

PRESS RELEASE

Statistics Commission

11-19 Artillery Row
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10 July 2005

COMMISSION WELCOMES PLANS FOR LEGISLATION BUT HIGHLIGHTS REQUIREMENTS

The Statistics Commission today publishes its annual report for 2005-06. Introducing the report, Commission chairman Professor David Rhind said: "The Chancellor's announcement last year of plans for a statutory framework for official statistics, and the more recent Government proposals for legislation, were the key events of the year and build on earlier work by the Commission. The Commission welcomes the commitment to legislation but has stressed that the responsibilities, accountability and constitution of the proposed Board will be crucial to achieving greater public trust in official statistics."

The Commission believes that:

- the new arrangements must relate to **all official statistics**. Many of the most sensitive are produced by policy departments and are based on administrative data
- a **statutory Code of Practice** is needed to define the practices which government departments and other relevant bodies are expected to follow
- **funding and planning arrangements** will need to be more transparent than currently – and auditable in relation to their adequacy to meet agreed plans
- there needs to be an **end to the practice whereby Ministers have earlier access** to statistical reports than other interested parties

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- all statistical series should be published with a **frank commentary written in plain English** on the reliability of the statistics and any limitations in relation to their potential uses. Ministerial comment on the figures should normally be released only after the statistical statement is published.

Professor Rhind concluded: "During the Treasury consultation, the value of the independent Commission's role has been highlighted by many contributors. We are seeking to ensure that this is not lost or diluted under the new arrangements although we have accepted that the Commission in its present form will need to be replaced under a statutory framework."

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Statistics Commission was set up in June 2000 to advise on the quality, quality assurance and priority setting for official statistics, and on the procedures designed to deliver statistical integrity, to help ensure official statistics are trustworthy and responsive to public needs. It is independent both of Ministers and of the producers of official statistics. More information about the Commission's role and work is on its website www.statscom.org.uk.
2. The Commission's *Annual Report 2005-2006* was laid before Parliament on 10 July and is available on the Commission's website at: http://www.statscom.org.uk/media_pdfs/annuals/Annual_Report_2005-06.pdf
3. During the year we published reports on: perceptions of the Statistics Commission, revisions to public sector finances, user perspectives on school education statistics, quality management of official statistics, the impact of EU statistical requirements on the UK and statistical aspects of PSA targets. A review of crime statistics, following our interim report, will be published this September.
4. The report also lists other issues that the Commission investigated and looks forward to our plans for 2006-07.
5. Contact numbers:
 - a. for further information: Richard Alldritt, chief executive, 020 7273 8008
 - b. printed copies of the report are available from Emmy Mulla, team secretary, 020 7273 8004.

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