

CESSATIONS AND CHANGES TO SCOPE OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS: GUIDANCE FOR HEADS OF PROFESSION¹

Version: 1.0
Date: July 2016
Author: GSS Good Practice Team (Martin Ralphs and Nick Woodhill)
Date of next review: July 2017

The National Statistician has agreed that the GSS Professional Team will no longer centrally collect information about the cessation or change of scope of official statistics, nor will the team centrally monitor statistical consultations.

The Head of Profession, as the local representative of the National Statistician within a department, is responsible for deciding who to notify and when / whether to escalate any proposed change of scope or cessation proposal to the National Statistician (usually via the Good Practice Team) or Monitoring and Assessment team.

What does the Code of Practice say?

The [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) addresses this point under Protocol 1, Practice 7, which emphasises the **need to consult with users before making changes to official statistics or publications**. The Code states that consultations should be:

- **Informed** – by relevant [central guidance](#) on how consultations should be conducted; and by the views of user groups on the best means of obtaining views;
- **Efficient** – by balancing the importance of the issue and the likely impact of users' views against the time and resources available, so as to obtain good value for money from the consultation process; by liaising and co-ordinating with other producers to avoid duplication of effort and to minimise burdens; and by exploiting different methods of consultation;
- **Clear** – by describing the consultation, and expressing the issues, as simply and concisely as possible; and by publishing the timetable for each consultation; and
- **Responsive** – by publishing the records of decisions and actions following a consultation, together with explanations for them; and by publishing individual responses, unless anonymity is requested.

More general central guidance is available in the Cabinet Office [consultation principles](#). These were updated in January 2016 and this [blog](#) looks at how and why they were refreshed.

What other factors might you want to consider when making changes?

Consider the impact of the change, and whether this is sufficient to require escalation. This is a matter of judgement for the Head of Profession and departmental statistical team.

¹ This guidance supersedes the document entitled 'Reporting cessations and changes to scope of Official Statistics – guidance for Heads of Profession' that was previously published on the GSS website.

For example, if the statistics in question are numbers of high national value and / or wide interest then a proposal to cease production rapidly or substantially change the scope (for example due to resource reduction or instruction from a Minister) should normally be brought urgently to the attention of the Authority and National Statistician.

If, on the other hand, the numbers in question are for a specialist, niche audience who are aware of and in agreement with the proposals, and the statistical team and Head of Profession have been involved in the change and transition arrangements, notification would not normally be required.

Who can I contact for help?

The GSS [Good Practice Team](#) are happy to provide advice on specific cases - you can always contact us to discuss the best approach with regard to potential changes of scope or cessations. As a rule of thumb, if you have concerns about proposed changes, please notify us so that we can support you appropriately. Our contact details are provided below.

GSS Good Practice Team (goodpracticeteam@statistics.gov.uk) – this is usually the most efficient way to contact GPT.

Martin Ralphs (London) 0207 592 8650
Charles Lound (London) 0207 592 8643
Tegwen Green (Newport) 01633 45 5789
Nick Woodhill (London) 01633 65 1593
Gareth Pryce (Newport) 01633 45 6063