

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Tuesday 26 February 2019
Boardroom, London

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)
Ms Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)
Mr Iain Bell
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Professor David Hand
Mr Ed Humpherson
Ms Sian Jones
Dr David Levy
Ms Nora Nanayakkara
Mr John Pullinger
Professor Sir Adrian Smith
Professor Anne Trefethen

Also in attendance

Mr Jonathan Athow
Mr Nick Bateson
Mr Owen Brace
Mr Robert Bumpstead
Ms Vanessa Holden
Ms Frankie Kay (for item 6)
Ms Heather Savory

Apologies

Professor Jonathan Haskel

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Professor Jonathan Haskel.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 31 January 2019, were agreed subject to a change to paragraph 10.2, to reflect the Board's formal request for advice from the National Statistician

4. Report from the Authority Chair

4.1 The Chair reported on his activity since the last meeting. The non-executive members of the Board had met prior to the Board meeting to discuss progress in recruiting the next National Statistician.

4.2 The Chair had written to the Governor of the Bank of England on 18 February 2019, regarding the Retail Prices Index (RPI). If the Governor were to find proposed changes to the RPI both 'material' and 'detrimental', Sir David would write to the Chancellor.

4.3 Members of the Board were also invited to attend an upcoming workshop on the data landscape.

5. Report from Chair of the Regulation Committee

5.1 Professor Trefethen reported on the work of the Regulation Committee, which had met on 14 February 2019.

5.2 Members of the Committee had considered:

- i. the strategic priorities of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR)
- ii. a draft business plan for the OSR;
- iii. systemic reviews on policing and adult social care; and
- iv. upcoming changes to the migration statistics landscape.

5.3 The Committee had also agreed to designate construction statistics as National Statistics (with the exception of regional breakdowns).

5.4 Updated Terms of Reference for the Committee, reflecting recent changes to membership, would be circulated to Authority Board members to approve via correspondence.

6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(19)07]

6.1 Mr Pullinger provided an overview of activity and issues for February.

6.2 The outcome of a recent employment tribunal, relating to a case brought against the Office for National Statistics (ONS), had been published. The Tribunal's judgement dismissed four claims of discrimination on the grounds of disability, but found that two claims of sex discrimination were well founded. Mr Pullinger reported that the judgement raised significant issues, which the office was considering carefully. The Board requested information from the executive on its recruitment and HR practices at a future meeting.

6.3 Mr Pullinger also updated the Board on data acquisition; pay; and, a recent visit from the Eurostat compliance team.

7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(19)08]

7.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last Board meeting. In doing so, he highlighted:

- i. plans for the first anniversary of the refreshed Code of Practice for Statistics;

- ii. a recently published update on social care statistics; and
- iii. ongoing concerns with income and earnings statistics.

7.2 It was agreed that Mr Athow would bring a paper on income and earning statistics to a future meeting of the Board.

8. Census [SA(19)09]

8.1 Mr Bell and Ms Kay updated the Board on the delivery of the 2021 Census for England and Wales.

8.2 Since the last update to the Board:

- i. the migration of user journey tests to the 'live' Census environment had commenced;
- ii. the critical path for the 2021 Census had been further developed and refined; and
- iii. a series of design workshops on field force operations had confirmed the scope of the upcoming Census Coverage Survey.

8.3 Ms Kay also discussed the use of administrative data in the context of the Census. She explained that ONS planned to use administrative data to help inform field operations, to quality assure data, and to address any gaps in data collected.

8.4 The Board thanked Mr Bell and Ms Kay for the update.

9. Draft resource business plan [SA(19)10]

9.1 Mr Bateson sought views from the Board on the Authority's emerging business plan. He reminded Board members that the OSR's business plan was being developed separately and – following its consideration by Regulation Committee earlier in the month – would be brought to the Board at its March meeting.

9.2 Board members welcomed early sight of the plan, and considered:

- i. the coherence and coverage of proposed metrics;
- ii. links between the business plan, the Authority strategy, and the next spending Review (suggesting that the 2019/20 business plan should reflect the perspectives of the current strategy, rather than introducing new messaging); and
- iii. how best to communicate the business plan internally.

10. Any other business

10.1 There was no other business. The Authority Board would meet next on Thursday 28 March 2019 at 09:15 in London.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

26 February 2019, 09:15 to 13:30

Boardroom, London

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies: Professor Jonathan Haskel

Attendees: Ms Frankie Kay (for item 5)

09:15 – 09:45: Non-Executive Session

1 09:45-09:50 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declarations of interest	Meeting of 31 January 2019 Meeting of 14 February 2019
2 09:50-10:10 20 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 10:10-10:20 10 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulation Committee	Oral report Prof. Anne Trefethen
4 10:20-10:50 30 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(19)07 Mr John Pullinger
5 10:50-11:10 20 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(19)08 Mr Ed Humpherson
6 11:10-12:10 60 mins	Census	SA(19)09 Mr Iain Bell Ms Frankie Kay

12:10-12:40: Lunch

7 12:40-13:25 45 mins	Draft business plan	SA(19)10 Mr Nick Bateson
8 13:25-13:30 5 mins	Any other business	

Next meeting: 28 March 2019, Newport, 10:30 to 16:00

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Chief Executive's Report, February 2019

Purpose

1. This report provides the Board with an overview of activity and issues for February.

Summary

2. This month, we provided our written response to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee inquiry into the Governance of Statistics. The Royal Statistical Society have already appeared at the committee to give oral evidence, and we will likely do so in mid-March.
3. We have held a workshop with the National Cyber Security Centre, the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs to discuss access to administrative data.

Review of recent activities

4. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
 - i. we held a forum for users of housing and homelessness statistics. With speakers from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Welsh Government and ONS. This forms part of a series of cross UK user engagement events on housing statistics and improving their coherence across the Government Statistical Service;
 - ii. our pay offer to employees was published on our intranet. Trades unions now decide if they will ballot their members, and we hope to have an outcome in time for March pay; and
 - iii. Iain Bell and Frankie Kay gave evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee for a one-off inquiry considering the delivery of the 2021 Census. Topics discussed included: what protected characteristics data the Census would collect, and how ONS were ensuring the delivery of the census would be accessible and inclusive for all communities.
5. Progress with the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme this month includes:
 - i. a Census key supplier initiation event took place on 23 and 24 January. All key Census suppliers were in attendance.
6. Other activities and risks being managed during this period include:
 - i. ONS officials hosted a two and a half day Eurostat Gross National Income (GNI) Mission Visit. The role of GNI is important, and sensitive, as GNI is one of the four resources used to calculate each EU Member States' contribution to the EU and is a key factor in the UK/EU exit negotiations. The UK have received further actions to improve the sources and methods underpinning GNI; and
 - ii. we had our first end-to-end run of the "H-Approach" for estimating Gross Domestic product (GDP). For the first time, we produced 'double deflated' GDP estimates through our new core National Accounts systems. We have a long way to go to quality assure and finesse these estimates, but it marks a significant step on the Blue Book 2019 journey.

Future look

7. In March, we will give oral evidence to the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and will respond to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee Report on Price Indices.

John Pullinger, 19 February 2019

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Report from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on regulation activity since the last Board meeting.

Recommendation

2. Members of the Board are invited to note the activities and proposed actions.

Discussion

3. Key activities since the last Board meeting include:

- i. RPI:

The OSR role on RPI, as with any set of statistics, is to judge whether the producer has a coherent strategy, and whether it is implementing its strategy effectively. As the Authority considers its response to the report from the Lords Economic Affairs Committee, OSR will review the extent to which the production strategy is coherent, and how it is being implemented.

- ii. Trade, construction and migration:

The Regulation Committee agreed to re-designate the construction outputs and new orders statistics on the basis of OSR advice that it represented the best available estimate and is not materially misleading. On trade, the Committee noted ONS's progress on providing the best available estimate. The Committee is looking for further assurances on whether the existence of significant asymmetries means that the statistics are materially misleading. This will involve further examination of international comparators. On migration, we described the ONS's improvement strategy. The Committee discussed trigger points at which new evidence (especially from administrative data) points to the need for further review of the reliability of the estimates.

- iii. Strategy and business plan:

We continue to develop strategic priorities for OSR, based on three areas of focus:

- upholding the trustworthiness, quality and value of official statistics and data used as evidence in public debate (our current remit and role but recognising the application of our principles beyond official statistics);
- protecting the role of statistics in public debate (our casework role); and
- better understanding of the public good in collaboration with others – a new focus, recognising the need to define and advocate the public value of good statistics and data (and the dangers of bad).

After discussion at the February Regulation Committee, we will now undertake a process of consultation with key stakeholders, including round tables in London, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff. At the same time, we are developing our annual business plan, and will discuss our 2019/20 work programme with producers.

- iv. Education statistics:

Our intervention on the School Cuts website (managed by the National Education Union (NEU)) has generated some media criticism of the NEU. I am due to meet the General Secretaries of the NEU in early March to explain our thinking and to encourage more transparent presentation of statistics – in effect, to adhere to the same standards as we expect from the Department for Education.

- v. Health: We published an update on social care statistics, based on engagement with users of social care statistics in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This output highlights the weakness of statistics on social care, and the different trajectories of statistics in the UK's four nations.

- vi. Police:
We will publish a paper on the public value of policing statistics in March.
 - vii. Income and earnings:
We are disappointed by progress on income and earning statistics and I will be writing publicly to Jonathan Athow about this concern.
 - viii. Code of Practice:
For the first anniversary of the Code's relaunch at the end of February, we will publish blogs from John Pullinger, Sir David Spiegelhalter, the Head of Profession at the Department for Work and Pensions, and Will Moy of Full Fact. We continue with our evaluation of how far the Code met our aims. Additionally, in February we secured another high profile voluntary adopter of the Code – the Social Metrics Commission. Building on John's blog, which will talk about the universal applicability of the Code's principles, we will continue to encourage ONS to apply the Code to outputs that are not official statistics, where it has not done as much as some Government departments.
 - ix. OSR development:
We received 11 applications for the head of our Edinburgh Office. Interviews take place on 1 March.
 - x. External engagement:
I wrote a blog on the strategic challenges for statistics ("Move fast and don't break things"), which is included at **Annex B** to this report. I also chaired a round table on how producers engage with the public on how personal data are linked and used; met Jennifer Rubin, head of ESRC, on access to administrative data for research purposes; and met the CEO of NHS Digital, who outlined significant restructuring plans to modernise official statistics produced by NHS Digital.
4. As reported at the beginning of this month, the main challenges are:
- i. Planning:
Our regulatory work plan for 2019/20 looks more deliverable than our 2018/19 plan, with fewer new outputs and fewer large systemic reviews. Nevertheless, avoiding overoptimistic planning remains a challenge.
 - ii. Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC):
The evidence session at PACAC is in March. The themes of their questions are reasonably clear: OSR independence; whether there are genuine improvements in the public value of statistics; and the status of individual statistics like RPI and quarterly migration. OSR has a good story to tell and look forward to developing a clear explanation of our impact.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 23 January 2019

List of Annexes

Annex A Regulatory Activities
Annex B Blog on strategy for statistics

Regulatory Activities February 2019

Economy	Business, industry, energy and trade	Health and social care	Labour Market and welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment: Drafting report on assessment of HMT Country and regional Analysis for April Reg Comm. FDI CC letter published in Dec. Experimental Labour Productivity statistics CC report currently being drafted. Measuring Tax Gaps CC meeting with HMRC early Feb, report due end of March. • Public Finances Systemic Review: Socialising emerging findings with devolved administrations. • Casework: Checking Secretary of State for Int'l Trade evidence to Int'l Trade Select Committee over confusion on stats in Liam Fox's oral evidence. Casework complaint about Scottish Govt presentation of its draft 2019-20 budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Output and Prices: User feedback on ONS recommendations gathered and presented as part of case for re-designation • UK Trade: Outcomes discussed following last Reg Comm suggest concern over disaggregate asymmetric data. Case to be discussed further during Feb Reg Comm. • Annual Purchases Survey – Assessment started, BITE team in the process of analysing data from 2015 and 2016 surveys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments: Designation recommendation for ONS Avoidable mortality statistics and draft assessment report on ONS cancer survival statistics discussed at Feb Reg Comm. • Systemic review: Highlight findings from the stakeholder engagement phase of the systemic review of Adult Social Care statistics to be published early February. • Casework: Published letter concerning Scottish Government's presentation of ISD mortality statistics. A number of items of casework are being dealt with by private correspondence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic reviews: Attended meeting on 28/01 with the ONS harmonisation team to discuss them helping the I&E team implement recommendations. • Compliance checks: Universal Credit review has started. • Domain activities: Investigated casework related to PM tweet. Attending seminar on 'Using admin data to improve Labour Market statistics' on 30/01.
Crime and Justice	Housing, planning and local services	Children, education and skills	Agriculture and Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic Reviews: Policing statistics review: Paper presented to Feb Reg Comm with initial findings from engagement activity; media analysis continuing. • Casework: Investigating method used and communication of results of Home Office estimates of the cost of domestic abuse. • Compliance checks: Single letter to the MoJ HoP published following similar results from three compliance checks on civil, criminal and family court statistics in England and Wales. Follow-up meeting arranged to discuss improvement plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments: Confirmed Nat stats on Welsh Housing Conditions Survey. • Compliance checks: Published CC of ONS's Household Projections, CC letter published in Feb; to discuss findings with Scot Govt on Homelessness; and CC of Welsh Govt's Homeless stats. • Systemic reviews: Received progress update from ONS/cross-gov group for published work plan for housing stats. • Casework: Working on complaint on Exeter Council's planning performance measures; MHCLG's estimating Leasehold Dwellings in England and considering stats on use of Temp Accommodation for Homelessness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casework: Recently published casework on the use of statistics on the Schools Cuts Campaign website. • Skills Systemic Review: Reviewing feedback from producers bodies • Compliance checks: Recently completed CC of the Higher Education Statistics Agency's HE Student Statistics release, on-going work on Welsh Government's School's Examination Results statistics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance checks: Finalising letters of Scottish Sea Fisheries and UK Sea Fisheries statistics CCs – expecting to publish mid-Feb. Drafting letters for Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh June Agricultural Census statistics – expecting to publish end of Feb. • Assessment: Reviewing evidence and meeting with users and data suppliers for Defra's air quality and emissions statistics assessment. • Casework: Published letter about the quality and National Statistics designation of Defra's England Biodiversity Indicators statistics.
Security, defence and intl relations	Travel, transport and tourism	Population	Culture and Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domain Activity: Met with the International Defence Committee on 6th Feb on use of stats by DfID. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment: Agreed Assessment of National Rail Passenger Survey with Transport Focus to start in Feb 2019. • Compliance Checks: Continuing CC of GB Road Safety Statistics. • Domain Activities: Engaging with Dept for Transport and Office of Rail and Road on Vol Application of Code by Transport organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casework: Responding to query on ONS's Nov Migration Report. • Assessment: Engaging with 3 census offices on phase 1 assessment. • Compliance Check: Follow-up meetings with ONS, NISRA and NRS following CC's of Nat population projections. • Domain activities: Engaging with HO about new experimental statistics on sexual orientation of asylum seekers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment: Designation recommendation for DCMS Economic Estimates statistics – discussed at Reg Comm on Feb 14th.

Annex B – Blog on strategy for statistics

Move fast and don't break things: the challenges of strategy for statistics

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, writes about the challenges faced by statisticians formulating strategy in a constantly changing landscape.

At the end of last year, I attended a conference where heads of statistical offices from various Commonwealth countries put their heads together. One session involved them defining the leadership challenges statisticians face.

Their list said that statisticians in leadership roles need to:

- demonstrate high levels of **integrity**
- be deeply **knowledgeable** about statistics
- have the ability to set vision and define **strategy**
- be skilled in **communication**
- have strong **people leadership** skills

We also heard they need resilience; need to be inclusive; face increasing demands and loss of monopoly; and need to build partnerships across society. These challenges are significant, and not just for heads of statistical agencies, but for statistical professionals and leaders across Governments.

But to some extent the list is quite generic. It's difficult to think of a role that doesn't require communication and people leadership skills; integrity is – or should be – a valued commodity in every role. What is it that is unique to statistical leadership in official statistics?

The challenges of strategy for official statistics

To me the most salient of these challenges revolves around **strategy**. Statisticians face an environment that is changing and full of a series of trade-offs:

- being expected to provide definitive views versus recognising the uncertainty in the statistics produced: statisticians are often asked for The Number, the single point estimate that resolves an issue – or can be dropped into a briefing or speech as if it was just padding, mere upholstery. But the statistical leader knows that the single number is elusive; whether it means what people think it means depends crucially on what question you are trying to answer. Conveying this while still providing relevant, useful insight, is a huge challenge.
- using new forms of data and new tools versus providing consistent time series. The expectations that statisticians get with the worlds of Big Data and data science are growing all the time. Yet because new data can create new insight, they can also represent a decisive break with the past. So what should the statistician do? Preserve a time series so the present can be compared with the past? Or update methods and data sources to take advantage of all that the digital revolution has to offer? Our answer at the Office for Statistics Regulation starts from the principle that statistics should always be the best available estimate. But it's not straightforward for statisticians to deliver on this principle where stakeholders value and need consistency of data over time. The best balance is likely to differ in different contexts and for different users of statistics.
- serving experienced users versus wider populations of ordinary citizens. "Users" is a broad and complex concept. What works for those who delve deeply into the data, use it regularly to answer specific technical questions, may not work for people who only rarely engage with the statistics. This is the challenge of the lived experience, of

the “that’s your GDP, not mine”, and it’s a huge issue for those who produce statistics.

- serving Government decision makers like central banks and finance ministries versus informing wider public debate. Statistics must serve a much wider constituency than this – and serving both the elite decision making group and the wider audience can be demanding. A strategy like [Better Statistics, Better Decisions](#) can look like it’s focused on senior policy makers who make the Big Decisions, even though John Pullinger (the National Statistician) always emphasises that the idea of a “decision maker” can go much wider.

The common thread of these trade-offs is managing a balance of technical and democratic roles. Statisticians are technocratic – perhaps the epitome of the technocrat – but they also perform an essential social role: the public want to see themselves, their lives, in the statistics, and not feel that statistics are remote, technical, abstract, dry. And this balance is harder now than ever – because the availability of data and the complexity of our societies demands more sophisticated tools of analysis (more technocracy) at the same time as there is a growing sense of mistrust of evidence, data, elites, and a growing demand among people for recognition of their identity (more social engagement and democracy). All of this requires openness: opening up while preserving core capabilities.

And supporting this opening up is such an important role for the Office for Statistics Regulation. We do this when we [assess statistics](#) – always emphasising the central role of opening up to a wide range of users. We do it when we do [systemic reviews](#), focused on the value of statistics in areas like [housing](#), [health](#) and [migration](#). And we do it through our [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), which is all about opening up the processes and outputs of statistics.

Move fast and break things?

Statisticians need to embrace disruption, and be urgent – to be ambitious and move quickly. But this disruptive task is not as simple as the motto of a commercial tech company: to move fast and break things (apparently [Facebook’s original motto](#)).

The strategic challenge is much harder, and therefore more interesting: the trustworthiness of official statistics is incredibly precious and statistical producers hold it in trust for the societies they serve. They mustn’t casually destroy it. This is what makes it an energising challenge – to change and develop statistics using new data sources and new techniques while enhancing connection with the public that statistics exist to serve.

And it’s our job is to help producers of statistics meet their strategic challenge: to Move Fast But Not Break Things.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Census – Update

Purpose

1. This paper updates the Board on the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are asked to note that:
 - i. progress continues to be made on delivery of the internal digital services and integration as per the current plan. Following the build of the first iteration of the most common User Journey (known as “Hannah”) testing of her User Journey is on schedule. To support further development and running of the live operations, the migration to the live Census environment is now underway;
 - ii. as included in the delivery plan, we have completed a number of design workshops for the Field Force Operation and now have clarity on the scope of inclusions of Households, Communal Establishments and the Census Coverage Survey in the Collection Rehearsal – all of which are currently planned. In addition, criteria for descoping have been agreed should this be necessary;
 - iii. since the last Board the critical path and milestone acceptance criteria have been improved, with them being fully embedded by the end of February;
 - iv. the first set of build metrics and test metrics are now available, which will be supplemented from March with revised Operational Readiness Acceptance metrics; Both the Build and Test metrics are at the expected level against the plan; and
 - v. that work continues on a range of activities to put the programme in an improved position.

Discussion

3. The Programme has been delivering a range of recovery activities in addition to planned progress.
4. To date the following has been achieved:
 - i. development work on the first version of the “Hannah” journey was completed on 29 January 2019 including the development and initial testing of all interface points. Business Acceptance Testing started on 31 January for the first iteration and is on track;
 - ii. we have mapped out all functionality and services required for all key respondent journeys ready for development;
 - iii. to ensure the management of Rehearsal scope we have developed a prioritisation approach to ensure decisions can be made quickly based on a pre-determined set of priorities. This will ‘rank’ high level business processes to demonstrate the extent to which the Rehearsal is the only opportunity to ‘test’ a business process, the value of the learning that will be achieved, the level of complexity and likelihood that the proposed solution can be delivered, the scale of respondent population coverage, the likelihood of reputational damage and the extent to which it is needed to support another critical business process. Rankings will then be used to assess relative priorities and adjust scope appropriately;
 - iv. there has been a significant improvement in the depth of knowledge around the key Digital Services and Technology (DST) and Methods, Data and Research (MDR) building blocks required to support user journeys;
 - v. the programme plan and critical path have been refined. They now include all key Security dates and events. Further work is required to validate the dates with MDR and DST;

- vi. we have reviewed all milestones and produced draft acceptance criteria for each one;
- vii. we have seen the beginnings of improved ways of working for all Census Teams, including gaining clarity on the delivery model, ways of working and the final scope of the Rehearsal. This work will be complete by end February 2019. To provide improved clarity, we have updated the governance structure in response to the recent internal audit and teams' suggestions. The governance structure will be kept under review to ensure it is able to support the requirements of the work going forwards;
- viii. programme tracking metrics have been assessed and an overall delivery confidence dashboard produced to monitor progress and provide early warning indicators. It will be supported by five core dashboards as well as standard project and programme delivery reports. They are:
 - **Security.** In addition, progress on supplier security management plans, performance and integration security is provided;
 - **Build progress** metrics from DST;
 - **Test metrics**, showing the performance of the digital products, as aligned to the seven user journeys through testing.;
 - **Commercial.** These will be available from March 2019. The first will provide key commercial information around contract performance, milestones and KPIs and the second a combined view of supplier deliverables and delivery performance; and
 - **Operational readiness assessments** of individual services as they are developed and operational readiness tests of end-to-end services prior to go live. These will be available from March 2019.
- ix. We are considering the most appropriate mechanism for completing the independent assurance before the decision to 'go live' is made for both the Rehearsal and Census 2021, ensuring the review is conducted with the relevant technology and service integration experience.

Census Field Force

- 5. The Census Field Force is grouped into three operational units. These units cover the enumeration of Households (HH), Communal Establishments (CE) and the Census Coverage Survey (CCS). Each of the three Field Forces will be managed separately with the CCS Field Force coming in at the end of the collection phase and operating independently to the others. This is a critical element to achieve the programme's statistical quality objectives as it is crucial in imputation.
- 6. The size of this combined Field Force is likely to be in the region of 35,000 to 39,000 individuals during the main Census, most of whom will be part-time workers. This number includes the regional, area, local management staff.
- 7. Supporting the progress, three Field Operational Design workshops were held through January, covering all three units. Each workshop tackled a list of outstanding critical design decisions, challenged design complexity, identified and resolved design gaps and agreed what should be in scope for the Rehearsal and why.
- 8. The HH design is now further developed with the CCS and CEs still underway, focussing on the specific challenges of care homes and similar for CEs as well as the technology challenges of the CCS. All design decisions will be endorsed and formalised via the next Programme Design Authority, on 28 February, which will be chaired by Frankie Kay. Sir Ian Diamond and Anne Trefethen particularly commented on care homes in their note of December visit. Once the work is completed we will provide a fuller update on communal establishments and care homes.

Data Acquisition Timeline

9. The Board specifically asked what the critical path was for inclusion of administrative data in the Census. There are three key sources:
 - i. Council Tax (CT) data is used in three ways:
 - to help inform the field operations with valuable information about the nature of properties through the address register;
 - to support statistics on housing vacancy rates; and
 - to improve full record imputation (where there is under coverage/low response).
 - ii. HMRC self-assessment data is used to help influence the Hard to Count index which assists in planning field operations and allows efforts to be maximised to increase response rates. Combined with this, DWP data also provides “signs of activity” which further assists with data quality as well as item imputation; and
 - iii. HMRC and DWP data will also be used and linked with the Census data to provide income estimates.
10. We are able to collect and process Census data without admin data as it enhances, but is not critical. However, the use of admin data for the Quality Assurance (QA) of the data is essential (Council Tax was one of the most important sources in 2011).
11. For the collection rehearsal, the last date by which we can receive data to use has passed. Whilst Council Tax data adds value to the quality of the address register it is not critical to a successful Dress Rehearsal. We are looking at how to test this outside of the dress rehearsal.
12. For the processing and outputs rehearsal Council Tax data is needed by April 2019 to be used to improve record imputation and support statistics on housing vacancy rates, and DWP/HMRC data is needed by December 2019 for QA of estimates.
13. For main Census, our estimate is that we need Council Tax and DWP/HMRC data by December 2019 to support field operations and item imputation. However, as noted, we will not have tested this via the rehearsal. In order to support the QA of Census estimates, Council Tax and DWP/HMRC data is needed by July 2020 to be able to understand how data would be used and integrated. Extracts as at Census day would also be required in order to validate the Census estimates.
14. In 2011, administrative data sources were not tested during the collection rehearsal and we did not rehearse processing.
15. The table below summarises:

Source	Potential use	Collection Rehearsal	P&O Rehearsal	2021 Census
		Last Date Required By		
Council Tax	QA of Census estimates	n/a	December 2019	July 2020
All DWP/HMRC data (inc. BID, RTI, SA, CIS)	QA of Census estimates	n/a	December 2019	July 2020
Council Tax	Validation of field outcomes (data collection)	Passed, but we will validate use afterwards	n/a	December 2019
Council Tax	To improve full record imputation, where the Census has under-coverage/low response.	n/a	April 2019.	December 2019

Source	Potential use	Collection Rehearsal	P&O Rehearsal	2021 Census
		Last Date Required By		
	To support statistics on housing vacancy rates			
Self-assessment	Hard to Count index	Passed	n/a	December 2019
DWP/HMRC demographic data (from CIS/RTI/BID)	Item imputation (as part of processing) – auxiliary data to improve accuracy of imputation of age	n/a	Passed	December 2019

16. The contingencies for population coverage, for editing and imputation and adjustment include relying on existing sources, such as the Personal Demographic Service admin datasets. For the field operation, we are using OFCOM and DVLA data already.

Next Steps

17. Work to support the programme continues, particularly focussing on:

- i. the delivery of the remaining six respondent user journeys. The next respondent journey to be built will deliver the more complex journey known as “Fred”. This will introduce some of the interactions with field officers that are critical to the scope of the Rehearsal and provides a longer lead time to deal with some of the associated complexity. The remaining two household respondent journeys will be developed next and the final respondent journeys relate to CEs and CCS;
- ii. continued joint working and embedding of new staff in new roles. Regular meetings between the PMOs of the Programme, DST and MDR are now taking place and additional workshops with technical teams at all levels are planned in February 2019 to continue to develop meaningful shared plans;
- iii. consolidation of the Census delivery model, ways of working, roles and responsibilities as well as the final detailed scope of Rehearsal and the process through which it can be changed if required;
- iv. embedding the updated plan, critical path and metrics and using these to track progress and help drive decision making. The key artefacts will be widely circulated and used as pivot points for all assurance meetings;
- v. agree a common view of data of the data processing pipeline/architecture and develop a delivery plan for the processing rehearsal, including a critical path and success factors by end February 2019; and
- vi. as previously stated, the further work to support the well formulated third-line of defence and bring clarity over the first and second lines of defence will be complete by end February 2019 to ensure that assurance is forward looking and effective and the remaining actions from the Census Governance Audit will be complete by May 2019.

Conclusion

18. Further time, and the described supporting work, is required for these actions to bed in so that the resulting effects to have a meaningful impact.

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy
Frankie Kay, Director of Transformation, Population and Public Policy, 14 February 2019

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Business Plan

This document will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The document will be available at:

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/strategy-and-business-plan/>