



UK Statistics  
Authority

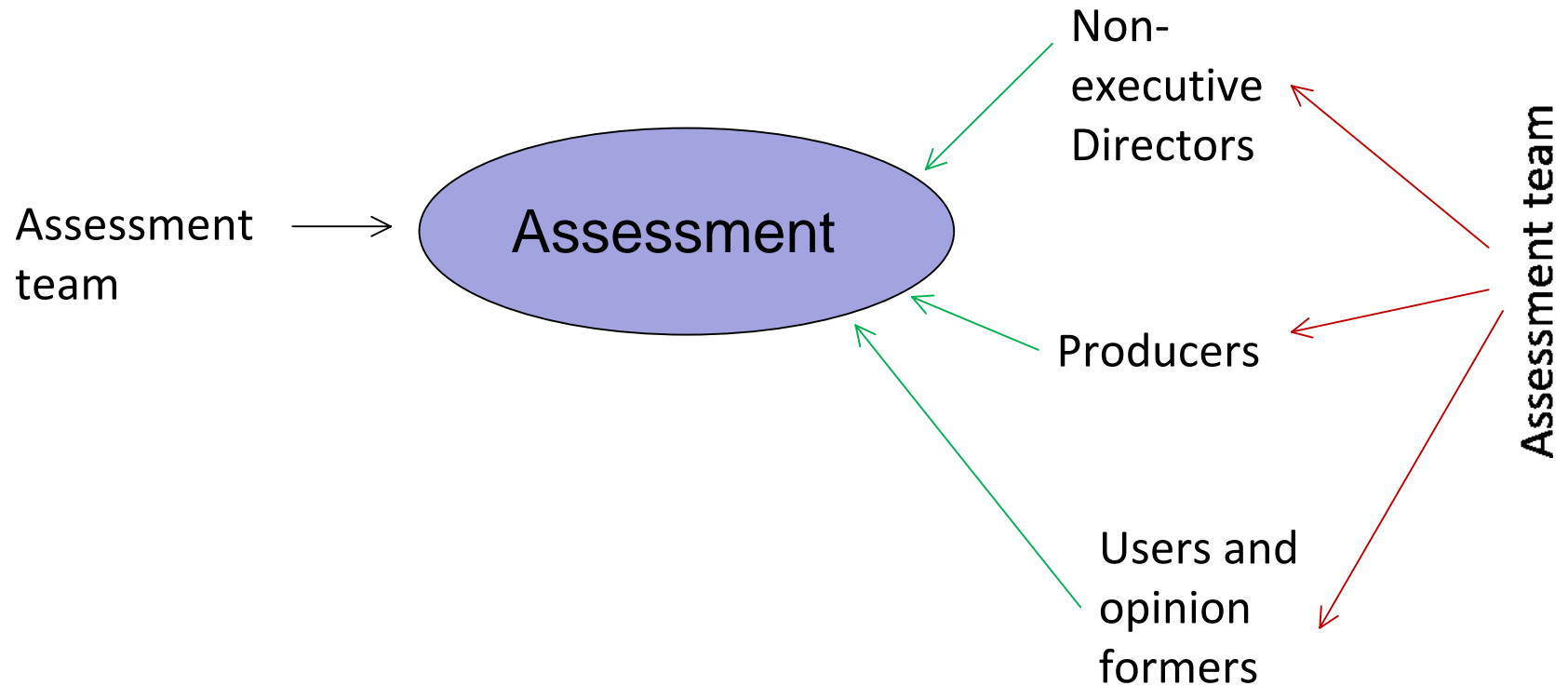
# Experience of, and lessons learnt from, Assessment.

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# Overview

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# The Assessment team's experience and lessons learnt

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1. Our profile, and our work
2. Our staff
3. Our quality assurance
4. Our value and impact

# Profile and work

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## Experience

The Statistics Authority was a new body, and the process of Assessment was unique. The Authority is accountable to Parliament.

Our work – individual reports, and the totality – is scrutinised and challenged. The Code of Practice has been absolutely central to our work.

## Lessons

- Any (early) problems with assessment would have adversely affected its reputation
- Focus on the product – published Assessment reports and summaries
- A major emphasis on quality
- The Code has stood up well to its use in Assessment

# Staff

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## Experience

Balancing the size and nature of the 'task' against the available resources means that our work has been relentless: something of a treadmill.

The variety of skills and experiences in the team of assessors has been the critical factor in having delivered assessment so far.

## Lessons

Basic good management: we have

- tried to offer a variety of work
- tried to involve the team in decision making – ownership
- emphasised progress and the prospect of the 'next cycle'.

In addition, we:

- (slowly) encouraged flexibility
- used standardised formats
- started small, then built up the team (over three sites)
- sought assessors from a range of backgrounds

# Quality assurance

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## Experience

Our quality assurance (QA) processes and systems have needed to be strong to reflect the nature of our work and the implications of 'mistakes'

## Lessons

- It is a real challenge to be consistent over time and coherent between different assessments.
- We have used several different levels of QA
- We have been sensitive to the impact of QA on our team

# Value and impact

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## Experience

Our value and impact are enhanced by documenting what we are learning about Assessment, the Code, and the statistical system/service

## Lessons

- Documentation of refinements to Assessment process, and interpretations of the Code
- Published 'handbook' guidance for those being assessed
- Publication of a series of summaries of what we were 'learning' from assessment about the statistical service
- Publication of provisional views about our impact.

# Our perspective of the importance of our non-executive Directors

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- They have been strongly committed to the “Herculean” task
- They have brought their own expertise and experience to bear
- They are interested in the broad strategic issues raised by individual assessments
- Their external focus has included considerable interest in ‘impact’ – the benefits accruing from Assessment
- Their support has enhanced the credibility of Assessment. It has helped to ‘calibrate’ the standards in the Code
- Their perspective has helped look at gaps, duplication, and coherence
- Evidence from Assessment has focused their views about what needs to be improved in the statistical system, and so the issues to be picked up by the senior managers of the statistical service



# Our perspective of producers' views of Assessment

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- Views about Assessment have been mixed, and we have seen elements of the 'cycle of grief' – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.
- More recently we have seen signs of producers themselves seeing some benefits.
- In many cases the responses to the remedial actions we have identified are the bare minimum; responses even from within a single producer body can be quite different
- We took steps to win the hearts and minds of producers, even before the first assessment – but we might have usefully done more, to allay concerns.
- We have offered flexibility on scheduling
- We have emphasised 'good practice' fairly
- Thorough follow-up from the Assessment team, before a set of statistics is finally 'designated', requires real determination

# Our perspective of the views of users and other opinion formers about Assessment

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- It has been difficult to obtain a good spread of users' views for many Assessments
- Users are waiting to see rapid and tangible improvements to the statistical service
- Opinion formers seem to appreciate that change is a slow process (but we should assume that their patience is limited)
- We have followed up users whose views we wanted
- More awareness-raising early on might have helped
- We have thought of 'success' as being when users and opinion formers are satisfied with the statistics and the statistical service
- We have published regular 'progress summaries', to highlight the changes in the statistical service that we have stimulated