UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Draft Minutes
Thursday 30 January 2020
Boardroom, London

Present
UK Statistics Authority
Sir David Norgrove (Chair)
Ms Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)
Ms Helen Boaden
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Professor David Hand
Professor Jonathan Haskel
Mr Ed Humpherson
Ms Nora Nanayakkara
Professor Sir Adrian Smith

Also in attendance
Mr Nick Bateson
Mr Iain Bell
Mr Owen Brace
Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Douglas Cameron (Secretariat)
Ms Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)
Ms Frankie Kay
Mr Will Laffan
Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne

Apologies
Professor Anne Trefethen
Mr Jonathan Athow

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Professor Anne Trefethen and Mr Jonathan Athow

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 25 November 2019, were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

4.1 Non-executive directors had met prior to the Board. They had discussed the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 16 January.

4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met, noting:

   i. Mr William Wragg MP had been appointed as the Chair of the Public Accounts and Administration Committee;

   ii. the selection process for non-executive directors was ongoing with interviews scheduled in February;

   iii. he had written to the Lords Economic Affairs Committee regarding the timing of the Authority's joint consultation with HM Treasury on RPI;

   iv. the press coverage following the publication of the National Rail Coverage Survey;

   v. he had attended a reception at the Geospatial Commission;

   vi. he had visited the Newport site which included a visit to the Data Science campus and attendance at the annual Christmas dinner for local veterans; and

   vii. he had met Mr Roger Taylor, Chair of the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, with Mr Humpherson and Professor Sir Ian Diamond.

5. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

5.1 Ms Nanayakkara reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which had met on 16 January 2020.

5.2 Committee members had considered:

   i. the Authority's current financial position;

   ii. progress against the delivery of the Internal Audit Programme 2019/20;

   iii. ONS' engagement with Internal Audit, specifically the completion of management actions;

   iv. the key risks and controls in place around data capability;

   v. the progress of legacy transformation; and

   vi. the development of strategic risks which would be reported to the Board in February.

5.3 The Committee would remain engaged with the people agenda and legacy transformation with further updates scheduled in the coming months.

6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(20)01]

6.1 Professor Sir Ian Diamond provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues for December and January.

6.2 Sir Ian reported on the focus at a senior level to develop communications and engagement across the organisation. This included the introduction of monthly meetings with Directors and Deputy Directors to cascade key messages, such as the response at a corporate and directorate level to the People Survey results 2019.

6.3 Sir Ian reported on ONS' activities working across government to enhance the UK's statistical system's data infrastructure to enable data sharing and better evaluation and monitoring of public policy.

6.4 Sir Ian commended the work by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on data sharing across government to impact policy.

6.5 Board members discussed the progress made to date in accessing data under the Digital Economy Act 2017. An update on data acquisition would be provided at the March Board meeting.

7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(20)02]

7.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last Board meeting.

7.2 Mr Humpherson had published a blog which summarised OSR's activities during the election period. On 28 January Mr Humpherson had given evidence to the Lords Democracy and Technologies Committee. OSR had published two reviews: Adult Social Care and the Rail Passenger Survey – both of which received some media coverage.

8. National Statistics Designation [SA(20)03]

8.1 Mr Humpherson introduced a paper which presented the findings from an exploratory review into the National Statistics designation.

8.2 The Office for Statistics Regulation working in partnership with the GSS Good Practice Team had undertaken an exploratory review into the National Statistics designation. The Board considered the initial findings and the proposal for a fuller development programme including further research.

8.3 The Board agreed that an advisory group should be established to oversee the development of the research programme and consultation. Ms Helen Boaden (Non-Executive Director) would chair the advisory group. On completion of the work recommendations would be made to the Board.

9. Migration Look Forward/Look Back [SA(20)04]

9.1 Mr Bell and Ms McKeown introduced a paper which provided the latest update on migration statistics. The paper set out the programme of work to improve migration statistics in the short term; and in the longer term the development of a fully integrated population and migration system.

9.2 Board members discussed the development of migration statistics and the policy need for the best estimate of migration flows. They heard that significant progress had been made in 2019 using administrative data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Home Office which were providing the best assessment yet of migration trends. Work was continuing with DWP and the Home Office to access key data sets; and in the interim pragmatic solutions were in place to ensure the production of quarterly migration statistics was sustained. An open and transparent approach was being taken to users as the work progressed.

9.3 Sir Ian highlighted the effort being put into managing relationships with data suppliers on multiple levels to access key data sets.

9.4 It was noted that ONS was working with NISRA regarding trade and migration data from Northern Ireland following the UK's exit from the EU Exit on 31 January. The impact of the UKRI Global Talent Visa being launched on 20 February and subsequent data feed was also being considered.

10. Census and Data Collection Transformation update [SA(20)05]

10.1 Mr Bell and Ms Tyson-Payne provided an update on the Census Data Collection and Transformation Programme with a focus on business and social survey transformation.

10.2 With regard to the milestones reported to the Board in November and December it was noted that there were two areas of focus relating to the availability of PAYE and council tax data, and the build of new functionality. Work was ongoing with the

Portfolio Management Office to ensure accurate reporting at a portfolio level (which would be reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in March).

10.3 The Board heard about progress across the wider programme: the write-around to complete the Census order was near completion and would be laid in Parliament at the earliest opportunity; the Sikh Federation were seeking permission to appeal from the Court of Appeal; and the Census Collection and Census Coverage rehearsals had completed successfully before Christmas. A full evaluation and lessons learned and the strategy for handling under enumeration would be provided for the Board in March.

11. Strategy – further update [SA(20)06]

11.1 Mr Cameron introduced a paper which provided an update on progress with the development of the Authority's next strategy. It also detailed findings to date from other development activity.

11.2 The business planning process was ongoing alongside the strategy development and the prospective Spending Review which would be factored into the process.

11.3 The Board discussed the initial analysis from the consultation and the diversity of the respondent base. The gender split was broadly representative of the statistical community and grade split more heavily weighted with junior colleagues.

11.4 The Board welcomed the progress made and looked forward to receiving a draft strategy at the February meeting.

12. EU Exit Update [SA(20)07]

12.1 Mr Laffan introduced a paper which provided an update on activities to prepare the UK statistical system for EU Exit.

12.2 Board members heard that the move from the EU to the transition period should not pose any disruption for the production of UK official statistics. Longer term commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement related to the financial settlement and the protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. The EU Exit Programme would be working closely with HMRC on the application of the protocol.

13. Any other business

13.1 The Authority Board would meet next on Thursday 27 February 2020 at 09:15 in London.

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Agenda

30 January 2020, 09:15 to 13:45, Boardroom, London

Chair: **Sir David Norgrove**

Apologies: **Prof. Anne Trefethen**

Attendees: **Ms Liz McKeown (for item 7), Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 8), Mr Douglas Cameron (for item 9), Mr Will Laffan and Mr Michael Willmott (for item 10)**

09:15 – 09:45: Non-Executive Session

1 09:45-09:50 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings • Declarations of interest	Meeting of 25 Nov 2019
2 09:50-10:10 20 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 10:10-10:25 15 mins	Report from Committee Chair • Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	Oral report Ms Nora Nanayakkara
4 10:25-10:45 20 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(20)01 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
5 10:45-11:00 15 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(20)02 Mr Ed Humpherson
6 11:00-11:25 25 mins	National Statistics Designation	SA(20)03 Mr Ed Humpherson
7 11:25-11:50 25 mins	Migration Look Forward/Look Back	SA(20)04 Mr Iain Bell Ms Liz McKeown

11.50-12:30: Lunch

8 12:30-13:00 30 mins	Census and Data Collection Transformation update	SA(20)05 Mr Iain Bell Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne
9 13:00-13:30 30 mins	Strategy – further update	SA(20)06 Mr Douglas Cameron
10 13:30-13:40 10 mins	EU Exit Update	SA(20)07 Mr Will Laffan Mr Michael Willmott
11 13:40-13:45 5 mins	Any other business	

Next meeting: 27 February London, 09:15 to 14:00

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SA(20)01

Chief Executive's Report, January 2020

Purpose

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

Summary

2. Much has changed since the last meeting with a new Government now in power which has vocalised its interest in data and data science as a crucial part of informing policy and decision making. This is an opportunity that the statistical system must capitalise on. I have spent a significant amount of time during this period with colleagues across the Government Statistical Service (GSS) to learn about the array of work taking place and how best we can support them.

Review of recent activities

3. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:

    i.   This month ONS has, for the first time, produced statistics on child abuse in England and Wales by working with organisations such as the National Associates for People Abused in Childhood and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The report received extensive coverage in the media.

    ii. In December we published a collection of articles and analyses relating to disability. These looked at the additional barriers faced by those with a disability through the lens of crime, education, employment and others. This was in response to a request by Number 10 to improve outcomes and related data for disabled people as part of work to drive out injustices they face[1].

    iii. On 3 December, members of the ONS Senior Civil Service had an away day in Swindon. Much of the agenda focussed on generating ideas and enthusiasm for the development of the next UKSA strategy. The Authority Board also met for two strategy discussions. The development of the forthcoming strategy continues. The internal consultation has now closed with over 1000 responses.

    iv. Iain Bell met with Rebecca Evans AM, Welsh Minister for Minister for Finance and Trefnydd to discuss issues in Wales surrounding questions on ethnicity, and sex and gender in the 2021 Census. Iain updated the Minister on plans to test on alternative wording for the ethnicity question.

    v.   Before Christmas the Office invited local veterans and pensioners to the Newport office for the annual Christmas dinner. This event was attended by the Mayor of Newport and the Lord Lieutenant of Gwent with members of the ONS Senior Leadership Team waiting on guests.

    vi. Following collaborative working between ONS and Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs, ONS published an article[2] comparing the official monthly survey-based labour market statistics on pay and number of employees with experimental

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-launches-new-drive-to-tackle-barriers-faced-by-disabled-people

[2]

https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/newmethodsformonthlyearningsandemploymentestimatesfrompayasyouearnrealtimeinformationpayertidata/december2019

estimates from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI) data. Previously, PAYE RTI data were only been available quarterly, but following methodological improvements they can now be produced on a monthly basis and will be published alongside the ONS labour market estimates. The comparability between these two data highlights the potential of using administrative data in the future.

vii. December's General Election brought with it the increased focus on evidence and analysis. In accordance with GSS policy[3], official statistics due to be published on election day were postponed to the following day, with the exception of two releases from Public Health England.

viii. In December the latest People Survey results were published with a record high overall Engagement Index score at 63 per cent. This is on par with the average across Departments, but the ONS should strive to be a high performing unit of the Civil Service. As such there are some areas to focus on over the next year. For example, leadership and management. The launch of the strategy presents a chance to address some of these issues and make quick progress, but is only part of our plan to respond. Overall the results are positive, but there is clearly more to do.

ix. ONS has announced the 2019 pay offer, with all staff receiving a minimum 1.8 per cent award.

Future look

4. Focus in February will shift to the external element of the strategy consultation, culminating in an engagement event at the Royal Statistical Society on 19 February. Next month will also see the ONS hosting a visit from No.10 to showcase the capabilities of the statistical system in the UK, discuss barriers to data access and illustrate the potential for data-driven decision making.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, 23 January 2020

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[3] https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Polling-days-policy.pdf

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

2. Key activities since the last Board meeting include:

    i. **Election:** The Authority was very active during the General Election and more active than in the 2015 or 2017 General Elections. We reviewed a range of statements made by campaigns that used statistics. Our tests for intervention were: whether the statement in question involves statistics; whether it is a sufficiently significant misstatement or misleading use to potentially influence a voter's interpretation of something (so an error of a small degree would not justify intervention); and whether the statement is gaining traction and is reused (so a one-off statement would not justify intervention). In most cases, we decided not to intervene on this basis or made informal approaches to parties to address minor issues in their communication of statistics. We were also very clear that our role is not to be an all-purpose fact checker, verifying the "truthfulness" of all claims made by political parties. Instead we focus on situations where the statistics are misunderstood or misrepresented. Using these principles, we identified five cases where the Authority should clarify the statistics on a particular subject:

        *   the funding of schools in England;
        *   the number of children in good or outstanding schools in England;
        *   the trajectory of youth unemployment in Scotland;
        *   the trajectory of homelessness in England; and
        *   the extent of changes in violent crime.

        These interventions took the form of statements on the Authority's website, except the last, on violent crime, which involved a letter from the Chair to Jeremy Corbyn. The statements generated some media and political interest, particularly those on youth unemployment in Scotland and homelessness in England, but it was the letter to Jeremy Corbyn that produced the largest volume of media coverage.

    ii. **Polling day policy:** We also handled a small number of queries about the Authority's polling day policy. This policy requires any publications scheduled for polling day itself to be shifted back to the following day, unless there are grounds for granting an exception. The most significant queries came from some health journalists who questioned the move of some significant NHS England publications (including the winter A and E performance statistics) to the Friday; and from Matt Hancock, who questioned the exemption which allowed Public Health England to publish flu statistics on polling day. The Public Health England publication went ahead as planned. In the light of these queries, I would recommend that the Authority carries out a brief review of the policies and practices over the election period.

    iii. **Post Election report:** OSR is preparing to publish a summary of the role the Authority played in the General Election. This will serve two purposes: it will provide transparency about the range of activities we undertook; and it will also provide a basis for evidence I will draw on when I give evidence before a House of Lords Committee on democracy and digital communication on Tuesday 28 January (alongside Full Fact and Fact Check Northern Ireland).

    iv. **National Rail Passenger Survey:** In early January we published our assessment of the National Rail Passenger Survey. The assessment was critical of the limited coverage of the survey (it excludes the winter months of peak travel disruption, for

example); and our press notice and social media communications highlighted these messages. The report was reported in the transport industry press, including Transport Network and Railway Technology. Transport Focus are preparing an action plan to address the issues raised by our report.

    v. **Adult social care:** We published our review of adult social care statistics in England, which highlighted the poor availability and coverage of official statistics. We focused the report's communications on key decision makers in the health and care system, and had some good responses on social media (retweet and blogs). We also had a positive article in the Daily Mail. We are following up the report with a round table of stakeholders which will focus on next steps to drive improvement.

    vi. **National Statistics review:** We have provided a separate paper to the Board on our proposed review of the National Statistics designation.

3. The main short-term challenge surrounds responding to the PACAC report's recommendations and developing a clear response to the questions over location. I will put a paper to the February Regulation Committee on this issue, and after that share it with the Board. In the medium term, we continue to explore ways to raise the media impact of our outputs.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 21 January 2020

List of Annexes

Annex A   Regulatory Activities Dashboard

Regulatory Activities January 2020

Economy	Business, Trade and International Development	Children, Education and skills	Housing, Planning and Local Services	Crime and Security
Assessment: Published re-designation letter for HM Treasury's Public Sector Expenditure Analysis statistics: Country and Regional Analysis statistics (delayed due to purdah). Very positive feedback from HM Treasury statisticians on the value of the work **Voluntary Adoption**: HM Treasury confirmed voluntary adoption of Code of Practice pillars in respect to its Block Grant Transparency statistics. **Stakeholder engagement**: - OBR compiled and sent us its Statement of Data Needs which will act as an input to the regulatory work plan going forward. We intend to publish OBR's letter. - We submitted a proposal to run a session on regional statistics at the ESCoE Conference taking place in May 2020. **Case work completed** - Wrote privately to Santander about their use of UK Intellectual Property Office Patenting Statistics.	**Compliance Checks:** - Business Investment: - Retail Sales: Review paused by ONS delay to the use of VAT data in RSI estimates. Currently examining the circumstances behind the delay. **Assessment:** Business Demography: Strategic focus of the review will be on the extent to which official statistics provide value and insights into the way businesses are born, grow and die.	**Casework**: - PMQs – Investigating PM's statement around record sums invested in education and claim around improved reading for disadvantaged pupils in G7 countries - Higher Education Initial Participation Rates: Investigating new complaint on the methodology used. Previous complaint in October/November. Checking to see if the complaints are connected. - Teaching Excellence Framework: Currently assessing the Independent Review's findings and awaiting the final report publication. - Welsh School Funding – Drafting response to complainant and will be contacting Welsh Government for progress with setting up a meeting with The National Association of Schoolmasters / Union of Women Teachers. **Skills Review:** Draft report is with producers for comment, prior to publication in February 2020.	**Compliance Checks:** Initiating compliance checks on MHCLG and WG rough sleeping estimates **Assessments:** engaging with users as part of our assessment of Northern Ireland Planning Statistics, due for publication by end of April 2020 **Housing review:** recent outputs from the cross-government Housing Group in response to our Housing Systemic review are: - ONS blog on 'Across UK Homelessness Analysis' - GSS Harmonisation work on the homelessness conceptual framework. OSR will publish two-year progress update at the end of February 2020.	**Assessment:** Aim to designate PSNI Motoring Offence Statistics as NS in March 2020. **Police Recorded Crime statistics:** Discussions with ONS about the most effective regulatory input OSR can have on PRC to improve quality and value of the statistics.

Population and Society	Labour Market and Welfare	Health and Social Care	Agriculture, Energy and Environment	Travel, transport and tourism
Casework: Correspondence published between Ed Humpherson and Paul Lincoln, Border Force, on the use of statistics on e-borders. **Compliance Checks**: Sub National Population projections (ONS, NRS, Welsh Government and NISRA). **Published**: - A statement on the Home Office's commitment to improve EU settlement Scheme statistics.	**Compliance Checks**: - Civil Service Statistics due to be published in January. **Assessment**: ONS Labour Market Statistics: draft report is being shared with Reg Comm in February.	**Compliance check**: - Adult Social Care Productivity statistics produced by ONS. **Mental Health Review**: carrying out focus groups in England are now underway. Publication on English mental health statistics planned for May 2020. **Social Care Review**: our report on English Adult Social Care statistics was published on 16 January 2020. Work is ongoing on the Scotland and GB reports, with planned release dates in mid to late February. The Scotland report will support our submission to the Scottish Parliament Social Care Inquiry.	**Compliance Check**: - Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment statistics. **Defra user engagement review**: launching user survey in January. Continuing to analyse evidence from the user engagement workshop and following up with statistics teams.	**Assessment**: report for Transport Focus' National Rail Passenger Survey was published earlier in January, along with a suite of comms including tweets and a press notice. Transport Focus are due to publish an action plan for addressing the requirements by the end of January.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

National Statistics designation review: project update and proposal

Purpose
1. This paper presents findings and recommendations from an exploratory review into the National Statistics designation and proposals on detailed phases of research for consideration by the Authority Board.

Recommendations
2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:

   i. agree to publish the findings and recommendations of the exploratory review, including a consultation on some relatively small-scale changes to wording; and
   ii. agree the proposed approach for a fuller **development programme**, involving further research into the nature of and customer needs for the National Statistics designation.

Background
3. The Director General for Regulation commissioned a short review of the National Statistics designation to be completed in autumn 2019. The project was conducted by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), in partnership with the GSS Good Practice Team. We elicited the views of a wide range of stakeholders about official statistics, National Statistics, experimental statistics, and statistics produced by organisations voluntarily applying the pillars of the Code.

4. The Regulation Committee asked that the proposals for further research be presented to the Authority Board for discussion in the January meeting.

Discussion
5. The exploratory review confirmed the views about the National Statistics designation previously observed in the Code Stocktake. We received feedback from stakeholders about the nature of the National Statistics designation and its relevance. We also received suggestions on where further developments can be made to clarify the fitness for purpose of statistics, the oversight of the statistics regulator and the regulatory view of the adequacy of the statistics.

Findings and consultation for immediate publication
6. The exploratory review was considered by the Regulation Committee in November 2019 – it agreed that a paper on the findings be published and a brief consultation be held on the proposed changes. We propose to publish the findings and consultation questions. The consultation is scheduled to run until 27 March 2020.

7. The exploratory review report focuses on the improvements that can be made in the short term. We plan to review the consultation feedback in April 2020 and to report our conclusions to the Regulation Committee prior to implementation, if agreed.

Development programme
8. We also propose that a more detailed stage of research be undertaken to examine more fully the nature and usefulness of the National Statistics designation for producers and other stakeholders, to determine whether the designation meets the needs of official statistics in serving the public good in a data abundant world. And, if required, to identify what further developments should be conducted.

9. We recommend forming a steering group led by a non-executive director and including the National Statistician and Director General for Regulation. We propose that the group

be supported by experts from a range of expertise, and that it oversees the development and conduct of the research programme.

10. Our overarching research questions are:

   i.   How should the designation be designed to reflect fitness for purpose in a data abundant world?
   ii. What do customers need from the designation?

11. To help answer these questions we propose four strands of research in phase 2:

   i.   What is the history of National Statistics?
   ii. How do other countries determine and demonstrate the status of their official statistics?
   iii. How are the judgments of other regulators measured and communicated, such as, on food standards?
   iv. How are other types of ratings assessments, such as those used by credit ratings agencies, measured and explained?

12. We aim to use the evidence gathered in phase 2, to inform the design of the designation and maximise its effectiveness and usefulness to its customers. In phase 3, we propose to work with communication experts and psychologists, to help answer the following questions and test proposed designs:

   i.   How are statistics users deciding whether to use statistics?
   ii. What are the clearest ways of providing the information needed by users to support their decision making?
   iii. Is the National Statistics designation useful for users?
   iv. What information do users need to decide which data source to use?
   v.   What are the best ways for statistics producers to communicate this?

13. This third phase of research will provide the basis for a recommendation to the Board on the future nature of the National Statistics designation.

14. These additional research phases would involve both OSR and the GSS Good Practice Team, as well as commissioned experts, to collect evidence in a variety of ways:

   i.   desk research,
   ii. interviews with:

        • statistics producers;
        • users;
        • other stakeholders;
        • international statistical bodies; and
        • other regulators.

   iii. focus groups – to test proposed designation approaches.

15. Public engagement is vital. We propose to conduct a consultation supported by public discussions and an exposure draft report outlining the recommended solutions.

16. We welcome the views of the Board regarding this programme of research to determine the appropriate nature of the National Statistics designation in a data abundant world.

Penny Babb, Office for Statistics Regulation, 21 January 2020

SA(20)04

Migration statistics

Purpose
1. This paper provides the Authority Board with the latest update on migration statistics and a brief history of how we got here.

Recommendations
2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:

   i. the programme of work to improve migration statistics in the short-term;
   ii. that longer-term this will develop into a fully integrated population and migration system with an ongoing coverage survey; and
   iii. the dependency on getting administrative data to deliver this system.

Background
3. There is a strong need for accurate statistics and analysis to help the government and other users' understanding of migration to and from the UK. It is important that they are clear, so that they are interpreted correctly and inform debate. This will help the government plan and build services and create and evaluate policy, especially following Brexit. It will also help inform public debate, noting that Ipsos Mori's latest report states two thirds of Britons mention Brexit as one of the biggest issues facing the country and migration, despite falling to its lowest level since 2001, is in the top 10 issues.

4. There has long been criticism of the use of the International Passenger Survey for measuring migration, with criticism dating back to the 1970s. Following a 2008 House of Commons Treasury committee inquiry into the adequacy of population statistics, where they concluded that the International Passenger Survey was not fit for purpose to measure migration statistics in its current form, the ONS responded by launching the Migration Statistics Improvement Programme. The UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) also initiated a review of migration statistics and published its findings and recommendations in 2009.

5. Several improvements were subsequently made to ONS international migration statistics to better meet user needs and respond to the committees and the Authority's recommendations. These changes included: enhancements to methods; increased coverage of the International Passenger Survey (IPS); new questions on the IPS; increased use of administrative data for local authority estimates; new short-term migration statistics; and several changes to migration reporting.

6. It is important to note however that the work done to improve migration statistics between 2008 and 2017 was focused on migration flows in isolation, not the population system as a whole. It was also focused on creating a 'perfect' system based on data that was still not available – notably the e-borders scheme. Consequently progress was relatively slow and narrow and in 2013, the Public Administration Select Committee published a report which said migration statistics were still not fit for purpose, since they were not accurate enough to measure the effect of migration on the population. Alongside this Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) interventions in 2016 and 2017 focused on coherence issues between sources of data, namely the relationship with National Insurance Numbers in 2016 and a focus on student emigration in 2017.

Discussion
7. Our current work focuses on balancing between two competing demands; the need to address immediate policy priorities in the short term while building the capacity needed in the longer term for an integrated population and migration system. In this section we

first look ahead and set out our current and future plans, before outlining the progress that has already been made since 2017. What links both sections is that data acquisition is both key and an ongoing challenge. Whilst we continue to make progress embedding more administrative data into our statistics, we do not yet have all the sources we need to deliver a fully integrated administrative data-based statistics system.

Looking ahead

Short-term – 2020

8. Over the next year we are working closely with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Home Office to access further administrative data, which is critical to support our progress and understanding of EU and Non-EU migration respectively. While we await full access to the data, DWP are undertaking the necessary analysis for us to enable the adjustments to be made. Our current plan is to refine and operationalise the preliminary adjustments we made last summer (and outlined in more detail later in the paper) over the next year. We are committed to providing the best available estimates of migration based on all sources as we go through this process.

9. We will also continue to:

    i.   work closely with our users, including Home Office and external stakeholders, to understand and provide more robust EU stock estimates to help inform analysis on the EU settlement scheme;
    ii. answer the highest priority policy questions, especially as more data becomes available, including more information on how the sources fit together;
    iii. progress our research around concepts and definitions, keeping users informed and engaged; and
    iv. endeavour to provide more evidence on illegal migration.

Longer-term - 2020 and beyond

10. For the longer term the focus is on using administrative data combined with a coverage survey to deliver a completely transformed and integrated population and migration system. We will also be investigating how we can use administrative data to predict migration trends, and no longer need the IPS for measuring migration. The coverage survey may also become a vehicle for all our social surveys.

11. As we discuss later in the paper, we have now publicly acknowledged the IPS has been stretched beyond its original purpose and our recent research has shown that migrants' increasingly uncertain intentions are impacting the quality of the existing data. To address this, we will be exploring with the ONS methodology team how we might model the administrative data to provide timely estimates that are not based on an intentions-based survey. We intend to seek reaccreditation for migration statistics when we have a completely transformed system in place that meets user needs without being reliant on the IPS; we will work closely with OSR on this.

12. In addition, we will be continuing our work on concepts and definitions, exploring travel patterns alongside traditional definitions of migration with a focus on circular travel and migration. We will of course also continue to provide evidence for policy and will progress our work on the impact migrants have on public services and housing while resident.

13. All of the work planned for the longer-term will continue to be progressed alongside our shorter-term plans, but progress is largely dependent on when we get the data and systems necessary for delivery.

Progress since 2017

14. Our current and future plans build on the substantial progress in transforming migration statistics to better meet user needs since 2017. Significantly, the migration programme of

work is now fully integrated with the overall transformation of population statistics (formally the Beyond 2011 programme). We are transparent about our progress externally which included publicly acknowledging that the IPS had been stretched beyond its original purpose for the first time.

15. We have been keen to draw on external expertise to help inform our programme. We have therefore continued to rely on the GSS migration steering group, which was set up in 2016, to help steer the forward work programme and also recently established an expert group, which consists of academics, technical experts and some Government representation, to peer review our technical research and analysis; and provide constructive challenge to our thinking and approach.

16. Using our data-sharing powers through the Digital Economy Act 2017, we have been acquiring data and progressing research into how we can link a range of government data sources to build an integrated system for measuring population and migration. In January 2019, we published a research engagement report that updated users on our ambitions, dependent on acquiring access to the further data sources needed to fill gaps in coverage. As already noted, there have been significant challenges to data acquisition, and we are still in the process of acquiring critical data.

17. Nonetheless this work has been recognised internationally, and we have been invited to talk at a variety of events, including the International Forum for Migration Statistics. We have also continued to consult with users in a variety of forums and, following their feedback on what was important to them, delivered relevant and timely new insights and analysis on the impact of migration using both survey and administrative data including:

    i. labour in the agriculture sector, construction and travel and tourism sectors;
    ii. the living abroad series, on the number of British citizens living in Europe;
    iii. current evidence and future plans on migrants' impact on the health workforce and education sector; and
    iv. our current position on illegal migration.

18. We have also published the research we have done so far using Home Office administrative data, looking at concepts such as circular migration and asked users to tell us what they thought of our methods, direction and how these and other definitions might meet their needs in the future. We will publish a further report of our progress by the end of the financial year.

19. Since January 2019, we have also made further progress towards our ambition to put administrative data at the core of population statistics. This includes our June 2019 update on developing administrative data-based population estimates (ABPEs), where our latest rules show promise for removing patterns of over-coverage seen in previous research. For migration statistics in particular, this also includes our improvements based on a preliminary adjustment using administrative data from the Home Office and DWP. These preliminary adjustments and new data sources being used are giving us the best assessment yet of migration trends.

20. As set out in our research report in August 2019 - which provides further detail on the adjustments made and the rationale for them - our assessment was that the preliminary adjustments had a small impact on UK net migration overall and the trends we see over time are largely unchanged. However, while the headline trend is broadly unchanged, our analysis revealed some differences; EU migration may have been somewhat higher and non-EU migration somewhat lower than previously published. These differences largely reflect uncertainty in intentions among specific groups:

    i. for non-EU, uncertainty when emigrating means we have previously understated emigration and overstated net migration. This is primarily amongst students; and
    ii. for EU8 until 2016, we have understated immigration and so also understated net migration for this group. Since 2016, there are early indications that the link between

intentions and behaviours are changing for the EU8 group and as we bring additional data in, we will feed this into our adjustments.

21. We committed to refining our estimates as new data sources become available and reclassified them to Experimental Statistics to signal and support this period of development to our users. This approach was supported by OSR, with an exchange of letters in August 2019.

Conclusion

22. Transforming our statistics in a way that is highly responsive to user needs and balancing both short-term and longer-term priorities is crucial. We have already delivered new insights using new administrative data sources and made significant steps in improving our migration flow estimates. However, we will continue to take forward a range of research to address key questions. We will also be looking to produce migration statistics in the future without use of the International Passenger Survey. We will of course also ensure that our developments all feed into the long-term goal to deliver an integrated population and migration statistics system and the plans for Census 2021 and beyond.

Jay Lindop, Migration Statistics Division, ONS, 16 January 2020

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme update

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Board with an update on the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) in the round. It provides the usual update on Census activity. Following a thorough review of the milestones reported in November and December for business and social statistics, this paper sets out the action and remaining risk areas of data acquisition. It will also discuss the build for Distributive Trades (Dtrades) sector, which will be the first integrated system of administrative and survey data.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note that:

   i. the Census Collection and Census Coverage rehearsals completed successfully before Christmas. An evaluation and lessons learned report will be presented to the Board in March;

   ii. the Processing and Outputs Rehearsal starts on 3 February following an internal assessment of readiness. Work on final design and build for main Census is now underway;

   iii. the remaining transformation has been progressing alongside this:
   - building on the success of launching the Opinions Survey as an online multi-mode survey, the social survey transformation team are now designing a new social survey collection vehicle which will allow for more efficient survey collection;
   - progress continues to be made in Business Statistics Transformation with over 50 per cent of responses in this financial year expected to be online.

   iv. following a review of all milestones, we expect three to return to amber and green next month. Our attention is focussed on council tax and PAYE/RTI data acquisition and the build of new functionality to ensure the transformation of social surveys and business statistics remains on track.

Discussion

Census

3. The Collection and Census Coverage Survey rehearsals are now successfully complete and evaluation is being finalised. The full evaluation report will be presented to the Board in March. Following the rehearsals' completion, initial observations and early lessons learned are now being fed into the final design for 2021. This will include updating the Wave of Contact model (how we interact with the public to maximise response) in conjunction with strengthening of our strategies for coping with under-enumeration. It will also be built in conjunction with the updated engagement strategy currently being developed using the lessons learned from the rehearsal. This will be working much more closely with community groups to build engagement during the lead up to March 2021. The final design will be completed by end January 2020 and the build is already underway. Considerable pace is being brought to this to ensure the build schedule is maintained through 2020. This will allow end-to-end testing to start in September 2020.

4. Approval for the Processing and Outputs Rehearsal has now been given and will commence on 3 February 2020. Taking place over the spring and summer, it will run actual and simulated data through the live processing system, iterating the tools and methods throughout, to allow us to build an effective solution that can cope with any

under-enumeration and demonstrate our ability to produce the first Census release within a year.

5. The formation of the new Government requires write-around to be completed to approve the Census Order. This is expected to be completed by the time the Board meets. The Census Order will be laid in Parliament at the earliest opportunity after this. The Census Regulations will be laid in Parliament shortly after the Order is approved.

6. The Sikh Federation UK judicial review, concerning the lack of a Sikh tick box in the ethnic group question, was dismissed by the judge on the grounds it was premature, as well as in breach of parliamentary privilege and the constitutional convention of the separation of powers. The Sikh Federation UK are seeking permission to appeal from the Court of Appeal.

Wider Transformation

Beyond the Census

7. Paper SA(20)04 sets out the wider transformation of population and migration statistics. This paper sets out a core part of our strategy for a statistical system beyond the Census. It sets out the key component of work to estimate the population using administrative data.

Social Survey Transformation (SST) Progress

8. Within SST, the programme has delivered:

   i. The online-first mixed-mode Opinions Survey has now successfully completed, with a final response rate of 69.5 per cent. 50 per cent of the responses were achieved online, significantly exceeding agreed targets. Previous telephone-based collection methods achieved response rates in the region of 60 per cent whilst the historic face-to-face model rarely exceeded 55 per cent. The next survey takes place in January 2020 and is already showing good on-line responses.

   ii. In 2019, we completed our Labour Market Survey (LMS) pilot, a test of the redesigned labour market content of the existing Labour Force Survey (LFS). Final response to the online-first, mixed-mode LMS was 61 per cent, meeting our targets. Both the LFS and LMS are longitudinal survey designs and the 2019 test covered only one time period. We plan to undertake a longitudinal test in 2020. We have compared the 2019 test results with the traditional LFS-based estimates produced at the same time. These comparisons will be published in early February 2020 and the initial results do not show any bias from introducing an online mode.

9. We are now focussing on the design for a new survey vehicle to create a significantly different and more efficient survey mechanism. New resources are currently being brought in to ensure the planning and build of the initial capability to drive this forward. Initial re-planning utilising the Census Coverage Survey will allow our population and migration statistics transformation to continue as planned and that we can maximise the use of programme funds.

Business Statistics Transformation (BST) Progress

10. Within Business Statistics Transformation, this year, for the first time, we expect to receive more than 50 per cent of business survey responses online. Progress has been made in the following areas:

   i. **On-line business surveys** - the forecasted number of online business surveys to be dispatched by March 2020 now is approximately 800,000 (against a target of 625,000). Our target for 2020/2021 financial year is now 975,000. The Vacancies Survey (6,000 sample per month) will move online in March 2020. We are planning the move of the Construction Survey (8,000 sample per month) in June 2020, the Annual Acquisitions and Disposals of Capital Assets Survey (annual sample of

around 2500) in January 2021, and the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (sample of over 1,000, exact figure to be decided) in March 2021. We are on track to meet our target for next year. In parallel we are reviewing the delivery approach for the collection of very small surveys with small samples sizes to enable delivery more efficiently.

ii. **Distributive Trades sector** - this is the first survey where we aim to replace survey questions with administrative data as part of an integrated delivery. It continues to make progress towards the creation of survey and non-survey pipelines. The delivery of these pipelines and the business process model that provides the user interface and more, will provide the fundamental building blocks for statistical production for future business survey transformation work. This work is dependent on the cloud computing strategy for the organisation and the availability of administrative data. The first iteration will build all the functionality for use of both VAT and PAYE data from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). VAT will be used from the start, with PAYE data following once it is available.

iii. **Inter-Department Business Register (IDBR)** - a discovery project to replace the IDBR is being undertaken to create a business register that meets our transformation ambitions. It will also remove the risk of diminishing quality that could impact upon our economic statistics and will align with the ONS Data Strategy, forming a key component of the Reference Data Management Framework (RDMF). This work will complete in April 2020, following which a full implementation plan will be produced.

Core Issues for SST and BST

11. Since the December report we have reviewed all milestones relating to business and social statistics transformation elements of the programme. Whilst the overall picture is one of progress, for example we will achieve this year's BST target and we are on track for next year, we are reliant on the resolution of some core issues to ensure progress is maintained. These are focussed on the acquisition and subsequent use of administrative data to support both BST and SST. As well as Digital Services and Technology's build of new systems and functionality to support the move of business surveys on line, in particular for Dtrades. This is vital as it will then underpin remaining survey transformation.

Programme Milestones

12. The programme milestones were developed at a time when CDCTP planning was less mature and were of a level of detail that should not be at portfolio level. We are working with the Portfolio Management office to improve our contribution to office-wide reporting at a portfolio level. This will be taken to Audit and Risk Committee in March and will form a key part of the ONS Strategic Business Plan that will support the revised Authority Strategy.

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician
Nicola Tyson-Payne, Interim Transformation Director, 20 January 2020

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Developing a new strategy for the UK's statistical system

Purpose

1. Building on previous Board discussions, and two Board away days, this paper provides an update on progress and explores options for the development of the next Authority strategy. It also details findings to date from other development activity.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:

    i.   note the summary of progress and engagement undertaken so far;
    ii. discuss key outcomes from the analysis of consultation so far; and
    iii. discuss and agree the proposed outline strategy framework;

Background

3. Over the last year, Board members have held several discussions on our future strategy. At its October 2019 meeting the Board endorsed proposals for the development of a single overarching strategy for the UK's statistical system for the period 2020-2025. At its November meeting, the Board agreed this is to be developed through consultation with colleagues from across the system. Board workshops were then held in January 2020.

4. The consultation to shape the Authority's new strategy launched internally on 9 December and across the Government Statistical Service (GSS) on 16 December. The consultation received over 1000 responses so far from a variety of grades, departments, professions and locations across the ONS, OSR and GSS. Focus groups will also take place across the GSS in January and February 2020 to further gather views.

5. We continue to collaborate with the Data Science Campus (DSC) who have begun to analyse responses from the internal staff consultation. They are performing textual analysis to find similarities and key themes among responses.

6. Externally, we have also launched a call for responses with key external stakeholders alongside specific roundtables with media, third sector and data organisations. An event on the next Authority strategy will also be held at the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) on 19 February. We have also begun to explore options for launching and communicating the strategy. A more detailed update on these proposals will be provided in the February Authority Board paper.

Discussion

Key outcomes from Senior Civil Service (SCS) and Heads of Profession (HoP) discussions

7. The strategy was discussed by members of the ONS SCS in December where there was a clear desire that the strategy set an ambitious and radical direction for ONS and the wider statistical system to help us become a society with official statistics woven through its discourse. Inclusivity and sustainability in the way the system works was considered vital. In being more inclusive and setting clear strategic priorities, the strategy will help to break down barriers between ONS and the wider GSS across government.

8. There was an agreement that the strategy should look to answer the following questions:

    i. **Reputation –** Our reputation gives us the license to operate. How over the next five years should we more confidently communicate the impact we have?
    ii. **Data Landscape** – Should we provide a data platform for government, or should we focus on setting standards for a federated system? Should our aim be that the National Statistician also becomes the Chief Data Officer for Government?

iii. **Government Statistical Service** – We can join up much better to fill evidence gaps – e.g. Climate Change, but how best to leverage the system to do so? How do we ensure a humble yet inclusive leadership style?

iv. **Partnering within the research community** – How strong is the UKSA role as a catalyst to promote and enable public good research in academia? Should ONS publish its own areas of research interest?

v. **Central government's strategic priorities** – How do we keep the relationships which give insight into tomorrow's priorities? Showing the value of our work important to getting into the right rooms – how can we make sure we do that?

9. The strategy was also discussed at the quarterly meeting of Heads of Profession for statistics across government on 11 December. There was considerable support for an ambitious and inclusive co-creation of the strategy across the GSS. HoPs were asked to provide the single biggest priority for the statistical system over the next five years in their view, having discussed with their departments.

10. Having answered the above question, HoPs discussed, voted for, and then coalesced on their top four priorities for the statistical system. These were as follows:

i. 'Be the truth bearers in an information war';

ii. 'Defeating fake news and providing trusted clarity in the UK and internationally over all statistics and data';

iii. 'Bring together and link multiple datasets to answer key questions to be relevant'; and

iv. 'Meeting increasing demands from users for quick, joined-up and relevant analysis, communicated well'.

11. Emerging from both days, there was a desire for the next strategy better tackle the rise of misinformation across the statistical system, helping to better use our position as an impartial and trusted source of insight, data, evidence and analysis to tackle society and government's biggest policy challenges. These included an ageing population, climate change, inequality and leaving the EU. The strategy would position the statistical system as *the* trusted and impartial source of evidence and insight on these issues.

12. The new strategy's ability to include and bring together the ONS and wider GSS must be essential if this is to be realised in practice across government. In addition, other themes included better data sharing across and between government, ensuring we stay relevant in line with government priorities, communicating statistics and data effectively to decisionmakers and the wider public, and ensuring the strategy allows for alignment with local and departmental strategies across the GSS.

13. Members of the Inter Administration Committee (IAC) also discussed the development of a new Authority strategy in December. The Committee supported plans for an ambitious, radical, sustainable and inclusive new strategy, co-created in consultation with the whole UK statistical system across nations. The strategy should be inclusive in three ways:

i. inclusive of **all colleagues** across the ONS, OSR and UKSA;

ii. inclusive of the **whole Government Statistical Service**, including the **devolved administrations**; and

iii. inclusive in **how we serve our population** in collecting and disseminating data.

Initial findings and outcomes from internal staff consultation

14. While we are yet to receive a full analysis from the DSC, we have begun to explore key themes in our internal responses. When asked for the key priorities for the UK statistical system over the next years, respondents coalesced around a small group of key words: "***data***", "*accurate*", "***relevant***", "*trust*", "*government*", "*quality*", "*reliable*" and "***trusted***".

15. On this question, there was a desire for the new strategy to position the Authority with a "*stronger ability to support decision making*" and "*a trusted resource across government*

and the wider public", ensuring "*more collaboration across the service*" and "*challenging misuse*". There was an overarching emphasis on need for relevance, "*reaching out to all sectors and government to comment on emerging societal issues*", while ensuring the Authority becomes "*more accessible to the wider public*".

16. When asked about services the system should provide beyond producing and regulating statistics, respondents predominantly referenced "***data***", "***public***", "***analysis***", "*people*", "*education*", and "*fact checking*". There was a recurring desire to "help to educate the public on statistics and analysis" through "improving the public's data literacy" alongside *"partnering with other organisations"* to "*review outputs*" and "*rebut fake news*".

17. In terms of who the statistical system should aim to serve, respondents 'strongly agreed' with 'government/policy makers', 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' with the 'general public', and 'agreed' with 'academics', 'research bodies', 'businesses', and 'charities'.

18. There was an overarching sense across respondents that "*there should be no limit to our ambitions*", and that "*there needs to be more collaboration and information sharing across government*", *"making use of technology to communicate more effectively with each other and the wider public"* to better "*reflect society's changing demands and policy issues under public scrutiny*".

Summary of findings and discussions at January Board Strategy Workshops

19. At the first Board workshop, there were detailed discussions around the Authority's core purpose, who are customers are, what their needs might be, and our unique selling point as an organisation to these various users. There was agreement that the Authority would need to take an increasing role in data and analysis, potentially acting as a data store for the UK. There was a shared recognition that the Authority's USP came from unrivalled access to multiple data sources, our independence, and investment in skills capability.

20. The Board explored the tension between relevance in relation to adapting to government priorities against the Authority's independence and wider users. Being too independent could lead to isolation and irrelevance at a time when government is highly drawn to data science and using data to inform policy. There is an opportunity for the Authority to be major providers of analysis for government to inform evidence-based decision making.

21. However, serving government must mean serving the wider society. On the Authority's core purpose, there was agreement that the Statistics and Registration Service Act (SRSA) and Digital Economy Act not only permits, but requires us to work inform the nation with evidence. In the SRSA, the Authority's objective is "promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good". Here, 'public good' refers to a) "informing the public about social and economic matters" and b) "assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy".

22. There is a need to modernise this definition in the strategy, reflecting the Authority's call to do analysis in a trusted and relevant way whilst working in partnership. However, there was acknowledgement that 'defeating fake news' or 'being truth bearers' results from driving up trust as an end, rather than as the means.

The Authority's core purpose, mission statement and strapline

23. The strategy needs to set our position in a wider context. Having reviewed other National Statistical Institutes' mission statements, at the second Board workshop there was a desire to explicitly reference 'data' and the Authority's USP. As an ambitious strategy that moves beyond statistics, this should be reflected in a new, inclusive and memorable mission statement. While the Authority itself may be aware of our existing role with data, referencing 'data' asserts ownership of a territory and there is a need to give an assertive signal.

24. Below are some examples which came from the discussion. The final words may not be any of the below, but stem from the information we have available at this moment. The strapline or mission statement will need to follow once our engagement activity has been analysed in more detail and the strategy content is fully developed.

25. Some examples for mission statements can be found below. It is not intended to propose or discuss any of the below options, rather they are illustrative of a direction we could move in:

   i. 'Informing the nation to help government, businesses and citizens level-up';
   ii. including our USP in a statement, we may wish to consider 'High-quality, trustworthy and relevant statistics, data and analysis for the public good'; and
   iii. picking up on a recurring theme of 'fake news' and being the trusted source, an example could be 'Defeating fake news and providing trusted clarity in the UK and internationally over all statistics and data'

26. For a shorter strapline, there is a need to capture the 'emotional pull':

   i. we could extend the current strapline 'Better Statistics, Better Decisions' though this would be at odds with an ambitious and radical new strategy;
   ii. maintaining elements of continuity, we could explore whether 'data' should explicitly feature in the new strapline, such as 'Better Data, Better Lives';
   iii. taking a greater focus on impact, examples could be 'Improving outcomes through statistics, data and analysis' or 'Improving outcomes through data';
   iv. we could look to articulate our role in the society and look at some of the verbs alongside "lead" or "serve";
   v. reflecting a desire to better engage and educate society beyond government, there could be scope for an ambitious call to action, such as 'An informed nation'.

27. Central to any strategy is a need to maintain and improve trust and trustworthiness. Trust is what gives us our license to operate. It is our ultimate USP, that we have no skin in the game but for the analysis of information in the public good.

28. There is an opportunity for the Authority to coordinate across partners to be at the heart of analysis, data and statistics in government but also the wider statistical system. Working in partnership with other parts of government and the research community is central to our aims.

Conclusion

29. Following the consultation with staff across the statistical system, we will incorporate the analysis of these findings into developing our next strategy. It is recommended that the Board receive a draft strategy in February alongside a full report on findings, with a view to finalising the strategy document in March and launching the strategy in April 2020. This will ensure the new round of business planning aligns with the strategic priorities set out in the strategy.

30. This paper has sought to reflect the Board's current thinking on the type of strategy we will develop and invited discussion on an initial strategy framework. It also sought discussion on key points of content which will be developed in the coming weeks and brought back to the Board, following a fuller analysis of the consultation.

Will Marks & Douglas Cameron, Central Policy Secretariat, 23 January 2020

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

EU Exit Programme Update

Purpose
1. This paper updates the Board on activities to prepare the UK statistical system for EU Exit.

Timing
2. The UK is set to leave the EU on 31 January, and enter a transition, or implementation, period lasting until 31 December. This paper sets out preparations for the start of the transition period and looks ahead to the next phase of work.

Recommendations
3. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:

    i.   note the implications of leaving the EU on 31 January and entering the transition phase; and
    ii. note the proposed next steps for the EU Exit Programme.

Background
4. The EU Exit Programme's mission is to lead the statistical aspects of the UK's exit from the EU, leveraging opportunities to transform statistics consistent with our strategy, while mitigating the risks.

5. The Board has received regular updates on the Authority's EU Exit Programme since it was initiated shortly after the EU referendum. Updates over the last year focused on the statistical system's readiness for a potential no-deal exit, first in March[4] and then in October.[5]

6. Following the General Election on 12 December, the UK is set to leave the EU on 31 January under the terms of the negotiated Withdrawal Agreement[6], following ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill by the UK Parliament.

7. With the manner and timing of the UK's withdrawal now clear, the work of the EU Exit Programme is moving into a new phase looking at:

    i.   supporting the statistical system over the course of the transition phase, including ongoing engagement with Eurostat and communications around the UK's departure on 31 January;
    ii. feeding into the Government's negotiations with the EU on a future relationship to seek an outcome for the statistical system consistent with our strategy, and the preparatory work done to-date; and
    iii. preparations, both domestic and international, for a range of scenarios beyond 2020, dependent on the outcome of negotiations.

8. At the same time, the relevant functions within the UK Government are in the process of being reorganised, to which the programme will need to adapt accordingly.

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[4] https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/uk-statistics-authority-board-minutes-28-march-2019/

[5] https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/uk-statistics-authority-board-minute-31-october-2019/

[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/withdrawal-agreement-and-political-declaration

Discussion

9. The Programme operates as a central co-ordinating function, working closely with colleagues from across the Authority, the ONS, and the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) on the issues relevant to them.

10. The EU Exit Programme Board met on 16 January and discussed its priorities over the transition phase and potential scenarios after 2020.

Preparations for 31 January

11. Business is expected to continue largely as now at the start of the transition period, and is not expected to cause disruption for the statistical system. With this in mind, the Programme has in place a low-key communications strategy for 31 January with two objectives:

    i. communicating effectively with stakeholders and staff about the implications of the UK's withdrawal and the transition period; and
    ii. communicating effectively what the transition phase means for our statistics on the UK economy and society.

12. The focus of our communications will be internal, ensuring that colleagues in the statistical system are fully aware of transitional arrangements with the European Statistical System, and that every effort is made to support EU national colleagues applying for settled status.

13. A statement from the National Statistician has been prepared for publication, but not proactive use, which would make clear our continued alignment with international standards, reaffirming the commitment made in the context of no-deal by John Pullinger in January 2019.

14. Unlike a no-deal scenario, the move from EU membership to transition period should not pose any disruption for the production of UK official statistics. Working groups on economic and migration statistics looking at mitigations and alternative data sources for the most at-risk series in the event of a no-deal, have been paused until April.

Transitional engagement with Eurostat

15. Under the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK will continue to participate in the European Statistical System for the duration of the transition period. However, the UK will not participate in its decision-making or governance. This is a consistent position across almost all EU programmes and institutions.

16. Obligations in EU law, including existing and new regulations relating to statistics, will continue to have direct effect in the UK. This is given effect by the Withdrawal Agreement Bill, which will preserve the relevant provisions of the European Communities Act (with some minor modifications) for the duration of the implementation period.

17. While the UK will need to continue to supply data to Eurostat throughout 2020, we will not generally be present for meetings of the European Statistical System. The Withdrawal Agreement states the UK may exceptionally attend meetings or other groups without voting rights, in specific circumstances, at the invite of Eurostat, but such instances are expected to be rare.

18. Following the Government's review of attendance by UK officials (including ONS officials) at EU meetings, attendance reduced substantially towards the end of last year so in practice the transitional arrangements will not represent a major change. The Programme and the International Team will nevertheless continue to engage bilaterally with Eurostat and with their counterparts in other member states, to ensure we retain a complete picture of developments in the European Statistical System.

19. The Withdrawal Agreement provides for an extension of the transition period for up to two years, however Government has publicly ruled out such an extension and is in the process of legislating against it through the Withdrawal Agreement Bill.

Longer-term commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement

20. Alongside the transition period, the Withdrawal Agreement includes a number of commitments that endure beyond the end of 2020. Two of these have direct statistical consequences:

    i.   Part Five, concerning the financial settlement; and
    ii. The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

21. The financial settlement in the Withdrawal Agreement was initially agreed in 2018 and its implications for the statistical system analysed by the Programme at the time. The settlement meets the UK's financial obligations for the duration of its membership and the transition period, and are calculated based on the UK's share of Gross National Income (GNI) for those years. As a result, the UK is required to continue to provide GNI statistics to Eurostat until the process of revisions is complete and all reservations by Eurostat have been addressed. This process will mean the UK continues to provide data until at least 2024, and potentially 2028.

22. The Government published a revised Protocol on Northern Ireland to the Withdrawal Agreement agreed with the EU on 17 October. Under the revised protocol, arrangements to avoid border checks on the island of Ireland require EU regulations on trade statistics (*Intrastat* and *Extrastat*) to continue to apply to the UK in respect of Northern Ireland. The EU Exit Programme will work closely with HMRC on the application of the protocol, as detailed arrangements are developed over the course of the year.

Statistical relationship after 2020

23. Over the course of the Programme, engagement has been taking place on the shape of a potential future statistical relationship, in particular with the Cabinet Office, Department for Exiting the EU, HM Treasury and the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy. The latter has overarching responsibility for the UK position on the EU Single Market Programme, which after 2020 will include the EU Statistical Programme.

24. The Political Declaration on a future relationship, published alongside the Withdrawal Agreement, makes clear that the EU is open to UK participation in programmes. It states:

    "Noting the intended breadth and depth of the future relationship and the close bond between their citizens, the Parties will establish general principles, terms and conditions for the United Kingdom's participation in Union programmes."

25. The EU Exit Programme is considering and preparing for a range of potential scenarios beyond 2020, depending on the outcome of negotiations. At the two extremes this could mean full participation in the European Statistical System, or it could mean participation limited to the commitments already made under the Withdrawal Agreement and listed above.

26. It is worth noting that the Withdrawal Agreement Bill will postpone the effect of secondary legislation made under the powers contained in the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018, including the statutory instrument relating to statistics, so it takes effect at the end of the transition period, rather than on 'exit day'. As a result, the legislative work already done to prepare the legal framework for statistics for the UK's departure remains in place.

Conclusion

27. The start of the transition period is not expected to result in any disruption for the statistical system, with business continuing largely as now. Plans are in place for communications, principally internally, to ensure this is well understood by colleagues in ONS and across the GSS.

28. The EU Exit Programme will continue to engage with Government to feed into negotiations on a future relationship and will continue to monitor developments and prepare for all scenarios.

Will Laffan, Central Policy Secretariat, 21 January 2020