

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

Report on the Fourteenth Meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board

Introduction

1. This note reports back to PAMS members on the business of the fourteenth SCOTSTAT Board meeting held on 11th May 2009.
2. The agenda, papers and minutes for the meeting are not yet available on the SCOTSTAT website (as at 12th May) but should be shortly at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/statistics/scotstat/board/meetings>

Meeting report

3. The fourteenth meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board was held on Tuesday 11th May 2009 at St Andrew's House. The Board was chaired by Rob Wishart, Chief Statistician, Scottish Government.
4. The agenda for the meeting was as follows:
 - UK Statistics Authority Issues (Paper A)
 - Update on Single Outcome Agreements and Statistical Capacity Building across Local Authorities and other Public Bodies (Paper B)
 - Stakeholder activity within the Statistics Group (Paper C),
5. Under Action Points from the previous meeting there was a discussion on the proposed format for the next annual Stakeholders meeting – you may recall the two previous events in the George Hotel and the Surgeons Hall. The aim of these events is to promote SCOTSTAT and user consultation. The current plan is to hold another event this autumn, possibly at the end of October or the beginning of November with two plenary sessions – one of which may be a speaker from the UK Statistics Authority – and two parallel sessions which might be workshop/showcasing sessions on different topics.
6. Paper A – UK Statistics Authority Issues
The meeting was attended by Neil Jackson who heads the UK Statistics Authority office in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh office will carry out some assessments of what is classified as national statistics and they are currently assessing:
 - Recorded crime in Scotland; and
 - Children looked after by local authorities.

It is planned to look at three major Scottish surveys (Crime and Justice Survey, Health Survey and House Condition Survey) later in the year.

An assessment questionnaire, which will allow them to assess how far the statistics conform to the Official Statistics Code of practice (issued in January 2009), has been developed and is being trialled in the first two assessments. SCOTSTAT has been used as a means of contacting users of the statistics.

The Scottish pre-release order was approved in December 2008. This is different from England and Wales. For example, allowing ministers early access to the stats so that they can make informed comments. This could result in more leaks. Discussions are ongoing with Cosla regarding access for quality assurance.

Neil Jackson informed the meeting that their Annual Report was in preparation and would be submitted to the Scottish Parliament. In the next couple of years they would be concentrating on assessing statistics currently considered as National Statistics. It will be open for users to contact the

Authority if they have concerns about any National Statistics which they do not think have been addressed by the Statisticians within the Scottish Government.

7. Paper B – Update on Single Outcome Agreements and Statistical Capacity Building across Local Authorities and other Public Bodies

This paper set out progress which has been made.

The Office of the Chief Statistician have been evaluating the indicators contained in the 2009/10 SOAs and advice prepared on sources of data, gaps and targets. An internal working group of SOA analysts has been set up.

All Statistics Branches are being required to add a “Data Sources and Suitability” section to their websites focussing on what is available at a local authority level and its suitability for performance monitoring.

A new Local Outcome Indicator Report was added to Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics in February.

The Improving Local Indicators Project with the Improvement Service and SOLACE is progressing. A programme of consultation events is planned.

The network of analysts in local government and other public bodies has been established and a number of workshops have been run to enhance capacity.

8. Paper C – Stakeholder activity within the Statistics Group

An updated version of the original report was circulated at the meeting. This report provided a summary in bullet point form of the stakeholder engagement by the Statistics Group within the Scottish Government. It was noted that there were still some gaps and the coverage was patchy in what information was provided. It was agreed that something similar but perhaps more informative was needed on a regular basis.

SCOTSTAT are proposing to produce a quarterly newsletter to publicise new products and consultations.

We were informed that an Advanced Quantitative Methods Network was due to be launched on 1st July. This was ESRC funded and was planned to develop a programme of training and capacity building.

9. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in the autumn, date to be fixed around the proposed Stakeholder conference.

Conclusion

10. This paper summarises the issues discussed by the SCOTSTAT Board at its meeting in May 2009. I should be happy to provide further information if required.