

**Minutes of the**

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

**17th January 2018**

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

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| **Attendees:** |  | **Apologies** |  |
| Jen Woolford (Chair) | ONS | Hersh Mann | UKDS |
| Charlie Wroth-Smith | ONS | Ian O’Sullivan | ONS |
| Frances Pottier (audio) | BEIS | Kate Bedford | NHS Digital |
| Gareth James (audio) | ONS | Nick Barford | ONS |
| Ian Sidney (audio) | ONS | Pete Brodie | ONS |
| Jamie Robertson (audio) | SG |  |  |
| Julie Stanborough | ONS |  |  |
| Penny Babb | OSR |  |  |
| Richard Laux | CO |  |  |
| Stephanie Freeth | MHCLG |  |  |
| Steve Ellerd-Elliott | MoJ |  |  |
| Becki Aquilina (Secretariat) | ONS |  |  |

**1.0 Welcome and Introduction**

* Jen welcomed members to the meeting and informed members this would be her last meeting as Julie Stanborough will now take over as Chair. Jen was thanked for her contributions.

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

* The previous meeting minutes were agreed. All actions were either ongoing or completed.

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

* The BHTFG has been meeting for the last 12 months and has held 5 meetings to date. There will be an 18-month review in Summer to decide if the BHTFG should continue as it stands or it will be combined with the National Statistics Harmonisation Group. To date the following business definitions have been harmonised;
* Total Turnover
* Number of employees
* Hours worked and fulltime equivalent
* There are issues with continued engagement and buy-in across the GSS and the team will be looking into this in the next couple of months
* Increasing use of admin data; there are many projects that have reviewed admin data and we need to find a way to collaborate and understand what work has already been conducted
* Working with GSS Data Discovery Project. This will cover a number of social and business themes. The first theme isTrade Statistics and the harmonisation team is involved with this work.
* Begun looking at where harmonised definitions are used and introduce harmonise questions for eQ collection, taking into account different modes of collection
* To date, mostly looking at harmonising EU legislative definitions and have identified 8 broad topic areas to be reviewed
* There are around 80-90 business surveys, some of which ask unique questions. There is no requirement to harmonise unique questions

1. **Update on the NSHG - Charlie Wroth-Smith**

Social Harmonisation;

* A new definition for ‘homelessness’ is being researched (working with OSR/MHCLG and others)
* A revised definition for ‘internet access’ is being developed
* Revised harmonised questions for ‘social capital’ are being investigated
* Updated principles for ‘benefits and tax credits’ have been published
* New Harmonised definitions for ‘migration’ have been approved and will be published asap
* The Harmonisation Team are continuing to work closely with the 2021 Census and with the transformation of ONS social surveys whereby all are developing online modes of collection. We need to understand what the impact would be if harmonised principles are revised/changed
* The Harmonisation Team are planning a Sexual Identity (SI)/Sexual Orientation (SO) workshop on the 6th February with key stakeholders. The workshop intends to understand the impact and comparability issues between SI and SO

Admin data Harmonisation;

* There is a drive to focus more on harmonising admin sources
* Harmonised definition of a ‘household’ differs between survey data and admin data and this is one of the issues that need to be investigated further
* Charlie will lead a workshop on Harmonisation of UK outputs to be held in Edinburgh to consider the impact if England and Wales move towards using a more admin data collection system before Scotland and Northern Ireland
* Recently involved with the Health and Social Care Statistics Project looking at comparability and accessibility of healthcare statistics across the GSS

1. **Agree the 2018 Communication plan - Becki Aquilina**

* Becki gave an overview of the 2018 Communication Plan and mentioned the targeted activities for the first quarter (January, February and March)
* Best Practice and Impact (BPI) promotion (targeting HoPs and departments) are looking to produce leaflets for each area and begin promoting ourselves as a package (GPT, Harmonisation and Quality).
* Could engage with the launch of the Code of Practice refresh, once the communication plan has been finalised

1. **Update from Julie Stanborough on the new division and structure - Julie Stanborough**

* The Harmonisation Programme now sits within Best Practice and Impact (BPI) which is mainly GSS focussed with Julie as the head of division
* Looking to increase the resource within BPI
* Moving towards a consultancy type role which is research focussed and becoming experts in field
* The Methodology Advisory Committee (MAS) is within BPI and will be promoted as another suite of services available
* Planned for BPI to engage more with HoPs and become part of inductions/courses for G6/7s
* Plan to add an introduction to Harmonisation on Official Statistics/Data Analytics courses

1. **Race Disparity Unit findings and lessons learned – Richard Laux**

* The Race Disparity Audit (RDA) began 1 year ago
* Phase 1 – design a website and adding data; currently approximately 130/140 different measures broken down by ethnicity, gender, NS SEC, age etc from survey and admin data
* Phase 2 – policy response to race disparities in relation to crime, employment, income, health and education and then discuss an action plan
* Phase 3 – data strand to update data and add new data sets/measures and improve quality and harmonisation
* Harmonisation - – many departments use 18 + 1 ethnicity categories and in other cases 5 + 1 classifications have been used, some binary (White British and other). However, there are some departments that have not used the harmonised ethnicity categores which has caused comparability issues.
* It would be useful to map out what is being used across the government and look at what might be improved; improvements/changes will increase coherence and comparability but may reduce continuity
* A clear understanding is needed to review the scale of the problem; need to focus on what is being done to improve ethnicity data particularly with admin sources, identify problems and issues and recommendations to improve. It was noted a visual to display different ranges of outputs and categories used by government departments would be helpful.

1. **Update on the Code of Practice – Penny Babb**

* The online Code will be interactive; all contents will be the same as the booklet but with the ability to move across sections more easily and will include tagging of practices and principles
* The Code and has been updated to become outward facing and engaging with the GSS
* The interactive Code is going to be more valuable for finding practices that are relevant to individuals
* Some guidance to interpret the Code will be available when the Code is launched. It is expected to be developed further going forward and feedback on what would be helpful will be welcome
* National Statistician Office, SPSC and GPT have been helpful in providing guidance
* The Code and guidance will be added to the GSS Policy Store
* Tagging may be a Harmonisation opportunity to add into the interactive Code
* Case studies are to be added as an example of how to comply with the Code
* Within the Code, the role of HoPs has been extended in post consultation to engage more and discusses Harmonisation and trustworthiness
* Looking at collaboration across the GSS for quality and coherence which is also what harmonisation is striving towards.

**ACTION 1 –** SG members to feedback what would be helpful to include in the guidance to interpret the Code of Practice

9.0 **Horizon Scanning - Jen Woolford**

Brexit;

* Need to consider if EU requirements disappear considering Brexit
* Although it is important to try and maintain harmonisation, there may be more freedom to use the definitions we want
* EU are planning to change the definition of a household
* Industrial Strategy – Statistical Analysis Priority Group may be groups to engage with

Just About Managing (JAM);

* Ethnicity by NS-SEC is split by age groups
* There are no harmonised definitions for JAM
* This is an area of policy interest and may be worth engaging with (team in ONS provide analysis for Cabinet Office Number 10, contact is Hugh Strickland)

DWP and Government Digital Services;

* There is a risk that harmonised inputs that are secure, for example ethnicity data by benefits may no longer be collected in the future

GDS;

* Continue working with GDS working towards a harmonised gender question and consider other questions that may be improved

**10.0 AOB, items for next meeting and next meeting dates - Jen Woolford**

* It was suggested the next meeting should take place after the NSHG meets on 12th March
* It was also requested that the GSS SPSC minutes are circulated with the minutes of this meeting

**ACTION 2 –** Becki to set up the next meeting for March 2018 (after the NSHG), and send invites

**ACTION 3 –** Becki to circulate the latest GSS SPSC minutes to members

Becki Aquilina - GSS Harmonisation Team

**January 2018**

**Annex A**

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| **ACTIONS FROM NSH SG MEETING – 17th January 2018** | | | | |
| **Action No** | **Para** | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Status** |
| 1 | 8.0 | SG members to feedback what would be helpful to include in the guidance to interpret the Code of Practice | All |  |
| 2 | 10.0 | Set up the next meeting for March 2018 (after the NSHG), and send invites | Becki Aquilina | Complete |
| 3 | 10.0 | Circulate the latest GSS SPSC minutes (11th January) to members | Becki Aquilina | Minutes yet to be finalised, will circulate as soon as possible |