

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

SCOTSTAT BOARD MEETING

Jenny Boag's report of recent ScotStat Board meetings is attached for information.

Formal minutes of ScotStat Board meetings can normally be found at

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/scotstats/board/minutes.asp>

PAMS is invited to note the report.

March 2003

Report on the Second and Third Meetings of the SCOTSTAT Board

Introduction

1. This report is intended to inform members of the Population and Migration Statistics Theme Group of the outcomes of the second and third SCOTSTAT Board meetings which I have attended as the PAMS representative. There was no PAMS meeting following the second Board meeting and therefore this report covers both meetings.
2. If anyone would like copies of the papers from the meetings, I will be happy to supply these. Unfortunately, the SCOTSTAT Board website is very out of date and there are no papers or agendas for the last two meetings on the website. However, the minutes of the June 2002 meeting are available (www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/scotstats/board) and a draft minute from the latest meeting has been circulated to those who attend.
3. Action points for PAMS are noted as appropriate.

Meeting reports

4. The second meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board was held on Wednesday 26th June 2002 and the third on Monday 3rd February 2003 in St Andrew's House. The Board was chaired by Rob Wishart, Chief Statistician, Scottish Executive. There was a good attendance at both meetings, in spite of poor weather in February. This included representatives of the statistical Theme Groups, other Scottish Executive representatives from among the Senior Statisticians and the Central Research Unit and external representatives from the Scottish Parliament, the Royal Statistical Society, Audit Scotland and the voluntary sector.

Second Meeting – June 2002

5. The business of the meeting comprised several items of an administrative nature but also a substantive paper on Neighbourhood Statistics and a short item on the Census. The agenda items were as follows:
 - Summary report of Committee Workplans, Membership etc (Paper SCOTSTAT 7/02);
 - Priority issues for the Board (Paper SCOTSTAT 8/02);
 - Neighbourhood Statistics (Paper SCOTSTAT 9/02);
 - Local Authority Consultation (Paper SCOTSTAT 10/02);
 - Use of 2001 Census data;
 - Links between the SCOTSTAT Committees and the SCOTSTAT Board (Paper SCOTSTAT 11/02);
 - Update on SCOTSTAT website.
6. Paper 7/02 Committee summaries: The first paper summarised the pro-formas which each of the Theme Committees had produced covering their membership, meeting frequency, working groups, links to other SCOTSTAT Committees, main agenda items, cross cutting issues covered, main activities in 2001/02 and planned actions for 2002/03. This paper was supplemented by the actual pro-formas for each Committee. This was generally agreed to be a useful exercise in providing the Board with information on each Committee.
7. During the discussion it was agreed that it was not necessary to summarise the Committee Reports, as these were generally only one or two pages. These should be produced again for future meetings.

Action: A further report from PAMS was submitted for the February meeting and these will be needed for each future Board meeting

8. Now that membership lists were available for each of the Theme Committees, the Executive agreed to review this to ensure that all appropriate groups were properly represented on each Theme Committee. Comments from Board members were requested.
9. There was some variation in the type of issues being dealt with by each committee, ranging from strategic thinking to identifying gaps in the data, reviewing statistical publications and designing and implementing survey forms. A gap was identified in that further and higher education was not covered by any Committee. It was also agreed that the remit of the Economic Committee was very wide, including the labour market, and agriculture, forestry and fishing which might be better covered by the Natural Environment Committee. It was agreed to pursue a number of suggestions which were made about changing the coverage of some of the Committees with the individual Committees concerned.
10. Committees were encouraged to make links with each other. The paper contained a useful table which indicated the links which had been identified so far for each Committee. In particular, the need to make reciprocal links was flagged up. For PAMS, the Economic and Health & Care Committees had identified links with us.
Action: Consider reciprocal links with other Committees
11. It was agreed that every Committee should have Neighbourhood Statistics and Social Justice as items on their agendas. Equality statistics should also be taken into account by all Committees.
Action: Ensure that Neighbourhood Statistics, Social Justice and Equality statistics remain on our agenda
12. After discussion, no recommendations were made on the timing of meetings in relation to Board meetings. This was left for each Committee to decide.
13. Paper 8/02 Board priorities: This dealt with priority issues for the Board and was a follow-up to the discussion at the first meeting and a consultation paper which had been sent out by the Scottish Executive to Board members following that meeting.
14. The first issue identified, Neighbourhood Statistics, was already covered on the agenda. The following priorities were set out in the paper:
- Initial priorities:
- ◆ dissemination and use of Scottish Executive statistics;
 - ◆ performance information;
 - ◆ broadening the scope of SCOTSTAT to include other organisations' statistics.
- To be dealt with in other ways and/or re-considered next year:
- ◆ range of statistics produced – refer to Theme Committees;
 - ◆ key statistics – possibly refer to Theme Committees;
 - ◆ equality/diversity statistics – possibly refer to Social and Welfare Committee;
 - ◆ Code of Practice – by correspondence.
- No early action, although Board members would be kept up to date with developments:
- ◆ statistical methodology;
 - ◆ data protection, data sharing and use of administrative data;
 - ◆ costs and value for money;
 - ◆ electronic data capture.
15. After discussion it was agreed that there were two priorities which linked some of the topics set out in the previous paragraph. These were:
- ◆ dissemination linked to data protection and data sharing;
 - ◆ performance information and key statistics.

16. It was agreed that the Executive would produce papers in advance of the next meeting on each of the initial priorities. The Executive would also get in touch with Board members about the priority issues and how to move these forward.
17. Theme Committees were to be asked about the key statistics which they produce, who uses them and what for.
Action: Respond to request for information as required - this has subsequently been received following the third meeting.
18. Paper 9/08 – Neighbourhood Statistics: This was a comprehensive paper setting out the policy aims of Neighbourhood Statistics, ICT developments required, links to Census data, the deprivation index, geography, confidentiality, denominators and expenditure and a long list of possible statistics to be included by domain. The paper had been widely circulated.
19. It was agreed that the Theme Committees would be very important in developing the statistics required for each domain and to take this forward. Neighbourhood Statistics was a long term commitment with a variety of organisations required to produce quality data over a period of time. Active promotion of the data was important.
20. The Board would be looking to ensure that the objectives of the Neighbourhood Statistics project were achieved and continued with.
21. Paper 10/02 Local authority consultation: This short paper raised some concerns among the three local authority members of the SCOTSTAT Board. Meetings of lead officers on all the Theme Groups who come from local authorities had already been set up which had identified a number of issues regarding representation of local authorities on the Theme Committees and consultation.
22. It was pointed out to the Executive that there remained a need for them to consult formally with local authorities via Chief Executives, Directors of departments etc. as appropriate and not to rely on the SCOTSTAT structure or the Register as the sole means of consulting. These were both useful additional means of consulting but should not be the sole method used.
23. The local authority group would consider further the membership of the Theme Groups as discussed at para 8 above and how to ensure good consultation with and among local authorities.
24. It was further agreed that there was a wider issue of awareness raising by the Executive of SCOTSTAT and Neighbourhood Statistics.
25. Use of Census 2001 Data: This item was an opportunity for Rob Wishart to explain the ideas he had for departments within the Executive to plan their use of Census data over the next few months. These plans would be shared with the Theme Committees. Discussions were ongoing with UK colleagues about the production of multi-source topic reports and the Executive was likely to provide some high level statistics to contribute towards these.
26. There was some discussion on the need to provide training in SCROL to the wider community. I reassured the Board that this was in hand.
27. Paper 11/02 Links between Theme Committees and Board: This covered the formal reports which will be required from the Theme Groups to the Board as well as how to deal with ad hoc issues which the Board wishes to raise with Theme Groups and vice versa. The proposals in the report were generally supported.

28. It was agreed that the Executive would reconsider the planning and reporting cycles. It was also suggested that a meeting of the Chairs of the Theme Committees might be useful as some of them did not come from the Executive and might not be familiar with the SCOTSTAT procedures.

Action: Chair to attend meeting if convened. This was suggested again at the third meeting

29. SCOTSTAT website: This had now been launched and was being used by the Executive. There were still some glitches to be sorted out. A number of suggestions for improvements were made. Committees were asked to check their links to the website and suggest any other appropriate links to the SCOTSTAT site.

Action: Check links

Third meeting – February 2003

30. The business of the meeting consisted mainly of updates on progress on the priority issues identified at the second meeting in June. The agenda items were as follows:

- Priority issues for the Board (Paper SCOTSTAT 1/03);
- Key Statistics and performance indicators (Paper SCOTSTAT 2/03);
- Statistical Surveys (Paper SCOTSTAT 3/03);
- Survey of users and producers of official statistics (Paper SCOTSTAT 4/03);
- Summary of update reports on Committee Workplans, Membership etc (Paper SCOTSTAT 5/03);
- National Statistics Issues;
- Disclosure and data protection (Paper SCOTSTAT 6/03).

31. Paper 1/03 Priority Issues for the Board: At the June 2002 meeting and subsequently, four initial priority issues for the Board had been identified. These were:

- ◆ Neighbourhood Statistics;
- ◆ dissemination and use of Scottish Executive statistics;
- ◆ performance information and key statistics;
- ◆ data protection, data sharing and use of administrative data.

32. This paper summarised progress on all the issues listed above and the remaining issues listed in para 14. Separate papers were discussed on the initial priorities together with a report on surveys.

33. The exception was Neighbourhood Statistics which had been the subject of separate meetings. The first release of the higher order data was scheduled for March. User comments would then be requested on the IT system as well as the content. Future funding had been secured.

34. Equality and diversity statistics had been remitted to the Social and Welfare Committee. A UK group was considering the ethnicity classification but this was proving a difficult issue.

35. Paper 2/03 Key statistics and performance indicators: As with the other initial priorities, a brainstorming meeting had been held which had been attended by several Board members. A number of options for further work were set out in the paper.

36. These were discussed and it was agreed that an overview of key statistics and performance indicators would be useful. It was agreed that a matrix of all the key statistics and performance indicators which could be identified would be drawn up. These would be grouped by topic so that duplication could be flagged up.

37. It was also agreed to build on the work which had already been done in the “Getting it Right” document, which had never been published. This report had been produced by SOLACE, CoSLA, the Audit Commission and the Executive to look at best practice in performance indicators. This should form the basis of Board advice.
38. A Steering Group would be set up to take this issue forward. Theme Committees were to be asked about the key statistics which they produce (see para 17 above).
39. Paper 3/03 Statistical Surveys: A discussion meeting had been held in the autumn where there had been a presentation on the proposed ONS Integrated Social Survey and a general discussion on all the population and household surveys which currently take place in Scotland. This included both Scotland only surveys and national ones.
40. Following this, the Executive had set up a co-ordinating committee on the surveys which are carried out in Scotland. Board members were asked if they wished to be involved in this committee or to put forward nominations. It was agreed that there should be a further report of progress to the next Board meeting. It was also agreed that greater Scottish involvement in the Integrated Social Survey would be pursued.
41. Paper 4/03 Dissemination and use of Executive statistics: Again a brainstorming meeting had been held and a short questionnaire had been produced to users of the SCOTSTAT Register. A separate questionnaire had been sent to producers of statistics. The initial results from this were reported. The final results would be reported back to the Theme Committees and to those on the Register.
42. Paper 5/03 Update on Committee Workplans: A number of changes to the Committee structures were notified. There was to be a new committee on Labour Market and Skills which had previously been covered by the Economic Theme Group. The Health and Social Work Groups were to be merged into a Health and Care Group with the current user groups continuing to operate under their auspices. There were also to be changes to the Crime and Justice Group.
43. There was concern that a number of groups had failed to produce updates in spite of several reminders. It was also unclear why the reports from Groups had been summarised when the response of the Board to the reports for each committee given to the June meeting had been well received. It was agreed that these would be repeated for the next meeting.
44. Concern was also expressed about the lack of progress of the Social and Welfare Group which had not got going. It was reported that this Group would be re-formed focussing on its original remit and widen its membership.
45. Once again the Executive were asked for a diagram showing the membership and areas covered by each of the committees and the SCOTSTAT structure.
46. There was criticism of the delay in putting papers from committees and the Board onto the website.
47. National Statistics issues: Rob Wishart reported on progress with the Executive’s Statistics Plan. The themes should have already gone to the Theme Committees for consideration. It was proposed to put a draft to Ministers and ask for approval to go out to consultation. Ministers would revisit the plan after the elections in May.
48. Rob also reported on the National Statistics Code of Practice. A series of specific protocols were being issued in England and Wales for consultation but the Executive did not think these were necessary for Scotland.
49. On the CLIP concordat between central government and the Local Government Association, it was agreed that such a document was unnecessary in Scotland.

50. Paper 6/03 Disclosure and data protection: A working group had met and had a broad discussion which focussed on two areas. The first was to provide users with guidance on methods to prevent disclosure of information such as rounding, data swapping, thresholds etc and when it is necessary to do this. A guidance paper is to be issued shortly and will be circulated for comment.
51. The second issue was data linking. There is an Executive group looking at data sharing at the moment and this issue will be taken forward by this group. There may be a need for legislation to cover this area and the Statistics Commission is consulting on the issue for England and Wales, but this may not be taken forward in Scotland.

Conclusion

52. This paper sets out the issues discussed by the SCOTSTAT Board at their meetings in June 2002 and February 2003. There are no substantive issues for the PAMS Group.

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