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**Topic (iii): Improving the respondent experience**

**IMPROVING THE RESPONDENT EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**Working Paper**

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**I. Introduction**

1. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (launched in 2010) outlined that our stakeholders are 'individuals or groups who depend on ONS to fulfil their own goals and on who, in turn, ONS depends. They have an effect on, or 'stake in', what ONS does and how well it does it.' As the people, businesses and organizations who take part in our surveys, respondents were identified as one of the six key stakeholder groups. In preparation for increasing our focus on respondents, we have an established organizational structure for considering respondent issues. See Annex A.
2. ONS takes its relationship with respondents seriously and is committed to minimising the impact of its business surveys on them. The ONS Survey Charter and United Kingdom Statistics Authority(UKSA) Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which are public documents, outlines ONS's commitment and responsibilities to those who take part in our surveys. To support the increased focus on respondents, ONS also developed and published a Respondent Charter for both business and social surveys. The aim of this Charter is to help respondents understand why their participation is important and what they can expect from us. It explains how we will keep their information secure and confidential, value their time by making it as easy as possible to contribute to our surveys and improve our communication with them, as well as listening and acting upon their views.
3. There is an ever increasing need to improve our respondents' experience when dealing with ONS. The demands of the economic climate mean that our respondents are under pressure and are becoming more challenging when we request they supply their information to us. If we do not champion initiatives to improve the respondent experience whilst balancing the needs of customers and users, what might happen? There is a risk that we lose the goodwill of respondents with subsequent reductions in response rates and the quality of our outputs; that we experience an almost certain increase in the resources required for failure demand activities (such as reminders, response chasing and enforcement) and that ONS' reputation as a professional organization is severely damaged within the business and wider community.

4. Historically, respondents have not enjoyed as high a profile in ONS as is the case with customers or users, yet survey respondent cooperation is a crucial element of producing good quality ONS outputs. Minimising burden and communicating effectively are paramount to maintaining this cooperation as respondents can feel 'there is nothing in it for them' when completing our requests for information. Therefore it is imperative that respondents understand how important it is for them to supply their information to ONS, and trust us to be fair and maintain the security of their data from the outset.

## II. Key Principles

5. Most ONS business surveys are conducted under the Statistics of Trade Act 1947, which places a legal obligation on respondents to supply data. With the key factors mentioned above in mind, we developed a strategy for business survey respondents that is designed to put our respondents first and helps them to understand why their participation in our business surveys is important. Three key principles were identified:

- *Principle 1:*

Provide more choice. It is important that we recognise that the respondents' time is valuable and that they are able to respond to ONS surveys by a mode that is convenient, available, cost effective and enables timely contribution. Our strategy sets out that we will seek to utilise additional modes of data collection to maximise respondent choice and enable timely response;

- *Principle 2:*

Minimise impact. ONS is committed to ensure that the burden they are placing on respondents is minimised. We will aim to minimise the cost to the respondent through fair and equitable sampling frames in order to minimise compliance burden and design and timetable our surveys to make them as easy as possible to respond to;

- *Principle 3:*

Improve how we communicate with respondents. Through effective respondent engagement ONS needs to ensure the business community understand what we do and create a more positive public image, enhancing our respondent relations and improving our reputation within the business community. Our aim is to improve respondent engagement through effective and timely communication.

6. We recognise that the current economic climate means that respondents are under increasing pressures and that our requests for information can sometimes be seen as an additional burden. We need to balance their needs with the importance of measuring the economy so that the Government can prioritise investment and policy making.
7. Across ONS we have been reviewing our work with the aim of making it as easy as possible for business survey respondents to comply with their legal obligations to respond to our business surveys. We have developed initiatives to help improve communication, including feedback from respondents, in order to improve our levels of customer service, our collection processes and our understanding of their needs.
8. The ONS is exploring ways to improve their data supplier focus and the content of this paper is intended to share the practical approach we have taken, promote discussion and to explore ways in which we can improve our interaction with respondents.

## III. Principles in More Detail

### A. Principle 1 - Providing more choice for respondents

9. ONS currently offer paper, fax, telephone, Telephone Data Entry (TDE) and Secure Electronic File Transfer (SEFT).
10. There is a major project underway in ONS taking forward Electronic Data Collection, responsible for developing internet collection, administrative data feeds and e-technology. The project is currently focusing on a new SEFT portal, secure messaging and developing e-questionnaires.
11. ONS already offer TDE as a collection mode for most of their short term surveys with a maximum of 9 variables as either an option or, where reduced costs are a factor, as default mode. It is also offered as an option for nil returns for Capital Expenditure survey (Capex) and some Prices surveys where the number of items allow. This system is available 24/7 offering respondents a flexible mode of response to suit their working practices. Where TDE is used this has generally improved the timeliness of returns.
12. We have maximised the functionality of TDE by offering all surveys with single page reminders a TDE facility for ordering duplicate questionnaires. This has reduced the number of incoming calls to the Respondent Relations Teams (RRT) following large survey reminder despatches by directing respondents to the TDE system to order their duplicate questionnaires electronically. We have also improved TDE dialogues for surveys to promote take up.

## **B. Principle 2 - Minimising impact on respondents**

13. Generally, when speaking of minimising impact on our respondents we think about sampling and how many surveys and questionnaires a respondent receives.
14. Emerging feedback themes highlighted cases where respondents were complaining about the number of surveys they were receiving. In line with the Survey Charter which states that we will regularly review our processes, ONS has initiated a review of their sampling processes which is being taken forward as a Lean Six-Sigma project. This project will quality assure our processes as well as investigate whether other initiatives, such as ‘Osmotherly’ – a guarantee we offer to respondents with fewer than 10 employees that if they complete the survey for which they are selected for the required length of time, they will not be selected for another survey for three years – could be extended for those businesses with fewer than 19 employees. Other considerations could be sampling on a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) basis as with our Business Register Employment Survey (BRES) which is designed to minimise the impact on businesses with many part timers and whether a ceiling level should be applied to the number of surveys a business is requested to participate in.
15. There are other ways that we can minimise this impact by using the right communication at the right time. We are reviewing our timetabled communication to ensure it is sent at the right time for respondents to return their data. At certain times of the year, and for those surveys with a tight timetable (e.g. Retail Sales Inquiry – RSI), respondents are often contacted several times during a round to obtain their data. This can cause deterioration in the relationship management.
16. Many respondents who have few administrative staff have told us it would be helpful if they knew when to expect our surveys as they need to organize their time to ensure they have appropriate staff available. As a result, ONS are developing survey calendars, which will be available on our website, this will provide the respondent with information on when to expect the surveys and when their data are expected to be supplied by.

## **C. Principle 3 - Improving how we communicate with respondents**

17. Communication is one of the central elements for maximising the quality and utility of statistics. From a survey perspective communication is essential so respondents understand why their data are being requested and how it will be used i.e. what statistics will be produced from their data. There has been much work among National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) to reduce response burden and increase respondent motivation across business surveys in recent years, and effective respondent communication has been shown to be one way to do this.

18. For business survey respondents, survey communication is often associated with the level of attention that they give to the survey request and ultimately the quality of data they provide. In turn this will impact on the quality of the derived statistics and respondents perceptions of burden.
19. Most visible to respondents are the written communications which accompany a questionnaire and introduce the survey. The extent to which these communications state clearly what is expected of the respondent, and where to turn to for any questions can impact the time and effort needed to respond.
20. Written communications occur at three crucial points for each ONS business questionnaire; the newly selected respondent information flyer, questionnaire front pages and questionnaire reminder mail outs. An initial respondent consultation exercise with respondents revealed that they were largely unaware of how their data are used, who by and for what purpose. It is hoped that by improving the written communications ONS could reduce the number of unnecessary phone calls made to the RRT helplines, reduce the amount of response chasing that is required through reminders, phone calls and the Enforcement Team (therefore increasing response rates and data quality), and reduce respondent burden, and in doing so improve respondent experience.

#### **IV. Respondent Communication Project**

21. ONS communicates with respondents in a variety of ways and need to ensure the business community understand what we do and what we expect of those taking part in our surveys. Respondents also need to understand what they can expect from us in order to create a more positive public image and enhance our reputation within the business community.
22. With this in mind ONS embarked on a Respondent Communication Project in 2012, which fits within the wider programme of work to improve the respondent experience,
23. The aims and objectives of this project were to:
  - standardise the written communications across ONS business surveys as far as possible (making communications consistent promotes a better corporate image and improves overall credibility of ONS and its surveys);
  - reduce the number of unnecessary incoming calls received by Respondent Relations Team (RRT), by providing an optimal level of information on the written communications); and
  - reduce the amount of response chasing that is required (by making the information more concise and improving comprehension it is hoped that respondent burden can be reduced, respondent experience improved, response rates both increased and obtained in a more timely fashion).
24. Working with Data Capture Methodology (DCM) experts, the project reviewed current communication with respondents, to improve the layout of front pages, survey reminders and information flyers for newly selected businesses, despatched with the questionnaire, in terms of content and consistency. This revealed a wide variation in content and style, level of detail and definitions used across our business surveys.
25. Research findings and case studies from other National Statistics Institutions were then used to inform key recommendations for change, which were tested on a small selection of different sized businesses to identify what they found useful/not useful, including:
  - (i) providing respondents with an explanation of who ONS is
  - (ii) providing respondents with information on the use of the statistical output produced from their data

- (iii) providing respondents with a link to the page where the relevant outputs are published (as a form of positive feedback)
  - (iv) making the information on survey return date and compliance more visible
  - (v) simplifying the return details and contact information
  - (vi) improving the content, structure and access to the respondent web pages
  - (vii) ensuring that respondents are made aware of changes to the questionnaire
26. Several work streams have been undertaken, including exploring development of survey calendars to reduce perceived respondent burden.

## V. Initiatives/Work streams

### A. Initiative 1 - New front page for business survey questionnaires

#### 1. Issue

27. Respondent feedback identified that branding and the format of the front page of most statutory ONS business survey questionnaires was an issue for many respondents. They
- did not recognise ONS as an authentic organization
  - were confused and worried that ONS business surveys they were receiving may be a scam as there was inconsistent format of the communication
  - did not recognise they were legally obliged to complete the survey and often ignored or discarded the original questionnaire
  - immediately telephoned the RRT as other options available were 'hidden' within text e.g. freephone telephone data entry lines to request duplicate questionnaires
  - could not identify what their data would be used for and the purpose of the survey.

#### 2. What we did

##### 28. We

- reviewed the content and format of the front page of our business survey questionnaires in conjunction with DCM
- researched the use of colour in addition to the black and red highlight currently used
- collaborated with our survey managers to establish a comprehensive paragraph explaining the purpose of each survey
- stated, as the opening sentence of the questionnaire, the legislation the survey is conducted under and pointed out that a response is legally required
- extracted all relevant contact information within the questionnaire and created a specific 'contact' box, where possible identifying the telephone number for the RRT as the final number in the list
- incorporated the ONS website url at the end of the survey specific paragraph indicating that the survey output can be found there

- cognitively tested the revised front page with a selection of business survey respondents of various sizes to obtain feedback on the proposed format
- set out the descriptive text in 'letter format' which was the preferred option
- created a generic template for use across all surveys (as far as possible) to establish consistency and a recognised 'brand' of communication for ONS business surveys
- rolled out the new front page on key surveys
- evaluated the success of the new front page by monitoring the levels of response and the rate at which it was received
- incorporated the agreed changes into reminders.

### **3. What we found**

29. Although response rates seemed to have increased, the statistics for response rates and other metrics are quite volatile and subject to compounding factors (such as the rotation of businesses within survey samples). Consequently, they are not necessarily robust enough to be used as a sole measure of success for any of the respondent communication initiative but importantly, they do indicate that the changes have not had any detrimental impact on response rates. Encouragingly, we also experienced a general decrease in the volume of incoming calls to the RRT seeking advice on who ONS is and the purpose of the survey.
30. On the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) year on year (2011/2012) there was evidence of a 1% drop in calls in relation to the number of reminders issued (from 9% to 8%) i.e. 2011 = 2742 calls (29359 reminders sent), 2012 = 2396 calls (30262 reminders sent). Also there was a 13% decrease (346 calls) in the overall number of calls received despite an additional 903 reminders being sent in 2012.
31. 'One size does not fit all' - some ONS business surveys do not lend themselves entirely to a generic template e.g. those that are conducted in conjunction with other government departments or have additional/different contact details. On these surveys we are aiming to retain as much of the generic version of the template as possible, particularly with regard to maintaining appearance and establishing the 'ONS brand'.

### **4. Current position**

32. We are now introducing the new front page and reminder across all appropriate ONS business surveys in a phased programme, continuing to evaluate the impact on response levels, rate of response and type of feedback being recorded.

## **B. Initiative 2 - Information flyer for newly sampled business survey respondents**

### **1. Issue**

33. Feedback collected identified that ONS received a significant volume of telephone calls from businesses when they were initially sampled for an ONS business survey seeking further information. They raised questions such as who was ONS, what was the purpose of the survey, how had the business been selected, why had the business had been selected, did they have to complete the survey etc. These calls, by volume alone, were proving extremely resource intensive. Although ONS did send information to these businesses, feedback suggested it did not answer the key questions.

### **2. What we did**

34. We

- analysed the recorded respondent feedback to identify the key issues
- discussed with DCM the proposed layout and appearance of the flyer
- changed the format of the flyer from portrait to landscape
- collaborated with each Survey Output Manager to identify the users of their data
- utilised the survey specific information obtained for the new questionnaire front page, and the 'user' information to create a specific 'survey information' section under column 2
- considered the possibility of creating a tri-fold leaflet (our future aim is to produce a stand-alone 'marketing' and information leaflet)
- created a generic template for the flyer consisting of three columns - columns 1 and 3 containing standard information on selection and a series of frequently asked questions; column 2 will change depending on each survey to contain specific information about the purpose of the survey and identify the users of the data
- cognitively tested the content and appearance of the flyer with newly sampled businesses prior to despatch.
- evaluated the success of the new flyer by monitoring the levels of response from newly sampled businesses, the rate at which response was received and the volume of incoming calls.

### **3. What we found**

35. Initially, we rolled out the 'newly sampled' flyer concurrently with the newly designed questionnaire front page on the Monthly Construction Survey. Although there was a positive impact on response rates/receiving data in a more timely manner we were unable to determine whether the increases were as a direct consequence of either initiative.
36. However evidence in relation to the Annual Business Survey, where we issued only the flyer, showed the number of response chasing calls reduced year on year as it was not necessary to contact newly sampled businesses in May as was previous practice due to response levels being at an acceptable level. In addition, there was an overall increase year on year in newly selected response between the period before response chasing started to results in August i.e. 18% in 2010 to 20% in 2011. There was also a noticeable overall decrease in incoming calls year on year on this survey.

### **4. Current position**

37. We are now introducing the newly sampled businesses flyer across all appropriate ONS business surveys in a phased programme, continuing to evaluate the impact on response levels, the rate of response and the type of feedback being raised.
38. In the future we propose investigating the feasibility and cost of introducing a 'marketing and information' flyer which includes information about ONS as well as a particular survey that respondents can read in isolation at their leisure.
39. We will also be considering other ways of promoting ONS using this flyer by distributing it to Trade Associations and other business federations for circulation to members.

## **C. Initiative 3 - Respondent Web Pages**

### **1. Issue**

40. Conscious of the need to take advantage of engaging with respondents using all means of communication, in 2012, ONS developed respondent information pages on our website aimed at those businesses sampled for our surveys. The aim is to improve the respondent experience of ONS by providing a comprehensive source of information.
41. Qualitative analysis of the Respondent Feedback Database (RFD) has enabled better alignment of the type of questions raised by respondents, when creating these pages.

## **2. What we did**

### **42. We**

- created a respondent landing page which can be accessed on the ONS website home page via a button ‘Taking part in a survey?’
- developed pages including: ‘Has your business been asked to take part in a survey?, General Information about ONS business surveys and a Respondent Charter for business surveys
- created a template of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) based on questions raised by respondents during conversations with RRT staff and recorded feedback themes
- utilised the survey specific information already collated for the newly designed questionnaire front page and created an A-Z of ONS business surveys incorporating information about the purpose of the survey with links to the associated output. We also introduced very basic information giving an indication of the time of despatch of survey questionnaires, reminders and their return date
- provided a mechanism for respondents to provide feedback to ONS via the website where they can email directly to the Respondent Feedback Team (RFT) on BDD Respondent Feedback Team@ons.gov.uk
- created a database directly linked to the RFT e-mail address to store only respondent communication via the Web to allow us to evaluate and monitor such communication
- introduced a shorter url for the respondent pages and incorporated it into the newly sampled businesses flyer and questionnaire front page
- collaborated with the Web metrics team to identify what information we can glean about hits/views of the respondent web pages.

## **3. What we found**

43. These pages went live in August 2012. Visits to the respondent web pages increased significantly between September and October. However, feedback indicated that the pages are difficult to locate. Information from the Web metrics team for Quarter 1 of 2013 showed a steady increase in views across the survey pages, nearly 25% overall. Some of this increase can be accounted for by the overall 12% increase in traffic to the website. “Information for Survey Respondents” ranked at third place. Almost 50% of the total views are accounted for by views of the main survey page and the search page. The top 20 “next pages visited” include pages that allow the user to search by a particular theme or publication suggesting they may be having difficulty finding what they require.
44. The Web metrics team are also able to identify organizations using the respondent pages e.g. universities, local authorities, media stations which respondents find more interesting than repeatedly being told the data is used by government. They are also able to identify the top referral sites to the ONS website e.g. google.com, google.co.uk, bing.com which is an indication of how businesses navigate to the website rather than by its www. address.

45. As the newly sampled flyer/questionnaire front pages are rolled out we are experiencing a manageable increase in communication to the RFT via the web.
46. The focus of incoming calls to RRT is changing from respondents asking 'who is ONS' and 'how/why their business has been selected' to questioning and challenging the time in survey, the number of surveys they are selected for and the tight deadlines for returning data.

#### **4. Current position**

47. We are continuing to pursue establishing a specific Respondent tab on the ONS website and creating a link on each statistical output page to the respondent page/s.
48. We are also continuing to monitor information received from the Web metrics team on the respondent pages and the volume of communication received via the e-mail link.

### **D. Initiative 4 - Create a 'Podcast' for social media**

#### **1. Issue**

49. Respondent feedback has identified that many smaller businesses are unaware of ONS, the purpose of completing its' business surveys and how their data feeds into the statistics being produced. A podcast could be another way to reach those respondents.

#### **2. What we did**

50. We

- used respondent feedback and staff experience to identify the key questions from smaller businesses
- collaborated with ONS's Digital Publishing Team (DPT) on the duration, content, filming and format of a Podcast
- enlisted RRT staff to 'play the part' of business respondents in selected industries where there are predominantly smaller businesses, e.g. construction, retail, catering.

#### **3. What we found**

51. From experience, the DPT advised that a 3 minute podcast was likely to be most successful at maintaining interest.
52. We gained permission from the ONS Site Management Team to use areas on site for the filming such as the shop, canteen and agreed times for filming to minimise disruption. By using the ONS DPT and site meant there were no cost or copyright implications.
53. Utilising staff in the process ensured messages were conveyed in the correct context and engaging them in 'role play' helped maintain enthusiasm and commitment to the project. It also benefitted when filming as the DPT could negotiate access to locations and staff whenever necessary.

#### **4. Current position**

54. We are now in a position to release the Podcast on the respondent pages of the ONS website, YouTube and Twitter in the near future.

### **E. Other current initiatives**

- Use of email for response chasing. Respondent feedback indicated that smaller construction businesses were rarely in the office during the day and it is not always convenient to contact them

on mobiles. We piloted the use of email for response chasing on the monthly Construction Survey. A total of 300 e-mails were sent to businesses of various sizes. 30% of businesses returned data. A further 11% acknowledged the e-mail and advised as to when the data would be returned/why the data would not be returned by the deadline. The pilot is currently being rolled out across other surveys.

- Call quality assessments. It is important our staff provide the best service to respondents when receiving their calls. As well as a mechanism for collecting management information on the volume of incoming/outgoing calls conducted by the RRT, the telephony system also allows recording of telephone conversations. We have established a programme to assess the quality of these conversations to ensure respondents are receiving good customer service. Managers listen to conversations conducted by their team, and staff can listen to their own calls, allowing them to identify a particularly good or difficult conversation. The examples are then discussed on a one-to-one basis allowing managers to give positive feedback and/or discuss an individual's potential training/coaching needs.
- Scripts to answer 'Showstopper' questions In the current economic climate businesses are asking more probing questions e.g. what is ONS doing to reduce government red tape?, micro businesses are asking 'how do statistics benefit me?'. Staff often, through the call quality assessments, identify a challenging question so that an optimum response can be developed and shared through 'Showstoppers' scripts containing a series of factual bullet points/phrases.
- Coaching for difficult conversations. Following on from the 'Showstoppers', coaching sessions are set up whereby staff listen in a group to a particular series of conversations and the responses. They discuss what went well, what did not go well, what improvements could have been made, how could/should the question have been answered?. The aim of these sessions is for staff to share experiences and learn from each other. The initiative will also help maintain a quality customer service for respondents and thus ONS's reputation, as well as nurture and build confidence of our staff.
- The Improved Data Flow Project reviewed where first time resolution has not been possible with either data validation or respondent issues. The recommendations from this are concentrated on providing a 'one stop shop' for respondents. Queries relating to questionnaires and data given over the telephone will be dealt with and validated at source. The benefits of this will be reduced respondent burden and improved timeliness of data delivery to customers.

## F. Possible future initiatives

- Create visual imagery on the Web pages to help smaller businesses understand how their data feeds into the economic statistics ONS produces and eventually Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Develop comprehensive survey calendars. Although we currently identify approximate despatch dates for our survey questionnaires and return dates, we are looking at developing more comprehensive survey calendars. Our future aim is to consider the concept of an interactive tool on the Web e.g. data viz to create a tool in Flash or SVG that would enable a business to assemble its own survey timetable by selecting from the A-Z those surveys it receives.
- Establish an optimum time for despatching and returning questionnaires i.e. review questionnaire and reminder despatch dates to help reduce the impact on businesses. Many businesses complain that they do not have the data requested by the date ONS requires it as they have not yet completed their monthly/quarterly accounts. In some circumstances this results in the business also receiving a reminder which they consider puts them under undue pressure. Extending the deadline or despatching the questionnaires at a more appropriate date may increase response and improve the quality of data.

- Issue reminders to only those sectors where we are struggling to hit the required response to provide quality data. This would reduce both cost to ONS and reduce any unnecessary pressure on respondents.
- Develop strategies focussing on improving the quality of service to newly sampled businesses that have not responded to our survey e.g. courtesy calls to establish the reason behind non-response and educate them on the importance of their contribution.
- Review communication to take account of the audience i.e. many survey samples are now predominantly micro businesses rather than larger, corporate businesses. Should we tailor our communication accordingly e.g. issue different versions of our questionnaires depending on the recipient?
- Broaden our engagement with external stakeholders such as trade associations and invite businesses to participate in 'business breakfasts' providing them with an opportunity to discuss any concerns/issues face to face with the organization.
- Consider single Account Managers - our Business Profiling Team in our Register section already engage with larger businesses with established contacts on a one-to-one basis to ensure accuracy, consistency and continuity of their reporting structure. We could consider establishing single account managers for key businesses to deal with any concerns they may have regarding survey selection, provision of data and data validation. The aim would be to forge reliable, practical and effective relationships with significant data suppliers.
- Review Enforcement Strategy and Communication. Although most ONS business surveys are conducted under the Statistics of Trade Act 1947, ONS aims to encourage response and uphold its statutory powers as a last resort. In order to ensure ONS complies with the principles of fairness outlined in the UKSA Code of Practice of Official Statistics, the enforcement strategy needs to be reviewed. Alongside this we aim to review the content of the enforcement communication and assess its success.

## **VI. Conclusion**

55. Much of ONS' effort to date has been from a pragmatic and practical perspective and at relatively low cost. We recognise there is much more to do in aiming to improve the respondent experience.
56. When researching initiatives we came across the BLUE-Enterprise and Trade Statistics Project in which D. Giesen (2010) from Statistics Netherlands outlined several communication practices used within NSIs which have the potential to reduce response burden.
  - (i) The availability of a help desk for respondents
  - (ii) Having a website with help for respondents
  - (iii) Providing a survey calendar that gives respondents an overview of which surveys to expect
  - (iv) Management of contacts with large businesses by a single account manager
  - (v) Providing information on the concrete use of statistical output
  - (vi) Offering personalised statistical feedback for respondents.
57. It was very encouraging to discover that ONS has already established good practice in 5 of the 6 key areas identified. However, we recognise there is much more to do.

58. Further research has identified that other NSIs seem to be facing similar issues with regard to survey communication to reduce response burden and increase motivation amongst business respondents. We have communicated with Statistics New Zealand who are developing a similar strategy aimed at Improving the Respondent Experience. Although there has been significant development in terms of best practice for communicating with businesses, NSIs are still asking questions like "What works?", What really motivates businesses to complete NSI surveys?, and What would reduce perceived and actual burden? This poses a need for continued international collaboration and work sharing, in which ONS is keen to be actively involved.

## **Annex A: How we are organized and how we have prepared for increased respondent focus**

### **ONS Respondent Board**

An internal reorganization meant that all business survey processes from data capture to output and publications are contained within one directorate. In order to progress the Respondent agenda we have created a high level Respondent Board whose remit includes overarching responsibility for compliance planning, robust change control monitoring as well as prioritising respondent initiatives to address issues raised from the Respondent Issues Working Group.

### **Respondent Issues Working Group (RIWG)**

The Respondent Issues Working Group benefits from a more formal governance through the Respondent Board, which strengthens the focus on respondents.

Utilising information gathered from a variety of sources: survey pause and review meetings with customers, respondent feedback gathered by frontline staff from telephone calls and written correspondence recorded on our Respondent Feedback Database, the Respondent Feedback Team highlight emerging issues and investigates possible solutions via this cross ONS working group to help determine where we need to improve and prioritise our efforts. The members are empowered to initiate change such as improving information on our front page and flyers to selected businesses.

The group has also had success in terms of highlighting potential issues with sampling processes, evidenced by themed feedback.

### **Respondent Relations Team (RRT)**

In 2007 ONS, set up the Respondent Relations team in Business Data Division, an area handling incoming calls from respondents as well as outgoing calls to encourage response for 80 business surveys. This team provides a dedicated helpline for respondents to assist them with their queries. The area makes full use of call centre technology so that incoming calls are routed to appropriately trained individuals in that particular survey, resulting in query resolution at first contact.

### **Respondent Feedback Team (RFT)**

The Respondent Feedback Team deals with written requests for information and feedback from respondents. All written requests are recorded, actioned and responded to within 10 working days. We also have a Complaints Strategy which provides respondents with an avenue to raise any concerns they may have.

The team also administer the Respondent Feedback Database (RFD), a robust tool for collecting and monitoring feedback from our business survey respondents, where frontline staff record feedback segmented as queries, grievances and complaints. This has proved to be a rich source of valuable feedback and a key enabler where information is analysed and used to identify emerging themes on what is causing respondents problems, providing evidence to prioritise efforts for improvement.