resource to test new questions.**

## 9.8 **EILR – Angela Potter-Collins**

9.8.1 Angela was not able to be at the meeting. Her report was presented by the Chair. There were no comments.

## 9.9 **Health, Disability and Carers - TBA**

9.9.1 There is currently no topic lead for this group, therefore a report has not been submitted. The Harmonisation Team is currently, without much success, still trying to find a new lead for this group. It was suggested we contact Kate Bedford (NSH SG member) to see if she could make any suggestions.

**Action 13 – Harmonisation Team to contact Kate Bedford, to see if she could make any suggestions, for a replacement lead for the Health, Disability and Carers Topic Group.**

9.9.2 It was also suggested the topic is too broad and it may be worth looking at breaking up the topic into two separate topics; Health and Disability (including Carers), as this may be considered less of a burden for potential leads.

#### 9.10 **Housing and Tenure – Hugh Mallinson**

9.10.1 Hugh was not able to be at the meeting. No report was submitted.

#### 9.11 **Income – Richard Tonkin**

9.11.1 Richard was unable to be at the meeting and had nothing to report this period.

#### 9.12 **Integrated Household Survey – Tim Vizard**

9.12.1 Tim was unable to be at the meeting but did provide a report, which was presented by the Chair. There were no comments or questions raised. The inclusion of a report from the Integrated Household Survey (IHS), as a topic lead report, was discussed and it was agreed it was no longer required. The inclusion, however, of an overall report on the activities of the Social Survey Division (SSD) at ONS was considered to be of interest to this group. A few meetings ago Tim had stated he was interested in being a contact point for SSD with regard to NSHG activities. With this in mind the Secretariat was asked to contact Tim to see if he is still willing to do this and provide a quarterly report for section 3 of future NSHG meetings.

**Action 14 - Secretariat to contact Tim Vizard to see if he is still willing to act as a representative for SSD and provide a quarterly report for section 3 of future NSHG meetings.**

#### 9.13 **Pensions – Tim Gibbs**

9.13.1 Tim stated there was nothing to report for this period for this topic group.

9.14 There were some general comments with regard to the topic groups. It was agreed the harmonised questions should be reviewed for the next Census which will be predominately internet based, as some may need to be redesigned. It was recognised there would be mode specific issues and that topic groups need to consider the inclusion of different modes within their respective harmonised principles.

9.15 In response to a question it was stated that surveys from other Government Departments are included in the VQB but only the GSS approved harmonised questions are identified by the GSS logo. It was also pointed out the Census questions are not currently available in the VQB but there are plans to include them.

9.18 A query was raised with regard to which topic leads to contact for Nationality, National Identity, Religion and Ethnicity as there is a strand of the Electronic Data Collection (EDC) work looking at adapting the Labour Force Survey to a self completion mode. It would be best to contact Angela Potter-Collins (lead for Ethnicity, Religion and National Identity) and Pamela Cobb (lead for Country of Birth which includes Nationality) who are the leads covering these topics.

**Action 15 – Pete Betts to contact Angela Potter-Collins and Pamela Cobb with regard to changing questions on Nationality, National Identity, Religion and Ethnicity to self completion mode.**

## 10.0 **AOB**

10.1 There were no items of AOB

## 11.0 **Next Meetings**

11.1 The dates of the next two meetings are:

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate, Meeting Room 3

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate, Meeting Room 3

### Annexes:

A List of Actions

### ANNEX A

<b>ACTIONS FROM THE NSHG MEETING – 18 SEPTEMBER 2014</b>				
<b>Action No</b>	<b>Para</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Status</b>
1	2.4	Sarah Martin (and Julie Wilson) to discuss NSHG membership with National Records Scotland and report back to the NSHG.	Sarah Martin	
2	3.7	Paul Waruszynski to send the Secretariat a link and information about where the Census commissioned tables are published online and also what is being doing in terms of assessment of meeting user needs and benefits realisation.	Paul Waruszynski	
3	3.11	Secretariat to provide a link in the minutes of this meeting to the Authority Exposure Draft for Quality Assessment of Administrative Data.	Secretariat / Emma Wright	Complete
4	3.12	Sarah Martin to talk to colleagues within NRS to see if an update on the Scottish Census could be presented at the next NSHG meeting.	Sarah Martin	
5	4.2	Secretariat to contact the MRWG with the feedback from the meeting and asking them to resubmit the paper so it can be circulated by correspondence to the NSHG, for approval.	Secretariat	Complete
6	6.1	NSHG members to report back to the NSHG, via the Secretariat, with any further ideas for case studies they may have.	NSHG Members	Complete
7	6.2	Emma Bowditch to discuss the coming poverty event with Jan and forward dates and an invite.	Emma Bowditch	Complete
8	6.3	Jan Thomas to circulate the paper for the SPSC with the four case studies to the NSHG membership.	Jan Thomas	Complete
9	8.5	Marie Haythornthwaite to share the Beyond 2011 Team's list of contacts for admin data sets with the NSHG.	Marie Haythornthwaite	Complete

10	8.7	Harmonisation Team to write to topic leads to get a consensus on their thoughts about responsibility for dealing with related administrative variables and questions.	Harmonisation Team (Jan Thomas)	Complete
11	9.6.1	Harmonisation Team to contact Debra Leaker as there may well be some tie in to the Business Harmonisation activity.	Harmonisation Team (Jan Thomas)	Complete
12	9.7.1	Education topic lead asked to contact Data Collection Methodology (DCM) in ONS with regard to potential resources needed to test new questions	Karen Grierson	
13	9.9.1	Harmonisation Team to contact Kate Bedford, to see if she could make any suggestions, for a replacement lead for the Health, Disability and Carers Topic Group.	Harmonisation Team (Jan Thomas)	Complete
14	9.12.1	Secretariat to contact Tim Vizard to see if he is still willing to act as a representative for SSD and provide a quarterly report for section 3 of future NSHG minutes.	Secretariat	Complete
15	9.18	Pete Betts to contact Angela Potter-Collins and Pamela Cobb with regard to changing questions on Nationality, National Identity, Religion and Ethnicity to self completion mode.	Pete Betts	Complete



## National Statistics Harmonisation Group

### GSS SPSC Meeting Report – December 2014

#### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The GSS SPSC meeting was held on 16 October 2014. The meeting was chaired by John Pullinger (National Statistician) and was attended by Pete Brodie and Jacqui Jones. This report highlights the discussed items from the GSS SPSC meeting that directly affect the NSHG. The full minutes for the meeting are at Annex A - these are in draft and have not been approved.

#### 2.0 Issues for Information/discussion

##### 2.1 Harmonisation Strategy: Case Studies – GSS SPSC (14) 36

Pete Brodie introduced the paper which sets out the progress on the preparation of the new harmonisation strategy. It was noted that the strategy includes the four case studies requested by the Committee at the last meeting illustrating the benefits of harmonisation.

Members were also informed that the steering group have a draft implementation plan. The following points were raised in discussion:

- the Committee welcomed the new case studies, agreeing that they are good examples;
- some members felt that whilst the case studies were good it was not necessary to discuss it in detail at SPSC;
- if the steering group is to continue it should ensure that it has a strategic focus., i.e. the promotion and expansion of business and administrative data;
- the Committee felt that the Harmonisation Team should feel empowered to lead for GSS

##### 2.2 Points arising from Summary Reports from Sub-Committees – GSS SPSC (14) 30

There were no points arising from the NSHG Sub-Committee summary report

#### 3.0 Next GSS SPSC Meeting

3.1 Next GSS SPSC meeting is planned for 29 Jan 2015.

**Pete Brodie**  
**ONS Methodology**  
**Nov 2014**

#### List of Annexes:

**Annex A** Draft Minutes of the GSS SPSC Meeting, 16 October 2014

**MINUTES OF GSS STATISTICAL POLICY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday 16 October 2014**  
**Meeting room 3, UK Statistics Authority, Pimlico, London**

**Present**

Pete Brodie	Office for National Statistics
Julie Brown (via audio)	Department for Transport
Gareth Clancy	National Statistician's Office
Pam Davies	National Statistician's Office
Steve Ellerd-Elliott	Ministry of Justice
David Fry	Department for Communities and Local Government
Jacqui Jones	Office for National Statistics
Peter Lumb	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
Duncan Millard	Department for Energy and Climate Change
Bill Oates	National Statistician's Office
Clare Parsons	National Statistician's Office, Secretariat
John Pullinger (Chair)	National Statistician
Keith Spicer	Office for National Statistics
Andy Tait (via audio)	Office for National Statistics
Emma Wright (via audio)	Office for National Statistics

**Apologies**

Roger Halliday	Scottish Government
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**1 Chair's welcome**

1.1 John Pullinger welcomed everyone to the meeting. As this was his first meeting he asked members for their thoughts on the Committee and its function. The following points were raised in discussion:

- the Committee provides a means to challenge and engage in meaningful debate, providing a greater sense of the impact of decisions and their implementation;
- the Committee's scope is wide and it occasionally becomes involved in too much detail. It should concentrate on strategic priority setting;
- the Committee highlights the importance of methodology and improves engagement. It provides a link between GSS policies and departments and gets things done as part of statistical governance;
- the Committee sometimes feels process driven and may benefit from a more workshop based approach to deal with changes to policy and standards.

**2 Minutes, Actions and matters arising from last meeting - GSS SPSC (14) 28**

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2.2 All other actions from the last meeting are complete or in progress with the following points noted:

- *action 10 – Meetings between Monitoring and Assessment and HoPs* – It was confirmed that Ed Humpherson has received feedback from HoPs and is in the process of formulating a delivery plan. Pam Davies agreed to check how this is progressing;
- *action 17 – Observers attendance at SPSC meetings* – the Chair and members agreed that they are content for observers to attend future meetings. Any requests should be made initially via SPSC Secretariat.

**ACTION 1:** Pam Davies to establish the progress relating to the communication of the draft guidance on Administrative Data between the Monitoring and Assessment Team and HoPs.

### 3 Update from the GSS Presentation and Dissemination Committee - GSS SPSC (14) 29

3.1 Julie Brown introduced the paper explaining that she is the newly appointed Chair of the Presentation and Dissemination Committee (PDC) and requested a steer from SPSC on current priorities for the committee. The following points were raised in discussion:

- PDC chair should meet with the ONS Head of Communications, Sian Callaghan, in relation to engagement with social media without detracting from policy. It was agreed that Julie should contact Sian and look to join up the communication aspect regarding social media;
- it was noted that the ONS Statistical Product Working Group are looking at producing Digital Bulletins and how these would look in the future. It was agreed that Jacqui Jones would agree to contact the PDC chair to discuss this further, specifically what good looks like. It was also agreed that the PDC chair should be invited to relevant ONS events to add a broader GSS focus;
- members were informed that the Department for Transport (DFT) and the Good Practice Team (GPT) are currently running workshops covering Data Visualisation and Engaging with Users. If successful these workshops should be offered to other departments. It was noted that GPT are launching Data Visualisation Packs which will be used at the workshops but also published on the GSS Website;
- the Committee indicated there was a desire within departments to have a more joined up approach in developing good practice;
- it was noted that much of the work involving GDS and gov.uk on the release calendar has now been completed. It was recognised that PDC still have a vital role to play to further improve and strengthen the relationship with GDS;
- many junior statistician's are responsible for writing the statistical releases it is important to capture examples of how to enthuse them.

**ACTION 2:** Julie Brown to contact Sian Callaghan (Head Of Communications at ONS) to discuss engagement with Social Media across the GSS.

**ACTION 3:** Jacqui Jones to contact Julie Brown regarding attending potential ONS events and further discussions regarding what good looks like for statistical bulletins.

#### 4 Points Arising from Summary Reports from Sub-Committees and Sub-Groups GSS SPSC (14) 30

4.1 Pam Davies introduced the summary reports and the following point was raised in discussion:

##### 4.1.1 *International Committee (IC)*

- members were informed that IC are currently developing a dashboard as the committee's main method of communication with the GSS which will include publication on the GSS website. It was agreed that this will be presented at the next SPSC with a view to possible rolling out this way of communication to other committees/sub-committees;

**ACTION 4:** Future use of the IC Dashboard to be included on the agenda for the next SPSC meeting on 29 January 2014. NSO to liaise with Duncan Millard and Wesley Miles.

#### 5 Data Science

5.1 Bill Oates opened the discussion on Data Science, explaining that no paper was provided as the Data Science Agenda was moving rapidly and he felt that a timely update would be more useful following his project meeting earlier that morning.

5.2 Bill provided the following update to the Committee:

- following the launch of the GSS Data Strategy in 2013, at the start of 2014, a 'Data Science' project was initiated by the Cabinet Office, GO-Science and GDS with broadly similar objectives. As such the main focus for the GSS Data Strategy has now become working alongside the Data Science project to secure the role and place of statistics and the GSS in this arena and to make the case that the existing analytical professions are appropriate repositories of data skills and expertise. It was noted that progress has been good, with early successes including a number of statisticians involved in the 'Accelerator' process, which involves working alongside GDS Data Scientists to deliver a short three-month data science piece of work;
- following on from the above success a more detailed proposition, on behalf of the National Statistician, is being prepared for a cross-governmental analytical function, including a significant role for the GSS. It is intended that an agreed proposition will be presented to the Cabinet Secretary in December 2014. Key features of the proposition include:
  - a core team that will focus on both capacity building/network activities and the hands-on delivery of advanced analysis projects;
  - a wider network and community of interest: the analytical community in government and also the users (policy and service delivery);
  - links with the market (e.g. big data suppliers), research community and also potentially with data advocacy groups to help generate an effective ethical framework.

- it was noted that the detail of the location of this function and the relative resource contributions from different parties and stakeholders will be the primary focus of work in the next few weeks.

5.3 Bill invited comments from members and the following points were raised in discussion:

- Data Scientists are considered more experimental, so statisticians would have to think about the differences, although this will provide good opportunities for statisticians and analysts;
- HoPs should be thinking about how data science can answer questions that their Permanent Secretaries are asking them;
- ONS are currently recruiting an Director General who will have responsibility for data and provide leadership across the GSS;
- ONS's Big Data Project has highlighted many different opinions on what Data Science is. It has looked at building capability and engaging with users such as the UN and Eurostat;
- pilot studies have looked at how to use mobile phone data, twitter data, smart meter data, and administrative data and how to gather statistics more efficiently. It was noted that ONS are using aggregated smart meter data;
- HMRC are currently involved in a large scale recruitment and expansion project for new directorates; Big Data and Data Exploitation;
- assuring individuals privacy is critical, The Netherlands have raised concerns over privacy relating to smart meters;
- examples used within the proposition paper and to shape the network should bring it to life. The keys to success will be communication and engagement.

## **6 Review of the benefits of the Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) - GSS SPSC(14) 32**

6.1 Pete Brodie introduced the paper which included proposals for the future of the fund which are as follows; do nothing, abolish QIF and do not replace or restructure and rebrand ONS Methodology service as the GSS Methodology Service. The following points were raised in discussion:

- concerns were raised regarding the lack of feedback or accountability after the funds were allocated. Currently there is no means of measuring the benefits to the GSS;
- it was agreed that the re-branding from ONS to GSS was a good idea;
- there was some concern as to why some of the work including within bids isn't already being done. Also raised was whether those who made unsuccessful bids managed to secure funds from departmental budgets if the work was necessary;
- the Committee agreed that the fund would be reduced to £150,000 and the broader benefit to the GSS must be evidenced. If this is successful the fund will continue. It was agreed that the fund would be reviewed for value for money in a year's time.

**ACTION 5:** QIF chair to action the changes as agreed. NSO to communicate the changes to the wider GSS.

## 7 Revised Geography Policy- GSS SPSC(14) 33

7.1 Andy Tait introduced the paper explaining that approval was being sought for the revised Geography Policy. The review of the policy has resulted amendments that reflect the statistical geographies updated from the 2011 Census, along with a closer alignment with the stages of statistical production. It was noted that the policy has been reviewed by stakeholders such as the GSS Geography Services Forum and GSS Regional & Geography Committee. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Scottish Government raised a concerns prior to the meeting, these are currently being dealt with and Andy will respond directly to Scottish Government;
- the Committee approved the revised policy but concerns were raised with regards to the GSS branding, with some thinking that Arms Length Bodies (ALB's) may not think it applies to them. It was agreed that communicating the policy was key in order to ensure that it was fully inclusive;
- the Committee raised concerns regarding mapping, although they appreciated there was more work to do. It was suggested that it may be useful to discuss the communication strategy further with the Good Practice Team (GPT).

**ACTION 6:** Andy Tait to respond directly to Gregor Boyd on behalf of the Scottish Government regarding the issues raised on the Revised Geography Policy.

**ACTION 7:** Andy to discuss communicating the Revised Geography Policy with the Good Practice Team and consider how to further promote good practice.

## 8 Consultation on the scope of the Online List of Government Statistical Surveys (OLGSS) – GSS SPSC(14) 34

8.1 Emma Wright introduced the paper, providing an update on developments in survey control (respondent burden). She explained that it is proposed to make changes to the scope of the Online List of Government Statistical Surveys (OLGSS). This will see the inclusion of surveys of individuals and households within OLGSS and the removal of quality reviews as a requirement on OLGSS.

8.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- it was confirmed that Government Employees are excluded from scope;
- it was noted that prior to the meeting, concerns has been raised that a compliance cost should not be mandatory for a voluntary survey;
- consideration needs to be given as to how the proposals link to the Harmonisation Strategy, with it noted that links to harmonisation and standards need to be communicated in order to promote good practice;

- the proposals may assist Social Researchers improve question design;
- concerns were raised about the burden on departments. It was agreed that Emma would investigate the number of web-hits the list has received. It needs to donate value added;
- the focus needs to be on quality not just on compliance. Although OLGSS should be extended to individuals & households it should not adopt the same requirements as business surveys.

8.3 It was noted that the Committee approved both of the proposals.

**ACTION 8:** Emma Wright to respond directly to Andy Sutherland (HSCIC) regarding the points he raised regarding OLGSS prior to the meeting.

**ACTION 9:** Emma Wright to respond directly to Kim Leather (MOD) regarding the points she raised regarding OLGSS prior to the meeting.

**ACTION 10:** Emma Wright to amend the list accordingly ensuring that it reflects concerns relating to the one-size fits all approach.

## 9 **Disclosure Task and Finish Group : Revised Guidance (microdata from Social Surveys) GSS SPSC(14) 35**

9.1 Keith Spicer introduced the paper which provides an update from the GSS Task and Finish Group on Statistical Disclosure Control. It was noted that the group has already produced guidance on disclosure control on administrative data and the paper requests approval of the updated guidance relating to social surveys. The following points were made in discussion:

- members were informed that there had been an extensive consultation process and that the guidance had been updated to reflect comments received;
- it was agreed that outstanding issues/comments with HMRC and SG should be followed up and once resolved the Committee agreed to proceed with the guidance;
- the Committee agreed that the group should be disbanded. However it did recognise the importance of the work that the group had completed and felt that a network should be developed to aid discussion;
- it was noted that HMRC would welcome an opportunity to be represented on any future group/network and that the governance of such a group will need further consideration, along with its function;
- concern was raised relating to paragraph 4.2 with the guidance relating to privately held data. The phrase '...are in reality doubtful to give much protection', needs to be amended so people can be confident that private data can be handled well;

- the case studies were recognised as good examples, with it agreed that further examples from across the GSS would be welcome.

**ACTION 11:** Keith Spicer to look at paragraph 4.2 of the Tabular Guidance and re-word as appropriate.

**ACTION 12:** Keith Spicer to set up a network using the GSS website.

## 10 Harmonisation Strategy :Case Studies – GSS SPSC (14) 36

**10.1** Pete Brodie introduced the paper which sets out the progress on the preparation of the new harmonisation strategy. It was noted that the strategy includes the four case studies requested by the Committee at the last meeting illustrating the benefits of harmonisation.

**10.2** Members were also informed that the steering group have a draft implementation plan. The following points were raised in discussion:

- the Committee welcomed the new case studies, agreeing that they are good examples;
- some members felt that whilst the case studies were good it was not necessary to discuss it in detail at SPSC;
- if the steering group is to continue it should ensure that it has a strategic focus., i.e. the promotion and expansion of business and administrative data;
- the Committee felt that the Harmonisation Team should feel empowered to lead for GSS

## 11 Any other Business

11.1 John Pullinger provided an update on his future vision for statistics drawing member's attention to potential changes in GSS structure and governance. It was noted that a paper will be presented shortly to the National Statistics Executive Group outlining proposals for future governance.

11.2 It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled for 29 January 2015.

**SPSC Secretariat  
October 2014**



## National Statistics Harmonisation Group

### NSHG Work Plan – December 2014

#### 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 associated activities, the main items of progress being reported below.

#### Current Work Programme

3. **Harmonisation Web pages** – As reported on the workplan for September, the ONS Harmonisation web pages are currently being reviewed to ensure the content is current. The Harmonisation landing page has now been refreshed and work is currently going on to refresh the content of all the harmonisation pages.
4. **Sub topic groups** – It has been agreed to remove 'Classifications' from the Topic Groups as it is felt the Standard Classifications for Occupation and Industry are not relevant to harmonisation work. There are now thirteen sub groups reporting to the NSHG. The work of these Topic Groups has been ongoing and the quarterly reports from these groups are presented at this meeting.
  - Benefits and Tax Credits
  - Consumer Durables
  - Country of Birth/Migration and Citizenship
  - Crime and Anti Social Behaviour
  - Demographic Information, Household Relationships to include Civil Partnership
  - Disability; to include general health and carers (no current topic lead)
  - Economic Activity and Employment Status
  - Educational Attainment
  - Ethnicity, National Identity, Language & Religion (EILR) now combined with Sexual identity
  - Housing and Tenure, including Accommodation, Type/Length of Residence, Motor Vehicles & Housing Costs and Benefits
  - Income
  - Pensions

The interim revised harmonised principle for Benefits and Tax Credits is still progressing slowly as the issues around the Social Fund are resolved. A new question has been devised and the aim is to present this with the questionnaire consultation for the next FRS survey. It is hoped this will be done by the end of the year.

A temporary replacement Topic Lead for Country of Birth, Migration and Citizenship, has been identified and will start to look at the work the group has already done. The search for a topic lead for the Disability, Health and Carers group is continuing, with a member of the National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group (NSH SG) looking into this.

We have just been advised the topic lead for Economic Activity is standing down and are now looking for a replacement topic lead for this group. We would welcome any input from the membership on finding a suitable replacement.

5. **UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank** – The VQB team have acquired additional resource to help add the business surveys to the VQB and this work is expected to be finalised imminently. The harmonisation team have identified that Census questions are not available on the VQB and have also requested that they are added to the bank. The VQB team have responded that this is on their to-do list. The harmonisation team continue to provide demos to raise awareness and encourage the use of the VQB. <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/variables>.

6. **Raising the profile of Harmonisation and strengthening links** – A list of relevant stakeholders for social, business and administrative data has been developed by the Harmonisation Team. The Team will use this information to identify and address any gaps in who we are communicating with and how.

The Harmonisation Team has also submitted abstracts to present at:

- Research, Analysis and Statistics (RAS) Conference at ONS Newport on 27th January 2015
- New Techniques and Technologies for Statistics (NTTS) Conference in Brussels on 10-12th March 2015

7. **Harmonisation Roadshows** – Since the last meeting the following roadshows/presentations have taken place:
- ONS Beyond 2011 Statistical Options Development (StOD) Team Meeting on 20th November 2014
  - Northern GSS Conference on 27th November 2014

Future events planned are:

- Business Statistics Harmonisation workshop - early 2015 (date to be confirmed)
- Statistics User Forum workshop (joint event with RSS) on 21st January 2015 (date to be confirmed)
- UK Statistics Authority Monitoring and Assessment Team workshop on 26th January 2015

8. **NSHG Steering Group** – The NSH SG with its enhanced membership, has now met a further two times via audio. To date the NSH SG Terms of Reference have been agreed and a Strategy Plan has been discussed and agreed. Discussions have also taken place around 'query analysis' and how this could feed into a 'forward looking' communications plan and around ideas for 'kick starting' business harmonisation. At the GSS SPSC meeting on 16 October, the strategic role of the NSH SG was agreed. It was also agreed there would be a combined report from the NSH SG and the NSHG with the NSH SG report to the GSS SPSC including the report from the NSHG. At the same meeting a question was raised with regard to Devolved Administration membership of the NSH SG and an action was taken to discuss membership with a representative from the Scottish Government. A further two meetings are planned for the group. The first in January 2015 will be another audio meeting and the second in April 2015 will be formal meeting.

9. **Harmonising Business Standards** – The Harmonisation Team is continuing to engage with ONS business data colleagues in Newport. A member of the team recently spent two days in Newport to meet colleagues face to face and to learn more about business statistics. A stakeholder analysis has been developed and a project plan is being developed, including looking at the various business initiatives going on within ONS and across the GSS to examine the crossovers and identify where harmonisation can help. The Harmonisation Team is planning to hold a workshop in the New Year with colleagues in Newport to kick start the business harmonisation sub-group. The report on comparing definitions of turnover across all ONS business surveys has been circulated to business experts and the Harmonisation Team is hoping to meet with them soon to discuss the findings.

10. **Harmonising Administrative Data** – There are a number of initiatives within ONS (BY2011 and within the Admin Data Division), UK Statistics Authority and Admin Data Research Network are looking into

how administrative data may be used effectively. Work in this area is in its infancy and the harmonisation team are meeting with relevant teams and are planning to assist with future feasibility studies.

11. **Data Markers (Symbols in Tables)** - The data markers and supporting documentation are now live as guidance on the GSS Website A-Z of Policy and Guidance pages.
12. **Revised Harmonisation Strategy** – At the October GSS SPSC meeting the additional case studies to support the revised Harmonised Strategy were presented. This was at the suggestion of the GSS SPSC who had asked the NSH SG to prepare three further case studies to support the Strategy, in addition to the one on Equalities and Human Rights, originally submitted with the Strategy. The four case studies selected to support the revised strategy are:
  - Harmonising Citizenship for the UK: Census Country Numbers
  - Ethnicity
  - Indices of Multiple Deprivation for the UK
  - Harmonisation and the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Measurement Framework

The case studies were agreed by the SPSC and the committee was happy with the different types of harmonisation issues raised. The next step will be to append the case studies to the Revised Strategy for circulation to the GSS SPSC for approval and sign-off.

13. The NSHG workplan will be amended for next year to ensure the items reported against, reflect the revised implementation plan. These amendments will also be fed through into the Terms of Reference as well.

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**Annex A**  
**NSHG Workplan – Review December 2014**

<b>Term of Reference</b>			
<b>1. To provide strategic direction for the design, development and maintenance of common statistical frames, definitions and classification for Statistics</b>			
<b>Key action Step(s)</b>	<b>Previous reporting activities</b>	<b>This reporting activity</b>	<b>Person/area responsible</b>
Research project – Administrative sources A-Z of Harmonised Principles Harmonisation Web-pages Harmonisation Strategy and Implementation Plan NSHG Workshop NSH SG Business Harmonisation	September 2014  The A-Z of Harmonised Principles is now up to date.  The ONS web site landing page that has the link to the Harmonisation pages has been revamped making it easier to find the pages.  The GSS SPSC has had further input to the Harmonisation Strategy, suggesting we need case studies to support the strategy. These are currently being worked on.  NSHG Steering Group now has an additional four members and has met via audio a couple of times, with further meeting planned.	December 2014  The Harmonisation landing page on the ONS Website has now been refreshed with an up to date look and a check for current/relevant information. The remainder of the Harmonisation pages, linked off this landing page are now being reviewed.  The case studies to be included with the Harmonisation Strategy have now been finalised and agreed by the GSS SPSC. These will now be appended to the Strategy and the whole document circulated to the SPSC for approval and sign-off.  NSH SG has met in September and October. TOR and strategy now agreed. A combined NSH SG and NSHG report will be submitted to GSS SPSC in future	NSHG members
<b>Term of Reference</b>			
<b>2. To be responsible for setting harmonised principles</b>			
<b>Key action Step(s)</b>	<b>Previous reporting activities</b>	<b>This reporting activity</b>	<b>Person/area responsible</b>
NSHG Topic Sub Groups NSHG workshop to identify, review and prioritise harmonised standards	September 2014  Revised Interim Benefits and Tax Credits Harmonised Principle is very near to completion and may be ready for 18 Sep 14 NSHG meeting.  A topic lead has been identified for the Demographic Information group. A meeting has taken place to source a new lead for the Country of Birth and Migration Topic Group.	December 2014  Revised Interim Benefits and Tax Credits Harmonised Principle is still being worked on. The social fund question has been rewritten and included for consultation for the next FRS survey.  A topic lead has been identified for the Country of Birth Migration and Citizenship Topic Group. The NSHG are still trying to identify a suitable Topic Lead for the Health, Disability and Carers Topic Group  A replacement topic lead is required for the Economic Activity topic group.	NSHG members

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>September 2014</p> <p>The UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank have agreed to add the Annual Business Survey (ABS) and the Monthly Business Survey (MBS) to the VQB as a pilot (due to be before the end of 2014).</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>The VQB team have acquired additional resource and the business surveys should be added to the VQB imminently. The harmonisation team have identified that Census questions are not available on the VQB and have also requested that they are added to the VQB. The harmonisation team continue to provide demos to raise awareness and encourage the use of the VQB.</p>	ONS
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>September 2014</p> <p>A number of successful roadshows took place during June and July. These were generally well supported. No further roadshows are planned for the time being.</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for the NSHG have been revised to include further references to the Code of Practice.</p> <p>A 'Harmonisation Flyer' has been produced to highlight the benefits of harmonisation and how it is achieved. This also contains useful links to harmonisation material.</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>No further Roadshows are planned for the time being. The content of future roadshows will be reviewed to include the recent changes to the Harmonisation Strategy and Implementation Plan and will include some of the case studies work, to reinforce the benefits of harmonisation.</p> <p>The NSHG Terms of Reference will be fully reviewed, now the Harmonisation Strategy Implementation Plan has been agreed, to ensure it is still reflective of the Strategy.</p> <p>Work is currently going on to improve the use of the StatsUserNet community. This work includes the use of 'blogs' and the Stats Users Forum.</p> <p>NSHG agendas, papers and minutes are now published on the Harmonisation page on the GSSnet Website. This is now the primary method of distribution for these documents.</p>	NSHG members

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>September 2014</p> <p>There is nothing to report on future harmonisation topics (Alcohol Consumption and Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS)).</p> <p>There have been several positive meetings with various business data colleagues in Newport over the summer to move the Business Harmonisation work forward.</p> <p>The harmonisation team have initiated meetings with Beyond 2011 to ensure involvement in the process to harmonise administrative sources. The team have also been invited to attend the planned two day Beyond 2011 workshop during October and will become part of the Integrated Project team</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>The paper recently submitted to the NSHG for agreement on guidance on the use of 'Country of Birth' and 'Nationality' when looking at migration data, has been agreed by the NSHG (by correspondence).</p> <p>The Harmonisation Team is continuing to engage with ONS business data colleagues in Newport. The Harmonisation Team is planning to hold a workshop in the New Year with colleagues in Newport to kick start the business harmonisation sub-group.</p> <p>UK Statistics Authority and Admin Data Research Network are looking into how administrative data may be used effectively. Work in this area is in its infancy and the harmonisation team are meeting with relevant teams and are planning to assist with future feasibility studies.</p>	<p>NSHG members</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>September 2014</p> <p>The UK Data Services Variable and Question Bank has been promoted through the Harmonisation Roadshows and is always well received.</p> <p>A full review of the Harmonisation web pages is under way and will hopefully result in a cleaner look to the pages and enable users to find information more easily. The Guidance and Methodology landing site has already been reviewed and updated.</p> <p>A 'Harmonisation Flyer' has been produced to highlight the benefits of harmonisation and how it is achieved. This also contains useful links to harmonisation material.</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>The Harmonisation landing page has now been refreshed and work is currently going on to refresh the content of the remaining harmonisation pages on the ONS Website.</p>	<p>Mainly ONS</p> <p>NSHG members are also expected to promote harmonisation within their own departments and wherever possible</p>



## **National Statistics Harmonisation Group**

### **Census Update - December 2014**

#### **Introduction**

This short paper is for NSHG members to update them on progress on the 2011 Census Outputs for England and Wales and for the UK.

Please note that dates specified below are provisional and subject to change.

#### **Summary of census releases – England and Wales**

For a complete list of 2011 Census releases for England and Wales, and for more information on these releases see the following link: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/2011-census-data-catalogue/census-data-quick-view/index.html>

#### **Summary of census releases – UK**

For a complete list of 2011 Census releases for the UK, and for more information on these releases see the following link: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/uk-census-data-releases/index.html>

#### **Since previous update (September 2014)**

The following products have been released since the previous update:

#### **Origin and Destination tables (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and UK)**

In November the remainder of the public origin and destination tables were published, these were a series of migration tables for the UK, this was accompanied by a piece of analysis.

Please see the following page for more information:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/origin-destination-statistics-on-migration-for-local-authorities-in-the-united-kingdom/index.html>

In addition, the first sets of 'secure' and 'safeguarded' tables have also been made available. These are detailed flows at lower levels of geography, therefore, ensure confidentiality, these files aren't available publically and are available either through the UK Data Service or the ONS Virtual Microdata Laboratory (VML).

Please see the following link for more detail on what data's available, through what route it's being made available and how to gain access:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/census-origin-and-destination-data/index.html>

#### **Out of term population tables – September**

A variety of tables containing demographic characteristics of the out of term population for England and Wales. The out of term population differs from the usual resident population in that full-time students, with a 'students home address' provided, are counted at this alternative address rather than their enumeration address.

Please see the following page for more information:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/out-of-term-population-statistics-for-output-areas-in-england-and-wales/index.html>

**Microdata secure samples – October**

The Microdata secure sample have now been made available via the ONS VML. There are two samples, individual and household level, which feature 10% anonymised samples of the Census data.

For more information on the variables contained within the files and how to gain access, please see the following link:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/census-microdata/census-in-the-virtual-microdata-laboratory/index.html>

**Upcoming Statistics****Origin and Destination tables – December and January**

There will be continuing Origin and Destination releases throughout December and January. These will include the remainder of the 'safeguarded' UK tables, as well as the remaining England and Wales secure and safeguarded tables.

**Microdata individual safeguarded sample – December and January**

The safeguarded microdata files will be individual files available to users remotely via the UK Data Service. The aim is to produce two safeguarded samples, one at the region geographic level with detailed variables, a second at a lower 'grouped LA' geography, but with less detailed variables.

The following link provides the latest information and a list of variables for the region sample:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/census-microdata/safeguarded-microdata/index.html>

**Small population tables – December and January**

The first set of the small population tables are due for release on the 18<sup>th</sup> December. These tables will provide five year age by sex counts for a total of 30 separate countries of births and ethnic groups, for each local authority, where this groups meets a threshold of 200. These tables will be made available via NOMIS.

More information such as table specifications will be made available shortly.

**United Nations tables – December and January**

A series of tables requested by the United Nations for the UK, the main geographical breakdown for these tables is the urban / rural split.

**UK migration tables – January**

This release contains a number of tables on migration within the UK. These tables count the numbers of people who move into and out of an area and the characteristics of these people.



## National Statistics Harmonisation Group

### Proposal for Business Harmonisation Workshop - December 2014

#### **Introduction**

At the September NSHG meeting, it was agreed to set up an NSHG sub-group to formalise the harmonisation of business statistics. In order to kick-start this process, the Harmonisation Team proposes to hold a workshop in the New Year, with colleagues from business statistics within ONS.

A business harmonisation workshop was previously held in 2012 and in 2013 and participants were interested and enthused but due to lack of resource within the Harmonisation Team, the work has not progressed further. The Harmonisation Team now has additional dedicated resource to take this work forward.

#### **Issues for Discussion**

NSHG members are invited to comment on the following items:

1. The Harmonisation Team proposes that the workshop is held at ONS Newport as that is where most of the ONS business statistics stakeholders are based. It is proposed not to involve external stakeholders at this stage until the scope and approach have been agreed.
2. It has been suggested that the following people are invited:
  - Deputy Directors (or their representatives) from National Accounts & Economic Statistics and Data Collection directorates within ONS
  - Representatives from ONS change programmes (European System of Accounts, Electronic Data Collection, Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics, Admin Data Programme) and IT projects (Common Open Road Architecture)
  - Data Collection Methodology branch within ONS
3. The workshop should be run by the Harmonisation Team with input and support from the business areas.
4. The objectives of the workshop will be for:
  - Harmonisation Team to explain the current harmonisation process for social statistics using an "appreciative inquiry" method i.e. focussing on identifying what is working well, analysing why it is working well and then doing more of it.
  - Volunteers to show examples of harmonisation success in business surveys e.g. Capital Expenditure Survey and examples where harmonisation may be beneficial e.g. turnover definitions.
  - Harmonisation Team to demonstrate the Variable and Question Bank (hopefully using Annual Business Survey).
  - Attendees to make proposals for the sub-group Chair and members (including outside ONS) and to discuss how to involve and work with non-ONS members.
  - Attendees to make proposals for topic leads, topic groups and quick wins.

**Next Steps**

Harmonisation Team will set up a workshop for the New Year.

**Palvi Shah  
Harmonisation Team  
December 2014**



**National Statistics Harmonisation Group**  
**Administrative Data Update and Proposal**  
**December 2014**

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 At the September NSHG meeting, it was agreed to set up an NSHG sub-group to formalise the harmonisation of Administrative Data or build links with existing groups.

1.2 There are a number of on-going initiatives reviewing administrative data and how it may be used for statistical purposes. These initiatives are within Beyond Census 2011, the Administrative Data Programme (under the Administrative Data Division ONS), the UK Statistics Authority and the Admin Data Resource Network (ADRN).

## 2.0 Administrative data initiatives

2.1 The **Beyond 2011 programme (BY2011)** has been established to carry out research to look at existing data already held within government and this includes administrative data. There are already a number of known items that can be easily harmonised and are currently available in an administrative form, such as;

- Date of Birth
- Ethnicity
- Age ranges and
- Address formats

2.2 Alongside these, there are a number of variables that have been identified that cover a similar topic to census questions and those that are currently not available via administrative sources. Administrative data are collected for purposes other than statistics and the census are currently liaising with key data suppliers (DWP, Health, Education, BIS and HMRC) to influence the way data are collected. There are planned trial outputs on some characteristics in autumn 2016. A member of the harmonisation team recently attended the two day census awayday and has been invited to become involved in a number of Integrated Project Teams (IPTs). Alongside this, the harmonisation team are in regular contact with BY2011 and the NSHG now have a permanent BY2011 representative at quarterly meetings.

2.3 The recently formed **Administrative Data Division (ADD)** comprises of a range of admin data services that include:

- data acquisition,
- data processing, and
- data matching.

2.4 The ADD is leading on the **Administrative Data Programme (ADP)** and the **Admin Data Research Centre for England (ADRCE)**, which includes academic partners. Census will be funding part of **ADP** to allow them to keep pace with Beyond 2011's requirements for acquiring new admin datasets.

2.5 The **Admin Data Research Network (ADRN)** is a UK wide partnership between universities, government departments, funders and the wider research community (see diagram

in **Annex A**). It is funded by the Economic and Research Council (ESRC) and was set up to facilitate accredited researchers in accessing (de-identified) administrative data for research. **The UK Statistics Authority** is the reporting body to the UK parliament on ADRN and has created the ADRN board.

### 3.0 Administrative data considerations

3.1 A White Paper for Administrative data legislation (led by the Cabinet Office) was expected to be published this autumn, however plans for this are now on hold until after the next general election (next year). There is a lengthy process in using powers under the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) (SARS) to attain secondary legislation for Information Sharing Orders (ISOs) to get access to administrative data. This can take up to two years (developing business cases/seeking agreement with the department/ministerial engagement/approval in both Houses of Parliament/technical liaison over data supply etc). The Admin Data Programme (ONS) are intending to use the SARS to obtain administrative data.

3.2 As previously mentioned, not all census questions are covered by administrative sources, some are, some need work until they will be compatible and some questions are not available at all.

3.3 There are issues with the ONS address register in that there is currently no Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) used across the GSS and common definitions are required. The harmonisation team have offered to produce a joint paper highlighting the issues to raise awareness and also to identifying the top five admin data problems (Company identifier was another issue raised). Once the paper is finalised it will be brought to the NSHG for discussion.

3.4 A further issue is that the ADP is working towards harmonising administrative data over 5-7 years and the next census is planned in 7 years (2021). Although working together the timetable may need adjusting to suit census needs and requirements (for the census test and planning etc.).

3.5 Census teams are currently working with data suppliers and it may prove difficult to persuade data suppliers to provide data in such a way that is comparable and therefore can be used to supplement the Census.

### 4.0 Proposal

4.1 The proposal is not to form a separate topic group at this point in time, but instead to retain strong harmonisation presence within Census IPTs and for the ADP to advise and steer towards the harmonisation of administrative data. It would add good value to work with Beyond 2011 because harmonising administrative sources is more likely to be achieved through the work of the IPTs and working with data suppliers to harmonise the way in which administrative data are recorded. Any progress made will be reported back to the NSHG via regular reports.

### 5.0 Next Steps

5.1 The next steps are to:

- Investigate the proposed work on administrative sources currently planned by the ADP and Census Beyond 2011, to understand how they overlap and interrelate to each other and how the Harmonisation team may become involved in the process and in what capacity (advisory or assisting with feasibility studies etc.).

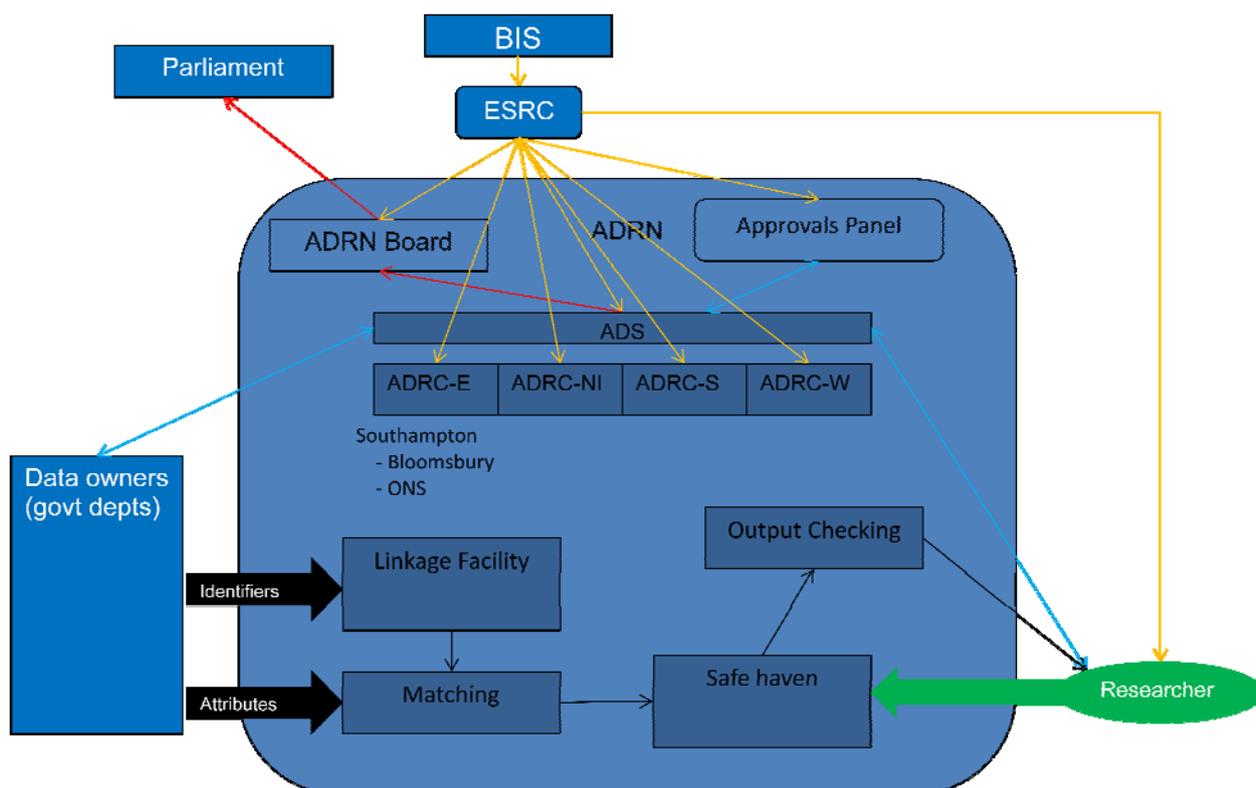
- Secure resources allocation - the Census will be allocating a sum of money to Methodology (ONS) to assist with various aspects of the 2021 Census. The amount of funding that will be allocated to the Classification and Harmonisation Unit (ONS) is yet to be confirmed but initial meetings have taken place to discuss requirements.
- Confirm timescales - the Census IPTs that require harmonisation involvement are expected to begin around spring 2015
- Expand current stakeholder analysis for administrative sources – an initial stakeholder analysis has been conducted but this is expected to be added to as progress of the IPTs and the ADP is developed.
- Liaise with the ONS address register project - the project is currently liaising with the ordinance survey (OS) and Geoplace who have the responsibility to deliver a national address register. Part of this is about standardising addresses across public data sources including admin sources. The Harmonisation team will work closely with the address register project and produce a combined report to feed back to NSHG and raise awareness of some of the on-going issues.

Becki Aquilina  
Harmonisation Team  
December 2014

## **Annexes**

Annex A      Admin Data Resource Network (ADRN)

Annex A – Admin Data Resource Network (ADRN)





## **National Statistics Harmonisation Group**

### **Review of the 2011 Census Questions - December 2014**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this short paper is to inform the NSHG of preliminary research work currently being taken forward as part of the Beyond 2011 Programme in relation to development of a primarily online census questionnaire. The focus of this short-term work is to review the 2011 Census questions to identify and start to assess some of the challenges that will need to be considered in moving from the 2011 data collection approach to an online design. Findings from this work will feed into the ongoing development of research plans in this area, which will form part of the next phase of the Census development over the next 18-24 months.

It should be noted that this is early stage research and no decisions have yet been made in relation to the design of the 2021 census collection instruments. While this paper focuses primarily on the current short-term research it also aims to set out, at a high level, some of the questionnaire design challenges that will need to be considered before an appropriate design can be finalised and agreed.

The short-term work for discussion is a range of research tasks reviewing the performance of the 2011 online questions. This will then inform the development of 2021 online questionnaire instrument. At this early stage we are focusing on the questions asked in 2011 as no decisions have been made regarding questions for 2021.

#### **Background**

The National Statistician recommended in March 2014 that the 2021 Census in England and Wales be online. In addition, she recommended "increased use of administrative data and surveys in order to enhance statistics from the 2021 Census and improve statistics between censuses".

The 2011 census questions were initially designed on paper, and then transferred to an online form, which approximately 16 percent of respondents used to complete the questionnaire. The online form was designed to be as similar as possible to the paper questionnaire, in order to keep the respondent experience consistent across modes, and reduce mode effects; this is known as a unimode design. An alternative is a mixed mode design which involves using different modes of data collection with the questions in each mode specifically designed for that mode.

In view of the National Statistician's recommendation it is vital that the online environment for the 2021 census is accessible for as many people as possible, is easy to use, minimises respondent burden, is secure and cost effective. These issues are not limited to the census programme, as GSS surveys move online all questions are going to need to be adapted to ensure that good quality, fit for purpose data is still collected safely and securely.

#### **Online survey development: Work to date**

Since May 2014, the Beyond 2011 Programme has undertaken a series of short-term research tasks to identify the latest research and best practice in designing and conducting online questionnaires and censuses. Online devices include personal computers (PC's), laptops, tablets and smart phones. These projects have included:

- A systematic literature review of online mode effects (variation in responses caused by different modes) – analysis of how to reduce measurement error in online surveys.
- A literature review of use of tablets and other mobile devices – how to best design for

smaller screen sizes.

- Research into best practice design of sequential and concurrent models – designing for online first and then subsequent modes such as telephone or face to face interviewing for non-respondents.
- Review of developments by other National Statistics Offices
- Best practice respondent communication materials – how to engage respondents to complete an online survey quickly and accurately.
- Assessing the 2011 Census questions against the Census Quality Survey.

This short-term research work has further highlighted the challenges of designing questions for online modes compared to paper. Examples of high level findings include:

#### **Designing for each mode separately:**

- Questions to be asked in an online mode need to be designed and tested in an online mode. Subsequent modes (as in a sequential or concurrent design) then need to be further designed and tested in each specific mode, as each mode has its own unique biases (e.g. limited to visual or aural stimulus).
- A 'mobile first' approach should be adapted for smart phones, phablets and tablets – that is, the interface should be designed specifically and optimised for smaller screens.

#### **Constructing effective questions:**

- Best practice for online survey design has continued to develop. Value can be added by de-cluttering questions and pages, personalising questions and some extra online formatting functions (eg hard and soft validation checks) to correct respondents' own mistakes can be added to the online mode to improve response quality.
- Online respondents provide less socially desirable answers and feel more comfortable in providing accurate answers, particularly on sensitive questions, compared to paper and interview modes. However differences between online and paper modes may no longer be as considerable as the public become more aware of online data use.
- Open-ended questions are better suited to online designs, but longer surveys are better suited to paper and other modes. There needs to be a balance.
- Use of symbols (eg mm/yyyy) may be beneficial to online respondents helping them to complete, for examples, dates.

#### **Using layout wisely:**

- Respondents might not read everything on a page so it's essential that questions and instructions are worded as simply as possible, with easy to find further guidance available if respondents choose to use it.
- The easy to find further guidance/help can be as long or short as required (within reasonable limitations) to fully help the respondent.
- The privacy policy, further information etc can all be accessed through links in the header or footer of the web page, and do not need to take up valuable real estate.
- When presenting questions, internal consistency is a good thing for responses on similar questions. However, where online respondents have their questions presented on the one screen (scrolling) this can increase burden and survey abandonment. It is recommended to present questions on different pages (but not too many), and group a few related questions on one page.

These findings are not specific to work on the 2021 Census, and have also fed into the Electronic Data Collection (EDC) programme.

#### **Work for Discussion: Preliminary work on the 2011 questionnaire**

Findings to date and ongoing research work highlight a range of harmonisation related issues that will need to be considered and discussed as research progresses. For example current research is focussed on applying the findings from the short-term research to date directly to the 2011 census

questions, and further identifying questions that caused issues for respondents. As some of these questions are harmonised questions, we are bringing this work to the attention of NSHG. However it should be noted that this research is at a very early stage and it is likely to be some time before research that could lead to proposals to adapt 2011 questions is sufficiently well progressed.

Current work includes the following research projects:

**Content review of the 2011 census questions:**

Following on from the systematic literature review of online mode effects, the results and recommendation from the literature review will be applied to inform the assessment of the 2011 online census question quality. Where the literature review findings suggest questions require re-development, a literature review of findings will be applied to inform the development of proposals for alternative question designs more suitable for online completion. This research will also look at improving individual questions already identified by the 2011 Census Quality Survey as having low agreement rates.

**Analysis of the performance of the 2011 Census Questions using the unimputed 2011 data:**

To review the performance of individual 2011 questions, the unprocessed, un-imputed data from the census at the individual question level will be analysed to see imputation trends across the different questions. That is, the questions where responses had to be imputed during the processing stage (i.e if a response is missing or invalid). Looking at this data, we will be able to improve our understanding of which questions from the 2011 Census performed well, and which questions need work to be improved in the online environment going forward.

**Analysis of available paradata from the 2011 online responses:**

Paradata is data about the collection of data. Paradata was collected by the online collection instrument during the 2011 Census but has not been analysed. This includes variables such as the number of times context specific help was accessed (clicked on) and when (during which question) respondents exited the survey without finishing. Analysis of this data will give an understanding of which questions caused respondents the most issues while completing online.

**Classifications and coding:**

This project is to consider the potential options for coding industry and occupation as part of an online questionnaire design and broader application of auto-coding. This work will aim to include written in data collected for 2011 Census and subsequent codes allocated alongside potential alternative designs.

**Next Steps**

Findings from individual research tasks will be compiled to give a representative picture of the performance of each individual census question and potential ideas for improvement. The programme will feed back to the NSHG in 2015 with any harmonisation related findings. This work will also inform research plans for the next stage of census development.

**Author Name:** Ellen Hewitt

**Division/Directorate/OGD:** Data Collection Methodology, Research, Development and Infrastructure

**Date:** 10 December 2014



## **National Statistics Harmonisation Group**

### **Harmonisation and Consistency December 2014**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The NSH Steering Group is directing the harmonisation work towards focussing more on the objectives and outcomes of harmonisation from the user perspective. Harmonisation of input data across surveys enables final outputs to be more consistent and comparable. This requirement is of increasing importance with the move towards producing new outputs from the merging of different data sources.

1.2 A definition of consistency is “agreement or accordance; compatible; not self-contradictory”. This document outlines the various ways in which harmonisation can make survey input data and outputs more consistent and compatible with other surveys that cover the same concepts and questions.

1.3 Harmonisation differs from standardisation, in that harmonisation does not necessarily mean that all harmonised principles are the same everywhere. Harmonisation finds the best trade-off between too many and too few standards for a process. Statisticians understand the term ‘harmonisation’ to mean the creation of a desired degree of comparability between statistics. Standardisation, on the other hand, sets uniformed norms and standard processes, for example using a standardised methodology or a standardised disclosure control process.

1.4 The goal of the harmonisation strategy is that all users of official statistics should seek to use harmonised questions, concepts, definitions and outputs when designing and implementing surveys. User needs are met by engaging effectively with users of official statistics and highlighting the benefits of harmonisation to promote trust in official statistics and also, to maximise the value for the public.

The harmonisation vision states that:

*All inputs, processing and outputs for the Census and surveys and all data from administrative records will be harmonised, so that users can compare data from different sources with confidence and can merge and match data more easily, taking account of international implications.*

#### **2.0 Issues for Discussion**

2.1 The paper explains how harmonisation is very much an enabler to improving the quality of outputs and contributes to the open data agenda, thus increasing user satisfaction. The principles can be applied to all types of data from surveys, social and business, and even to administrative data. There may be a perception that harmonisation is something which could slow down data collection and processing, adding unnecessary delays. In fact, on the contrary, if harmonisation is considered at the outset it can prevent delays and queries, increase understanding and avoid unnecessary confusion. NSHG members are invited to contribute to this discussion

#### **3.0 Why do Consistency and Comparability Matter?**

3.1 Consistency and Comparability allow users to:

- focus on common goals and outcomes with a view to carrying out analysis of data from different sources
- make informed decisions in relation to data sources and statistics, within and across themes, in accordance with the ESS quality dimensions and aims of Coherence and Comparability
- carry out cross survey analysis and integration, making statistics comparable across time and across different sources, thereby creating an environment in which multiple data sources can be integrated
- avoid misinterpreting data which they believe is similar, but which has fundamental, but not apparent, differences

#### **4.0 How does Harmonisation help to achieve consistency?**

4.1 Harmonisation helps to achieve consistency through the various stages of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) by:

- reducing potential misunderstanding or confusion caused by the use of different questions and/or outputs sourced from the same topic area
- increasing understanding for users – if harmonised principles are used, then no matter what data users access, the questions and definitions they are using will be consistent and familiar
- improving ease of use - for data users who require multiple datasets, having multiple concepts with multiple meanings increases the possibility of mistakes or can make results incomparable
- ensuring data are coded correctly and making outputs more comparable through the use of standard classifications
- giving users confidence that they are comparing like with like, through the use of harmonised definitions and variable descriptions, question wording and interviewer instructions

#### **5.0 Devolved administrations**

5.1 Harmonisation has a particularly strong role to play when it comes to comparisons of data from the different countries of the UK. This does not necessarily mean that all harmonised principles are the same everywhere.

5.2 Comparing different countries of the UK requires harmonised statistics, to ensure that differences are genuine and not the result of other factors, such as question wording. This is particularly important for devolved issues, such as health, where separate surveys are carried out in England, Wales and Scotland.

#### **6.0 International perspective**

6.1 The UK principles reflect those of international harmonisation. These are adapted where necessary to reflect the UK context. This ensures that UK results can be shown as consistent with international results. The UK contributes to the formulation of new and updated international principles and classifications, consistent within the UK context.

#### **7.0 Conclusion**

7.1 Harmonisation can be increasingly seen as an enabler towards the quality goal of consistency and coherence and can improve user satisfaction by increasing understanding of data, avoiding confusion and making the outputs generated from merging data more meaningful.

**Jan Thomas**  
**ONS Titchfield,**  
**December 2014.**



## **National Statistics Harmonisation Group**

### **Harmonisation and Twitter – December 2014**

#### **Introduction**

In order to make harmonisation as effective as possible a method of communication and engagement that reaches many users, data providers and other interested parties is essential. At present the ONS Harmonisation team have high visibility across the GSS, be it through meetings, road shows or workshops, but online resources are not being fully utilised. The harmonisation team promulgate information via the ONS harmonisation web pages and StatsUserNet.org.uk, but this mainly consists of posting newsletters and meeting papers, and has not resulted in the user engagement that might have been hoped. StatsUserNet.org.uk offers forums for discussion but at present the membership base is limited. As a result, the harmonisation team are considering additional methods of engaging with users using online social media and the first of these is via Twitter. The aim of this paper is to begin discussions relating to how Twitter can be used to benefit harmonisation and to expand the reach of people it is possible to engage with. The sort of information which might be suitable for posting must also be considered, and how it could encourage engagement with harmonisation.

#### **Issues for discussion**

Twitter is an online social networking tool that enables users to send and read short messages called 'tweets'. The ONS harmonisation team are seeking views from members as to if this is a worthwhile action to take, what information they would like to see presented there, and any hints or tips for how to make it as engaging, useful, or interesting to users. The potential benefits of using Twitter include:

- Updating users – Twitter may be an effective method of disseminating information quickly which would otherwise form part of an ONS newsletter and perhaps be released weeks after the event itself.
- User engagement – Twitter's user base is far wider than current dissemination methods, which enables the harmonisation to potentially reach a wider audience, and because anyone could read our tweets it could reach users that the harmonisation team have not previously considered.
- Research - Twitter's search functionality provides a simple method of looking for other tweets about harmonisation so it would enable us to identify trends, stories or comments about harmonisation. The harmonisation team could then engage with stories by responding, asking questions or re-tweeting, hopefully enabling further promotion of harmonisation
- Feedback – Users would have another forum through which to contact harmonisation, provide comments and ask questions.
- Link to related content – The harmonisation team would be able to link harmonisation related information, or other information that may be of interest to users, for example other ONS tweets.

#### **Further consideration for an ONS Harmonisation Twitter account**

As an ONS Twitter account would be used to output information into the public domain and is viewable by anyone, the ONS Harmonisation team are aware of a number of considerations that need to be made. The first is to conform to the updated guidance for using digital and social

media<sup>1</sup>, and ONS' own policy on social media. In addition to social media policy consideration needs to be given to:<sup>2</sup>

- The Civil Service Code<sup>3</sup> – If something is not suitable to be said in the real world then it is not suitable to publish online.
- Mistakes – If an error is made it is not always possible for it to be deleted without first being shared or screen grabs being taken.

### **What would ONS Harmonisation tweet about?**

The main purpose of any harmonisation Twitter account would be to highlight the work undertaken by the team. This would include not only anything published, but potentially any ongoing work, conferences attended or presentations given.

In addition to the work of the team, the Twitter account would be used to link interesting tweets relating to harmonisation from other users, both national and international.

A harmonisation Twitter account would also be used to re-tweet information from the ONS' official Twitter page, as there may be instances where harmonisation has played a significant part in the release and it would be a good opportunity to champion harmonisation and identify why it is important.

A harmonisation Twitter account would also be used to converse with users who may have harmonisation questions.

### **Next steps**

The ONS Harmonisation team would welcome your thoughts relating to the proposals outlined in this paper.

**Steven Cooley**  
**Classifications and Harmonisation Unit**  
**Office for National Statistics**  
**21<sup>st</sup> November 2014**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants>

<sup>2</sup> <https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2014/11/12/7-social-media-myths/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code>

**National Statistics Harmonisation Group**

**Combined Topic Group Report – December 2014**

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Benefits and Tax Credits  
Caroline Smith**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Caroline Smith (DWP)
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	Alice Jefferd (ONS); Alissa Goodman (IoE); Bob Watson (ONS); Charlotte Turner (CLG contractor); Chris Cousins (DWP); David Feeman (ONS); Debra Leaker (ONS); Donncha Burke (DWP); Giles Horsfield (ONS); Hugh Mallinson (CLG); Jane Carr (DWP); Jenny Collins (CLG); Joanna Littlechild (DWP); Jonathan Knight (ONS); Kris Simpson (ONS); Laura Keyse (ONS); Lucy Chandler (ONS); Mark Herniman (DWP); Mike Bielby (HMRC); Noah Uhrig (Uni. Of Essex); Rachel Councell (DWP); Riaz Ali (DWP); Richard Tonkin (ONS); Roger Morgan (DWP); Sarah Levy (ONS); Simon Clay (DWP); Stephanie Yow (DWP); Steve Dunstan (ONS); Suzanne Cooper (CLG); Tracy Lane (ONS); Valerie Christian (DWP)
<b>Reporting Period</b>	September to November 2014 (inc)

<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<p>There is one area of questions that still needs to be updated. These have been incorporated into FRS 15-16 questionnaire design with the aim of finalised new questions ASAP. Policy analysts are also on board in signing off the new questions.</p> <p>Advice from DCM in ONS agreed that work was needed but no progress was made on alternatives.</p>	
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Key Issues and Risks</b> <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	

**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 Cobb**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Pamela Cobb (on temporary basis)
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	Sian Bradford - ONS Katharine Thorpe – Home Office

	David Matz – Home Office Ian Shipley – Welsh Government Jon Burton – University of Essex Samuel Dickinson – Department for Transport Kanak Ghosh - ONS
<b>Reporting Period</b>	September – December 2014

<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
There has been no work on this topic group since December 2013.	
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>
Target Concepts definitions	Completed. 34 out of 35 definitions have been approved. The only one yet to be formally approved is country groupings. ONS consulted on this in 2014, and is publishing tables using proposed new country groupings in November 2014.
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
Agree Harmonised questions	Incomplete
<b>Key Issues and Risks</b> <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
A new topic lead is needed for the group to take forward remaining products in the work plan.	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour  
Nicola White**

A report has not been submitted for this Topic.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Demographic information  
Emily Knipe**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Emily Knipe
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	Nicola Haines, Vital Statistics Output Branch, Office for National Statistics 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
<b>Reporting Period</b>	September to December 2014
<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
Gender Identity: Documents covering the work that has been done to date were gathered and sent to Angela Potter Collins (Ethnic Group, National Identity, Language, Religion and Sexual Identity) as a possible person to take over the work. It has been suggested that this work is not carried forward- particularly not within ONS. I don't know what the next steps are for this work. I would suggest that it is discussed with the Harmonisation group- Angela has more details on	

why the work may not be taken forward. Same-sex marriage: Comments have now been received from Karen Hurrell. The questions have not been developed further due to a lack of resource. A demand for these questions has been noted from HMRC.	
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Key Issues and Risks</b> <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	
Work has been delayed due to the prioritisation of an annual output.	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report**  
**Economic Activity**  
**Debra Leaker**  
Nothing to report for this period.

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

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Karen Grierson
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	Andy Blinston, Tony Clarke, Michael Greer, Rachel Lloyd, Debra Leaker, Matthew Bollington, Jane Carr
<b>Reporting Period</b>	September to November 2014 (inc)

<b>Summary Status</b> <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 and is expected to be finalised within the next reporting period.	
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>
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
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
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	
<b>Key Issues and Risks</b> <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
Lack of resource to test new questions developed for a simplified approach.	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	

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

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Angela Potter-Collins
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	
<b>Reporting Period</b>	September 2014 – November 2014

<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<p>A story on ethnicity and the labour market was published on November 13<sup>th</sup> 2014. The story contained a time series from the LFS from 2001 to 2014 on employment and economic inactivity using the broad ethnic group categories. The primary focus of the article looked at new economic activity data from the 2011 Census and employment characteristics of ethnic groups using the 18 group classification. It was published alongside an infographic and interactive content which has been well received by stakeholders. This was the first time since 2011 that ONS had published labour market data by ethnicity.</p> <p>Current plans are to publish a religion infographic detailing the 'Other' write-ins on the 16<sup>th</sup> December.</p> <p><b>The branch is currently reviewing census analysis on EILR topics. We would welcome suggestions on areas of priority now that we are approaching the final months of analysis.</b></p> <p>An overview of census analysis on EILR topics was presented at a workshop to stakeholders at the Millennium stadium in Cardiff on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2014.</p> <p>A quality assurance role across the office in relation to EILR outputs continues to be provided. Advice also continues outside of the office, for example I will be attending the Ethnicity Advisory Strand Committee for the Understanding Society on December 1<sup>st</sup>.</p> <p>Social Surveys published a statistical bulletin on the 7<sup>th</sup> October detailing sexual identity by gender, region, age and occupation.</p>	
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>
As above	Complete
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
As above	Ongoing
<b>Key Issues and Risks</b> <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
None	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report**  
**Health, Disability and Carers**  
**TBC**

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

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

A report has not been submitted for this Topic.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report**  
**Income**  
**Richard Tonkin**

Nothing to report for this period.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report**  
**Integrated Household Survey**  
**Tim Vizard**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Tim Vizard (ONS)
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	N/A
<b>Reporting Period</b>	September to November 2014 (inc)

<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<p>1) The IHS bulletin was published on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014. Associated microdata has been deposited in data service, and will be available in due course.</p> <p>2) Work is progressing on the migration of IHS variables to the Annual Population Survey. A plan will be circulated to IHS and APS steering group members over the next few months.</p> <p>3) Due to the current status of the IHS, it is recommended that the IHS no longer provided a topic group update. Instead, representatives from the IHS will offer to present an update on the migration of IHS to APS at future NSHG meetings.</p>	
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Key Issues and Risks</b> <i>(Summary of actual or potential problems along with risks, potential impacts and sensitivities linked to individual needs of UK nations)</i>	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report**  
**Pensions**  
**Tim Gibbs**  
 Nothing to report for this period.