

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

Report on the Fourth Meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board

Introduction

1. This note is intended to report to PAMS members the business of the fourth SCOTSTAT Board meeting.
2. Papers from the meeting are available on the SCOTSTAT website. (www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/scotstats/board).

Meeting report

3. The fourth meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board was held on Friday 20th June 2003 at Victoria Quay. The Board was chaired by Rob Wishart, Chief Statistician, Scottish Executive. There was a reasonable attendance at this fourth meeting. This included representatives of most of the statistical Theme Groups, other Scottish Executive representatives from among the Senior Statisticians and the Central Research Unit.
4. The papers for the meeting were as follows:
 - Organisational chart of the Government Statistical Service in Scotland (Paper SCOTSTAT 6/03);
 - KPI/Targets Guidance (Paper SCOTSTAT 7/03);
 - Key Statistics/Pis and targets - Matrix (Paper SCOTSTAT 8/03);
 - Dissemination and use of SE Statistics (Paper SCOTSTAT 9/03);
 - Summary of Committee Reports and Workplans (Paper SCOTSTAT 10/03);
 - Priority Issue for Board – update (Paper SCOTSTAT 11/03);
 - Draft letter to Public Sector Bodies on Statistical Standards (Paper SCOTSTAT 12/03).
5. Paper 6/03 Organisational chart: This chart had been requested by Board members to help them understand the operation of the statistics service within the Executive. This is set out in paper 6/03 listed above.
6. Key Statistics and Performance Indicators: The two papers relating to this agenda item had been requested by the Board (papers 7/03 and 8/03). The ultimate aim of this piece of work is two fold. Firstly to see if any rationalisation is possible and secondly to see where advice is needed on quality/fitness of purpose of the information being used.
7. The matrix drew together the first responses to the request to Theme Committees for information about targets, milestones and performance indicators which came within their remit. This was long and detailed. It was generally considered by both the Executive and the Board to have been a useful exercise. It was agreed that some further work would be done to polish up the table such as adding a column for geographical level. Then the matrix would be sent back to the Theme Committees for further consideration to see if any additional information could be provided.
8. High level discussions are taking place within the Executive about target setting and this work may contribute to that discussion. The Executive may be looking at external monitoring of target setting. National Statistics were also considering the issue.
9. In parallel with this data collection exercise, the Executive is looking to take forward the guidance paper which had been produced called “Getting it Right” but which had never been finalised or published. It was agreed that further work should be done on this.

10. Scottish Population Surveys Co-ordinating Committee: There was a short presentation from Rob Wishart on progress on this work. In the short term they were concentrating on co-ordinating and harmonising existing surveys, including looking at management arrangements, costs and procurement. They were also monitoring the work on the UK Integrated Social Survey. In the longer term, consideration would be given to integration of surveys and a decision made on the Scottish response to the Integrated Survey. Key decisions would also need to be made on the future of the Census and the Scottish Household Survey.
11. The need for robust statistics for small areas had been identified as an issue. There was the potential to produce longitudinal data from the Integrated Social Survey.
12. GROS are members of this Committee and there are other PAMS member organisations involved including Communities Scotland, Marion Lacey from SCVO and Stephen Morley from North Ayrshire Council representing local authorities. The Executive indicated that they would be willing to have more representatives of external organisations on the Committee.
13. Neighbourhood Statistics: The Board received a demonstration of the Neighbourhood Statistics website which was due to be launched on 25th June (www.sns.gov.uk).
14. The Board were also informed that the Executive was restructuring its own website which should give better access to statistical information. The Board would be notified when this went live. (Note that this has now taken place).
15. Survey of Users and Producers of Official Statistics: This report updated the version which had been discussed at the last Board meeting and in particular finalised the information on the survey of SCOTSTAT register users. There was some discussion about how to keep the SCOTSTAT register up to date and how to encourage people to use it.
16. Summary of Committee Reports and Workplans: There had been a better response from the Committees this time and the Board was generally satisfied with the report and the progress which was being made by individual committees.
17. The Board were informed that the Scottish Executive Statistics Plan was now on the website and that an Annual Report would be produced.
18. Committees are to be asked to consider that balance of their membership to ensure that all interested groups are invited to be represented.
19. No specific issues were raised regarding the work of PAMS.
20. National Statistics Code of Practice: The Scottish Executive arrangements as part of this were outlined by Rob Wishart. The Executive will be producing its own compliance statements as they do not think that all the protocols which are being produced by National Statistics are necessary in Scotland.
21. A six monthly meeting between the Executive and National Statistics has been set up at which issues can be raised. The Executive are supporting the retention of the NOMIS system. (Note: this is now being retained).
22. Board Priorities: An updated schedule of the priority issues for the Board was produced outlining progress which had been made on the main issues. Progress had been made in most of the priority areas and it was agreed to bring forward the issue of data protection and confidentiality and to look at what could be done in that area next.

23. Draft Letter to Public Sector bodies on Statistical Standards: The Executive was proposing to send out a letter to public sector bodies, such as local authorities and Health Boards, to seek initial views on how to promote high standards in statistics across the public sector. There was some discussion as to whether this would produce any useful response as it was not clear who was likely to respond to such a letter sent out at a fairly high level. It was agreed to proceed with it and see what the response was.
24. Other issues: The Executive agreed to respond to an e-mail from Alan Campbell from Aberdeenshire Council who had written to the Executive about specific concerns from local authority representatives on the Theme Committees
25. The next meeting is likely to be held in January.

Conclusion

26. This paper sets out the issues discussed by the SCOTSTAT Board at their meeting in June 2003.