

Dear Colleague,  
please can I advise you that I am an ONS civil servant but my comments are not based on insider knowledge. I am a member of the Royal Statistical Society and I take an active interest in the work of the Statistics Commission. I have previously worked in what was the Department of Social Security.

I have a number of concerns with the consultation document :

The vast majority of the general public put all statistics in the "same pot". Hence if an independent ONS is going to have no control or very limited control over statistics published in OGDs (e.g. hospital waiting lists, school league tables) it is going to be criticised and could (albeit unjustifiably) be perceived as not really being independent of government ministers. There could very naturally be questions raised as to what has changed.

It is vital that there is only one governing board for UK Statistics as otherwise there is even more danger of inconsistent statistics in different parts of the UK which would mean it would be difficult or even impossible to meet UK European/International obligations. The board should have representation from across the UK.

There is need for greater clarity on how the GSS will function post independence. As the consultation document recognises it is of great benefit for the staff themselves and to the general public for them to have worked in both ONS and policy departments.

I am also interested to know what, if any, are the implications for relocation given ONS independence. For example intuitively it would be more difficult for ONS to carry out a "policeman" role for Other Government Departments and properly fulfil its responsibility to a London based parliament remotely.

Best Wishes,

Justin (Wickens)  
13 June 2006