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Population, Great Britain. Central Office of Information. Publishing Services, Stationery Office/Tso, 1995, 0117020079, 9780117020078, 105 pages. The Aspects of Britain series is an up-to-date, unbiased guide to life in Great Britain today. Aspect titles are grouped in six different categories: Government and Administration, Overseas Relations, Social and Cultural Affairs, Britain and its People, Industry, and Environment. Each book is 6" x 8 1/4" and illustrated throughout with b&w and color illustrations..

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It is charged with the collection and publication of statistics related to the economy, population and society of England and Wales at national, regional and local levels. It functions as the executive office of the National Statistician, who is also the UK Statistics Authority's Chief Executive and principal statistical adviser to the UK's National Statistics Institute[2] and the 'Head Office' of the Government Statistical Service (GSS). Its main office is in Newport near the United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office and Tredegar House, but another significant office is in Titchfield in Hampshire, and a small office is in London. ONS co-ordinates data collection with the respective bodies in Northern Ireland and Scotland, namely NISRA and NRS.

The ONS was formed on 1 April 1996 by the merger of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS).[3] Following the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the United Kingdom Statistics Authority became a non-ministerial department on the 1 April 2008.[4]

ONS produces and publishes a wide range of the information about Britain that can be used for social and economic policy-making as well as painting a portrait of the country as its population evolves over time. This is often produced in ways that make comparison with other societies and economies possible. Much of the data on which policy-makers depend is produced by ONS through a combination of a decennial population census, samples and surveys and analysis of data generated by businesses and organisations such as the National Health Service and the register of births, marriages and deaths. Both its publications and its publicly available raw data, available free, are reported and discussed daily in the media as the basis for the public understanding of the country in which they live.

The reliance on some of these data by government (both local and national) makes ONS material central to debates about the determination of priorities, the allocation of resources and for decisions on interest rates or borrowing. The complexity and degree and speed of change in the society, combined with the challenge of measuring some of these (e.g. in relation to longevity, migration or

illness patterns or fine movements in inflation or other aspects of national accounts) give rise to periodic debates about some of its indicators and portrayals. Many of these rely on sources which are outside of ONS, while some of its own sources need to be supplemented, for example between censuses, by updated but less rigorously obtained information from other sources. Consequently, unexpected or incomplete data or occasional errors or disputes about its analysis can also attract considerable attention.

Gordon Brown, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced on 28 November 2005,[5] that the government intended to publish plans in early 2006 to legislate to render the ONS and the statistics it generates independent of government on a model based on the independence of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England.[6] This was originally a 1997 Labour manifesto commitment[7] and was also the policy of the Liberal Democrat[8] and Conservative[9] parties. Such independence was also sought by the Royal Statistical Society[10] and the Statistics Commission.[11] The National Statistician would be directly accountable to Parliament through a more widely constituted independent governing Statistics Board.[12] The ONS would be a non-ministerial government department so that the staff, including the Director, would remain as civil servants but without being under direct ministerial control.[13] The National Statistician, Dame Karen Dunnell, stated that legislation would help improve public trust in official statistics[14] although the ONS already acts independently according to its own published guidelines, the National Statistics Code of Practice,[15] which sets out the key principles and standards that official statisticians, including those in other parts of the government statistical service, are expected to follow and uphold.

The details of the plans for independence were considered in Parliament during the 2006/2007 session and resulted in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.[16] In July 2007, Sir Michael Scholar was nominated by the government to be the three day-a-week non-executive chairman of the Statistics Board which, to re-establish faith in the integrity of government statistics, will take on statutory responsibility for oversight of UK statistics in April 2008 and oversee the Office for National Statistics. It will also have a duty to assess all UK government statistics. Following Gordon Brown's announcement of new constitutional arrangements for public appointments, Sir Michael also became, on 18 July, the first such nominee to appear before the House of Commons Treasury Committee and to have his nomination subject to confirmation by the House.[17] On 7 February 2008, following the first meeting of the shadow board, it was announced that it will be known as the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA).

The non-executive chairman is Andrew Dilnot CBE. Six other non-executive members were appointed in open competition: Professor Sir Adrian Smith FRS, deputy chairman responsible for governance of the Office for National Statistics, Professor David Rhind CBE FRS FBA, deputy chairman with responsibility for oversight of the UK official statistics system, Dr Colette Bowe, Partha Dasgupta, Dame Moira Gibb CBE, Dr David Levy. The executive members are Jil Matheson (national statistician), Richard Alldritt (head of assessment) and Glen Watson (director general, Office for National Statistics).

Directors are de facto Permanent Secretaries but do not use that title. As the ONS previously incorporated the OPCS, the Director was also the Registrar General for England and Wales, although the recent changes saw the transfer of this function away from the ONS. In addition, he or she is ex officio the Head of the Government Statistical Service. The first Director of ONS was Professor Tim Holt. Subsequent Directors have had an additional title, the National Statistician. The second Director was Len Cook. He was succeeded by Karen Dunnell on 1 September 2005,[18] then Jil Matheson in September 2009. Following the implementation of the Statistics & Registration Service Act, the General Register Office continues to be part of a ministerially accountable department and became a part of the Home Office. The title of Registrar-General moved with it and is no longer held by the National Statistician.

Statisticians are also employed by many other Government departments and agencies, and these statisticians often collect and publish data. They are members of the Government Statistical Service and are the professional responsibility of the head of the service, who is also the National

Statistician. Each department has a statistical service Head of Profession. For example, data on Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry comes primarily from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Along with economic data on which the Treasury and Bank of England rely for decision-making, many of the statistics that receive widespread media attention are issued by the Home Office, the Department of Health, and the Department for Education and Skills. ONS is also responsible for the maintenance of the Inter-Departmental Business Register and the Business Structure Database.[19]

Prior to the establishment of the UK Statistics Authority, the statistical work of ONS, since June 2000, was scrutinized by the Statistics Commission, an independent body with its own chairman and small staff. This ceased to operate from 1 April 2008. The General Register Office and the post of Registrar-General for England & Wales ceased to be part of ONS from that date but remains subject to ministerial accountability within the Home Office.

The London (Pimlico) office was the head office until April 2006 when the corporate headquarters was moved to Newport[24] following the Lyons Review[25] on public sector relocation. Since May 2011 the London office has been located on the 2nd floor of the former Drummond Gate headquarters and houses the methodology consultancy service, the virtual microdata laboratory and media briefings.[26]

The ONS asserts that recruitment and training of quality staff in South Wales, where data collection and analysis already takes place, will ensure that there is no risk to the quality of its services and that it is managing the risks associated with the changes which it is implementing in a planned and gradual way.[27] However the plan to discontinue all remaining statistical activity in London is proving controversial amid claims that the shift of functions from London and the impending closure of the London office could have serious implications for the future of certain particular sets of statistics. These include health statistics, National Accounts, Retail and Consumer Prices and Labour Market Statistics. These risks derive from the fact that few of the experienced staff working in these highly technical areas are expected to be willing to relocate to Newport, resulting in a substantial loss of expertise and a consequent threat to the continued quality of the statistics.[28] In a submission to the Parliamentary Treasury Sub Committee, the Bank of England too has expressed concern over the relocation of the ONS to Newport, saying, that "the relocation programme poses serious risks to the maintenance of the quality of macroeconomic data. If substantial numbers of ONS staff are unwilling to relocate, the loss of skilled individuals could have a severe impact on a range of statistics." [29][30] The director of ONS has vigorously defended ONS implementation of government policy on civil service relocation and the decision to concentrate staff in the three locations outside London.[31]

Occasional errors and revisions account for some past criticism[citation needed], while the allocation of Private Finance Initiative expenditure (albeit following OECD and international statistical guidelines according to who carries the risk) has attracted political attention[vague]. Many of the most controversial topics for statistics issued by government do not come from the ONS though they are expected to meet National Statistics standards. Crime statistics, and other data (e.g. health and education) that could be deemed to assess the effectiveness of government policies, often attract media scepticism. The compulsory nature of the census (unlike most other surveys by academics and market researchers) differentiates the ONS from other data collectors (apart from HM Revenue and Customs).

The Office for National Statistics won the 2004 Big Brother Award for the "Most Heinous Government Organisation" from the campaigning organisation Privacy International for its Citizen Information Project. The project is one of several that lead the Information Commissioner to warn that there is a danger of the country "sleepwalking" into a surveillance society.[32]

There has also been criticism[by whom?] of the ONS and of the government for its pursuit of government policies for modernisation and for relocation to sites outside London. It will[when?] perform most of its functions from the two sites in Newport and Titchfield while reducing its London operation to one small location.

In December 2012 the organisation's new website to provide statistics to the public was described as "a disaster" by Members of Parliament on the Public Administration Committee. The chair of the UK Statistics Authority said that significant improvements to the website were being made, but admitted that its state at the time made it "difficult to use, difficult to navigate and difficult to search".[34]

Members of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Maori communities are advised that this catalogue contains names and images of deceased people. All users of the catalogue should also be aware that certain words, terms or descriptions may be culturally sensitive and may be considered inappropriate today, but may have reflected the author's/creator's attitude or that of the period in which they were written.

This publication provides details of the overseas trade in goods statistics (OTS) of the United Kingdom (UK) which are published as National Statistics by HM Revenue and Customs. The OTS are a detailed dataset covering the UK's trade in goods at a disaggregated country and product level. These are published separately for Non-EU and EU trade and provide access to both aggregated and detailed data for over 9,000 commodities and 250 partner countries.

Contains cost indices (purchase of materials and fuels, earnings and National Insurance, general expenses and combined costs) relating to four aerospace and electronics industries. The data are based on the revised Standard Industrial Classification SIC (2007) and are calculated on a base year of 2005=100. The indices are widely used by government and business as an authoritative source of information on inflation, cost adjusting and price variation in trading contracts.

Each of these departments will agree 3 significant exemplar service transformations with Cabinet Office. These will be identified and published in departmental digital strategies in December 2012, alongside delivery plans. Departments will start to redesign these exemplar services by April 2013 and implement them by March 2015.

It is important we do not leave anyone behind in this move to a digital by default approach. Departments will recognise and understand the needs of people who can't use digital services. We will provide appropriate support for these people to use digital services and other ways to access services for people who need them.

"Central Government where possible must become a digital organisation. These days the best service organisations deliver online everything that can be delivered online. This cuts their costs dramatically and allows access to information and services at times and in ways convenient to the users rather than the providers";.

Each government department will prepare and publish its own departmental digital strategy. These documents will explain how departments will make their services digital by default in ways that work for their users. These strategies will be published by the end of 2012, in time to influence departments' 2013/14 planning process. They will set the framework for service transformation over the lifetime of the next spending review.

This strategy is mainly about the services provided by central government departments and associated agencies and arm's length bodies. Some matters covered by the strategy are devolved and reference should be made to the Devolved Administrations for more details as to how this strategy affect their areas.

However, in order to provide public services digitally by default, all public bodies will need to work together. Most public services are provided by local organisations such as local councils and the NHS. People often use a range of services, not just one at a time. Most people and businesses don't differentiate between different levels and types of public services; they just want a good service.

The actions in this strategy are mainly about transactional services such as applications, tax, licensing and payments. The strategy explains how the civil service will develop new skills and approaches to complement its existing expertise. It also includes actions to improve the way the government makes policy and communicates with people.

Digital by default services are more efficient and more convenient for users. Our initial testing comparing GOV.UK to the previous Directgov and Businesslink.gov.uk sites shows a more positive rating on both ease of use (93% compared with 75% before) and speed (80 seconds as opposed to 120 seconds to undertake comparable transactions).

Government will save money if demand for higher cost channels decreases. A 2012 SOCITM study across 120 local councils estimated that the cost of contact for face to face transactions averages £8.62, for phone £2.83, but for web only 15 pence. The Digital Efficiency Report found that the average cost of a central government digital transaction can be almost 20 times lower than the cost of telephone and 50 times lower than face to face.

In 2010 HMRC estimated that around 35% of calls to its contact centres were avoidable at an National Audit Office estimated cost of £75 million a year. Changes have since been made to processes, letters and forms that have reduced the total number of calls and the proportion of avoidable calls to around 26% of the total.

<http://eduln.org/799.pdf>

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