

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Thursday 30 July 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
Mr Ed Humpherson
Ms Frankie Kay
Ms Nora Nanayakkara
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter
Professor Anne Trefethen

Also in attendance

Mr Jonathan Athow
Mr Nick Bateson
Mr Iain Bell
Mr Owen Brace
Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Douglas Cameron (Secretariat)
Ms Pam Everett (for item 9)
Mr Mike Hardie (for item 10)
Mr Richard Heys (for item 11)
Ms Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)
Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 13)
Ms Amy Williams (Secretariat)

Apologies

Professor Jonathan Haskel

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies received from Professor Jonathan Haskel.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 June 2020 were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

- 4.1 Non-executive directors had met prior to the Board. They had discussed test and trace statistics and excess death statistics.
- 4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met, focussing on the successful launch of the new Authority strategy - Statistics for the Public Good. The launch had included a range of internal and external activities. Sir David, Sir Ian and Mr Humpherson had delivered a number of all-staff talks, which were well received. Mr Cameron informed the meeting that a systematic approach was being taken to assess the impact of the launch (including follow up questions in the pulse survey and focus groups across the organisation).
- 4.3 Sir David had attended a Royal Statistical Society meeting on the Retail Prices Index (RPI) on 21 July, with Mr Athow as a speaker at the event. Mr Athow had provided a summary of the goals of the consultation on the Reform to RPI Methodology (closing on 21 August).
- 4.4 Sir David informed the meeting that he had written to Mr Miles Briggs MSP regarding a comparison made to the Scottish Government of COVID-19 prevalence in Scotland and England.

5. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(20)45]

- 5.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last meeting. OSR had undertaken a preliminary review of the performance of the statistical system during the pandemic. The Board heard that overall, the statistical system had performed well. The areas for improvement, which did not apply to ONS, included coherence of data sources; improved information on quality; and the independence of statisticians within government departments. Mr Humpherson highlighted that ONS' involvement had improved coherence across the system. The Board discussed the findings, specifically the need for and the potential impact of the Authority's interventions, which had been made in accordance with the Interventions Policy.
- 5.2 Mr Humpherson went on to report that OSR had also considered the concerns about Public Health England's daily deaths data, which would continue to be an area of focus.

6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(20)46]

- 6.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues for July, highlighting the following:
 - i. The launch of the Spending Review 2020 (SR20) on 21 July. Mr Bateson informed the Board of the key activities in preparation for SR20, which would be underpinned by a clear evaluation and monitoring strategy.
 - ii. The work with officials across government regarding a co-ordinated data agenda following the recent Machinery of Government change (the responsibility for government use of data had been transferred from the Department for Culture Media and Sport to the Cabinet Office). This linked to the work being led by Ms Kay on the Integrated Data Platform; and the work with the AI Council regarding data standards.
 - iii. The expansion of the COVID-19 Infection Survey including the rationalisation of existing studies and the design and delivery of further studies.

6.2 Sir Ian highlighted that an announcement was scheduled on 31 July regarding the classification of train-operating companies. Following the launch of the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good, a taskforce on inclusive data had been set up. The ONS was also working with the Economic and Social Research Council on the social and economic aspects of COVID-19.

6.3 The Board welcomed the update and would continue to remain engaged with SR20 and delivery of the strategy.

7. Report from the Chair of the Regulation Committee

7.1 Professor Trefethen reported on the work of the Regulation Committee, which had met on 16 July 2020.

7.2 Committee members had considered:

- i. the assessment of ONS business demographic statistics and the work by OSR with ONS regarding the need for improvements;
- ii. the approach by OSR to risk management, which was well received by the Committee; and
- iii. a draft report of the Mental Health systemic review.

8. Risk: Strategic Risk and Risk Appetite [SA(20)47]

8.1 Mr Bateson introduced a paper which outlined a proposal for the Authority's risk appetite and a revised set of strategic risks. The development of the new strategy provided the opportunity to reset the organisation's approach to risk management so that it would become an essential part of governance and leadership; and an integral part of organisational activities to support decision making and delivery of the strategy.

8.2 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) supported the principles of the approach to risk appetite, noting that the organisation would need to develop the capability to use it effectively. It was acknowledged that ARAC would have oversight of the work as it progressed, but it was for the Board to set and agree both the risk appetite and strategic risks.

8.3 Board members discussed the proposed approach, highlighting the link to the Nationals Statistics designation review. The Board supported the proposed approach to risk appetite and approved the draft strategic risks subject to a final review by Mr Bateson.

9. Alternative Data Sources [SA(20)48]

9.1 Ms Kay and Ms Everett introduced a paper which provided an update on progress to acquire and prepare alternative data sources for use in ONS analysis and statistics. This included the Integrated Data Platform (IDP), the response to COVID-19 and the ambition underpinned by the new strategy.

9.2 The Board heard about the progress that had been made by ONS to build the foundations needed to use alternative data sources alongside survey data. The Data Access Platform (DAP) and the Secure Research Service (SRS) provided a cloud-based solution for researchers. The Integrated Data Platform would ultimately integrate both the DAP and SRS on commodity Cloud technology. The migration to commodity Cloud technology is planned to take place over the next couple of years and will ensure that the appropriate level of security will be in place.

9.3 The Board noted the significant progress that been made by the ONS in this area.

10. RPI

10.1 Mr Athow provided an update on the Authority-HM Treasury consultation regarding the future of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) that would conclude on 21 August and outlined an indicative timeline for an announcement on the outcome of the consultation.

11. System of National Accounts [SA(20)49]

- 11.1 Mr Athow and Mr Heys introduced a paper which provided a summary of the international work to update the System of National Accounts (SNA) – the framework which defined how numerous economic statistics, specifically the national accounts, are produced both in the UK and overseas.
- 11.2 Mr Heys highlighted the priority areas for consideration: globalisation; digitalisation; well-being and sustainability; and the communication of National Accounts concepts. The Board heard that the process had reached the stage where draft proposals on specific issues would be consulted on internationally. The changes would be introduced in an updated SNA in 2025. The Board noted the update and highlighted the importance of public engagement in taking the work forward.

12. COVID-19 Infection Survey update [SA(20)50]

- 12.1 Mr Bell presented a paper which introduced the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS), including the performance and development of the survey and work to form an integrated surveillance response.
- 12.2 Mr Bell highlighted the successful delivery, positive feedback and impact of the CIS. The Department for Health and Social Care had approved the scale up of the survey by October 2020. The survey would be expanded into Wales and Northern Ireland with discussions ongoing to extend to Scotland.
- 12.3 The Board welcomed the update and commended the organisation on the significant progress made to date. The Board would continue to remain engaged with the development of the CIS.

13. Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) update [SA(20)51]

- 13.1 Mr Bell and Ms Tyson-Payne introduced a paper which provided an update on the programme focusing on the Census, including progress on build, processing and outputs rehearsal, and the focus of activities during the Summer period within the wider transformation.
- 13.2 Mr Bell reported that the Census programme rating had been independently and externally assured by the Infrastructure and Project Authority. End-to-end testing on the digital build was on schedule for the end of September. The design of the address check in response to COVID-19 to a desk-based check had exceeded the planned target and was on course for completion.
- 13.3 Since the last meeting the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture had confirmed the delay of Scotland's Census to March 2022. Mr Bell confirmed that delivery of a Census in March 2021 for England and Wales remained achievable.
- 13.4 Ms Jones reported on the Census workshop she had attended early July, commending the progress that had been made by the team. The Board noted the update.

14. Review of Effectiveness [SA(20)52]

- 14.1 Ms Jones introduced a paper which covered the results of the Authority Board's self-review of effectiveness, highlighting the key issues raised and proposing improvements.
- 14.2 The Board was invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis to identify where it was performing well and where improvements might be made. The analysis highlighted improvements over the last year and areas of focus for Board in the coming year including delivery of the Census, Integrated Delivery Platform and COVID-19 Infection Survey.

15. Any other business

The Authority Board would meet next on 29 September by videoconference.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

30 July 2020, 08:30 to 11:30, via videoconference

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies: Prof. Jonathan Haskel, Ms Nora Nanayakkara

Attendees: Mr Mike Hardie (for item 8), Ms Sarah Henry (for item 7), Mr Richard Heys (for item 9) and Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 11)

NED Session: 08:30-09:00

1 09:00-09:05 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none">Declarations of interest	Meeting of 30 June 2020
2 09.05-09.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 09.15-09.25 10 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(20)45 Mr Ed Humpherson
4 09.25-09.45 20 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(20)46 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
5 09.45-09.50 5 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regulation Committee	Oral report Prof. Anne Trefethen
6 09.50-10.10 20 mins	Risk	SA(20)47 Mr Nick Bateson
7 10.10-10.25 15 mins	Alternative Data Sources	SA(20)48 Ms Frankie Kay Ms Sarah Henry
8 10.25-10.40 15 mins	RPI	Oral update Mr Jonathan Athrow Mr Mike Hardie
9 10.40-10.50 10 mins	System of National Accounts	SA(20)49 Mr Jonathan Athrow Mr Richard Heys
10 10.50-11.05 15 mins	COVID-19 Infection Survey update	SA(20)50 Mr Iain Bell
11 11.05-11.20 15 mins	Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme update	SA(20)51 Mr Iain Bell Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne
12 11.20-11.25 5 mins	Review of Effectiveness	SA(20)52 Ms Sally Jones
13 11.25-11.30 5 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 29 September 2020, 11:00-13:30, via teleconference

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

2. Key activities since the last Board meeting have focused on COVID-19:
 - i. we have dealt with a surge in cases of publication and use of statistics. To illustrate this, in the period April-June, we handled over 100 cases, almost all of them COVID-19 related. This *three month* figure is higher than we have ever handled before over a single year;
 - ii. a significant proportion of the cases arise from OSR's own monitoring – driven by our use of Twitter analytics and media reviews. For example I wrote to the [Scottish Government](#) on 8 July to request that they issue hitherto unpublished data on testing. We identified this issue ourselves through our ongoing monitoring developed by our head of automation. We spotted that the Scottish Government had issued a press release quoting a data snippet that was not otherwise published. The Scottish Government have committed to releasing the data. This is just one of several examples where our intervention has led to more data being published;
 - iii. we have now delivered 11 rapid reviews of new statistical outputs published on aspects of the pandemic. We know from the recent Heads of Profession meeting that producers really value these rapid reviews, which provide both assurance and feedback on areas to improve;
 - iv. one of the most important rapid reviews was of the NHS's Test and Trace statistics. We found that the statistics had been developed quickly and professionally. But we also found that they did not answer all of the questions about the effectiveness of the programme (e.g. they don't yet include turnaround times for pillar 1, though plan to, and don't include how long the whole process takes); and that they are part of a confusing landscape of pandemic-related data in England. We will liaise with Iain Bell about how ONS can bring greater coherence to this landscape; and
 - v. we have also looked into the concerns about Public Health England's (PHE) daily deaths data – revolving around the fact that no positive case is ever removed from the dataset. This means that it appears no-one ever recovers, and COVID-19 deaths can be recorded several months after the positive test. Our view is:
 - this reinforces our view that the ONS weekly deaths data, based on death certificates, are much more reliable;
 - we have spoken to PHE who are looking into introducing a cut-off – e.g. a number of days after a positive test at which someone will be removed from the data; and
 - we have asked PHE to make any change clear; to explain more clearly their assumptions around recoveries; and also, to make any change to introduce a cut-off date clear.
3. Beyond this surge in pandemic activity, we have also progressed a range of other outputs. It is not the case that all other work has been suspended. We have:
 - i. developed our review of mental health statistics, published our review of post-16 skills and education and published our review of Defra's user engagement;
 - ii. published a range of non-COVID-19 compliance checks of individual statistical outputs, for example indices of multiple deprivation in England, Wales and Scotland;

- iii. developed three strategic corporate documents:
 - our review of the [statistical system](#) (published on 2 July);
 - our [annual report](#) (published on 15 July); and
 - our [5 year plan](#) (published on 16 July).
- iv. continued to develop our cross cutting functions on insight (which has produced our overview of the performance of the UK statistical system in the pandemic – see paragraph 4 below; policy (including signing up new voluntary adopters of the Code inside and outside Government: Department of Health and Social Care’s (DHSC) test and trace statistics; Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) conversion factors for environmental reporting; and the Femicide Census (run by a non-governmental organisation); and automation (we published a [blog](#) by the lead of our automation function on 1 July);
- v. continued to evolve our communications approach, including reaching 1,000 Twitter followers in June (from a standing start in November) and redesigning our website; and
- vi. all this speaks to a team with growing capability, agility and resilience.

Performance of the statistical system during the pandemic

4. OSR’s Head of Insight has conducted a preliminary internal review drawing together evidence from OSR colleagues on the performance of the statistical system during the pandemic. This evidence suggests the following high-level conclusions:
 - i. the statistical system has performed well. It has made use of new data sources while adapting and developing methods; collaborated and shared data effectively; added insight; and raised the profile of statisticians and analysts in many parts of Government and beyond; and
 - ii. we also note some areas for improvement: the need for more coherence around the various data sources covering the pandemic; better information on quality; and in some areas the need for greater control by statisticians and analysis over what data are released.
5. We would be interested in the Board’s thoughts about the findings and conclusions of the preliminary review, which we will develop into a fuller paper for the September Board meeting.

Challenges

6. The resilience of the OSR team has seemed to me to be remarkable. A huge amount of work has been done despite the challenges of lockdown. We have done a lot to support people in lockdown too – offer contact, flexibility and regular check-ins. Nevertheless, I do worry about people’s ability to work at this level of intensity. We are constantly reviewing how we support well-being, and are starting to develop virtual away days. I think these away days and personal contacts are crucial to maintaining capacity and resilience. We are also constantly reviewing our work programme to make sure we do not over-commit.
7. Two further issues I would like to bring to the Board’s attention, both related to the Census:
 - i. the Census in Scotland has been postponed to 2022. This will raise questions about the coherence of UK-level population information. It will be important that both National Records of Scotland and ONS consider how best to mitigate the absence of Census information for Scotland; and
 - ii. we are currently considering a case involving the risk of conflating sex and gender in the guidance for the Census in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This is perhaps less pressing in Scotland now that the Census has been postponed to 2021. However, the way that sex and gender are recorded is important for many

official statistics, and OSR is developing a statement on how to apply the Code of Practice to the recording of sex and gender.

Ed Humpherson, Director General, Office for Statistics Regulation, 21 July 2020

List of Annexes

Annex A Regulatory dashboard

Regulatory Activities July 2020

Economy	Business, Trade and International Development	Population and Society	Children, Education and skills	Crime and Security
<p>Regulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared OSR position statement on the RPI Made revised proposal for panel session we are leading at ESCoE Conference on 17 September on Regional Imbalances <p>Rapid Review: Published HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme's statistics.</p> <p>Engagement: Met with officials in Scottish Fiscal Commission to update each other on the work of the respective organisations and OSR will help review a chapter on the Code of Practice in SFC's next Statement of Data Needs being published in early September.</p>	<p>Assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Demography Finalising report following discussion at July Regulation Committee. UK Trade OSR position statement to be published after launch of OSR website. <p>Compliance Checks: Reviewing ONS Mergers and Acquisitions statistics and will be examine ONS's use of VAT data in the production of economic estimates.</p>	<p>COVID-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue with Home Office on availability of statistics on people given leave to remain in UK, subject to the no recourse to public funds condition following letters issued by Ed Humpherson and Sir David Norgrove. Investigated a tweet by Nadine Dorries MP on care home deaths due to COVID-19. Speaking privately to MP on importance of appropriate sources and phrasing <p>Assessments: Census Workshops with census offices on methods are being held July/August. DWP NINo gathering findings and user engagement stages.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Loneliness Planning next stages with project sponsor and linking to Local Data review.</p> <p>Sex and gender identity Met with ONS regarding testing/research linked to guidance for census sex question and engagement with academic data users. Supporting sex and gender related casework.</p>	<p>Compliance Checks: Graduate Outcomes Survey: Started after the statistics were published on 18th June.</p> <p>Casework: School funding – private email sent to acting Deputy HoP in DfE outlining concerns with the use of the £14bn figure in a DfE press release. Case closed and will monitor going forward.</p> <p>Engagement Engaged with Qualifications Wales and the NI Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment on how school assessments will be standardised and published.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Skills Report has been published on new website.</p> <p>Children and Young People Publishing blog on 23rd July to renew interest in this area and recommence research activities (has been paused since 2019).</p>	<p>Crime: Prepared OSR position statement on crime statistics for publication on new OSR website.</p> <p>Face-to-face Crime Survey for E&W replaced by a telephone survey. First results on this new methodology will be published 27 Aug. Discussing with ONS what designation would be appropriate.</p> <p>Casework: Investigating sex and gender in criminal justice statistics.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Started a new CC of the MOD Armed forces continuous attitude survey.</p> <p>Raising awareness of MoJ data linkage work: Writing a blog about several MoJ data linkage projects, including Data First – their collaboration with ADR-UK.</p>
Health and Social Care	Labour Market and Welfare	Agriculture, Energy and Environment	Housing, Planning and Local Services	Travel, Transport and Tourism
<p>Assessments: Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) with NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) underway.</p> <p>Rapid reviews: DHSC Test and Trace data review published.</p> <p>Casework: Dealing with elevated levels of COVID-19 casework: statistics on test and trace programme, comparability of UK-wide data, use of unpublished data in ministerial statements. Public interventions can be viewed on our COVID-19 webpage and correspondence page.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Mental Health in England: Report shared with Regulation Committee. Once final changes are made, the report will be shared with producers before publishing.</p>	<p>Assessment: Progress has been slow with DWP on Quarterly Benefits Summary – evidence is starting to come through and we are conducting user interviews.</p> <p>Casework: Received two complaints relating to the Prime Minister's use of statistics on child poverty. Preparing a blog to set out the position on poverty statistics in response.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Published letters and a blog on Indices of Multiple Deprivation (GB) on 16 July.</p>	<p>Assessment: July Regulation Committee confirmed continued NS designation of Defra's air quality and emissions of air pollutants statistics Letter to be published w/c 20 July.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Waste statistics across the UK underway, expecting to publish August.</p>	<p>Casework: Continuing to liaise with MHCLG on the use and publication of management information on rough sleepers provided with emergency accommodation during the pandemic.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Reviewing Scottish House Condition Survey and English Housing Survey.</p>	<p>Assessment: Assessment of the Office for Rail and Road's Estimates of Station Usage statistics underway. Initial findings and draft recommendations to be shared with ORR.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Follow up of requirements from compliance check of ONS' travel and tourism statistics.</p>

Chief Executive's Report, July 2020

Purpose

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

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 have continued to attend the Scientific Advisory Group in Emergencies (SAGE) as it continues to provide advice on the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - ii. this past month has seen the launch of the new UK Statistics Authority strategy, Statistics for the Public Good, which will govern the decisions made across the Authority for the years to come;
 - iii. I have collaborated with colleagues across government to coordinate a programme of National Core Studies relating to the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - iv. on 15 June I was able to showcase the work of ONS, GSS and the Analysis Function through hosting a session on using analysis to inform decision making at Civil Service Live;
 - v. I have chaired a series of meetings to look at future surveillance approaches to monitor the rate of COVID-19 in the population;
 - vi. on 19 July I continued my engagement with the mainstream media, through appearing on the Sophie Ridge on Sunday show;
 - vii. ONS have continued to provide fresh insights into the COVID-19 pandemic, notably through publishing the inaugural results from the Vitaldi study into care homes and through the Covid-19 Infection Study (CIS) providing its first breakdowns on the characteristics of positive cases;
 - viii. the CIS has expanded its sample size and now also includes participants in Wales;
 - ix. the decision has been taken by National Records Scotland to postpone their census until 2022; and
 - x. plans have been announced to centralise the Government Communication Service under the Cabinet Office.

Future look

4. Work will continue to onboard other devolved administrations into the CIS.
5. We will continue to monitor guidance around a return to the office.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, 23 July 2020

Risk Appetite

Purpose

1. Following a series of consultations, a discussion by the National Statistics Leadership Team on 26 June and discussion at the National Statistician's Executive Group (NSEG) meeting on 21 July, this paper outlines a proposal to reset the way the Authority defines its risk appetite.

Recommendations

2. Members of Authority Board (the Board) are invited to:
 - i. note the development of the chosen model for risk appetite and the supporting statements and risk categorisations;
 - ii. review, discuss and agree the risk tolerances outlined; and
 - iii. review and approve the draft revised strategic risks, noting the changes from the previous framework which was agreed by the Board; and,
 - iv. support the approach to take the risk appetite forward for management and decision-making purposes, which will be overseen by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Background

3. Historically the management of risk within ONS has not generated sufficient insight or been used in its decision making to yield tangible value to the organisation. Essentially, a two-tier system has been operating, generating a lot of process led activity, but has failed in its core purpose of escalating risks, driving informed decision making, and enabling the organisation to take managed risks within the defined appetite levels.
4. As part of the final year of the Better Statistics, Better Decisions strategy, the Board were consulted in the development of a strategic risk framework. The Board identified seven strategic risks against the strategic outcomes outlined and a decision was made at that time to review these risks and define the Board's risk appetite for each of them following the finalisation of the revised Authority strategy.
5. The development of a new 'Statistics for the Public Good' five-year strategy provides the opportunity to reset the organisations approach to risk management so that it becomes:
 - i. "an essential part of governance and leadership, and fundamental to how the organisation is directed, managed and controlled; and
 - ii. be an integral part of all organisational activities to support decision-making in achieving objectives." ¹

Discussion

6. In all government departments, the adoption of risk management is mandatory, with Boards and Accounting Officers required to disclose within its published Governance Statement, compliance or an explanation for any departure from the Orange Book.
7. As with all aspects of good governance, the effectiveness of risk management depends on those charged with accountability and responsibility for delivery, engaging with and operating within the risk management framework that has been put in place. Effective and meaningful risk management in ONS is fundamental to support the organisation to become radical in its thinking, ambitious in its aims, inclusive in its culture and build a streamlined but sustainable operating platform. The new strategy requires the senior

¹ The Orange Book: Management of Risk - Principles and Concepts – HM Treasury [2020]

leadership team to embrace openness, constructive challenge, as well as advocate transparency and collaboration in order to ensure success.

8. The first stage in the journey of bringing risk management to life has been to rethink how the Authority defines its risk appetite. This means defining the sum of the risk that the organisation can accommodate and setting it out in such a way that it can be translated into a new risk management framework. This will enable individual risk owners to manage and/or escalate as appropriate.
9. The starting point is to distil out the risk areas/categories that encapsulate what the organisation needs to focus on in order to deliver the strategy and business plan. Through consultation with senior leaders, eight distinct areas have been which represent the key areas of delivery and risk. Reputational risk goes across the organisation and is a facet in each of the risk categories below:
 - i. **Radical** – Analysis
 - ii. **Ambitious** – Statistical Quality
 - iii. **Inclusive** – People, External Partnership/Collaboration
 - iv. **Sustainable** – Effective Change
 - v. **Underpinning requirements** – Data, Security, Regulatory (financial; people; commercial etc)
10. It is clear that, to deliver on its new strategy, the organisation needs to both understand the risks and opportunities it is facing but also to work in a one-ONS manner to work to manage and take risks. The model provides a proposed set of risk appetite/tolerances for consideration.
11. The model for determining risk appetite seeks to move the assessment from a simple set of statements – active; open; cautious; minimal and averse, where the organisation is able to manage its risk and opportunities within a lower and upper tolerance range for each of the defined areas.
12. Agreement of the risk appetite statements will provide the organisation with a clear set of expectations. This will be integrated with the ongoing review of governance across the Authority as the role of NSEG and its sub-committees will be critical to ensuring that the senior leadership engage with and manage their risks in a meaningful way and within the agreed defined risk appetite/tolerance.
13. Alongside this proposed model, the Risk and Assurance team are revisiting the risk management framework, reporting mechanisms and approach, as well as the role of the risk management team, with the aim to better support the organisation in improving its risk maturity. Real engagement is key to delivery, and organisational insight and value from the overall framework; as well as develop the accountabilities of the leadership team alongside the second line activities that are crucial to good organisational management.

Conclusion

14. The development of a new approach to risk appetite as part of a relaunch of a new approach to risk management should be seen as an essential delivery element of the new UK Statistics Authority strategy. A decision at this meeting will ensure so that work can progress on developing the supporting risk management framework in conjunction with the new Authority strategy This paper seeks the Board's approval and support for the revised strategic risks, proposed model and tolerance levels. The details of the framework and reporting will be discussed at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in the Autumn.

Amanda Smith, Deputy Director, Risk and Assurance

Nick Bateson, Director of Finance, Planning and Performance, 22 July 2020

Alternative Data Sources – from Better Statistics, Better Decisions to Statistics for public good

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on ONS progress to acquire and prepare alternative data sources for use in ONS analysis and statistics, including the Integrated Data Platform (IDP) and response to COVID-19, and sets out the ambition underpinned by our new strategy.

Recommendations

2. Board members are invited to comment and note the progress made to date and plans for the near future

Background

3. ONS has been on a long journey to build the foundations needed to use alternative data sources alongside survey data. There is evidence that we are now much more mature – from the ability to articulate our requirements better, respecting data suppliers’ position and understanding data quality and constraints. This paper summarises the journey to date and sets out the direction of travel.

Discussion

The end to end data service journey

4. The data we receive is often complex and requires technical intervention before it can be analysed. The ETL (Extract, Transform, Load) is handled by experts on both sides of the transaction and includes security professionals, IT experts, business domain experts, expert data engineers and linkers and data architects. The transactional data we receive was collected for different purposes and understanding it is pivotal to creating additional value at the analysis stage.
5. To underpin the end to end service journey, ONS has created a Data Access Platform (DAP). The system itself currently resides on a purpose-built infrastructure located in the crown hosting environment and provides statistical tools to carry out analysis and data science on small to huge datasets. Security is considered throughout the design and implementation of the platform to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved to meet business, technology and security requirements. The solution conforms to government and international security standards. In addition, the Secure Research Service provides a cloud-based solution for researchers. The IDP – which will be delivered as part of the new strategy - will ultimately integrate both services on commodity Cloud technology.
6. The data journey starts with the negotiations for the acquisition of data and ends with the provision of data to analysts in ONS. The journey requires a complex pipeline of stages to transform the data into a consistent format so that it can be used in ONS analysis and statistics. There are currently several manual steps. Our ambition is that these stages are automated and efficient as set out in the following table:

Requirement: Current state	Comment and Next steps
Hold data legally and in line with agreements and contracts with data suppliers.	Although we aspire for consistency, our experience is that practice varies across government. The newly established government Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) Steering Group is looking to significantly improve data sharing across government and are looking at

	areas, including data sharing agreements to remove blockers.
Support consistent data outputs, for example, by applying consistent methodologies to linking data sources.	The Admin Data Methods Research programme includes development of linkage methods, especially those relating to linking hashed data. The Reference Data Management Framework (RDMF) will underpin the data architecture.
Establish and implement reproducible analysis pipelines (RAP) that are transparent in how statistics were produced.	The latest RAP covers Crime statistics. The IDP business case includes continuation of the investment which is critical to maximising output from additional access to data.
Able to track how data was used and combined since it was first acquired.	Tracking to date includes many manual processes. IDP includes investment in new tools that are needed to deliver automated pipelines.
Avoid repeating the same process many times, for example, converting variables to common formats across data sets or starting data linkage processes from scratch in every project.	Both investments in RAP and tooling will enable continuation of improvements in the process.
Comply with security policies, including controlling which users can see which data.	IDP will enable variable level access compared to dataset level access in DAP (Role Based Access Control)

7. We continue to develop the process to enable access to the data. We shortened the process especially for COVID-19 and we are currently reviewing the process to improve it further by conducting a full end to end review across the office using a 'systems thinking' approach.

COVID-19 process improvements

8. The cross-function Data Response Team (DaRT) was set up to streamline information governance, acquisition, ingest, access and processing of data specific to the COVID-19 response. DaRT comprises key roles from Data as a Service (DaaS), Security and Information Management (Salm), Digital Services and Technology (DST) and Data Architecture, with authority for actions granted by the National Statistician and the Chief Security Officer. Between March and July 2020, DaRT fast-tracked and supported 29 high-priority COVID-19 projects across multiple ONS data storage and analysis platforms, including the COVID-19 Infection Survey, the production of weekly COVID-19 mortality figures and the infection hotspot identification project. The DaRT process for handling COVID-19 data access requests yielded several benefits, such as significant reduction of data ingest and project setup times, increased use of Cloud solutions for speed of data access and information sharing and new mechanisms for enabling immediate business needs at pace, while also providing recommendations and support for implementing strategic solutions.

Case study: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) furlough data

9. One of the ambitions of the DaaS Transformation was to build capability for mature data acquisition planning, ensuring that the analytical requirement is understood, and the request is deliverable from the data supplier's point of view.
10. At the beginning of the pandemic ONS saw a reduction in response rate to several surveys, understandably. Obtaining HMRC furlough data was identified as a key information source that could help to understand reasons for non-response and enable

quality assurance of GDP estimates based on surveys with lower than usual response rates. HMRC were unable to provide granular disclosive data in a tight timescale but refining the request to specific industries and aggregated data enabled swift delivery.

11. The need for this to feed into GDP data drove an aggressive timescale. The first request for the data was received on 24 April. It took a week to refine the request, agree a data sharing process, agree governance with ONS security and legal (as well as HMRC) and conduct a proof of concept. By 18:00 on Friday 1 May, the first data had been received, and was included in the GDP estimate for March, published on Wednesday 13 May. This process has since been repeated twice, with HMRC now providing more detailed data than the first share.

Data acquisition for statistics

12. DaaS acquires, ingests and enables access to over 100 'business as usual' regular data supplies. Since the last update in March, we have acquired more than 25 new datasets to support the Census and Economic Statistics, as well as to support COVID-19 related work. These new datasets include: HMRC business data (VAT and corporation tax), a range of health datasets, datasets from other government departments (including Home Office, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Defence, Department of Education), HESA data, and Civil Aviation Authority Air Passenger data. We have also completed the data engineering of HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) RTI data received earlier in the year and released it to analysts in ONS.
13. We continue to work closely with both Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HMRC to extend the range of data they provide to ONS, and to put in place arrangements for regular supplies of data. For those datasets that include personal data, DWP and HMRC share encrypted data. This includes DWP's Customer Information System (CIS) – essentially benefits data – and HMRC's PAYE data and Self-Assessment data. The decision to accept encrypted data has enabled us to make good progress with both departments, although there are challenges working with data when identifiers are not 'in the clear'. The methodology and data engineering teams have developed methods to get the best quality matched data possible. This will need to be continuously reviewed and improved collaboratively across departments to ensure consistent data standards and approaches. While the match rate is high for CIS and PAYE, it is lower for Self-Assessment because of the nature of the data. We are currently exploring with HMRC whether these match rates can be improved.
14. ONS has received DWP CIS data covering 2012 – October 2019. We are working with DWP for an updated supply of CIS data covering 2010-2019 using revised encryption. The work has been delayed due to COVID-19 work at DWP. We are working with Census colleagues to understand the implications for Census research, and to plan for how we can use the data we already hold. DWP are not expecting delays to providing data covering the census period in 2021.
15. Council Tax data is required during the Census to improve collection efficiency by prioritising field follow-ups on main residences. It is also required for census quality assurance to estimate the number of usual residents in an area, and to assist in placing imputed households into realistic locations. We continue to work with Local Authorities to acquire Council Tax data. Our engagement is focussed on maximising coverage and putting additional focus on high priority Local Authorities (LAs) that have not yet agreed to share data. It is unlikely that all LAs will provide data in time for Census, partly because of COVID-19 related challenges. We are exploring secondary 'signs of life' data including utilities data, to inform operational decisions in Census in areas where council tax data is not shared.

Data Sourcing for Research

16. Significant effort has been made to enable continued research use of government data during the COVID-19 pandemic, including changes to enable use of the Secure Research Service from home and a continued focus of opening up new data sources.
17. All ONS data related to COVID-19 are available, and the CIS microdata will also be opened more widely in the near future, while we are actively engaged with partners across government to make other sources (e.g. Test and Trace data) available alongside these.
18. Working with Administrative Data Research UK, we continue to make new non-COVID-19 data sources available, for which there is high demand. A highlight is the Magistrates Court data from Ministry of Justice (MoJ), which is now in the Secure Research Service, and which will be followed by Crown Court data later this year and is the first time MoJ have made such data available for research.

Future Ambition - The Integrated Data Platform

19. A key tenet of the delivery of the new Authority strategy is the Integrated Data Platform. The ability to share, link, and analyse the multiple datasets held across government will enable the faster development of policy and facilitate the evaluation of policy effectiveness. This requirement has never been clearer than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data required to better understand the risk profile of the pandemic exists in government, but it is dispersed across organisations, held in different systems, formats and without common identifiers, which restrict the ability to analyse it.
20. The IDP will build on the data, methodology, process and technology foundations delivered through the previous strategy with a view to extending the current capability across government. A key part of ONS' technology strategy is to utilise cloud native products to take advantage of the power available through cloud analytics to address the limitations of processing data on premise.
21. ONS has the most advanced foundation in government for the delivery of shared, linked data for statistical and analytical purposes, as proven by COVID-19. The transformation of DaaS over the past year, and the establishment of Methods, Data, Research (MDR) more generally, are bringing a stronger emphasis on professionalising acquisition and new, flexible ways of working to ensure that high priority acquisitions are adequately resourced. A key aspect of the new strategy is Sustainability and the delivery of IDP using alternative data side by side with our survey data requires expert resource and technical skills to build on the existing foundations. We are working with Finance Planning and Performance to ensure that MDR has the appropriate capacity and capability to deliver the new strategy in a sustainable way.

Sarah Henry, Methods. Data. Research, 20 July 2020

Update on Systems Of National Accounts Revision Cycle**Purpose**

1. This paper provides a summary of the international work to update the System of National Accounts (SNA), which is the framework which defines how many economic statistics, specifically the national accounts, are produced both in the UK and overseas. Alongside the SNA, other key accounting frameworks such as the Balance of Payments and Government Finance Statistics are also being updated on a consistent basis.

Recommendations

2. Members of Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the co-ordinated approach ONS is making to drive forwards revisions to the SNA and other accounting frameworks; and
 - ii. the substantive issues under discussion.

Background

3. The international community is targeting having a completely new version of the SNA in place for 2025. Informed by previous implementation timetables the UK would likely wish to move across to compiling with this new version in either 2028 or 2029.
4. The System of National Accounts is a framework, owned by the United Nations, to help ensure consistent methods are applied by all countries so National Accounts are comparable. These methods are subject to routine updates and revisions, so concepts can and do change through time. Changes are based on negotiation and the latest research reflecting changing needs, new data sources and improved methodology.
5. These changes have been in recent years broadly generational: the System of National Accounts (SNA), based off an initial report published in 1947 has been revised in 1953, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1993 and 2008. These revisions have updated and amended key concepts and the recommended methods used to measure them.
6. The SNA is a framework and has scope for flexibility. Some developed countries have a domestic document which outlines their interpretation of the SNA and any divergences.
7. Within the European Union (and more widely, including European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries), methodological consistency is delivered through the European System of Accounts (ESA) framework document, which is drafted by the European Commission in consultation with the Member States and outlines how Member States interpret the SNA. The SNA is often considered to define 'what' should be done and ESA can be considered to define in more detail 'how' this should be delivered.
8. The adoption of the SNA therefore touches upon wider issues which will be covered in a future paper relating to the governance of the economic statistics system after the UK leaves the EU. We will not repeat those issues here. The UK currently produces its National Accounts in line with ESA 2010, which was drafted in light of SNA 2008.
9. The international frameworks are very important for economic statistics:
 - i. they sometimes have direct financial consequences, for example the UK's contributions to the EU both in the past and under the withdrawal agreement, are based on national accounts concepts in ESA 2010;
 - ii. if poorly framed, they can pose problems for us, for example, the treatment of non-monetary gold in the balance of payments has been problematic;
 - iii. they allow comparability and failure to adopt them therefore has consequences. For example, part of our trade asymmetry with the US is because they have not moved to the latest framework; and

iv. compliance with them is an important indicator of the quality of our statistics.

Discussion

10. The current cycle of research and drafting has been underway for several years and has coalesced around four priority areas which were signed off by the relevant UN bodies in 2019. The key details of each are:
 - i. Globalisation;
 - ii. Digitalisation;
 - iii. Well-being and Sustainability; and
 - iv. Communication of National Accounts Concepts.
11. Each of these areas has a dedicated team leading development of guidance notes on each of the topics gathered under these four workstreams. The UK has taken a leading role in the development of this agenda, being one of the few countries with representation on all four groups and on the high-level coordinating group. This reflects the UK's relative strength in this research, driven by the investment made through the funding made available to support delivery of the Bean Review (2016) recommendations.
12. The UN is also looking to align the new SNA with revisions of the ISIC classification of industries and the CPC classification of products (goods and services), as the interaction here will be key, particularly for digitalisation. The UN is also looking to align the revision process of the SNA with those of the other major statistical manuals (including the Balance of Payments Manual (BPM 6) and the Government Finance Statistics Manual (GFSM 2014), with a view to ensure consistency.
13. The process has reached the stage where draft proposals on specific issues will be consulted on internationally, using various existing events and conferences to gather comments. Countries will then be able to test final drafts of the new guidance on individual topics. As soon as a critical mass is reached, the changes will be introduced in an updated SNA in 2025.
14. As the UK will approach the implementation of the next generation of international guidance outside of the EU there will be some decisions to be made on exactly which frameworks we adopt and how we implement them. Those decisions are not for this paper, but in any event a strong and coherent set of international frameworks will support whatever set of UK-specific rules we agree on. We therefore have a strong incentive to get these frameworks in good shape.

Conclusion

15. Implementing SNA 2025 and related guidance will have noticeable effects on the UK's main macroeconomic aggregates. New methods for dealing with digitalisation and globalisation are both likely to have substantive direct effects on the UK's National Accounts. Our aim is to engage with this work proactively to ensure that the new frameworks meet the UK's needs.

**Richard Heys, Productivity, Research and Professional Development Division, ESG,
ONS, 22 July 2020**

COVID-19 Infection Survey**Purpose**

1. This paper introduces the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS), including the performance and development of the survey and work to form an integrated surveillance response.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the successful delivery, positive feedback and high impact of the CIS;
 - ii. the recent Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) approval to scale-up the survey by October 2020;
 - iii. that the CIS programme remains at Amber, with work focused to mitigate key risks on resources, scale-up, data quality and the stability of the data pipeline; and
 - iv. the significant focus on integrating CIS into broader surveillance work.

Discussion**Introducing the COVID-19 Infection Survey**

3. COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 12 March 2020. Virus containment efforts across the globe have relied heavily on population quarantine ('lock-down') measures to restrict population movement and reduce individual contacts. In order to develop public health strategies for England's exit from lock-down there has been urgent need to understand SARS-CoV-2 infection and transmission at a national and regional level. Effective surveillance has rapidly become an integral component of the long-term solution to the pandemic. There are also critical policy questions regarding viral immunity that need to be answered, including the possibility of onward transmission and waning immunity in individuals who are positive, whether such individuals can be re-infected symptomatically or asymptotically, and about incidence of new infection in individuals without prior exposure.
4. DHSC commissioned ONS at the end of April 2020 to conduct the CIS to collect the data which can help to answer these questions and inform government's policies and operational interventions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The CIS is now the flagship surveillance study within DHSC's surveillance strategy and is the key source of COVID-19 infection, incidence and antibody prevalence in communities across the UK.
5. A repeated cross-sectional survey with longitudinal follow-up, each week the CIS invites a new cohort of over 2,500 households to join the survey for a year. The first month participants are swabbed weekly, before moving to a monthly testing regime. 10 per cent of households are also invited to take a monthly blood test to provide antibody data. The latest headline analysis results are based on data from 29,687 individuals over the previous fortnight. At this scale, the CIS provides national estimates of infection prevalence (with population breakdowns), incidence and antibody prevalence, as well as regional estimates of prevalence and incidence (with understandably larger margins of error). CIS data also informs estimates of R produced by our academic partners which is used to determine the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) consensus on R.
6. To deliver the CIS, ONS has worked jointly with Oxford University (providing antibody testing and Prof. Sarah Walker as Chief Investigator/Medical Ethics Sponsor), with the UK Biocentre (conducting swab testing) and with IQVIA, who are leading a field data collection consortia of over 750 staff from multiple organisations. Data collection on the

survey will continue for two years, followed by a year of further analysis. The survey has a maximum not-to-exceed cost over the three years of £942 million.

Survey Performance and Impact

7. ONS was able to launch the CIS across England, only a week after receiving DHSC's requirement, thanks to an enormous collective effort that occurred across the whole of ONS and across our partner organisations. Such a rapid inception has understandably led to some issues as the CIS team have operated the survey and delivered results, while continuing to refine the design and establish the end-to-end infrastructure flexible enough to respond to current and future needs. A Rapid Regulatory Review of the CIS by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in May endorsed the approach taken by ONS and described the agility in launching and resourcing the new survey as remarkable.
8. The current performance on the survey is strong, with data collection consistently exceeding weekly targets over the last month. However, as the UK has exited lockdown, house bound respondents have begun to return to work and public focus on COVID-19 has begun to wane. Household response rates have dropped from 51 per cent at the end of April to between 35 and 40 per cent in more recent weeks even with incentives (£50 first visit, £25 subsequent visits, per respondent). In a similar manner to ONS's other social surveys, this response has a greater proportion of white middle-aged and older respondents and a lower proportion of younger and ethnic minority respondents than the national demographic. Much of this can be compensated for within the survey analysis, but with interest in ethnic minority vulnerability and less accessible working respondents at increased risk of COVID-19 infection, improving response rates is currently a key priority on the survey.
9. With timely reporting of results essential on CIS, exploratory approaches have been used to provide twice-weekly management information slide decks, circulated to key decision makers in Government. These slide decks also provide detailed information about how the estimates are constructed, the limitations of the data and how the data can be used. CIS data contributed to the 5pm podium briefs while weekly bulletins continue to ensure the headline information being used by the top of government is publicly available. Examples of recent ad hoc outputs and impact include our article providing more detail about the characteristics of those who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and the support and the direct referencing of CIS results in DHSC's shielding policy for the clinically extremely vulnerable.
10. Feedback on the approach ONS has taken has been phenomenal, with very senior figures publicly referring to 'brilliant statistics' and regular daily questions and continued interest from policy makers across government. With such active interest, feedback and engagement we have continued to adapt our analytical approach and priorities, evolving our presentation, language and adding in additional information in subsequent bulletins. For example, recent questions have focused on the sensitivity and specificity of the tests and we now include this information in our slide decks and our public bulletins.

Survey Development and Risks

11. In response to the volatile, complex and demanding environment presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, an ongoing CIS development programme has been established to ensure the survey continues to meet stakeholder requirements over its three-year life. With rapidly developing test technologies and knowledge on COVID-19 increasing daily, continued development and constant evolution will become a hallmark of the CIS.
12. There are four phases of the development programme this financial year, specifically:
 - i. **Phase 1 "Start"** – The initial pilot, development and launch of the survey in England. (Complete)

- ii. **Phase 2 “Embed”** – Expansion of the survey into Wales (29 June) and Northern Ireland (27 July), an updated questionnaire (in two parts) and improved survey operation (e.g. texting test results to respondents and auto-referral of results to Track and Trace). (Current Phase)
 - iii. **Phase 3 “Scale-up”** – Significantly scale-up the survey by October to 150,000 individuals tested per fortnight in England, plus proportional increases in Wales and Northern Ireland. This will deliver the current national analytical capability within each region/devolved administration and enable detection of a 1 per cent prevalence hotspot in a geographical area containing 500,000 people. The proportion of households receiving blood tests will also be increased to 20 per cent. Detailed planning completed, scale-up will start from 27 July.
 - iv. **Phase 4 “COVIDx”** – A phase of research and trials as part of an evidence-based approach to improving the cost-effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the CIS, as well as improving the integration of CIS into the emerging wider COVID-19 surveillance landscape. This work will directly inform the planned competition on CIS. Planning recently started and initial quick wins identified.
13. In addition to the above, discussions continue with the Scottish Government to secure their support and inclusion on the survey. Subject to approval by the First Minister, the working assumption is currently that data collection in Scotland will start in September.
14. The delivery of the CIS programme above was recently assessed as Amber by the ONS CIS Steering Group. Phase 2 is on track to launch the CIS in Northern Ireland on the 27 July and complete remaining survey improvements in August when the data collection software used across the entire field force will be upgraded. DHSC approval has recently been received to commence the Phase 3 Scale-up. The key risks are:
- i. **Project Resource** – The rapid CIS initiation has meant that staff across ONS were rapidly loaned onto the survey. The continued development of the survey and substantial scale-up in Phase 3 has further increased the resource requirements at a time when ONS is already stretched. While dedicated support from ONS People and Business Services Directorate has recently resulted in significant recruitment, focused effort continues to ensure all key resource gaps are addressed, single points of failure are eliminated and that current demanding workloads become more sustainable.
 - ii. **Scale-Up** – Over the coming months the phase 3 scale up will test CIS’s ability to recruit respondents, the ability to increase rapidly the field force by over 2,800 staff and the operational integrity to our systems such as our data pipeline. In response, a new respondent recruitment approach that can operate at scale is currently being tested in the field, IQVIA have already started recruiting for the scale-up and work to improve our systems is underway.
 - iii. **Data Quality** – Data quality issues include falling response rates/bias and errors introduced during the large data collection process. Work has recently commenced to investigate both quick wins and longer-term solutions to improve response rates, while IQVIA’s recent implementation of barcode scanning of swab vials has eliminated the main cause of field data collection errors.
 - iv. **Data Pipeline Stability** – The data pipeline that ingests, cleans and links the multiple CIS datasets (respondent questionnaire, swab and antibody data) currently requires significant manual intervention and data engineering. Work is currently focused on improving the stability and automation within this pipeline.
15. Noting the forthcoming Census *and* the scale-up of the CIS, close working between CIS and the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) has aimed to maximise the opportunities (e.g. in sharing/exploiting skills, tools and capabilities) while minimising the negative impacts (e.g. scarce resource clashes).

16. Recent significant work has sought to strengthen the contracting arrangements on CIS. For Phases 1 and 2 DHSC were responsible for the initial contracts with Oxford University and IQVIA. From Phase 3, ONS will take on this responsibility and the commercial priorities have been to secure long-term value for money, ensure appropriate testing of the market, enable operational delivery at minimum risk and deliver clear and direct accountability of the supply chain. Within this context, the Cabinet Office have recently agreed to a nine-month direct award to IQVIA, followed by a planned competition for the second year of data collection, all subject to decision making at regular Joint Appraisal Reviews with the Cabinet Office, Treasury and DHSC. In progressing the direct award, positive recent discussions with IQVIA should result in a stronger performance-based contract offering substantial cost savings over the existing arrangements.

Integrated Surveillance

17. CIS was initiated as an independent surveillance activity, but ONS is also now involved in the delivery of surveillance studies in Care Homes, Prisons and Schools. With a growing need for further surveillance (e.g. in Ports/Airports and workplaces) DHSC are developing an overarching surveillance strategy, while GoS have proposed ONS takes a leading role in a national core workstream on surveillance. Recognising this need for integration, work in ONS is focused on:

- i. **Integrated Analysis** – Work continues to build an integrated analytical picture of COVID-19 infection in the UK population. Initially by drawing together the data and insights from our own surveillance activities (e.g. CIS, Care Homes, Prisons and Schools) and existing linked datasets (e.g. NHS admissions) and subsequently by drawing on wider data and results (e.g. national testing results).
- ii. **Integrated Delivery** – There is an exciting potential to integrate surveillance delivery, for example by adapting the sample design or operational delivery of the CIS, to meet the requirement of schools or work-place surveillance.
- iii. **Integrated Research and Development** – Wider academic research and ONS's smaller surveillance activities provide the opportunity to test data collection approaches for subsequent deployment onto the CIS. Equally, Phase 4 "COVIDx" of the CIS programme will act as an integrated Research and Development (R&D) hub in ONS, aligning and prioritising surveillance R&D requirements while delivering quick wins and longer-term tests and trials to support evidence-based decisions.

18. Overall, the benefits of successfully achieving integration are significant, not only in delivering a more valuable holistic picture of COVID-19 infection and impact on the UK population, but also in improving cohesion, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. A further fundamental benefit and exciting opportunity is the potential to achieve integrated transformation, aligning the newly emerging surveillance studies (e.g. 100,000 respondent contacts a week), with CDCTP activities (e.g. social survey transformation and data capture platforms) and most importantly with the Integrated Data Platform and the opportunity for data exploitation and linkage this presents. We expect to be able to provide further information on these integration plans and progress in October.

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy
Pete Benton, Director of Population and Public Policy Operations
20 July 2020

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the programme focusing on the Census, including our progress on build and processing and outputs rehearsal, and the focus of activities during the Summer period within the wider transformation.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the programme retains a rating of Amber. This rating has been independently and externally assured following a successful Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) strategic assessment (G0) during July 2020;
 - ii. despite the COVID-19 challenges we remain confident and assured in our ability to deliver a high-quality Census in March 2021. Census Regulations are now in force, printing of questionnaires has commenced, and the first recruitment campaign is now live. The digital build is on track to allow full end to end testing to start at end September;
 - iii. the processing and outputs rehearsal has successfully completed and will now move into an evaluation phase. This provides the confidence that our technology platform can deliver the processing needed to deliver first census outputs within a year;
 - iv. since our last update, the position on data acquisition has improved across several data sources including Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Department for Education (DfE). We continue to work with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure we can deliver maximum value to the timescales of the programme. For council tax data, we are continuing proactive engagement with local authorities whilst commencing work to deploy contingencies including utility data and Royal Mail;
 - v. Distributed Trades (DTrades) within Business Statistics Transformation has completed the alpha (prototyping and testing) phase and is now working on the beta (preparing live product); and
 - vi. we have progressed work towards the 2023 Recommendation on the future of a census and the transformed system of population, social and business statistics.

Discussion

Programme update

3. The programme remains at Amber. Delivery remains on track with all teams sustaining delivery through the challenges presented by COVID-19. Our programme on a page and census on a page show our current milestone position and future planning.
4. Census build continues at pace with more than 80 per cent of the digital build completed. Build will continue through to September at which point full end to end and operational acceptance testing will commence. Preparations to automate this testing and ensure confidence into live operations are making good progress. The latest detailed build metrics have been shared with the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC).
5. The programme held an IPA Strategic Assessment (G0) between 6 and 10 July to assure our preparedness for delivery and our delivery confidence. The review team agreed with the delivery confidence of Amber and were positive and encouraging of the scenario and planning response to COVID-19, and the progress being made across programme. The team recommended, as a priority, that the testing window be protected to ensure a robust live operation. The next review will be a readiness for service (G4)

during October 2020 largely focused on Census and a critical friend review in the Spring of 2021 to review the wider programme and early indicators from Census collection.

Preparations for Census

6. We remain confident and assured of our ability to deliver a high-quality census on 21 March 2021. The design of the field operation has been amended to ensure it can run successfully under any circumstance including national or local lockdowns should these be in place. We continue to make design changes to allow maximum flexibility. These include management information to predict potential localised restrictions and altering the HQ operation to be predominantly virtual. We are now working with the new agency on ensuring the campaign can flex with any COVID-19 situation, considering how the labour market may evolve to support our recruitment and planning how to test and rehearse our virtual HQ operation and incident management.
7. The digital build is continuing and is now over 80 per cent complete of the total build needed for the Census. The supply chain remains positive and responsive and we continue to actively involve suppliers in our preparations through the key supplier meetings.
8. Recruitment for the Census has now commenced with the first campaign going live at the beginning of July (censusjobs.co.uk) for the initial community engagement managers (CEMs). At the time of writing, we have received 2,200 applications for 200 posts of which nearly 1,000 have already passed the situational awareness tests. We are planning applications to open for community advisors (CAs) during August and field roles during November and December.
9. The processing and outputs rehearsal has successfully concluded having exceeded the level of assurance rehearsed in 2011. The capability of the clerical matching tool within the Data Access Platform (DAP) has been proven which was a critical success factor for the rehearsal. This provides assurance that the platform has the ability to process data to meet our first release in a year target. Additionally, a number of administrative data sources in the rehearsal dataset have reintegrated back into the processing pipeline including Valuation Office Agency data (replacing the number of rooms question), MoD data (allowing us to verify responses to the Veteran's question) and Patient Register/PDS (providing age which aids the imputation of missing dates of birth). Other data sources have also been identified to support work on under enumeration.
10. The design of the address check in response to COVID-19 was changed to a clerical desk-based check with a plan to check up to 179,000 addresses. As at 13 July, we have checked 164,000 cases and are on track to deliver 207,000 cases on completion. Not only does this surpass the original design expectation but will further enhance the address frame to avoid waste from missing or false addresses. It has additionally deepened understanding to help inform how the live operation deals with certain types of address. For example, a house of multiple occupancy which has been formally sub-divided as opposed to a house of multiple occupancy where it exists as a house-share.
11. The programme took part in a workshop with Sian Jones to playback the design changes to the Census, impact of COVID-19 and the foundations from the rehearsal. The programme will be developing an articulation of that journey in an accessible way to be able to share with others. We will be working on this through the Summer.
12. The Census Regulations for England have been laid in Parliament and are now in force. Census Regulations for Wales in Senedd Cymru have similarly been laid and are also now in force. This concludes an intensive period of ensuring we have the legislative foundation to deliver the Census and has been achieved through the hard work of teams across the organisation and those in Cabinet Office.

13. There is a remaining judicial review in relation to the Sikh Federation. Permission has been granted for this to be heard and we anticipate this being in October.
14. The Professional Assurance (PASS) has now been signed and approved. This enables the programme to continue with census media and campaign activities. There has been minimal impact from this delay, and we are now planning the full national media campaign.

Acquisition of administrative data

15. The taskforce continues to hold workshops with key stakeholders to focus on priority datasets which are at risk. These workshops have been targeted to identify and understand what options exist to reduce the impact of any loss or delay to receiving the data. Results are being reported weekly.
16. Work continues to resolve, but also to develop contingency, for the critical datasets of Customer Information System (CIS) and Benefits and Income Data (BIDs) from DWP and Council tax data from local authorities (LAs). This includes leveraging existing data in new ways and exploiting additional data sources, for example, utilities data to supplement council tax data.
17. The acquisition process is being altered to include a more detailed definition phase, prior to receiving the data, where ONS users will be involved in quality assurance, metadata review and access to the supplier analysts to facilitate cross-organisation understanding. This should support accelerated data engineering once the data is received. The provisioning (data ingest) process has been reduced to six weeks by which time the data is available for use. There will be a further six weeks needed for full linking and integration. Additional process improvement work is underway, including a Systems Thinking focus on the end to end value chain.

Wider transformation

18. The programme continues to capture and evaluate new ways of working from the response to COVID-19. This has informed future planning including the delivery of Labour Market Survey (LMS) and Household Finance Survey (HFS) and how to leverage the Coronavirus Infection Study (CIS) to provide additional contingency for the Census Coverage Survey (CCS).
19. DTrades is a project to transform short-term statistics for the retail, wholesale and motor trades sectors. This uses a combination of survey and administrative value-added tax (VAT) data utilising a new cloud-based Statistical Production Platform (SPP) and new Business Process Management (BPM) system.
20. The project has delivered the alpha (prototyping and testing) phase and has completed the formal gate review. Data clearing, key validations and automatic validation is being developed. Demonstration of the results pipeline took place on Monday 22 June. The imputation (assignment of values by inference), winsorisation (minimising the impact of outlier values), grossing (showing full values) and aggregation (separate values are gathered and expressed as one value) are now all integrated into pipeline with enhancements identified for the next phase. The next phases may be delayed by three months to allow resource to be deployed onto the Integrated Data Platform programme. The planned go-live has therefore moved to March 2021 from December 2020.
21. Work on the 2023 Recommendation has continued with the first steering group and initial work packages agreed. There will be further work during the Summer, including engagement across the organisation and with the Public Policy and Impact Board.

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17 July 2020

Authority Board Self Review of Effectiveness

Purpose

1. This paper covers the results of the Authority Board's self-review of effectiveness, highlighting the key issues raised and proposing improvements.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to note the results and consider proposals for action.

Background

3. The Board is invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis to identify where it is performing well and where improvements could potentially be made.
4. The results of the Board's review in 2019 indicated an improvement in the operation of the Board in the following areas:
 - i. strategy and business planning;
 - ii. the relationship between executive and non-executive members;
 - iii. opportunities to engage with staff outside of Board meetings;
 - iv. the quality of papers; and
 - v. the support provided by the Secretariat.
5. Areas highlighted for focus in 2019 included: further discussion on risk; the need to engage with more strategic and fewer operational issues; long term planning; and frequency of meetings.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

6. The results of last year's self-effectiveness review indicated improvements on the previous year. This year's review has indicated that there have been further improvements, including:
 - i. more focussed discussions on risk in the last year;
 - ii. an improved business planning process than in previous years, with significant shaping, thinking and contribution by the Board;
 - iii. the Chair continues to provide an open and supportive culture, which members noted has improved during the pandemic; and
 - iv. the transition to remote meetings went well. The chairing and operation of remote meetings has largely been a success with the Secretariat providing a high level of support.

Forward agenda

7. Members agree that the Board spends sufficient time on the issues that matter and that members value each other's retrospective contributions. The annual review of effectiveness provides an opportunity to consider the Board's forward agenda.
8. The forward agenda includes regular discussions on the areas of focus highlighted by members for the coming year:
 - i. quarterly progress updates on the Strategy- Statistics for the Public Good;
 - ii. delivery on the ONS Business Plan at every meeting via the Performance Report;
 - iii. quarterly updates on the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) with a paper scheduled for this meeting [SA(20)50]; and

- iv. an update on the Integrated Data Platform as part of the paper on alternative data sources scheduled for this meeting [SA(20)48], with further discussions planned in September and November.
9. Members may find it useful towards the end of every meeting to briefly run through the proposed agenda for the following meeting.

Programme of Activities

10. The Programme of Activities (PoA) provides Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) with the opportunity to engage face to face with colleagues below Board level across a range of divisions. As a result of COVID-19 and the lockdown, several PoA office visits for NEDs that were scheduled between March and July were cancelled. We are in the process of developing a programme of remote activities, having sought feedback from Non-Executive Directors.

Risk

11. While Board members agree that there have been improvements and more focused discussions on risk in the last year, it was suggested that further work is needed on the Authority's risk appetite and awareness of emerging risks. This issue is being addressed with a discussion on the proposed risk appetite; and revised strategic risk profile scheduled for this meeting.

Diversity

12. The review highlighted the need to consider the diversity of the membership of the Board, with gaps relating to the lack of representation of ethnic minorities and those with disabilities. The diversity of the Board is considered as part of the recruitment process for new members.

Digital Technology, Change Management and Delivery

13. Members highlighted that it would be beneficial to build on the skills surrounding digital technology expertise and change management.

New Practices

14. Several new practises that members would like to see implemented for meetings were discussed in the self-review. Members highlighted that a balance between remote meetings and physical meetings would be welcomed, and that shorter meetings going forward would be beneficial.
13. Some members highlighted that they would welcome the continuation of comments being submitted in advance of meetings.

Conclusion

15. The Authority's annual self-review affords members the opportunity to reflect on what is working well and where we may need to improve our ways of working. This year, Board members have requested:
 - i. delivering on the strategy, Census, CIS and IDP, while maintaining a balance between ambition and realism;
 - ii. improving risk approach and experience in digital technology and change management; and
 - iii. a focus on diversity gaps in membership of the Board.
16. Secretariat will resolve or seek improvements for the issues highlighted in the paper.

Central Policy Secretariat, 17 July 2020