

Press Release

6 January 2009

Statistics Authority publishes the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority today publishes the new *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. The Authority has statutory responsibility under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* to prepare and publish this Code after due consultation.

The Code, along with a statement of the procedures that will be followed in assessing statistics against it, was the subject of a 12-week public consultation between July and September 2008. Only those sets of statistics that the Authority judges to be produced in compliance with the Code will be allowed, in future, to carry the National Statistics designation.

Alongside the Code of Practice and the formal report on the consultation exercise, the Authority is publishing a further report which lists some 340 sets of official statistics not currently designated as National Statistics. The report identifies some of these statistics that the Authority believes should be brought within the scope of the Code, and assessed against it with a view to designation as National Statistics. The Authority has a statutory duty to notify government ministers of such cases and will be following them up with the relevant government departments.

The Authority made critical comment before Christmas on a Home Office statement, issued on 11 December, on knife crime statistics. The Authority's analysis of this case appears in a paper prepared at the time for the Authority Board, and is published today on the Authority's website. It draws out the respects in which the statement was inconsistent with the Code of Practice.

Speaking today, Sir Michael Scholar said:

"The publication of our new Code of Practice for Official Statistics marks the beginning of a new chapter for the Statistics Authority. We now have the guiding principles in place against which we will assess official statistics to determine whether they meet the standards necessary to be labelled as National Statistics.

"Compliance with the Code allows official figures to carry the National Statistics label, and the assessment process helps to ensure consistently high standards of service, as well as identifying areas that need attention. The Authority wishes to see the National Statistics label recognised as an assurance that the statistics have been produced and explained to high standards, and that they serve the public good. By looking at whether the statistical system is meeting the needs of users of statistics and wider society, it will help, over time, to build trust in official statistics.

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“I believe the new Code of Practice will help the many producers of UK official statistics to collect, explain, and release those statistics in ways that build public trust and confidence in the statistical system as a whole.”

The new Code of Practice is available on the Authority’s website at:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

The reports on the consultation exercise and on the priorities for designation as National Statistics are at:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/index.html>

A separate document containing the individual responses to the consultation is published at:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/consultations/closed-consultations/index.html>

The Monitoring and Assessment Note *Statement on knife crime statistics, 11 December 2008 – analysis against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics* is at:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring-and-assessment-notes/published-notes.html>

The Authority’s Head of Assessment, Richard Alldritt, is responsible for assessing whether official statistics are compiled, released, and presented in a way that is consistent with the Authority’s Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and whether to designate official statistics that have been assessed against the Code as National Statistics.

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