

# STATISTICS COMMISSION OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY POLICY STATEMENT

## Introduction

1. As set out in the *Framework for National Statistics*, published in June 2000, the Statistics Commission has a duty to conduct its operations in a transparent and open way. Section 4.2 of the framework says:
  - (i) 4.2.1 - '(The Commission) will operate in a transparent way with the minutes of its meetings, correspondence and evidence it receives, and advice it gives, all normally being publicly available for scrutiny';
  - (ii) 4.2.3 - 'Its advice will be made available to the wider public';
  - (iii) 4.2.5 - 'It will operate in a transparent and open way - making its operations publicly available for scrutiny.'

## The Commission's approach

2. The Commission has a policy of openness and transparency and publishes information on its website including papers for and minutes of Commission meetings; research and other reports commissioned by the Commission; Commission's operational policies; and correspondence with users and other stakeholders.

## The Freedom of Information Act 2000

3. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000. It gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. The general right of access to the information held by a public authority is provided for under section 1 of the Act. Any person wishing to exercise this right, which will come into force on 1 January 2005, will have to make a written request to the public authority. Any person who makes such a request must be informed whether the public authority holds that information and, subject to exemptions, supplied with that information.

## Publication Scheme

4. Under section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 the Statistics Commission is required to adopt and maintain a publication scheme specifying the classes of information it publishes or intends to publish; the manner in which each class is, or will be, published; and whether the information is available free of charge. An electronic copy of this publication scheme is available on the Statistics Commission website at [www.statscom.org.uk/](http://www.statscom.org.uk/).
5. The classes of information which the Commission undertakes to publish under this publication scheme are as follows:

Agendas, minutes and papers for Commission meetings;  
Research and other reports commissioned or written by the Commission, including reports to Ministers;

Operational policies;  
Correspondence by letter;  
Details of Commissioners and staff;  
Press releases.

For further details please see the publication scheme.

### **Access arrangements**

6. The first two categories above are likely to be of interest to a range of stakeholders and will be placed on the Commission's website [www.statscom.org.uk](http://www.statscom.org.uk). In the case of papers for Commission meetings these will be placed on the website with the minutes, normally within one week of the meeting for which they have been prepared. Reports to ministers etc will normally be placed on the website within one working day of being issued.
7. Documents relating to operational policies are likely to have been included in papers for Commission meetings, whether for agreement, or in the case of internal management documents, for information. However it may be appropriate to index some of them separately on the website for easier reference. This will be considered on a case by case basis initially.
8. Routine correspondence is less likely to be of general interest and so will usually be made available on request. However, any correspondence which seem likely to be of wider interest will be placed on the website. A balance will be sought between comprehensive coverage and ensuring that the website is easy to navigate and allows easy practical as well as theoretical access for all stakeholders.
9. Statistics Commission policy is to be open and helpful. Until the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in January 2005 the Commission will continue to follow the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. In responding to reasonable requests for information the Commission will release information except where disclosure would not be in the public interest. From January 2005 the Commission will be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and will comply with requests for information which it holds unless an exemption from disclosure applies.

### **Pre-Publication consultation**

10. As with most organisations, the Commission will not normally release its reports or papers in draft form, whilst the report or paper is still being prepared or discussed internally. However, the Commission may show its draft reports to interested parties to ensure factual accuracy. Where it does so, it will expect the draft report to be treated in confidence and not disclosed by the recipient organisation before or after publication.

Secretariat  
Statistics Commission  
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