

# National Statistics Harmonisation Group

## Meeting Agenda:

Wednesday 5 March 2014 at 11:00 to 13:30 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		Tricia Dodd
2	1105 – 1110 hrs	Review of Previous Minutes and Actions	NSHG (13:4) 31	Tricia Dodd
3	1110 – 1125 hrs	a) GSS SPSC Meeting Report	Verbal Update	Tricia Dodd
		b) Review of NSHG Workplan	NSHG (14:1) 01	Becki Aquilina
		c) Census Update and Latest Plans	Verbal Update	Kanak Ghosh
4	1125 – 1135 hrs	Interim Standard – Benefits and Tax Credits	May not be ready for meeting	Caroline Smith
5	1135 – 1145 hrs	Harmonisation Governance	NSHG (14:1) 02	Jan Thomas
6	1145 – 1155 hrs	Revised NSHG Strategy – Initial Thoughts	NSHG (14:1) 03	Palvi Shah
7	1155 – 1235 hrs	<b>NSHG Topic Group Updates</b>	NSHG (14:1) 04	<b>Topic Group Leads</b>
		Benefits and Tax Credits	Report Received	Caroline Smith
		Classifications	Report Received	Michaela Morris
		Consumer Durables	No Report Received	Laura Keyse
		Country of Birth & Migration	Report Received	Pete Large
		Crime & Anti Social Behaviour	No Report Received	Nicola White
		Demographic Information	Report Received	Karen Gask
		Economic Activity	No Report Received	Debra Leaker
		Education	Report Received	Karen Grierson
		EILR	Report Received	Sian Bradford
		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	Eddie Smith		
8	1235 – 1305 hrs	WDA Open Data Presentation	Presentation	Daren Barnes
9	1305 – 1315 hrs	Interim Standard – Personal Well-being	NSHG (14:1) 05	Claire Shenton
10	1315 – 1325 hrs	AOB	1. Discuss a theme for the NSHG Workshop on 18 Sep 14.	Tricia Dodd
11	1325 – 1330 hrs	Next Meetings	Wednesday 4th June 2014, between 1100 - 1330 hrs, ONS, Drummond Gate Office, London  Wednesday 18th September 2014, between 1100 - 1330 hrs, ONS, Drummond Gate Office, London – followed by the Annual NSHG Workshop (1400 – 1700 hrs)	Tricia Dodd



## National Statistics Harmonisation Group

### NSHG Work Plan – March 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 B** contains a table summarising the terms of reference for the group and progress against the associated activities.

#### Current Work Programme

3. **Harmonisation Web pages** – The ongoing update of the ONS Harmonisation web pages has continued alongside the launch of the new ONS website.
4. **Sub topic groups** - There are now thirteen sub groups reporting to the NSHG. The work of these Topic Groups has been ongoing and the reports from these groups are presented to this meeting. A number of recommendations have now been ratified by GSS SPSC and HoPs.
  - Benefits and Tax Credits
  - Classifications
  - Consumer Durables
  - Country of Birth/Migration and Citizenship
  - Crime, Anti Social Behaviour and Social Capital
  - 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

An interim standard for Personal Well Being has been added to the NS harmonisation web-pages. An Interim Harmonised Standard containing newly revised Benefits and Tax Credits are close to being finalised.

5. **GSS Harmonised Question Library (GSS HQL)** – A final version of the UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank was re-launched during March 2013 and a link has been added to the ONS Harmonisation web-pages: <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/variables>
6. Some ONS Business surveys have been added to the UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank to compare differences between questions. A Link to a demo on Youtube <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/harmonisation/harmonisation-programme/uk-data-service/index.html> has been added to the harmonisation web-pages. ONS shall continue to work

closely with the UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank team for future improvements and maintenance.

7. **Raising the profile of Harmonisation and strengthening links** – The Annual NSHG workshop identified various interest groups that need to be approached and consulted to raise the profile of harmonisation and to strengthen links;

- Government Social Research (GSR) – Roadshow planned
- Government Economic Service (GES) – Roadshow planned
- Government Statistical Service (GSS)
- Research, Analysis and Statistical (RAS)
- Royal Statistical Society (RSS)
- Survey Control Unit (ONS) – Roadshow planned
- Information Standards Board (ISB)
- Survey Design
- Open Data Initiative
- Admin data and data linkage

A list of relevant stakeholders will be developed by the harmonisation team to ensure wider dissemination of information.

8. **Harmonisation Roadshows** – Two future roadshows are planned; Survey Control Liaison Officers (SCLO) seminar on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and the Government Social Research Service (GSR) and Government Economic Service (GES) seminar on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014. The Harmonisation team will continue to make contact with the list of identified groups above to raise the harmonisation profile across the GSS.
9. **Web Data Access (WDA)** – The aim of the project is to deliver an enhanced website capability for organisations and individuals to use and explore ONS statistics more effectively by providing users with direct access to ONS data sources. Within the work there will be a key requirement for the harmonisation of dataset characteristics and the use of standard classifications. There is a presentation by the WDA Project towards the end of this meeting.
10. **NSHG Steering Group** – There are a number of noted issues with the Steering group and the structure of the Steering group. The following points will be highlighted to the next GSS SPSC meeting ;
- Insufficient challenge with the same chair for NSHG and the Steering group
  - Representation was limited although Steve Ellerd-Elliott and Kate Anderson have given some good pointers
  - It was envisaged that more senior members would be involved (originally envisaged at HoP level)
11. **Harmonising Business Standards** – The Harmonisation have been meeting with different teams within the ONS Business Division. The main purpose of the meetings was to gain ‘buy-in’ to harmonising business standards and to showcase the UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank. ONS is currently undertaking a large project to implement changes generated by updates to the European System of Accounts (ESA) and this may be an ideal time to harmonise business standards whilst other major changes are taking place. The next steps following on from various meetings are to present to the Business Survey Change Portfolio Board (BSCP) in May 2014 and to obtain delegated nominees to act as topic leads for a number of topics. The Harmonisation team are nearing completion of the matrix to show different terms used for turnover, fulltime and part-time across all ONS Business surveys.
12. **Harmonising Administrative Data** – The harmonisation team are in the process of forming an implementation plan, but there are issues holding it up that are being worked through. In terms of the

harmonisation strategy, the short and long term strategies have been agreed by the NSHG. The short term strategy is to identify priority data items which require improved metadata, and work with supplier/holders to improve the quality of the metadata. The long term harmonisation of administrative data strategy revolves around working with data providers to standardise the way administrative data is recorded, and will focus on; setting priorities, in consultation with stakeholders; working on influencing data suppliers, and improving metadata. The harmonisation team are looking to inviting a member of BY2011 to become a permanent member of the NSHG and to provide regular quarterly reports.

13. **Data Markers (Symbols in Tables)** – GSS SPSC members were invited to approve the "Harmonising Symbols in Tables" proposal as a harmonisation standard for use across the GSS by 7th February 2014. One late response was received by Scotland and the Harmonisation team have responded to the comments raised. Once Scotland is content with the responses, the next step will be to forward to HoPs for final ratification and add to the NS harmonisation web-pages
14. **Revised Harmonisation Strategy** – The harmonisation team have been updating the previous strategy which was approved in July 2011. This was as a result of a request from the GSS SPSC to create a higher impact. The draft strategy will be discussed at this meeting.

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## Annex A

Priority Ranking	Topic Lead
<b>High Priority (H)</b>	
Demographic Information	Karen Gask
Crime and Fear of Crime	Nicola White
Economic Status, NS SEC and Employment	Debra Leaker
Internet Access	Laura Keyse
<b>Medium to High Priority (M-H)</b>	
Educational Attainment and Qualifications	Karen Grierson
General Health and Carers	Topic Lead TBC
Long-lasting Health Conditions and Illness	Topic Lead TBC
<b>Medium Priority (M)</b>	
Benefits and Tax Credits	Caroline Smith
Income	Richard Tonkin
Sexual Identity	Sian Bradford
<b>Medium to Low Priority (M-L)</b>	
Consumer Durables	Laura Keyse
<b>Low Priority (L)</b>	
Accommodation, Household Information and Tenure	Hugh Mallinson
Ethnic Group	Sian Bradford
Housing Costs and Benefits	Hugh Mallinson
National Identity and Religion	Sian Bradford
Pensions	Eddie Smith
Selected Job Details	Debra Leaker
Social Capital	Topic Lead TBC

**Annex B**  
**NSHG Workplan – Review December 2013**

Term of Reference			
1. To provide strategic direction for the design, development and maintenance of common statistical frames, definitions and classification for Statistics			
Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
Research project – Administrative sources A-Z of Harmonised standards Harmonisation Web-pages Harmonisation Strategy and Implementation Plan NSHG Workshop NSHSG Business Harmonisation	December 2013 No NSHSG meetings have taken place since the previous NSHG meeting in September. The GSS SPSC were asked to suggest nominations and wider membership to provide cross government feedback and direction or an alternative approach – non were forthcoming	March 2014 No NSHSG meetings have taken place and issues with the groups are currently being discussed.  A draft Strategy is to be discussed at this meeting. The strategy will be linked to a revised implementation and communication plan once finalised	NSHG members
Term of Reference			
2. To be responsible for setting harmonised standards			
Key action Step(s)	Previous reporting activities	This reporting activity	Person/area responsible
NSHG Topic Sub Groups NSHG workshop to identify, review and prioritise harmonised standards	December 2013 Stage three target concepts for Country of Birth circulated to NSHG and corresponding members to be endorsed  Data Markers consultation now complete. To be formally ratified by GSS SPSC and HoPs  Interim standard for Well-being to be agreed by NSHG members	March 2014 Country of birth and migration are currently having resource issues and for this reason the revised standards are slightly delayed.  Revised benefits and tax credits standards are to be discussed at this meeting  Date Markers (Symbols in Tables) had received one response via the GSS SPSC and the harmonisation team have responded to this.  Interim well-being standard has been added to the NS Harmonisation web-pages	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 standards	December 2013 Harmonisation team to re address the Quality Methods and Harmonisation Tool (QMHT) to see if it could be better highlighted.	March 2014 The QMHT is no longer being used, due to a number of reasons, however the ‘use of harmonise questions’ section of the tool could be updated, amended and revised by the harmonisation team to address the use of harmonised standards across the GSS.  The harmonisation team are reviewing the effectiveness of the ‘softly softly’ approach as advised by the UKSA	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
UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank will support the CoP by directing survey designers towards Harmonised standards Roadshows Harmonisation web-pages A-Z produced StatsUserNet community StatNet/GSSnet publications Other targeted articles (3Moons etc)	December 2013 Roadshow presented to BIS and two Mini business Harmonisation workshops held during October.  Future roadshows will be targeted to list of various interest groups identified during annual NSHG workshop in September 2013  Harmonisation team plan to compile a list of stakeholders for wider dissemination	March 2014 There are two planned roadshows; - Survey Control Liaison Officers (SCLO) seminar on 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2014 and - the Government Social Research Service (GSR) and Government Economic Service (GES) seminar on 19 <sup>th</sup> May 2014.  The A-Z will be updated (electronically and on line) and printed once the benefits and tax credits standards are agreed and will include the addition of the interim standard of Well-being.  StatNet has been replaced with GSSnet and we are currently liaising with the NSO to create a Harmonisation forum within the GSSnet. All future meetings NSHG papers will now be added to GSSnet as StatNet is no longer being maintained.	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</p> <p>NSHG Workshop</p> <p>Business Harmonisation Workshop</p> <p>Watching brief of Beyond 2011 administrative data and data linkage as future harmonised topic groups.</p> <p>Watching brief of future harmonisation topics: Alcoholic Consumption as part of the Health, Disability and Carers, Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS).</p>	<p>December 2013</p> <p>Business Harmonisation workplan and matrix to be developed</p> <p>Invite BY2011 to future NSHG and to provide quarterly reports</p>	<p>March 2014</p> <p>The Harmonisation team are making good progress with Business survey teams and will be presenting to the Business Survey Change Portfolio Board (BSCP) during May 2014</p> <p>An Interim standard for Well-being has been added to the NS harmonisation web-pages.</p> <p>The results of the Census consultation process will be publicised March 2014 – once the results are known, the harmonisation team can formulate a plan to begin liaising with the appropriate teams (for example administrative data and data linkage)</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>Engage with the Web Data Access project to ensure harmonisation and classification requirements are suitably incorporated.</p> <p>Promote use of UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank</p> <p>Harmonisation Web-Pages</p> <p>A-Z of Harmonised Standards</p> <p>Promotional material and articles</p> <p>Harmonisation Roadshows</p> <p>Harmonisation in-box</p> <p>StatsUserNet community</p> <p>StatNet/GSSnet</p>	<p>December 2013</p> <p>Continued promotion of harmonisation via web-pages, roadshows, StatsUserNet, GSSnet etc</p> <p>On-going demos of the VQB</p>	<p>March 2014</p> <p>The harmonisation team is in the process of updating the harmonisation information flyer. Once complete, will be circulated via various communication platforms.</p> <p>The Harmonisation team continue to attend meetings and arrange roadshows to promote harmonisation</p> <p>The harmonisation team are in the process of creating a revised stakeholder analysis to strengthen our relationship across the GSS and wider.</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

### Harmonisation Governance

NSHG members are asked to review this paper and provide comments and feedback.

#### **Introduction**

The National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) reports into the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (GSS SPSC) for the Harmonisation activity undertaken across the GSS.

The GSS SPSC recognises the NSHG do valuable work, but occasionally reservations are made about the direction it is taking. The Harmonisation team are concerned they may not be providing enough detail about what the NSHG do, how it is done and what is achieved. This has come to the forefront via feedback to NSHG taken from the GSS SPSC meeting minutes.

#### **Issues with Governance**

1. The GSS SPSC recommended a steering group to guide NSHG and provide strategic direction. The steering group was designed to consist of a group of HoPs, with the Chair at HoP level. In reality, Jen Woolford (whilst NSHG Chair) was also asked to chair the steering group meeting and there were two members delegated by HoPs (Steve Ellerd-Elliott (MoJ) and Kate Anderson (HSCIC)). There are a number of noted issues with the steering group and the structure of the steering group;
  - Insufficient challenge with the same chair for NSHG and the steering group
  - Representation was limited although Steve and Kate have given some good pointers
  - It was envisaged that more senior members would be involved
2. The overall approach to Harmonisation is not working as effectively as it could because of the environment in which it is applied. There is currently no mandate to insist on using harmonised standards in official statistics, although it is mentioned in the Statistics and Registration Service Act and within the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics. There is currently no mention of a statistic failing an assessment for not using harmonised standards. The harmonisation approach, as guided by the GSS SPSC, is to persuade, influence and encourage via conducting road shows, through the internet, intranet, StatsUserNet, StatNet/GSSnet, booklets, flyers, conferences and meetings (for example with the Good Practice Team - Martin Ralphs).
3. There is currently a 'bottom up' approach to the promulgation of Harmonisation - with the Harmonisation Team carrying out roadshows, conferences and providing on-line and other publicity material. A 'top down' approach, with more support and direction from senior members of the GSS would be very helpful in championing the cause for wider harmonisation. There seems to be an overall lack of engagement with GSS SPSC.
4. It has been suggested the term Harmonisation should be re-branded from Harmonisation to Standardisation, but the view of the Harmonisation Team is there is a difference between the

two (Standardisation = conformity, Harmonisation = consistency, focussing on common goals and outcomes).

5. Resource issues have been highlighted to GSS SPSC and the response received was to do one thing at a time and concentrate on harmonising a standard for well-being. The Harmonisation Team are currently coordinating the work of thirteen Topic Groups for social standards and are engaging with Business Statistics to harmonise their data. The resource requirements are not within the team itself but with the need for topic leads for certain topics.

### **Proposed Action Plan:**

The Harmonisation Team proposes the actions to be undertaken as follows:

- Present the revised Harmonisation Strategy to the GSS SPSC. This would also be an ideal opportunity to raise concerns and issues and to inform the group further about the work of the NSHG.
- Ask the GSS SPSC to review the 'softly softly' approach to harmonisation in light of the fact it is of emerging importance and facilitates a number of other strategies (i.e. EDC).
- Ask the GSS SPSC to action HoPs to come up with named persons in light of resource issues with their departments and to appoint topic leads for Business Statistics harmonisation. A process to fill highlighted resource gaps would be most welcome.
- Confirm the need for a NSHG steering group with the GSS SPSC, ask for nominations for membership and revitalise the group.
- Either through the NSHG Steering Group, or directly, provide a steer as to the relative importance for harmonising social, business and admin statistics (recognising timing considerations and constraints).
- Ask the GSS SPSC if they are the most appropriate authority for the NSHG to report into.

There are a number of activities that can be undertaken to improve the relationship between the two groups and NSHG members are invited to further contribute to these proposals.

**Harmonisation Team**  
**ONS Titchfield**  
**February 2014**



## Harmonisation Strategy 2014

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This harmonisation strategy updates the previous strategy which was approved in July 2011. This is in response to a request from the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) to review the strategy with the aim of creating higher impact.

### **2.0 The Harmonisation Team – Who we are, and what we do**

- 2.1 Since 2006, the Harmonisation team within ONS has been working on a cross-governmental programme of work to harmonise statistical inputs and outputs, to facilitate clearer and more robust comparison between data sources.
- 2.2 Much work has been undertaken to harmonise social standards. Key successes include the development of the Variable and Question Bank in collaboration with the UK Data Service, the formation of thirteen topic groups and formal agreement of a range of primary and secondary standards.

### **3.0 The Harmonisation Vision – Where we want to be**

- 3.1 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.

### **4.0 Achieving the Vision**

- 4.1 In order to achieve the vision, this strategy focuses on five key areas:
- Role of Harmonisation
  - Work Priorities
  - Communication Strategy
  - Stakeholder Engagement
  - Research Projects

### **5.0 Achieving the Vision - Role of Harmonisation**

- 5.1 Harmonisation is a principle that underpins a wide range of strategies and links into most of the priorities of major ongoing projects and initiatives within ONS and across the GSS. More detail can be found in the paper “Harmonisation – Underpinning Recent and Emerging Strategies” (*to be finalised*).
- 5.2 Currently the approach to harmonisation is that it is ‘encouraged’ rather than ‘enforced’. This can lead to a disparity amongst areas which engage with and adopt harmonised standards and those that fail to do so. It is perhaps the right time to review how effective this ‘soft’ approach has been and whether it is still the correct one. We will also review how harmonisation can inform the UKSA assessment process and if it is engaged sufficiently with the need for harmonised standards.
- 5.3 There are a number of conflicting priorities within ONS and across the GSS, but the harmonisation agenda requires more support from some senior bodies to push forward the

harmonisation strategy. We need to educate all stakeholders about the role and benefits of harmonisation and to strengthen our relationship with the GSR, senior staff and HoPs. We will review the reporting structure, membership level and roles of the groups that the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) reports to such as the GSS SPSC and make changes where necessary, for example building closer links with the ONS Strategy Group.

- 5.4 Harmonisation is not the same as standardisation. There is a subtle, but important difference between the two. Standardisation is about conformity. Harmonisation is about consistency. This subtle difference indicates that when you harmonise you focus more on common goals and outcomes with a view to improving the comparability of data from different sources and one size does not always fit all. Although the two are different, our strategy can contribute to standardisation initiatives such as the ESSNet Standardisation project and the Electronic Data Collection (EDC) project.

#### In summary:

- **Review effectiveness of the ‘soft’ approach to encourage harmonisation and its role in the UKSA assessment process.**
- **Educate and persuade senior management and other stakeholders about the role and benefits of harmonisation.**
- **Review the reporting structure, membership level and roles of the groups that the NSHG reports to.**
- **Proactively lead on harmonisation and input to other standardisation initiatives.**

## 6.0 Achieving the Vision - Work Priorities

- 6.1 Our work priorities are:  
 Harmonising business standards (high)  
 Communicating and engaging with stakeholders (high)  
 Harmonising social standards (medium)  
 Harmonising administrative data

The rationale behind these priorities is stated below.

- 6.2 Harmonisation of business standards is our top priority. This is because there are a number of initiatives taking place within the business surveys area and harmonisation can facilitate many of these. We need to get buy in from business areas by engaging with them about how we can help them to harmonise their data. We will review and continue to follow up on the actions from the initial business workshop held in Autumn 2013. We will add business surveys to the Variable and Question Bank to highlight the differences in definitions.
- 6.3 Communication and engagement with stakeholders (in particular those whose processes are not yet harmonised) is a high priority to be achieved through a refreshed communication plan and stakeholder analysis which will be produced once the strategy has been agreed.
- 6.4 Harmonisation of social standards is of medium priority as much work has already been completed on social surveys, therefore we just need to ensure the standards are kept up to date and new areas such as well-being are identified.
- 6.5 There are external factors that need to be resolved before we can move forward with the harmonisation of administrative data such as legislative and data sharing constraints and the outcome of the Beyond 2011 consultation. If the decision is made to have an alternative to the traditional Census, using administrative data, this work will become higher priority.

**In summary:**

- **Our highest priorities are to harmonise business standards and to communicate and engage with our stakeholders.**
- **We have an ongoing commitment to keep social standards harmonised.**
- **Harmonising administrative data is not currently a high priority but may become so.**

**7.0 Achieving the Vision – Communication Strategy**

- 7.1 There remains a lack of awareness in some business areas of the purpose and benefits of harmonisation. Business areas working in silos do not have harmonisation on the top of their agendas due to the perceived resource and system costs associated with harmonising as well as explaining change to customers. Our strategy aims to target and engage with those areas that are not yet harmonised to explain the benefits of harmonisation, the issues caused by non-harmonisation and how we can help them to harmonise. This will be achieved via a targeted communication plan.
- 7.2 We already have strong links with groups where there is a formal structure set in place and with whom we meet with regularly e.g. through the quarterly NSHG meetings. Members and topic leads receive dedicated support from our team which has resulted in their ongoing commitment.
- 7.3 However, we need to do more to increase our visibility within ONS and across the GSS, to promote the harmonisation vision and the long-term benefits. This will be achieved by taking advantage of opportunities to meet with and present to stakeholders. We will also hold regular workshops with new and existing stakeholders to involve them in the decision making process. We will follow up actions from these meetings to ensure momentum is not lost. We will review and improve our written publicity material such as intranet and internet pages and quarterly newsletters. We will explore new ways of communicating with our stakeholders such as setting up online communities, making more use of video conferencing and exploiting social media.

**In summary:**

- **Develop targeted communication plan to identify and engage with areas that are not harmonised.**
- **Engage with stakeholders within ONS and across the GSS via verbal, written and digital methods of communication.**

**8.0 Achieving the Vision – Stakeholder Engagement**

- 8.1 We have many stakeholders across the GSS, some more engaged with harmonisation than others. Our strategy aims to identify who our stakeholders are, what their priority is in relation to our work plan and how well we have engaged with them so far. This will be achieved via a revised stakeholder analysis. We will then review the gaps to identify those stakeholders we are not reaching. We need to identify those individuals who have the enthusiasm to drive forward the harmonisation agenda within their areas such as the divisional Quality Champions and we need to ensure the right people are consulted on harmonisation changes.
- 8.2 We will review membership of groups such as NSHG to ensure the right people are involved at the right time. We need to identify why some members are not as active as others. We will review the role of the topic leads, checking they are the most appropriate people and seek new ways to support them such as a mentoring scheme to pair up new topic leads with established ones.
- 8.3 We will develop a closer relationship with Social Survey Division (SSD), one of our key stakeholders, to learn from them about how well harmonisation has worked to aid us with

the next phase of harmonising business data. We will explore ways to engage with them more regularly e.g. via the NSHG or via quarterly meetings.

**In summary:**

- **Undertake stakeholder analysis to identify and prioritise all stakeholders, to see where the gaps are.**
- **Review membership of groups (eg NSHG) to ensure the right people are involved.**
- **Develop closer relationship with SSD.**

## **9.0 Achieving the Vision – Research Projects**

- 9.1 There are several pieces of research we can undertake. However there are some constraints to obtaining data needed for empirical research such as legal gateways to access administrative data.
- 9.2 We will continue to develop case studies to show examples of where business areas have successfully harmonised, highlighting the benefits and issues encountered. We can use these to help promote harmonisation to those areas which are not yet harmonised.
- 9.3 We will do further research into comparing similar questions across different surveys to identify duplicate non-harmonised definitions and those surveys which are not using harmonised standards. We will liaise with those business areas to discover why harmonised standards are not being used. This will form part of our targeted communication plan.

**In summary:**

- **Develop case studies to show examples of business areas that have successfully harmonised.**
- **Identify duplicate non-harmonised definitions across surveys and business areas which are not using harmonised standards and target them directly.**

## **10.0 Implementation**

- 10.1 This strategy sets out some high level actions which begin to provide the detail of how we will implement this strategy. Further details on the actions required to support delivery of the vision are set out in a separate implementation plan.

**National Statistics Harmonisation Group**  
**Combined Topic Group Report – December 2013**

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

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Caroline Smith	
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	Alice Jefferd (ONS); Alissa Goodman (IoE); Aruna Ramyeed (DWP); 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); Mike Bielby (HMRC); Noah Uhrig (Uni. Of Essex); Rachel Councill (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>	December 2013 - February 2014	
<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>		
<p>Given the time since this was last shared with the B&amp;TC group I have circulated the changes made late in 2013 I have circulated this version to the group for approval to ensure that it still reflects the current policy position. The deadline I gave was Friday February 14<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>I will update at the meeting what was received and where this will go next.</p> <p>If there are no concerns then this will be ready for publication shortly.</p>		
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>		
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>	
Interim Harmonised Standards (v5)	Underway	
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>		
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	
Reviewing comments on v5 standards	Planned	
Circulating final version to GSS	Planned	
<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>		
<p>There is a key risk in placing the interim standards on the harmonisation website without a full impact assessment on what these changes may do to levels of benefit receipt. This has been partially mitigated through a small pilot conducted by NatCen on behalf of DWP which has provided very positive feedback on the changes made.</p>		
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>		
None		

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Classifications**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Michaela Morris
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	Lindsay Prosser
<b>Reporting Period</b>	December 2013 - February 2014
<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<p>CHU are currently coding 1% sample (approximately 5000K records) of those that are economically active in England and Wales from Census to a 'gold standard' to identify errors and to code to a higher level of accuracy and hence higher quality</p> <p>CHU published version 2 of the SOC volume 2 (the coding index) on 21 January. This update included approximately 40 new job titles and 10 amendments.</p>	
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>
Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) data has been received from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)	Complete
Analysis of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data to improve throughput for automatic coding is almost complete	Ongoing
A working group has been set up to move forward replacing ACTR with G-Code as the corporate coding tool. The replacement is now necessary as ACTR will not work on the Windows 7 operating system	Ongoing
A request for Scottish Census data has been made with GRO- Scotland	Ongoing
The list of International and Allied Classifications constructed by CHU has been uploaded onto the website; the document will be reviewed bi-annually.	Complete
Quality assurance of updates to international classifications allied to UK SIC for DIME_ITDG group.	Ongoing
Methodological advice on UK and international classifications, provided to the Creative Industries.	Ongoing
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>	
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
The England and Wales Census data is being recoded to a 'Gold Standard' to identify errors and code to a higher level of accuracy and quality.	Ongoing
Once received, Scottish Census data will be coded to a 'Gold Standard'	Ongoing
Emerging job titles continue to be identified from a variety of data sources for inclusion in the next update to SOC Volume 2 – the Coding Index	Ongoing
Comparison and concordance work for updated international classifications allied to UK SIC at the request of the DIME_ITDG group.	Ongoing
Consult with the Creative Industries to ensure their proper understanding of UK SIC as an internationally based classification.	Ongoing
Implementation of ECOICOP	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>	
ONS is migrating to Windows 7. ACTR will not work on W7, its replacement G-Code is being further tested. This is being managed via a working group.	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	
None	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Consumer Durables**

A report has not been submitted for this Topic.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Country of Birth and Migration**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Pete Large (ONS)	
<b>Topic Group Members</b>		
<b>Reporting Period</b>	December 2013 - February 2014	
<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>		
As foreshadowed at the previous NSHG meeting, no resource has been available to take work forward on this topic this quarter. If and when resource is provided, a revised timetable will be circulated to the Group for agreement.		
<b>Progress made during this reporting period</b>		
<b>Product Name</b> <i>(including expected completion date)</i>	<b>Status</b>	
N/A		
<b>Work planned for the next reporting period</b>		
<b>Product Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	
N/A		
<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>		
N/A		
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>		
N/A		

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Crime, ASB and Social Capital**

A report has not been submitted for this Topic.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Demographic information**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Karen Gask
<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 Karen Gask, 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>	December 2013 - February 2014
<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
Gender identity: A paper proposing a new harmonised standard for gender identity was circulated to the sub-group in the last reporting period. The topic lead has now received comments on this and hopes to circulate this paper to the NSHG at the June 2014 meeting.	
<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>	
The main risk is insufficient resource being available to carry out harmonisation work required. We need to be vigilant that the usual workload does not detract from the time needing to be spent on harmonisation.	
<b>Other Information</b> <i>(Any other relevant details)</i>	
None	

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Economic Activity**

A report has not been submitted for this Topic.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Educational Attainment**

<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>	December 2013 - February 2014	
<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>		
We are no longer waiting for the results of the Census Quality Survey to be published due to the delay. The desk review is being discussed by the Topic Group and will be finalised based on the feedback received.		
<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>		
None		

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Ethnic Group, National Identity, Religion and Sexual Identity**

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Sian Bradford/Angela Potter-Collins
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	

<b>Reporting Period</b>	December 2013 - February 2014	
<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>		
<p>The branch is continuing to review the Census analysis plans on EILR topics. Further consultations are scheduled with stakeholders in order to prioritise areas of interest and meet policy needs.</p> <p>A story on Gypsy and Irish Travellers using the Census data was published on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2014. A story on English proficiency in the labour market was also published on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014 (produced by the central analysis team).</p> <p>There are plans to publish a story on 'Mixed identities' within families in 2014 subject to data availability. Also being scoped at the moment is a labour market story that focuses particularly on minority ethnic groups. <b>Comments and suggested areas of interest are welcomed by the group.</b></p> <p>A quality assurance role across the office in relation to EILR outputs continues.</p> <p>For information, on gender, the branch is currently compiling the UK stats for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's statistical database as well as providing the UK's position on gender stats for the UNSC and other briefings.</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>		
None		

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

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

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

A report has not been submitted for this Topic.

**NSHG Topic Group Highlight Report  
Income**

Nothing to report this period.

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

<b>Topic Lead</b>	Tim Vizard
<b>Topic Group Members</b>	
<b>Reporting Period</b>	

<b>Summary Status</b> <i>(An overview of the status of the work at this time)</i>	
<b>1) Statistical Products Consultation:</b> ONS has announced its outcome from the statistical products consultation ( <a href="http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/get-involved/consultations/consultations/statistical-products-2013/response/index.html">http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/get-involved/consultations/consultations/statistical-products-2013/response/index.html</a> ).  Within this announcement - a proposal was adopted for the Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF) to stop carrying the IHS core set of questions. The LCF team will be investigating which IHS topics they wish to retain over the next few months, with a view to no longer be fully harmonised with the IHS core by 2015. This will mean future publications from the IHS (specifically the questions on sexual identity, personal wellbeing, smoking prevalence, general health, and other key demographic information) will be based on data collected on the Annual Population Survey (APS).  The IHS team are currently looking at how IHS data will be made available in the future, and will present a paper at the April IHS steering group for discussion (this paper will also be shared with NSHG members). It's important to note that the IHS core set of harmonised questions will still be collected on the APS.	
<b>2) Review of IHS outputs:</b> The IHS team plan to hold a session at the April steering group to review the variables and outputs currently produced by ONS, with a view to improve the usability of IHS data in the future. As a result, the IHS will not be inviting requests for new question topics in 2015.	
<b>3) Date of 2014 IHS Steering Group:</b> The next IHS Steering Group will take place on Wednesday 2nd April 2014, between 10-12pm at ONS Newport.	
<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**

Nothing to report this period.



## **National Statistics Harmonisation Group**

### **Personal Well-being: Interim Standard - March 2014**

#### **Introduction**

An interim standard for a set of personal well-being (PWB) questions has been created in order to reflect a growing demand to collect and use information on personal well-being by a range of organisations. It is intended that a fully harmonised set of questions will be available in the long-term, however, the questions are still experimental in nature and could be subject to revision going forward in light of further user engagement, testing and development and international demands for harmonised questions. The four questions proposed as interim standards will allow users to get the best estimates possible, whilst taking account of the harmonisation work that is being undertaken around the world. The Interim Standard is at Annex A.

#### **About the Measuring National Well-being Programme**

Measuring National Well-being is about looking at 'GDP and beyond'. It includes headline indicators in areas such as health, relationships, job satisfaction, economic security, education, environmental conditions and measures of personal well-being (individuals' assessment of their own well-being). The first phase of the programme entailed a National Debate which gathered views on 'what matters to people'. Since then there has been extensive development work of new measures of well-being including that of personal well-being

#### **Development of the Personal Well-being Questions**

The proposed interim PWB questions are the four questions that are currently used on the ONS Annual Population Survey (APS). These questions were introduced on the APS in April 2011 and have remained unchanged to date. A range of both qualitative and quantitative testing has been carried out on the PWB questions. All quantitative testing has been carried out on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to preserve consistency of measures on the APS.

The experimental questions included in the Annual Population Survey were developed with expert academic advice as well as benefiting from discussions between members of the National Statistician's Measuring National Well-being Advisory Forum and Technical Advisory Group. They represent a balanced approach to the measurement of personal well-being drawing on the three main theoretical approaches identified in the academic literature on the subject (Dolan et. al. 2011<sup>1</sup>, ONS, 2011<sup>2</sup>) and are designed to collect information on different aspects of people's personal well-being. The three different approaches to measuring personal well-being are:

- the 'evaluative' approach in which people are asked to reflect on their life and make a cognitive assessment of how their life is going overall or of how specific aspects of their life are going;
- the 'eudemonic' approach, sometimes referred to as the psychological or functioning/flourishing approach, which draws on self-determination theory and measures people's sense of meaning and purpose in life, connections with family and friends, a sense of control and whether they feel part of something bigger than themselves;

<sup>1</sup> Dolan P, Layard R and Metcalfe R, Office for National Statistics (2011). [Measuring Subjective Well-being for Public Policy \(99.8 Kb Pdf\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics (2011). [Measuring Subjective Well-being \(240.8 Kb Pdf\)](#).

- the 'experience' approach which measures people's positive and negative experiences (or affect) over a short timeframe to capture people's personal well-being on a day-to-day basis.

The personal well-being questions that ONS uses on its household surveys are:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? (evaluative approach)
- Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? (eudemonic approach)
- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? (experience approach)
- Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? (experience approach).

All are answered using a 0 to 10 scale where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.

Further information on the ONS approach to measuring personal well-being can be found in the paper ['Measuring Subjective Well-being' \(240.8 Kb Pdf\)](#) published by ONS in July 2011.

The ONS personal well-being questions are currently used on a range of surveys carried out by a variety of organisations. Details of [surveys](#) using these four questions and also surveys using different variations on the questions are available on the ONS website.

### **Next Steps**

The Personal Well-being questions are currently undergoing the UK Statistics Authority assessment process in order to achieve National Statistics Designation. This has a planned completion for late spring 2014 at which point the questions will no longer be classified as 'experimental'. Additionally, the Measuring National Well-being Programme is undergoing a mainstreaming process which is due to be complete by the start of the next financial year. Once the National Statistics Designation and mainstreaming processes are finalised, we will then aim to put forward a fully harmonised set of questions. It is however anticipated that testing and development will continue to be on-going. As such, the questions could still be subject to revision and will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.

**Claire Shenton**  
**Measuring National Well-being, ONS**  
**12 February 2014**

Annexes

A. Interim Standard for Personal Well-being

**Annex A – Interim Standard for Personal Well-being**



Harmonised Concepts and Questions for Social Data Sources  
Interim Harmonised Standard

Personal Well-being

**About this document**

This document has been written in order to inform users about development of the ONS survey questions on personal well-being. The four questions that were introduced on the APS in April 2011 are experimental in nature and could be subject to revision going forward in light of further user engagement, further testing and development and international demands for harmonised questions. Long term plans are to have a set of questions that provide consistent estimates over time. In the shorter term this needs to be balanced with getting the best estimates possible, ensuring they meet policy needs and take account of the harmonisation work that is being undertaken around the world.

**This is version 1.0, published in January 2014.**

Please note this version is an interim standard created to reflect the current desire to collect and use information on personal well-being. A fully ratified set of questions will be available in the longer term.

**Contact Information**

If you would like further information on the personal well-being questions or have any questions, please contact:

Email: [personal.well-being@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:personal.well-being@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

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Mail: Dawn Snape  
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## Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) introduced questions on personal well-being on the Annual Population Survey (APS) in April 2011. The questions have remained unchanged on the APS since they were first introduced. All question testing that has been carried out on personal well-being questions has been done using a separate survey – the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) – to preserve consistency of measures on the APS.

One of the main benefits of collecting information on personal well-being is that it is based on people's views of their own individual well-being. In the past, assumptions were made about how objective conditions, such as people's health and income, might influence their individual well-being. Personal well-being measures, on the other hand, take account of what matters to people by allowing them to decide what is important when they respond to questions.

## Personal well-being (PWB) questions as they currently appear on the ONS Annual Population Survey:

### PERSONAL WELL-BEING

#### 68. Satis

UK

Next I would like to ask you four questions about your feelings on aspects of your life. There are no right or wrong answers. For each of these questions I'd like you to give an answer on a scale of nought to 10, where nought is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

*Interviewer instruction: where nought is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'*

Scale from 0 to 10

**Asked if: PersProx<sup>1</sup> = IN PERSON, DVAge = 16+<sup>2</sup>**

#### 69. Worth

UK

Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

*Interviewer instruction: where nought is 'not at all worthwhile' and 10 is 'completely worthwhile'*

Scale from 0 to 10

**Asked if: PersProx = IN PERSON, DVAge = 16+**

#### 70. Happy

UK

Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

*Interviewer instruction: where nought is 'not at all happy' and 10 is 'completely happy'*

Scale from 0 to 10

**Asked if: PersProx = IN PERSON, DVAge = 16+**

## 71. Anxious

UK

On a scale where nought is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Scale from 0 to 10

**Asked if: PersProx = IN PERSON, DVAge = 16+**

1. PersProx = IN PERSON: responses should be answered in person by the respondent. Proxy responses (on behalf of someone else in the household) will not be accepted
2. DVAge = 16+ = Questions asked to those aged 16 and over only

### Question Placement

It is recommended that the four personal well-being questions are placed after the key demographic questions in line with the way the questions are administered on the APS. The positioning of the four questions was decided following ONS qualitative work and extensive discussions within ONS.

Positioning the four questions after the key demographics allows rapport to be developed between the interviewer and the respondent, as well as ensuring the main survey questions do not impact on response to the personal well-being questions. For further details on question placement, please refer to the Personal Well-being Survey User Guide.

### Survey Modes

To date, ONS have tested the four personal well-being questions using a range of modes of administration, including self-completion (CAPI) and interviewer-led face to face and telephone survey methods.

The Annual Population Survey is mixed mode and data is collected either by telephone interview or face-to-face in the respondent's home. Different collection modes can affect responses and personal well-being estimates are no exception. For example in the Annual Population Survey it appears that on average people responding face-to-face with an interviewer in their home gave lower ratings to those responding via the telephone.

This issue is particularly important for the APS as all interviews in Scotland north of the Caledonian Canal are administered by telephone only, rather than through a combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews, as is the case in other areas of the UK. Please see the latest statistical bulletin 'Personal Well-being Across the UK, 2012/13' for the most recent data for different survey modes on the APS.

A regression analysis which looked at the variation in well-being outcomes by specific characteristics and circumstances of individuals whilst holding other characteristics equal was also carried out in spring 2013. The findings of this analysis show that people interviewed face to face give lower well-being ratings on average than people interviewed by telephone. However, the size effects are small. Further details on this regression analysis are available in the report 'Measuring National Well-being - What matters most to Personal Well-being?'

Previous research has found that on average lower scores to well-being questions are received if the interview is carried out via self-completion rather than administered by an interviewer, particularly for female respondents (Pudney 2010). Testing on the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) has shown that there was little difference in the mean ratings between the interviewer led and self-completion interviews. Further details on this testing are available in the report 'Initial Investigation into Subjective Well-being from the Opinions Survey'

The following working paper produced for the National Statistician's Technical Advisory Group on Measuring National Well-being also provides further evidence on the impact of responses under different interview conditions: Ralph, K., Palmer, K. and Olney, J. (2011), '[Subjective well-being: a qualitative investigation of subjective well-being questions](#)' (344.6 Kb Pdf), Working Paper for the Technical Advisory Group on 29 March 2012

#### References:

- I. Pudney S (2010) 'An experimental analysis of the impact of survey design on measures and models of subjective wellbeing' ISER Working Paper Series: 2010-20 Institute for Social and Economic Research. <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/publications/working-papers/iser/2010-20>

### Frequently Asked Questions

The Personal Well-being Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) which will be updated as required can be found in the link below:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/social-and-welfare-methodology/subjective-wellbeing-survey-user-guide/subjective-well-being-frequently-asked-questions--faq-s-.html>

### Surveys Using the Four ONS Personal Well-being Questions

An overview of surveys in the UK that use the four ONS personal well-being questions as of September 2013, can be found in the link below:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/social-and-welfare-methodology/subjective-wellbeing-survey-user-guide/index.html>

### Personal Well-being Survey User Guide

A download of the 'Personal Well-being User Guide: 2012/13 Dataset' and previous versions of the user guide for use with different datasets can be found in the link below:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/social-and-welfare-methodology/subjective-wellbeing-survey-user-guide/index.html>

### Are the Current Four Personal Well-being Questions Likely to Change?

The four questions that were introduced on the APS in April 2011 are experimental in nature and could be subject to revision going forward in light of further user engagement, further testing and development and international demands for harmonised questions. Long term plans are to have a set of questions that provide consistent estimates over time. In the shorter term this needs to be balanced with getting the best estimates possible, ensuring they meet policy needs and take account of the harmonisation work that is being undertaken around the world.

The questions have remained unchanged on the APS since they were first introduced and all question testing has been carried out using the OPN survey to preserve consistency of measures on the APS.

### Personal Well-being Publications

'Personal Well-being Across the UK, 2012/13' (data from 2012/13 dataset)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/personal-well-being-across-the-uk--2012-13/index.html>

'Personal Well-being in the UK, 2012/13' (data from 2012/13 dataset)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/personal-well-being-in-the-uk--2012-13/index.html>

'What matters most to Personal Well-being?' (regression analysis, 2011/12 dataset)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/what-matters-most-to-personal-well-being-in-the-uk-/index.html>

'Differences in Well-being by Ethnicity'

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-subjective-wellbeing-in-the-uk/differences-in-well-being-by-ethnicity/index.html>

'First Annual ONS Experimental Subjective Well-being Results' (data from 2011/12 dataset)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-subjective-wellbeing-in-the-uk/first-annual-ons-experimental-subjective-well-being-results/index.html>

'Analysis of Experimental Subjective Well-being Data from the Annual Population Survey, April to September 2011' (data from 2011/12 dataset - 1st 6 months)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-subjective-wellbeing-in-the-uk/analysis-of-experimental-subjective-well-being-data-from-the-annual-population-survey--april---september-2011/index.html>

'Initial Investigation into Subjective Well-being from the Opinions Survey'

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-subjective-wellbeing-in-the-uk/investigation-of-subjective-well-being-data-from-the-ons-opinions-survey/index.html>

### **Quality and Methodology information**

A download of the information paper covering quality and methodology information for the 'First Annual ONS Experimental Subjective Well-being Results' can be found in the link below

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/quality-information/people-and-places/index.html>