

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

**Minutes**  
**Thursday 27 May 2020**  
**Via Videoconference**

## **Present**

### **UK Statistics Authority**

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)  
Ms Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)  
Ms Helen Boaden  
Professor Sir Ian Diamond  
Mr Richard Dobbs  
Professor David Hand  
Professor Jonathan Haskel  
Mr Ed Humpherson  
Ms Frankie Kay  
Ms Nora Nanayakkara  
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter  
Professor Anne Trefethen

## **Also in attendance**

Mr Jonathan Athrow  
Mr Nick Bateson  
Mr Iain Bell  
Mr Owen Brace  
Mr Robert Bumpstead  
Mr Douglas Cameron (Secretariat)  
Ms Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)  
Ms Amy Williams (Secretariat)

## **Apologies**

None

## **1. Apologies**

1.1 There were no apologies received.

## **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 30 April 2020 were agreed.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair**

4.1 Non-executive directors had met prior to the Board. They had discussed the agile response by both the ONS and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to the challenges posed to the production and regulation of statistics by the pandemic.

4.2 The Chair introduced the newly appointed members, Mr Richard Dobbs and Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter and welcomed them to the Board. With regard to membership of the Authority sub-committees Mr Dobbs would be a member of the Regulation Committee; and Sir David would be a member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

4.3 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met. On 7 May Sir David, Professor Sir Ian Diamond and Mr Humpherson had met Lord Burns to discuss the need for the coherence and regularity of official statistics on COVID-19. The Board heard that ONS staff had been seconded to No 10 to provide advice regarding the presentation of statistics used in the daily briefing.

4.4 Sir David had written to Mr Matt Hancock MP (Secretary of State for Health and Social Care) regarding the need for clarity of COVID-19 testing statistics, which should meet the standards set by the Code of Practice for Statistics. Sir David informed the Board that he had received a reply from Mr Hancock that morning and would be considering his response. The Board went on to discuss the need for clarity of the metrics to measure the success of the test and trace service. Sir Ian was scheduled to meet Baroness Harding, who had been appointed to lead the NHS Test and Track programme at the Department for Health and Social Care, to discuss.

4.5 Sir David had written an article for The Independent commending the efforts by official statisticians in response to the pandemic.

## **5. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(20)32]**

5.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last meeting. The Board heard that OSR had emphasised to Departments the need for management information that was quoted by Ministers to be publicly accessible. OSR had published a statement on 18 May setting out the regulatory stance to support transparency and openness and equality of access. Mr Humpherson noted that he would be following up with the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the management of information on rough sleepers.

5.2 Mr Humpherson and Sir Ian had given evidence at the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee on COVID-19 statistics on 13 May. Mr Humpherson had highlighted the need for the wide range of data on COVID-19 to be brought together in one place, with ONS taking a key role. It was noted that ONS had a dedicated area on the website with the latest statistical information on COVID-19, with consideration already being given to how to join-up social and economic analysis to illustrate the wider impact of the virus and create a coherent narrative for the public.

5.3 Mr Humpherson went on to report that some areas of the regulatory programme of work had been paused due to the impact of COVID-19. While COVID-19 had been a primary area of focus for the OSR recently, other key outputs had been progressed

e.g. the report of the review of HMRC's statistical quality, which had been published on 30 April.

## **6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(20)33]**

- 6.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues for May. With regard to statistical outputs Sir Ian reported that:
- i. The COVID-19 Infection Survey was providing authoritative estimates of the prevalence of the virus in the population and being used by the government to inform decision making. Results of the pilot study had been published on 14 May. New information would be added to each release.
  - ii. The statistics on deaths from COVID-19 registered in England and Wales included new variables, such as ethnicity and occupation.
  - iii. The complex work on international comparisons of COVID-19 was ongoing.
  - iv. The Opinions and Lifestyle survey continued to provide weekly estimates on attitudes and behaviours to measure the social impact of the virus.
  - v. The Business Impact of COVID-19 fortnightly survey indicated how businesses were reacting to the pandemic. The economic impact of the pandemic would continue to be a key area of focus for ONS in order to provide the data needed to inform and enable the economic recovery (this would include working with colleagues at HM Treasury, Joint Biosecurity Centre and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy). ONS would be considering the need for additional surveys and the use of administrative data.
- 6.2 Work on the Integrated Data Platform (IDP) was progressing with funding of £5 million agreed in the budget on 11 March.
- 6.3 The Board had heard from Ms Ceinwen Blake on the successful transition to homeworking at the April meeting. Sir Ian informed the meeting that he would be writing to Ms Blake to congratulate her on 40 years' service at the ONS.
- 6.4 Since the transition to homeworking there had been a significant reduction in average working days lost through sickness absence. Consideration was being given to prepare for a transition from home working to a safe return to the office for staff, when appropriate. Mr Cameron and Ms Kay were undertaking a piece of work that would outline potential ways of working safely and flexibly in the office.
- 6.5 The Board welcomed the update and highlighted the importance of learning lessons from the organisation's response to the pandemic.

## **7. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

- 7.1 Ms Nanayakkara reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which had met on 14 May 2020.
- 7.2 Committee members had considered:
- i. the Authority's current financial position;
  - ii. progress against the delivery of the Internal Audit Programme 2019/20;
  - iii. the delivery of the External Audit 2019/20;
  - iv. an update from Ms Philippa Bonay following the HR Deep Dive considered by the Committee in November. The Committee welcomed the progress that had been made, specifically the programmatic approach being taken to delivery. There was a need for independent assurance around the delivery of the Strategic People Committee which was being considered by the Executive;
  - v. statistical quality and the impact of the pandemic on outputs; and
  - vi. the improvement to risk management around compliance and the plans to elevate the approach to risk management across the organisation to inform decision making.

7.3 The Committee would remain engaged with the people agenda and statistical quality and further updates had been scheduled for the coming months. It was noted that the Committee's oversight of statistical quality would be strengthened by the expertise of Sir David Spiegelhalter.

**8. Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) update [SA(20)34]**

8.1 Mr Bell introduced a paper that provided an update on the CDCTP programme, including the work on scenario planning in response to COVID-19.

8.2 The Board heard that the delivery of a Census in March 2021 remained achievable. The scenarios reported to the Board in April had been reviewed and remained relevant. Significant progress had been made with the processing and outputs rehearsal, which had now exceeded the level of assurance undertaken for the 2011 Census. As part of the work being conducted around scenario planning, and in the event of any further restrictions during live field force operations, the requirement for Personal Protective Equipment was being considered. New models for community engagement may include engagement via online groups. Engagement with Communal Establishments was also an area of focus.

8.3 The update scheduled for the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee would include an update on data acquisition risks given the reliance on administrative data.

8.4 The legislative timetable remained on track. The Privy Council had approved the Draft Census Order. The Census Regulations would be laid in Parliament and in the Senedd.

8.5 Board members discussed the update and noted the need for shared learning with other countries including the United States, Australia and New Zealand. It was noted that the International Census Forum provided the opportunity for shared learning.

**9. Scenario Planning**

9.1 It was agreed that the item on scenario planning would be deferred for discussion at the June meeting.

**10. Any other business**

10.1 The Authority Board would meet next on Tuesday 30 June 2020 by videoconference.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### *Agenda*

**27 May 2020, 11:30 to 13:00, via teleconference**

**Chair: Sir David Norgrove**

**Apologies: Ms Nora Nanayakkara (until 12:00)**

**Attendees:**

**NED Session: 11:00-11:30**

1 11:30-11:35 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Declarations of interest</li></ul>	Meeting of 30 April 2020
2 11:35-11:45 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 11:45-11:55 10 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(20)32 Mr Ed Humpherson
4 11:55-12:20 25 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(20)33 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
5 12:20-12:25 5 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audit and Risk Assurance Committee</li></ul>	Oral report Ms Nora Nanayakkara
6 12:25-12:40 15 mins	Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme Update	SA(20)34 Mr Iain Bell
7 12:40-12:55 15 mins	COVID-19 Scenario Planning	SA(20)35 Mr Douglas Cameron
8 12:55-13:00 5 mins	Any other business	

**Next meeting: 30 June, 08:30-11:30, Remote meeting via teleconference**

*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 have focused on COVID-19:

Rapid regulatory reviews

3. Since the last Board meeting, we have published rapid reviews on:
  - i. [School attendance in England](#) – a new Department for Education (DfE) output which tracks the numbers of schools open and school children attending them, and estimates the numbers of vulnerable children who are in school;
  - ii. [ONS's infection survey](#) – our review praised the work of ONS to develop the infection survey incredibly rapidly. We highlighted how the role of the survey results in estimating R (the reproduction number) should be clear; and
  - iii. [Department for Transport \(DfT\) statistics](#) – again, we praised the work of analysts in DfT. We also highlighted the need to publish these data on a predictable basis – they had been published on an ad hoc basis through the Number Ten daily briefing.

Improvements to COVID-19 data

4. We continue to push for further improvements in COVID-19 data, for example around the Number Ten daily briefing. With extensive input from ONS staff, these briefings now feature much clearer explanations of what the data are and where they are from.
5. In Northern Ireland, we wrote to the [Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health](#) to push for the republication of their daily data dashboard which had been suspended. Publication has now resumed.

Management Information

6. We have emphasised to Departments the need for management information that is quoted by Ministers to be freely accessible. I wrote again to Permanent Secretary of the [Department for Work and Pensions](#) to clarify to confirm our expectation that figures used by their Ministers on Universal Credit should be available publicly. This letter followed discussions the Department, and we are content with the commitment to transparency that they have now made.
7. We published [a statement](#) on 18 May setting out our regulatory stance, which is to support transparency and openness. I mentioned this issue in our evidence to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee (see below), and the chair of the Committee subsequently wrote to the Prime Minister to encourage full transparency around management information that is referred to publicly.

Testing

8. We have been concerned about the quality and completeness of the data on testing, related to the Government's target to do 100,000 tests a day. The Chair wrote to [Matt Hancock](#) on 11 May raising concerns about this. We are now discussing with the Department of Health and Social Care how they can publish much clearer information the progress of testing.

### Cases

9. The OSR health and population team is working very well to handle a wide range of cases about the availability and use of COVID-19 statistics. In the week of 11 May, for example, they closed around 20 separate cases that were raised with us or which the team identified internally.

### Communication

10. I published a blog – [the armchair epidemiologists](#) – highlighting the important role played by data and statistics in public understanding of the pandemic.
11. With Sir Ian, I gave evidence at the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee (PACAC). Key points I made included the importance of transparency on management information; the crucial role played by getting a regional as opposed to national picture of the pandemic; and the weaknesses in data on social care.
12. At PACAC I also spoke of the need for the wide range of data on COVID-19 to be brought together in one place. In OSR we see this as a very important role for ONS to play and we would encourage ONS to build on its really strong response to the pandemic by playing an increasing role of curator of data sets produced across Government.

### HMRC review

13. We published our HMRC review of quality on 30 April. HM Revenue and Customs have welcomed it, and I have follow-up meetings on implementation with the Executive Board and the Director General of Finance.

### Challenges

14. I have mentioned the need to improve the report production process. While this remains a challenge, the way OSR has responded to the demands of the pandemic illustrates agility, confidence and a capacity to reach judgement quickly. This offers a model for how we want to work in general.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 18 May 2020**

### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Regulatory Activities Dashboard**

Regulatory Activities May 2020

Economy	Business, Trade and International Development	Population and Society	Children, Education and skills	Crime and Security
<p><b>HMRC Quality Assurance Review:</b> Report published 30 April and DG Regulation met with First Secretary to the Treasury.</p> <p><b>Regulation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responded to invitation from ONS to comment on draft articles on the impacts of Covid-19 on GDP, Inflation and Public Sector output statistics</li> <li>Input to meeting with ONS about their plans to change the publication of several economic statistics</li> <li>Met with ONS on the changes to ONS's measurement of inflation</li> <li>Met with Prof Guy Nasen of Imperial College about the inflation indices</li> </ul> <p><b>Casework:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asked for advice on whether the Intellectual Property Office had breached the Code of Practice in respect to the public disclosure of patent data</li> </ul> <p><b>Parliamentary Affairs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Input to briefing for Ed Humpherson in advance of PACAC hearing on Wednesday 13 May</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment:</b> Business Demography: Summarising and reviewing evidence gathered from users and stakeholders. UK Trade – Reviewing ONS Trade Development plan to inform OSR position statement on the status of the assessment of UK Trade statistics.</p> <p><b>Casework:</b> Discussing with DiT and ONS the need to provide users with greater detail on the causes of changes in UK Trade statistics.</p> <p><b>Compliance Checks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retail Sales: Continue to examine the circumstances and evidence behind the introduction of VAT data into economic and retail sales statistics.</li> </ul>	<p><b>COVID-19</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewing evolving Registered Death statistics from ONS, NRS and NISRA</li> <li>Published Surveillance and Registered deaths data review</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Census offices due to submit evidence on meeting phase one assessment requirements in coming month</li> <li>Assessment of NRS's vital event statistics paused given COVID-19 impacts on the statistics and priorities of NRS at this time</li> <li>User engagement linked to the Wellbeing of Wales assessment proving challenging at this time</li> </ul> <p><b>Systemic Review:</b></p> <p><b>Loneliness</b> In its final scoping stages, reviewing evidence gathered from initial user and producer conversations.</p>	<p><b>Rapid Reviews:</b></p> <p>Published: Attendance at local authority setting during Coronavirus (Covid19) pandemic (Welsh Government) Coronavirus (Covid19): Attendance in educational and early years settings (DfE)</p> <p><b>Casework:</b> Closed - Comparisons of per pupil funding across England and Wales. 11-plus and grammar school entrance.</p> <p><b>Systemic Reviews:</b></p> <p><b>Skills Report</b> has been reviewed again by relevant departments and is due for publication in early June.</p> <p><b>Children and Young People</b> This review has been paused since January 2019.</p>	<p><b>Assessment:</b> We have postponed the final outcome of our regulatory work on the NI Safe Community Survey, while the producer team decide how they will handle the survey during the COVID pandemic.</p> <p><b>Casework:</b> Closed, Use of MI by ministers in public domain, for MOJ and Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Compliance Checks:</b> Completed the MOJ cc and just started a cc on MOD business and trade statistics, we expect to finish early June</p> <p><b>Police Recorded Crime statistics:</b> We have started research for a 'position statement' about PRC, to be published in the autumn. This will set out the journey these statistics have been on since they were de-designated in 2014, and what still needs to be done. We recently had a really good discussion with ONS about this. We intend to speak with HMICFRS and HO as well.</p> <p><b>Raising awareness of OSR:</b> Presentations to MOD and MoJ analysts about OSR have been postponed until Autumn. We are speaking to the femicide census about voluntary application.</p>
Health and Social Care	Labour Market and Welfare	Agriculture, Energy and Environment	Housing, Planning and Local Services	Travel, Transport and Tourism
<p><b>Assessments:</b> Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) with NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) ongoing.</p> <p><b>Casework:</b> Dealing with elevated levels of COVID-19 casework, coverage of statistics on deaths, transparency of testing programme, comparability of UK-wide data, metadata around the daily dashboards, publication of COVID-19 data in Northern Ireland.</p> <p><b>Systemic Review:</b></p> <p><b>Mental Health in England:</b> All analysis of user engagement is now complete, and the written report is well underway. We plan to publish the report during summer 2020, considering any potential sensitivities around mental health given the current COVID-19 situation.</p>	<p><b>Assessment:</b> Quarterly Benefits Summary assessment has been paused due to resource pressures in DWP and will resume in June.</p> <p><b>Casework:</b> Two letters were published in response to DWP's use of unpublished management information on Universal Credit.</p> <p><b>Compliance checks:</b> Kicked off CCs on Index of Multiple Deprivation (GB). MHCLG have confirmed they can support this in June. Still awaiting response from Welsh Government and Scottish government.</p>	<p><b>Rapid review:</b> People and Nature Survey (Natural England) due for publication 9 June</p> <p><b>Compliance checks:</b> Waste statistics across the UK underway, expecting to publish June/July</p> <p><b>Systemic review:</b></p> <p><b>Defra User Engagement,</b> report scheduled for publication on 28 May.</p>	<p><b>Assessments:</b> Report on Northern Ireland Planning Statistics assessment published 7 May</p> <p><b>Casework:</b> Seeking equal access to MHCLG quoted MI on rough sleepers housed during the pandemic</p> <p><b>Compliance Checks:</b> Carrying out compliance checks on MHCLG and WG rough sleeping estimates</p>	<p><b>Rapid review:</b> Rapid review of Department for Transport COVID-19 statistics published on 15 May.</p> <p><b>Assessment:</b> Assessment of the Office for Rail and Road's Estimates of Station Usage statistics kicked off at the end of April. Currently carrying out user engagement.</p>



# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(20)33

## *Chief Executive's Report, May 2020*

### **Purpose**

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

### **Summary**

2. I have spent the past month meeting with Senior Officials across Government, providing decision makers with timely analysis to help inform Her Majesty's government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Review of recent activities**

3. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
  - i. I attended the Scientific Advisory Group in Emergencies (SAGE) as it continues to provide advice on the COVID-19 pandemic;
  - ii. I provided evidence to both the Science and Technology Committee and the Public Affairs and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) as these commitments seek to inform the response to COVID-19;
  - iii. the ONS have published breakdowns of COVID-19 deaths by new variables. These include publications on COVID-19 deaths by ethnicity, occupation and within the care sector;
  - iv. the joint COVID-19 Infection Study conducted by ONS in partnership with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and University of Oxford which looks at the proportion of the population currently with COVID-19 was launched in the field. Early results of the pilot were published on 14 May;
  - v. I also engaged in activities with the main stream media, notably being interviewed on the Andrew Marr Show on 3 May, releasing an Op Ed in The Times on 5 May and participating in the daily COVID-19 press briefing on 7 May;
  - vi. the ONS has worked in collaboration with the DHSC and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to set up a survey aiming to establish the Government's initiative to 'shield' the 1.8 million most clinically vulnerable groups; and
  - vii. on 19 and 20 May I chaired two 'Your Call' sessions with all staff in which a range of questions were put to me from colleagues throughout the business.

### **Future look**

4. This next month will see a further iteration of the COVID-19 Infection Study to inform decision makers on the prevalence of COVID-19 in the population.
5. We will continue to monitor government guidance and make adjustments in line with these where appropriate.

**Professor Sir Ian Diamond, 19 May 2020**

***Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on the programme focusing on the Census, our scenario planning in response to COVID-19 and the continuing efforts to maintain readiness for delivery.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
  - i. the Census Order has now passed both the Commons and Lords to proceed at the May Privy Council. This means our legislative progress remains on track. Following the Privy Council meeting, we will lay the Census Regulations in Westminster and the Senedd;
  - ii. the programme remains at amber. We have implemented some contingent design options, such as a virtual candidate journey, to maintain our delivery. Despite small changes to our plans, and the continued challenge of securing administrative data, the programme remains on track;
  - iii. the delivery of a Census on 21 March 2021 remains achievable. We are considering alternative methods of delivery if disruption continues into 2021 but our first readiness assessment in April has assured our current position. There has been significant progress made with the processing and outputs rehearsal which has now exceeded the level of assurance undertaken in 2011;
  - iv. this work is being carried out in parallel with National Records of Scotland (NRS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to maintain harmonisation and provide mutual support around achieving delivery; and
  - v. emerging opportunities for innovation and new ways of working have been identified and are being built into future planning for the wider transformation.

**Discussion**

*Programme update*

3. The programme remains at Amber. The immediate challenges presented by COVID-19 have been met with focus now shifting to acceleration of contingent design alternatives to secure and safeguard this position. Census design and build remains on track with the wider transformation progressing well.
4. Census build is continuing in line with the updated Wave of Contact model. The high-level design has been issued and, during May, the prioritisation of build requirements will feed a Digital Services and Technology (DST) sizing exercise. Progress reporting against this design and sizing has been enabled following a collaborative effort by the Programme Management Office, Census Collection, Business Architecture, Service Integration and Testing and DST teams. A sample report was presented to the May Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. We expect to be able to share our first progress report with the Authority Board in July.
5. The Census Processing and Outputs Rehearsal continues to make good progress. To date, we have completed 17 of the planned 23 assurance activities and by the middle of May has exceeded the level of assurance reached in 2011. This has included adding administrative data from the Valuation Office Agency and the Patient Register/Personal Demographics Service to support the development of statistical contingencies. There have been technical

issues identified and subsequently resolved during the process. This has reinforced the value of the rehearsal.

### Preparations for Census during COVID-19

6. We are confident, although not complacent, of our ability to deliver the main census as planned on 21 March 2021. As previously described, the census “Wave of Contact” model has been updated following the lessons learned from the census rehearsal. This includes an A5 postcard to every household to “watch out” for Census 2021, and an invitation letter including a Unique Access Code followed by two reminder letters. For around 10 per cent of the population we will be issuing a paper questionnaire directly, for everyone else we will be inviting them to go online to complete the survey.
7. We have reviewed the scenarios described in our April submission to the Authority and have agreed that they remain relevant and aligned to the Government advice. As a reminder, our scenarios are:
  - i. operational restriction in place for three months with up to two months transition back into normal operations by the end of July 2020;
  - ii. as per scenario (i) but restrictions are re-imposed in October 2020 for a further three months but back into normal operations by February 2021; and
  - iii. as per scenario (i) but with a rolling set of (a) planned restrictions for up to a year based on three months restricted and three months unrestricted, and (b) unplanned restrictions for an undefined amount of time over an undefined period.
8. As reported in our April submission, we are committed to ensuring our confidence in delivery is not tinged with optimism bias. Our series of ‘readiness assessment points’ have been arranged for 30 April, 18 June, 30 September and 1 December. The assessments feed and determine the focus for continuing detailed planning and prioritisation. The first assessment checkpoint was held on 30 April and was ratified by the May Programme Board. The output from the assessment was shared with the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. At this stage, our conclusion is that there are no major impacts affecting delivery.
9. Following the April assessment, we have commissioned additional work to understand the ‘no regrets actions’ we can immediately take to mitigate or reduce future risks. This is because there may be changes we can approve which would be crucial to the more extreme scenario three but are valid for any of the scenarios. One such example is the recruitment journey where we have altered the design to be an alternative virtual candidate journey.
10. Our scenario planning continues to take account of the potential for cumulative risk to build over the coming months. This is particularly relevant to statistical design as alternative design options are approved in response to COVID-19. We have commissioned the teams to understand each impact to statistical design and the options for recovery.
11. In all scenarios, we are beginning to understand and incorporate social distancing into our field and operational design. This is through updated or new policies, procedures, ways of working and training. It is also likely that there would be an increased dependence on administrative data.
12. Should there be any further restrictions (an ‘additional wave’) during live field operations, our existing statistical and operational risk contingency plans will apply. These are currently being refreshed for all COVID-19 related risks. This will include understanding any requirement for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to manage any virus transmission liability during live operations. The supporting operational procedures to manage, audit and assure are also being updated.

13. The programme continues to meet regularly with colleagues in NRS and NISRA to share progress in relation to the scenario planning, identify opportunities to support each other and to coordinate respective responses.
14. We are keen to understand public perceptions and attitudes towards the delivery of a Census. We are working with colleagues in stakeholder relations and communications to build this into our readiness assessment. For example, could this cause an increase to the risk of non-compliance or, alternatively, an opportunity to add to the effort of reassurance to the public.
15. Our next readiness assessment is due on 18 June. The work commissioned to underpin this assessment includes the no-regrets actions to be mobilised, analysis of key decisions needed where there is a budgetary impact or commercial imperative and the analysis of the statistical impact of changes being implemented. This assessment will be shared in our June Authority Board update and ratified in the July programme board. We are discussing how we may build our approach to readiness assessment into the July Infrastructure and Projects Authority gateway review.

#### Acquisition of administrative data

16. The taskforce continues to work through the mitigating actions needed to maintain acquisition of data. This is being reported and discussed on a weekly basis. Data suppliers have maintained good engagement despite the challenges being faced across Government following COVID-19.
17. Work continues to assess how automation can be applied to the provisioning of data for use (data ingest), specifically automatic ingestion of data at point of receipt and removal of data on physical storage. This includes working with Enterprise Architecture to understand how new technologies such as Automation, and Business Process Management can be applied to the Data Acquisition and Ingest process. If we are able to implement these changes, it may contribute to reducing the time between acquisition of data into the office and it being available for use.

#### Legislative progress

18. The Census Order has progressed through Parliament and is due to now proceed to May Privy Council. Regulations for England will be laid in Parliament at the conclusion of the process to be in force 21 days later. Regulations for Wales in Senedd Cymru follow a similar timescale. This has been accomplished following a considerable team effort across the programme and the Policy team working closely with Cabinet Office colleagues.

#### Wider transformation

19. Though COVID-19 has presented challenges to the programme, it has generated opportunities for accelerating and changing the way we approach transformation. The learning has been incorporated into the refresh of the Social Survey Transformation programme which is being presented to the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme transformation board in June. Further work will be undertaken to build into our plans for returning to normal non-restricted work.

**Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy**  
**Nicola Tyson-Payne, Interim Director of Transformation, Population and Public Policy**  
**15 May 2020**

***Scenario Planning***

**Purpose**

1. This paper draws together work done on scenario planning from across ONS over past weeks.

**Recommendations**

2. The Board are asked to:
  - i. consider, given how you have seen the statistical system respond to the current pandemic, what you would like to keep in the medium term; and
  - ii. consider further opportunities for radical transformation.

**Background**

3. At the UK Statistics Authority Board meeting in April, comments were provided on a framework for scenario planning given the COVID-19 pandemic. The scenarios considered ranged from a gradual easing of social distancing restriction over the next few months, to no easing of restrictions at least until 2021.
4. Since then an information collection exercise has been conducted involving all parts of the Office for National Statistics to understand the potential impacts of the different scenarios.

**Discussion**

5. The work completed on scenario planning shows that management action will be required, in order to avoid losing progress made over the past few weeks and to continue to meet the statutory objective of the statistical system.
6. As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, the scenarios will be kept under review so that we can respond in an agile fashion to changes in our internal and external environments.
7. It is vital that we capture the changing environment within the next 5 year strategy for the statistical system, and therefore all of the information that is gathered throughout this exercise will inform the continued development of the strategy.

**Conclusion**

8. Planning for the future is vital for continued provision of high-quality statistics and analyses which serve the public good. This paper seeks to set out early thoughts on opportunities and threats, whilst seeking the Boards view on further areas for development.

**Douglas Cameron, Central Policy Secretariat, 26 May 2020**