

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Thursday 28 April 2022
Via Videoconference

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sian Jones (Interim Chair)

Professor Sir John Aston

Sam Beckett

Helen Boaden

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Richard Dobbs

Ed Humpherson

Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter

Also in attendance

Nick Bateson

Owen Brace

Robert Bumpstead

Luke James (for item 9)

Mike Keoghan (for item 9)

Emma Rourke (for item 10)

Hugh Stickland (for item 8)

Apologies

Professor Anne Trefethen

Professor Jonathan Haskel

Nora Nanayakkara

Alison Pritchard

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Professor Anne Trefethen, Professor Jonathan Haskel, Nora Nanayakkara and Alison Pritchard.

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 31 March 2022 were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

- 4.1 Non-Executives had met prior to the Board meeting. They had discussed the prospective review of the Authority by the Cabinet Office.
- 4.2 The interim Chair reported on her recent activities since the Board last met noting that on 25 April the House of Commons had approved the motion relating to the appointment of Sir Robert Chote as the next Chair of the UK Statistics Authority. The appointment would be finalised in consultation with the Queen.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(22)22]

- 5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:
- i. positive engagement by ONS with Local Authorities as part of the Census quality assurance process ahead of the publication of the first Census outputs early Summer 2022;
 - ii. the ongoing support by ONS for National Records of Scotland in the delivery of the Scotland Census 2022; and
 - iii. the work by Nick Bateson to finalise the ONS business plan, which would be circulated to the Board in correspondence ahead of publication.
- 5.2 The Board heard that Sir Ian would be hosting a Japanese delegation led by Mr Yasushi Kaneko, Japanese Minister for Internal Affairs and Communication, regarding future collaboration with the Japanese Statistics Bureau, on 29 April. Sir Ian noted thanks to Will Marks, (Private Secretary to the National Statistician) and Kirsten Newton (Deputy Head of International), for their work leading on the visit.

6. Report from the Director General for Regulation - OSR Business Plan [SA(22)23]

- 6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity highlighting the letter that had been received from Christine Jardin MP regarding the Prime Minister's use of employment statistics during Prime Minister's Questions on 27 April. It was noted that a response would be provided setting out interventions to date.
- 6.2 The Board heard that OSR's business plan had been updated following comments by both the Board and Regulation Committee. The Board approved the business plan, which was scheduled for publication in May.

7. Strategy Update [SA(22)24]

- 7.1 Robert Bumpstead and Nick Bateson introduced a paper which provided an update on progress against the delivery of the UK Statistics Authority strategy, Statistics for the Public Good.
- 7.2 Since the last update to the Board ONS had stayed at the forefront of informing the public and government about fast changing national priorities with the provision of joined up data and analysis. In response to questions about the impact of the pandemic on the labour market the Over 50s Lifestyle Survey of 20,000 workless 50-70 year olds had been stood up very quickly to explore the reasons people had left work. Other areas of delivery included the work with the Department of Health and

Social Care to secure funding for the delivery of the Digital COVID-19 Infection Survey; and progress of the Integrated Data Service New Private Beta.

- 7.3 The Board heard that public confidence in official statistics remained high as evidenced by the findings from the Public Confidence in Official Statistics 2021 survey, which had been independently conducted by NatCen Social Research and published on 25 April. A further discussion on the findings was scheduled for the June Board meeting.

8. UK Humanitarian Response Insight Survey [SA(22)25]

- 8.1 Hugh Stickland gave a presentation on the UK Humanitarian Response Insight Survey, which ONS had delivered in collaboration with stakeholders in the Cabinet Office and the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

- 8.2 The Board heard that initial results would highlight where refugees were staying in the UK, how they were accessing services and what support they would require. The results of the survey would be published. It was noted that this work would form the basis of a wider body of work which would chart refugee experiences in the UK from across the globe.

- 8.3 The Board noted thanks for an excellent presentation.

9. ARIES Update [SA(22)26]

- 9.1 Mike Keohan introduced a paper which provided a quarterly overview of the ARIES transformation programme.

- 9.2 The Board heard that the next iteration of the ARIES 2.0 Programme began on 1 April with work ongoing to align the programme with wider ONS priorities. The programme comprised of seven projects: Prices, Labour Market, Legacy Reduction, Business Statistics Transformation; Public Sector, Crime and Household Financial Statistics Transformation. It was noted that governance changes would enable the senior leadership team to take an agile approach to the scope of the programme and respond flexibly to changing demands.

- 9.3 The Board noted the update and would remain engaged in the delivery of the ARIES Programme as the work progressed.

10. COVID-19 Infection Survey and Surveillance Studies [SA(22)28]

- 10.1 Emma Rourke introduced a paper which provided an update on the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) programme, highlighting the latest results.

- 10.2 The Board heard about the transition to CIS Digital with delivery milestones in place. The stabilisation of the CIS transition was a key focus for the team underpinned by detailed planning. The ONS health strategy was in development to realise the value of the CIS sample in partnership with the wider UK health system.

- 10.3 The Board welcomed the update.

11. Any other business

- 11.1 The next meeting would take place on 30 June.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

28 April 2022, 09.45-12.30

Remote Teams Meeting

Chair: Sian Jones (interim)

Apologies: Professor Jonathan Haskel, Nora Nanayakkara, Alison Pritchard

Attendees: Mike Keoghan (for item 8), Donna Leong (for item 8), Emma Rourke (for item 9), Hugh Stickland (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 31 March 2022
2 09.50-10.00 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sian Jones
3 10.00-10.25 25 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(22)22 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 10.25-10.40 15 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none">OSR Business Plan	SA(22)23 Ed Humpherson
5 10.40-10.45 5 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regulation Committee	Oral report Prof. Anne Trefethen
6 10.45-11.05 20 mins	Strategy update	SA(22)24 Robert Bumpstead Nick Bateson
11.05-11.15 10 mins	Break	
7 11.15-11.40 25 mins	UK Humanitarian Response Insight Survey	Presentation Hugh Stickland
8 11.40-12.00 20 mins	ARIES	SA(22)25 Donna Leong Mike Keoghan
9 12.00-12.20 20 mins	COVID-19 Infection Survey and Surveillance Studies	SA(22)26 Emma Rourke
10 12.20-12.30 10 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: Thursday 26 May 2022, London Boardroom

Chief Executive's Report, April 2022

Purpose

1. This provides the Authority Board with an overview of activity and issues for April 2022.

Summary

2. April has seen a continued focus on providing analytical insights at pace to central government on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, alongside key work on labour market inactivity and the cost of living. I am happy to report that the Integrated Data Service (IDS) New Private Beta has been successfully deployed on time, while HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has approved the supply of Pay As You Earn (PAYE) data in the clear. Our transition to a new operating model for the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) continues at pace and we are currently testing the new digital delivery model. Finally, I was pleased that we have been able to work with colleagues at Statistics Poland to deliver aid packages from ONS colleagues to statisticians and their families in Ukraine.

Review of recent activities

3. The IDS remains at amber and is on track for three releases this year. The New Private Beta has been successfully deployed with testing of the data virtualisation and analysis tooling already underway. The Initial Public Beta will follow in July and Full Public Beta in late Autumn. There is now an Infrastructure and Project Authority Gateway Review planned for June, and another prior to Full Public Beta. Work also continues developing the IDS branding and overall website offering.
4. There has been positive progress this month on data acquisition. We have signed a revised agreement with NHS Digital allowing the use of COVID-19 health datasets for wider research projects. HMRC has approved the supply of PAYE data in the clear for use in the construction of our Demographic Index. This is a major milestone in terms of progress towards admin-based population estimates. A Memorandum of Understanding to access Exit Check data from Home Office has also been signed.
5. On subnational data, we have secured funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to significantly increase the work we are doing on subnational statistics and analysis. This includes establishing an 'ONS Local' offer for UK regions, further work on an 'explore subnational data service' and a cross-government dashboard to help monitor activity and outcomes. New experimental estimates of regional capital will soon be published, and we are close to finalising the ONS workplan to deliver the Government Statistical Service subnational data strategy.
6. The second iteration of the ARIES programme launched this month. ARIES 2.0 comprises a more concentrated list of Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics Group transformation projects that require cross-organisational delivery and contribute to work in priority areas such as survey development and legacy reduction. Work across the programme is focussed on expanding and developing project plans to cover the current spending review period.
7. In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and subsequent humanitarian response in the UK, we have been asked to stand up a rapid survey to anticipate and respond to the immediate need of charting the experience of Ukrainian refugees arriving in the UK. This is the result of a collaborative effort led by ONS with input from stakeholders in the Cabinet Office, Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities. Initial results will highlight where refugees are staying in the UK, how they are accessing services, what support they require and their intentions for staying in the country which will feed into immediate policy responses for the coming months. This

work will be the basis of a wider body of work which charts refugee experiences in the UK from across the globe.

8. On cost of living, ONS is using a novel data source - 76,000 prices scraped weekly from supermarket websites—and data science methods (supported by the Data Science Campus) to compile a new 'Least Cost Index' that captures changes in supermarket prices for lower price items. Our outputs on cost of living have received significant coverage this month.
9. Following written and oral evidence to the House of Commons' Environmental Audit Committee, it recommended that the ONS produce a quarterly climate change output. This is in line with our emerging plans already underway, with a first quarterly bulletin to be published alongside preliminary Gross Domestic Product estimates on 12 May, along with a methodology paper on estimating quarterly greenhouse gas emissions to gather stakeholder and user feedback.
10. The ONS Data Science Campus celebrated its 5th birthday this month and the successes to date, including completing 87 data science projects, publishing some of the world's first ever faster indicators, developing a COVID-19 community-level risk model, training more than 4,000 people in data science (against a target of 500 in the national data strategy) and working with and influencing multiple UK public sector organisations and other statistical agencies through partnerships and collaboration.
11. The Data Science Campus are organising the Government Data Science Festival which will begin on 27 April. The event seeks to bring together data scientists across government to share learning, to consider what the future of data science in government looks like, and to build capability. The event will launch with a panel featuring myself and Dr Laura Gilbert (10DS) with over 1,000 participants.
12. We also hosted a successful visit from Eurostat in April to conduct a verification visit of some of our Gross National Income reservations. The reservations relate to data for the time period when we were a member of the EU and are used as part of the calculation of the UK's contribution to the EU budget for that period.
13. This month also saw a deepening of our relationship with the Bank of England as Sam Beckett and her team held a high-level meeting with counterparts including Deputy Governor Ben Broadbent and Chief Economist Huw Pill. Huw Pill will now be visiting our Newport office in May for a further tour around our economic statistics workstreams.
14. On the CIS, our transition to a new operating model is moving at pace. We have received an encouraging initial response to our CIS Digital Private Beta tests; of those opting in, 98.5 per cent have selected postal return of samples, indicating a significant cost saving for the programme. These participants will take part in the testing phase of the new CIS model from early May. The CIS team are enacting an incentive and sample reduction throughout April in line with the funding envelope for the new financial year.
15. Following discussions at the Authority Board in March, we are finalising the 2022/23 business plan. The residual elements of the work are the confirmation of budgets in the context of ministerial approval for additional funding, from the DLUHC, of £27 million over the Spending Review Period for the Sub-National Data Strategy; the outcomes of the prioritisation exercise; and ensuring that the milestone delivery plans are robust in the context of the requirements for data acquisition. The plan will be provided to the Board for final review in May by correspondence – with the key initiatives being taken forward immediately for delivery and tracking via the Integrated Performance Report.
16. I attended a meeting of the Union and Policy Implementation (UPI) Cabinet Committee this month, which considered an annual update on availability of UK wide data, to improve the evidence base for policy interventions. Examples of good statistical practice were noted, including the Authority Concordat on Statistics with the Devolved

Administrations, the IDS, UK Health Security Agency dashboard and COVID-19 Infection Survey. Ministers were keen to improve the availability and coherence of UK wide data and willing to support a number of initiatives. ONS has been asked to report quarterly to the UPI on progress to improve coherence in data across the UK on key policy areas.

17. In Edinburgh, we have secured six desks at the government Hub based at Queen Elizabeth House. These will be used in a hybrid way and anticipate these will be ready in the summer. This location will be used to support recruitment in hard to fill roles, and will initially be aimed at digital, data and technology job adverts, such as the Data Science Campus Director post.
18. Finally, early in April, ONS colleagues drove to Warsaw to deliver donations from the wider ONS to support our colleagues at the State Statistics Service of Ukraine. Staff at ONS donated a huge number of essential items in response to this appeal and we have worked closely with our partners at Statistics Poland. Polish colleagues will now transport these directly to Ukraine. We have also been running an internal campaign to ensure that all colleagues receive quick and clear guidance on how they may be able to support and be supported through this crisis.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, 20 April 2022

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(22)23

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

2. Our main areas of focus since the last Board meeting have been:
 - i. **30th Anniversary of the Fundamentals Principles of Official Statistics:** The Authority hosted a [UN panel discussion](#) to mark this anniversary and focused on Principle 4, Prevention of Misuse. I spoke, alongside the President of Statistics Poland, and a representative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Following this panel I published a blog on [Acting against the misuse of statistics is an international challenge](#).
 - ii. **Population estimates:** At Regulation Committee we had a helpful presentation from ONS and discussed ONS' work on transforming population estimates. We would like to see greater clarity on what will be available when and how different outputs should be used. While we support ONS' recent decision to delay migration outputs in the circumstances, it did raise concerns about the potential for delays to other key outputs and the knock-on impact of these delays.
 - iii. **Sir Robert Chote:** My Senior Leadership Team and I had the opportunity to meet with Sir Robert last week during our weekly catch up. It was a great opportunity to highlight the work of OSR.
 - iv. **OSR outputs:** As the dashboards at **Annex A** show, we confirmed [Labour Productivity Statistics](#) and [UK Employment and Jobs Statistics](#) as National Statistics.
 - v. **Casework:** We are still seeing a high volume of casework. COVID data casework has been replaced somewhat by questions on the availability of data, or lack thereof, to support statements made in the media about the war in Ukraine. I have written to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on [Transparency of Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme management information](#). We have also written to DWP regarding [Work Capability Assessments](#) and to the Home Office regarding [small boats](#).
 - vi. **The Regulation Committee:** We had a productive committee meeting where we discussed a number of issues including around our response to horizon scanning and how we can improve this. We have taken a number of actions away to strengthen our horizon scanning ability and positions.
 - vii. **Data Bites:** I had the opportunity to speak about Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in my [8 minute slot](#) at the most recent Institute for Government Data Bites session, and then had 8 minutes of questions. This was a great format with a broad and diverse audience and a good opportunity to extend OSR's reach.
 - viii. **Business plan:** This was discussed at length at the Regulation Committee and is for your information and approval. We are provisionally looking to publish this on 12 May 2022.
 - ix. **09:30 consultation:** We have started to get requests through to publish (or continue publishing) statistics at times other than 09:30. I wrote to Victoria Obudulu regarding the [seasonal flu vaccine uptake statistics](#). We continue to hear concerns among some stakeholders about the 7am release time for economic statistics.

Conclusion

3. On my mind at the moment are:

- i. **OSR Management and development:** Our people survey results confirmed the need for us to focus on management of people in OSR. Among very good results this was one of our weakest areas. Therefore, we plan to make this a focus of our work for 2022/23. It is outlined in our organisation priorities in the business plan and we are developing an action plan within OSR. Our focus will be on supporting line managers to be able to coach staff and help them manage workloads and deliver in line with OSR expectations. We have also started the new cohort for the OSR Development programme this month giving colleagues the opportunity to gain a better understanding of leadership in OSR.
- ii. **Population:** We will be working closely with ONS to reiterate the importance of clear communication around its plans and decisions.
- iii. **Living Standards:** There is widespread public interest in cost of living. We are looking at what regulatory work we should be undertaking to support understanding, including around poverty.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 20 April 2022

Regulatory Activities – April 2022 Authority Board

Economy	Children, Education and Skills	Population and Society
<p>Assessments: ONS Productivity Statistics – Published confirmation of continued National Statistics status of these statistics.</p> <p>ONS Country and Regional Public Sector Finances – Regulation Committee approved the draft assessment report, which we plan to publish on 6 May</p> <p>ONS Regional GDP – Assessment on hold until May 2022, when it is expected, following user consultation, ONS will publish improved estimates of regional economic performance</p> <p>Systemic Review: Post-Brexit ONS Economic Classifications – Under the new ONS governance arrangements for economic classification and National Accounts scrutiny, OSR and ONS discussing the risks of engaging the IMF or OSR in the role of external reviewer.</p>	<p>Casework: Health and Wellbeing Census in Scotland – concerns around the confidentiality and ethics of the census of school age children.</p> <p>The case for a fully trust led system – concerns about the transparency and robustness of the evidence underpinning the Department for Education 'Opportunity for all' white paper.</p> <p>Compliance Check: Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland - Letter drafted and due for publication in late April.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Children and Young People –Report published on 3 March. Successful launch event held with over 130 attendees. Planning for follow up engagement.</p> <p>Assessment: Key Stage 4 statistics in England – In the analysis phase of the assessment with a view to publishing the report in July.</p>	<p>Assessments: Census Regulation Committee will consider NS designation by correspondence in the coming months. User consultation for Scotland's census launched in April.</p> <p>Scottish Household Survey – Publish letter in April</p> <p>Casework: Building on a range of casework to bring together views on COVID related deaths statistics and excess death reporting. Movement of people relating to war in Ukraine being seen in casework.</p> <p>Investigating statements made by a MP about the characteristics of migrants crossing the channel in small boats.</p> <p>Measuring the population – continuing discussions, progressing work on population estimates, migration, census and LFs with ONS and other key stakeholders. Further structured user engagement around migration statistics planned for the summer</p> <p>FOI queries: 2 FOIs, relating to recent casework and OSR's projections review.</p>
Transport, Environment and Climate Change	Housing, Planning and Local Services	Health and Social Care
<p>Assessment: People and Nature Survey Defra HoP has withdrawn interest in assessing these.</p> <p>Casework: Fuel Poverty closed following private response.</p> <p>FOI query: response drafted and under review for query regarding Home Office animal testing statistics.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Accessibility of Transport Networks – follow up with producers ongoing</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Desk research begun on Fuel Poverty statistics and the Food Security report</p>	<p>Assessment: Statutory Homelessness in England statistics: Engaging with team in line with DLUHC action plan, addressing assessment requirements</p> <p>Casework: Homes for Ukraine – published letter to DLUHC on the transparency of the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme management information; Government's £150 Council Tax rebate – planning to respond privately to a concern about how the £150 rebate is presented in DLUHC's latest Council Tax statistics</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Reviewing Registers of Scotland's Land and property titles in Scotland by country of origin, and BEIS's Fuel Poverty statistics (cross-domain project with TECC).</p>	<p>Assessments: Family Practitioner Services statistics report approved by Regulation Committee – published in May. Assessments underway for the NHS Education Scotland Workforce statistics and ONS statistics on Deaths in the Care Sector.</p> <p>Casework: drafting a letter in response to concerns about misleading assertions made in the House of Commons on the harms done by the COVID-19 vaccine.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Healthcare associated infections statistics, transferred to UKHSA from PHE.</p> <p>Rapid reviews: About to start review of Ambulance Performance statistics in Scotland.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews: Performing further rounds of user engagement, following up on Adult Social Care and Mental Health reviews.</p>
Crime and Security	Labour Market and Welfare	Business, Trade and International Development
<p>Assessments: Home Office Police Officer Uplift statistics – started reviewing evidence and arranging meetings with users.</p> <p>Casework: Investigating concerns about MoD defence spending.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Hate Crime statistics – drafting letters. Provisional publication date of 10 May.</p> <p>ONS modern slavery statistics: started desk research.</p> <p>Rapid Review: Department of Justice NI Safe Community Telephone Survey – finalising findings. Provisional publication date early May.</p>	<p>Assessments: DWP Benefit Cap statistics - postponed following discussion with producer.</p> <p>ONS Employment and Jobs – Confirmation of NS designation published following April Regulation Committee meeting.</p> <p>Transformation of Labour Force Survey Phase 1 – Kick-off meeting scheduled for late April.</p> <p>Casework: Published a letter to DWP on Universal Credit Work Capability Assessment statistics and 3 additional pieces of active casework on DWP statistics and inequality statistics</p>	<p>Assessments: Now kicked-off an assessment of ONS's Funded Occupational Pension Schemes: UK statistics which we anticipate publishing in July</p> <p>Organising a panel at ESCoE's Conference on Economic Measurement in Glasgow in May to introduce our systemic review into more dynamic classifications of industries.</p> <p>Compliance Checks (CCs): Expect to publish our CC on consistency of exports estimates at industry level between UK Trade and National Accounts sources in May</p>

Data and Methods

RAP – Putting together case studies for the Code on website.

QCovid – Blog [published](#) 22nd March. Will present the work at a future cascade and complete a closure report.

Model Guidance and exams lessons merger – Currently writing the beta version of the guidance incorporating the exam review lessons and QCovid lessons. Also exploring what work we have coming up that could inform our thinking further on this such as the models for housing need that HPLS are looking at.

Methods - Main focus of work is supporting regulatory projects, including migration. Also providing input into NS designation quality workstream. Now starting to get involved on the methods side of regulatory work across other domains outside population.

Data Science Projects – Reused data science tool to identify users in pensions assessment and delivered sentiment analysis for the CES domain on school league tables. Working with C&S on analysis of HO press releases, which may generate insight for the potential HO review. We have a live version of the Full Fact checking tool which we are actively testing and gathering evidence on its use within OSR. We are also shadowing casework to understand its use in that process.

Wider Reach – Lots of stakeholder engagement happening in this space. Meetings with CDDO, RAI working group and CDEI. Also presented to CDEI on our work and TQV. Gave talks to the DSC on our projects. Also talking to private sector companies in data and AI.

Other – Recruitment of SEO Data Officer now at interview stage (19th April) which will help to put more weight behind our work on data in government.

Policy & Standards

9:30 release times review - We have published the [consultation findings](#) for our release times review (24 March) - this included engaging with heads of profession, preparing guidance material for producers and summaries for stakeholders who participated in the consultation. We are preparing for the changes to the Code of Practice on 5 May 2022, including a blog to celebrate four years of the second edition of the Code.

NS designation review - Developing plans for the implementation project, including the Assessment, the Code Maturity Model and the Quality Grade developments and in contact with producers to find collaborators. Initial producer testing of the Quality Grade begins after Easter.

Voluntary application and wider reach - Continuing wider engagement with other analysts to promote TQV; working with TfL and GLA on further embedding the Code; we are receiving entries for the 2022 Award for Statistical Excellence in Trustworthiness, Quality and Value and judging is in early May.

Insight

Insight and Evaluation Committee – Held third meeting on 31 March to sign-off projects, share progress on Theory of Change and introduce upcoming projects such as State of the Statistical System Report and Annual Report. We will be introducing a new statistics producer as a member at the next meeting.

Communicating Uncertainty in Statistics – In end stages, slightly delayed but due for completion end of April 2022.

The Role of Official Statistics in Policy Evaluation – Internal discovery paper presented and approved at March I&E Committee with a plan to publish general findings as part of a blog. Findings will also be used to aid analytical leadership and data linkage work programmes. We plan to run a second phase of this project in Q2 of 2022/23.

The State of the Statistical System Report – newly branded as the flagship Insight report. Project approved by committee and fully resourced. due for completion in June 2022.

Other – beginning work on Insight webpage to aid communicating work under one brand.

Research

Public Confidence in Official Statistics Survey — We are currently analysing the PCOS data to explore whether there are any further insights of relevance to our work. The final PCOS report is still on track for publication by the end of April.

Public Perceptions of the Public Good, Collaboration with ADR UK — A company has now been chosen to run the public dialogues. Once the contract has been agreed, the methodology will be finalised with the research company and the project advisory group.

Internal Exploration of OSR's Perceptions of the Public Good — The findings have been written up and we are planning a session with the team to reflect on the results.

Cross Cutting Issues

Business planning for 2022/23 - We will share the near final version with Regulation Committee for this meeting, after accounting for any Board Comments.

Analytical leadership public event held on 3 February (almost 200 people joined us) and we are launching a 6-month seminar series for the Analysis Function in Spring.

Helen Miller-Bakewell joined us at the end of February as our Grade 6 Head of Strategic Development and Impact.

Strategy and Business Plan Update

Purpose

1. This paper is the sixth quarterly update on progress against the delivery of the UK Statistics Authority strategy, Statistics for the Public Good.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note progress against the delivery of the strategy; and
 - ii. consider the ongoing areas of focus.

Background

3. We are now into the second year of the strategy, and work continues at pace to meet our key strategic objectives. As we look forward to 2022-23, we are continuing to focus on delivery – following the successes of the 2021 Spending Review settlement and progress made in planning for the period to March 2025.
4. Looking back at what we said we would deliver, progress has been strong during 2021. In our strategy we set out to:
 - i. respond flexibly to the uncertainties and challenges of COVID-19, including tracking the impacts of new variants, and delivering long term value from the survey approach;
 - ii. provide an inclusive, trusted and engaging narrative on the UK's economic and social fabric and trends, addressing cross-cutting issues and providing analysis to inform and engage governments, policy makers and the wider public;
 - iii. build flexible and integrated analytical capabilities and data management tools to address COVID-19 and other priorities to enable the organisation to manage data and deliver analysis that cuts across organisational boundaries;
 - iv. deliver high quality, inclusive and efficient economic and social statistics that are internationally recognised, by streamlining our processes and blending administrative data with transformed survey capabilities with the capacity to answer key questions quickly;
 - v. deliver a successful Census in March 2021, deliver high-quality outputs from the Census in 2022 and make a robust recommendation on the future of the Census in 2023;
 - vi. deliver a revised and comprehensive system of population and migration statistics based on administrative data and a consolidated social survey platform, having successfully delivered the full benefits of Census 2021;
 - vii. take opportunities to advocate for improved statistical literacy – with the analytical community, Parliament, schools and media; and
 - viii. build our organisational capabilities and resilience including the working environment that will support our hybrid working principles.
5. Since the last quarterly update, ONS has stayed at the forefront of informing the public and government about fast changing national priorities, serving the public good through the provision of crucial evidence and further demonstrating the value of joined-up data and analysis.
 - i. In response to questions about the impacts of the pandemic on the labour market, the ambitious Over 50s Lifestyle Survey of 20,000 workless 50-70 year olds was stood up in just 11 days after cross-ONS collaboration to explore the reasons people have left work and the motivations and barriers to returning to work. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we coordinated data, analysis and insight on the latest

situation including impacts on the UK economy, census data on the Ukrainian diaspora, and new survey and administrative studies of refugees. As public interest in the cost of living has increased, ONS has responded both with new communication tools to help people see their own experience in our data, and with the use of innovative data science methods to analyse 76,000 web-scraped prices of low-cost groceries.

- ii. One of the strategy's Inclusive goals is for a more joined up statistical system, serving the needs of all four nations. The National Statistician has continued to attend the Union Policy Implementation Committee, giving ONS a high profile presence within a senior Cabinet Committee, connections to relevant work across government, and support for our work on subnational data and for collaboration between the four nations under the renewed Concordat on Statistics. We have received ministerial approval for £27 million of funding over the Spending Review period from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to support the contribution the Sub-National Statistics Strategy will make to the Levelling Up agenda.
- iii. In line with Sustainable pillar of the strategy (and with steers from the Board and from Parliamentary Committees), ONS has made progress on reporting data on the environment alongside some of our economic indicators. A pilot publication of climate change-related statistics is scheduled for 12 May, the same day as the quarterly preliminary estimate of UK Gross Domestic Product. Subject to assessment of impact and feedback, the intention is for this to become a regular quarterly publication. To further develop this release we have also announced a methodological publication setting out options to publish estimates of residence-based greenhouse gas emissions (which enable direct sectoral comparison with the national accounts) quarterly instead of annually.
- iv. We have established the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee, which met for the first time on 28 March chaired by Professor David Hand and discussed the Integrated Data Service, the ONS website, and priorities for transforming access to data and statistics to improve the user experience. This aims to help meet the need identified in the strategy for better and richer understanding of user needs, and a strategic shift towards more impactful cross-cutting analysis.
- v. We have secured funding of £268 million for 2022-23 from the Department for Health and Social Care for the Digital COVID-19 Infection Survey with an ambitious plan in support of its delivery.
- vi. We submitted the business case for the Ambitious Radical Inclusive Economic Statistics Programme (ARIES) to HM Treasury, in support of the funding provided at the Spending Review and released from prioritisation decisions through the business planning process. HM Treasury's assurance processes will continue through April, with bridge funding agreed to enable the ARIES programme to proceed at pace.
- vii. We have progressed with the Integrated Data Service (IDS) New Private Beta which is due for launch in April, with the first set of users to test the system onboarded and testing of the security, data virtualisation and analysis tools underway.
- viii. The Census outputs delivery and quality assurance plan has continued to progress to deliver the first estimates of the population in the summer.
- ix. Discussions have continued with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on the key release of data 'in the clear' to support our wide statistical and data transformation needs – leading towards a further meeting with the Permanent Secretary of DWP to seek agreement to the data sharing agreement on 22 April.
- x. The programme of work to support hybrid working across our estate has completed.

Discussion

6. Over the coming period the focus will be on the following:

- i. Delivery of the 2021 Census outputs, transformed system of population and migration statistics and the business case for the future model for delivery of the Census benefits in Autumn 2023.
- ii. Transformation of economic statistics – including radical new approaches to prices, labour market statistics, public sector finances and the data feeds into the descriptions of economic growth through the ARIES programme.
- iii. Radical advances in the availability and usage of government’s data through the IDS Programme including the development of data assets in support of levelling-up, net zero and public health.
- iv. Transformation of the COVID-19 Infection Survey, in partnership with the Department for Health and Social Care and Health Security Agency, to a digital first model - facilitating ongoing management of the pandemic at significantly reduced cost while building resilience into the ongoing approach to collecting data in support of public health.
- v. Transformation of the crime survey, in partnership with the Home Office, to provide more granular data on crime and revised approaches to sensitive areas including violence against women and girls and child abuse.
- vi. Some direct measures of the perceived public good of the statistical system will be provided by the latest Public Confidence in Official Statistics survey when it is published in the next month. Commissioned by the Authority and carried out independently by NatCen, the survey will provide insight into what impact the pandemic may have had on public attitudes to official statistics and their use.
- vii. Building inclusivity and quality into statistics across government.
- viii. Flexible analytical and data science capacity to provide rapid access to data in support of emerging areas of concern and/or access to new and novel data sources – including key government priorities such as net zero, in partnership with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; levelling up, in partnership with the DLUHC; and analysis of cohorts of migration and age range, including refugee populations.
- ix. Sustainable improvements to the resilience of the organisation through continuing improvements in quality, web presence, technology estate and security approach.
- x. Building the Analysis Function to be the centre for expertise for government across the analytical professions through the business case that is being considered by HM Treasury.
- xi. Ongoing drive to demonstrate the resource sustainability and financial efficiency of the Authority and broader statistical system.

Conclusion

7. As we head towards the summer we will be launching the 2022-23 business plans for the ONS and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and planning an update of progress in the delivery of the Authority Strategy.
8. This paper sets out recent progress and the ongoing focus on the delivery of the strategy. As we move into 2022-23, we will continue to focus on the high level priorities for the Authority as set out in the business plans for the ONS and OSR that were considered in draft form by the Board at the end of March.

Nick Bateson – Director of Finance Planning and Performance and Rob Bumpstead – Chief of Staff, 14 April 2022

ARIES Programme Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board with a quarterly overview (January to March 2022) and look ahead (April to June 2022) of the ARIES transformation programme in Economic Social Environmental Statistics Group (ESEG).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note progress made across the programme since the last update in January 2022, and our plans for the coming quarter;
 - ii. note the programme summary plan up to end March 2025; and
 - iii. offer feedback on the updates, most notably in the context of alignment with wider ONS and the Authority plans.

Background

Introducing ARIES 2.0

3. The ARIES programme brings together the four pillars of the Authority Strategy 'Statistics for the Public Good' (Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive, Sustainable) with the transformational aims of ESEG. It continues to be one of the ONS key strategic enabling programmes with a vision to deliver an ambitious transformation.
4. ARIES 1.0 (2021/22) consisted of 11 individual projects spanning the core suite of economic stats. At the point of its transition into a multi-year programme (ARIES 2.0) in March 2022 it had recorded notable achievements in the introduction of Double-Deflation methodology to the annual National Accounts, the lifting of some UK Gross National Income reservations by Eurostat, introduction of online and telephone data collection for the Labour Market Survey (LMS) in conjunction with Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP), and the design and proof of concept of a Google Cloud Platform (GCP) pipeline to integrate alternative data sources into Prices statistics.
5. The January 2022 update to the Authority Board laid out our plans to act on lessons learned from ARIES 1.0 and maximise the opportunities afforded us by the most recent Spending Review (SR21) settlement through refreshed scope and governance.
6. The next iteration of the programme (ARIES 2.0) began on 1 April 2022 and is currently working through initiation actions to ensure that plans are refined and aligned with wider ONS priorities, key resources understood and filled, and approval of the Business Case is secured.
7. ARIES remains committed to driving a "One ONS" approach to design and delivery, working closely with other programmes and delivery partners on which ARIES has a significant dependency throughout its lifecycle.

Discussion

Recent work and near-term plans

Progress January to March 2022

8. The last three months has seen ARIES undergo activity to transition from a one-year interim programme (ARIES 1.0) to a three-year programme (ARIES 2.0). Taking on board previous feedback from the Authority Board, users, and enabling partners, the programme has defined a rationalised scope which is both ambitious and achievable.

9. By March 2025, as a result of successful delivery of ARIES users will see ESEG statistics that are higher in quality, more granular, more representative, and more relevant. The programme will achieve benefits in the areas of stakeholder value with users being able to take more informed policy decisions, and risk reduction with fewer errors across our processes and systems thereby further strengthening our reputation.
10. Clear “entry” criteria were set to define ARIES scope; projects focussing on transformation which deliver high-levels of business change, require cross-organisational delivery, and actively contribute to the drive to reduce legacy technology across the ONS IT estate. Other ESEG change underway that do not meet these criteria will be managed under the authority of the ESEG Management Board.
11. Consequently, ARIES 2.0 will comprise of seven projects.
 - i. Prices – transformation of Consumer Price Index (CPIH) using alternative data sources alongside quality improvements to rents statistics;
 - ii. Labour Market – introduction of LMS data to headline estimates and research into use of Pay As You Earn data to transform wider suite of Labour Market statistics;
 - iii. Legacy Reduction – reduce use of Ingres technology across ONS alongside targeted improvements to core National Accounts systems;
 - iv. Business Statistics Transformation – transformation of high-priority business surveys, with initial focus on the Annual Business Survey and Research and Development;
 - v. Public Sector – transformation of suite of public sector systems alongside more granular statistics on the UK’s fiscal position and the activities of the UK non-market services sector;
 - vi. Crime – stabilise current survey and expand to focus on high-priority areas such as violence against women and girls; and
 - vii. Household Financial Statistics Transformation – rationalise current suite of household financial surveys and target specific quality improvements.
12. These projects have completed high-level roadmaps which have been incorporated into a single programme view. The programme scope and plan balances realism with ambition but does carry some key risks. Notably, the organisation’s capacity to support the changes, our recruitment velocity, and balance of priorities at a portfolio level. The ARIES programme is heavily involved in the current business and strategic workforce planning activities, driving alignment of plans and activities with our enabling partners to mitigate these risks.
13. Elsewhere this quarter, in-flight projects have continued to deliver against their plans. Some of key achievements in the past three months are below.
 - i. In conjunction with CDCTP, successfully implemented telephone mode collection into the LMS (in addition to already live on-line collection) at the end of February to further work towards defined quality attributes that will allow its use in Labour Market statistics. In addition, have planned National Statistic accreditation activity for LMS data with the Office for Statistical Regulation which will formally begin later this month.
 - ii. Completed design phase on use of the GCP in Price statistics in early March and moved into development phase. In addition, have shared with the Advisory Panel for Consumer Prices the impact of incorporating used cars and rail fares into the headline measures who are providing independent subject matter expertise to guide the implementation of alternate data sources in CPIH.
 - iii. Completed research phase of Public Sector Finance systems, processes, sources, and methods enabling development of roadmaps and transformation plans.
 - iv. Submitted an Outline Business Case (OBC) for the programme to HM Treasury (HMT) and secured first quarter funding in advance of full approval.
 - v. Invited and completed an external Critical Friend Review (CFR) of the programme.

Critical Friend Review

14. In March 2022 an external Critical Friend Review of the programme was carried out by an independent team to assess readiness for delivery. As part of this a number of stakeholders across ONS were interviewed and an assessment of essential programme artefacts was carried out.
15. The review concluded a number of recommendations related to recruitment, planning and governance and has challenged the programme to establish firm baselined plans across all projects. In addition, the report also encourages the support of the Programme Board and Portfolio and Investment Committee to stimulate a cross-organisational discussion on the ways and methods of embedding a broader delivery culture.
16. In response to these recommendations, the programme is undertaking a focussed period of planning in the coming quarter. We are also working collaboratively with colleagues in People and Business Services on the development of a recruitment plan to fill priority posts in the coming months. Cognisant of the challenge in this space, the programme continues to consider appropriate opportunities to package work for delivery by commercial avenues.

Quarterly Look-Ahead April to June 2022

17. Focus for the first quarter of this new financial year will be cross programme planning. Building on the programme view, plans will be developed further, bringing greater detail to project milestones, dependencies, and risks. As part of this, high priority recommendations from the recent CFR will be actioned.
18. Detailed project plans will be agreed at ARIES programme board in early May at which point we will consider the programme to be baselined and subject to formal organisational governance reporting and processes.
19. Key project deliveries in the coming quarter include:
 - i. The first wave of the LMS/Labour Force Survey parallel run will be completed and initial data will emerge to begin assessing against agreed quality measures. In addition, the next stage of the LMS rollout will complete in April 2022 and see an increased LMS sample introduced further increasing quality of returned data.
 - ii. The Prices GCP development will have completed their first build phase which will see parallel runs for rail fare, used car, and groceries (scanner) data commence.
 - iii. Within Legacy reduction the start of the pilot to migrate the Monthly Business Survey system from Ingres based technology to the new Statistical Production Platform.
20. As part of further establishing the programme we will undertake several stakeholder communication activities to share the vision, scope and plans of the programme more widely (e.g. Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence Conference on Economic Measurement).
21. The OBC will undergo the Treasury Approval Panel process, capturing feedback to enable completion of Full Business Case for submission in summer 2022.

Conclusion

22. ARIES 2.0 now has an agreed, coherent, and focussed programme scope for the coming three years and has secured funding from HMT for Q1 2022/23 whilst the OBC is considered.
23. For those projects in-flight, continued progress is being made with some important milestones due for delivery in the next quarter. Planning will be the predominant focus for both the programme and individual project teams in the next quarter with the aim to established detailed deliverables and milestones for the full SR21 period.

24. The programme continues to be a cross-ONS effort to deliver better statistics for the public good and will require ongoing support and collaboration with enabling partners across the organisation.

Donna Leong (ARIES SRO), Economic, Social and Environmental Group, 14 April 2022

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, and the work to support urgent policy decisions;
 - iii. ongoing CIS Digital development in the context of challenging timelines; and
 - iii. that the CIS programme remains at Amber, with considerable progress made in addressing key risks on the programme.

Discussion**Tracking positivity**

3. We have continued to see high rates of COVID-19 across the UK in recent weeks. Omicron BA.2 variant remains the dominant variant across all UK countries.
4. CIS has additionally generated a range of novel insights including:
 - i. most people who reported having been vaccinated continued to be less likely to test positive than those who reported not being vaccinated;
 - ii. people previously infected with COVID-19 continued to be less likely to test positive than those who had not experienced a prior infection;
 - iii. people who reported that they had travelled abroad in the last 28 days continued to be more likely to test positive for COVID-19 than those who had not;
 - iv. people who reported working outside the home two, three or four days per week were more likely to test positive than those who reported not working outside the home;
 - v. the percentage of people testing positive who reported loss of taste or smell remained at low levels in March 2022, after decreasing sharply between December 2021 and January 2022 (during the time when the Omicron variants became most common);
 - vi. the risk of re-infection was approximately 10 times higher in the time period when the Omicron variants were most common (20 December 2021 to 20 March 2022), when compared to the time period when the Delta variant was most common (17 May to 19 December 2021); and
 - vii. from 2 July 2020 to 20 March 2022, people who were unvaccinated were more likely to be re-infected than people who reported they had been vaccinated.

Child immunity and schools infection study (SIS2)

5. The third and final wave of the Schools Infection Survey concluded at the end of March 2022. 172 schools and 10,868 pupils participated in the in-school antibody testing in wave 3. A total of 24,644 antibody samples have been collected over the duration of the study.
6. Results from the different elements of the study are due to be published during May and June. A meeting of the Schools Scientific Advisory Group, comprising Government policy makers and analysts, clinicians and academics is planned for early May to discuss analysis plans and the future vision for the linked education and health data asset.

CIS Digital

7. The Full Business Case has gone through the internal UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Investment Board and been approved. It will now progress through HM Treasury governance and Cabinet Office approval. The move to the digital arena is gathering pace and we are moving through approvals quickly, responding to additional asks from UKHSA on increasing efficiency, costings, sampling, a potential lab move and other risks. The team are preparing for Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) assessment prior to launching the data collection tool in May.
8. Correspondence has gone out to our participants informing them of the move to a digital arena and the reduction in the voucher amounts. This communication has caused a lower than assumed attrition, so visit cadence has been adjusted to preserve the sample. However, wider attrition is expected further downstream especially when we commence the step wedge transition. Plans are in place to minimise attrition within tolerances.
9. Agreement has been reached on the sample sizes for the CIS with 10 per cent achieved at the start of April and the further 15 per cent to be achieved by end of April. The required sample reduction is being achieved through minor extension of the time between study worker visits, enabling preservation of the sample to be taken forward into the digital arena as mitigation against expected attrition through this migration. ONS and UKHSA has reached agreement on sample sizes for all Devolved Administrations.
10. Acceptance criteria and associated key performance indicators have been shared with IQVIA. The acceptance criteria will drive the Go/No Go decisions for continuation of the tech build and associated operational processes.
11. A new Executive Governance Group has been established to oversee the commercial and contractual aspects of the new contract as well as providing rapid escalation point for novel and contentious issues outside wider Project Board and Design Authority meetings.
12. As reported last month, the risk regarding the programming language on the IQVIA Digital build from CDDO has been resolved and the team are developing an approach to continuous improvement to the tool through the year which satisfy CDDO requirements. ONS undertook an internal assessment of the build so far alongside the user research we had gathered. The assessment was positive which drives us further towards passing the upcoming Beta Assessment with CDDO.

Next Steps

13. The momentum and continued stabilisation of the CIS transition remains the highest priority and the team will continue to prepare robustly for a rapid launch of and stepped wedge transition to the revised model.
14. The ONS health analysis strategy is taking shape and initial discussions have commenced on the how we might realise the longitudinal value of the CIS sample in partnership with the wider UK health system. These conversations will continue and develop in the coming weeks.

Emma Rourke, Director, Health Analysis and Pandemic Insights, March 2022