

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Thursday 28 October 2021
Via Videoconference

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)
Professor Sir John Aston
Sam Beckett
Helen Boaden
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Richard Dobbs
Ed Humpherson
Nora Nanayakkara
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter
Professor Anne Trefethen

Also in attendance

Nick Bateson
Pete Benton (for item 10)
Owen Brace
Meghan Elkin (for item 9)
Liz McKeown (for item 9)
Alison Pritchard

Apologies

Robert Bumpstead
Professor Jonathan Haskel
Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Robert Bumpstead, Professor Johnathan Haskel and Sian Jones.

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 meeting on 30 September 2021 were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

- 4.1 Non-Executives had met prior to the Board meeting. They had discussed the recruitment process for the Chair.
- 4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met highlighting:
- i. Sir David had met the ONS environmental statistics team on 1 October ahead of a meeting on 5 October, alongside Professor Sir Ian Diamond and the team, with Lord Deben, (Chair of the Climate Change Committee (CCC)), and Chris Stark (Chief Executive, CCC);
 - ii. Sir David had chaired a meeting of the Economic Experts Advisory Group on 13 October;
 - iii. Sir David and Sir Ian had attended the Royal Statistical Society National Statistics Advisory Group meeting on 19 October;
 - iv. Sir David, Sir Ian and Ed Humpherson had provided evidence to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on 21 October on the work of the Authority;
 - v. Sir David had attended a meeting of the Chairs of Independent Offices on 25 October; and
 - vi. Sir David and Sir Ian had met with Lord True, and Sir David had subsequently visited the Cabinet Office National Situation Centre on 27 October.
- 4.3 Sir David highlighted the engagement with the Heads of Profession and senior officials at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in the week of the Board meeting regarding the presentation of Covid-19 vaccination surveillance statistics.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(21)60]

- 5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:
- i. progress of the Integrated Data Service particularly the engagement with stakeholders across government;
 - ii. ongoing discussions with stakeholders regarding the long term strategic development of the Covid-19 Infection Survey;
 - iii. improvements made to Gross Domestic Product with the full implementation of double deflation;
 - iv. following the closure of the Census output consultation on 4 October a blog had been published on 12 October setting out the processes ahead of publication of the first census results in late Spring 2022; and
 - v. ONS had been named the country's best employer for work-life balance in 2021, by the jobs website Glassdoor.

6. Report from the Director General for regulation [SA(21)61]

- 6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity highlighting the discussions with UKHSA regarding the presentation of Covid-19 vaccination surveillance statistics.

6.2 The Board heard that a continued focus for the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) was around transparency, to ensure that where data were quoted by government departments they were made publicly available. At the recent evidence session to PACAC the OSR approach to stakeholder engagement and increased profile had been highlighted.

7. **Report from the Regulation Committee**

7.1 Professor Anne Trefethen reported on the Regulation Committee, which had met on 14 October.

7.2 Committee members had considered:

- i. progress against the delivery of the OSR business plan and risk management;
- ii. the work by OSR on transparency with the need for metrics to track progress;
- iii. the progress on the National Statistics Designation review;
- iv. draft reports of OSR's assessments of the 2021 Census in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland; and
- v. OSR's Systemic Reviews on Climate Change, and Children and Young People.

8. **Spending review 2021 [SA(21)62]**

8.1 Nick Bateson introduced a paper which provided details of the Authority's settlement following the Spending Review 2021 (SR21).

8.2 The Board welcomed the update noting that importance of delivery in the three year period aligned to the bid and the strategy.

9. **Crime Statistics – Violence against Women and Girls [SA(21)63]**

9.1 Liz McKeown introduced a paper which provided an update on the work to date led to inform the delivery of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, the continued delivery of crime statistics and ambitious plans for the future.

9.2 The Board heard how the Cabinet Office had approached ONS to provide analytical leadership to help provide the evidence base needed to support the development of the VAWG Strategy. This recognised ONS' expertise, convening power and system wide view.

9.3 Board members noted their thanks for an excellent presentation.

10. **Census [SA(21)64]**

10.1 Pete Benton introduced a paper which provided an update on progress on the 2021 Census, focussed on processing, outputs and dissemination. It also provided an update on progress towards the 2023 recommendation and wider transformation.

10.2 The Board heard that all aspects of the census collection were complete. Going forward the programme would focus on dissemination of census outputs, the evidence base to inform the 2023 recommendation and wider transformation.

11. **User Engagement [SA(21)65]**

11.1 Owen Brace introduced a paper which provided an update on actions taken to improve engagement with users.

11.2 The Board heard that a new central engagement hub would be set up to take forward the user engagement action plan, which would be completed by the end of the year. An external expert user advisory group to advise the National Statistician was being set up.

11.3 The Board noted the paper and it was agreed that a further update should be provided at a future meeting.

12. **Any other business**

12.1 The next meeting would take place on Thursday 25 November 2021.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

28 October 2021,09.15-12.20

Remote Teams Meeting

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies: Robert Bumpstead, Professor Jonathan Haskel, Sian Jones

Attendees: Pete Benton (for item 8), Liz McKeown (for item 7)

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 30 September 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)60 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 10.20-10.30 10 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(21)61 Ed Humpherson
5 10.30-10.40 10 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regulation Committee	Oral report Prof. Anne Trefethen
6 10.40-11.00 20 mins	Spending Review 2021	SA(21)62 Nick Bateson
11.00-11.10 10 mins	Break	
7 11.10-11.35 25 mins	Crime Statistics - Violence against Women and Young Girls	SA(21)63 Liz McKeown
8 11.35-11.50 15 mins	Census	SA(21)64 Pete Benton
9 11.50-12.10 20 mins	User Engagement	SA(21)65 Owen Brace
10 12.10-12.20 10 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 25 November 2021, London

Chief Executive's Report, October 2021

Purpose

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

Summary

2. October began with another milestone for the **Integrated Data Service** with the launch of our cross-government Private Beta and publication of the **Inclusive Data Taskforce's** Report and recommendations. It will conclude with the announcement of our **Spending Review** settlement. The **COVID-19 Infection Survey** also reached a major milestone in October, passing one million blood tests completed as well as more than six million swab tests. ONS data has also been informing decisions in the Government's response to **supply chain disruption**. Finally, I was pleased to hear that our **Data Access Platform** has been designated as **Critical National Infrastructure** within Government.

Review of recent activities

3. The **Integrated Data Service (IDS)** reached another major milestone at the start of October with the successful launch of the **Private Beta**, which is accessible by analysts across Government. Three projects are currently underway, which will help us test and demonstrate the new capabilities such as data virtualisation.
4. The **Spending Review** process continues. We are near to concluding conversations with the Treasury and broader stakeholders on our five key programmes of work: IDS; Public Health Monitoring Analysis and Reporting; Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive Economic Statistics (ARIES); Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP); and crime. The results of the Spending Review are due to be announced on 27 October – at which point we will have a confirmed settlement for the three-year period to the end of March 2025.
5. Our **Data Access Platform**, its data and statistical outputs have been designated as nationally critical within the Government sector of operations. This places our data work at the heart of Government and recognises the delivery of statistics is vital to the UK.
6. The **COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS)** has passed the milestone of 1 million blood tests completed. We are now testing around 150,000 participants for antibodies every month up from around 14 per cent of the sample when we started scaling up from April 2021. We have completed more than 6 million swab tests and continue to provide insights that directly inform government policy on pandemic response across all four nations. In his recent lecture, the Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, publicly thanked ONS for the insights we've provided, citing our sophisticated use of data as a source of confidence for ministers taking decisions.
7. The **Schools Infection Survey 2** has been commissioned by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). Antibody testing is planned to take place in all three waves starting on 1 November across a sample of schools in addition to data gathered from pupils, parents and headteachers.
8. On 28 September, I launched the conclusions from the **Inclusive Data Taskforce** at an event alongside Dame Moira Gibb and other panellists. The event was the best attended ONS virtual event to date. This report contains far reaching, strategic recommendations for creating a step change in the availability of data and analysis on inclusivity in UK society. I also published my response to the Taskforce and a **detailed workplan to drive forward** this work across the statistical system. We are now developing the Detailed Plan through external stakeholder engagement, for release in January 2022.

9. Our '**Data Masterclass for Senior Leaders**' goes from strength to strength having now opened for a new cohort from the ONS and HMT. As of 15 October, 1,750 senior leaders have joined from 11 different departments, and in October/November - Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Crown Prosecution Service, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Transport, Department for International Trade, HM Revenue and Customs, Home Office and Scottish Government are all starting cohorts. Completion rates for cohorts that have been running for 6 weeks is 32.7 per cent, well above industry averages. The Masterclass is also being incorporated into the Civil Service Fast Stream and talent programmes, with pilots now underway.
10. On 12 October I launched the cross-government **Data Science Graduate Programme** with 50 data scientists across nine public sector organisations. The two-year curriculum will deliver professional data scientists across government having been based on two successful pilot cohorts in ONS. I look forward to meeting the cohort in the new year.
11. On 30 September we implemented several **significant improvements to Gross Domestic Product**. These included full implementation of double deflation (international best practice) and a step change in our understanding of the financial sector. We were complimented by senior leaders at the Treasury and Bank, amongst others, on the implementation, including the quality of engagement in advance. New data and methods were also published to incorporate the Test, Trace and Vaccinations programmes into measures of healthcare output in the National Accounts (in collaboration with DHSC, the National Health Service, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and HMT).
12. Our health surveillance work has continued to provide data and analytical insight into the Government's **response to COVID-19**. Following our publication on **long COVID** prevalence, we presented the results at the monthly DHSC ministerial roundtable on long COVID (this month chaired by the Secretary of State for Health) and at a WHO webinar on rehabilitation following coronavirus infection.
13. We are also heavily involved with work on **Supply Chains disruption**, providing a new unit in Cabinet Office with the latest data and information to inform decisions. Data is drawn from several sources including business surveys, the opinions survey, Labour Force Survey, Faster Indicators and financial transactions data. We are also producing published analysis on HGV drivers and impacts on availability of essential goods.
14. With interest building towards the **COP26 UN climate change** summit in Glasgow in November, we are delivering a programme of outputs and engagements to maximise impact for ONS. We published the first two on 21 September: a statistical bulletin on UK greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions in 2020 by sector and an article focusing on how UK household emissions changed in the early part of the pandemic. We have a highly coveted slot at COP26 itself on 2 November to showcase a new climate change statistics portal launching in w/c 25 October.
15. Following the closure of the **Census output consultation** on 4 October, on 12 October, we published a blog laying out what happens next in our census journey: Census 2021 – the count is done, the data is in, so what happens next? The blog helps our stakeholders understand how successful our census collection was and the processes we need to complete ahead of publication of the first results in late Spring 2022.
16. On 6 October, **we wrote to local authorities**, asking them, for the first time, to help us directly with our Census 2021 quality assurance work. We will be providing limited access to anonymised, provisional census estimates for all local authorities (who agree to take part) strictly for the purposes of quality assurance prior to publication.
17. Internally, the **recruitment campaigns** for the Director General Health, Population and Methods, and Director General Economic and Social Statistics, closed on 21 September.

Shortlisting has begun and employee engagement sessions took place towards the end of October. Interviews for both roles will be conducted in early November.

18. I was delighted that the ONS has been shortlisted for various external awards. CIPD Wales recognised us in the **Best Diversity and Inclusion** category for our D&I dashboard, and the **Best Resourcing and Talent Management** category for our skills sourcing talent. Our **contact centre teams** are finalists for three Welsh contact centre awards: Best COVID-19 strategy, customer engagement, and small in-house team.
19. Lastly, our **Locations and Dynamic Workplaces programme** has been recognised by the Smarter Working Awards. We are finalists in the Workplace Transformation category. This is great recognition of cross-team effort, to create a modern and inclusive environment, through policy, training, technology, equipment, automation, resourcing and communication.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, October 2021

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board with an overview of OSR priorities and activities.

Discussion

2. Our main areas of focus in recent weeks have been:
 - i. **Regulation Committee:** We had another excellent meeting of the Regulation Committee on 14 October, focusing on a mix of strategic issues and OSR outputs. It was helpful to discuss our plans on transparency, a particular area of focus for OSR at the moment, and to agree a way forward for raising this issue with senior leaders across government.
 - ii. **OSR outputs:** Since the last meeting of this Board we have published two major outputs: the [Annual Review of Casework](#), and our report on [COVID-19 lessons learned for health and social care statistics](#). This year's casework report was the most developed yet, and set out how impactful the pandemic was on our casework programme last year. It also generated some excellent media coverage, highlighting the clear public interest in our work. The lessons learned report highlights the remarkable efforts of those producing health and social care statistics during the pandemic in response to the unprecedented level of demand for data. The report also makes a number of recommendations on statistical leadership, transparency, and investment to help overcome challenges and build on the good work over the last 18 months.
 - iii. **Public event:** Last week (13 October) we hosted our first ever public outreach event, where we presented on our role as the statistics regulator and discussed our work during the pandemic, including the lessons learned review. It was a great success for the OSR team with a good level of engagement and some excellent questions as part of the Q&A. There is certainly an appetite internally to run something similar again in future.
 - iv. **Engagement:** This week, I will be joining Sir David and Sir Ian on a panel at the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. It will be a good opportunity to highlight the increased profile that we have gained during the pandemic and our future plans. Other engagements of note over the last few weeks includes a meeting of the Civil Service Leadership Group, held in Stoke, on levelling up. This was a good opportunity to network with many colleagues in person for the first in a long time. I've also met with a wide range of external colleagues throughout October. This includes an introductory meeting with Tamsyn Barton, head of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, to discuss areas of shared interest; Nicola Byrne, National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care; Sir Tom Winsor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary; and Sarah Sharples, Chief Scientific Advisor at the Department of Transport.
3. The big challenge for the autumn is driving forward our focus on transparency so that where data are quoted by Government, they are made publicly available.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, Office for Statistics Regulation, 20 October 2021

Regulatory Activities - October 2021 - AB

Health and Social Care	Economy	Population and Society	Crime and Security	Children, Education and Skills
<p>Covid-19 – Lessons Learned Review: Report published 7 October; engaging with producers, parliaments, and media. Public discussion held on 13 October.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Commenced work on reviewing Outpatient Waiting Time statistics published by the Department of Health (NI).</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Adult Social Care (GB) – Preparing draft report.</p> <p>Casework: responding to casework concerning Scottish waiting time statistics.</p>	<p>Assessments: ONS Productivity Statistics – Continuing discussions with ONS on progress against our requirements.</p> <p>Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) – Held early discussions with WRA on its land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax statistics, headline land transaction tax statistics. Assessment planned to commence in October.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Post Brexit ONS Economic Classifications – Preparing options paper on OSR’s response to ONS’s new accounting and classification arrangements for December’s Regulation Committee meeting.</p>	<p>Assessments: Census reports for E&W and NI censuses discussed at October Regulation Committee. Reports will be finalised, taking on board Regulation Committee and census office comments, and aim to publish early Nov.</p> <p>Casework: Letters sent to Home Office and Mr Timms MP about no recourse to public funds (NRPF) data. Migrant Crossings statistics being discussed with Home Office.</p> <p>Compliance check: Scottish Household Survey – Finalising outcomes reflecting emerging developments, on sex and gender data from Scottish Government.</p> <p>Migration – Engaging with ONS and external stakeholders on plans for future migration publications. Planning to provide an update on this work at December’s Regulation Committee meeting with a report due for February’s Regulation Committee.</p>	<p>Assessment: Holding workshop with ONS and Home Office on 18 November to plan what follow-up work would be appropriate for police recorded crime statistics for England and Wales.</p> <p>Compliance check: Published letter for Scottish Government’s Criminal Proceedings in Scotland statistics. Continuing desk research for review of new ONS/Home Office knife-enabled crime figures. Started desk research for review of Department of Justice’s Northern Ireland prosecutions and convictions statistics.</p>	<p>Casework: Pupil premium change – Private letter to DfE sent on 30 September encouraging greater transparency around methods</p> <p>Systemic Review: Children and Young People – findings being developed with a view to publishing report in late 2021/ early 2022.</p> <p>Scottish Attainment - User concerns raised around statistics and link to early labour market outcomes. Holding a planning event with SG and ESRC with a view to a wider user event.</p>
Labour Market and Welfare	Housing, Planning and Local Services	Agriculture, Energy and Environment	Business, Trade and International Development	Travel, Transport and Tourism
<p>Assessments: Pay in NI Civil Service Stats: user interviews underway.</p> <p>NI Personal Independence Payments: letter confirming NS designation published 15 October.</p> <p>Compliance checks: ONS’ small area income estimates – meeting with producer.</p> <p>Welsh Government’s Regional economic and labour market profiles – letter with findings to be published by end of October.</p>	<p>Assessment: Statutory Homelessness statistics: Follow up meeting held with DLUHC. Drafting assessment report for December Regulation Committee.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Published letters for MoJ Landlord and Mortgage Possessions statistics, DLUHC Local authority green belt statistics for England, and Household Estimates and Projections produced by Welsh Government, NRS and NISRA, incorporating themes from the OSR Population Review.</p>	<p>Assessment: People and nature survey assessment was supposed to start now but couple of senior personnel changes means awaiting decision from team as to go ahead</p> <p>Compliance checks: Flood Defence Spending statistics follow up meeting scheduled with producers.</p> <p>Systemic reviews: Climate Change statistics – Actioned comments from producers and October Regulation Committee, developing comms plan.</p> <p>Food Statistics – Scoping being carried out along with desk research. Meeting with analysts involved in new English food strategy arranged.</p>	<p>Assessments: NISRA BESES – Report discussed at Oct Regulation Committee. Report will be finalised to reflect Regulation Committee and producer comments. Aim to publish early November.</p> <p>Trade Statistics and Business Demography Statistics – following up with ONS.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Initiating UK Trade statistics (x2) and inclusion of VAT data into Economic statistics and Retail Sales Statistics.</p> <p>HMRC Betting and Gaming statistics.</p>	<p>Compliance checks: Recently published: ORR’s Passenger Assistance and Disabled Persons Railcards statistics. Ongoing: DfT’s new Transport Disability and Accessibility Statistics publication, and Transport Scotland’s new Disability and Transport publication</p> <p>Travel and Tourism - Engaging with ONS on plans for future of the International Passenger Survey.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Accessibility of Transport Networks – Developing recommendations and drafting report</p>

Spending Review 2021 – Authority Settlement

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Board with details of the Authority's settlement following the Spending Review 2021.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to note and comment on the Authority's settlement.

Discussion

3. The Chancellor announced the results of the Spending Review 2021 at 1pm this afternoon. This announcement concluded the negotiation phase of the Spending Review and sets out spending envelopes for government departments for the next three years.
4. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the fiscal environment across government remains challenging and funding envelopes across significant areas of activity have been highly constrained.
5. In this context, the UK Statistics Authority settlement represents a vote of confidence in our strategy – Statistics for the Public Good. It also reflects the significant impact of the statistics and analysis we have produced to illustrate the economic, social and health impacts of the pandemic; and the government's confidence in our ability to deliver major programmes including the Integrated Data Service Programme and Ambitious Radical Inclusive Economic Statistics programme – building on the back of the success of the Census 21.
6. Funding for the COVID-19 Infection Survey will be negotiated with the Department for Health and Social Care following the Spending Review announcements.
7. As expected, we did not receive funding for all of the business cases we put forward for the Spending Review.
8. Following the announcement of the result of the Spending Review, we will now assess priorities across the organisation. I have asked Sam Beckett to lead a small group to ensure that we are set up to deliver our strategic priorities in the context of the resources we have been provided with and our people capacities and capabilities. This will include evaluating the packages of work we proposed for levelling-up, ongoing health surveillance and crime against our ongoing activities.
9. The prioritisation work will be brought together with the organisational design principles that are being delivered by the BASE Review to ensure that we are set up with a sustainable medium-term plan and business model to deliver for the remaining period of our current strategy – Statistics for the Public Good.
10. I am thrilled that the Treasury and has provided funding through Spending Review settlement to deliver our radical, ambitious, inclusive and sustainable vision for the organisation for the next three years. We can look forward with confidence in the light of this settlement to continue to deliver our priorities at pace.

Profession Sir Ian Diamond, 27 October 2021

Crime Statistics including analytical leadership on VAWG

Purpose

1. This paper provides of Authority Board with an update on the work to date we have led to support the delivery of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, the continued delivery of crime statistics and our ambitious plans for their future.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. comment on the progress of work to date; and
 - ii. agree the scope of the proposed workplan and note the work already underway to advance it.

Background

3. To reduce crime and its impact on people and communities, there needs to be investment in the evidence base so that government, citizens, businesses, the wider public sector and civil society have the information they need to design and develop effective interventions and evaluate their impact; to support the delivery of public services and to hold them to account; and to help drive improvements across the Criminal Justice system. ONS has a key well established role in this through our Centre for Crime and Justice.
4. The Centre brings subject matter expertise, strong partnership working and a track record of innovation, delivery and impact. Over the last 18 months it has:
 - i. Ensured the timely delivery of essential Crime statistics throughout the pandemic. When the onset of the pandemic resulted in the immediate suspension of face-to-face survey interviewing, the Centre responded rapidly to ensure that we were still able to answer important questions around crime and victimisation. They completely re-engineered the face-to-face Crime Survey and delivered a fully working telephone survey covering many sensitive topics in less than two months. This also included developing, building, testing and deploying a new processing system in record time.
 - ii. Extended insights into new areas reflecting the changing nature of Crime. This year it has been more important than ever to understand the effect crime and all its' negative consequences has on children and we produced and delivered new in-depth analysis on the "toxic trio" looking at impact of adults experiencing mental ill health, domestic abuse and drug misuse on children living in those households, the prevalence of on-line bullying, as well as publishing a child abuse compendium, the latter being nominated for a Civil Service Award.
 - iii. Delivered significant efficiencies through automation. The 'Nature of Crime' Reproducible Analytical Pipeline project used R and Python to automate the production of 206 'Nature of Crime' tables. This increased efficiency produced a significant resource saving, reducing production time from three weeks for 13 analysts to two analysts in under an hour.
5. It has also led at pace cross-Government analytical work on Violence Against Women and Girls, which we discuss in more detail below.
6. Our ambitious plans for the future of Crime Statistics build on these strong foundations and are aimed at providing the strongest possible evidence base to improve understanding of the extent and nature of crime in our society and its impact for use in decision making, monitoring and evaluation. The plans have wide support from

stakeholders across and beyond government and are also discussed in further detail below.

Discussion

Leadership of Cross Government Analytical Work to Address VAWG

7. To respond to the urgent need to radically enhance the evidence base on Violence Against Women and Girls, the Centre for Crime and Justice has worked in partnership with the Cabinet Office and Other Government Departments to produce the first comprehensive synthesis of the available evidence drawing on ONS, government and civil society data; new analysis filling critical evidence gaps and an associated data landscape, which together provide an important evidence base for policy makers as the implementation plan for the VAWG strategy is developed. The full evidence pack can be provided separately to the board and we will draw out the key findings for members at the Board meeting.
8. We presented these findings to the VAWG cross-government group (chaired by Cabinet Office and comprising of policy directors from across Whitehall) on the 7 September, where it was very well received. This presentation led to a “Deep Dive” meeting into the data gaps within VAWG which the Cabinet Office asked us to lead which identified priority data gaps for both departments and ourselves to take forward – the current focus of this includes the use of health data and gaining richer insight on harassment.
9. Our Centre for Crime and Justice are now working with ONS data visualisation to find the best way to publish this evidence. This is likely to be alongside the Domestic Abuse compendium update just before the UN 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in November. They are also working with the No.10 visualisation team on how to make the evidence pack more accessible to those across government and with the Cabinet Office on how we can support the future monitoring and evaluation of the VAWG strategy.

Vision and plans for Crime Statistics

10. While the Centre for Crime and Justice has worked hard to increase the influence and impact of its statistics and analysis in recent years it is worth noting that Crime Statistics have received no investment to support their transformation over the last decade. Against this backdrop our future ambition for Crime Statistics, subject to available funding, is a radical programme that:
 - i. delivers more granular, timely statistics that radically improve our ability to effectively monitor progress, facilitate learning and underpin accountability at a Police Force area level through a transformed Crime Survey with larger sample size, supplemented with the use of innovative and integrated data sources;
 - ii. addresses significant evidence gaps that affect our ability to support some of the most vulnerable in society by delivering new surveys on hidden crimes including Child Abuse, building on consultation findings, wide-ranging engagement with Civil Society and in-depth research. This will also provide greater flexibility to deliver significant improvements to the evidence base supporting wider government strategies, including on Violence Against Women and Girls, and Domestic Abuse; and
 - iii. transforms our understanding of the impact of crime by developing a new crime harm index, to better understand the effect of crime on people and society.

Current work in train

11. Ahead of the outcome of the Spending Review, the Centre for Crime and Justice is continuing to work hard to deliver significant improvements in our understanding of crime and its impact on people and society. We have been at the forefront of developing new and valuable insights in a timely and responsive manner and looking to the needs for

crime statistics in the future. This includes – in addition to the work on VAWG outlined - above:

- i. developing a set of crime screener questions to test an online first mode of delivery, which we are already piloting;
- ii. commissioning a series of initial research projects to test various aspects of transforming the Crime Survey, so it is fit for the future;
- iii. acknowledging the importance of data gaps on crime, caused by operational issues during the pandemic. As of this month, the Crime Survey is returning to a face-to-face mode, one of the first large-scale household surveys to do so;
- iv. developing and running a series of questions on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey to understand people's attitude to safety, which we will be re-running in the winter months; and
- v. undertaking a public consultation on the need and requirements for timely information on the prevalence of child abuse. Respondents confirmed there is an urgent need for this evidence gap to be filled.

Conclusion

12. This paper has set out the recent achievements of the Centre for Crime and Justice including on the work we have led cross-government on Violence Against Women and Girls; our future ambitions for this work, dependent on available funding and the work we already have in train to advance our ambitions in this space.

Liz McKeown, Public Policy Analysis Directorate, October 2021

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on progress on the 2021 Census journey, focusing on processing, outputs and dissemination. It also provides updates on progress towards the 2023 recommendation and wider transformation.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the main census data collection operation is complete, including the Census Coverage Survey and Census Quality Survey, and we are on track for publication of first results;
 - ii. the first element of the more complex statistical processing, the clerical matching of Census and Census Coverage Survey data, has begun; and
 - iii. the Census outputs and analysis user consultation has closed with over 300 responses from a range of users. A focused Board session on Census outputs and dissemination tools is being planned for December.

Discussion

Programme status update

3. All aspects of the census collection operation are now complete and we now turn our attention to producing census outputs; the 2023 recommendation on the future of the census; and wider transformation.
4. The Programme status remains at Amber. This reflects good progress on the 2021 census and 2023 recommendation, with a need to review wider survey transformation plans at ONS Portfolio level in response to a welcome increase in demand for surveys following our successful response to the pandemic.

Census data processing

5. The main Census collection operation is now complete and the focus of the collection phase is now on evaluation and decommissioning of the systems and suppliers. All Census questionnaire data (paper and eQ) has been scanned and coded and the first element of more complex statistical processing (clerical matching of Census and Census Coverage Survey data) has begun. The second element, the editing of invalid responses and the imputation of missing data items, is planned to commence on 22 October.
6. The remaining elements of statistical processing, (coverage estimation and adjustment), are well rehearsed with systems tested and ready to commence. The final elements of the statistical estimation methodology were discussed at the Methodology Assurance and Review Panel on 6 October.
7. Quality Assurance (QA) is a continuous process and we are already comparing and validating data against a wide range of administrative data sources. We have further enhanced our QA plan by involving Local Authorities in February 2022, prior to publication of the results, to get the best of their unique local insight and expertise
8. To provide sufficient time to properly incorporate their feedback, the first results will now be available in May 2022 rather than March 2022.

Census outputs and dissemination

9. Significant progress is being made with our flexible table builder solution for census 2021 (known as Cantabular) which will enable a very significant increase in both the breadth,

ease and timeliness of census tabulations. This will sit alongside pre-prepared analysis, visual representations and tables on the ONS website with more complex tables on the existing 'NOMIS' service hosted by the University of Durham.

10. The Census outputs and analysis user consultation has closed with over 300 responses from a range of users, which will inform our final publication plans. A longer discussion with the board is planned for December to walk through the publication plans and demonstrate the dissemination tools.

Progress towards the 2023 Recommendation

11. In July, we updated you on the progress that we had made in developing a roadmap for the evidence that will feed into the 2023 Recommendation.
12. Given the increasingly dynamic nature of the population and the likely ongoing post-pandemic structural changes, there is an ever increasing need to provide timely and frequent population statistics. In light of this, we are accelerating our plans for Admin - based population estimates (ABPEs).
13. In the last few months, we have also published our latest experimental [admin-based income statistics](#), which for the first time included income from self-employment; and feasibility research for [admin-based ethnicity statistics](#). These have been well-received by users and continue to demonstrate our progress towards producing population characteristics from administrative data.

Wider transformation

14. Work continues with Digital Services and Technology to deliver strategic platforms for business and social surveys transformation, building on the 2021 census infrastructure. This includes moving more business surveys online and replacing the Inter Departmental Business Register with a new Statistical Business Register.
15. Social Survey Transformation is being driven through the development of the Labour Market Survey. Plans will be finalised when the Spending Review outcomes are known.

Pete Benton, Director of Transformation - Health, Population and Methods Group
15 October 2021

User engagement update

Purpose

1. At the Board in June 2021, we presented a set of actions to improve our engagement with users by bringing greater coordination, especially among our key relationships, implementing a programme of outreach to engage with a broader user base and structuring our monitoring and measurements for continual improvement.
2. Since the last update, we have set up a central engagement hub to take forward the action plan. We have implemented the three-month actions set out to the Board and have made significant progress towards the six-month actions and expect to complete this work by the end of December.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note the progress made and comment on further targeting for our outreach programme.

Discussion

Coordination of key relationships

4. We have identified organisations where the ONS has multiple relationships and objectives. These organisations are not the totality of key organisations the ONS engages with but are often subject to multiple approaches or requests from across the organisation and therefore our targets for better coordination. These are predominantly key users of our statistics across government, and strategic partners, data providers and partner organisations.
5. The engagement hub, working with engagement leads across the ONS, are coordinating our collective relationships and requests, and providing central briefing for informed and targeted engagement.
6. While this system will iterate and adapt, this has already helped to address the previous risk of multiple separate approaches and requests of the same organisation without collective oversight.
7. We will also take the findings from our relationship satisfaction survey and deep dive interviews to target engagement and set further objectives for top tier organisations.

Easier for users to engage

8. Since 2020, we have introduced a coordinated approach to our consultations, ensuring we get the most engagement from as wide a group as possible while minimising burden by aligning calls for evidence or spacing out separate requests.
9. This year, through our engagement hub, we have also ensured we are reaching out to relevant bodies who may not have previously engaged with our consultations, which aligns with a key action from the Inclusive Data Taskforce.
10. As a result, by focusing and targeting our consultations and reaching out to broader groups, the average response per consultation has increased significantly in 2020 and again in 2021.
11. As well as promoting our formal and informal consultations with users through our mailings and social media channels, we are also building clearer signposting through our web estate.

Broadening our reach

12. The ONS has implemented a programme to reach out to wider groups to garner views and communicate data to a much wider set of potential users.
13. We have introduced new seminars to deep dive into analytical themes with a broader set of users, particularly targeting third-sector organisations:
 - i. the first on rough sleeping was held in June in partnership with the Centre for Homelessness Impact with 123 attendees including Shelter, Crisis and Kings Fund; and
 - ii. the second on long Covid was held in July in partnership with the Royal College of GPs with 138 attendees including Which?, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Mental Health Foundation, NHS, central and local government.
14. The engagement hub is working with analysis and statistics teams to identify an ongoing programme of seminars.
15. This outreach programme is a key action to proactively engage audiences in better use of data and raise awareness of ONS's role in use of data. We have made direct approaches to representative bodies of third sector, local government, businesses, and health professionals. This is in addition to the existing relationships and those who have approached the ONS without prompt.
16. While this is helping to reach broader groups to share analysis and identify data needs, we are also identifying opportunities to promote work on data sources and the Integrated Data Service as part of our drive for openness and transparency.
17. We are planning for further opportunities in the coming months to maximise our reach, build awareness of our work and public awareness of better use of data, and continue to build the profile of the ONS to a widest possible audience.
18. This is just a small example of the outreach work, which expands across all teams at all levels across the organisation.
19. As an additional measure, to ensure we are getting views directly from the wider public, we are also bringing public representatives onto our existing advisory panels.

Monitoring and impact

20. The engagement hub has established a network of engagement leads across the ONS to help coordinate working level relationships, coordinate organisation-wide activity, promote best practice engagement and feedback insights from all user groups. These insights are relayed to the relevant sub-committees of the National Statistics Executive Group.
21. In addition to this regular reporting, the engagement hub has set a cycle of activity to monitor the impact of engagement and where the ONS can continue to improve. This involves two main 'listening activities' – a Relationship Satisfaction Survey in the autumn, which is currently live, to baseline impact of relationships and help set objectives, and anonymised in-depth interviews in the spring, which gives richer and detailed insight into what is working well and what needs to be improved.
22. This is in addition to the regular surveys on ONS impact and citizen focus groups which are run throughout the year and provide valuable insight directly from the public.

Streamlining our engagement

23. The proposal to create an external expert user advisory group to advise the National Statistician directly on cross-cutting issues relating to the use of statistics was welcomed by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Statistics Advisory Group on 19 October.

24. The issues raised to the advisory group will be informed by the National Statistician executive committees, the online ONS user engagement forum – statsusernet.org.uk consisting of more than 1500 members and managed by the engagement hub – and working level user engagement groups across the GSS coordinated through ONS and GSS leads.
25. In addition, the ONS is working through the existing user engagement forums to streamline activity where possible and ensure they feed insights into this advisory group and the central engagement hub.

Conclusion

26. The ONS has taken significant steps to build on the existing extensive user engagement activity to bring better coordination, reach a wider group of users and improve our monitoring of impact, all under a central engagement hub and with a new strategic advisory group.
27. While we build on the initial work implemented by the engagement hub and continue to iterate the approach, the remaining actions to fully embed an engagement function working effectively between central oversight and local delivery is progressing well and will be completed through the BASE review of enabling functions.

Owen Brace, Communications and Digital Publishing, 21 October 2021