

**Minutes of the**

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

**28th September 2017**

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

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| **Attendees:** |  | **Apologies** |  |
| Jen Woolford (Chair) | ONS | Debra Prestwood | ONS |
| Becki Aquilina | ONS | Hersh Mann | UKDS |
| Charlie Wroth-Smith | ONS | Ian O’Sullivan | ONS |
| Frances Pottier | BEIS | Jamie Robertson | SG |
| Gareth James (audio) | ONS | Kate Bedford | NHS Digital |
| Helena Rosiecka (audio) | ONS | Pete Brodie | ONS |
| Ian Sidney (audio) | ONS |  |  |
| Mark Pont | OSR |  |  |
| Sezen Barutcu | UKSA |  |  |
| Stephanie Freeth | DCLG |  |  |
| Steve Ellerd-Elliott | MoJ |  |  |
| Daisie Hutchinson (Secretariat) | ONS |  |  |

**1.0 Welcome and Introduction**

* 1. Jen welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted the GSS SPSC meeting is taking place next week and at each meeting there is a ‘deep dive’ into one of the sub committees. Jen will be representing the NSH SG for the ‘deep dive’ agenda item.

**2.0 Review minutes and actions from 28th March 2017 meeting – Charlie Wroth-Smith**

2.1 The previous meeting minutes were agreed. All actions were completed.

**3.0 Update on the fourth Business Harmonisation Task and Finish Group (BHTFG) held on the 15th August 2017 - Ian Sidney**

* 1. Business Harmonisation has progressed well over the last 9 months and has engaged well across the GSS. Business Harmonisation has met with the Scottish Government, NISRA, BEIS and other relevant departments.
  2. At the last BHTFG meeting, a range of topics were discussed; rationalising business surveys, the importance of country based statistics for devolved statistics and changes in stocks variables and the definitions for these. Papers based on the changes in stocks variables are being taken to the next BHTFG on the 3rd October for agreement.
  3. The Business Harmonisation Team is having early discussions with E commerce to look at the disaggregation of turnover and internet sales. E commerce report 16% of all turnover, 5% of this being from internet sales. Additionally, the team are also looking at the electronic data interchange both business to business and business to government to see if there is a user need for this kind of information.
  4. Future work in the area of Business Harmonisation was discussed with focus on;
* Variable definitions
* Question changes between electronic and self completion surveys
* Promotion and use of harmonised definitions and monitor where these definitions are being used
* Using administrative data and whether survey and administrative concepts are aligned
  1. When questions are not harmonised, it should be explained why they are not. Additionally, work should be conducted to find out where the differences lie between questions and what the consequences are of this.
  2. There have been discussions with the Government Digital Service (GDS) to understand why their service manual principles are different to harmonised principles. Working collaboratively together has begun to identify the differences between the two and producing new variables cohesively.

1. **Update on Social Harmonisation - Charlie Wroth-Smith** 
   1. The Harmonisation Programme now sits within Best Practice and Impact (BPI) which is mainly GSS focussed. The new head of division is Julie Brown who is currently a HoP for DFT and Chairs the Cross government Survey Sharing Group. Julie is expected to begin her new post in January 2018.
   2. The Harmonised Process is being revised due to the Harmonisation Team becoming more research focussed and becoming topic owners in place of relying on topic leads that are often constrained by a lack of resources. Topic leads will continue to be approached for their expert advice but we will be removing a lot of bureaucracy.
   3. The Harmonisation Team are working alongside Census to understand if any of the harmonised principles will be impacted by Census decisions.
2. **Update on the harmonised dashboard - Becki Aquilina**
   1. The Harmonisation Team have four topic owners: Alison Brookman, Becki Aquilina, Daisie Hutchinson and Ian Sidney. These topic owners will now be responsible for completing all NSHG update templates, producing meeting minutes, creating topic groups and pushing the process forward. We are trying to rectify the previous problem of people not submitting papers for meetings and harmonised principles not being reviewed regularly.
   2. The out of date Harmonised principles which have been removed from the website are income, social capital and internet access.
   3. More detailed information of where each topic is being progressed may be found within the individual topic tabs of the Dashboard document.
3. **Communication Plan - Becki Aquilina** 
   1. Becki gave an overview of the Communication Plan for the third quarter (July, August, and September):
   2. Ian explained the RSS Conference went well; however, it was difficult in terms of questions as there were so many speakers and not enough time for questions, although it was well attended.
   3. Ian had a meeting with the Scottish Government. This has resulted in progressing to get the business harmonised principles out to the Scottish Government and try to get more engagement across both the social and business side. It was suggested that we should be engaging with local authorities.

**ACTION 1 -** Look at engaging with local authorities in the 2018 Communication Plan

* 1. It was suggested that it would be a good idea to raise the GSS Harmonisation Programme profile at the Inter-Administration Committee which looks at UK level issues.

**ACTION 2 -** Look at presenting to the Inter-Administration Committee within the next quarter

* 1. There was a comment that the GSS website is being updated by Gareth Pryce. The Harmonisation Team are already in regular contact with Gareth Pryce to promote Harmonisation across the GSS website/ newsletter and social media platforms; Facebook, Twitter, Yammer.

1. **Census topic update - Helena Rosiecka** 
   1. Helena gave an overview of the different census topics which are possibly having revisions.
   2. Helena gave an overview of progress across the different census topics which are possibly having revisions. These include potential new topics and the potential to simplify questions on existing topics.

* 1. ONS has yet to formulate its recommendations for the 2021 Census. Once it has done so the Government will bring forward a White Paper which will include the census questions.

1. **Update on the Code of Practice - Mark Pont**
   1. The Code of Practice is being updated to become more outward facing and engaging with the GSS. There has been feedback that the Code is a disabler, however it should enable people to do things and do them well.
   2. Looking at collaboration across the GSS for quality and coherence which is also what harmonisation is striving towards.
   3. When producers of statistics are consulted with, the Code of Practice is cited, however, there is not much force behind this. Mark was asked whether there would be a stronger approach after the revision. Mark explained that the idea of the code is to empower people to work in a quality assured way.
   4. Mark has begun having discussions with Steve Ellerd-Elliott about guidance.

**ACTION 3 -** Mark to feedback to Becki plans for guidance for the Code of Practice

1. **Horizon Scanning - Jen Woolford**
   1. There may be some implications for harmonisation after Brexit, however it is important to try and maintain harmonisation after this occurs.
   2. Harmonised occupation classifications across Europe would need to be looked at as it might be necessary to identify occupations that would get special access rights to the UK and vice versa.
2. **AOB, items for next meeting and next meeting dates - Jen Woolford** 
   1. The Inter-subject comparability (ISC) has a paper coming out on the comparability of crime and justice statistics. There seems to be some problems about the comparability of crime and justice statistics which is why these discussions are taking place. Steve Ellerd-Elliott is part of a crime and justice working group looking into this.
   2. The next meeting is to be held during January, unless there is something pressing which needs to be discussed beforehand. It was mentioned that the Race Disparity Unit have agreed to come to the next Steering Group meeting to present their findings.

**ACTION 4 –** Becki to set up the next meeting for January, and send invites

Daisie Hutchinson and Becki Aquilina - GSS Harmonisation Team

**October 2017**

**Annex A**

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| **ACTIONS FROM NSH SG MEETING – 28th September 2017** | | | | |
| **Action No** | **Para** | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Status** |
| 1 | 6.3 | Look at engaging with local authorities in the 2018 Communication Plan | Becki Aquilina |  |
| 2 | 6.4 | Look at presenting to the Inter-Administration Committee within the next quarter | SG members/ Harmonisation Team |  |
| 3 | 8.5 | Feedback to Becki plans for guidance for the Code of Practice | Mark Pont |  |
| 4 | 10.2 | Set up the next meeting for January, and send invites | Becki Aquilina | Complete |