

Government Statistical Service

Heads of Profession

Roles and Responsibilities

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Roles and Responsibilities of Heads of Profession for Statistics

Where an official body produces ‘National Statistics’; produces an appreciable number of official statistics; produces particularly high-profile official statistics; or employs an appreciable number of statisticians, that organisation should appoint a Head of Profession for Statistics (HoP). HoPs should be appointed by departments, in consultation with the office of the National Statistician. Appointees remain in the line management of their own organisation but are accountable to the National Statistician for the professional issues. Departments or arm’s length bodies that do not have a HoP should appoint a Lead Official for Statistics – see Annex 1. HoPs have three broad responsibilities:

1. Comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics

The core of the role of a HoP is a responsibility to **ensure that their organisation complies with the Code of Practice for Statistics**, Pre-Release Access Orders, relevant data-related legislation, and with the National Statistician’s guidance on management information. This responsibility is about **ensuring official statistics are trustworthy, of high quality, and of high public value**. HoPs are also **expected to advocate the use of the Code beyond their organisation** – for example, with ALBs. Irrespective of their organisation’s statistical structure, HoPs should have **suitable oversight of their own organisation’s statistical functions** and are responsible for the development of any department-specific official statistics policy. They should make statistical decisions with due regard to the coherence of the UK statistical system as a whole and to implications for the devolved administrations. HoPs play a key role in **building public trust in official statistics**.

2. Lead the Government Statistical Service (GSS)

The power of data and statistics can be greatly enhanced by sharing, linking and analyzing data across organisations, and by ensuring that related statistics, even when produced by a range of official organisations, tell a coherent story. **Heads of Profession should be advocates for the possibilities of such data linking**, and for a **coherent, cross-GSS, approach to related statistics** – with users’ needs at the core of their thinking. HoPs are expected to make full use of their cross-GSS networks to **bring the combined strength of the GSS to bear on challenges within their own organisation**. Similarly, HoPs should support their GSS colleagues in tackling challenges in other organisations and across the GSS – developing cross-GSS families of statistics to shine a light on key policy issues. Moreover, **HoPs form the leadership group for the GSS** and should work with the National Statistician, other Heads of Profession, Chief Statisticians in the devolved administrations, and the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), to promote coherent statistics across the UK – and ensure the GSS as a whole adapts to the changing data and policy environment.

3. Build Statistical Capability and Capacity

HoPs should ensure there is suitable **recruitment of appropriately qualified statisticians** into their organisation. They should: establish and **promote a learning culture for GSS staff** and for those working in statistics-related areas within their organisation; champion Continuous Professional Development (CPD); and ensure access and opportunities for personal development are open to all. HoPs play a key role in helping develop the future statistical capability of the GSS. HoPs should encourage multi-disciplinary work, cross-organisation moves, and should work to **strengthen the civil service’s analytical function**. HoPs are responsible for ensuring the **statistical needs of their organisation are met**. They should be **advocates for the use of evidence** within their organisation; offer **advice on statistical issues**; and promote the use of statistical information in their organisation’s decision-making processes.

Annex 1 - Lead Officials for Statistics

Where an organisation produces official statistics but not a sufficient number to warrant appointing a Head of Profession for Statistics (HoP), or where there is no suitable candidate for the HoP role, that organisation should appoint a Lead Official (LO) for statistics. Often, but not always, arm's length bodies (ALBs) would be expected to appoint an LO rather than a HoP. Where possible, such organisations should make arrangements for the LO to be supported by a HoP in another (e.g. sponsoring or related) organisation.

Engagement with the UK Statistical System

LOs have the same responsibilities as HoPs with regard to compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics and are accountable to the National Statistician on professional matters.

The relevant HoP is then responsible for providing professional guidance and support to the LO on all official statistics matters. While the LO retains responsibility for Code compliance and interaction with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in their organisation, the HoP and LO are expected to work closely, with the HoP leading on the LO's behalf on cross-GSS and HR matters in particular. The HoP is responsible for acting as the focal point for communication between the National Statistician, the Government Statistical Service (GSS), and the ALB.

The LO is responsible for liaising directly with the OSR during the assessment of official statistics produced by their organisation, keeping the HoP informed of progress and any issues arising.

By exception, the National Statistician may wish for particular LOs to interact more directly with the wider GSS and HoPs as the leadership group for the GSS.