

**Response to “Independence for statistics: A Consultation Document”  
From Economy and Labour Market Division**

**Background**

1. Economy and Labour Market Division are part of the Work, Welfare and Equality Group within the Department for Work and Pensions, and are specifically responsible for providing information on the Labour Market in the UK. As such they are key users of the Labour Market Statistics produced by Office of National Statistics, ONS.

**Issues**

2. It is important that any new structure of the ONS upholds the link between policy and statistics for the various departments.

**Key Areas**

3. For Labour Market Statistics the main issue is pre release access and more details are given on this below
4. At the time of release there is a need to provide analytical description of the data. This is probably best done by the policy department, with a background note defended by professional reputation. This would then distinguish between the statistics, and the assessment of them for ministerial statements.
5. There is also the issue of combining administrative and survey data together to allow analysis of policy developments. Associated with this is the importance of linking together statistics from the central office, and devolved administrations, and the policy departments.

**Pre release access**

6. This is an extremely important aspect of the current arrangements for labour market statistics as it allows ministerial briefing to be prepared, in advance of public release. It would need to be maintained in some format, but not necessarily exactly as it is now.
7. Any such agreement should be applied to all statistics, whether they are produced by the ONS, or by a department. For example pre release access to crime statistics should be the same whether published by ONS or the Home Office.
8. The timing of access should be determined by the nature of the statistics. For market sensitive data, such as Labour Market statistics, a short duration would be appropriate, ie 48 hours. Whereas for non market sensitive data, such as poverty statistics, a longer duration, of say 1 week, would seem more appropriate.

9. There seems to be a need to consider the exact timings of pre release. The current 40.5 hours for market sensitive, seems absurd, why could this not be 48 hours?

**Other areas**

10. As a UK body the new office should combine UK wide statistics, even if the statistics are collated by devolved organisations.
11. Attention needs to be given to international comparisons. However, given the differences in systems in countries, comparative information does not necessarily mean harmonised information.
12. It will be important to maintain links between policy departments, and central statistics offices in order to ensure that policy developments are fully incorporated into the development of information and statistics base (i.e. information on inactive benefits).

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