



Minutes of the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) Meeting
12th March 2018
1100 to 1330 hrs
ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ

Attendees:

Steve Ellerd-Elliott – Chair	MoJ
Alison Brookman	ONS via video
Anthony Clarke	ONS via audio
Charlie Wroth-Smith	ONS
Clare Cameron	DWP via audio
Daisie Hutchinson	ONS
Darren Stillwell	DfT
Dawn Camus	BEIS
Emily Knipe	ONS via video
Grant Blank	University of Oxford
Hannah McConnell	ONS via video
Helen Fox	ONS via audio
Jamie Robertson	SG via audio
Jill Morton	NRS via audio
Joe Ellison	ONS via video
Karen Hurrell	EHRC via audio
Lisa Walters	Welsh Gov via audio
Matthew Minifie	ONS via video
Penny Babb	OSR
Pete Betts	ONS
Silvia Manclossi	ONS via video
Steve Smallwood	ONS via video
Steve Webster	NHS Digital
Becki Aquilina – secretariat	ONS

Apologies:

Amanda Sharfman	ONS
Catherine Davies	ONS
Debbie Curtis	ONS
Dani Evans	ONS
Helena Rosiecka	ONS
Hugh Kerr	NISA
Kim Bradford	DfID
Jonathan Page-Swan	ONS

1.0 Welcome and Introduction – Steve Ellerd-Elliott

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked those who have left the NSHG for their contribution.

2.0 Minutes and Actions from the previous meeting, NSHG (17:3) 18 – Steve Ellerd-Elliott

There were no comments from the previous minutes, all the actions were completed.

3.0 Update on Harmonisation Work**a. Verbal Update, NSH SG / GSS SPSC Meeting Report – Steve Ellerd-Elliott**

The main points were:

- NSH SG
 - Julie Stanborough is leading Best Practice and Impact (BPI) Division which includes the Harmonisation Team, Good Practice Team (GPT), the Quality Centre (QC) and Methodology Advisory Service (MAS)
 - the communication plan was agreed including what projects the Harmonisation Team should be involved in

- Penny Babb presented the new Code of Practice prior to the launch and how Harmonisation fits within the new narrative around the Code
- Richard Laux talked about the Race Disparity Audit (RDA) and how the NSH SG and RDA may work together in the future to ensure greater ethnicity harmonisation across the GSS
- Horizon scanning identified further work needed in the following areas;
 - Just about Managing (JAM)
 - Government Digital Service (GDS)
 - Influencing European Statistical Community (Brexit/Eurostat)
- the next meeting will take place on 16th April 2018
- it was suggested that the NSH SG meeting should be circulated to NSHG members

Action 1: Becki to circulate the NSH SG meeting minutes to NSHG members

- GSS SPSC
 - the last meeting was held on 18th January 2018
 - an item on driving forward Harmonisation was postponed until the next SPSC meeting on 10th April 2018
 - Code of Practice statistics refresh was discussed and the work required to amend documents on the Policy Store to reflect the language in the new Code

**b. NSHG Update – Charlie Wroth-Smith
Social Harmonisation**

- new harmonisation Topic Leads;
 - Claire Cameron for Benefits and Tax Credits
 - Ian Sidney temporary topic lead for Consumer Durables
 - Debbie Curtis for Economic Activity
 - Amanda Sharfman for Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
 - Silvia Manclossi for Personal Well-being
 - Dani Evans for Social Capital

All new Topic Leads will be contacted by a member of the Harmonisation Team to provide a Harmonisation Induction in the next couple of weeks

ACTION 2 – Harmonisation Team to organise Harmonisation Inductions for all new Topic Leads within the next two weeks

- the Harmonisation Team are continuing to develop a new harmonised definition for Homelessness; the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) published a systematic review of housing statistics on how to improve the coherence and comparability of housing statistics late last year and we are heavily involved in assisting the OSR and Debra Prestwood (HoP leading the development). The Harmonisation Team will be offering consultancy, advice and research to producers of housing statistics to make their data more comparable.
- the Harmonisation Team are continuing to develop Internet Access questions and are in the process of securing resource to test the questions
- Benefits and Tax Credits harmonised principles have been updated and disseminated across the GSS
- new definitions for Migration, Country of Birth and Citizenship have been developed, approved and disseminated across the GSS
- continued liaison with a number of programmes and initiatives across the GSS (2021 Census, ONS Data Collection Transformation Programme, GDS, GSS Data Discovery Project; Race Disparity Audit (RDA); Admin Data Census Programme
- due to the growing importance of harmonisation and increased recognition, Julie Stanborough is increasing resource to the Harmonisation Team

Business Harmonisation

- to date, have developed a range of business definitions and continue to meet with a range of stakeholders to increase the profile
- involved in the GSS Data Discovery project and a main area this project is working on is Trade Statistics and the Harmonisation Team have been involved in these workshops
- been involved with the DCTP for business surveys
- working with a range of departments (HMRC/DWP/ONS/BEIS) to understand if a harmonised definition is required for the sharing economy and the gig economy
- a 'turnover workshop is planned for the end of March to bring together turnover experts to understand how turnover is collected across the GSS and to address any comparability issues

c. Best practice and Impact (BPI) Update – Daisy Hutchinson

Daisy presented the BPI slides which Julie Stanborough will be presenting to HoPs on 13th March 2018. There are 7 strands;

- Provide strategic direction
- Build capability
- Consultancy
- Share best practice
- Develop tools, guidance and standards
- One GSS voice
- Compliance

d. NSHG (18:1) 01, Communications Plan – Becki Aquilina

Becki presented the Communication Plan which was approved by the NSH SG at the 17th January 2018 meeting.

- members were reminded the two main objectives of the Communication Plan are to;
 1. Make Harmonisation part of the GSS voice
 2. Increase contact to and from users
- members were asked to email Becki with communication tactics for 2018, the following suggestions were raised:
 - contact Steve Dempsey to organise a business harmonisation presentation/workshop at BEIS

ACTION 3 – Members to consider suggestions for communication ideas and platforms and inform the Harmonisation Team

ACTION 4 – Business Harmonisation to contact Steve Dempsey to organise a presentation/workshop at BEIS

4.0 Census Topic Update

England and Wales - Becki Aquilina on behalf of Helena Rosiecka

The following papers have been published;

- [The census topic research report](#)
- [The 2017 test report](#) - field test during March and May – Census test day was 9th April 2017
- [A summary of the Sikh meeting](#) - meeting with the Sikh community on 23rd October 2017
- [and the response to the number of rooms/bedrooms consultation](#)
- a blog from Iain Bell was published; Population and Public Policy forum held during December 2017
- the White Paper is due to be finalised by in 2018

Scotland – Jill Morton

- quantitative testing is nearing completion and currently working on a draft version of the findings; will provide the results of the quantitative testing when available
- Scotland have developed a trans status question
- working with MoD and ONS for assurances regarding the ex-service question
- still working on the ethnic group question; liaising with African community and looking at Jewish/Sikh
- NRS have been running a series of events on the output strategy for Census. This has provided an opportunity to explain how questions work and getting the data required in absence of a tick boxes
- publication strategy for NRS – looking at producing a range of topic reports in place of research based reports
- the three areas of UK are working closely together via topic groups
- things are moving very quickly and there is still a lot to do

Northern Ireland – Becki Aquilina on behalf of Hugh Kerr

- there were no areas of major concern although there is still a lot of work to be done on Sex/Gender and Armed Forces Community

5.0 Update on Sexual ID/Sexual Orientation – Emily Knipe

- increasingly the term ‘Sexual Orientation’ is being used across the GSS and wider. This has prompted a review of the terminology used within the current harmonised principle of ‘Sexual Identity’
- a **Sexual Identity/Orientation** stakeholder meeting was held during February to review what terminology is being used across the GSS and key organisations (attendance included; ONS, LGBT Foundation, Stonewall, GEO, EHRC, NHS, NRS, Scottish government to name a few)
- of the stakeholders represented at the meeting, all were in favour of the terminology ‘sexual orientation’ rather than ‘sexual identity’. The main reasons given were that sexual orientation matches the terminology used in the Equality Act, 2010 and is the terminology most recognised by the public. None of the attendees supported the terminology of ‘sexual identity’.
- it was agreed to allow stakeholder’s two weeks to give any further comment/feedback after consulting within individual departments/organisations. No further feedback was received. We also asked for feedback from those attendees unable to attend.
- if the change is agreed it is important to note that the change only relates to the labelling; the measurement concept will continue to be the Sexual Identity dimension of Sexual Orientation, and the data collected will not change- maintaining comparability.
- in addition to the recommended labelling update, footnote wording will be developed to appear with the principle to explain sexual orientation as a concept and what the recommended question is designed to capture. It will be recommended that a footnote should appear with any outputs produced based on the harmonised principle
- the Harmonisation Team will now begin to carry out necessary approval/governance processes. This will involve asking for approval from the National Statistics Harmonisation Group and the National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group to amend the labelling of the current GSS Harmonised Principle of Sexual Identity to be replaced with ‘sexual orientation’. NSHG members will receive the recommendation template and will be given two weeks to respond.

6.0 Data Collection Methodology – Gender Identity Update – Steve Smallwood and Pete Betts

- the 2021 Census Topic Consultation identified a need for information about the population whose gender is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Steve explained that gender is;
 - A personal internal perception of oneself
 - And as such the gender category with which a person identifies may not match the sex they were assigned at birth
- in contrast, sex is biologically determined
- traditionally gender was viewed as a binary and is often conflated with sex (male, female)
- ONS initiated a programme of stakeholder engagement and research to consider whether and how this need could be met, including through the 2021 Census, social surveys and/or administrative data.
- an overview of the topic, the latest position, and the qualitative testing of various potential questions on sex, gender and trans status were presented
- if members have any issues regarding gender Identity, please get in touch by emailing stakeholder.engagement@ons.gsi.gov.uk

7.0 UKSA Code of Practice – National Statistician’s Guidance – Quality, Methods and Harmonisation - Penny Babb

- the interactive online code was published on 22nd February on the statistics authority website (<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>); there is also a booklet version
- some guidance and case studies have been added; members were asked to consider what other guidance could be added and to email regulation@statistics.gov.uk with suggestions
- there is a guide to voluntarily apply the code (pdf format) for non-official statistics (for example local authorities and charities) to encourage producers of statistics to apply the three pillars of the Code (Trustworthiness, Quality and Value)
- members were asked to provide feedback to the Code by 22nd March

8.0 Household Definitions Update - Emily Knipe

- December 2017- As part of the IESS (Integrated European Social Statistics), which is due to be implemented 2020/21, a new household definition is being proposed.
- DSS (Meeting of European Directors of Social Statistics) paper from Oct 2017 documented the new proposed definition.
- this moves away from our current definition used in social surveys and the census.
- key changes affect: students and lodgers
- note: current admin data developments don't/can't align to the harmonised definition
- January 2018 - Meeting of key teams within ONS that this would affect. Actions included; consulting with devolved administrations, 2021 Census and to obtain a progress update from the IESS side
- paper from SILC working group indicated that Eurostat will impose a definition after agreeing the specifics
- March 2018 - Household definition raised at a recent DSS meeting. Roma Chappell fed back after meeting. Countries (inc UK) raised concerns about students and operational issues for online surveys. Also concerns about Harmonisation with the 2021 Census and across social surveys
- conclusion from meeting was that they decided to leave the definition as is. DSS minutes to record that it was not fully supported
- current understanding of position is that the UK (and DSS overall) have accepted the definitional change

- Social Surveys are liaising with customers to determine the appetite for aligning as part of DCTP- but this would happen after IESS is implemented (the date of which is still unconfirmed by Eurostat)
- note that the current DCTP strategy is to transform social survey data collection assuming non-compliance with Eurostat. Issues could include; continuity, interview length and respondent burden.
- If the UK needs to remain EU compliant then IESS surveys will need to adopt the new definition. However, if customers do not wish to change the definition then we may be able to obtain derogations
- currently investigating census position for signing off the definition for 2021
- recommended next step is to meet within ONS to discuss best way forward/action plan and then report back to NSHG.

9.0 Health and Care Statistics - Helen Fox

- The OSR and the Secretary of State Department of Health (DoH) recognised that improvements were needed for the coherence and accessibility of health and care statistics for users; health is devolved but in England it is also decentralised which has resulted in 10 main producers of health statistics in England in different formats and it is difficult for users to find information they need
- the English Health and Care Statistics Steering Group was formed which is represented by key producers of health and care statistics in England; Department of Health and Social Care, NHS Digital; NHS England; NHS improvement; ONS; Public Health England; Care Quality Commission and various others
- the group have produced a Health and Care Statistics Landscape, which brings all official statistics for health and care into one document, broken down by different topics and updated monthly. An overview of the work can be found [here](#), along with a [statistics landscape document](#)
- there is a Monthly Knowledge Sharing Update which you can receive by email and aims to draw together recently published official statistics from across the health and care landscape. If you would like to sign-up to this Update please complete the short form [here](#) (you can also view back issues here too). I'd also encourage you to share more widely with colleagues and users who may find it useful.
- there are 19 [different theme groups](#) which cover the health and care statistics environment (smoking/alcohol/drugs/obesity/mortality/adult social care/mental health/health inequalities), the purpose is to align definitions and methodology across the main producer bodies, reduce duplication of effort, to work more collaboratively to provide greater insight to users and to produce more rounded stories and finally to engage and incorporate user requirements into statistical products.
- last 6 months have harmonised definitions and methodologies and coordinating releases to be published on the same day for example smoking statistics from Public Health England, NHS Digital and ONS were published in June 2017 on the same day
- the English Health and Care Statistics Steering Group is joined up with GSS Harmonisation Team and GPT and intend to include them in the theme groups
- also involved in GSS Data Project who are looking to expand to health and care statistics in the future

10.0 NSHG (18:1) 03, NSHG Topic Lead Updates – Topic Group Leads

The Chair thanked the topic leads for their reports and asked if topic leads would like to bring something to attention of members;

Benefits and Tax Credits – Claire Cameron

Clare informed members the Questionnaire Consultation is taking place and this may result in minor changes to some questions.

Note: The Questionnaire Consultation is the process where stakeholders and the FRS consortium are asked to contribute their thoughts on what they consider to be necessary changes to the questionnaire each year, and then go back and forth with ONS and NatCen until the questionnaire code, interviewer material and show cards are all correct.

Consumer Durables

New topic lead is being sought.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour – Fiona Aitchison

A revised set of questions has been developed and the revision template is attached for members to review and agree via correspondence within two weeks.

Demographic Information – Emily Knipe

Please see report.

Economic Activity – Debbie Curtis

Please see report.

Education – Julian Austin/Tony Clarke

Please see report.

EILR – Becki Aquilina (temp)

Amanda Sharfman is the new topic lead for EILR; the Harmonisation Team will conduct a handover and Harmonisation induction for Amanda.

Gender Identity – Michelle Monkman

Please see report.

Health, Disability and Carers – Steve Webster

Please see report.

Homelessness

This is a new Harmonisation topic and the first meeting will be held soon.

Housing and Tenure – Scott Edgar

Please see report.

Income – Mathew Minifie

Please see report.

Internet Access – Grant Blank

Grant gave a brief overview of his experience as topic lead for Internet access

Migration, Country of Birth and Citizenship – Hannah McConnell

Hannah is a new topic lead; the Harmonisation Team will conduct a Harmonisation induction for Hannah soon.

Personal Well-being – Silvia Manclossi

A new minister for Loneliness has been announced and has been tasked with the measurement of loneliness. It is still early stages but the team are working with a technical group to decide the definition and measures to distinguish loneliness; there is a tight timescale and needs to be developed by Autumn 2018.

Social Capital – Dani Evans

Please see report.

11.0 Any Other Business

- None raised.

12.0 Next Meetings

Date of the next meetings is:

- 3rd July 2018, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate

ACTIONS 6 – Members are requested to let the Secretariat (harmonisation@ons.gov.uk) know if they have any items for inclusion on the agenda for the next NSHG meeting.

Annexes:

- A. List of Actions
- B. Presentation Slides

ANNEX A

ACTIONS FROM THE NSHG MEETING – 12th March 2018				
No	Para	Action	Responsible	Status
1	3.0	Circulate the NSH SG meeting minutes to NSHG members	Becki Aquilina	Complete
2	3.0	Organise Harmonisation Inductions for all new Topic Leads within the next two weeks	Harmonisation Team	On-going
3	3.0	Consider suggestions for communication ideas and platforms and inform the Harmonisation Team	NSHG Members	
4	3.0	Contact Steve Dempsey to organise a business Harmonisation presentation/workshop at BEIS	Ian Sidney	
5	12.0	Let the Secretariat (harmonisation@ons.gov.uk) know of any items for inclusion on the agenda for the next NSHG meeting	NSHG Members	

ANNEX B

Best Practice and
Impact (004) NSHG (
