

**Minutes of Migration Statistics Improvement Programme Board Meeting
5 December 2008, 10.30-12.00pm
FE 15 Redwood (ONS Myddleton Street)**

Present

Office for National Statistics

Ms Karen Dunnell (Chair)

Ms Jil Matheson

Mr Guy Goodwin

Ms Roma Chappell

Secretariat

Mr Steve Smallwood

Other Attendees

Mr Neal Hatch (Bank of England)

Miss Audrey Brown (DCSF)

Mr Michael Hipkins (DIUS)

Mr Chris Kelly (HM Treasury)

Mr Stephen Jones (LGA) - from item 4

Mr Jonathan Sedgwick (Home Office)

Mr Mike Reed (CLG)

Apologies

Mr David Williams (CLG), *and*

Mr Adam Sharples (DWP).

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1 The Chair welcomed the board members.

2. Minutes, matters arising and action points

MSIPB(Dec08)02 and MSIPB(Dec08)03

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment

2.2 There were two action points that had not been reported on. For Action 2 it was agreed that it is important for statistical releases to identify key messages that are relevant to policy. It was agreed to pick this issue up in the Migration Reporting Working Group and factored into the Communications strategy.

Action: ONS to ensure that Migration Reporting Working Group takes on this work

2.3 The other outstanding action, reporting on cross government work in kind, was addressed on the agenda.

3. Programme Update

MSIPB(Dec08)04, MSIPB(Dec08)05 and a short presentation distributed at meeting

3.1 Mr Goodwin gave a presentation as part of the programme update. He explained that the reason for the overall amber status would be apparent from agenda items 4, 5 and 6. Activities are focused on delivering improvements in the short, medium and long term. In the short term they are particularly focussed on improved population statistics to feed into the next funding round. In the medium term, the focus is particularly on the 2011 Census and its results, and in the long-term on the Beyond 2011 project. There are medium and long-term issues that need addressing now, for example, potential future maintenance of an address register and administrative data sources needed for comparison with Census.

3.2 In highlighting the items for short-term delivery Mr Goodwin explained that there is a contingency of using aggregate data if individual HESA data are not available in time. The annex in paper MSIP(Dec08)07 showed the general timetable for data sharing and it was hoped that HESA data would be available in April, but any delay would make it almost impossible to use in any adjustment for the next settlement round.

3.3 Mr Sedgwick asked how the need for an accurate 'always up to date' address list interfaced with the national identity register. The Chair confirmed that discussions on the address register were taking place in the Cabinet Office; and that she has pressed at those meetings the statistical benefits that a single address list might provide.

3.4 A high level timetable was presented for implementing improvements. It was confirmed that time had been allowed for national population projections. This timetable is being consulted on with key users.

3.5 Mr Goodwin expressed a concern that if access to new sources was slowed there was a danger of the package of improvements being seen to be shrinking. A particular concern is the need to be seen to be delivering across government.

3.6 The UK Statistics Authority is reviewing the programme and would report in March 2009. An internal audit report is also being carried out; focusing on how the programme has been set up and run.

3.7 An end of year report was planned on the programme which would show the achievements and also show the work in kind. Ms Matheson said that there should be a report to the ministerial group and for the public. The Chair pointed out that the timing would fit well with the new style GSS UK Statistics Authority report to be published in June 2009.

3.8 Mr Kelly asked whether we can quantify the level of improvement made. Mr Goodwin said that this would appear in the end of year report for the IPS improvements, and that ONS methodology were working on quantifying accuracy of population estimates, a feasibility report would be published in summer 2009.

3.9 Mr Sedgwick wanted, given the context of tightening finances across government, to see a clear statement of what is being gained for the money and Mr Hipkins wanted to know which of the items on the list of achievements contributed most to improving the population estimates. Ms Dunnell suggested the list could be scored to show this.

Action: ONS to consider how list of improvements can be scored

3.10 It was noted that the changes that would be made were primarily to the sub-national distribution, although the effect of any age distribution changes may feed through to the national picture. Miss Brown requested that the national effect be quantified.

Action: ONS to quantify any national effects of improvements made

4. Entry and Exit data

MSIPB(Dec08)04

4.1 Ms Chappell presented the paper. It is important that better statistics on migration are achieved from new systems such as e-borders. Ministers have stated their keenness for this to happen. There was some concern that insufficient progress is being made. There is currently no separate statistical objective in the business case for e-Borders, which is focussed on border security; improved statistics are seen as a benefit. There would also be a need for statistical reporting from the Points Based System (PBS) and to check what information might be obtained from landing cards. The paper suggested a restructuring of the working group.

4.2 Mr Sedgwick responded by acknowledging the current frustration. The e-Borders programme plan and the department's statistics improvement plan should be brought together into one programme to help facilitate data from the system eventually becoming the National Statistics on migration. A new HO scoping paper for the new combined programme should be completed within a month, after which ONS and HO would meet.

4.3 Mr Sedgwick reported that the cost of plans to process data on landing cards was proving prohibitive. However, the option to analyse the data should not be ruled out.

4.4 Ms Matheson thought that the PBS would only provide limited information, if this is so then a decision could be made to invest less in statistics from this source. There would be a need for some kind of statistical dissemination, and reporting would also need to be linked to coherent reporting on migration.

Action: ONS and HO to meet when new scoping document complete

4.5 ONS are grateful for the work DCSF has put into the regulation for access to School Census data. The main risk now to progress on improving migration statistics is timeliness of the regulation for access to HESA data. It was confirmed the process involved affirmative resolution. There is a process for data sharing but more clarity is needed for board members on who is leading in each department.

Action: ONS to confirm departmental contacts on the HESA regulation in DIUS

Action: ONS to provide the list of departmental leads on individual data sharing projects, and timetables for data access, ensuring risks are identified.

5. Work in Kind

MSIPB(Dec08)04

5.1 There is a need to reflect the effort and cost of work in kind in reporting on the Migration Statistics Improvement Programme. An initial report from departments on the first six months had been asked for, but only two received. Mr Goodwin said there were some grey areas, such as inclusion of IT costs or costs of data provision, which needed to be clarified. It would be best if departments laid out all costs for consideration of what is in scope. The Chair suggested that a template should be developed, based around the initial requests that specified the work departments would carry out 'in kind'.

5.2 Mr Goodwin said that meetings would be arranged with departmental contact points, and ONS would report back to the next meeting.

Action: ONS to develop template to collect information on work in kind and to arrange bilaterals with departmental contacts

5.3 Mr Jones commented that the DWP National Insurance Reporting tool has been a very useful development for his work.

6. Any other Business

6.1 The next Ministerial meeting is provisionally scheduled for February 2009 and would need to include papers on work in kind and also on Migration Indicators. It was agreed that a Programme Board should take place before the next Ministerial meeting. It was agreed to hold the programme board meeting in late January/ February and the Ministerial meeting at the beginning of March.

6.2 Risks to the programme, such as delayed receipt of HESA data, should also be taken to Ministers at that meeting. The Chair said such risks need to be escalated to the Board too.

Action: ONS to arrange next board meeting and CLG to arrange next ministerial meeting to agreed timetable

7. Meeting Summary and papers for information

7.1 The Chair asked for any comments on the background papers provided. Programme board members wanted to see clear links between the deliverables paper and the timeline.

7.2 Ms Chappell said the communications paper is not wholly about strategy and was a cross between strategy and a high level plan. Ms Matheson thought the objectives need enhancing. There was a need to join up with other communication strategies, such as Census.

7.3 Mr Goodwin reminded the Board that the LGA had provided help with communication, not just with the workshops but also in saying they would help ONS liaise with key people in LAs such as Finance Officers and Chief Executives, for example on consultation on the implementation timetable.

7.4 The Chair concluded by recapping the main outcomes of the meeting:

- Some progress had been made but with suggestions from this meeting the programme should be able to get smarter at reporting on the programme.
- Jonathan Sedgwick agreed that more work was needed in the UK Borders Agency to ensure the importance of statistics is a primary objective of its programmes.
- The Chair and Ms Matheson would reinforce at Heads of Professions meetings the importance of messages in migration reporting. CLG would help to achieve this outcome working with ONS and others on the MRWG.
- More information is needed on data sharing leads and timetables
- More work is needed to draw together information on work in kind
- the board would meet before the next Ministerial meeting.