national STATISTICS

National Statistics Code of Practice

Protocol on Data Presentation, Dissemination and Pricing

National Statistics Code of Practice

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A National Statistics Publication

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the *National Statistics Code of Practice*. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs.

They are produced free from any political influence.

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Summary of Principles – Data Presentation, Dissemination and Pricing

Code of Practice – Statement of Principles

Data will be presented to a standard that clearly and accurately expresses the contents to the widest possible audience, with choice and flexibility in the format where possible.

As far as reasonably possible, the price of National Statistics products will not be a barrier to access.

Producers of National Statistics reserve the right to respond, in an impartial manner, to any misunderstandings or misleading interpretations of their outputs.

Additional principles embodied in this Protocol

National Statistics will be made accessible to the widest possible community, and where appropriate with a choice of format, helping users to get what they want simply and quickly.

Presentation of National Statistics will be integrated and will focus on users' needs.

Information will be presented objectively, in line with professional standards, and in ways that make the statistics clear and useful.

The identity of National Statistics will be promoted as an independent and authoritative source of official information, accessible both directly and through third parties.

Where appropriate, 'experimental statistics' will be published to enable interested parties to judge whether they are fit for their purposes, and to help assess whether they meet National Statistics standards for quality and relevance.

Pricing will comply with legislation and wider government policy, and will provide fair value.

Introduction

For background information on this document please see *An Introduction to the National Statistics Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols.*

Scope

This protocol sets out how all those involved in the production of National Statistics will carry out their responsibilities with respect to data presentation, dissemination and pricing – as outlined in the *Framework for National Statistics* and the *National Statistics Code of Practice.*

The principles embodied in this protocol cover all published information designated as National Statistics, including first releases and statistical bulletins, any publications or other material placed on websites, statistical databases, research and analytical studies, findings from statistical surveys, methodological documents, experimental statistics and accompanying information about these data (metadata).

Exclusions

This protocol does not cover detailed standards for the release of National Statistics, or issues relating to the management of quality, the publication of quality measures, the handling of revisions, or the provision of metadata. These matters are covered in related Protocols.

A guide to putting the principles into practice

1. **National Statistics will be made accessible to the widest possible community, and where appropriate with a choice of format, helping users to get what they want simply and quickly.**

   a) Each organisation producing National Statistics will adopt a publication strategy covering presentation, dissemination and pricing. Its objective will be to ensure the widest possible access, while continuing to meet the needs of specific user communities.

      i. Those disseminating National Statistics will take account of the needs of the whole community, and give regard to their responsibilities under relevant equality legislation.

   b) The web will be the primary means of providing general access to National Statistics.

      i. When developing new products, and when reviewing existing products, producers of National Statistics will consider all ways and means of making statistics accessible, and where practicable, will give high priority to dissemination on the web.

      ii. The National Statistician will work with Heads of Profession to provide user-friendly and coordinated entry-points to the entire range of outputs disseminated as National Statistics.

      iii. Content will be organised as much as possible so that it can be easily understood and easily found.

iv. Producers of National Statistics will encourage comparative analysis and help to provide context to any particular output, through facilities such as metadata, links to related information, and cross-referencing to glossaries and background material.

c) Where appropriate, and in recognition of the fact that web access is not universal, other forms of dissemination will continue to be maintained.

i. Where there is sufficient demand to justify the service, statistical products will continue to be made available in paper versions, CD-Roms and other formats.

ii. Where practicable, statistical products disseminated in alternative formats will be made available at the same time as the web version.

2. **Presentation of National Statistics will be integrated and will focus on users' needs.**

a) Producers of National Statistics will endeavour to integrate and harmonise their publications and products in accordance with users' needs and give users easy access to related statistics through common gateways or interlinked websites.

b) Producers of National Statistics will respond to changing expectations about access to outputs. Formats, media, content and support materials will be regularly reviewed, and informed by an understanding of users' current and future needs and the standards set out in the *National Statistics Code of Practice.*

c) Within the guidelines of departmental policy and the *National Statistics Code of Practice*, producers will exercise professional judgement to decide on the types of presentation – including commentary, analysis and interpretation – best suited to the range of users for a particular output.

3. **Information will be presented objectively, in line with professional standards, and in ways that make the statistics clear and useful.**

   a) Presentation will set out information neutrally, clearly and simply, according to National Statistics standards of independence and integrity.

      i. Regularly recurring releases will follow a fixed format for presentation in accordance with the *Protocol on Release Practices.*

      ii. The decisions behind the content and type of commentary and analysis provided as National Statistics should be transparent and reasonable. In this context, producers should take into consideration whether a release includes anything new or exceptional, has an impact on government policy, or involves any matters of known public interest.

      iii. Analysis, commentary and presentation will not promote political, commercial or vested interests.

      iv. Where useful and appropriate, presentation of data should include analysis and background information on methodology, quality, trends, etc to aid understanding of data.

      v. It should be made apparent whether any commentary and analysis are themselves part of National Statistics, or based upon National Statistics.

      vi. Statistical presentation and commentary will be adapted, wherever practical, to suit the different needs of the various communities and audiences likely to be interested in a particular output.

b) Consistent departmental formats will be applied to released outputs, including representations such as graphs, tables and maps.

i. Producers of National Statistics will follow departmental house-style guides and refer to appropriate best practice when presenting numerical and graphical information.

4. **The identity of National Statistics will be promoted as an independent and authoritative source of official information, accessible both directly and through third parties.**

a) National Statistics will be promoted extensively as a leading, independent and authoritative source for official information.

i. The value and meaning of National Statistics will be maintained in line with the principles of Relevance, Integrity, Quality, and Accessibility set out in the *National Statistics Code of Practice.*

ii. Information published as National Statistics will be properly identified in compliance with corporate guidelines.

b) Organisations outside the Government Statistical Service will be encouraged to distribute National Statistics, provided they are capable of sustaining the values and meaning of the National Statistics identity.

i. Complementary relationships should also be forged, through hyper links, to bring traffic back to National Statistics Online and to departmental websites.

ii. Access to published material will be encouraged through complementary third-party channels, including, for example, the government's Information Asset Register.

iii. National Statistics products will be promoted in comprehensive, freely available and up-to-date catalogues and, where appropriate, in complementary catalogues outside the Government Statistical Service.

5. **Where appropriate, 'experimental statistics' will be published to enable interested parties to judge whether they are fit for their purposes, and to help assess whether they meet National Statistics standards for quality and relevance.**

   Experimental statistics are not National Statistics but are statistics which are undergoing evaluation with a view to their becoming National Statistics. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

   a) Experimental statistics will be published in accordance with the following objectives:

      i. Consultation – to provide government statisticians with informed feedback from potential users.

      ii. Acclimatisation – where the experimental series are alternative versions of an existing series, government statisticians may wish to help users become accustomed to – and receive their views on – new presentations.

      iii. Functionality – experimental series can provide very useful information for users as long as their nature is well explained and understood.

b) Dissemination of experimental statistics will comprise the following steps:

i. Experimental series will be introduced by an article on the National Statistics or Departmental website and in an appropriate National Statistics publication, where their context, concepts and construction will be explained.

ii. They will subsequently be updated and made accessible via a dedicated area of the 'Latest Releases' section of the National Statistics website or on the relevant Departmental website This will ensure that the status of the series is clear. Articles and/or tables will be made available for downloading as appropriate.

iii. Whilst updates for experimental series will be disseminated via the Web, the information may also appear in an appropriate National Statistics publication. It is important that in all cases these statistics are clearly marked as experimental.

iv. Experimental statistics will comply with the *National Statistics Code of Practice*, except for certain aspects of the Protocols on *Quality Management* and *Release Practices*.

(For more information about experimental statistics, please refer to the Annex)

6. **Pricing will comply with legislation and wider government policy, and will provide fair value.**

a) As far as possible, the price of National Statistics products will not be a barrier to access.

i. Headline National Statistics outputs and other information of broad and general interest will be free on the internet.

ii. Access to underlying data may incur charges where it is likely to be only of specialist interest and to involve extra processing and security measures.

iii. Where authorised, access to identifiable data may incur a charge for managing any arrangements necessary to protect the confidentiality of the data.

iv. Pricing for National Statistics products will conform with legislation and with wider government policies, including guidelines on charging issued by HM Treasury and instructions on Crown Copyright issued by HM Stationery Office.

b) Publications in print or other physical media will normally be priced to recover no more than the cost of manufacture, marketing and distribution.

i. The publication price will normally exclude the cost of core business activities, including data collection and processing.

c) Tailored data services carried out at the request of a specific non-government user may be charged to recover costs in full, including product development and any dedicated collection and processing (subject to the general guidance on access to Government information).

i. In some cases these services may be charged at a profit, where they are carried out in a commercial environment.

ii. Costs may be mitigated where the required data are available, though not published. Costs may be further mitigated, and in some cases the work may be free, where the responsible Head of Profession judges there to be a significant benefit to National Statistics, or to the wider community.

Annex:

A Note on Experimental Statistics

By definition, experimental statistics are being evaluated. Some are new outputs, some are changes to existing outputs. They are published to help involve users and other interested parties in their development, as a means to build in quality at the earliest stages.

Defining what is experimental is largely a matter of judgement, but typically experimental series arise when:

- There is a defined programme, either to develop new statistics or to improve existing outputs.
- New statistics remain subject to testing in terms of their volatility and ability to meet customer needs.
- The statistics do not yet meet the rigorous quality standards of National Statistics.
- New measures are available from a new set of statistics, with components that have considerable immediate value to users. These users are aware of the statistics' theoretical quality and can make qualified use of them before all operational testing has been completed. The testing is usually designed to validate the measures to the standard expected of National Statistics.

The experimental nature of such statistics may reflect:

- New methods which are being tested and are still subject to modification.
- Partial coverage (e.g. of industries) at that stage of the development programme.
- Potential modification in the light of user feedback, in terms of usefulness and credibility versus other sources.

The National Statistician, Head of Profession or Chief Statistician in a devolved administration will decide when experimental statistics are submitted for approval to become National Statistics proper. Factors taken into account will usually include:

- Whether the statistical methods have proved sufficiently robust to suit the variety of circumstances material to their use.
- When coverage reaches a sufficient level.
- When user feedback indicates that the statistics are useful and credible.
- When the defined development phase has ended.
- When it is judged that the statistics meet the quality standards of National Statistics.

Experimental statistics will comply with the *National Statistics Code of Practice*, except for certain aspects of the Protocols on *Quality Management* and *Release Practices*. There will be no early access granted for experimental statistics except in those limited circumstances described in the *Protocol on Release Practices.*

Managers of experimental statistics should work to a published timetable showing when they expect to submit their statistics for approval to become National Statistics.

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