

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Thursday 30 March 2023
Remote Teams Meeting

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Robert Chote (Chair)
Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)
Dr Jacob Abboud
Professor Sir John Aston
Sam Beckett
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Richard Dobbs
Ed Humpherson
Nora Nanayakkara
Professor Dame Carol Propper
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter
Penny Young

Also in attendance

Penny Babb (for item 10)
Owen Brace
Robert Bumpstead
Megan Cooper (for item 9)
Phillip Davies (for item 11)
Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)
Alex Lambert (for item 11)
Will Marks (for item 8)
Megan Mayell (for item 11)
Helen Miller-Bakewell (for item 10)
Alison Pritchard
Tom Taylor
Jason Yaxley (for item 12)
Jason Zawadzki (for item 13)

Apologies

None

1. Apologies

1.1 There were no apologies received.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 February 2023 were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(23)15]

4.1 Non-Executive Directors had met prior to the Board meeting. They had discussed topics including the prospective independent review of the Authority by the Cabinet Office, and frequency of Board meetings. The Chair on behalf of the Board congratulated Professor Sir Ian Diamond on his reappointment as National Statistician for a second term.

4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activities since the Board last met:

- i. on 2 March Sir Robert had met Alistair McAlpine, Interim Chief Statistician, Scottish Government.
- ii. Sir Robert had discussed the development of this year's State of the Statistical System report with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) team;
- iii. on 22 March Sir Robert alongside Sir Ian had led a panel discussion at the mid-term strategy review stakeholder event with Dr Laura Gilbert, Chief Analyst No.10, Ming Tang, Chief Analyst NHS England and Tim Harford, writer and broadcaster. A successful event attended by over 200 people from the statistical and analytical community;
- iv. Sir Robert had met with Dame Kate Barker, Chair of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel on Consumer Prices on 28 March; and
- v. on 28 March Sir Robert had attended the Group of Independent Chairs meeting hosted by Lord Jonathan Evans and the Committee on Standards in Public Life; and had met the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(23)16]

5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:

- i. Sir Ian had presented a lecture to the Royal Society on 9 March on the 'Future of Economic Statistics';
- ii. the COVID-19 Infection Survey data collection had paused. Planning was ongoing for a new COVID-19 and Respiratory Infections Survey;
- iii. progress of discussions with a number of departments regarding data sharing across the Union with a focus on health indicators;
- iv. launch of the flexible table builder on 28 March for census data, which would allow users to create a custom dataset;
- v. work on the consultation on the future of the production of population and social statistics in England and Wales, including pre consultation engagement with 14 Local Authorities;
- vi. the continued support by ONS for colleagues at the National Records of Scotland (NRS) on the Scotland Census 2022 with the secondment of Jon Wroth-Smith to NRS as Director of Census Statistics;
- vii. the annual update of the inflation basket of goods and services;
- viii. effective management of the 2022/23 year end position with the current position projecting an under expenditure; and
- ix. ONS engagement with the Institute for Fiscal Studies, a methodological discussion regarding the definition of pension benefits.

5.2 The Board heard that field worker retention was a national issue. It was noted that the strategic re-design of the ONS field force model would provide a more sustainable solution and career progression.

6. Report from the Director General for Regulation: OSR Draft Business Plan [SA(23)17]

6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity highlighting that the second assessment report for Scotland's Census 2022 would be published on 4 April.

6.2 OSR's draft Business Plan and regulatory work programmes set out high level activities for 2023/24 including a programme of enhanced scrutiny of economic statistics. Casework included correspondence from NHS England about the improvement to waiting time statistics following engagement with OSR.

6.3 The Board heard that OSR continued to engage with the Home Office regarding issues previously raised on the need for transparency across the department.

6.4 Board members endorsed the draft business plan; and supported the proposal to expand OSR's work on economic statistics. It was noted that OSR had improved efficiencies through a focus on key domain topic areas.

7. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

7.1 Sian Jones reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which had last met on 16 March.

7.2 The Committee had considered:

- i. the financial position of the organisation and the effective management of the year end position by the finance and senior leadership teams;
- ii. progress implementing the risk and assurance framework, with the introduction of dashboards across the strategic risk profile;
- iii. the draft Internal Audit programme of assurance 2023/24;
- iv. delivery of the Internal Audit programme of work 2022/23;
- v. an Internal Audit Report for the Ambitious Radical Inclusive Economic Statistics (ARIES) Programme
- vi. assurance on the implementation of audit findings following the cyber security Internal Audit report; and
- vii. OSR's annual update including assurance of the work by ONS on statistical quality.

7.3 The Chair reported that a theme highlighted throughout the meeting was the need to strengthen baseline measures and metrics across the strategic risk profile to support the assurance function and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

8. Strategy Update [SA(23)18]

8.1 Will Marks introduced a paper which was the eighth quarterly update on progress against the delivery of the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good.

8.2 A mid-term review of the strategy was ongoing considering progress to date and remaining challenges going forward. A survey across the Authority (ONS, OSR and the Government Statistical Service (GSS)); and the annual ONS stakeholder satisfaction survey had been undertaken. On 22 March, a successful stakeholder event with users had been held including presentations from Sir Ian, Ed Humpherson and Sam Beckett. It was noted that Sir Robert alongside Sir Ian, as part of a rolling programme of departmental visits across the GSS, met Heads of Professions and their teams regularly regarding delivery of the strategy.

8.3 Board members welcomed the update and noted the successful stakeholder event. Next steps of the review would include a full analysis of all feedback including postcards submitted at the event by users, which had asked about the main

challenges facing the UK statistical and analytical community, and the achievement of the aims of the strategy. Board members discussed the career progression of analysts more generally. The Board would remain engaged with this work as it progressed ahead of publication of the review.

9. ONS Draft Business Plan [SA(23)19]

- 9.1 Tom Taylor and Megan Cooper introduced a paper which provided the refreshed draft ONS business plan 2023/24.
- 9.2 The Board heard that the work on delivery of the draft plan was already in progress, with discussions by the National Statistics Executive Group and the Portfolio and Investment Committee (PIC). The plan highlighted the need for the organisation to continue to innovate in line with the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good, and live within its means for the remainder of the spending review period.
- 9.3 The Board would consider the final plan in May on completion of the business planning process, which would conclude the work on prioritisation, an assessment of capacity and produce a final set of key milestones. The outcome of the mid-term review of the strategy would also be considered. External publication of the plan was scheduled for June.
- 9.4 Board members discussed the draft plan. It was noted that legacy transformation was embedded within programmes due to its cross cutting nature, rather than a standalone project, with oversight at the PIC.

10. National Statistics Designation Review [SA(23)20]

- 10.1 Ed Humpherson and Penny Babb presented a paper which provided an update on OSR's project to refresh the National Statistics designation.
- 10.2 The Board heard that the Regulation Committee, at its February 2022 meeting, had approved the proposal to clarify rather than replace the term 'National Statistics' by enhancing the description to 'National Statistics are accredited official statistics', adopting the language of 'independent review'; and labelling experimental statistics as 'official statistics in development'.
- 10.3 This discussion was an opportunity for Board members to comment on progress of the designation refresh project as OSR conduct further user testing of badges ahead of discussion at April Regulation Committee and a final paper to the Board in May.
- 10.4 Board members welcomed the update and highlighted the need to include examples setting out how the new approach meets the Authority's statutory requirements, and how it would improve the number of producers seeking designation.

11. Business Survey Transformation [SA(23)21]

- 11.1 Alex Lambert, Phillip Davies and Megan Mayell introduced a paper regarding a vision for the future of business surveys in ONS and summarised plans to develop an initial proof-of-concept for June 2023.
- 11.2 The Board heard that there were eight major business survey projects currently improving the quality of data collected, delivering efficiency savings, replacing legacy technology, increasing capability and moving data collection online. The vision for the future of business surveys would rationalise the survey portfolio, increase data quality and reduce respondent burden. The initial proof of concept work was scheduled for completion by June 2023.
- 11.3 The Board noted their thanks for an excellent presentation. It was noted that the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme was providing the enabling online resources to support business survey transformation. The revised Statistical

Business Register using new systems and technology would help reduce the burden on both large and small businesses.

12. Integrated Data Service [SA(23)22]

- 12.1 Alison Pritchard and Jason Yaxley presented a paper which provided an update on the progress of the Integrated Data Programme (IDP), responsible for the delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS).
- 12.2 The Board heard that the technology for the Public Beta service had been delivered. The Digital Economy Act accreditation process for the IDS was ongoing. Onboarding news users and data and securing buy-in for the IDS across government would be key areas of focus for the programme going forward.
- 12.3 The Board noted the update and would remain engaged as the work progressed.

13. ARIES Transformation Programme [SA(23)23]

- 13.1 Jason Zawadzki presented a paper which provided an update on the progress of the Ambitious Radical Inclusive Sustainable (ARIES) transformation programme.
- 13.2 The Board heard that over the course of the first year the programme had delivered in a number of areas: improved data for the Balance Sheet of Public Corporations in the Regional Accounts; improved understanding of Research and Development statistics; new sub-national data in the Regional Accounts; and the launch and parallel run of the Transformed Labour Force Survey.
- 13.3 Areas of lessons learned during the course of the programme were being used to strengthen the delivery model going forward. It was noted that the Internal Audit Report on ARIES programme governance, would underpin improvements in assurance and benefits management.
- 13.4 The Board noted thanks for a clear paper, which had effectively set out progress to date and challenges going forward.

14. Any Other Business

- 14.1 The next meeting would take place on 27 April.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

30 March 2023, 10.30-14.30

Remote Teams Meeting

Chair: Sir Robert Chote

Apologies: None

Attendees: Penny Babb (for item 8), Megan Cooper (for item 7), Phillip Davies (for item 9), Dr Alex Lambert (for item 9), Will Marks (for item 6), Megan Mayell (for item 9), Helen Miller-Bakewell (for item 8), Jason Yaxley (for item 10), Jason Zawadzki (for item 11)

NED Session: 10.30-11.00

1 11.00-11.05 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings Declarations of interest	Meeting of 23 February 2023
2 11.05-11.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(23)15 Sir Robert Chote
3 11.15-11.50 35 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(23)16 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 11.50-12.10 20 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSR Draft Business Plan 	SA(23)17 Ed Humpherson
5 12.10-12.15 5 mins	Report from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 	Oral update Sian Jones
6 12.15-12.30 15 mins	Strategy update	SA(23)18 Will Marks
7 12.30-12.50 20 mins	ONS Draft Business Plan	SA(23)19 Tom Taylor Megan Cooper
12.50-13.00 10 mins	Break	
8 13.00-13.20 20 mins	National Statistics Designation Review	SA(23)20 Ed Humpherson Penny Babb Helen Miller-Bakewell
9 13.20-13.45 25 mins	Business Survey Transformation	SA(23)21 Dr Alex Lambert Phillip Davies Megan Mayell
10 13.45-14.00 15 mins	Integrated Data Service	SA(23)22 Alison Pritchard Jason Yaxley
11 14.00-14.20 20 mins	ARIES Transformation Programme	SA(23)23 Jason Zawadzki
12 14.20-14.30	Any Other Business	

10 mins		
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Next meeting: 27 April 2023, Newport Boardroom

Chair's Report, March 2023

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of the Chair's activity in late February and March.

Review of recent activities

2. On 21 February I met Huw Pill, Chief Economist at the Bank of England, for the first in what will be regular discussions between us on issues of mutual interest to the Authority and the Bank, supplementing the excellent engagement at working level. We also talked about the Bank's own internal data strategy.
3. On 27 February, I met directors from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities who were working on cross-UK comparable data.
4. On 2 March, I met Alastair McAlpine, interim Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government.
5. The National Statistician and I continued our engagements across the Government Statistical Service, meeting colleagues:
 - i. on 7 March at the new Department for Culture, Media and Sport;
 - ii. on 8 March at the Department for Work and Pensions; and
 - iii. on 9 March at the Department for Education.
6. On 22 March I chaired an event to mark the halfway point of the five-year span of the *Statistics for the public good* strategy and seek feedback from stakeholders on their priorities. Over 200 attendees from across the statistical community joined us both online and in person at Great Ormond Street Hospital's DRIVE (Data Research, Innovation and Virtual Environments) unit.

Casework and correspondence

7. On 23 March, I wrote to the Shadow Minister for Immigration, Stephen Kinnock MP, who had raised questions about the use by several Ministers of statistics on unprocessed asylum claims.
8. Also on 23 March, I responded to Lord Brian Paddick, the Liberal Democrats Lords Spokesperson for Home Affairs, on the subject of asylum and immigration by small boats.

Sir Robert Chote, Chair, 23 March 2023

Chief Executive's Report, March 2023

Purpose

1. This provides the Authority Board with an overview of activity for March 2023.

Summary

2. March saw several exciting activities and key successes take place across the statistical system. I attended the **UN Statistical Commission** in New York where I met more than 20 National Statisticians from other nations. During my time there, I gave a keynote speech on the need for better data on ageing at the American Association of Retired Persons luncheon and was on the panel at a session on measuring the health of refugees and migrants, organised by Statistics Poland and the World Health Organisation. I also enjoyed participating in sessions on Beyond GDP, migration and Violence against Women and Girls.
3. I also gave a lecture to the **Royal Society** on 9 March 2023 on the 'Future of Economic Statistics'. The lecture was well attended by a wide-ranging audience with interest in the field and I enjoyed the chance to take part in a live Q&A chaired by Professor Sir Adrian Smith. The lecture has also been made into an op-ed which featured in the Times Red Box on 16 March. The article can be found [here](#). The lecture will be turned into an Editorial piece in a future Royal Statistical Society journal.

Efficiencies and financial update

4. We continue to liaise with HM Treasury (HMT) in respect of the **ONS Efficiency Savings Review** but this element of the process is now drawing to a close with HMT accepting our return as 'compliant'.
5. We have initiated the latest **business planning** round in advance of 23/24 with the aim of drawing together all deliverables/accountability framework objectives with the finances and other resourcing needed to deliver them. We will continue to iterate these plans across the coming weeks using our prioritisation framework to drive decisions in the context of the constraints we will face. Trade-offs will be inevitable as with all business plans, and we remain confident that we will continue to deliver against our key strategic aims.
6. We continue to make progress in relation to **funding for the future of our portfolio**. Funding for the Integrated Data Programme has been confirmed with conditions received from HMT; a Treasury Approval Panel was held to discuss the Future Population and Migration Statistics business case – we await the decision; we have also received confirmation of the ongoing contribution from Home Office supporting the expansion of the Crime Survey.

Review of recent activities

7. This month has seen the launch of a campaign to recruit a substantive **Deputy National Statistician for Health, Population and Methods**. Later in the month, we will also welcome Louise Love as **Head of Internal Audit** who joins us from the Government Internal Audit Agency.
8. The UK Statistics Authority, alongside many organisations, celebrated **International Women's Day** on Wednesday 8 March; the theme for which centred on embracing equity. A number of successful events were run on the lead up to and around the day, including introducing of our Menopause Ambassadors and a discussion led by Dr Jessica Taylor from Victim Focus on Violence Against Women and Girls.
9. Internationally, the Director of the Data Science Campus recently attended side-events prior to the UN Statistics Commission. He was there for the official launch of the **UN Data**

Science Leaders Network of which he is the first chair. There are a range of issues facing National Statistics Institutes (NSIs) internationally including how to move away from survey-based censuses and how to make better use of big data in the production of official statistics. There was interest from our key partners in setting up a small group of NSIs (ourselves, Statistics Canada, US Census Bureau, etc.) to work jointly on these issues.

10. Domestically, preparation continues at pace ahead of the next ministerial-led **Domestic and Economic Affairs (Union) committee** where I will discuss work to improve the availability of UK-wide data.
11. Preparation also continues for the **Analysis Function annual report and annual delivery plan** which will reflect on the successes of the last year and outline our plans for the next year. We are also preparing for Analysis in Government month which will be in May this year.
12. Our recent public **consultation on the future of Household Financial Statistics** in the ONS closed in March with 49 responses received from amongst others key stakeholders and users, in HMT, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Resolution Foundation. Early analysis of the responses shows the value users put in the range of statistics ONS publish from our Household Financial Surveys, and that they are supportive of the approach we are recommending to improve how we deliver these in the future.
13. A suite of publications related to the research being completed as part of the **2023 Recommendation** on the future of population statistics were released over the past month. These included admin-based statistics, Statistical Population Dataset papers, Linked Analysis papers, Quality and Coherence papers and a Dynamic Population Model publication.
14. Working with the wider Analytical Function, we have published analysis of the impact of **demography on health, inactivity and labour market status**, having worked with HMT, No10, DWP and DHSC. The March Budget announced a wide-ranging package of reforms including greater pension freedoms and £400 million to help those with mental health and musculoskeletal conditions to return to work.
15. This month also saw the annual updating of the **inflation 'Basket of Goods and Services'** on 13 March, which received exceptionally high levels of media coverage as our press release was picked up across a wide range of broadcast and print media outlets. We were able to land strategic messages on our transformation of economic statistics, with the Financial Times, Times, Reuters and BBC all explaining how the ONS is moving to an increasingly data-driven approach to the calculation of inflation using "millions of real-time prices".
16. Colleagues from Economic, Social and Environment Group also met with Secretary of State Michael Gove's office to showcase some of the **advances in the presentation of spatial data** that we have been working on through census, and are now beginning to apply in the delivery of the sub-national data strategy. Feedback was incredibly positive, and attendees remarked on how these products will make it much easier for policy makers to access the data and insight, and in turn make it more likely that the information will play a part in policy-making.
17. There are three weeks remaining until the end of the **COVID-19 Infection Survey** contract and CIS data collection is scheduled to pause on 13 March 2023. Exit plans continue being enacted to manage relationships with IQVIA and other stakeholders through to the natural end of their contracts. Closedown activities are being prioritised within CIS teams to ensure a smooth handover of models and data to future studies and data archives. Over 2 million questionnaires completed, and 2.9 million samples returned

to the labs since the transition to CIS-Digital from 1 August 2022. This is an amazing achievement by all involved in ONS and IQVIA.

18. The plans for a new separate **COVID-19 and Respiratory Infections Survey (CRIS)** online health questionnaire are underway. The CRIS is planning to send a pre-note to participants in the last week of March, with pilot data collection from 3 April. National Statistician's Data Ethics Committee approval of this new survey is underway.
19. Following Data Governance Committee (DGC) held on 22 March, both Strategic Risk 4 Security and Strategic Risk 11 Data access and usability have been proposed and agreed to bring back within risk appetite. In both cases the Risk and Assurance Team support the reduction in score noting key controls are operating and metrics are in place.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, March 2023

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(23)17

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

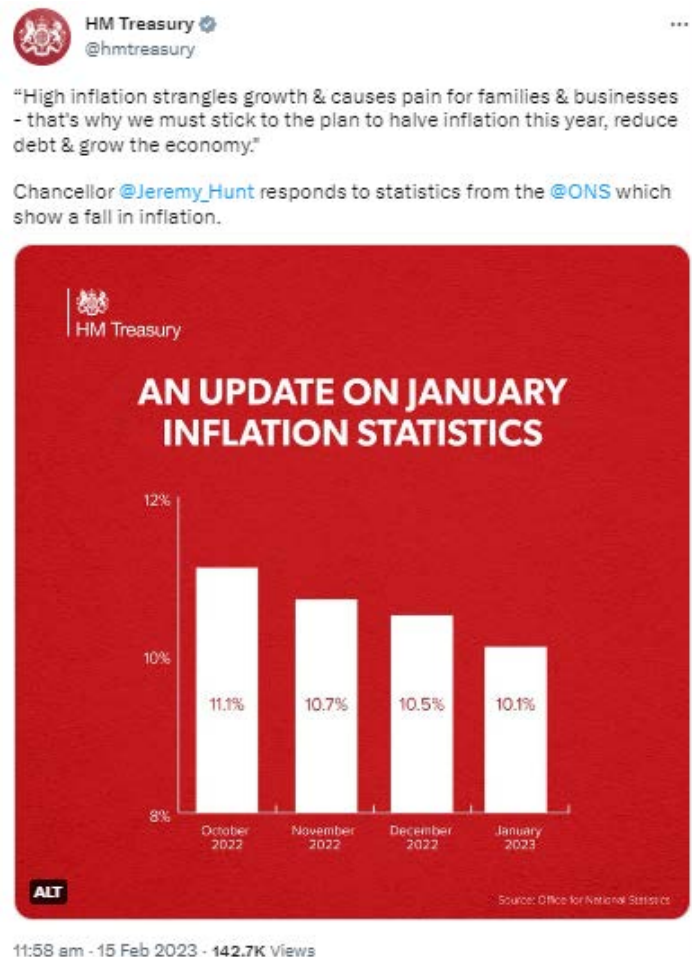
Discussion

2. Our main areas of focus since the last Board meeting have been:
 - i. **Designation Review:** You have a paper (SA(23)20) on our National Statistics designation review that invites your comments on the proposal, which the Regulation Committee has approved, to enhance the description to 'National Statistics are accredited official statistics' and to adopt the language 'independent review'. We would also like your comments on the wider findings of the designation refresh testing.
 - ii. **Intelligent Transparency:** We held a round table with the four largest operational producers Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, Department for Work and Pensions and Home Office (HO) to get their feedback on Intelligent transparency and its implementation within the department. This and the other round tables we have held have given us a number of actions that we will follow up on as we create a plan to refresh our guidance around intelligent transparency.
 - iii. I also recorded a video for the cabinet office on intelligent transparency. This video will become part of a suite of training for communication professions and highlights our expectations around the transparent release of data and what could happen if these principles are not followed.
 - iv. **Draft Business Plan 2023/24 and related budget:** We will share the final draft of our 2023/24 business plan and our associated regulatory work programme with Regulation Committee on 20 April 2023, for sign off prior to publication. I would welcome your feedback. I would draw your attention to two points in particular:
 - Our proposed high-level activities 2023/24 are informed by our strongest dialogue yet about plans for the coming year – through targeted engagement with a range of key stakeholders; talking with Heads of Profession and the devolved administrations; domain-level engagement; and continuing to build our social media engagement through Twitter, LinkedIn and a series of blogs encouraging stakeholders to reach out to us. The priorities are:
 - o support and challenge producers to innovate, collaborate and build resilience;
 - o champion the effective communication of statistics to support society's key information needs;
 - o build partnerships to champion good practice principles for data and analysis that inform the public; and
 - o increase our capability as a regulator.

Casework

3. Since the last meeting we have received casework raising concerns about air pollution in London, Civil service pay, Transport for London road safety, migrants, asylum backlogs, displaced people, A&E statistics and inflation.
4. We are continuing to engage with several cases on migrants, asylum back log claims and displaced people. This is a topic of high media attention at the moment. As well as engaging with the casework we are considering other avenues, such as a statement, to respond to concerns quickly and have a positive impact on the conversation.

5. We have closed several cases including a public intervention to HM Treasury (HMT) regarding their infographic on inflation (shown below). The [public letter](#) received a largely positive response. As well as the media interest the case received, we have also been able to engage with HMT and have been asked to present our expectation around intelligent transparency and our guidance to the HMT communication colleagues.



Wider reach

5. **Cross-regulator working:** This month [Ofcom found that the Mark Steyn programme on GB news breached broadcasting rules in April 2021](#) when it presented data to viewers that claimed incorrectly a definitive causal link between a third vaccine and hospitalisation/death rates. While investigating this case Ofcom contacted OSR to ask about our process when investigating misuse of statistics and found our [blog on communicating data](#) useful alongside the work of full fact. By using the resources that we produce Ofcom were able to make several recommendations about how the data was presented as well as noting the weaknesses in the UK Health Security Agency reporting that offered a partial mitigation for misinterpretation. Overall, they made the point that challenge and discussion around statistics and evidence was a good thing, but that should not be at the expense of misleading the audience.
6. I spoke at several events this month:

- i. I met with HO analysts to talk about our work and priorities. This informal talk went well with over 200 attendees and Simon Palmer and Jon Simmons really highlighted the helpfulness of our interventions, especially around small boats, which has encouraged HO to be much more responsive to public interest.
- ii. I was also invited to be the lead speaker at a Royal Statistical Society seminar on misleadingness. At this event I highlighted how OSR think about misleading uses of statistics and how we judge misleadingness. This event raised several points for us to consider further around highlighting how different types of misleadingness can manifest itself and what more we could do to help users of statistics be critical friends.
- iii. I also presented the OSR vision and priorities at the UK Statistics Authority strategy event last week. The key messages I relayed were related to our vision of regulatory maturity:
 1. we are delivering our core regulatory activities (a basic level of maturity);
 2. we are responsive to emerging issues - but this is something we can work on (dynamic maturity);
 3. we are improving our systemic ability to focus on the public value of statistics – which will be a growing area of focus for OSR (systemic and public-facing maturity); and
 4. we need the input, advice and challenge of a wide range of users/stakeholders to achieve our ambition.

Issues on my mind

7. The main issue on my mind now is no longer recruitment, but rather how we continue to develop the capability of our staff, including new recruits; and how we make a success of our quality-focused reviews of economic statistics.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 22 March 2023

Regulatory Activities Dashboard

March 2023

Housing, Planning and Local Services

Assessment: **Statutory Homelessness in England statistics**: Continuing engagement in line with DLUHC action plan

Casework: Investigating concerns raised about the quality of VOA's **property attribute and council tax banding** data.

Compliance Checks: Follow-up meeting on Dept. for Communities **NI Homelessness statistics**

Rapid Reviews: WG's **Estimates of Housing Need and Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping** Management Information.

Engaging with ONS, DLUHC and LUHC committee on **Sub-national data** developments, to support public understanding of levelling up

Health and Social Care

Assessments: Re-assessment underway for the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) **Adult Oral Health Survey statistics** and assessment underway of **Scottish A&E waiting times** statistics.

Casework: Investigating concerns about comparability of **A&E waiting times** across the UK.

Compliance Checks: ONS **Health Index** and **substance misuse statistics** in England published.

Systemic Reviews: Further rounds of user engagement, following up on **Mental Health** reviews.

Children, Education and Skills

Assessment: Started assessment of Scottish Government **Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence** statistics

Casework: Drafting letter to DfE on the **figures on teacher pay** quoted by SoS Gillian Keegan.

Compliance Check: Published letter for **Welsh Government School Workforce Annual Census**

Population and Society

Assessments: **Scotland Census** Assessment report due for publication w/c 27 March

Measuring the population: Ongoing engagement with ONS teams ahead of its consultation which will feed into 2023 recommendation on the future of census.

Migration transformation ongoing. ONS published a response to OSR recommendations from the report
Casework: Various cases live on ministerial use of Home Office migrations statistics.

Compliance Check: **ONS mortality statistics** publication in final internal sign off stages before publication

Economy, Business and Trade

Assessment: **Post-Brexit ONS Economic Statistics Producer Price Index** pilot assessment applying Quality Framework and speaking with key stakeholders.

Monitoring **UK Trade Annual Business Survey, Purchases Survey and Business Demography** continuing follow up with ONS.

Compliance check: **ONS International Comparisons of Productivity (ICP) statistics** – speaking with the productivity team regarding advice around communicating uncertainty

Casework: Published letter to HMT on **inflation infographic** following numerous complaints. **Scottish Cost of Living Budget** - engaging with Scottish Government to understand £3bn figure.

Transport, Environment and Climate Change

Assessments: **People and Nature Survey (PaNS)**. Continuing engagement in line with NE action plan.

Assessment underway of Defra's **butterfly statistics**.

Casework: Ongoing **Salmon Stocks** statistics.

Compliance Checks: Home Office's **Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals** due to be published end of March. Defra's **wild bird** statistics underway.

Crime and Security

Reviews: Progressing with review of **Police Recorded Crime statistics**

Casework: Investigating concerns about the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) **Teachers Toolkit** on gender-based violence, Investigated Ministry of Justice **Reoffending Statistics**, raising informally with MOJ.

Compliance checks: Published letters for ONS **modern slavery in the UK statistics** and **Home Office National Referral Mechanism statistics**. Shared findings of review of **Redevelopment of Domestic Abuse questions for the Crime Survey for England and Wales** with ONS.

Labour Market and Welfare

Compliance checks: ONS transformation of the **Labour Force Survey** (Phase 2) continues. Discussions ongoing with ONS around current timetable – concerns shared. Planning next letter detailing our view and progress against recommendations in May.

Letter for **ONS Labour Disputes** statistics published.

Assessments: Statistics on Employment and Earnings from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI) drafting assessment report, due to go to Regulation Committee in April.

Regulatory Activities Dashboard

March 2023

Data and Methods

Internal work: Our new SEO data scientist started in March so we will be re-launching our data science programme. We may also have an opportunity for an MSc student to work on a project with us, recruited through the ONS Research & Innovation Office.

Review of [data sharing/linkage](#), we are now at the draft stage of the report and to publishing in early summer 2023.

Insight

Intelligent transparency (IT): We held a round table with DWP, HO, MOJ, MOD to hear about their successes and challenges in following IT principles. It was a fascinating discussion and has given us lots to take forward, including enhancing our engagement with the comms profession. We'll be refreshing our IT guidance over the next few months.

Insight Committee: We held an Insight Committee in March, where we received helpful input on our plans for the 2022/23 **State of the Statistical System report**.

Recruitment: We have recruited a new Evaluation and Insight Manager, who we hope will start in April

Policy & Standards

Designation refresh: We have submitted a paper to the Authority Board on the future messaging around the designation. Currently completing our testing of badges before submitting recommendations to the Regulation Committee in April. Our regulatory team is refreshing our assessment approach, conducting pilot assessments and developing guidance.

Voluntary application and wider reach: We added a private data company, Fable Data, to our published list of voluntary adopters. We continue to provide advice to analysts looking to adopt the Code pillars for their non-OS outputs. We held an appreciative inquiry session with a group of key adopters to help us plan a project to develop VA further in 2023/24.

Research

Research Programme: After working across OSR to pull together information from research and regulatory work, we are now developing an initial definition of the 'public good of government statistics'. We are continuing to promote our work such as through organising a seminar for analysts on the public good and writing an article for Significance magazine.

Cross Cutting Issues

None

Strategy and Business Plan Update

Purpose

1. This paper is the eighth quarterly update on progress against the delivery of the UK Statistics Authority (the 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, including the mid-point strategy review.

Background

3. We are now into the third year of the strategy, and work continues at pace to meet our key strategic objectives. As we look forward to 2023-24, 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 continued to be strong during 2022. In our strategy we set out to:
 - i. respond to the challenges of COVID-19 flexibly, including tracking the impacts of new variants, and delivering long-term value from the survey;
 - 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 agile economic and social statistics that are internationally recognised, streamlining processes and blending administrative data with transformed survey capabilities to answer key questions;
 - v. deliver a successful Census in 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 supported by funding through the Spending Review 2022.

Discussion

5. We have made good progress against these aims. Since the last quarterly update:
 - i. Internationally, the National Statistician attended the UN Statistical Commission in New York where he met more than 20 National Statisticians from other nations. During his time there, he gave a keynote speech on the need for better data on ageing at the American Association of Retired Persons luncheon and was on the panel at a session on measuring the health of refugees and migrants, organised by Statistics Poland and the World Health Organisation.
 - ii. We have continued to deliver influential analysis including on labour market inactivity (informing the Budget); cost of living (including results from our winter panel and the delivery of our Cost of Living Insights tool making it easier for users to access our

- insights); industrial action (delivery of a synthesis article bringing insights from across the Office and ongoing support to the Cabinet Office on impacts).
- iii. There has been substantial progress on subnational statistics and analysis including the release of hyper local Gross Value Added data providing an essential input to support evaluations of local economic interventions; new analysis on the night time economy and quality jobs; successful engagement with Secretary of State Michael Gove; and a well-attended successful one year on event in Birmingham with the growing reputation and impact of ONS Local.
 - iv. In March we included new data, methods and systems for the rail fares category for the first time in our headline consumer inflation statistics. While the direct impact of transforming rail fares on the headline measure was small, the new data (around 70 million rows of raw data every month) give us better information as to what is driving rail fare inflation. This development work has also allowed us to re-plan next steps of the transformation work for used cars, rents and groceries more accurately.
 - v. Our ongoing collaboration with Visa has also progressed, receiving the first ingestion of Visa Big Data, as part of our new three-year agreement. This highly granular data on UK card payments will allow us to analyse UK consumer spending patterns in more granular ways and better measure UK household expenditure, improving the quality of our national and subnational statistics.
 - vi. We have also completed a series of nine Census 2021 topic summary releases which have gained widespread interested and media coverage. We have also engaged with the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on the future of population and migration statistics.
 - vii. Beyond this, the Veteran's Survey, which was launched as a self-select survey last November, has had a tremendous response – achieving 24,000 responses against a 'target' of 13,000. We have also now had permission to contact prisons, for additional returns. We are looking at what we can take from this success, to assist in designing ongoing ad-hoc, and perhaps regular, social surveys.
 - viii. The National Statistician also gave a lecture to the Royal Society on 9 March on the 'Future of Economic Statistics'. The lecture was well attended by a wide-ranging audience with interest in the field and enjoyed the chance to take part in a live Q&A chaired by Professor Sir Adrian Smith. The lecture has also been made into an op-ed which featured in the Times Red Box on 16 March.
 - ix. As a strong indication of progress against our People Plan, ONS became the first Civil Service department to make it onto the annual Glassdoor Employees Choice Awards, placing twenty first in the UK's Top 5 Best Places to Work 2023. In addition, ONS won the 'Beyond Smarter Working' award at the Smarter Working Live awards. We have also commenced a new lease at the Tootal Building in Manchester, providing space for up to 100 colleagues, supporting the Places for Growth agenda, and increasing our skills and diversity, especially in digital and technology.
 - x. The ONS Efficiency and Savings plan has been submitted to HM Treasury with a positive initial response. Early queries have been addressed and a series of sessions are being planned with both the National Statisticians Leadership Team, and HM Treasury to discuss the next level of detail, including any impact on any key outputs. The OSR position has also been included in the next iteration of the plan.
 - xi. Within the ONS portfolio, a Treasury Approval Point was held on 7 March for the Future of Population and Migration Statistics and we are now awaiting a funding decision from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury; the current iteration of the Covid-19 Infection Survey is drawing to a close having delivered successfully to date, with discussions continuing with the Department of Health and Social Care and the UK Health Security Agency on the future of the survey; funding confirmation was received for the Integrated Data Programme to enable progress towards full public beta, followed by an Amber delivery confidence assessment from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority "Gateway 4" assurance review.

- xii. Business planning for the next financial year is now well underway, with an updated future-facing set of strategic objectives, and a clear articulation of the organisation's priorities for the year ahead. The key milestones that will be published with the plan are undergoing a final review to ensure they are affordable and deliverable in the face of the efficiency and savings agenda.
6. Over the coming period the focus will be on the following areas:
- i. completing the FY23/24 business planning activity, including adding the next level of detail into our Efficiency and Savings Plan in collaboration with HM Treasury, leading to the publication of the ONS Strategic Business Plan in June;
 - ii. delivering a refreshed ARIES business case to HM Treasury and re-setting the programme milestones following an intensive period of re-planning;
 - iii. delivering full public beta of the Integrated Data Service and providing strong leadership across government on the value of data sharing to inform policy;
 - iv. finalising negotiations related to the future of the COVID-19 Infection Survey and public health monitoring, as well as launching an interim survey solution; and
 - v. extensive stakeholder engagement activities on the future of population and migration statistics leading towards the 2023 recommendation, including with Local Authorities, government departments, the ONS Assembly, and think-tanks.

Mid-term strategy review

7. As discussed at the Authority Board meeting in December 2022, we are currently reviewing the Authority strategy (Statistics for the Public Good) to mark its halfway point. This takes stock of progress to date, evaluates what radical, ambitious, inclusive and sustainable mean in 2023, and looks ahead to the remaining challenges.
8. Since December, we have run an all-colleague survey to seek views across the Authority (Office for National Statistics (ONS), Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and Government Statistical Service (GSS)) on successes to date, and opportunities and challenges for the remaining period. This received 450 responses. We have also run the annual ONS stakeholder satisfaction survey to seek views on fulfilling our mission and meeting user needs. This received 230 responses from a variety of stakeholders. Finally, OSR have sought feedback on their high-level priorities to support change and transformation.
9. This has culminated in a stakeholder event with users on 22 March 2023 held at Great Ormond Street Hospital's DRIVE centre. The conversation provided users with an opportunity to help shape the future of Statistics for the Public Good. Over 200 people from the statistical and analytical community attended in person and online, reflecting on achievements and priorities going forwards.
10. At the event, the Chair led a lively panel discussion, with Dr Laura Gilbert (Chief Analyst, No10), Ming Tang (Chief Analyst, NHS England) and Tim Harford (writer and broadcaster). Panel members discussed several topics with the audience both virtually and in the room. There were presentations from the National Statistician, Ed Humpherson and Sam Beckett. A video produced for the event included reflections from colleagues across the GSS, including Professor Chris Whitty.
11. From our user survey, 94 per cent of our stakeholders said our statistics and analysis met their needs (44 per cent) or partially met their needs (50 per cent), with the majority (91 per cent) agreeing that we produce statistics relevant to the issues of the day. In terms of our mission, 89 per cent of users agreed we fulfil our aim to provide high-quality data and analysis to inform the UK. From the GSS colleague survey, 73 per cent of respondents felt the Authority had been successful to date in achieving its mission, and 68 per cent agreeing the statistical and analytical community was in a stronger position that it was in 2020 to inform the UK on key decisions.

12. On successes so far, colleagues cited GSS work providing timely and relevant analysis on cost of living, the successful delivery of an inclusive and digital first census in 2021, and the response across the GSS to the pandemic, including the world leading COVID-19 Infection Survey. As for challenges ahead, colleagues noted changing technology, ease of access to data, skill retention, resource constraint, maintaining public trust, and reflecting diversity in statistics and analysis.
13. In terms of the key strategic pillars (Radical, Ambitious, Sustainable and Inclusive), colleagues felt most progress had been made on being ambitious (44 per cent) and inclusive (34 per cent) as a system, with a desire for future focus on being sustainable (52 per cent) and radical (20 per cent). However, the feedback qualified that any focus on sustainability should not be at the expense of being radical, ambitious and inclusive. While the survey is not a representative sample, these insights are still valuable.
14. In our conversation with users on 22 March, several key themes emerged which are now worth deeper exploration. Topics included the effective communication of statistics and analysis, including to policymakers; the use of large language models and AI in analysis; career opportunities within the statistical and analytical system, particularly from young statisticians; statistical literacy; the need to integrate policymakers and analysts together in answering the key questions of the day; the role of granular and local data; and finally, the comparability of statistics internationally.
15. The next steps of the mid-point strategy review will be to review fully and analyse the content above, including postcards submitted at the event by users. This asked about the main challenges facing the UK statistical and analytical community, as well as what we can do to ensure we achieve the aims of our strategy. As we work to re-energise the strategy and publish the review in the next couple of months, the Board will be involved in a continued conversation, as well as our users more broadly.

Conclusion

16. This paper sets out recent progress and the ongoing focus on the delivery of the strategy as we hit the halfway point of the period. Over the next quarter we will continue to focus on the high-level priorities as we set out the business plans for the ONS and OSR. The mid-term review of the Authority strategy has seen strong engagement with users and a set of helpful feedback so far. We will now assess this information as we evaluate what radical, ambitious, sustainable and inclusive mean in the context of 2023.

Will Marks Principal Private Secretary to the National Statistician; Megan Cooper, Deputy Director of Finance, Planning and Performance March 2023

Strategic Business Plan 2023/24

Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with early sight of the draft 2023/24 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Strategic Business Plan (SBP).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to review the draft Business Plan.

Discussion

3. This refreshed SBP will be the third iteration since the launch of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) Strategy Statistics for the Public Good. The overall approach to the 2023/24 business planning round was agreed in December 2022 at Portfolio and Investment Committee (PIC). This involved iterative development of key aspects of the plan, including the organisation “theory of change” and strategic objectives, followed by an updated prioritisation framework to inform more detailed planning.
4. The full planning approach is ongoing but the refreshed SBP has been developed.
5. The SBP emphasises the need for the organisation to “live within its means” for the remainder of the Spending Review period, including delivery against the Efficiency and Savings Plan. While recognising that this will mean stopping or doing less of some activities, the SBP also emphasises the need to continue to innovate in line with the Authority’s Strategy. The precise detail of what this prioritisation may mean in terms of outputs will not be available until the executive’s business planning process is complete, in May. An affordable capacity assessment will drive feasibility of the plan.
6. The draft SBP has been considered through our executive governance in March. Comments from PIC and National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) are still being collected and will be incorporated into the final version of the SBP.
7. External publication of the refreshed SBP will take place in June. The final version of the SBP will be available for final review by the Board in May prior to publication.

Conclusion

8. The Planning and Portfolio Management team will continue to fine tune the SBP ready for publication in June incorporating:
 - i. PIC, NSEG and Board feedback;
 - ii. the outcome of the mid-term review consultation on the Authority’s Strategy;
 - iii. the outcome of the capacity assessment to determine feasibility of the plan; and
 - iv. a final set of key milestones and budgets aligned to affordability.

Megan Cooper and David Harris, Finance Planning and Performance, ONS, 20 March 2022

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(23)20

National Statistics Designation Project Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update to the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) on the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) project to refresh the National Statistics designation, in advance of recommendations to be submitted to the Board in May. The paper sets out proposals for how we can communicate the designation, and OSR's role, going forward to improve understanding among users of statistics and stakeholders, and to build confidence in official statistics.

Recommendations

2. Following on approval from the Regulation Committee (RC), members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. comment on the proposal to clarify rather than replace the term 'National Statistics' by enhancing the description to, 'National Statistics are accredited official statistics', and the proposal to adopt the language 'independent review', to be used by the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority), OSR and statistics producers on their websites, in the Code of Practice for Statistics (the Code) and in future relevant statistical releases; and
 - ii. comment on the wider findings of the designation refresh user testing.

Background

3. We currently describe 'National Statistics' as the most important official statistics, which have been demonstrated, through OSR assessment, to meet the very highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value (TQV), set out in the Code. Only they carry the unique logo of the National Statistics tick mark.
4. Through our review, we have identified real weaknesses with the current National Statistics designation and the use of the National Statistics label and badge. In January 2022, the Board approved an exploration of ways to adapt and clarify the label of 'National Statistics', including possibly moving away from publicly using the label itself.
5. At the conclusion of the designation review, we proposed to rely less on the label 'National Statistics' to provide assurance to users, and instead to emphasise the role of designation as an independent review of official statistics, to reassure users on how the regulator, OSR, has ensured that professional standards are being applied. Our goal is to ensure that the meaning of the label 'National Statistics' – that the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value have been met – is clear to users and that producers are motivated to provide this reassurance.
6. In our subsequent designation refresh project running through 2022, we have been developing and testing ways to reframe the designation to enable clearer messaging and the greater accountability in the production of official statistics. We have been working in collaboration with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Digital Communications – content designers, graphic designers and user testers – to conduct wide-ranging testing of proposed messaging associated with National Statistics, official statistics, and experimental statistics.
7. This paper concentrates on the designation messaging testing that has been discussed and approved by the RC and invites the Board to consider this framing of the National Statistics designation. The wider designation refresh project is also testing material to support producers to effectively communicate quality and to grow a 'Code culture', and

we are refreshing our assessment process. Together, this work aims to inspire statistics producer bodies to embed a Code culture, actively seeking independent review to show they comply with the Code (showing TQV) and clearly communicating quality. It also aims to reassure users and stakeholders, enabling them to make appropriate choices about use of statistics, and decisions based on statistics, based on prominent quality descriptions about the statistics.

Discussion

Communicating the designation

8. We have concluded from our testing that we can clarify the meaning of the designation for users of statistics and other stakeholders by saying 'National Statistics are accredited official statistics', as opposed to using the label National Statistics alone. We can also simplify our explanation of OSR's regulatory role in confirming Code compliance, and build confidence in accredited statistics, by referring to 'independent review'. We therefore propose using this explanatory language on the OSR and the Authority's websites, in the Code and in all designated statistics to clarify the meaning of the designation.
9. Making these changes is in line with the requirement of the Statistics and Registration Services Act: the Authority's legal team has reviewed our ideas and confirmed the legal position on the labelling (and badging) of National Statistics. Current legal advice states that we can refer to the designation as 'accredited official statistics', if we are clear that this reference is equivalent to National Statistics.
10. We maintain the published list of designated ('accredited') statistics. We are enhancing the list to record the changing status of official statistics that are reviewed by OSR, such as when we confirm, suspend or remove the accreditation, and list our reviews of other official statistics.

Changing the label 'Experimental statistics'

11. Another key finding from our work is that there would be a benefit to changing the label 'Experimental Statistics', which is currently used to describe official statistics going through development and testing. Users and analysts found the alternative label 'Official statistics in development' to be clearer and more reassuring than 'experimental' which sounded riskier. This term is currently referred to in two practices in the Code (T2.1 and V4.2) and in the glossary.

Ongoing work on badging official statistics

12. Alongside testing new language, our designation refresh project includes testing of potential new badges for official statistics. This work is still ongoing: we are currently completing the design and testing of a range of badges, aligning with the various statuses of official statistics: designated statistics, non-designated official statistics, and (what are currently known as) experimental statistics. We will provide an update on the findings and seek the views of the RC in April about proposed designs, should our research support their usefulness. We will then be able to make recommendations to the Board on whether to introduce new badges.

Next steps

13. We will address any feedback from the Board and the RC in April and submit a paper to the Board for its May meeting with recommendations on the designation messaging and badges, and on proposed language changes in the Code. This paper will include our plan for implementing the changes we recommend, should they be approved by the Board, and ways to support their adoption by official statistics producers.

Conclusion

14. While this work has been seen and approved by the RC, we would welcome the views of the Board regarding the findings of the designation refresh project as we finalise the badges and communication of the designation. We propose clarifying the term 'National Statistics' by saying 'National Statistics are accredited official statistics' and adopting the language of 'independent review'. In relation to experimental statistics, we recommend that we use the label 'official statistics in development'.

Penny Babb and Helen Miller-Bakewell, Office for Statistics Regulation, 20 March 2023

A Vision for the Future of Business Surveys

Purpose

1. This paper defines a vision for the future of business surveys in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and summarises our plans to develop this through an initial proof-of-concept for June 2023.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the challenges of maintaining and developing our existing business surveys; and
 - ii. provide feedback on the new vision for business surveys.

Background

3. ONS is increasingly exploiting alternative data sources to paint the picture of the UK economy, but business surveys continue to play a key role in providing the data that other sources cannot, as part of a joined-up, hybrid data acquisition approach. ONS operates 77 business surveys (including 10 collected on behalf of other Government departments) equating to a total of 2.6 million questionnaires each year to 380,000 businesses (approximately 7 per cent of the UK business population). 275,000 businesses receive only one survey while a 1,000 of the largest companies are typically selected for fifteen or more surveys, which can lead to several hundred survey questionnaires per year.
4. Eight major business survey projects are currently improving the quality of data collected, delivering real efficiency savings, replacing legacy technology, increasing capability and moving our data collection online. This work is valuable but is focused on maintaining a complex portfolio of surveys that has organically grown over time to meet evolving needs. Unintegrated designs and inflexible systems limit our ability to rapidly adapt to meet emerging user needs. The survey portfolio is burdensome for both ONS and respondents, increasing the risk to survey quality, increasing respondent burden, and contributing to declining business survey response rates.
5. The complex end-to-end survey operation is often underestimated and presents three significant challenges in re-designing the portfolio:
 - i. surveys historically designed in isolation have created a hugely diverse set of user needs and designs, requiring careful navigation to integrate and rationalise;
 - ii. a multitude of legacy platforms and technology support the production of economic statistics, with different interfaces, capability, and levels of support; and
 - iii. the National Accounts relies on inter-related and co-dependent data sources, methods and statistical analysis. Surveys and outputs have many-to-one and one-to-many relationships and some surveys are often pre-requisites for others.

Discussion

6. Working as OneONS, we have defined a compelling vision for the future of business surveys and an overarching *evidence-based* design principle has ensured credibility. Analysis of our statistical designs, processes, and systems, alongside research into international best practice and business engagement has informed our proposals. We have specifically been in discussion with Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics Group (ESEG)/ARIES around existing projects and programmes to ensure benefits and opportunities are exploited and aligned to deliver maximum impact and value for our users.

The Vision

7. Our vision for a fresh new integrated survey design will dramatically rationalise the survey portfolio by at least 50 per cent, increase data quality and reduce respondent burden:
 - i. analysis demonstrates an integrated, modularised design based on theme and periodicity is possible; and
 - ii. this approach enables a holistic view of ONS survey requirements, will remove unnecessary duplication, reduce respondent burden, and provide a significantly more flexible, efficient, and sustainable solution.
8. Our vision for a new business engagement model supports best practice and will include the expansion and development of our Large Cases Unit (LCU). Improved education, account management and better communication mechanisms will provide mutual benefit:
 - i. Five of the UK's largest multinational businesses are currently managed within the LCU, a bespoke service offered to build effective relationships, provide a more efficient service, and improve data quality. This account management approach has enabled us to integrate data requests, streamline processes, and address the impact of globalisation.
 - ii. Building on the success of the LCU approach, we will introduce a graduated business engagement approach. We will expand the number of companies going through the LCU and develop a less resource intensive version for larger companies. Working more closely in this way will enhance our understanding of UK businesses enabling early horizon scanning of the economic landscape.
9. Our vision is to explore and develop a direct Business Data Interface solution to enhance data sharing and provide new ways of data collection with businesses:
 - i. providing data for ONS surveys is burdensome and businesses must often set up new processes to extract the data we need and several contacts within a business may complete any one of our surveys; and
 - ii. ONS should explore automated data collection directly with businesses and accountancy software providers, to support the real-time automated supply of data to ONS, building digital capability for ONS and businesses.

The Proof of Concept (January 2023 – June 2023)

10. Our initial proof-of-concept work is refining and de-risking the three components of the vision, informing development of a delivery plan and assessing the impact on businesses, economic outputs and the data collection operation.
11. We are exploring the concept of an integrated, modular survey design, undertaking a deep dive into Inventories and Capital Assets data themes. Currently 17 surveys collect data on this theme, seven of which feed both directly and indirectly into Gross Capital Formation and GDP. We have focused on understanding and challenging current survey requirements, comparing survey samples and designs, and performing feasibility analysis with a handful of businesses to ascertain if data can be provided within a single module. Emerging conclusions support an integrated design, with analysis demonstrating an ability to harmonise variables and definitions and the similarity and overlap across sample designs and the businesses we select.
12. We have also completed a comprehensive analysis of the current business population to inform the proposal for our new business engagement model. We have explored metrics on business complexity, size, and structure, alongside survey selections and indicators to show the businesses that are key to each of our survey outputs. Whilst a sizeable proportion of businesses suit the current methods of engagement ONS offers, this work has now successfully defined a set of characteristics associated with increasing levels of

engagement from ONS. Work continues to formalise the benefits and consider the cost and resource implications of this alternative engagement model.

13. To progress the Business Data Interface concept, we are currently engaging businesses to gain an initial perspective the proposal. Both British American Tobacco and Amazon UK have expressed particular interest in the concept and have agreed to work with us to refine further.

Conclusion

14. Current proof-of-concept work will complete by June 2023. To take this work forward and implement the vision, there will be a need for an organisational pivot to re-focus finance, resources and effort, which may mean de-prioritising or stopping some of the current change projects within Economic Statistics. We have worked closely with ESEG and the ARIES Programme over the last six months to discuss funding as this work aligns with the ARIES objectives. We will continue these discussions as part of the business planning process to secure funding for the 2023/24 financial year.

Dr Alex Lambert, Director of Surveys, Phillip Davies, Deputy Director of Business Surveys and Registers Transformation and Megan Mayell, Business Survey Strategy Lead, 20 March 2023

Integrated Data Service – Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the progress of the Integrated Data Programme (IDP), responsible for the delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board (the Board) are invited to note:
 - i. achievement of an amber rating for the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) Gateway 4 review;
 - ii. endorsement for the IDS data and technical architecture at the cross-Whitehall Data and Technology Architecture Design Authority (DTADA);
 - iii. the programme’s overall delivery status remains at amber.

Background

3. The IDS is planned to enter Public Beta service in March 2023.

Discussion

4. Updates of relevance include:

Milestone progression

5. The IPA Gateway 4 Assurance Review took place between 20 and 23 February 2023 and investigated the readiness to make the transition to a Public Beta service release.
6. The programme received an amber status, achieving a stipulated funding condition of the Full Business Case refresh as noted in February’s paper.
7. Following the submission to achieve Digital Economy Act (DEA) accreditation for the IDS, the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) assessors have reviewed the Security and Data Capability evidence packs and provided feedback that is now being implemented within the programme.
8. As part of this, the Authority’s site visits were conducted on 13 and 14 March, the programme is expecting to receive a decision on the DEA accreditation status imminently.
9. The Safe Outputs capability remains on track to be in place for new users in time for the March Public Beta release. The technical solutions that underpin the delivery of “Safe Outputs” solutions are in testing.
10. The Department for Health and Social Care, who are also part of the Super Early Adopters (SEAs) work, successfully completed testing the security solution, a critical element of the Safe Outputs capability.
11. Programme delivery remains on track. All milestones are now RAG rated to provide better insight, with an overall amber rating.

Onboarding new users and data

12. The exploratory access provided to the SEAs has enabled a holistic understanding of the comprehensive dataset available via IDS. This understanding will be used to inform the development of substantive research project proposals over the coming months. Substantial progress has already been made in this regard:
 - i. Welsh language:
 - Members of the Knowledge and Analytical Services team at Welsh Government, supported by representatives from IDS and Census teams at the Office for National

Statistics (ONS), have been developing a workplan aimed at exploring the discrepancies in the self-reporting of Welsh language ability between Census 2021 and ONS survey data, specifically the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey. The IDS will be the platform on which the analysis is conducted.

- Darren Morgan, Head of Welsh Language Analysis at ONS, and the National Statistician for Wales have agreed for a paper, co-authored by ONS and Welsh Government (WG), to be published on the WG website in the first week of April.

ii. Department for Health and Social Care:

- An initial draft for a project proposal has been received, to construct a synthetic denominator to apply to model coefficients. This would need to publish outputs by the end of April and the feasibility of this is being urgently assessed in the context of other deliverables within that timeframe.

13. Insights gathered from SEAs continue to be taken forward as a priority by relevant areas of the programme, these have resulted in the following changes to improve usability:

- i. revised guidance on multifactor authentication, enabling users to securely access the IDS using both Google and Microsoft products, thereby providing greater flexibility for service users as this was previously Google only; and
- ii. a revised IDS User Guide, bringing together improved guidance on how to log into IDS, how to effectively use the analytical tooling in the IDS into one, comprehensive document.

Securing buy-in for the IDS: Cross-government engagement update

14. The IDS Programme Board has endorsed the engagement plan, which is now underway. This includes the first wave of departmental deep dives set up with senior stakeholders from several departments: Central Digital Data Office (CDDO), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Home Office, HMRC, Department for Education.

15. The second wave of departmental deep dives will include Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities and the Devolved Administration and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

16. The key principle of these sessions is to have in-depth conversations that offer:

- i. a clear articulation of the technical and data infrastructure that applies for the service;
- ii. clarity on the benefits to departments/users – while recognising that departments are often both providers and users; and
- iii. outline the asks on Departments to facilitate this data service and what is required to enable your own analysts to engage with the IDS.

17. Deep dives with CDDO and MoJ have taken place. The learnings from these have helped the programme to further understand the details that departments need from the IDS to enable collaboration and connectivity.

18. In parallel, the programme is engaging with key cross-government Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) boards to seek collaborative endorsement for the proposed architectural approaches.

19. The programme received positive endorsement on the data management model and technical infrastructure for the IDS from the DTADA in February and will now provide a regular item at that forum.

20. The programme will be presenting at the Chief Technology Officer Council on 31 March and the Chief Data Officer Council on 4 April. These meetings bring together a collaboration of peers from across Whitehall and devolved administrations. The

programme will then attend the Functional Leaders Group meeting on 9 May, providing endorsement is received from the two previous mentioned forums.

Reviewing the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

21. Jason Yaxley and Alison Pritchard will be meeting with Sian Jones, Non-Executive Director, the Authority, to reflect on the current KPIs and discuss how they can be further improved.

Alison Pritchard, Deputy National Statistician for Data Capability, 21 March 2023

ARIES Programme Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the progress of the ARIES programme, the learnings from its first year and details of the continued work to strengthen its delivery approach.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board (the Board) are invited to:
 - i. as we reflect a year into the refocused programme and Spending Review 21 (SR21) settlement, note the beneficial improvements delivered, key learnings, and ongoing actions to strengthen the programme;
 - ii. note progress against plan since the last update, our current key challenges and associated management action, and our latest delivery confidence assessment; and
 - iii. offer feedback and guidance in the context of alignment with wider Office for National Statistics (ONS) and UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) plans.

Background

3. The ARIES programme brings together the four pillars of the Authority Strategy 'Statistics for the Public Good' (Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive, Sustainable) with the transformation aims of the Economic, Social and Environmental Group. It remains a key strategic enabling programme for ONS with a vision to deliver an ambitious transformation.
4. At the start of the 2022/23 financial year, the programme was reset to align with the outcomes of the SR21 settlement. It consists of seven projects, each focussed on a combination of process enhancements, new measures, and risk reduction, with the aim of improving the quality and sustainability of our statistics.

Our first year in review

5. In our first year we have delivered several positive outcomes for stakeholders, including:
 - i. improved data for the Balance Sheet of Public Corporations into the Public Sector Finances release;
 - ii. new sub-national education output metrics in the Regional Accounts;
 - iii. improved understanding and transparency of our Research and Development (R&D) suite of statistics;
 - iv. successful introduction of scanner data for Rail Fares into Consumer Prices Index including owner-occupiers' housing costs; and
 - v. launch and parallel run of a new multi-mode, responsive and adaptive Transformed Labour Force Survey (LFS). With improvements in response rates, data quality, bias, and resilience compared to the current LFS.
6. We have also:
 - i. initiated seven projects, with four of them deep into implementation;
 - ii. engaged in two critical friend reviews, and three audits; and
 - iii. curated a breadth of intelligence and learning through our work.
7. Over this period, five critical systemic learnings have become clear and are being used to strengthen our delivery model, strategy, and practices going forward:
 - i. The inherent challenge in all projects is high. Most of projects involve levels of innovation, high degrees of intricacy, organisational change, and some are exposed to time sensitive publication window constraints.

- ii. Optimism bias in resourcing assumptions has had material adverse impacts on delivery. Many projects have suffered from optimistic resourcing assumptions in terms of the demand for change delivery skills and unrealistic demands for capacity to consume change in business teams.
- iii. All projects that put 'spades in the ground' this year, quickly discovered levels of complexity significantly in excess of initial expectations. All projects that have progressed deep into implementation have strengthened through the process. Projects still maturing are learning from them and are now more acutely aware and actively managing the critical assumptions underpinning their theory of change and forward plans.
- iv. Our ability to manage our 'capacity to deliver' is going to be critical to our success. Enabling partners facing multiple demands. Multiple competing priorities for capacity from business teams to consume change. Emerging needs and evolving priorities. In response, we are working with Portfolio to introduce simple "totality of change" tool through Q1 to improve our capability to proactively manage our capacity to deliver.
- v. Rigorous testing and diverse thinking have proven their weight in gold in assuring our work to date. Highlighted through the Prices and Labour Market projects, it has become clear independent expertise to assure the quality of our outputs and outcomes adds real value. It brings objectivity, diversity of thought and constructive challenge to provide greater levels of confidence in our deliveries. Examples include:
 - Throughout the transformation of consumer price statistics, we have engaged with numerous independent experts to review our data sources, methods, and strategy. The Advisory Panels for Consumer Prices - Stakeholder is chaired by Dame Kate Barker and includes a range of high-profile stakeholders including Bank of England, Royal Statistical Society, Trades Union Congress, and Which?. We have a separate Technical Panel which includes a range of international experts from other National Statistics Institutes (NSI), academics, and international organisations. We have also engaged regularly with other NSI and world leading experts such as Kevin Fox, Peter Levell, and Erwin Diewert to ensure that our methods are being developed in line with international best practice.
 - On the Transformed LFS, we have engaged Professor Paul Smith of the University of Southampton as a consultant throughout the development providing technical advice. We have also asked Tony Wilson (Institute of Employment Studies), Jonathan Portes and Michael O'Connor to help with the quality assurance, to "sense-check" the results and help with suggestions on methods (e.g. discontinuity analysis).
 - Business Statistics Transformation uses an expert group with representation from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Bank of England, NESTA and other Departments, including HMT, Go Science (Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy). In addition, Diane Coyle, Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge and an ONS fellow and member of our Economic Experts Working Group, provided independent expert review of the methods work for R&D Phase 1.

Progress against plan: January 2023 – March 2023

8. The programme has continued to make good progress through Quarter 4 of 2022/23 which marks the end of the programme's first year.
9. Last quarter, we reported six Level 0 milestones were forecast for completion during Quarter four. These were reported on track but with several milestones wrestling with challenges. Of these six, two have been delivered in full, one partially delivered, one on track, and two delayed.

10. An Internal Audit took place in February focused on Governance and Decision Making, Assurance, Benefits Management, and Follow-up actions arising from the March 2022 Critical Friend Review. It recognised a lot of good pockets of practice in place with respect to internal and external assurance activities, with strong assurance around impacts on National Accounts. However, the report assigned a 'limited' rating based on the observation that the programme would benefit from strengthening the structure, clarity, and auditability of its assurance plans. All actions will be closed in line with the timescales of the report. These will be tracked at the ARIES Programme Board.

Current key challenges and delivery confidence assessment

11. As with any complex programme, we regularly encounter tough challenges. The table below summarises those that are noteworthy and what we are doing to address them.

Project(s)	Challenge	Management action
Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS)	Due to delays to the field mode, resourcing challenges, increased time needed to assure outputs, and the need to protect the time required to successfully transition internal and external users the existing parallel run needs to be extended	As of 17 March, ONS's Portfolio and Investment Committee (PIC) formally agreed a 2-quarter extension for the parallel run.
Legacy Reduction (Ingres)	Interventions are needed to address the challenges of a highly integrated technology estate, tightly coupled to outputs and a very congested change agenda.	Proposals agreed with National Statistician Teams and PIC for an alternative approach to co-ordination of legacy reduction work at an enterprise level and options for resequencing and/or accelerating change have been commissioned.

12. In February, the ARIES Programme Board assessed the Delivery Confidence Assessment as Amber, with the following supporting rationale:

- i. given good progress to date;
- ii. our continued success in navigating several significant challenges;
- iii. our planned management action for current challenges;
- iv. a strong belief across teams and stakeholders that the programme is genuinely learning and strengthening at the pace required; and
- v. re-baselining of the programme associated with the Full Business Case.

Leveraging the Full Business Case (FBC)

13. Building on our 'Q3 reforecasting work' and, as noted in this update, the FBC is providing us with the opportunity to:

- i. account for critical learnings from the past year, including reducing optimism bias;
- ii. impact of higher levels of inflation and the second-quarter extension of the Transformation LFS parallel run;
- iii. create improved alignment with enabling partners across cost, time, and quality of delivery;
- iv. build in time and funding to ensure we have the right internal and external assurance into our plans going forwards; and
- v. re-baseline several Level 0 milestones to reflect learning into our plans, resulting in more plausible (but still very challenging) milestones.

Conclusion

14. ARIES 2.0 is the latest chapter in ONS's journey to transform how we provide economic statistics following the "Bean Report" in 2016.
15. Over its first year it has delivered several beneficial outcomes for stakeholders, as summarised in this update.
16. It is a complex programme and not without challenge. Our approach as a programme is to confront reality head on, learning on purpose, with purpose and at pace. In doing so, we build new knowledge and remove optimism bias.
17. This new knowledge is already being used to cross-pollinate improvements between projects and will continue to evolve throughout the life of the programme, strengthening its foundations across three dimensions:
 - i. Business Foundations –improvements in the robustness of our benefit estimates, cost estimates, and security of funding.
 - ii. Delivery Foundations – improvements in designs and plans based on learning to date through the planning, design, implementation of existing projects.
 - iii. Management Foundations – improvements to the processes, practices, and skills used to manage and assure the work of the programme in a way that continuously builds trust and confidence in our many stakeholders.
18. The programme remains confident, but not complacent.

Jason Zawadzki, Director, Economic Statistics Change and Senior Responsible Officer for ARIES 2.0. 20 March 2023