

UPDATE ON THE REVISION OF THE STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

During 1996 the arrangements for overseeing SOC were reviewed and the SOC Steering Group (SOCSG) was formed. At its first meeting in January 1997 members of SOCSG decided that users of the classification should be consulted on the need for and scope of any revision. Following this consultation and presentation of options, SOCSG members agreed on the scope of the revision at the July meeting. The plan is to publish the revised classification in 2000 with a final draft available some time before the end of 1999.

Advisory Group members are asked to note:

The latest information on the revision of SOC**Update on the Revision of the Standard Occupational Classification****1. Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to inform Advisory Group members on recent activities related to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).
- 1.2 During 1996 the arrangements for overseeing SOC were reviewed and the SOC Steering Group (SOCSG) was formed. At its first meeting in January 1997 members of SOCSG decided that users of the classification should be consulted on the need for and scope of any revision. Following this consultation and presentation of options, SOCSG members agreed on the scope of the revision at the July meeting. The plan is to publish the revised classification in 2000 with a final draft available some time before the end of 1999.
- 1.3 **Advisory Group members are asked to note the latest information on the revision of SOC.**

2. Consultation

- 2.1 The Occupation Information Unit mounted a consultation exercise by sending an information paper and questionnaire to a wide range of SOC users.
- 2.2 Of nearly 250 questionnaires sent out just under half were returned by the extended end date of May 23. The respondents covered users in government departments and agencies, the careers service, Training and Enterprise Councils, training organisations, local government, health authorities, academic, social and market research, with a few from the business sector.

2.3 The key points emerging from the consultation exercise were:

- the overwhelming majority of respondents want SOC to be revised, with only seven respondents preferring no revision;
- most respondents, including those who value continuity, want subdivisions of the unit groups (the lowest tier of the classification) and the creation of new unit groups; and
- the Employment Service favours the creation of a tier below the current unit groups.

3. Options for the revision of SOC

3.1 The views of users influenced the proposals for revising the classification which were put to the Steering Group. The requirements for change were described in three cumulative options. In brief these were :

Option A - updating the job title index;

Option B - Option A plus, reviewing some of the classification principles and conventions, defining more unit groups, taking account of recommendations from the Review of the Social Classifications, improving harmonisation with the classification used by Eurostat (ISCO 88 COM);

Option C - Option B plus, creating a more detailed level of the classification below the current lowest level of unit groups.

3.2 At the July meeting of the SOCSG, members agreed on Option B but with the addition of input from the Employment Service, especially on matters which may affect pursuing Option C. The Group accepted that, if the creation of a tier below unit groups were pursued later by the Employment Service, this would not change the structure envisaged under Option B.

4. Timetable

4.1 The proposed timetable set completion of a final draft of the revised classification at December 1999, with publication in 2000. This is far from ideal for the 2001 Census Complex Coding team who are managing the development of an automated occupation coding system. So the work programme and timetable are being assessed to find ways to achieve an earlier end date. A second consultation phase, to give users the opportunity to comment on a late version of the revised structure of the classification, may be dropped. Instead we may soon be inviting users to send us any suggestions for specific changes they would wish to see made to the current SOC.

5. Action

5.1 **Advisory Group members are asked to note the latest information on the revision of SOC.**

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