

**Minutes of the**

**National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group (NSH SG) Meeting**

**9th January 2017**

**11:00 to 12:30 hrs**

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| **Attendees:** |  |  |  |
| Jen Woolford (Chair) | ONS |  |  |
| Charlie Wroth-Smith | ONS |  |  |
| Frances Pottier | BEIS |  |  |
| Gareth James (audio) | ONS |  |  |
| Hersh Mann (audio) | UKDS |  |  |
| Reannan Rottier | DCLG delegated by Stephanie Freeth |  |  |
| Nick Barford (audio) | ONS |  |  |
| Steve Ellerd-Elliott | MoJ |  |  |
| Becki Aquilina (Secretariat) | ONS |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Apologies** |  |  |  |
| Jamie Robertson | SG |  |  |
| Kate Bedford | NHS Digital |  |  |
| Mark Pont | OSR |  |  |
| Pete Brodie | ONS |  |  |
| Stephanie Freeth | DCLG |  |  |
| Suzanne Ellis | ONS |  |  |

**1.0 Welcome and Introduction**

* 1. Jen welcomed members to the meeting and gave a brief update of the outcome of the October GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC): David Fry (BEIS) has taken over as Chair of the SPSC and is keen to look at the effectiveness of the SPSC and how the NSH SG relates to the SPSC. Members agreed that when Harmonised Principles came to them to be ratified, there was too much information for them to digest and felt they were not able to provide adequate scrutiny as a Committee. They would like the NSH SG to take on the role of scrutinising the principles as they are developed and overall responsibility of approving as Harmonised Principles. The GSS SPSC would then ratify the Harmonised Principles once approved by the NSH SG.

1.2 The Terms of Reference (ToR) and the Harmonisation Process has been amended to reflect the change in Governance to approve Harmonised Principles and the first Harmonised Principle to be approved by the SG (Age Bandings) is on the agenda of this meeting.

**2.0 Review minutes and actions from 3rd October 2016 meeting – Charlie Wroth-Smith**

2.1 The previous meeting minutes were agreed. All actions were complete or in progress. The action table has been updated accordingly (**Annex A**).

* 1. **Review the updated Terms of Reference (ToR) – Becki Aquilina**

3.1 The ToR has been amended to include the following:

***In relation to the endorsement of new or revised Harmonised Principles, the Steering Group will:***

* *review the information provided*
* *confirm the harmonisation process including consulation has been adhered to*
* *ensure Harmonised Principles are developed to reflect the needs across the four nations*
* *endorse the proposed principle or request further information or an amendment which would lead to the endorsement of a new or revised Harmonised Principle*
	1. It was suggested the language in the ToR (above) should be aligned with the Harmonisation Process Model, for example, replace *SG to endorse* with *SG to approve* and making an explicit link between the sections would be helpful.

**ACTION 1** – Becki to ensure the language in the ToR and the Harmonisation Process Model is consistent.

**4.0 The Harmonisation Process Model – Beck Aquilina**

4.1 Becki gave a short overview of the Harmonisation Process Model which was reviewed, updated and agreed by stakeholders last year and is aligned to the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM). The Model includes templates to be completed at different stages, ensures Topic Leads are aware of their responsibilities and stakeholders are consulted throughout. The Harmonisation Process Model is included within the Harmonisation Handbook which may be found on the GSS website:

<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/statistics/methodology-2/harmonisation/introduction-to-harmonisation/>

4.2 Members agreed the Harmonisation Process Model and suggested the inclusion of ‘inform SPSC (via regular update from NSH SG) within stage **F. Review and maintain.**

**ACTION 2** – Becki to include ‘Inform SPSC’ (via regular update from NSH SG) within stage **F. Review and maintain.**

4.3 Members felt it would be good to review the process once a number of principles have been through it and also to have a document to show which principles are at what stage. This would help SG members anticipate what principles are due for approval and which principles need to be actively progressed further. It was noted that a full review of all Harmonised Principles is underway and a number of principles will be forwarded to SG members in the near future.

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**ACTION 3** – Becki to produce a document to show which stage Harmonised Principles are at on the Harmonisation Process Model**.**

1. **Review updated Age Bandings Harmonised Principle – Charlie Wroth-Smith**

5.1 Charlie gave an overview of the revised Age Bandings Principle. There are currently 4 ratified categories for Age Bandings and the SG was asked to consider approval of two more categories (5 and 6). It was noted that some demographic outputs within ONS are not using the existing Harmonised category (4) and there was a demand for new categories to be developed (category 5). The new categories are designed to be in addition to the existing 4 categories already in place. A full list of existing and new categories for Age Bandings is at **Annex B.** A full stakeholder consultation has been conducted and the outcome revealed no issues with the proposed additional categories. Further additional categories were suggested by stakeholders to include 0 and below 0 but those will be considered at a later date.

* 1. Members suggested that when reviewing Harmonised Principles for approval it would be helpful to view the existing principles as well as the proposed changes to be approved.

**ACTION 4** – Harmonisation Team to ensure the existing principle and the proposed changes for approval are presented to the Steering Group.

* 1. It was noted that many demographic outputs are published at the single year of age and these can be constructed in any way required. The biggest impact is introducing an age band that did not previously exist (category 5/ 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19) that cannot be aggregated from the existing harmonised age bandings. Members felt it was confusing to have two sets of harmonised age bandings (4 and 5) that were similar which over lapped slightly at particular points but cannot be compared. Charlie explained that most demographic outputs are using the proposed category 5 and SG members asked if category 4 should continue to exist. Similar discussions were addressed at the NSHG and the Chair suggested that a summary of the discussion are provided to the SG before the SG are asked to approve a revised or new principle.

**ACTION 5** – Harmonisation Team to ensure the SG are provided with a summary or previous discussions at NSHG before the SG are asked to approve a new or revised principle.

* 1. Although it was recognised there are differing user needs for demographic and economic age band information, members would like evidence provided to them of a strong user need for both categories (4 and 5). This would aid in the decision process to approve the proposed additional category.

**ACTION 6** – Harmonisation Team to contact the Demographic Topic Lead for strong user needs evidence for categories 4 and 5.

* 1. Category 6 for older age bands was approved by the SG.
	2. Members suggested that a future review of Age Bandings could consider the zero age bands and below (particularly for maternity outputs and mortality statistics). Also retirement age of 66/67 and entitlement to National Living Wage (for workers 25 and above) could be considered.
	3. Members agreed that once the additional information is provided, they could review the proposed principle for age bandings via correspondence, and also agreed two weeks would be sufficient time to formulate a view.

**6.0**  **Update on the first Business Harmonisation Task and Finish Group (BHTFG) held on 5th December – Charlie Wroth-Smith**

6.1 Charlie provided a brief update of the first BHTFG which was set up to develop and agree Harmonised Business Principles (variables, definitions, concepts outputs ect) across the GSS. The first meeting was held on 5th December to establish the group and agree the ToR. The following government departments were represented at the meeting; HMRC, Devolved Administrations, DEFRA and ONS. Representatives from BEIS and DWP did not attend but follow up meetings with them are planned. The work ONS have done on harmonising (total) turnover and employment was discussed and departments have been actioned to have a look at the proposed definitions for turnover and employment and provide evidence of impact for their specific departments. A list of priority variables was circulated to members and will be discussed at the next meeting. The SG suggested it would be useful to view the work programme priority list. The next meeting will be held in February and will discuss the impact of the proposed definitions (if any) and how to take the proposal forward. The definition proposed for turnover and employment is a European definition and should be relatively simple to agree. Charlie will provide a further update at the March NSH SG.

 **ACTION 7** – Harmonisation Team to circulate the BHTFG workplan priorities to SG members.

6.2 It was suggested that ONS Admin Data as a Service should be invited to become a member of the BHTFG

 **ACTION 8** – Harmonisation Team to invite ONS Data User Service to become member of the BHTFG

**7.0 2017 NSH SG Communication Plan – Becki Aquilina**

7.1 Becki gave an overview of the 2017 Communication Plan and explained for the benefit of new members, that the plan is to target effective communication across the GSS. The two key objectives are;

1. Make harmonisation part of the GSS voice

2. Increase contact to and from users

The Communication Plan is a living document to be extended over time and is a regular agenda item for the SG. The plan was circulated to SG members on 4th November for approval and no comments were received. We are currently in the first quarter (Q1) of the plan and most communication tactics from previous quarters are either completed or ongoing. Members were asked to let Becki know of any upcoming events/meetings/committees so these may be added to quarter one (Q1) which spans January, February and March. A number of suggestions were made which will be added to the 2017 Communication Plan.

7.2 Producing a SurveyMonkey questionnaire was discussed as there has been a number of survey communications circulated recently and the timing needs to be considered. It was suggested to delay this to quarter 2 (April, May and June), or later. It was recommended that linking the survey with another initiative for example around the Consultation of the Code of Practice stocktake. Jen suggested discussing the workplan with the OSR/Private Office.

**ACTION 9** – Becki to move SurveyMonkey questionnaire to Q2 on the Communication Plan.

**ACTION 10** – Charlie to discuss the timing of the Code of Practice stocktake consultation with a view to linking in with the planned Harmonisation SurveyMonkey questionnaire.

7.3 A Business Harmonisation presentation for BEIS was suggested and agreed by members.

**ACTION 11** – Becki to add presenting Business Harmonisation to BEIS to the Communication Plan.

7.4 It was suggested that Harmonisation online training/courses could be developed to be used across the GSS/GSR (inductions/drop in sessions/workshops/fast stream training ect). Charlie informed members this is something the Harmonisation Team have begun to look into and it will be added to the Communication Plan.

**ACTION 12** – Becki to include develop online Harmonisation training to the Communication Plan for use across the GSS GSR

**8.0** **Horizon Scanning - All**

8.1 The following topics were identified;

 - Race Disparity Report (tool due to be published in autumn)

 - Just About Managing (JAM) – families who are just about managing to make ends meet

 - Code of Practice stocktake

 - Brexit (business surveys using European definitions)

 - Withdrawal of ONS Special Licence Data (implications)

 - Data Sharing Legislation (implications)

 - Digital and Technology (becoming more important stakeholders)

**9.0** **AOB, items for next meeting and next meeting dates – Jen Woolford**

8.1Stevehas kindly agreed to take over as Chair of the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG)**.** The SG was keen to have a non ONS Chair of the NSHG which would bring a wider GSS perspective to the group.

8.2 A review of the Methodology function within ONS has been conducted and has an impact on where Harmonisation is within the organisation. The review suggested the Harmonisation Team, Good Practice Team (GPT) and the Quality Centre (QC) become one unit. It is likely that the unit will remain within Methodology. This is seen as a positive move as all teams are GSS focussed and will help towards widening links across the GSS. Charlie will provide more information as it becomes available.

8.3 The following items for the next meeting were suggested;

- Update on OSR – Mark Pont

- Recap on approving age Bandings

- Update on Business Harmonisation – Debra Prestwood and Charlie Wroth-Smith

- Methodology Review and changes in the organisation; how is it working?

8.2 The next meeting is planned for 28th March 2017 and invites have been sent to SG members.

Becki Aquilina

ONS Harmonisation Team

**January 2017**

**Annex A**

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| **ACTIONS FROM NSH SG MEETING – 9th January 2017** |
| **Action No** | **Para** | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Status** |
| 1 | 3.2 | Becki to ensure the language on the ToR and the Harmonisation Process Model is consistent. | Becki | Complete |
| 2 | 4.2 | Becki to include ‘Inform SPSC’ (via regular update from NSH SG) within stage **F. Review and maintain.**  | Becki | Complete |
| 3 | 4.3 | Becki to produce a document to show which stage Harmonised Principles are at on the Harmonisation Process Model**.** | Becki |  |
| 4 | 5.2 | Harmonisation Team to ensure the existing principle and the proposed changes for approval are presented to the Steering Group. | Harmonisation Team/Becki Aquilina | On going |
| 5 | 5.3 | Harmonisation Team to ensure the SG are provided with a summary or previous discussions at NSHG before the SG are asked to approve a new or revised principle. | Harmonisation Team/Becki Aquilina | On going |
| 6 | 5.4 | Harmonisation Team to contact the Demographic Topic Lead for strong user needs evidence for categories 4 and 5. | Harmonisation Team/Becki Aquilina |  |
| 7 | 6.1 | Harmonisation Team to circulate the BHTFG workplan priorities to SG members. | Harmonisation Team/Ian Sidney |  |
| 8 | 6.2 | Harmonisation Team to invite ONS Data as a Service to become member of the BHTFG | Harmonisation Team/Ian Sidney |  |
| 9 | 7.2 | Becki to move SurveyMonkey questionnaire to Q2 on the Communication Plan | Becki | Complete |
| 10 | 7.2 | Charlie to discuss the timing of the Code of Practice stocktake consultation with a view to linking in with the planned Harmonisation SurveyMonkey questionnaire | Charlie |  |
| 11 | 7.3 | Becki to add presenting Business Harmonisation to BEIS to the Communication Plan | Becki | Complete |
| 12 | 7.4 | Becki to include develop online Harmonisation training to the Communication Plan for use across the GSS GSR | Becki | Complete |

**Annex B**

**Existing Principles**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Harmonised Principle 1** | **Harmonised Principle 2** | **Harmonised Principle 3** | **Harmonised Principle 4** |
| 0-24 | 0-24 | 0-15 | 0-4 |
|  |  |  | 5-10 |
|  |  |  | 11-15 |
|  |  |  | 16-19 |
|  |  | 16-24 | 20-24 |
|  | 25-44 |  | 25-29 |
|  |  | 25-34 | 30-34 |
|  |  | 35-44 | 35-39 |
|  |  |  | 40-44 |
| 25-64 | 45-64 | 45-54 | 45-49 |
|  |  | 55-64 | 50-54 |
|  |  |  | 55-59 |
|  |  |  | 60-64 |
| 65-74 | 65-74 | 65-74 | 65-69 |
|  |  |  | 70-74 |
| 75+ | 75+ | 75-84 | 75-79 |
|  |  |  | 80-84 |
|  |  | 85+ | 85+ |
| All ages | All ages | All ages | All ages |

**Proposed additional Principles**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Harmonised Principle 5** | **Harmonised Principle 6** |
| 0-4 | 90-94 |
|  5-9 | 95-99 |
|  10-14 | 100+/ 100-104 |
| 15-19 | 105+ |
| 20-24 |   |
| 25-29 |   |
| 30-34 |   |
| 35-39 |   |
| 40-44 |   |
| 45-49 |   |
| 50-54 |   |
| 55-59 |   |
| 60-64 |   |
| 65-69 |   |
| 70-74 |   |
| 75-79 |   |
| 80-84 |   |
| 85-89 |   |
| 90+ |   |
| **Notes** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Principle 5 - this can be used as standalone age grouping or principle 6 can be appended to principle 5 |  |
| Principle 6 - can be used as a standalone age grouping when presenting data on older people or high age estimates |