

**STOCKTAKE OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS  
STEERING GROUP**

**Agenda**

**1. Purpose**

1.1. This paper details the agenda for the Steering Group on 7 September 2016.

**2. Recommendation**

2.1. To note the agenda.

**3. Discussion**

Table 1. Steering group agenda, 7 September 2016

Agenda

Item	Title	Lead
1	Welcome, minutes, progress against actions	David Levy (Chair)
2	Progress with Organisational Development	Ed Humpherson
3	Draft Final Report of the Code Stocktake	Richard Laux
4	Any Other Business	David Levy

**Richard Laux / Johanna Hutchinson / Tegwen Green  
Monitoring and Assessment, UK Statistics Authority  
September 2016**

## **Draft minutes of the meeting of 7 September 2016**

### Attendees

**Dr David Levy**, Non-Executive Director, UK Statistics Authority - Chair  
**Phoebe Arnold**, Head of Communications, Full Fact  
**David Blunt**, Head of Profession, Home Office  
**June Bowman**, Head of Profession, Department for Transport  
**Lara Fielden**, Visiting Fellow- Reuters & IPSO  
**Chris Francis**, Director of Government Relations, SA  
**Laura Dewis**, Deputy Director, Digital Technology, Office for National Statistics  
**Ed Humpherson**, Director General Regulation, UK Statistics Authority  
**Johanna Hutchinson**, Statistical Assessor, M&A (Secretary to the Steering Group)  
**Richard Laux**, Deputy Director, M&A  
**Tegwen Green**, GSS Good Practice Team  
**Mike Hughes**, Royal Statistical Society

### Apologies

**Roeland Berteen**, Royal Statistical Society  
**Tricia Dodd**, Deputy Director, Chief Methodologist, Office for National Statistics  
**Prof. Paul Allin**, Chair of the RSS's Statistics User Forum  
**Neil Greenwood**, Director of Strategy, Ofsted

### Introduction

1. David Levy was delayed so Ed Humpherson chaired the start of the meeting. He welcomed members of the Steering Group and led round table introductions.
2. Minutes from the May Steering Group were approved; amendments suggested by Mike Hughes had already been incorporated and Ed Humpherson noted the useful challenge and clarification this had provided.
3. Actions were completed or rolled forward to the implementation stage of the Stocktake. David Blunt (in relation to Action 6) suggested it would be important for the Authority to consider two aspects of resource implications in extending the scope of the Code - for itself as regulator and also the implication for departments. The Group noted that it was difficult to assess resource implications at this stage. Ed Humpherson agreed to pay particular attention to the resourcing implications for departments during the implementation stage of the Stocktake, and took David Blunt up on his offer to use the Home Office as a test case to explore these implications more fully.

**ACTION 1 – David Blunt to work with the Stocktake implementation team (as one of a number of test cases) to assess the practical resource implications for departments in extending the scope of the Code in relation to MI and the Transparency agenda.**

#### Progress with Organisational Development

*Note: the new Office has now been launched and more information on this is available from: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statement-on-the-office-for-statistics-regulation/>*

4. Ed Humpherson provided an update on ongoing work to develop proposals for the Office for Statistics Regulation. The group was supportive of the principles of the new Office.

#### Draft Final Report of the Code Stocktake

*Note: the revised version has been published as an exposure draft and is available from: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/stocktake-of-the-code-of-practice-for-official-statistics-exposure-draft/>*

5. Richard Laux introduced the report and highlighted its current conceptual and strategic nature. He explained that the detail of its implementation would evolve in parallel with the new regulatory office and in consultation with GSS Heads of Profession over the coming months.
6. The Group all agreed the report was an impressive, thoughtful piece gathering momentum for ideas and with the ability to look across the statistical landscape. Members recognised challenges in implementing some of the ideas and suggested:
  - i) setting out commitments in more detail and with worked examples – especially in relation to resources, scope of the Code, voluntary compliance and equality of access
  - ii) clarifying how the new regulator would assess quality and proportionality
  - iii) making the most of opportunities to be more effective in relation digital innovation and helping decision makers navigate the statistical landscape;

#### Brand and Value

7. The Steering Group expressed their support for a Code written in relation to Trust, Quality and Public Value (TQV), especially the public value element and suggested that perhaps it is the Code, rather than National Statistics that has the real public value and should be marketed as such.
8. The Group saw an opportunity to emphasise TQV as a fundamental concept of all that is good for statistics used in decision making, not just for National Statistics. The Group agreed that other things could be talked about as a propagation of TQV and these properties should be promoted as properties the Code should require of all statistics.

### Families of statistics

9. The Group highlighted practical difficulties on self-regulation in relation to voluntary compliance with the Code and suggested these need to be thought through carefully in the implementation stage of the Stocktake.
10. Laura Dewis highlighted the importance of harmonisation and consistent metadata, when considering 'families' of statistics. The Group agreed judging the quality of these big data sources would also be challenging for the Regulator.
11. Some members suggested redefining the term 'equality of access' to cater for the digital world and the evolution of responsive data and APIs. The Group agreed the existing interpretation of equality of access was outdated and should be based on what enables full engagement with data and statistics.

**ACTION 2 – the Code Stocktake implementation team to work with Laura Dewis and other digital leaders across government to establish what 'equality of access' means in a digital world.**

### Boundary and scope

12. The group discussed the boundary and scope of the Code. The group discussed how there is logic in all numerical information coming out of government being covered by the Code, particularly from the public perspective - just to a different extent. Unpicking this different extent and proportionality point will be important, for example some steering group members highlighted that if all government data is subject to rigorous quality assurance than it may be published too late to be of real value to decision makers. A discussion on proportionality followed, including exploring how a different number of Code practices may apply to different levels of information.

**ACTION 3 – the Code Stocktake implementation team to explore the idea of proportionality in relation to different types of numerical information.**

### Digital and Data

13. Phoebe Arnold reiterated the importance of getting the basics of dissemination correct and Laura asked for some drafting changes in the report to reflect the concept that compliance with standards often makes innovation possible. Laura also reminded the Group that given the transient nature of social media it may be difficult to build guidelines around it, although thinking around its use would need to be incorporated into the Code in some way.

### Methodology and Quality

14. The Steering Group suggested that the circumstances under which deep dives will be conducted should be considered.

**ACTION 4 – the Office for Statistics Regulation to consider this as part of its application of the Code.**

### Presentation of the Code

15. Lara and others in the Group supported the idea of principle based regulation in contrast to the current approach. Members also supported increasing the profile of Code to a wider audience (such as ministers and other analysts). They suggested this may need

additional interpretative guidance to clarify understanding of people's responsibilities and what constituted a 'breach' of the Code and its supporting guidance.

**ACTION 5 – the Code Stocktake implementation team to explore greater information around breaches when developing supporting guidance.**

#### Next steps

16. It was noted that consulting 'widely' in the next stages of the Code Stocktake would include consulting with journalists and could include accessing media and deliberative research to get the opinion of public focus groups.

#### Any Other Business

17. Ed Humpherson congratulated the Stocktake team on producing such a good and comprehensive report and confirmed the report would be revised to reflect members' comments. He confirmed the Draft report will be taken to the Authority Board at the end of October, at which time he will decide whether or not to commend it to the Board. He thanked David Levy and all the Steering Group members for their valuable contributions to the Code Stocktake and agreed to circulate a final copy of the report to them as soon as possible.