

22 June 2012

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 22 May highlighting the Authority's Monitoring Brief 'Official Statistics and the Voluntary Sector'. It is a timely and comprehensive analysis of an area much in need of attention.

We agree that there is a need for improvement in the statistical information available about the voluntary sector, particularly now that the Citizenship Survey has been discontinued, and indeed we have received a number of queries in this regard. Work to improve this should build on that already undertaken by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

We also support a strengthening of engagement between the voluntary sector and producers of official statistics. Discussions have taken place internally, and it is under consideration whether this would be best achieved by increasing the voluntary sector presence in our existing Statistics User Forum groups, or by establishing a specific group for the sector. We would also like to hold an open event on official statistics and the voluntary sector, given that user events have previously proved effective in setting the scene and establishing the focus of future work. Our preference is for attendance to be free of charge, and assistance in covering costs for this shared agenda would be appreciated. Such an event would of course cover the findings and implications of the Monitoring Brief.

The Statistics User Forum and StatsUserNet provide a route for communication between users and producers of official statistics, and we hope that they can be used to improve understanding of the needs of the voluntary sector. It is of course important that user views are acted upon. Voluntary sector 'champions' would go some way to achieving this at a working level, although it will also be key to secure commitment at a senior level in the GSS in this area and for improving user engagement more generally.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Valerie Isham".

Valerie Isham
President
The Royal Statistical Society