



# GSS Good Practice Team



# 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.

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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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 work closely with the GSS Quality Centre, Harmonisation Team and Methodology Advisory Service, as part of the GSS Best Practice and Impact Team.

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 a good practice example, please get in touch.**

# Strategic direction

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 the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and the GSS Presentation and Dissemination Committee. We report regularly to the National Statistician who, alongside the Head of OSR, sets our strategic direction.

## Groups and committees

The Good Practice Team attends GSS Heads of Professions group meetings and contributes to the work of many of the GSS Groups and Committees. Our approach is to generate self-sustaining networks which promote continuous improvement by sharing good ideas that work.

## **GSS Presentation and Dissemination Committee and Presentation Champions network**

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.

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

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.

### **GSG Induction**

#### **1 day**

The induction course for new Government Statistician Group statisticians covers the statistical system, the Code of Practice, users of statistics, communication and analysis.

### **GSG Foundation**

#### **2 days**

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 by ONS Learning Academy.

# Building capability

The GSS Good Practice Team provides training, workshops and seminars to build capability within the GSS, based on the priorities identified by the National Statistician, the Head of Regulation and GSS Heads of Professions.

## 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.

## Good Practice Team secondments

### 2 weeks

We run short-term secondments to bring junior statisticians into the team, widening our reach and building capability. Secondees have the opportunity to shadow members of the team, co-deliver training, develop guidance and work on priority projects for the GSS.

## **Presentation and dissemination**

The team helps statisticians in government to present and disseminate statistical information effectively to a wide range of users.

### **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.

### **Writing about quality, uncertainty and change**

#### **Seminar | 2 hours**

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

# Building capability

## Writing about statistics

### 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.

## GSS peer review 'scrums'

### Workshop | 3 hours

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

## Infographics

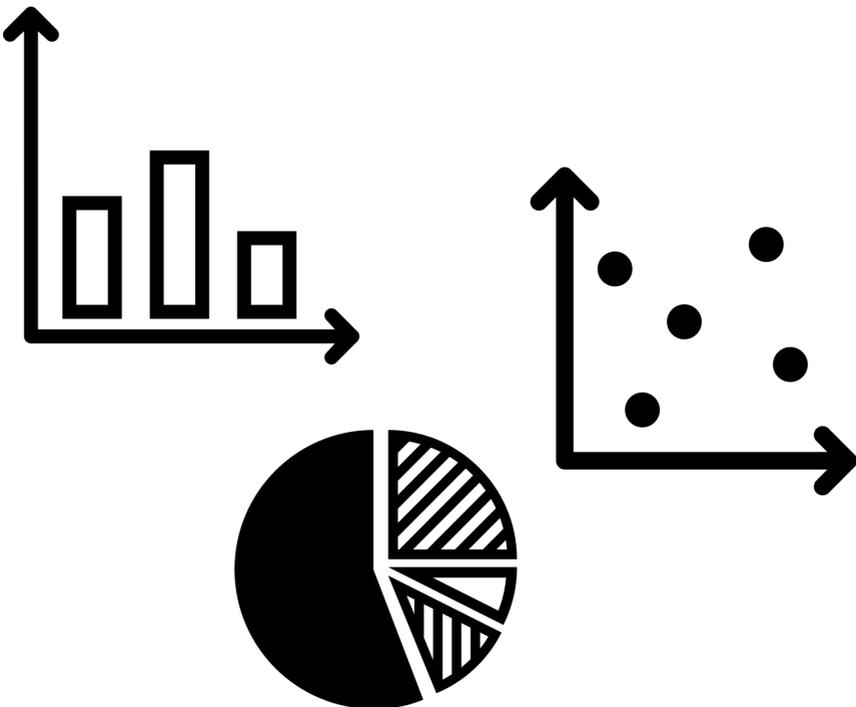
### Seminar | 1 hour

A discussion seminar on the use of infographics in the GSS including key points from ONS and Government Digital Service guidance. The hosting department reviews infographics they have produced and compares with best practice from the GSS.

## Effective tables and graphs

### 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.



Icons created by Trevor Dsouza for Noun Project

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# Building capability

## 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 increasing 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 engage with different user communities. It introduces the ONS model of 'user personas' and how it 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 the GSS currently uses social media, what makes good social media content and how to measure success. It can be delivered with '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. The team also 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) 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 frameworks, sets out how the frameworks can be used to quality assure administrative data and management information, and uses examples from the day-to-day work of participants.

# Building capability

## 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

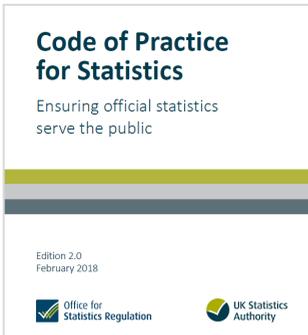
### Workshop | 2 hours

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.



# Consultancy

The GSS Good Practice Team provides advice and consultancy services to statistics producers.



## Code of Practice for Statistics

We provide consultancy on the Code of Practice for Statistics. 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.

## General advice and support

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

## 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**

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

## **Independent assurance**

The Best Practice and Impact (BPI) Team is able to provide independent assurance about statistical capability. This is a consultancy support function, usually led by a divisional director, whereby BPI staff work with GSS departments to identify areas for improvement and recommend ways forward.

We work with the producer to develop terms of reference for the review and use a mixture of desk research (for example, exploration of published outputs, policies and processes) and structured interviews with relevant stakeholders and staff to understand how things are done and produce recommendations for potential improvements to processes and capability.

# Sharing best practice

The team organises a number of cross-government events to promote and share good practice. GSS colleagues come together to share expertise, hear from keynote speakers, discuss 'hot topics' and network with colleagues. Find out about upcoming events on the GSS website.

## **GSS Sharing Seminars**

### **Monthly seminar series | ½ day**

Seminars cover technical and professional topics and are hosted across departments. If you have any ideas for topics to be covered, please get in touch.

## **GSS Methodology Symposium**

### **Annual symposium | 1 day**

A unique opportunity for government statisticians to present, hear about and debate innovative methodology being developed and implemented in departments.

## **GSS Presentation and Dissemination Symposium**

### **Annual symposium | 1 day**

Event showcasing and celebrating good practice in the presentation and dissemination of official statistics from across the GSS.

# Tools, guidance and standards

The GSS Good Practice Team has developed a suite of guidance to support producers in the presentation, communication and dissemination of statistics, including:

- Effective charts and tables
- Writing about statistics
- Communicating uncertainty and change
- Introduction to social media in the GSS
- Hints and Tips: Geography Top Tips
- Guidance on experimental statistics
- Releasing statistics in spreadsheets
- Symbols in tables: definitions and help
- Hints and Tips: Conducting a peer review

**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 collaboratively by the GSS Good Practice Team and the GSS Central Policy Secretariat. The Central Policy Secretariat help staff across the GSS to work together with senior leaders to achieve shared priorities.

# One GSS voice

The GSS Good Practice Team manages the GSS website and social media channels. We provide a single point of communication to members of the GSS.

## **GSS 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.

## **GSS Slack channel** [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.

## **GSS Twitter feeds** [@GSSGoodPractice](https://twitter.com/GSSGoodPractice) [@UKGSS](https://twitter.com/UKGSS)

The GSS and Good Practice Team Twitter feeds provide members of the GSS with updates on events and training, and is used to share news and blogs from across the statistical system.



# Compliance

## Reviews of Statistical Releases

The GSS Best Practice and Impact Team (GSS Good Practice Team, GSS Quality Centre and GSS Harmonisation Team) facilitates a programme of reviews of statistical releases from across government. The review programme provides an overview of the presentation and communication of the statistics, the level of adherence to harmonised principles and the standard of quality reporting across the GSS.

The team works with the Presentation, Quality, Harmonisation and Geography Champions networks to review a sample of statistical releases and accompanying materials, providing a RAG rating and feedback for improvement to producers.

The reviews provide reassurance of adherence to certain aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics, build capability across the GSS and ensure the Presentation and Dissemination Committee and the Office for Statistics Regulation maintain oversight of release quality.

If you would like to put a statistical release forward for review, please get in touch.

