**PAPER NO. GSS PDC(17)11**

**GSS PRESENTATION AND DISSEMINATION COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of meeting held at 1 Drummond Gate, London, 20 March 2017**

**Attendees/Members:**

Julie Brown Department for Transport (Chair)

Tegwen Green GSS Good Practice Team

Peter Antoniades Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy

Bethan Evans Valuation Office Agency

Gregor Boyd Scottish Government

Laura Dewis Office for National Statistics

Nancy Singh Ministry of Defence

Madeleine Watson NHS Digital

Glenn Goodman Department for Transport

Niall Goulding Department for Culture, Media, and Sport

Claire Gavin Department for Communities and Local Government

Katie Dodd Department for Work and Pensions

Dawn Fagence (audio) Department of Health

Sandra Tate (audio) Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Jamie Jenkins (audio) Office for National Statistics

**Guest Speaker:**

Lorna Booth House of Commons Library

Darren Barnes Office for National Statistics

Bill Roberts Swirrl

**Secretariat:**

Rachel Worledge Department for Communities and Local Government

Nikesh Lad Department for Transport

1. **Minutes and actions from previous meeting**
   1. Julie Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially new members and those acting as deputies.
   2. Members approved the minutes from the previous meeting. All actions were read through and noted as complete, with the exception of actions 13 and 14 which were noted as in progress. The survey on statistical release templates will be circulated by the Secretariat in early April.
2. **The Inquiring Citizen**
   1. Nikesh Lad and Rachel Worledge ran an interactive workshop session aimed at focusing members’ minds of the needs of the Inquiring Citizen and how to meet those needs.
   2. The slides used for the workshop, including speaking notes and links to the examples used, have been circulated to PDC members as paper GSS PDC(17)02. A summary is given below alongside feedback from the group sessions.
   3. Tegwen Green began the session with reflections from a meeting with Ola Rosling. He spoke about ignorance and emphasised the importance of keeping things simple. His top tips were to avoid all statistical language, have one key story and stick to it, and that a good chart was more memorable and sharable than commentary, no matter how good the commentary.
   4. Nikesh highlighted the extent of ignorance on several key topic areas and then proceeded to introduce the characteristics and behaviours of the Inquiring Citizen user persona. (All user personas are available from the ONS website).
   5. In the first activity, groups of PDC members were assigned two GSS publications and asked to use them to answer a pre-defined question that an Inquiring Citizen might ask. Feedback was mixed depending on the publication as some were able to answer the question and others weren’t. Members reflected on issues such as the key points being on page 7 and the terminology being used in the publication being different from the terms commonly used by the public. Others noted that this exercise relied on having the correct publication already in front of them.
   6. In the second activity, the groups discussed how well their own departments met the needs of the Inquiring Citizen and what barriers exist to improving this. Some departments noted recent improvements to statistical publications, including infographics and factsheets. When user testing is conducted it tends to be for internal Inquiring Citizens rather than external. Others noted the use of social media as a more appropriate dissemination mechanism for the Inquiring Citizen. Interactive tools are viewed as a useful mechanism, e.g. NISRA’s Neighbourhood Statistics website which gives a statistical snapshot of an areas based on postcode.
   7. Several departments noted a lack of understanding of what the Inquiring Citizen actually wants, with a lack of user research on common misconceptions and opinions. It was noted that our understanding is often driven by media coverage which may not always be a true reflection and results in gaps for policy areas less frequently in the news. Find-ability of statistics and consumption trends was also flagged as an area of poor understanding.
   8. After looking at examples of ‘good’ (see slides), for the final activity groups were asked to consider practical ideas to take forward and any resources or support required. Feedback included working with content providers such as Google to understand how to improve the find-ability of GSS statistics, the difficulty of using GOV.UK, the possibility of creating different products for the Inquiring Citizen (akin to the ‘accessible’ versions of key policy documents) and working with the media and Full Fact to understand what the key questions of the Inquiring Citizen are and how to use this to tailor GSS products and messaging.
   9. Members are encouraged to engage with their departments on how they cater to the needs of the Inquiring Citizen. Members are welcome to use the slides as the basis for their own session within their departments.

**Action 1 – PDC members to contact Secretariat if they require information on running their own Inquiring Citizen session in their own departments**

1. **Presentation and Dissemination Symposium**
   1. Jamie Jenkins, chair of the Presentation and Dissemination Symposium organising committee, provided an update on the proposed plans for the symposium.
   2. The symposium will be held on Friday 30 June at the BEIS Conference Centre in London. This year there will be around 200 spaces. Departments will be allocated a set number of places by the organising committee. HoPs or PDC representatives will be responsible for the final allocation of places to people. Personal invites for PDC members will be sent shortly. Members are encouraged to alert their departments to the date.
   3. The morning will focus on how best to present and disseminate to policy users. Speakers are likely to include a current or former minister and someone from a think-tank. The afternoon will focus on how best to present and disseminate to the public. Speakers are likely to involve journalists and/or representatives from the BBC or Full Fact. John Pullinger will close the event.
   4. Breakout sessions will be themed around visualisation in the morning, and writing in the afternoon. Each set of sessions will be split into beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. For instance, for visualisation the beginner session could focus on Excel whilst the advance might include D3.
   5. Laura Dewis commented that the proposal didn’t include anything about Open Data, which is the necessary underpinning for several presentation and dissemination improvements. Jamie suggested including Open Data in a main room event to get everyone involved, rather than as a niche session.

**Action 2 – Laura Dewis to provide Jamie Jenkins with suggestions for Open Data speakers for the Presentation and Dissemination Symposium**

* 1. Julie suggested that someone speak about the Churchill app and to ask data scientists to describe their projects. She also encouraged speakers to focus on how they did a piece of work so that attendees come away with both inspiration to try something similar themselves and ideas about how to practically take that forward.

1. **House of Commons Library presentation**
   1. At a previous PDC meeting it had been agreed to invite external speakers to PDC meetings to explain how they use GSS statistics, their experiences of using our statistics and to provide a challenge function to the PDC. Lorna Booth from the House of Commons Library is the first of these speakers.
   2. The slides from Lorna’s presentation have been circulated to PDC members as paper GSS PDC(17)09 with a summary given below.
   3. Lorna introduced the House of Commons Library, explaining that their work is divided into

* publishing hundreds of research briefing papers per year on a particular topic area or piece of legislation;
* answering 20,000-25,000 questions per year from MPs on anything they want to know about, of which around 6,000 are numerical.

All briefing papers can be found on the parliament.uk website, which also includes a separate ‘Brexit’ page.

**Action 3 – PDC members are encouraged to alert statisticians in their departments to the function and products of the Library**

* 1. Library researchers operates under extremely tight time constraints using a variety of data sources, including National and Official Statistics, to provide information on a vast range of policy areas. They often act as intermediaries to our statistics. Being able to quickly access and understand data sources is key.
  2. Lorna acknowledged the improvements to presentation, dissemination and accessibility of statistics that the GSS has made in recent years and thanked the committee for continuing to focus on these issues. Using feedback from her colleagues, Lorna presented a range of areas of frustration where improvements could still be made. The full list can be found in the slides.
  3. Julie commented that Lorna’s list included lots of practical aspects that could be delivered by G7-led statistics production teams. These include
* not deleting historic data from Excel tables when adding the new year’s data;
* adding contact details to the release and tables (and webpage if appropriate);
* re-thinking terminology used;
* using the correct LA codes (see GSS Geography Policy);
* routine checks of ad-hoc request page, FOIs and PQs to determine what should be added to the release as standard;
* using experience of misreporting in the media to guide changes to the release the next time it is published.
  1. Julie asked whether the GSS was responsive when contacted by the Library. Lorna answered that in general people were happy to help although suggested improvements were not always taken forward. She also acknowledged that sometimes due to time constraints Library researchers do not always contact GSS teams.

**Action 4 – PDC members to encourage G7-led teams within their departments to review the list of practical improvements and implement these as part of their publication cycles**

1. **GSS Discovery Project update**
   1. Darren Barnes and Bill Roberts presented an update on the GSS Discovery Project. The slides from their presentation have been circulated to PDC members as paper GSS PDC(17)10 with a summary given below.
   2. Darren gave an overview of the purpose, progress, challenges encountered, key findings and final output of the GSS Discovery Project.
   3. The purpose was to discover, map and improve the GSS data landscape to make it easier for expert users to find and use our data in a flexible way that suits their needs. It was not to create another platform or tool but instead was about providing a data registry, developing pipelines and providing query and search functionality to make data more searchable and connectable so that users can produce their own bespoke visualisations.
   4. The project has completed all intended departmental deep dives and HoP questionnaires. User research proved more problematic than expected as departments had less research than anticipated, where research did exist it was often fairly out-of-date and was more likely to focus on internal rather than external users. A ‘solar system’ has been created to provide a representative view of all datasets and variables produced by the GSS.
   5. The intention was to automate as much of the process as possible by drawing data from what we already publish, rather than increasing burden on departments. There was acceptance that not all data will fit this model and that decisions will need to be made on what should be included and excluded.
   6. Bill demonstrated small-scale elements of the projects. The hypothesis was whether we could use a standard web-based space which users could build on top of. Links are provided in the slides to the interactive aspects with screenshots also included in the slides.
   7. Bill showcased searching from different silos of data produced by different departments (e.g. Scottish Government and DCLG) but using aligned metadata. He then demonstrated the visualisations and tables that could be created from that data using a variety of freely available online software (e.g. Tableau, R Studio, D3 etc.)
   8. The Discovery Project officially comes to an end during the week of the meeting (24 March 2017). The report, including recommendations, will shortly be presented to the Design Authority and to HoPs. If agreement can be found on the recommendations, a business case for funding to implement the recommendations will be drafted.
   9. Peter Antoniades asked what the biggest problem was with existing data and metadata, to which Darren answered the lack of standardisation and harmonisation. As examples, inconsistent labelling of commonly-used categories (e.g. gender), different classification systems and different IDs / codes.
   10. Gregor Boyd raised the question of whether we need to engage with the Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) to emphasise the links between the Discovery Project and data standards.

**Action 5 – Tegwen Green to raise the link between the Discovery Project and data standards to the SPSC in the next quarterly PDC return**

* 1. Julie asked what this means for the role of statisticians and our value added. For instance, how to add commentary, analysis and insight. Similarly Madeleine Watson asked if any recommendations will prevent users from bringing together two unrelated datasets and drawing meaningless conclusions. It was emphasised that this is part of wider work (e.g. an ONS project on data caveating) and that the aim is to effectively manage risk, not avoid it entirely.

1. **2016/17 Work Plan review and going forward into 2017/18**
   1. Work stream leads were invited to speak about their strands on the work plan, providing an update on their activities over 2016/17. Please see the attached annotated 2016/17 work plan for comments on individual streams, as paper GSS PDC(17)03.
   2. Members were also encouraged to read this quarter’s What’s New return, paper GSS PDC(17)05.

**Action 6 – PDC Secretariat to produce a summary of the achievements of the PDC over 2016/17**

* 1. There will be an award for the department that made the most progress on presentation and dissemination matters over the course of 2016/17. There will be one winner and two runners up which will be announced at the Symposium. All PDC members, PDC champions, Open Data representatives and GOV.UK representatives will be able to vote.

**Action 7 – PDC Secretariat to arrange the voting process for the 2017 PDC Progress Award**

1. **Plans for 2017/18**
   1. Work stream leads were asked to explain whether they believed their work streams should continue into 2017/18 and whether they should be in the same format. Please see the attached annotated 2016/17 work plan for comments on individual streams, paper GSS PDC(17)03.

**Action 8 – Work stream leads for strands continuing into 2017/18 to provide PDC Secretariat with a revised form of words for use in the 2017/18 work plan**

* 1. New items for 2017/18 were discussed. Members agreed on the following new areas:
* Meeting the needs of the Inquiring Citizen;
* Best practice checklist for publications (based on the practical aspects raised in the House of Commons Library presentation);
* A placeholder for a stream reacting to the publication of the revised Code of Practice;

**Action 9 – All PDC members are expected to volunteer to either lead or support at least one work strand of the 2017/18 work plan. Members to contact PDC Secretariat with their preference**

**Action 10 – PDC Secretariat to draft 2017/18 work plan**

**Action 11 – PDC Secretariat to invite Office for Statistics Regulation to speak about the revised Code of Practice at the June PDC meeting**

* 1. PDC structure and membership was discussed. Broadly speaking members were happy to continue the sub-group structure, PDC champions and constituency representatives. Some members noted the grouping of constituencies may need refining and others noted that some organisations either were not covered or would prefer to be full members.

**Action 12 – PDC members with concerns or suggestions about their/others’ representation to contact PDC Secretariat**

* 1. The format of the 2017/18 Departmental Goals will be finalised once the 2017/18 work plan has been drafted.

**Action 13 – PDC Secretariat to draft 2017/18 Department Goals**

1. **Any Other Business**
   1. Lyndsey Melbourne (via Glenn Goodman) raised that a GOV.UK data publishers group met on 9 March with an attendance of 50 people and asked whether PDC had any links with that group. No one at the meeting was aware of the group but it was agreed that Sam Hall would engage with that community. Link to the community: <https://data.blog.gov.uk/2017/02/28/introducing-the-government-data-publishers-community/>

**Action 14 – Sam Hall to engage with GOV.UK data publishers group and report back via the GOV.UK subgroup**

* 1. Sophie Riley (via Claire Gavin) asked whether a rumour that government departments’ statistics pages that were not on GOV.UK were being closed down held any truth. Laura Dewis said she was not aware of this happening. However she noted that there have been no official requests made for statistical exemptions to the mandate that government material should be published on GOV.UK. This suggests that proper process is not being followed and that those pages are technically at risk of being closed down.

**Action 15 – Sam Hall to raise the concern about the risk of closure of non-GOV.UK statistical pages and link to statistical exemptions with GDS and report back via GOV.UK subgroup**

* 1. Laura Dewis alerted PDC members that NeSS and the web data access portal will close down before the next PDC meeting. It is being closed before its successor is available due to the resource required to dual run. All data will remain available but will be in a different format, with almost all available via NOMIS.
  2. The next PDC meeting will be held on 27 June 2017.

**Rachel Worledge, PDC Secretariat, DCLG**

**Nikesh Lad, PDC Secretariat, DfT**

**5 April 2017**

**Actions from GSS Presentation & Dissemination Committee meeting of 20 March 2017**

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| **No.** | **Person** | **Action** |
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| 2 | Laura Dewis | Laura Dewis to provide Jamie Jenkins with suggestions for Open Data speakers for the Presentation and Dissemination Symposium |
| 3 | PDC members | PDC members are encouraged to alert statisticians in their departments to the function and products of the Library |
| 4 | PDC members | PDC members to encourage G7-led teams within their departments to review the list of practical improvements and implement these as part of their publication cycles |
| 5 | Tegwen Green | Tegwen Green to raise the link between the Discovery Project and data standards to the SPSC in the next quarterly PDC return |
| 6 | PDC Secretariat | PDC Secretariat to produce a summary of the achievements of the PDC over 2016/17 |
| 7 | PDC Secretariat | PDC Secretariat to arrange the voting process for the 2017 PDC Progress Award |
| 8 | Work stream leads | Work stream leads for strands continuing into 2017/18 to provide PDC Secretariat with a revised form of words for use in the 2017/18 work plan |
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