



Government  
Statistical Service

# GOOD PRACTICE TEAM

WE'RE HERE TO HELP...

October 2017

# GOOD PRACTICE TEAM

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) Good Practice Team is a small, agile consultancy unit. The team was set up in 2013 by the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, the National Statistician and the Authority's Head of Assessment.

We report regularly to the National Statistician who, alongside the Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation, sets our strategic direction.

The members of the team are experienced staff with in-depth knowledge of technical and methodological issues and the production and dissemination of statistics across government.

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# GOOD PRACTICE TEAM

## **Our approach**

The GSS Good Practice Team works to build capability and drive forward the priorities of the UK Statistics Authority and the National Statistician. Our work is aligned to the priorities of Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and the GSS Presentation and Dissemination Committee.

The team identifies, promotes and shares good practice across the GSS and supports cross-government networks where GSS colleagues come together to share expertise. We support the Presentation Champions network, a sub-committee of the Presentation and Dissemination Committee. The network has representatives from all major departments and drives forward the improvement of commentary and presentation of statistics. Our approach is to generate self-sustaining networks which promote continuous improvement by sharing good ideas that work.

The Good Practice Team attends GSS Heads of Professions meetings and is contributes to the work of many of the GSS Groups and Committees.

We also run short-term secondments to bring junior statisticians into the team, widening our reach and building capability.

# GOOD PRACTICE TEAM

## What we offer

The GSS Good Practice Team supports statistics producers through mentoring, advice, consultancy, training and guidance on the production, dissemination and use of official statistics. We support the GSS community of some 7,000 statistical producers, as well as delivering training for other analytical and policy colleagues across government.

We offer a free support service and don't usually charge for the training we provide. Our work is not restricted to the GSS – we can and do support other government professionals.

We are happy to discuss new training opportunities and are especially keen to explore training that can be re-used and syndicated across the statistical system.

**If you have an example of a successful event which we could help reach a wider audience; or want to share an example of good practice – please get in touch.**



**UK Statistics  
Authority**



**Office for  
Statistics Regulation**

The GSS Good Practice Team provides advice and training around the Code of Practice for Official Statistics - practical application, interpretation and compliance. We work closely with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to ensure that our training and guidance is up to date and in line with the Regulator's thinking.

### **Assessment support**

In collaboration with the OSR, we provide advice and support for producers before and after assessment for Code compliance and National Statistics badging, especially around working through and meeting the requirements of an assessment.

### **Reporting Breaches of the Code of Practice**

GSS Good Practice Team works with statistical producers and the OSR to log breaches of the Code of Practice and agree appropriate mitigation strategies.

### **General advice and support**

We offer informal, ad hoc advice for statistical producers on the interpretation and application of the Code of Practice.

### **Introducing the Code of Practice**

#### **Teach-in | Flexible**

This introductory session aimed at statistical producers covers the Code of Practice, the statistical system, and how they work in practice. The session covers issues around official, National and experimental statistics, and management information. We use case studies to show how the Code has been applied.

The GSS Good Practice Team helps statisticians and analysts to make effective use of information and to act as advocates for evidence-based analysis. We encourage curiosity, statistical rigour and deep thinking about numbers; and support producers to think about the stories in their data and the wider context in which they sit. We promote synthesis, rather than multiple data sources.

### **Government Statistician Group (GSG)**

#### **Induction Training | 1 day – Foundation Training | 2 days**

The induction course for new GSG statisticians covers the statistical system, the Code of Practice, users of statistics, communication and analysis. The foundation course, for those 6-12 months into their careers, covers the process for producing official statistics and the role of the professional statistician. Attendance is co-ordinated through the ONS Learning Academy.

### **Communicating Statistics**

#### **Training | 1 day**

This course for statistical analysts discusses ways to improve how we communicate statistics. We stress the importance of understanding our audience, using peer review and good data visualisation. We provide tools to help review our own and others' publications.

### **GSS Sharing Seminars series**

#### **Seminar | ½ day**

GSS Good Practice Team curates a seminar series for GSS colleagues, hosted across departments. Seminars cover technical and professional topics and we aim to hold 6-12 per year. If you have any ideas for topics to be covered, please get in touch.

# Policy Profession

A key priority for the National Statistician is closer working and better collaboration between policy-makers and analytical teams in government, raising the impact and value of statistics in decision-making. The GSS Good Practice Team works with the Policy Profession Support Unit to develop professional standards and training for policy-makers.

## **Ten things you really need to know about statistics**

**Seminar | 1 hour 15 minutes**

This introductory Policy Curriculum workshop for policy professionals covers key statistical themes including data sources, correlation and causation, uncertainty, regression to the mean and checking your sources.

## **Better Statistics, Better Decisions**

**Workshop | 2 hours**

This interactive workshop at the Policy Profession Fast Stream Basecamp includes the key elements from the 'Ten things...' seminar and provides the opportunity for participants to explore the key points themselves from a set of tailored evidence.

**Better Statistics,  
Better Decisions**

Strategy for UK statistics,  
2015 to 2020



**Civil Service  
Learning**

# Presentation and dissemination of statistics

The GSS Good Practice Team helps statisticians in government to present and disseminate statistical information to a wide range of users and customers.

## Effective charts and tables

### Training course | ½ day

This introductory course gives an overview of good practice in the design and presentation of tables, graphs, maps and colour, and the cognitive issues that underpin it. The core principles and theoretical issues discussed are applicable to advanced tools used in development of infographics and interactive data visualisations.

## Writing about quality, uncertainty and change

### Seminar | 2 hours

This session explores approaches to the effective communication of uncertainty, drawing on GSS guidance, academic thinking and case studies. We work with users like the Royal Statistical Society, the BBC, Full Fact, Sense About Science and the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication.

## GSS peer review scrums

### Workshop | 3 hours

We manage the peer review of statistical releases and suites of statistical products. Our panels of analysts brainstorm ways to improve statistical products nominated by producers. Sessions usually take place without the authors present and the aim is to provide constructive, helpful feedback and suggestions for alternative presentation style.

## Infographics

### Seminar | 1 hour

A discussion seminar on the use of infographics in the GSS including key points from ONS and GDS guidance. The seminar allows hosting organisations to review infographics they have produced and compare with best practice across the GSS.

## Writing about numbers

### Seminar | 1 hour 30 minutes

This workshop explores helpful ways to write about statistics effectively, covering the key components of statistical commentary such as titles, main points, context, inferences and use of language, and draws on good and bad examples from across the GSS and beyond.

## Reviews of Statistical Releases

We work with the GSS Presentation Champions to review a sample of statistical releases and accompanying materials, providing a RAG rating and feedback for improvement to producers.



# Working with users

The GSS Good Practice Team helps producers to understand who their users are and what they want from statistical products. User engagement is critical for raising the value and impact of our numbers. We encourage producers to embrace the new opportunities of digital technology and engage with citizens to identify new users and support democratic debate.

## **Working with users**

### **Workshop | Flexible**

This workshop explores how to identify the users of statistics and how to engage with different user communities. It introduces the ONS model of 'user personas' and how this can inform the development of statistical content for different audiences.

## **Use of social media**

### **Workshop | 90 minutes**

This workshop explores why social media is helpful in the context of official statistics, how GSS departments currently use social media, what makes good social media content and how to measure success. It can be delivered alongside 'Working with users'.



# Data

The GSS Good Practice Team collaborates with the ONS Data Science Campus and the Government Data Science Partnership on data literacy and awareness of data science, and provides mentoring support on the Data Science Accelerator Programme. We support the work of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) around Quality Assurance of Administrative Data and Management Information.

## Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) and Quality Assurance of Management Information (QAMI)

### Workshop | 2-3 hours

This workshop is delivered in partnership with the OSR. The workshop covers the application of the QAAD/QAMI framework, sets out how the framework can be used to quality assure administrative data and management information, and uses examples from day-to-day work of participants.



Government  
**Data Science**  
Partnership

# Online community and resources

## Government Statistical Service website

[gss.civilservice.gov.uk](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk)



The GSS website provides news, guidance, career resources and event information for statisticians in government. The website is managed in collaboration with the GSS Central Policy Secretariat and the ONS Knowledge, Learning and Capability division.

## Policy Store

[statisticsauthority.gov.uk/policy-store/](https://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/policy-store/)



The store holds policies, standards and guidance for the GSS in one place and is managed in collaboration with the GSS Central Policy Secretariat. The Central Policy Secretariat help staff across the GSS to work together with senior leaders to achieve shared priorities.

## GSS Slack and Twitter

[gov-stats-service.slack.com](https://gov-stats-service.slack.com)



Network for GSS members to discuss professional and statistical topics of interest. Managed by the GSS Good Practice Team

[@UKGSS](#) | [@GSSGoodPractice](#)