

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Thursday 29 October 2020
Via Videoconference

Present

UK Statistics Authority

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

Also in attendance

Mr Jonathan Athrow
Mr Nick Bateson
Mr Iain Bell
Ms Philippa Bonay (for item 11)
Mr Owen Brace
Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Douglas Cameron (Secretariat)
Mr Mike Hardie (for item 12)
Ms Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)
Mr Will Laffan (for item 13)
Ms Emma Rourke (for item 9)
Ms Amy Williams (Secretariat)

Apologies

Professor Jonathan Haskel

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Professor Haskel.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Mr Dobbs had informed the Chair in advance of the meeting of a conflict of interest regarding the COVID-19 Infection Survey agenda item.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 September 2020 were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

4.1 Non-executive directors had met prior to the Board. Mr Dobbs had informed Board colleagues that he would recuse himself from two agenda items: the Chief Executive's Report and the COVID-19 Infection Survey, due to a conflict of interest.

4.2 The Chair welcomed Ms Alison Pritchard to her first Authority Board meeting as Deputy National Statistician for Data Capability. The Board heard from Ms Pritchard, a summary of her career and priorities going forward.

4.3 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met:

- i. Sir David, Ms Sian Jones, Professor Jonathan Haskel, Professor David Hand, Ms Helen Boaden, Sir Ian and Mr Jonathan Athow had met on 9 October to discuss the Authority-HM Treasury consultation on the future of the Retail Prices Index (RPI);
- ii. as part of World Statistics Day on 20 October Sir David alongside Sir Ian had held an all staff talk;
- iii. Sir David had attended the National Statistics Designation Review meeting on 22 October, chaired by Ms Boaden; and
- iv. Sir David had met Sir David Spiegelhalter, Prof Hand and Mr Iain Bell on 27 October regarding the Census.

4.4 The meeting heard that a series of departmental visits were scheduled for the Chair in the coming months to promote the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good. A meeting was also scheduled with the Governor of the Bank of England early November.

4.5 The remote programme of activities for Non-executive directors was underway. Professor Hand reported on his meeting on the Integrated Data Platform (IDP) and commended the innovative work by the IDP team. Professor Haskel had met the Economic Statistics team; and Sir David Spiegelhalter had participated in an event for Black History Month.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(20)60]

5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues for October, highlighting the following:

- i. HM Treasury had written to Permanent Secretaries in October informing departments that the Comprehensive Spending Review had been paused and a one-year review would be conducted instead;
- ii. the ONS-Health Data Research UK partnership continued to make good progress making available priority datasets required by the National Core Studies to enable research and inform policy across the UK; and
- iii. Mr Athow was liaising with International National Statistics Institutes including Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Netherlands and Estonia to share the innovative work by ONS; and
- iv. the development of the Integrated Data Platform across government was progressing well and would continue to be key focus.

5.2 The COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) was scheduled for discussion later in the meeting. The survey had surpassed a landmark one million swabs taken accumulatively since the survey had been established. The meeting heard that ONS was working with IQVIA to improve performance in response to an uplift in complaints, which linked to the upscaling of the survey. The risk and assurance framework for CIS and contract management was scheduled for discussion by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in November.

6. Strategy and Business Plan update [SA(20)61]

6.1 Mr Bateson and Mr Cameron introduced a paper which provided the first quarterly update on progress against the delivery of the Authority strategy. The reports to the Board by Sir Ian and Mr Humpherson since the launch of the strategy in July had demonstrated clear leadership and an agile response by both the regulatory and productions arms of the Authority in the delivery of the strategy.

6.2 The National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) had considered a revised set of Key Performance Indicators in September, which were aligned to the four strategic drivers: Radical; Ambitious; Inclusive and Sustainable. It was noted that as the NSEG subcommittee structure matured the respective Chairs would further develop the Management Information to support the delivery of the strategy and business plan.

6.3 The Board heard that the organisation's ability to deliver against the strategy was linked to the revision of the scope of the CSR to a one-year Spending Review, with a focus on economic statistics and analysis; public policy analysis; and the future of the IDP.

6.4 The Board noted the report and would remain engaged as the response to the one-year settlement developed.

7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(20)62]

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

7.2 Mr Humpherson highlighted the ongoing review by OSR of the approach to developing statistical models used to award 2020 exam results, supported by an Expert Advisory Group to provide technical oversight. The Regulation Committee would consider a draft report in November.

7.3 The OSR team continued to deal with a high volume of casework from members of the public. As reported to Regulation Committee, the team were successfully delivering on the business plan alongside pandemic related work.

8. Report from the Chair of the Regulation Committee

8.1 Professor Trefethen reported on the work of the Regulation Committee, which had met on 15 October 2020.

8.2 Committee members had considered:

- i. the Authority Interventions Policy and had agreed the need for a clear two-page policy with supporting frequently asked questions. Any proposed changes to the policy would need to be endorsed by the Board.
- ii. draft guidance for statistical producers on collecting and processing data on sex and gender, with further work needed;
- iii. the OSR Research programme, a new workstream for OSR; and
- iv. the Systemic Review on Statistical Leadership.

9. COVID-19 Infection Survey [SA(20)63]

9.1 Ms Rourke introduced a paper which provided an update on the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS), including the performance and development of the survey and a broader, integrated surveillance response in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and other government departments.

- 9.2 Board members discussed the update and commended the ONS on the successful delivery of the CIS, including the expansion of the survey to cover the entire UK and the scale up of the survey in England. It was noted that assisting in the development and evaluation of public policy was a key part of ONS' statutory remit.
- 9.3 The Board heard that ONS were working in partnership with the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England to produce a weekly, coherent narrative of COVID-19 indicators.
- 9.4 The Board would continue to receive regular updates on the CIS.

10. Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) [SA(20)64]

- 10.1 Mr Bell introduced a paper which provided an update on the Census programme, and progress on building towards the recommendation to Parliament in 2023 on the future of population and migration statistics.
- 10.2 Mr Bell reported that the target to move business surveys online had been met early. The Census digital build and testing remained on track and community engagement was underway. Delivery of the Census in March 2021 was on track despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. The acquisition of administrative data continued to be a key focus.
- 10.3 The Board heard about the work in preparation for the recommendation to Parliament in 2023 on the future of the census and population and migration statistics. The Sikh Judicial Review was ongoing.
- 10.4 The Board noted the update.

11. People plan and Inclusivity [SA(20)65]

- 11.1 Ms Bonay introduced a paper which provided an update on the People Plan (PP) and the Inclusion Strategy. The PP was launched in July as part of the business plan to support the delivery of the strategy. The Inclusion Strategy set out plans to create an inclusive organisation.
- 11.2 Ms Bonay highlighted that the focus on strategic workforce planning would ensure the organisation could deploy resources effectively. The organisation had seen an increase in declaration rates for all protected characteristics. With regard to graduate recruitment there was a reserve list, with the recruitment of analysts a key focus. In terms of measuring the delivery and impact of the PP and Inclusion Strategy the People Committee, chaired by Ms Beckett had oversight.
- 11.3 Board members discussed the link between strategic workforce planning, efficiencies and the approach to recruitment in response to the one-year Spending Review. It was noted that future resource plans and recruitment would focus on aligning skills in areas of the highest priority.

12. RPI [SA(20)66]

- 12.1 Mr Athow and Mr Hardie introduced a paper which provided an overview of the responses to the consultation on the reform to RPI methodology.
- 12.2 The Board heard that at the close of the consultation on 21 August 2020, 831 responses had been received. Overall, there were no statistical objections to the proposed methodology on how the proposed changes should be introduced. With regard to a response to the consultation HM Treasury had indicated that they would like it to coincide with an autumn fiscal event.
- 12.3 The Board noted the update. Mr Athow would liaise with the Chair on the timing of the announcement.

13. EU Transition [SA(20)67]

- 13.1 Mr Laffan and Mr Athow introduced a paper which provided an update on the work of the Authority's EU Exit Programme including the final phase of the programme's work to ensure the effective functioning of the statistical system outside of the EU; and the work to position ONS to meet the analytical demands of the end of the transition period, learning from the experience and successes of COVID-related analysis.
- 13.2 In September the Board had discussed a paper on the domestic arrangements for the governance of economic statistics and a further paper was scheduled in November. With regard to the demands for analysis at the end of the transition period the organisation's response to the pandemic had strengthened its ability to respond flexibly to decision makers' demands for analysis.

14. Any other business

- 14.1 The Authority Board would meet next on 26 November by videoconference

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

29 October 2020, 09:15 to 12:45, via videoconference

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies: Prof. Jonathan Haskel

Attendees: Ms Philippa Bonay (for item 9), Mr Mike Hardie (for item 10), Mr Will Laffan (for item 11), Ms Emma Rourke (for item 7)

NED Session: 09:15-09:45

1 09:45-09:50 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none">Declarations of interest	Meeting of 29 September 2020
2 09.50-10.05 15 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 10.05-10.20 15 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(20)60 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 10.20-10.35 15 mins	Strategy and Business Plan update	SA(20)61 Mr Nick Bateson Mr Douglas Cameron
5 10.35-10.45 10 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(20)62 Mr Ed Humpherson
6 10.45-10.50 5 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regulation Committee	Oral report Prof. Anne Trefethen
7 10.50-11.15 25 mins	COVID-19 Infection Survey	SA(20)63 Ms Emma Rourke
8 11.15-11.30 15 mins	Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme	SA(20)64 Mr Iain Bell
11.30-11.40 10 mins	Break	
9 11.40-12.00 20 mins	People Plan and Inclusivity	SA(20)65 Ms Philippa Bonay
10 12.00-12.15 15 mins	RPI	SA(20)66 Mr Jonathan Athow Mr Mike Hardie
11 12.15-12.35 20 mins	EU Transition	SA(20)67 Mr Will Laffan Mr Jonathan Athow
12 12.35-12.45 10 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 26 November 2020, 10:30-14:00, via teleconference

Chief Executive's Report, October 2020

Purpose

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

Summary

2. In the face of a second wave, new lockdown measures and an ever-increasing demand for rapid and robust analysis, the challenge to measure the spread of the virus and the impact it is having on our economy and society remains. However, fantastic progress has been made this month with the establishment of new Surveillance Studies, a boost to the sample for the Coronavirus Infection Survey (CIS) and improvements to our economic measures. Equally, October has provided a chance to celebrate statistical achievements both locally through the ONS Excellence Awards and internationally with World Statistics Day.

Review of recent activities

3. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
 - i. October saw the ONS host its annual Excellence Awards; a highlight of the year for me. It was fantastic to see colleagues' work showcased from across the organisation at a time when we are having more impact than ever before.
 - ii. Throughout October, the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network have been organising a series of events to celebrate Black History Month. This has provided a chance to recognise the achievements of Black people often left out of the historical narrative. Sam Beckett, the Second Permanent Secretary, and I hosted a launch event to kick off this series of activity and recognise the diversity across the ONS.
 - iii. 20 October marked World Statistics day, an international celebration focussing on how statistics connect the world with data we can trust. It seems particularly fitting that this quintennial event should fall in 2020. I spent the day hearing why colleagues from across the community were proud to work in statistics and held a Your Call Session alongside the Chair of the Authority.
 - iv. On 1 October, the Civil Service launched its People Survey. There is a massive amount of activity underway to boost response rates. With the majority of staff still at home it is incredibly important to understand how staff are feeling and gather their views on how we manage the organisation during these unprecedented times. The initial results of the survey will be presented to members in December.
 - v. On 21 October the Treasury wrote out to secretaries of state following a decision by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister to pause the current Comprehensive Spending Review and to conduct a one-year review instead. One-year settlements will be focussed towards essential operational needs.
 - vi. At the beginning of November, we will publish experimental estimates incorporating estimates 'double deflation' into the National Accounts. This was originally planned for 2019, but could not be implemented.
 - vii. Following a request from the Science Advisory Group on Emergencies (SAGE), the ONS is setting up a series of Surveillance Studies to evaluate the effectiveness of those areas facing the strictest COVID-19 measures. We are also working to boost the Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey (BICS) sample in those areas to further understand the economic impact of these measures.
 - viii. In response to a request from the Secretary of State for Health, on 5 October the CIS published its first results having boosted its sample to include over 150,000

households and surpassed a landmark one million swaps taken accumulatively since the survey was established.

- ix. The ONS-Health Data Research UK partnership has continued to make good progress mapping and making available priority datasets required by the National Core Studies to enable research to inform policy and operational decision making across the UK. Over the coming weeks work will progress to further open up these data for access within trusted settings.
- x. As part of World Statistics Day, I participated in a panel event discussing the Future of Federal Statistics. This was jointly sponsored by the Harvard Data Science Review, the American Statistical Association, the Caucus for Women in Statistics, the International Statistics Institute and the International Association for Official Statistics.

Future look

- 4. Over November we will continue to progress work on the National Core Studies, both the Surveillance Studies and Data and Connectivity streams.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, 21 October 2020

Strategy and Business Plan Update

Purpose

1. This paper is the first quarterly update on progress against the delivery of the UK Statistics Authority strategy, Statistics for the Public Good. It builds on the progress update provided to the Board in September for the ONS Strategic Business Plan.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. note progress against the delivery of the strategy; and
 - ii. consider areas of focus over the next three months.

Background

3. In July we launched our new strategy, Statistics for the Public Good. The delivery of that strategy is primarily reported through progress against the business plans for ONS and OSR. In September we reported against progress on the implementation of the ONS Strategic Business Plan.
4. There has been strong, positive feedback from stakeholders, and colleagues alike on the strategy and on our progress as a statistical system. A number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been developed as part of the ONS Strategic Business Plan and these are aligned to our four strategic drivers: Radical; Ambitious; Inclusive and Sustainable. We have presented a revised suite of KPIs to National Statistician's Executive Group (NSEG) in September that more tightly aligns to these drivers. As the NSEG sub-committee structure matures, we expect the chairs of these committee to define and control the management information that will support their agendas, which will further enhance the KPI framework.
5. Across the 12 strategic objectives, 10 are achieving/exceeding our target of delivery progress. This also shows that completion of two Accountability Framework Objectives (AFOs) have been completed by the end of September – which is in line with expectations. Overall, we are confident at this stage of delivering against all strategic objectives. The strategic objective that is below our KPI threshold of 70 per cent relates to publication and external engagement (SO9), which reflects the timing of resource approvals for this work. Following confirmation of funding recruitment is underway to deliver the detailed packages of work, which will address the amber ratings that feed this objective.
6. Across the portfolio, two milestones are currently reporting red, which relate to the data collection transformation element of the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP),¹ and four have been completed – which are early Integrated Data Platform (IDP) milestones.
7. The ability for us to continue to deliver against the objective suite will be affected by the revision to the scope of the Comprehensive Spending Review as set out in the Chief Executive's report to the Board. We will be working in the lead up to Christmas to understand the impact of this, once the overall funding envelope for 2021/22 becomes clear at the conclusion of the Spending Review.

Discussion

¹ These relate to cost savings and efficiencies for the retail trade survey and the availability of administrative data in support of the Household Financial Survey and are being re-planned.

8. Some of the highlights of progress against the strategy include:
 - i. increased the size of CIS to 150,000 tests a fortnight, and to all four nations of the UK, informing governments, businesses and society on the levels of infection;
 - ii. led the coordination of additional studies in care homes, schools, universities, ports and airports, ensuring that these add to the collective evidence available;
 - iii. secured funding for the IDP, with the approval of the strategic and outline business cases and establishes the programme team, structure and scope - important steps in joining up data and analysis across government;
 - iv. established an Inclusive Data Taskforce to enhance the representativeness of data collection and analysis across government;
 - v. enhanced coherence through comparisons of what different information sources are telling us about furlough, health, mortality and others; and
 - vi. delivered an ambitious Comprehensive Spending Review bid in line with the ambitions of the strategy.
9. There are, however, some challenges ahead and over the next three months the focus will be:
 - i. ensuring the country has the right information, well presented, on EU exit as well as COVID-19;
 - ii. stabilising the delivery of CIS and associated studies;
 - iii. continuing to prepare for the Census;
 - iv. receiving and analysing the results to the 2020 People Survey, which will give a strong indication on how the strategy has been received by colleagues;
 - v. properly defining the Analysis Function in line with the cross government functional agenda; and
 - vi. understanding the impact of the Chancellor's announcement of 21 October to reduce the Comprehensive Spending Review to a one year settlement on our ambitions, objectives and programmes while ensuring our activities are on a sustainable financial footing – with a particular focus on economic statistics and analysis; public policy analysis; and the future of the IDP.

Conclusion

10. The first three months of the new strategy have been successful for the statistical system. As ever, there is more to do to build inclusivity, coherence, and sustainability into all that we do – and we will continue to focus on doing so in the coming months.

Douglas Cameron, Head of Strategy Group
Nick Bateson, Director of Finance, Planning and Performance
22 October 2020

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY BOARD

SA(20)62

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on regulation activity for the Regulation Committee.

Discussion

2. Key activities since the last Board meeting have been detailed below.

Exams Review

3. The most significant area of work is our review of the statistical models used to set exam grades across the UK. We have discussed the scope of the review with the Regulation Committee, and are drawing on an Expert Oversight Group made up of Sir David Norgrove, Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter, Professor David Hand and Professor Sir Ian Diamond. [Our project webpage](#) outlines the scope of the review. We will share a draft report with the Regulation Committee in November prior to publication. The work to date has involved:
 - i. liaising with the key stakeholders: the exam regulators in the four countries of the UK and their Departmental sponsors (up to Director General/Permanent Secretary level); the Royal Statistical Society; and the chair of the independent review of the arrangements for awarding grades in Wales;
 - ii. conducting reviews of compliance against the Code of Practice for Statistics (nearly complete for England and Wales; in progress for Scotland and Northern Ireland) drawing on documents and meetings with the exam regulators;
 - iii. commissioning papers from Richard Dobbs (clarity of objective); Professor David Hand (the challenges facing modelling of this kind); and the Data Science Campus (on the model build); and
 - iv. input from a range of organisations with a broader interest in models and algorithms (including the Ada Lovelace Institute and Validate AI).
4. We will develop lessons that other Government bodies wanting to use models to support decisions can draw on. We will also draw on other reviews, including the review of the Scottish Qualifications Authority models, published on 7 October and the interim review of the models in Wales (due at the end of October).

Other work

5. Other work includes:
 - i. National Statistics review: we are about to enter the second phase of the work, in which we explore various propositions on how best to describe and use the National Statistic designation. We discussed the next steps with the steering group (chaired by Helen Boaden) last Thursday, and Helen and I will update the Board briefly during the meeting. We focused on the overall problem we are trying to address; what other regulators do; presenting uncertainty; and the potential role of a dashboard to tell users about the nature of the statistics they are using;
 - ii. we continue to deal with a high volume of cases. The April-September caseload was just below 200 cases – roughly double what we would expect in a normal 12 months period. We continue to press producers on transparency, clarity of explanation and availability of data, especially on Test and Trace data. I wrote to the Chief Executive of Public Health England on 21 October about delays to publication of weekly statistics on the pandemic;
 - iii. as the minutes for the Regulation Committee show, the OSR team has been progressing a wide range of business as usual, including systemic reviews and assessments. This includes four assessment reports and our review of the recording

of sex and gender in statistics. This shows that we can deliver our core business plan in spite of the twin challenges of a pandemic surge in work and most staff working at home; and

- iv. we have also continued to develop our cross-cutting functions. Our automation function is supporting our review of exams and provides the analytics that support our quick responses to casework; and our Insight function delivered the paper to the Board on the performance of the statistical system during the pandemic.

Challenges

6. Two challenges are on my mind as we enter the autumn season:
 - i. maintaining OSR's cohesion and resilience remains a priority; and
 - ii. continuing to balance a focus COVID-19 issues with other, more long standing issues (e.g. business demography, inclusion).

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 21 October 2020

List of Annexes

Annex A Regulatory dashboard

Regulatory Activities October 2020 - AB

Economy	Business, Trade and International Development	Population and Society	Children, Education and skills	Crime and Security
<p>Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ONS Productivity statistics Planning assessment <p>Compliance Checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HMRC Personal Incomes Statistics from the Survey of Personal Incomes. ▪ Follow-up to Quality Review of HMRC statistics published earlier this year. ▪ ONS Regional Household Final Expenditure statistics ▪ ONS CPIH statistics particularly in the light of users' concerns with OOH and proposals in respect to RPI <p>Stakeholder Engagement-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OSR session at the ESCoE economic measurement conference on 17 September ▪ Meeting held with Scottish Government exchequer and statistical officials in respect to presentation of the Scottish budget. 	<p>Assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business Demography Report presented to October Regulation Committee meeting and now due for publication on the 28th of October ▪ Annual Business Survey Planning assessment ▪ UK Trade Balanced Trade asymmetry dataset delayed until November – DiT aware and comfortable with the delay. <p>Compliance Checks: Review of ONS Mergers and Acquisitions statistics nearing completion. Awaiting response from ONS on development of single platform for processing VAT data in the production of economic estimates.</p>	<p>Assessments:</p> <p>Census Letters to Census office on how they have responded to phase 1 assessment findings published on 11 Sept. Workshops with NRS on methods are planned for October.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: DWP NiNo allocation statistics: meeting to discuss outcomes of compliance check planned for later in September.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Loneliness: Following up on case studies and drafting summary report</p>	<p>Exam Results Review: The review aims to identify lessons from the 2020 exams process for public bodies considering the use of statistical models to support decisions. Currently activities include; documentation research, initial review sessions with all four regulators and discussions with key stakeholders. Additional support is being provided by an Expert Oversight Group of UKSA Board technical experts which is meeting weekly with OSR. Project is working towards October final report date. Dedicated project webpage is providing regular external updates.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Children and Young People Following the publication of a blog on 23 July, we held various stakeholder meetings in September to discuss our approach and proposed framework. Domain is currently prioritising exam review work.</p>	<p>Guidance on data about sex: Regulation Committee agenda item. Catalysed by casework on statistics about sex in criminal justice statistics, OSR has prepared guidance for producers and users of statistics, setting out our expectations when collecting and reporting data about sex, in line with the Code.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Home Office statistics on Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000</p> <p>Raising awareness of OSR and the Code: Two presentations about OSR for MOD – one for producers about the Code and official stats production, and one for producers and policy on using statistics in briefings, with Ministers etc.</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) report presented to October Regulation Committee meeting. To be published 5 November.</p> <p>Submission: Public Accounts Committee submission to debate on Digital Transformation in the NHS.</p> <p>Casework: Continues to focus mainly on COVID-19 primarily on test and trace statistics. Our public interventions can be viewed on our COVID-19 webpage and correspondence page.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Mental Health in England: Report published 17 September.</p>	<p>Assessment: DWP Quarterly Benefit Statistics report presented to October Regulation Committee meeting. Awaiting comments from DWP.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Reviewing Northern Ireland's Benefit Statistics Summary.</p> <p>Poverty Review: We have received a lot of interest in our upcoming systemic review on poverty, following our casework interventions. Presented our proposal to the End Child Poverty Coalition.</p>	<p>Compliance checks: Waste statistics published 9 October.</p> <p>Climate change review: scoping for systemic review of climate change statistics with a position statement as intended outcome.</p> <p>Casework: One recent query on climate change/greenhouse gases and the governments road investment strategy closed - awaiting further detail from the complainant.</p>	<p>Assessment: Reviewing evidence provided by Dfl to address NI planning statistics assessment requirements</p> <p>Compliance checks: Published findings of CC of the Scottish House Condition Survey statistics, and currently reviewing English Housing Survey and Leasehold dwellings statistics.</p>	<p>Assessment: Assessment of the Office for Rail and Road's Estimates of Station Usage statistics report presented to October Regulation Committee meeting. To be published 3 November.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Response to follow up of requirements from compliance check of ONS' travel and tourism statistics published.</p>

COVID-19 Infection Survey and associated surveillance studies

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS), including the performance and development of the survey and a broader, integrated surveillance response in partnership with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Other Government Departments.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the successful delivery, positive feedback and high impact of the CIS;
 - ii. recent successful milestones, including the expansion of the survey to cover the entire UK and the scale-up of the survey in England by October 2020;
 - iii. that the CIS programme remains at Amber, with work focused to mitigate key risks on data quality and the delivery of new surveillance studies; and
 - iv. the increase in the sample size of the Opinions survey to 4,500, allowing us greater focus on demographics and geography in terms of behaviour, compliance with Nonpharmaceutical Interventions and social impacts.

Discussion

Survey Performance

3. Since the CIS was introduced to the Board in July (Board Paper SA(20)50) the performance on the survey has remained strong and it has recently successfully delivered against two important milestones. On 21 September, with the successful launch in Scotland, the CIS achieved its vision to cover all four UK nations. On 5 October the survey successfully completed over 150,000 swab tests from unique participants in England over the preceding two weeks. This represented the successful scale-up of the survey in England which DHSC had publicly announced to provide increased accuracy of data at a national and regional level, and an improved dataset at a sub-regional level. This level of testing will now be sustained in England until at least April 2021, while work to expand the survey in the Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland continues (to achieve 13,000, 20,000 and 6000 unique tests a fortnight respectively).
4. Approximately four per cent of UK households (1,086,094 households) have been invited to join the study since April. Response rates have declined during this time with an average of 17 per cent of households accepting the invitation to join the study (181,000 households, 384,000 individuals). Daily, a 3,600 strong field force contacts circa 13,000 households and completes circa 26,000 swab tests.
5. The field work on the CIS is delivered through our partner IQVIA. ONS continues to manage the contract with IQVIA very closely, recently successfully completing a Joint Appraisal Review with the Cabinet Office. IQVIA's success in delivering the scale-up and expansion into Scotland is commended. However, ONS has recently received an uplift in complaints in relation to the CIS, which is primarily a reflection on the large increase in scale on the survey during August and September. We are working with IQVIA to improve the transparency on complaints reporting and continue to investigate issues that are reported. We remain focused on delivering improvements on Key Performance Indicators (in particular the number of households tested within seven days of enrolment) and ensuring rapid action is taken to address call centre backlogs.

6. In a similar manner to ONS's other social surveys, the response on the survey continues to have a greater proportion of white middle-aged and older respondents and a lower proportion of younger and ethnic minority respondents than the national demographic. Weighting within the survey analysis addresses a majority of this bias so that the quality of the final survey data is not significantly impacted, but development work on the CIS over the next three months will implement over-sampling in areas with large populations of ethnic minorities. Additionally, the data collection software in the field will be upgraded to reduce user input errors and improvements will be made to integrate the CIS more effectively with the NHS COVID-19 app.
7. In response to the 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. As we know our test has high sensitivity and specificity, we are working with DHSC on new testing methods which if cheaper and match the quality achieved through our current approach, we will adopt.

Survey Impact

8. The CIS clearly identified the growth in positive rates over the last few weeks. This data underpins government decision making and played a key role in the Government briefing to the nation on 12 October. The differential positivity rates across regions and ages has received attention and the team regularly answers additional questions and bespoke analysis requests, as well as provide detailed breakdowns (e.g. covering international travel).
9. These statistics are a key source for weekly Secretary of State briefing, for No 10 decision making and are regarded by the Chief Medical Officer for England as the most robust analysis of the infection.
10. The survey analysis has received international interest with a recent request to present to the UN at the World Data Forum in October. This was an opportunity to share the success of the CIS to interested parties across the world, specifically our response in standing up such a survey so rapidly.

Monitoring COVID-19 in other settings

11. Schools Infection Survey - This joint Public Health England (PHE), ONS and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) study has reached out to Teaching Unions, Local Authorities, Academy Trusts and Directors of Public Health. 250 schools have been contacted with the aim to recruit 150 onto the study. Parents and pupils have been contacted and the rapidly forming field operation will be going into schools in early November to conduct both virus and antibody testing. It is anticipated that participation rates from schools and parents/pupils may be a challenge and further work to raise the profile of this important study in this community is being developed.
12. Universities - A survey to understand the impact of COVID-19 on students and their behaviours is being piloted in three Universities (Middlesex, Oxford Brookes and Worcester). The pilot launched on 12 October. The survey will run fortnightly, developing the questions and sampling frame over time. We are also exploring a cluster design for the CIS to ensure good coverage of university students (living in private households) in the survey. In tandem, we are looking at the data landscape across Universities (for example Test and Trace, wastewater sampling and Universities' own testing regimes) and considering how best to understand prevalence among students living in halls of residence.

13. Care Homes - The Vivaldi Care Homes study published first outputs on infection levels in staff and residents on 3 July. ONS has been commissioned by DHSC to improve the weekly reporting of prevalence across all care homes. A modelling approach is being developed to provide a representative picture of prevalence in care homes across England, based on data from the ongoing care home testing programme.
14. Prisons - Virus testing on staff and residents in 28 prisons has been completed and work to launch antibody testing for staff is now underway. ONS is working with the University of Southampton and PHE to analyse the data collected. The aim is to provide data internally within Government at the end of October and publish an interim report in November.
15. Ports and Airports - ONS/DHSC is working with the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) to understand the requirement for a behavioural insights questionnaire which could be piloted through the International Passenger Survey (IPS). We expect to roll this out when the IPS goes live in November.

Survey Opinion

16. We have surveyed 2,200 people each week through the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) over the past seven months, achieving broadly 70 per cent response rates. This has been instrumental in briefing Number Ten and SAGE in terms of social mixing, social distancing, face coverings, travel to work and other important elements of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs).
17. We are expanding the OPN to sample 6,600 people and hope to achieve 4,500 responses each week. Together with refreshing questions in line with the emerging NPIs, we should be able to track behaviours at a sub-regional level (e.g. Merseyside) and by broad demographics.
18. We will refine our weekly publication to ensure our data and insight remain relevant and timely to the ongoing situation. We also require discussions with Devolved Administrations, given the boost is England only, and with DHSC and Cabinet Office over funding.
19. The evaluation of NPIs effectiveness is a growing component of our research. In addition to improved monitoring, we also need to improve our understanding of what is working. It is hoped that we will achieve this through triangulation of evidence reflecting what has worked at a local level, alongside the monitoring information of how restrictions are being complied with. This approach will continue to evolve in the coming weeks.

Next Steps

20. Having achieved the 150,000 sample size, the aim is to routinely publish data at a sub-regional level and with additional population characteristics and behaviours (e.g. social distancing, household composition).
21. With JBC as partners, we are evaluating the effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical interventions, preparing to launch a weekly cross-cutting narrative of COVID-19 indicators. These reports explain the shape of the virus, the flow of patients through the health system and mortality across all locations. It is hoped that this will bring greater coherence to the discourse around the journey of the virus and become the definitive fact sheet for contemporary understanding of how it is affecting health in England.
22. We are investing in a team that will build a legacy plan for the investment committed to us for the CIS and wider surveillance programme. Our operational design innovation and the combined power of survey and administrative data at a national and regional level are key areas that we can utilise to improve our understanding of population health beyond the duration of this pandemic.
23. We would welcome an opportunity to brief the Board on a quarterly basis.

**Iain Bell, Director General, Population and Public Policy, Emma Rourke, Director,
Health Analysis and Pandemic Insight, 21 October 2020**

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the programme, focusing on the preparations for Census and progress on building towards the recommendation to parliament in 2023 on the future of population and migration statistics.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the programme retains an amber rating. A further COVID-19 assessment means we remain confident of our ability to deliver a high-quality census in March 2021;
 - ii. the Business Case Refresh was completed and submitted to HM Treasury (HMT) on 24 September, ensuring the programme remains in its original budget envelope;
 - iii. the Level 0 milestone (PLM312) "Move 975,000 Business Surveys Online" has been met six months ahead of target;
 - iv. Census build and test remains on track and early census operations are live with community engagement staff in the field. Engagement with the public and key groups is increasing. Plans for the media campaign are in final test, the school's campaign is now live and work to engage with wider partners is now underway;
 - v. receipt of administrative data remains challenging, however, agreement has been reached with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on the supply of re-bulked CIS/BID data. Migration data has been received and council tax data continues to arrive from local authorities; and
 - vi. progress is being made on building towards our recommendation on the future of population and migration statistics in 2023. The Programme Board will sign off the process to be used in November, after which we will update the Board further.

Programme update

3. The programme remains at Amber. Delivery is on track with all teams continuing their excellent work despite the ongoing challenges presented by COVID-19. Our programme on a page shows our current position.
4. The Business Case Refresh was submitted to HMT on 24 September along with SR20.
5. Business Statistics has continued to transform and has now met the Level 0 milestone (PLM312) "Move 975,000 Business Surveys Online". This excludes the Business Impact of Covid Survey (BICS) which will add an additional 570,000 surveys by the end of the financial year.

Preparations for Census

Operations and Build

6. The build continues and we remain confident of our ability to deliver a high-quality census in March 2021. Running of 'Mock Operations' and 'Wargames' has now commenced to assist in preparations for full live operations in February. This provides an opportunity to plan for additional scenarios (in particular COVID-19 ones) now, allowing maximum flexibility to respond to any changes required.
7. Preparations continue to ensure we can run the collection operation in a socially distanced and safe manner. The back-office operations will now all be run virtually, and plans are in place to accommodate local restrictions should they arise. Field staff will be

recruited and trained virtually and will be issued with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We are also exploring options to extend the field operation should this be necessary, to ensure the Census quality targets will be met.

8. The digital build is on track. The bulk of Household and Communal Establishment build is complete with final refinements happening during October. Census Coverage Survey (CCS) and Non-compliance builds are also on track. As planned, end to end testing commenced at the start of October with systems acceptance testing (SAT) and performance testing underway. This will be followed through to January with business acceptance testing (BAT) and operational acceptance testing (OAT). The latest detailed build metrics will continue to be shared with the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC).
9. The first two Census field staff roles have now been successfully on-boarded with the next phase of recruitment due to begin 2 November. Engagement is underway with many initiatives now in progress. For example, development of a census awareness raising video with the Roma Support Group and the announcement from the Royal Association of the Deaf that they are working with us on British Sign Language (BSL) support.
10. The creative comms activity is underway with the final creative on track to be shared with the Programme Board in November. Development of targeted campaigns for Key Population Groups is underway and a social media strategy has been approved. Two schools' recruitment campaigns launched in September and has been gathering momentum with over 1000 primary schools and 400 secondary schools registering. A range of partners are being targeted, from banks and supermarkets through to sports associations and estate agents.
11. The Programme Board agreed a staged approach and funding for Outputs and Dissemination following the three month 'alpha'. Work is underway and will be taken back to Programme Board in January 2021. New resource is being onboarded as quickly as possible to support the development of the processing solution following disruption due to loss of key staff to the Covid Infection Study (CIS).

Assurance and Legislation

12. We completed our third COVID-19 readiness assessment checkpoint on 30 September and remain assured in our ability to deliver a high-quality census on 21 March 2021. An Operational Readiness Review (Gate 4) will start on 2 November. Additionally, the Government Digital Service (GDS) were impressed by our work in their review of our digital components in October.
13. The judicial review in relation to the Sikh Federation will be heard on 20 October. The hearing is expected to take one and half days.

Acquisition of Administrative Data

14. We are continuing to work with colleagues in Methods, Data, Research (MDR) to support the improvements of the end to end data pipeline upon which our use of administrative data relies. This includes both the acquisition and the data engineering required once data has been received. We are growing in confidence on the data receipt with data starting to arrive. Transparency and timeliness of the next stage which ensures the data engineering can be completed ready for analysis remains challenging.
15. We have also received the migration data needed to start work on how to deliver 2020 Mid-Year Estimates using limited International Passenger Survey (IPS) data and administrative data. Receipt of council tax data continues with 194 authorities sharing data in September. Positive progress is being made with Utility data suppliers, with two at the point of clarifying supply dates.

2023 Recommendation

16. The National Statistician will make a recommendation to Parliament in 2023 on the future of the census and population and migration statistics. This will depend on the work being undertaken as part of the programme to transform population and migration statistics and develop an updated system for post Census 2021.
17. The aim of an updated system is to provide regular and more responsive population estimates particularly at small areas. This will give an improved level of agility, adapting to reflect modern society and the new challenges it provides. It will also allow estimation of alternative population bases such as daytime populations and the monitoring of a wider and more responsive range of variables and population characteristics, including all protected population characteristics and those additional requirements that might emerge in future.
18. Working in parallel with the population and migration transformation project and other ONS areas, the 2023 Recommendation project will articulate the needs of users of the future statistics system to ensure ONS is in a position to make a recommendation in 2023. As we develop the updated statistical system, a framework for assessing the recommendation is required. This framework will consider how the new system:
 - i. meets essential user needs;
 - ii. is ambitious, delivering enhancements to the current system on multiple fronts;
 - iii. is supported by a sound data supply and data security practices;
 - iv. is supported by robust methods;
 - v. is compliant with ONS obligations and Authority ethical principles;
 - vi. is accepted by users, suppliers and members of the public;
 - vii. provides value for money; and
 - viii. is deliverable within an appropriate timeframe.
19. We are also developing a consultation and engagement strategy for the period following Census 2021.
20. Once the final approach has been ratified by the Programme Board a further update will be provided to the Board.

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

People Plan and Inclusion Strategy

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update to the Authority Board on our People Plan and the Inclusion Strategy that defines our approach to delivering one of the Plan's key pillars.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note and comment on the update on the People Plan and our approach to measuring its delivery; and
 - ii. note and comment on the update on the Inclusion Strategy and our approach to measuring inclusion and diversity.

Background

3. The People Plan was launched in July as part of the ONS Strategic Business Plan, to support the Authority Strategy 'Statistics for the Public Good'. The Plan sets out how we will deliver Strategic Objective 10 – "to create an inclusive, collaborative, happy and healthy working environment where employees of different backgrounds, grades, characteristics and ways of thinking are consistently empowered and inspired to innovate and deliver their best work".
4. The Inclusion Strategy sets out in more detail our focus on creating a truly inclusive organisation, covering the priorities, actions and how we will measure our progress.
5. Together, the People Plan and Inclusion Strategy also support mitigation of the revised Strategic People Risk – "the ability to attract, retain and develop an inclusive, motivated and flexible workforce with the right capability is key to the delivery of the strategy. There is a risk that we are unable to bring in the skills and capabilities we need to deliver our ambitions".

Discussion

6. The People Plan details the workplace and workforce priorities we will focus on to enable successful delivery of the Strategic Business Plan. These priorities will ensure the organisation can deploy the right capability and capacity to successfully deliver our core business and major programmes. Our delivery plan is set out in the People and Business Services (PBS) Programme Plan and will be monitored by People Committee (PC). Some of our recent successes, shared in more detail with Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), include:
 - i. the launch of a new Social Mobility network, and a Neurodiversity Support Group;
 - ii. our first self-assessment completed against the newly published Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Practice Expectations, driving standards across people processes and informing the refinement of our Inclusion Strategy;
 - iii. the Pay Strategy developed and agreed at National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG);
 - iv. the 2020 Gender Pay Gap Report was issued in line with Cabinet Office's schedule showing positive trends. Hourly gender pay gaps have continued to reduce to 0 per cent median and 8 per cent mean. The reason for the mean hourly pay gap is lower representation of women at higher grades, though this has improved, it continues to be an area of focus. Gender bonus gaps have reduced to 0 per cent median and 5.1 per cent mean. These numbers have reduced significantly since the 2019 report because of the changes we made to the recognition scheme in July 2019;

- v. succession plans in place for Grade 7 and above, highlighting both emergency and long-term successors. Talent Boards have been held for all SCS;
 - vi. Agendas for Action for all protected characteristics developed and publicised;
 - vii. launch of the SCS Reverse Mentoring Programme;
 - viii. launch of the BAME into Leadership Programme; and
 - ix. external recognition for our work, including a Silver award from MIND (Mental Health Wellbeing Index) and a Top 30 position in the Working Families index, the first time we have achieved this. These are in addition to our Disability Confident Leader status, which we were awarded in December 2019.
7. Inclusion is a strategic driver for the organisation and one of the four Authority Strategy pillars. As such, it has a particular focus and a specific Inclusion Strategy has been developed. The Inclusion Strategy has been through consultation with our Network Groups and the Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group. It was ratified at PC in September. Given the importance of the inclusion agenda we have continued to develop and roll out interventions whilst finalising our strategy. The Board will note that a number of the achievements listed at paragraph 6 relate directly to inclusion and diversity.
 8. In terms of assurance, we have benchmarked ourselves against the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Practice Expectations. This exercise largely confirmed that our Strategy was appropriately targeted, while providing some areas for further consideration.
 9. Understanding our progress and measuring success are essential to delivering the People Plan and Inclusion Strategy. Key delivery elements will be monitored through our PBS Programme Plan and reported to PC, Portfolio Investment Committee and ARAC. Our People Analytics team are developing comprehensive measures to assess outcomes, using a dashboard approach for each of the ten priorities in the Plan. PC have scrutinised our use of management information in the development of these dashboards and will continue to provide oversight as we mature the set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to monitor and embed the People Plan. We are also reviewing our targets in key areas, particularly around Inclusion, to ensure they are achievable, ambitious and stretching. Inclusion will be measured through a range of data including diversity representation, pay gap data, employee voice and external benchmarking.

Conclusion

10. We have begun preparations to support an expansive Spending Review bid to bring in the additional skills, experience and numbers we need for our increased delivery. We continue our focus on strategic workforce planning to ensure a future focused and sustainable shape and size to the organisation. In a continued context of rapid response, new work and change due to COVID-19, EU Transition and wider societal impacts, we have made significant progress in the implementation of our People Plan, which provides the framework for successful delivery of these challenges. The Inclusion Strategy ensures that we also create an engaging and truly inclusive workplace.

Philippa Bonay, People and Business Services, October 2020

A consultation on the Reform to Retail Prices Index (RPI) Methodology

Purpose

1. We have provided various verbal updates for the Board since the consultation on reform to the Retail Prices Index (RPI) methodology closed and have discussed how we will respond to HM Treasury's (HMT) decision on the timing of any change. I will not cover this here. Nonetheless now that the full analysis of the consultation responses has been completed, this paper:
 - i. provides the Board with an overview of responses, noting that many of the responses were either aimed at HMT, focussing on the wider impacts outside of the index-linked gilts market, or questioning the UK Statistics Authority's (the Authority's) overall approach; and
 - ii. deals specifically with the Authority questions in the consultation on the technical approach for bringing the data and methods of CPIH into RPI, and the issue of sub-indices.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note the overview of responses to the consultation on the reform to the RPI methodology.

Background

3. The consultation on reform to the RPI methodology began on 11 March 2020. It was originally intended to run for six weeks, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, was extended to 21 August.
4. The consultation was run jointly with HMT, who consulted on the appropriate timing for the proposed changes to the RPI to take place. The Authority consulted on how to make its proposed methodological changes to the RPI in a way that follows best statistical practice. We also wanted to understand the use of sub-indices, which will stop being published once we began to bring the methods and data of CPIH into RPI.
5. Specifically, the Authority's questions were:
 - i. do you agree that this proposed 'chain linking' approach to introduce the methods and data of CPIH into RPI is statistically rigorous?
 - ii. which lower level or supplementary RPI indices are currently used, and what are they used for?
 - iii. what guidance would users of lower level or supplementary RPI indices find most useful for the ONS to provide?
6. In addition, aware that neither we, nor HMT, have full sight of the potential impacts, there were two joint questions, with a view to informing future policy:
 - i. what other impacts might the proposed changes to address the shortcomings of the RPI have in areas or contracts where the RPI is used?
 - ii. are there any other issues relevant to the proposal the Authority is minded to make of which the Authority or the Chancellor ought to be aware?
7. During the consultation period, the Authority ran a focussed user engagement event on 27 July. This replaced several planned sessions across the country that had to be cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The event on 27 July, attended by over 70 participants, was instead run as an online event and drew in feedback from users across the country. The consultation was also discussed at the ONS economic forum on 8 July 2020 (attended by over 180 stakeholders from government, business and

academia). Where requested, the Authority discussed the consultation at relevant third-party events, including an event organised by the Royal Statistical Society on 21 July, which was attended by over 100 stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds.

Responses to the consultation

8. At the close of the consultation, on 21 August 2020, there were 831 responses², including 591 (71 per cent) from individuals and 240 (29 per cent) from organisations. This included 257 from individual members of the British Airways (BA) pension scheme and 32 were from trustees of the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) pension fund. The total number of responses is more than double the number of responses to the previous consultation on RPI, which closed in 2012 and received 406 responses.
9. The response rates for the Authority questions on statistical rigour (43 per cent), other guidance (10 per cent) and use of supplementary indices (11 per cent) were far lower than the Authority/HMT questions concerned with relevant guilts and other impacts of the proposed change (80-90 per cent).
10. The most noticeable theme by far was that those in receipt of an RPI linked pension who felt that the result of the proposed method would lead to unfairness as they would receive lower pension rises in future. There was however very little criticism from a purely statistical perspective.
11. Of the 354 respondents who answered the Authority's question on our proposed approach for bringing the methods and data sources of CPIH into RPI, many acknowledged that it was statistically rigorous but felt that this was not the central issue, citing the financial impact of such a change. Some respondents suggested that RPI should be set equal to 'CPIH + X' where 'X' is the average gap between RPI and CPIH or mimic the way the City moved from LIBOR to SONIA (an important interest rate benchmark) – however, these approaches would clearly not resolve the statistical issues with RPI. "A slow and steady transition working with industry and stakeholders" was often cited here.
12. It should also be noted that the Authority's Technical Advisory Panel on Consumer Price statistics submitted a response on the question regarding the statistical methods, in which they stated that they "*were of the view that the only statistically rigorous linking approach was that set out in the UK Statistics Authority's proposals*".
13. The Authority's Stakeholder Advisory Panel on Consumer Prices discussed the RPI consultation document at its 3 April 2020 meeting and has [published its response](#). The extension of the consultation to 21 August was welcomed. While there was consensus on some of the substantive issues, there were also some deep disagreements. There was consensus that the proposed approach to transition the RPI to a CPIH-based methodology was logical, transparent and would result in a smooth transition. However, Panel members were divided on the merits of the proposal as it stands, with a minority of the Panel feeling strongly that the proposal was a mistake. If the change were to take place, there was agreement that 2030 would allow more time for the issues around long-term contracts to be resolved, and for people's expectations to adjust.
14. Overall, there were no statistical objections to our proposed methodology. Any concerns raised were really about the consequences of bringing the methods and data of CPIH into RPI.
15. There were very few informative responses from users of lower level or supplementary data. Only 93 respondents answered this question (11 per cent), five of those who

² Multiple responses from the same individual or organisation have been counted as one response here

answered this question referred to their use of RPIX and some respondents mentioned the use of specific items/classes.

16. There were only 79 responses (10 per cent) on the guidance for users of lower level or supplementary RPI indices; there was one noticeable theme that this should be 'understandable'.
17. This is reassuring in that we will be able to offer the users of the RPI sub-indices advice on what to do once their publication ceases.
18. On the Authority's specific questions, there was a clear and helpful message from the consultation. Whenever the change in RPI is made, we have a clear statistical approach to the transition and an appreciation of uses of the sub-indices.

Next steps

19. HMT have indicated that they wish to publish a response to the consultation to coincide with an Autumn fiscal event. We expect this to be in mid to late November. We are now liaising with the Treasury and the Bank of England over the nature of the response and have been guided by the steers provided by the Board.

Jonathan Athow, Deputy National Statistician for Economic Statistics, October 2020

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Preparations for End of EU Transition

This paper will be published following the outcome of the UK-EU negotiations