

UK Concordat on Statistics

Introduction

1. This Concordat sets out the agreed framework for co-operation between the UK Government (including the UK Statistics Authority and Office for National Statistics) and devolved administrations, in relation to the production of statistics, for and within the UK, statistical standards and the statistics profession^[1].
2. This Concordat is made between the National Statistician^[2], the Permanent Secretaries to the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Department of Finance (Northern Ireland), the Second Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office, and the Chief Statisticians of the devolved administrations.
3. This document follows the devolution settlements^[3] and is to be read in conjunction with wider agreements on intergovernmental relations between the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.
4. All arrangements will comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics and relevant international standards, including the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, as well as relevant legislation such as the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, and associated Pre-Release Access Orders, and Data Protection Legislation.
5. The Concordat reflects the responsibility of the National Statistician for professional standards for official statistics under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, including for the quality of official statistics, good practice in relation to official statistics, and the comprehensiveness of official statistics.
6. This Concordat supersedes the 2016 Concordat on Statistics which in turn replaced the Inter-Administration Working Agreement on Statistics, and the Concordat on Statistics which formed part of the 2001 MoU.

Purpose of the Concordat

7. Co-operation with respect to statistics, both devolved and 'not devolved'^[4], is essential to ensure that, as far as possible, the UK statistical system meets the statutory and non-statutory needs of the UK Government, devolved administrations, international organisations, fellow analysts and researchers and other users, now and in the future.

8. This Concordat provides the assurance that the UK Government and devolved administrations will continue to work together to reach consensus on how to best meet these needs, producing coherent/comparable statistics at the UK and disaggregated levels, where appropriate; while recognising that the policy context within administrations might not always be identical and that official statistics should reflect local as well as UK user needs.
9. As such it recognises the dual accountabilities held by each of the Chief Statisticians in the devolved administrations: professional accountability to the National Statistician within the context of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007; and their accountability to their relevant legislatures. It also recognises the accountability of the National Statistician, through the UK Statistics Authority, to each of Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd Cymru and the Northern Ireland Assembly under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.
10. Each party is committed to the common interest of promoting the integrity and independence of official statistics and adherence to relevant and internationally recognised professional standards.
11. This Concordat specifies the basis on which the UK statistical system will:
 - identify the needs of the UK Government, devolved administrations, international organisations and other users for UK and disaggregated statistics;
 - prioritise, and reach consensus on the statistics and statistical infrastructure required to meet these needs;
 - through a collaborative programme of work produce coherent/comparable official statistics in a way that represents good value for money;
 - similarly, collaborate to ensure the coherence of statistical infrastructure across UK Government and the devolved administrations to better enable the production of cross-UK data and analysis, where appropriate;
 - influence and contribute to the international reporting of statistics;
 - exchange data and other information, subject to legal restrictions;
 - consult with each other on areas of shared interest; and
 - co-operate on matters relating to professional standards and statistical staff.

Scope

12. The UK Government and devolved administrations engage with each other in regard to statistics in many different policy fora. This engagement will be handled in line with the general principles set out in this Concordat.
13. UK Government Departments and the devolved administrations each have a contribution to make to the provision of statistical advice and information to their own and other administrations, in relation to both devolved and not devolved matters, and to the production of coherent and comparable statistics (at international, UK and other geographic levels). However, this Concordat recognises that the priorities and objectives of each administration may not always be identical and this means that statistical requirements may differ.
14. This Concordat covers:
- any government activity involving the use of data for statistical purposes^[5] where two or more of the administrations have a direct interest as information providers or users;
 - work carried out by producers of official statistics;
 - activity associated with ensuring the maintenance of consistently high professional standards across the administrations in the production, provision and use of statistical information; and
 - the development of administrative sources by public authorities and the use of these, and other sources, in official statistics.
15. It does not cover the use of administrative and other data for non-statistical purposes and does not cover the sharing of information about statistical advice that has been given to policy officials or Ministers^[6].

Areas of Joint Working

Coherence

16. The administrations will work together to deliver an agreed suite of coherent, reliable, consistent and timely statistics about and across the UK to meet, as far as possible, the needs of the UK Government, devolved administrations and other domestic users.
17. The administrations will develop by consensus an annual work plan to jointly and proactively address shared priorities and needs in order to improve the coherence of UK-wide data and statistics. While recognising that the policy context within administrations might not always be identical and that official

statistics should reflect local as well as UK user needs, producers of official statistics across the administrations will look to develop:

- new or existing statistics in such a way that, while meeting the needs of primary users, aids coherence and comparability in the UK as well as internationally; and
- coherent infrastructure, including interoperable platforms, definitions and classifications for the linking and analysis of data, across the UK Government and the devolved administrations to better enable cross-UK data and analysis.

18. Where new statistics are needed, under new and evolving devolution settlements, the statistical producers will consider, as far as appropriate, whether they should produce equivalent statistics where feasible, to a comparable level of quality, subject to there being a demonstrated user need and the necessary resources being available.

19. Producers of official statistics will continue to take opportunities to work together to improve the quality of official statistics and ensure value for money, identifying priorities and sharing expertise/best practice to make best use of available resources.

International standards and obligations

20. As the recognised National Statistics Institute of the UK, the Office for National Statistics will co-ordinate the provision of UK and disaggregated data and statistics to international organisations. The Office for National Statistics will also co-ordinate input into developments in international standards, obligations and requirements, alerting UK Government Departments and devolved administrations to relevant developments as soon as possible.

21. The administrations recognise their shared responsibilities to meet international standards and obligations. Heads of Profession for Statistics in UK Government Departments and the Chief Statisticians in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will work together to ensure these responsibilities are met and to support the development and application of international standards on statistics.

22. This includes ensuring that any required data are made available on time, adhere to relevant international standards for quality, and follow the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

Data sharing

23. The administrations recognise that information they produce or hold (including both identified and aggregated/de-identified data) may be requested for statistical purposes by another administration.
24. Subject to any legal and data protection restrictions and there being demonstrated user need, where requested, administrations will share data and other information with each other for their statistical purposes, promptly, subject to availability and agreements about cost sharing.
25. The administrations will seek to minimise the burden on data providers, to maximise the efficient use of existing data sources and to facilitate efficient and secure data exchange, maintaining a shared level of trust across the UK Statistical System in regard to data access.
26. The UK Government Departments and devolved administrations will work together to ensure that where data are exchanged they are used for statistical/research purposes only, within any limitations on use set out in law and in data sharing agreements, and that the privacy of data providers, individuals and organisations, is safeguarded at all times with data handled in line with government security guidelines; recognising the importance of this for public trust in the UK Statistical System.

Consultation and wider collaboration

27. Administrations will consult each other on areas of shared interest including relevant statistical work plans, data collection and forthcoming publications.
28. Administrations will seek feedback from others in relation to the development of new and existing data collections, particularly when such collections cross administrative boundaries.
29. Where significant changes to, or cessation of, statistical outputs and/or data collections are planned that could affect the comparability or coherence of cross-UK statistics, administrations will seek feedback from others at an early stage.
30. Permission for the ONS to publish devolved statistics is subject to section 20 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. Although not enshrined in legislation, in the spirit of continued co-operation all administrations will adhere to the principle that they do not publish any statistics in relation to the functions of another administration without seeking consent and ensuring sufficient time is given for quality assurance and, if appropriate, pre-release access.
31. Official statistics will continue to be produced within the existing framework for UK official statistics, following the Code of Practice for Statistics and other

common standards such as the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

32. The four administrations will work together to contribute to the UK Statistics Authority objectives as set out in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

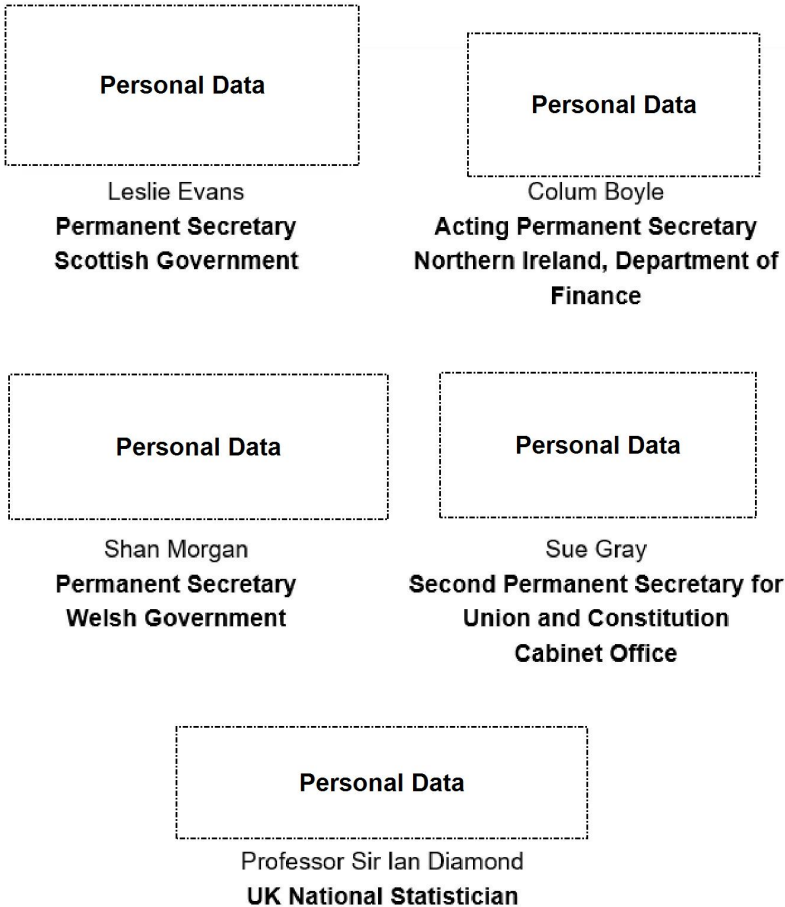
Professional standards and statistical staff

33. The administrations will work together on issues affecting the statistics profession, and producers of official statistics across the UK.
34. The Office for National Statistics, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and, where relevant, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, will work together on the development of Government Statistical Service and Analysis Function staff, including to minimise barriers to movement and learning across administrations.

Implementation and review

35. The good working of the Concordat will be overseen by the Inter-Administration Committee (IAC) which promotes coherence across the administrations of the UK and resolves inter-administration issues at a strategic level. The IAC is chaired by the National Statistician and its membership includes the Chief Statisticians and Registrar Generals from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
36. The Concordat is not intended to constitute a legally enforceable contract or create any rights or obligations that are legally enforceable.
37. The Concordat will be formally reviewed after one year by the National Statistician and Chief Statisticians from the devolved administrations, and thereafter every five years – although a formal review can be held at any time at the request of any of these individuals.
38. The views of the National Statistician and all three Chief Statisticians must be sought on any proposed changes to the Concordat.
39. Where required, more specific arrangements will be contained within bilateral concordats between UK Government Departments (including the Office for National Statistics) and devolved administrations, or in other agreements such as Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Data Sharing Agreements. Additional SLAs are only required if they add value to the principles contained in this Concordat, for example where the data are required to meet specific commitments/supply dates. Such additional agreements must be consistent with this Concordat and are subject to the agreement of relevant parties.

40. If issues in relation to statistical matters across the UK statistical system cannot be resolved by those directly involved, the National Statistician will attempt to broker agreement. In the unusual circumstance that agreement cannot be reached, the National Statistician will raise issues with the relevant UK Government Department(s) and/or devolved administration(s) and then via the intergovernmental dispute avoidance and resolution process if necessary.



- [1] The UK statistical system covers all producers of official statistics within the UK.
- [2] Head of the Government Statistical Service and the Analysis Function and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority/Office for National Statistics.
- [3] The key legislation for the purposes of the devolution settlements is the Scotland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the 1998 and 2006 Government of Wales Acts, each as amended from time to time, and any superseding acts.
- [4] Definitions of devolved statistics are set out in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 for the purposes of the Act.
- [5] Including data obtained from administrative, survey and other sources.
- [6] Although administrations may agree to share this information.