

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Monday 7 June 2021
Via Videoconference

Present

UK Statistics Authority

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

Also in attendance

Jonathan Athrow
Nick Bateson
Iain Bell
Owen Brace
Lauren Bradley (Secretariat)
Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)
Alison Pritchard
Emma Rourke (for item 12)
Tom Smith (for item 9)
Arthur Turrell (for item 9)
Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 14)

Apologies

Nora Nanayakkara
Robert Bumpstead

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Nora Nanayakkara and Robert Bumpstead.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 April were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

- 4.1 Non-executive directors had met prior to the Board meeting. They had discussed the format of hybrid Board meetings.
- 4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met highlighting:
- i. Sir David and Ed Humpherson had met Sir Simon Stevens on 6 May regarding vaccination statistics, following the rapid review by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) of NHS England and Improvement statistics on COVID-19 vaccinations;
 - ii. Sir David had written to a number of West Midlands Members of Parliament, following the publication of the review by OSR of ONS population estimates and projections; and
 - iii. on 17 May Sir David had written to Sir Keir Starmer regarding his reference to crime statistics at Prime Minister's Questions on 28 April and during the Commons debate on the Queen's Speech on 11 May;
- 4.3 Sir David noted thanks on behalf of the Board to Iain Bell, who was leaving the organisation at the end of June to take up the role of National Director of Knowledge and Research at Public Health Wales. As Director General for Population and Public Policy Iain Bell had led on the delivery of the Census 2021 and the COVID-19 Infection Survey.
- 4.4 In the coming month Sir David would be attending a meeting of the Chairs of Independent Organisations, chaired by Lord Jonathan Evans, and a meeting with William Wragg (Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee). It was noted that the remote Programme of Activities for non-executive directors was ongoing, including sessions on the Integrated Data Programme, Sustainable Development Goals, the Data Science Campus and the Census.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(21)28]

- 5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:
- i. the findings of the review of enabling functions had been presented to staff on 12 May. The recommendations would focus on overall management and alignment of the organisation as part of the One ONS approach to the delivery of the strategy.
 - ii. the finance team were in discussion with HM Treasury on the Integrated Data Programme Full Business Case;
 - iii. the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme included the preparation for the 2023 recommendation to Parliament, with a paper scheduled for the next Board meeting;
 - iv. the announcement by the Prime Minister of the independent, public inquiry into the government's handling of COVID-19 pandemic starting in Spring 2022;
 - v. Sir Ian had presented a keynote speech at the analysis in government launch event on 4 May;
 - vi. the ONS had received an award from the Royal Geographical Society for the 2021 Geography in Government awards; and the Florence Nightingale Award from the Royal Statistical Society for ONS's work with Oxford University and health organisations on work relating to the pandemic.

5.2 Board members discussed the review of enabling functions and noted the need to provide a high level of support for line managers and staff in taking forward the recommendations promptly.

6. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(21)29]

6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity highlighting the publication of the Review of Income-based Poverty Statistics on 19 May. The review identified a number of strategic improvements including the need for more transparency and greater data linkage to enable the statistics to reach maximum potential.

7. Report from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

7.1 Sian Jones reported on the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which had met on 13 May.

7.2 The Committee members had considered:

- i. the Authority's current financial position;
- ii. the progress of the External Audit;
- iii. the delivery of the Internal Audit Programme 2020/21 with a number of Internal Audit Reviews with positive opinions; and
- iv. the two areas of judgment for the year-end financial position;

7.3 The Committee had noted the progress made in developing and embedding the risk enterprise framework.

8. Presentation: Levelling Up [SA(21)30]

8.1 Hugh Stickland and Richard Protheroe gave a presentation on emerging thinking around levelling up, the process and governance around it, and the input by ONS.

8.2 The Board heard about the work being led by ONS to join statistics and analysis across Public Policy Analysis, Economic Statistics, the Data Science Campus and Health and Pandemic Insights.

8.3 The Board noted their thanks for an excellent presentation.

9. Presentation: Truck and Shipping Movements

9.1 Tom Smith and Arthur Turrell gave a presentation on the work by the Data Science Campus on truck and shipping data as part of the work to produce faster indicators of economic activity, particularly for movement of goods.

9.2 The Board noted their thanks for an excellent presentation.

10. Integrated Data Programme [SA(21)31]

10.1 Alison Pritchard introduced a paper which provided an update on progress of the Integrated Data Programme (IDP) with regards to its commercial activity in relation to commercial cloud provision.

10.2 The Board heard that the procurement of a cloud supplier was a key deliverable for the Integrated Data Programme platform workstream. Following discussions with Crown Commercial Services commercial activity had commenced with a cloud procurement team in place. It was noted that the procurement was a strategic procurement for Government.

10.3 The Board noted the update and would remain engaged as the work progressed.

11. User Engagement [SA(21)32]

11.1 Owen Brace introduced a paper which provided an update on the work to improve user engagement and build sustainable relationships. User engagement would be

coordinated through a central hub to target engagement effectively, deliver an outreach programme and continuously monitor and measure impact.

11.2 The Board heard about the successful user engagement models in the Census and Inclusive Data Taskforce, and plans to continually adapt the existing Statistics User Forum to represent a broader user base and provide best value to the statistics system.

11.3 The Board noted the update and endorsed the approach with a further update scheduled in September.

12. COVID-19 Infection Survey and Surveillance Studies [SA(21)33]

12.1 Iain Bell and Emma Rourke introduced a paper which an update on the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) Programme.

12.2 The survey continued to maintain good overall performance. The vaccine effectiveness monitoring was being scaled up to 150,000 per month. It was noted that the CIS team were preparing material to inform step four of the government's roadmap in June.

13. Business Plan [SA(21)34]

13.1 Nick Bateson introduced a paper which provided the final draft version of the 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan for review before finalisation and publication. The business plan was scheduled for publication early July.

13.2 The Board heard that the development of the business plan was a refresh with no change in main strategic direction.

13.3 Board members endorsed the refreshed business plan subject to comments to be provided in correspondence by Board members.

14. Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme [SA(21)35]

14.1 Iain Bell and Nicola Tyson-Payne introduced a paper which provided a short update on progress as the Census journey moves from collection to processing and outputs and dissemination. It also provided an update on the wider transformation programme.

14.2 Iain Bell reported that the Census field operation had finished on 17 May. All response targets had been exceeded. The Census Coverage Survey was complete. The response rate would be sufficient to support the estimation process. As planned, administrative data would be used to support the enumeration.

14.3 The Board welcomed the update noting thanks to both Iain Bell and Nicola Tyson-Payne, (who was leaving the organisation at the end of July). The Chair noted that delivery of the Census 2021 had been a triumph for which the organisation owed them a debt of gratitude and huge thanks.

15. Any other business

15.1 The Authority Board would meet next on 1 July 2021.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

7 June 2021, 09:15 to 12.45 via videoconference

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies: Nora Nanayakkara, Robert Bumpstead

Attendees: Emma Rourke (for item 10), Tom Smith (for item 7), Arthur Turrell (for item 7)
Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 12)

NED Session: 09:15 - 09:45

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 09.45-09.50 5 mins | Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings Declarations of interest | Meeting of 29 April 2021 |
| 2 09.50-10.00 10 mins | Report from the Authority Chair | Oral report Sir David Norgrove |
| 3 10.00-10.20 20 mins | Report from the Chief Executive | SA(21)28 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond |
| 4 10.20-10.30 10 mins | Report from the Director-General for Regulation | SA(21)29 Ed Humpherson |
| 5 10.30-10.35 5 mins | Report from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee | Oral report Sian Jones |
| 6 10.35-11.05 30 mins | Presentation: Levelling up | SA(21)30 Hugh Stickland Richard Prothero |
| 11.05-11.15 10 mins | Break | |
| 7 11.15-11.40 25 mins | Presentation: Truck and Shipping Movements | Tom Smith Arthur Turrell |
| 8 11.40-11.45 5 mins | Integrated Data Programme | SA(21)31 Alison Pritchard |
| 9 11.45-12.00 15 mins | User Engagement | SA(21)32 Owen Brace |
| 10 12.00-12.15 15 mins | COVID-19 Infection Survey and Surveillance Studies | SA(21)33 Iain Bell Emma Rourke |
| 11 12.15-12.30 15 mins | Business Plan | SA(21)34 Nick Bateson |
| 12 12.30-12.40 10 mins | Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme | SA(21)35 Iain Bell Nicola Tyson-Payne |
| 13 12.40-12.45 5 mins | Any Other Business | |

Chief Executive's Report, May 2021

Purpose

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

Summary

2. The Census operation is continuing to go from strength to strength with response rate now at 97.2 per cent. On 4 May, the Census Coverage Survey went live and is progressing well despite the poor weather. On COVID-19 we continue monitor the course of the pandemic, with our data being central to understanding impact of changing restrictions and the emergence of the Indian variant.

Review of recent activities

3. At the end of April, I presented and took questions at a meeting of cross bench peers, covering the Census, COVID-19 statistics and the support ONS has provided to wider government during the pandemic. The session received strong positive feedback from peers and generating correspondence on a variety of topics.
4. On 4 May I provided a keynote speech at the analysis in government month launch event, where I spoke of the key successes the function had made to date and the importance of its work in enabling government to develop policy and make decisions.
5. On 5 May, along with Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter and others I joined a panel event hosted by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries discussing the use of data and statistics to inform policy during a pandemic.
6. The annual Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence (ESCoE) conference on Economic Measurement was held online from 11-13 May 2021. With over 500 attendees and speakers including Katharine Abraham (University of Maryland), Richard Blundell (UCL and IFS) and Paul Schreyer (OECD) the conference was a success. There were 15 presentations from ONS colleagues in the contributed sessions, with a similar number of presenters from National Statistics Institutes and from academia. Authority Board member Helen Boaden also spoke at the conference.
7. The findings of the BASE review were presented to colleagues on 12 May. Most of the recommendations focus on improving the overall management and alignment of the organisation and will help us work better together. The three key areas that will have the most direct impact on teams and individuals were outlined as:
 - i. the future design of our Enabling Functions;
 - ii. the design of Data Capability;
 - iii. the development of a multi-disciplinary Analytical Priorities Hub; and
 - iv. a delivery plan is now being pursued.
8. HM Treasury (HMT) are beginning to commission the early stages of Spending Review 21.
9. On 20 May I presented to Government analysts on the importance of evaluation in Government.
10. On 21 May I provided a pre-recorded presentation to the Institute of Directors event Data for good – why a data strategy is critical to post-COVID recovery. This covered the Importance of Data Governance and data driven decision-making in the boardroom.
11. RPI Judicial Review: A single judicial review claim has been bought jointly against the Authority and HMT on behalf of BT, Marks and Spencer and Ford pension fund trustees.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, 27 May 2021

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) priorities and activities.

Discussion

2. Our main areas of focus in recent weeks have been:
 - i. **Poverty statistics:** We published our review of income-based poverty statistics on 19 May¹. Our review identified three strategic improvements: to move away from the production of individual outputs and create a more coherent evidence base; for producers to better understand how their statistics are used across policy and service provision and be transparent about their plans; and greater innovation and data linkage to help the statistics reach maximum potential.
 - ii. **Work and Pensions Committee:** On a related subject, on 26 May I gave evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee as part of their inquiry into measuring child poverty. I was on a panel alongside the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Social Metrics Commission and the Resolution Foundation. The Committee was interested in whether the current measures are the right ones and what improvements might be needed, and I was able to highlight the key findings from our poverty review. We will be monitoring the inquiry with interest, and look forward to reading the final report.
 - iii. **Population estimates:** This month we also published our review of ONS population projections and estimates². Our review identified areas for ONS to improve methods, enhance communication and embrace challenge. The report was well received and was picked up by several local media outlets and The Times. Our report has led to Guildford Council agreeing to review Guildford's Local Plan.
 - iv. **Business planning:** This week we published our annual business plan³ following sign-off by the Board last month. As discussed, our main areas of focus will be around building public trust in evidence, making data available for research and evaluation, enhancing understanding of social and economic matters, and improving clarity and communication of statistics. We will keep the Regulation Committee regularly updated on progress against the plan.
 - v. **COVID-19 and vaccines:** We continue to receive casework relating to the pandemic and vaccinations. Following our rapid review of vaccination statistics in April, we have been working with statisticians in the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and others to push for improvements to these statistics. Sir David and I met with Sir Simon Stevens, Head of the NHS, on 6 May. We discussed the complex structure of health institutions in the UK and the challenges that brought during the pandemic, and vaccination statistics. I have written to producers of health statistics in the UK encouraging them to make further improvements to the clarity, coherence and presentation of vaccination statistics⁴.

¹ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/review-of-income-based-poverty-statistics/>

² <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/review-of-population-estimates-and-projections-produced-by-the-office-for-national-statistics/>

³ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/office-for-statistics-regulation-annual-business-plan-2021-22/>

⁴ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/ed-humpherson-to-producers-of-health-related-statistics-in-england-statistics-on-covid-19-vaccinations/>

- vi. **Analysis Function:** Last month I presented at the Analysis Function Board on OSR's support to the function, the Code of Practice, and our recent review of Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP). I have subsequently met with the National Statistician, presented to the Government Economic Service on our work, and met with the Cabinet Office's evaluation task force. Our core message remains that the Code of Practice should be for everyone – analysts as well as statisticians – and we stand ready to support the function.
 - vii. **National Statistics Designation Review:** On 19 May, the National Statistics Designation Steering Group chaired by Helen Boaden met for the third time. We received positive feedback from the steering group on the three contrasting options we presented which we developed from considering the producers' views about the designation. We are now moving forward with a further round of engagement with producers to gather their views about the options, and will be publishing a findings paper on our engagement with producers in early June. We will also engage with intermediaries such as in the media and voluntary sector to hear what matters to them to have confidence in official statistics. We plan to update the Regulation Committee in July, and the Board in the autumn.
3. On my mind at the moment is how we consolidate the progress we have seen over the last year – in terms of:
- i. OSR supporting the responsiveness and agility of the Analysis Function across Government;
 - ii. OSR's own profile and impact; and
 - iii. building on broader public interest in the importance of sound data and statistics.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, Office for Statistics Regulation, 27 May 2021.

List of Annexes

Annex A Regulatory dashboard

Regulatory Activities May 2021

| Health and Social Care | Economy | Population and Society | Agriculture, Energy and Environment | Children, Education and Skills |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Review: Performing the engagement phase of the project on lessons learned for health and social care data during the pandemic.</p> <p>Assessment: General Pharmaceutical Services published by the NHS Business Services Authority: in the process of drafting the assessment report.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Mental Health (NI): in the process of drafting the review report. Adult Social Care (GB): performing producer engagement to follow up actions from reports published in 2020.</p> <p>Casework: continue to respond to items of casework; starting to see concerns wider in scope than COVID-19 statistics.</p> | <p>Assessments: Productivity phase 2 – meeting ONS at the end of June to discuss the action plan for productivity statistics we have asked them to prepare. This will then be followed up at the end of September with meetings on how they have/or are addressing our requirements.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Post Brexit ONS Economic Classifications – Initial meetings held with ONS Public Finances and National Statisticians Office. User consultation commencing this month.</p> | <p>Assessments: Census User and producers meetings continue to be held as part of phase 2 of the assessment.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Loneliness Reworking current planned output to reflect positive developments in the measurement of loneliness</p> <p>Population projections Report and accompanying letter now published. ONS are due to report back with plans Jul 2021.</p> <p>Migration Engaging with ONS on plans for future migration publications.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Scottish Household Survey – data on gender identity. On 24 May, Roger Halliday requested the check on the collection and reporting of data on gender identity. We will commence the review in the coming weeks.</p> | <p>Compliance checks: Draft letter for ONS natural capital accounts. Defra HoP arranging kick off meeting for CC of flood defence spending statistics</p> <p>Systemic reviews: Initial meeting arranged with BEIS for the Climate Change statistics review. The review is planned to be structured round OSR climate change recommendations from work done in 2011, 2013 and 2014. Further scoping done for food statistics review as well as some desk research and initial conversation with Defra HoP.</p> | <p>Exam Results Review: Continued dissemination activities including a joint event with the Ada Lovelace Institute.</p> <p>TEF: Response to RSS prepared for publication.</p> <p>PISA 2018: Compliance check letters published alongside response to the complainant.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Children and Young People: Drafted article using the 3Vs framework to review Children and Young People statistics during the pandemic. Continued engagement with the Centre for Equalities and Inclusion to feed into the work of the Inclusive data taskforce.</p> <p>DFE/ICO audit: Discussed progress with recommendations and lessons learnt for wider GSS with DfE Data Protection officer.</p> |
| Housing, Planning and Local Services | Crime and Security | Labour Market and Welfare | Travel, Transport and Tourism | Business, Trade and International Development |
| <p>Compliance checks: Published letter for Home Office Fire incidents statistics. Follow up meetings arranged with Scottish Government on their Vacant and Derelict Land Survey statistics (27 May); and Welsh Government on their suite of Fire Statistics (9 June). Planning the next steps for the devolved nations' Household Projections CCs following the publication of the OSR Population Review. Initiating a compliance</p> | <p>Assessments: Assessment report and accompanying letter to be published 3 June. Home Office aim to publish action plan in coming weeks.</p> <p>Compliance checks: CC of indirect jobs supported by MOD expenditure changed to CC of MOD regional expenditure as the publication was subsumed into this. Kick-off meeting held and review underway.</p> | <p>Assessments: Living Costs and Food Survey: Drafting the report and planning to share it with ONS for comment in the first week of June.</p> <p>DWP's Benefit Statistics: Reviewing progress against the 2020 assessment requirements, with a view to confirming National Statistics status.</p> | <p>Accessibility of Transport Networks: Engaging with producers and users of relevant statistics to finalise scope of Systemic Review. Carrying out a compliance check of DfT's new Transport: Disability and Accessibility Statistics publication.</p> <p>Travel and Tourism: Engaging with ONS on plans for the future of the International Passenger Survey</p> | <p>Assessments: Annual Business Survey (ABS). Following OSR Quality Assurance meeting, gathering further evidence from ONS on the impact of the Transformation Programme, Bean implementation and relationships with data suppliers on the development of the business survey.</p> <p>Broad Economy Sales and Exports statistics (BESES) from</p> |

check on MoJ **Landlord and Mortgage Possessions statistics** in collaboration with the Crime and Security domain.

Casework: Published letter on Labour parliamentary claim on crime increases. Drafting letter in response to query about judicial review reform.

NISRA. This assessment has started and is due to report in the early Autumn

Levelling Up

Purpose

1. This paper sets out the Government's emerging thinking around levelling up, the process and governance around it, and the input ONS has provided and our plans for the future. Authority Board members will also be given a demonstration of some of the tools we are developing.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the scope, timescales and ambition of the work; and
 - ii. advise on priorities and opportunities for ONS to deliver.

Background

3. Levelling up has emerged as a key policy priority for Government as we recover from the pandemic. In short, the aim is to reduce geographical inequalities in economic and social outcomes and opportunities across the UK. The emphasis is to raise or 'level up' the poorer more disadvantaged parts of the country, without detracting from the growth of the richer parts.
4. The Prime Minister has announced a levelling up White Paper for the Autumn to improve opportunity and boost livelihoods across the country. The Prime Minister has appointed Neil O'Brien MP as his levelling up adviser and created a new Number Ten–Cabinet Office unit to drive forward the work and write the White Paper.
5. Cabinet Office have set up a Senior Subnational Data Group to help unblock data and linking across Whitehall with Professor Sir Ian Diamond as co-chair. Sam Beckett also chairs an analysis group exploring drivers of local economic and social performance. Both are linked through to Cabinet Office and have been attended by Neil O'Brien. Levelling up is also a priority for Number Ten Delivery Unit and we have had early engagement with them.
6. Internally in the ONS, the work is currently led by Hugh Stickland and Richard Prothero head of the Centre for Subnational Analysis. We join statistics and analysis across Public Policy Analysis, Economic Statistics, Data Science Campus and Health and Pandemic Insights. We have regular weekly levelling up catch ups with Sam Beckett and directors.

Discussion – ONS role

7. In the short-medium term we are supporting the White Paper through:
 - i. building data analysis and exploration portals for towns and cities on key metrics for levelling up. This collects ONS data, along with other available data from Whitehall Departments to provide overviews and comparisons;
 - ii. co-ordinating shared evidence packs explaining local differences and drivers of growth against four themes identified by Cabinet Office. Jobs Skills and Growth (HM Treasury (HMT)/Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy/Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)), Infrastructure and Connectivity (Department for Transport/Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)), Health and Education (Department for Health and Social Care/Department for Education), Strong and Safe Communities (Home Office/MHCLG/DCMS/Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs); and
 - iii. building systems maps with Cabinet Office and HMT to demonstrate and evidence the interconnectedness between drivers and outcomes. For example improving school outcomes links to better health and wellbeing, community integration, and in

the longer-term jobs and productivity. We are also pulling together evidence on commuting and internal migration between places.

8. In the medium-term we are developing our Integrated Data Programme offer through:
 - i. bringing more administrative data into the Office, for example the Valuation Office Agency data on property attributes and business rates and the Longitudinal Education Outcome (LEO) data on pupil attainment, learning, labour market outcomes and earnings;
 - ii. developing a Data Science 'text as data' project, using machine learning to consider positive and negative sentiment in local press as markers of towns and cities growing or being left behind; and
 - iii. developing a series of Lighthouse projects on Levelling Up and Towns and High Streets:
 - Towns and Housing, using Valuation Office Agency data on property attributes, plus wider data on price and quality too – based on 1,182 towns in England and Wales.
 - Towns, Skills and demand for skills, using LEO data alongside the Labour Force Survey, but also looking at understanding the courses offered by Further Education colleges after interest from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.
 - Business Demography, using Inter-Departmental Business Register to look at number, size, sector, births and deaths, and growth of firms in towns and potentially how that interrelates with labour market, income and earnings and productivity estimates.
 - Amenities, working with Ordnance Survey, plus open data from sources such as Google maps and street view on location of amenities (shops, gyms, transport links, GP surgeries, schools etc) looking at travel times to points of interest and key services.
 - High Streets, looking at the impact of business rates on high streets and wider town centres (a geography we are developing alongside business parks). This may be developed with tracking the impact of Covid-19 and the recovery in different types of high streets and town centres
 - Productivity, using VAT data to provide experimental statistics at local town and town centre levels.
9. In the longer term, we do not envisage interest in levelling up and the difference between places to cease. We will remain engaged with the key priorities and research questions of the day. We will be able to bring in data from Census 2021 and look to develop flexible geography tools for bespoke analysis. We will also look to use our data and the Integrated Data Programme to assist with monitoring and evaluation of policies, allocation of funds, regeneration programmes etc. Evaluation is of critical importance to HMT and we expect a rigorous approach to major programmes to be set out with the Autumn Spending Review.

Hugh Stickland, Strategy and Engagement Division, 24 May 2021

Integrated Data Programme

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update for the Authority Board on progress of the Integrated Data Programme (IDP) with regards to its commercial activity in relation to commercial cloud provision.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note and discuss:
 - i. progress since the last update, with respect to the commercial activity;
 - ii. change of scope for the commercial activity and inclusion of Crown Commercial Services in supplier engagement activities; and
 - iii. outcome statement created for supplier engagement.

Background

3. The procurement for the Cloud supplier for IDP was scoped to take advantage of existing Government Cloud agreements to make effective use of government wide purchasing power and scale. The procurement would follow a form similar to that employed by ONS in securing Cloud Providers for the Census 2021 Collection and Processing elements. This approach meant that it was a light touch procurement allowing technical decisions and procurement choices being made from previously published documents by suppliers using the GCloud Frameworks.
4. The procurement for a cloud supplier is a key deliverable for the platform workstream which needs to create a private beta environment for wider Government use by the end of September 2021, so it was anticipated that procurement would be completed by end of June 2021.

Discussion

Procurement Advice/Lessons learned

5. Subsequent discussions have taken place between ONS, Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and Commercial Directors of Cloud based programmes. Findings indicated that:
 - i. commercial engagement should start now before funding is approved;
 - ii. even though the contract is of low value, strategically it will lock a provider out longer term so needs to address that;
 - iii. there is a new framework for Cloud compute being worked on by CCS which will cover nine providers (three originally envisaged by ONS). ONS were advised to take this route;
 - iv. CCS have volunteered to lead on the supplier days and the initial supplier engagement; and
 - v. the existing build needs to be discussed but that an outcome statement should be utilised to ask the industry for a solution.

Consequences/Changes to the approach

6. There are several consequences to the revised approach impacting on IDP:
 - i. set up a dedicated cloud procurement team led by CCS (largely in place now);
 - ii. move to a true multi cloud approach in three years' time (protecting the initial build in order to concentrate on the programme outcome stated to HMT);

- iii. the procurement is now seen as a strategic procurement for Government especially in obtaining level charge rates for ingress and egress between clouds (something not yet achieved but also important for the new Central Digital and Data Office);
- iv. the new commercial vehicle is not yet complete, and we rely on CCS to bring it forward in order to hold to timelines; and
- v. there is a risk that this revised procurement could delay the final provider to be in place by the Private beta milestone date in September, however we are looking at the possibility of continuing with the current product set and switching later to keep momentum up and removing this as a dependency for delivery.

Simon Sandford-Taylor, Chief Digital and Information Officer, ONS, 21 May 2021

User engagement and partnerships

Purpose

1. Understanding the needs of users is at the heart of the UK Statistics Authority strategy [Statistics for the Public Good](#). This paper sets out the work to continue to improve our user engagement and build sustainable relationships and feedback loops, to ensure:
 - i. we reach as wide a set of users as possible to fully reflect needs;
 - ii. users have a simple route into the ONS and we adopt best practice to engage with users when and how they can have most impact; and
 - iii. feedback from users influences our statistics, analysis and services across the whole ONS.
2. To meet these needs, we will coordinate our user engagement through a central hub to target our engagement effectively and manage relationships, deliver an outreach programme, share intelligence and continuously monitor and measure impact.
3. The central engagement hub has been established under the Director of Communications and will be strengthened to deliver:
 - i. **Within three months:** Coordinate relationships with our top tier organisations, set simple routes for users to engage with the ONS through our website and corporate channels, implement an outreach programme to target broader user groups, pilot community engagement to support social surveys, coordinate feedback through the existing network of user engagement groups and set objectives and targets for user engagement.
 - ii. **Within six months:** Establish a central model of engagement with national and local communities building on the Census engagement mode, set monitoring and impact measures to report on the engagement effectiveness and insight through executive committees, implement areas to streamline our engagement network and reduce any duplication, set a clear functional model and best practice for engagement teams working together across the ONS.
4. These actions are in line with the recently launched Government Statistical Service (GSS) [user engagement strategy](#). They will be driven through the central engagement hub, bringing together engagement and outreach teams from across the analysis, statistics, methodology, operations and digital functions across the ONS, and will report through the Analysis and Evaluation and Communications Committees.

Recommendations

5. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the ongoing engagement; and
 - ii. comment on actions to drive further coordination and expand our network.

Background

6. Engagement between statistics producers, users and potential users and other relevant organisations is a fundamental part of the development of statistics and analysis at the ONS. We work with governments, local and devolved administrations, third sector, academia, researchers, policy groups, media, international, commentators and citizens.
7. Effective engagement can provide a range of strategic benefits for the ONS such as identifying opportunities to improve the quality and coverage of our statistics, building partnerships and collaboration to deliver Statistics for the Public Good, understanding and responding to public attitudes and concerns, and continuing to improve our service and products.

Discussion

Wider and diverse network

8. Through our regular feedback and successful engagement models in the Census and Inclusive Data Taskforce (IDTF), we have identified areas where we can reach a wider network of users and bring greater coordination.
9. The engagement project to support the England and Wales Census demonstrated the importance of reaching beyond our usual user groups to gain much wider views and representation.
10. The teams focused on building a broader understanding of data needs and interaction with the Census through local and national communities and networks and representatives of key population groups who were less likely to take part in the Census without additional interactions.
11. These groups, such as charities and community groups but also including local and national businesses, are also less likely to be represented through our existing user networks and can represent people who are less likely to engage in other surveys and services.
12. The Census has also demonstrated the value of feeding back the analysis to individuals and community groups who participated in surveys, to maintain a strong relationship and connection with the ONS.
13. The IDTF was set up with the clear intention to reach beyond our existing user base. The team has directly engaged with around 20 equalities groups, representing nine protected characteristics, to identify data needs across coverage, content and products.
14. The input from these groups has not been used in isolation but has added valuable insight to the additional reach sought through government, academia and research.
15. The IDTF has also undertaken a wider variety of engagement methods, beyond a previous reliance through online consultation, to ensure our methods of engagement are as accessible and inclusive as possible.
16. We are taking the learning from these successful engagement models to reach a wider and more diverse audience by:
 - i. expanding our community outreach from the Census model to a central function supporting the whole of ONS;
 - ii. piloting the use of census engagement officers to support regular social surveys and build a stronger connection with the ONS and directly with survey responders and community groups; and
 - iii. represent a broader user base across government, academia, third sector and business, and act as subject experts across core statistical and analytical themes through our statistics user groups.
17. The expansion of the Census model and feedback mechanism across existing engagement networks are key parts of the Census transition work and BASE review of enabling functions, with the aim to agree a model over the summer and implement by October.
18. We are aiming to introduce the social surveys pilot with agreed evaluation in June, with minimal disruption from the end of the collection phase of the Census.

Coordinate user engagement

19. We regularly seek feedback from key users and partner organisations on our engagement model and outcomes of our engagement. This insight has recognised the importance of extensive engagement but highlighted duplication and lack of coordination as areas to improve.

20. Our existing model of more than 250 engagement groups and channels is largely based on single topics and expertise but lacks clear coordination across the ONS with no single route in for groups to engage with ONS.
21. While this provides clear and valuable feedback on individual surveys and analysis, we are often speaking to the same organisations and the wider organisations does not benefit from this insight.
22. We will establish a central function to focus on engagement with users and partners to build on the existing network and establish greater coordination and reach.
23. A central function will:
 - i. identify areas to remove duplication across our existing engagement groups and reduce burdens on organisations;
 - ii. provide a mechanism to feed learnings from our existing network of engagement groups to help shape our analysis and statistics; and
 - iii. create a single route in for potential users to engage through our corporate channels.
24. A small team has been established to coordinate this work centrally and we will strengthen this through the BASE review, to be implemented by October.

Senior level partnerships and relationships

25. As well as targeting users to improve our statistics, the ONS builds key partnerships and relationships with other organisations to deliver our strategic objectives by building advocacy and influence and collaborating on analysis.
26. A recent exercise to identify our top users and partners to target engagement highlighted potential gaps and areas of overlap, as well as opportunities to reduce multiple approaches to the same organisations through better coordination and information sharing.
27. To address this, we are coordinating these top tier relationships centrally to:
 - i. identify and continually review the organisations we need to engage, with clear objectives and evaluation of our success, and coordinate engagement with these top tier organisations across the ONS;
 - ii. ensure our key relationships are reflecting the broader groups including national, devolved and local government, parliaments, academia, research, third sector, private sector and international; and
 - iii. collate common themes, gaps in our analysis and areas to improve and report back through our Analysis and Evaluation and Communications Committees.
28. This is an ongoing process and the central team is starting with the top 30 organisations in June to set objectives, understand impact and coordinate engagement.

Outreach programme

29. We are overly reliant on users approaching the ONS which has led to repeatedly working with the same organisations. By actively broadening our user base through the Census and IDTF, we have demonstrated the value of proactive outreach to engage with groups.
30. The communications team will:
 - i. launch a proactive engagement programme for ONS senior leaders to build direct relationships with a wider group of representative bodies but particularly focusing on voluntary organisations, equality groups and businesses;
 - ii. identify platforms, conferences and speaking events to promote ONS analysis and statistics on relevant themes, building awareness of the work of ONS among key groups; and
 - iii. run regular citizen panels and focus groups on key issues such as data sharing and analysis gaps to inform our work and delivery.

31. Our proactive engagement programme will be implemented over the summer, taking advantage of the regular conferences and platforms traditionally held during this time.

Monitor and measure impact

32. We test our products and services through user research and live feedback to identify gaps and opportunities to innovate. This has led to a series of high-performing content such as recent articles on [regional differences in income and productivity](#), [COVID-19 insights](#), and an [economy roundup](#).

33. We review our relationships and key organisations to continue to improve our engagement. While this has led to the series of actions set out in this paper, we will test our engagement more frequently and will share this insight more widely to drive wider improvements.

34. We will:

- i. hold regular deep dive interviews and satisfaction surveys to identify ways to improve engagement;
- ii. set targets for key engagement with representative groups and outcomes for our engagement and services, such as filling analysis gaps, online use of content, and informing government decisions; and
- iii. run regular horizon scanning and situational analysis to understand opportunities and threats and setting recommendations to respond through the Analysis and Evaluation and Communications Committees.

Conclusion

35. ONS engages extensively within statistical and analytical areas on single relationships and subjects. The steps outlined will provide greater coordination and a customer service to other organisations, while ensuring our statistics and analysis meet the needs of as wide a group as possible.

Owen Brace, Communications and Digital Publishing, 2 June 2021

COVID-19 Infection Survey and associated surveillance studies**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) programme.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the continued successful delivery and high impact of the CIS;
 - ii. recent successful milestones, including the ongoing scale up of the vaccine effectiveness monitoring project; further analysis to support urgent policy decisions; ongoing strategic development; and
 - iii. that the CIS programme remains at Amber, with considerable progress made in addressing key risks on the programme.

Discussion**Survey Performance**

3. The survey continues to maintain good overall performance, with well over 4 million swab tests recorded. In recent weeks, the survey has seen an increase in attrition rates. This is due to participants reaching the 12 months enrolment in the survey and dropping out. The lifting of lockdown restrictions has also led to a higher number of households not attending appointments. A new sampling strategy and redeveloped protocol will mitigate further attrition and seek to retain participants until April 2022.
4. The Vaccine Effectiveness Monitoring work continues to scale up to 150,000 tests per month. Uptake has been slower than expected for reasons highlighted above and we expect to achieve the target by the end of June. The void rate of samples has also significantly reduced to an average of 4.3 per cent from 6.46 per cent last month as participants become more familiar with the process.
5. We continue to focus on operational efficiencies and improvements with our delivery partner, IQVIA. Efficiencies currently in train and to note are:
 - i. right sizing of the study worker (SW) resource. IQVIA have been tasked to reduce the current size to the optimum level by 28 May 2021. This aligns with the start of the new contract requirements and smooths out existing under or over resourcing; and
 - ii. results of tests to participants. This is currently done by letter and costs are more than £660,000 per month. The team are working with IQVIA to mitigate data security risks and move this process to email or text message at pace. This will not only create a substantial financial saving it also allows participants to receive their test results in a more-timely manner.
6. The re-competition of the CIS is nearing completion, with contract award anticipated at the end of May.

Impact

7. As swab positivity continues to fall across the UK, we are preparing some recommendations on how to deal with a period of sustained low positivity. We are testing the limit of the current models and the quality of the outputs will be suitable, even if they do run. We are exploring alternative options in addition to the existing methodology, such as weighted and even unweighted estimates. Additionally, we are developing the associated communications to explain to users how small changes in low prevalence can lead to volatile trends. We are reviewing the complement of outputs we produce

including the management information and pivoting to antibody findings as the headline messages. The underlying principle will be transparency of our data to inform our users whilst minimizing any misinterpretation.

8. CIS analysts are working on two significant development pieces of work in response to SAGE actions:
 - i. Poisson model development to address whether the reduction of rates post-Christmas were a result of national intervention or the vaccine deployment programme; and
 - ii. seeking to understand household transmission risk including linked Valuation Office Agency data for a more comprehensive understanding of household characteristics and vaccines.
9. Articles published from the CIS in May have covered patient facing health care workers, symptoms, social and physical contacts, work location, travel to work, antibodies and vaccines.
10. Wider health and mortality publications related to the pandemic during May included:
 - i. ischaemic heart disease deaths including comorbidities. A deep dive in this leading cause of death, providing more detail and insight;
 - ii. coronavirus and vaccination rates in people aged 50 years and over by socio-demographic characteristic;
 - iii. excess deaths in 2020. Looking in detail at excess deaths for the whole of 2020, using finalised 2020 mortality data;
 - iv. deaths involving COVID-19 in the care sector; Wave 1 vs Wave 2 analysis, England and Wales - an update on deaths in care homes, looking over the pandemic period as whole until April 2021; and
 - v. COVID-19 by religion - an update of last June's initial look at the risk of dying from COVID-19 for different religious groups.
11. Two pre-print academic articles are due to be published shortly:
 - occupation and COVID-19 mortality in England: a national linked data study of 14.3 million adults; and
 - sociodemographic inequality in COVID-19 vaccination coverage amongst elderly adults in England: a national linked data study.

Schools infection study and Daily Contact Study

12. Schools Infection Study:
 - i. the study has now completed over 100,000 tests (infection and antibody) from pupils and staff. Round 5 data collection, runs until May 21. There is high engagement and participation from enrolled schools which is resulting in high levels of testing;
 - ii. Round 4 infection rates were published 4 May and was well received by the media. The MI pack for round 4 staff antibody and round 1 and 2 pupil antibody results have been delivered. The results and accompanying analysis will be published on 27 May; and
 - iii. the first of two National Statistician round tables of the Scientific Advisory Group for schools was held on Thursday 20 May. This established a uniformity of agreement that there is a continuing need to collect information about children and interest in doing so within the school environment as well as a strong steer to further utilise data linkage opportunities to allow us to maximise the benefits of the data and understanding already gained with the SIS. The second roundtable is provisionally set for early June.

13. Daily Contact Testing Trial:

- 168 schools now engaged with the trial and 133 uploading data. Trial is set to run until 25 June and to report to Ministers by 15 July; and
- ONS are working collaboratively with Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) colleagues to present weekly analytical reports to the trial monitoring committee.

Monitoring COVID-19 in other settings

14. Care Homes:

- following approval to fund proof of concept analysis from CIS budget, we are seeking formal engagement and approval from DHSC to progress with our proposal this week; and
- once approved we will progress quickly with analysis of the weighted pillar 2 data for care homes and continue to scope out analysis related to mortality and vaccine efficacy.

15. Universities:

- final ingest of university-reported Lateral Flow Device testing data negotiated for mid-June; geographic analysis to be delivered to Department for Education (DfE) for Autumn return planning in mid-July;
- long-term focus on mental health for this cohort: ONS scoping availability of university/NHS admin data sources on wellbeing; and
- presenting work to Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling Higher Education subgroup 25 May.

Opinions Survey on Behaviours

16. Data to the 9 May shows a gradual shift in behaviours, with the proportion who maintain social distancing always or often with those from outside their household or support bubble dropping to 79 per cent. We also find 19 per cent met up with others indoors (prior to step 3 in England) and 57 per cent outdoors. Other reasons for leaving the home continue to increase, such as travelling to work (60 per cent), non-essential shopping (30 per cent) visiting cafes, bars, pubs (24 per cent).

17. We also asked questions about attitudes to attending large events in the future, finding 4 in 10 would be more positive if attendees had to show proof of a recent negative test. However, 7 in 10 would be less likely to attend if they had to wait for long periods to comply with socially distanced exits. Other measures such as no social distancing, wearing a face covering during the entire event and not being able to eat or buy food also made adults less likely to want to attend an event.

Population Health Surveillance

18. We are continuing to develop our strategy for Population Health Surveillance beyond the current state of the pandemic. The strategy is being shared with a wide range of stakeholders for their input and endorsement.

19. Our engagement with colleagues from DHSC and the UK Health Security Agency continues to progress with an emphasis on their key questions and how a population health surveillance model led by ONS in partnership with others can help meet their key objectives.

20. An academic roundtable was held in early May to share our vision and discuss the Longitudinal Study as a critical piece of the strategy with a wider variety of academic partners. We also held a similar session with the Royal Society which provided helpful advice and support to our direction of travel.

21. The strategy anticipates a range of different scenarios and is seeking to build a flexible model that can adapt to the changing state of health across the UK. It builds on our

unique data holdings and expertise to deliver a flexible integrated surveillance model which can adjust seasonally or considering a new COVID-19 variant of concern. This will allow us to both understand the lasting impact of COVID-19 and provide insight into other public health conditions and risks.

Next Steps

22. Further work to adapt the CIS for the winter flu season is underway in partnership with DHSC and the Joint Biosecurity Centre, and we will provide the Board with a fuller update on progress at the next meeting.
23. The team are preparing material to inform step four of the government's roadmap in June.
24. Our strategic work is now considering costings and preparedness for the Spending Review. By taking a modular approach to the Longitudinal Study, we allow government partners to consider a core investment which exploits CIS investment to date with the option to stand up additional modules to investigate particular areas of concern e.g. obesity, in more depth.

Iain Bell, Director General, Population and Public Policy

Emma Rourke, Director, Health Analysis and Pandemic Insight

25 May 2021

2021/22 Strategic Business Plan

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with the final draft version of the 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan for review before finalisation and publication.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to review and approve the 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan.

Background

3. The 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan is due for publication internally on Reggie and externally on the Authority website late June or early July (aligned with the publication of the Annual Report and Accounts).
4. Both the National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) and Portfolio and Investment Committee (PIC) have been heavily involved in the 2021/22 Planning Round with regular updates being provided to both:
 - i. the Planning Round approach, led by Planning and Portfolio Management, was approved by NSEG in November. The approach incorporated the impact of the one-year Spending Review 20 settlement by reviewing and agreeing priorities to inform the development of the 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan. The approach also built on the integrated planning from last year to further encourage co-creation and ownership of a single ONS plan that aligns to the Authority Strategy 'Statistics for the Public Good'. The approach encouraged greater collaboration across the ONS, using a Cross-ONS working group, to reduce siloed planning and early identification of dependencies;
 - ii. NSEG also reviewed the strategic drivers and rationalised the Strategic Objectives from 12 down to 8;
 - iii. an early draft of the 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan was presented for review to the April PIC meeting; and
 - iv. a near final version of the 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan was presented for review to the May NSEG meeting with the underlying objectives that will support the plan.
5. The Planning Round process also required both Director and Strategic Objective owner review and sign off at key stages.

Discussion

6. We have treated the development of the 2020/21 Strategic Business Plan as a refresh, as there has been no major change in strategic direction. Therefore, outside of the refresh and rationalisation of the strategic objectives and presentation of the plan in the context of the achievements of the year, there are no major points for discussion relating to the Strategic Business Plan
7. The plan has been kept brief by stripping out with further links and detail provided outside of the narrative of the plan.
8. We will produce a single version that will be published internally on Reggie and externally on the Authority website. The presentation and formatting will be changed when Internal Communications develop an accessible web page version.

Conclusion

9. The Authority Board's review, comments and approval will finalise the 2021/22 Strategic Business Plan ready for publication in late June early July to align with the publication of the annual report and accounts.

Nick Bateson, Director of Finance, Planning and Performance, Megan Cooper, Deputy Director, Planning and Portfolio Management, 24 May 2021

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme

Purpose

1. This paper provides a short update on progress as the Census journey moves from collection to processing and outputs and dissemination. It also provides an update on the wider transformation programme.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the programme retains an amber rating. Census continues to make good progress, but much remains to be done across the rest of the programme;
 - ii. the Census field operation has been a success and we now turn our attention to the Census Coverage Survey and Non-Compliance operation;
 - iii. pre-processing of Census returns is on track for completion, and we are able to move data through the processing pipeline to allow the tuning of statistical processing elements to commence; and
 - iv. business statistics transformation has met its Distributive Trades level 0 milestone, delivering both the first statistical production pipeline of its kind and a platform for further transformation.

Discussion

Programme update

3. The programme remains at amber, the Census collection operation has now closed and our focus in the field has turned to the Census Coverage Survey (CCS) and Non-Compliance (NC) Operation. Additionally, the build of the statistical processing pipeline and outputs and dissemination tools and channels continues.
4. As we refocus towards the wider transformation, we have met our important Distributive Trades (DTrades) milestone. This has delivered the statistical production pipeline that provides the capability to run retail sales data in a new strategic statistical production environment. This also paves the way for future survey transformation as we will continue to exploit the Statistical Production Platform (SPP) and new production environment further, particularly as we move away from the use of legacy technology. Good progress is being made on the work building to the 2023 recommendation and we will provide the board with more detailed update in June.

Census Collection Operation

5. The Census field operation has been a success, with our field activities finished on 17 May and the eQ was closed on the 24 May. All response targets were exceeded, and we continue to collect paper returns.
6. Our field operation is now focused on the CCS operation. The initial CCS engagement has been slower than expected. This is due to the success of the main Census operation, COVID-19 restrictions (meaning interviews are being undertaken on the doorstep) and the wet weather.
7. We remain confident that response rate will be sufficient to support the estimation process, particularly in light of the very high census response rate. As planned, admin data will be used to continue to support the enumeration. We are preparing to launch our non-compliance (NC) operation at the end of May. Initial NC letters were sent to non-responding households at the start of the month generating some response both online

and on paper. The relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions will make the operation easier and interviews will be conducted within households.

Census data processing

8. Good progress has been made to pre-process received responses in preparation for statistical processing in September.
9. Data is already moving beyond the pre-processing stages to allow teams in Methodology to prepare their systems for editing and imputation where missing or invalid items within responses can be corrected.
10. We are regularly extracting data sets for quality assurance on both the data itself and the processes being applied to the data, to ensure everything is working as intended. Data quality issues are to be expected and the time required for resolution has always been contained within the plan.
11. This quality assurance has also given us a better understanding of emerging requirements post collection as well as allowing us to understand more about specific aspects of the data, such as students and houses of multiple occupancy. Our standard design and methods are intended to address most issues. We are assessing the implementation of new methods to improve the enumeration of students at their term time address. In addition to the CCS for private households we have launched a Student Halls of Residence Survey via individual universities to extend our coverage assessment to these establishments.
12. The use of administrative data is a core part of our quality assurance and validation approach. We have been able to look at matching data to Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data to quality assure and improve what we know on number of rooms. We are now preparing to use data from the Ministry of Defence to quality assure and improve data quality around veterans. As we move through statistical processing later in the year, we will be validating all estimates against further administrative data sources.
13. Readiness for statistical processing in early September is progressing well. Whilst some elements of the build and subsequent testing are behind schedule as a result of the delay caused by moving to a cloud environment, we remain confident in our ability to produce initial findings within a year. Full build metrics will be shared with Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Census outputs and dissemination

14. Following final testing and as planned, we will be able to publish analytical content using the existing mechanisms of the ONS and NOMIS websites as well as providing a flexible table builder.
15. We are now focusing on developing innovative and engaging rich content products, such as the new “scrolly telling” feature. This is being tested in live having been used to recently publish regional differences in income and productivity. We are gathering feedback to further refine and improve on this format. The other work continues around the three strands of “find census”, “find local facts” and “find insights”. These are aimed at ensuring functionality can be built to best exploit the census data in a consumable way for the broadest possible audience. The work will also consider the legacy of existing Census-branded websites. Further work is planned for later in the year, which will focus on automating the publishing process and readying our platforms for next year.

Wider Transformation

16. Business statistics transformation has achieved their Level 0 milestone in the DTrades project. The release of the production environment on the cloud based SPP provides the capability to run end to end results processing for the Retail Sales Index (RSI) data. While the project focused on RSI data, the build focused on the development of re-

usable methods and technology that can be used in the transformation of other surveys. The project is now planning the next phases of this work with consideration to the need to move away from legacy platforms and wider organisational priorities.

17. Underpinning the 2023 evidence is our admin data research which is being developed to support successful delivery of 2021 Census outputs. Specifically targeting a number of key areas including students, quality assurance and residual bias adjustment. Focus is on what we can deliver with the data we currently have access too, and we are working through some of the challenges of ensuring data are held in the right place to facilitate this.
18. The evidence will be assessed through eight lenses. They will examine the data (both survey and admin), methods and public acceptability for the 2023 recommendation. Work is also underway to ensure we have a coherent plan for engaging and consulting with our users over the coming year on both our 2021 Census outputs and to support successful delivery of the 2023 recommendation.
19. We remain on track to introduce the telephone as a mode of collection, and introducing new income variables, for the Labour Market Survey (LMS) in July 2021. In parallel, progress towards our April 2022 milestone for the delivery of a new social survey platform remains on track. This work will use the LMS to leverage its design, whilst build on the success of the census Survey Data Collection platform. To support this work, underpinning lessons learnt from the census ways of working are being introduced, to ensure the teams can work as smoothly and efficiently as possible. This has included bringing in additional management resource. Close engagement with Economic Statistics remains vital to ensure a common understanding of requirements. This will also help us understand how we can speed up delivery, creating a minimal viable product from which further enhancements can made.

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy
Nicola Tyson-Payne, Director of Transformation, Population and Public Policy
25 May 2021