
Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

William Wragg MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

6 March 2024

Dear Mr Wragg,

Following the submission of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) written evidence to the Committee's *Transforming the UK's Evidence Base* inquiry on 31st August 2023, I then gave oral evidence to the Committee on 5th September 2023.

One of the topics that I am aware the Committee has been interested in, during the course of this inquiry, is analytical capability across government. I am pleased to be able to provide some additional evidence on this topic, as requested.

Analytical Skills

The Analysis Function (AF) is committed to building skills and knowledge across our community of 17,000 analysts, supporting effective career planning, and ensuring that we have skilled people in the right place at the right time. We have developed a suite of materials, designed to support analysts to navigate their careers across government analysis. These include the AF Career Framework, which features multidisciplinary role profiles and career pathways, as well as career stories showcasing the variety of entry points and available career progression routes.

The Analysis Function remains focussed on providing a learning and skills offer that meets the diverse needs of our community and adds value to the work being delivered by analytical professions and departmental colleagues.

Analysis Function Standard Assessment Framework

In my previous letter dated 5 October, I noted that Departmental Directors of Analysis were asked to undertake a self-assessment against the standard in 2023, for the first time. This process is a framework designed so that organisations can assess how well they are applying all aspects of the Analysis Function Standard¹. Consequently, this means that the assessment covers issues beyond analytical capability, such as capacity, governance and structures.

The Cabinet Office mandates that all functions conduct such exercises. The assessments were carried out in Q4 of 2023/24 and we had responses from 21 organisations across government. As the assessment is meant to drive improvements within organisations, only high-level information was returned to the

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-analysis-functional-standard--2>

Analysis Function Central team, under the agreement that these responses would not be shared more widely. The returns showed a mixture picture of strengths and weaknesses across government. The summary information returned has been used to develop further actions to support organisations in meeting the Analysis Function Standard, for example, setting up sessions to share best practice on key areas of the Standard.

Analytical Capability Audit of Policy Professionals

As part of his review of the effectiveness of government functions in 2021, Lord Maude commissioned a review of the analytical capability of policy professionals. The AF worked closely with the Head of the Policy Profession, Tamara Finkelstein, to identify areas of strength in the analytical capability of policy professionals, as well as development areas for improvement. This work further fostered positive working relationships between analysts and policy makers in government.

The report was completed in summer 2022 and has been well received. It is a key evidence base for the analytical skills development agenda across government, for both policy professionals and more widely across the whole Civil Service. This has led to a more robust analytical capability learning offer for all, ultimately ensuring that officials are more comfortable working with and analysing data when developing and delivering public services. The legacy of this work has been highlighted in core reform activities, such as the One Big Thing initiative in 2023, pushing the analytical capability agenda in government.

Cross Government Evaluation Capacity and Capability Survey

An Evaluation Capacity and Capability survey (ECCS) was conducted in Summer 2023. This was in response to a recommendation in the 2021 National Audit Office report *Evaluating Government Spending*² to enhance the evaluation capacity and capability within government. The survey, conducted by the Analysis Function Central Team, aimed to assess government's specialist evaluation capacity and capability and develop a plan to address any identified shortfalls.

The survey focuses on key research questions regarding evaluation skills and experience, confidence in applying evaluation-related skills, understanding of evaluation concepts among non-evaluation practitioners, engagement between analysts and non-analysts, and areas for improvement. The results are currently being analysed and associated recommendations developed, in collaboration with the Evaluation Task Force. High level results from the survey will be released through a blog.

We remain aware of, and draw on, the work of others who have influence in this space. This includes the Office Statistics Regulation, whom the Committee heard evidence from on 6 February.

² <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/evaluating-government-spending/>

I hope that you find this additional information useful. Please do let us know if we can assist the Committee further on the topic of the Analysis Function, or with any of its other inquiries.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Sir Ian Diamond