



Office for
National Statistics

The Effects of Relocation on Blaise Support in ONS

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Blaise support team (BDSS)

ONS and BDSS

- Office for National Statistics
 - Employs around 4000 people
 - Collects and publishes a wide range of statistics
- Blaise support team - BDSS
 - Provides support to survey teams in the Social Survey Division in ONS

Overview

- Background to ONS relocation
- Blaise support before relocation
- Support during and shortly after relocation
- Following relocation – where we are now
- Lessons learned

Background to ONS relocation: 1

- In 2006, ONS relocated many functions to Newport in Wales, including SSD and BDSS. The Field staff moved to Titchfield.



Background to ONS relocation: 2

- Few people relocated
- Big recruitment exercise
- Loss of knowledge and expertise



Blaise support before relocation: 1

- ONS adopted the 'survey specialist' model
- BDSS helped set up surveys and provide advice where necessary
- Team had time to focus on Blaise uses and development (the 'D' in BDSS)
- BDSS had a good working relationship with IT and Field

Blaise support before relocation: 2

- BDSS provided:
 - standard block templates
 - Mode libraries, depmenus
- BDSS quality assured all surveys before going out into the field
- Training schemes:
 - Half day introduction and standards workshop
 - 3 day course run by Statistics Netherlands
 - Researchers coached each other

During relocation: 1

- ONS announced it was going to relocate in 2006
- Huge loss of expertise and knowledge across the office
- The role of BDSS changed



During relocation: 2

- BDSS lost historical knowledge and technical expertise
- Quality assurance of surveys didn't happen
- Testing was minimal
- Standard blocks weren't being maintained
- Communication diminished between BDSS, IT and Field
- Other complex issues around time of relocation:
 - IHS (see Setchfield paper, 2007)
 - GHS (see Fiacco paper, 2007)

Following relocation: 1

- New strategic direction:
 - Looked at different ways of providing support
 - BDSS to take more responsibility for questionnaire
 - Reduce the amount of expert programming by researchers

Following relocation: 2

- BDSS expanded from 1 person in Newport to 5 full time members
- Training improvements:
 - Regular meetings and training sessions with IT and Field
 - Questionnaire set up to train researchers in Blaise basics and screen standards
 - Series of seminars
 - Mentoring researchers

Following relocation: 3

- New support strategy:
 - Keep on top of documentation
 - Support log for all ad hoc support queries
 - Reintroduction of standards
 - Quality assure all questionnaires before each survey scatter and larger annual audit
 - Thorough testing of routeing

Lessons learned

- The traditional approach to Blaise support was not working well
- New ways of working were implemented or are being set up
- Looking back we should have...
 - kept up communication with IT and Field
 - tried to keep QA process going
 - realised that survey teams were struggling
 - produced more training materials
 - kept up to date with standard blocks and documentation
- Many more challenges ahead!



Thank You

- Any questions?
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