

Statistical Reform Team
Room 3/07
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HM Treasury Consultation Independence for Statistics

We welcome the announcement that the Chancellor intends to make the ONS a 'wholly separate body'. Drawing on our work *Official Statistics: Perceptions and Trust* for the Statistics Commission (based on in-depth interviews with key opinion formers) and that of our own publication *Who do you believe? Trust in government information* (including qualitative research with the general public and extensive desk research), we concluded that it is perceived that by increasing the distance between government and the ONS, there will be less of an inclination to view its outputs with suspicion.

However, we believe it is vital that such a development must not open the backdoor for ONS to conduct survey research of national importance without going out to tender, over and beyond its current remit. ONS should not behave in a way which gives poor value for public money or lack transparency, given that it is both commissioner and supplier of research services.

Furthermore, we wish to see the role of the new governing board clarified. The new governing board will clearly have a key role to play in the new system but should be non-executive, leaving the national statistician with the key executive position. Linked to this, our research shows a need for external scrutiny. As we understand it, the work of the Statistics Commission will be subsumed by the new governing board. However, our findings highlight a need for a regulatory body above and beyond this which can act as an independent forum to which people can issue queries and complaints.

I am representing the views of Ipsos MORI, of which I am Chief Executive.

Yours sincerely

Brian Gosschalk
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