

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes
Thursday 9 March 2023
Via Videoconference

Members Present

Professor David Hand (Chair)
Professor Paul Allin
Dame Kate Barker
Professor Paul Boyle
Owen Brace
Professor Diane Coyle
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Ed Humpherson
Professor David Martin
Professor Ann Phoenix
Sir Bernard Silverman
Stian Westlake

In attendance

Kate Davies (for item 3)
Tony Dent (for item 2)
Ruth Studley (for item 3)
Becky Tinsley (for item 3)

Secretariat

Tom Marsh
Kerri Gourley

Apologies

Robert Bumpstead
Professor Jane Falkingham
Dame Moira Gibb

1. Minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Rob Bumpstead, Professor Jane Falkingham and Dame Moira Gibb. The minutes from the meeting of 5 December 2022 were agreed and all actions were reviewed.
- 1.2 Paul Allin provided an update on the establishment of the Royal Statistical Society's Forum of Statistics User Groups. The group held its first meeting on 8 March 2023 and was created to support and develop a thriving user community and increase the use and usefulness of official statistics.

2. Discussion with User (Tony Dent)

- 2.1 Tony Dent, Director, Better Statistics CIC joined the committee to talk about his perspective as a user of statistics. Tony updated members on the creation and operation of Better Statistics CIC alongside the role and membership of its advisory group.
- 2.2 Tony presented a set of slides which highlighted several areas of potential improvement across the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority), including the usefulness of the NSEUAC material published on the Authority website, and encouraged the committee to be more transparent to encourage involvement from users.
- 2.3 Members then discussed the ONS website specifically, areas for improvement and Owen Brace provided an update on the broader efforts to improve user engagement and thanked Tony for his continued contributions on this topic.
- 2.4 Members considered whether the committee could increase its impact by discussing topics thematically, agreed further in advance, allowing members to engage with other user groups they represent in advance of the committee meetings. Members also discussed whether the committee may benefit from an in person meeting.

3. Post Census Consultation [NSEUAC(23)01]

- 3.1 Ruth Studley provided an update on progress towards the delivery of the 'Consultation on the future of population and social statistics' and 2023 Recommendation and discussed the scope, purpose and approach to the consultation. Members heard that the aim of this work is to produce more timely statistics that shape our knowledge of the UK population.
- 3.2 Overall, members expressed their support for the material presented in the paper, and emphasised the importance of this work and additionally made the following points:
 - i. the consultation must keep all options open, and maintain the possibility that the UK undertakes another census, as it did in 2021;
 - ii. whether 12 weeks was a sufficient amount of time to open the consultation, especially over the summer;
 - iii. ONS must recognise that, if the decision is made to no longer conduct a census, some aspects of statistical measurement will be difficult to achieve through administrative data alone and ONS must be clear about what they are;
 - iv. ONS should carefully consider how it communicates messages with users and privacy groups on the increased use of administrative data from multiple

- government sources, potentially in place of a census, making clear the ethical and security protections ascribed to citizens' data; and
- v. ONS should continue its good work collaborating with the Devolved Administrations, bringing consistency and harmonisation wherever possible
- 3.3 Ian Diamond reassured members that ONS recognised the importance of this work, and is resourcing it accordingly, and that he, and the UK Statistics Authority Board, were very clear that this would be a real consultation, including the option of conducting another census. It was also noted that while administrative data will provide limitations in some areas, equally, it will enable ONS to significantly improve its measurement in other areas and choices will have to be made.
 - 3.4 Ruth Studley thanked members for their engagement and supportive feedback, confirming that it would be fed into the development of the consultation and asked the expert members to be ambassadors for the consultation.
 - 3.5 Members heard that extensive pre-consultation activity was underway to ensure contributors were already thinking about their input and that ONS were utilising the existing UK-wide governance to ensure the Devolved Administrations were involved as this work develops.
- 4. **Report on Impact of NSEUAC [NSEUAC(23)02]**
 - 4.1 In the absence of Rob Bumpstead, Tom Marsh presented a paper highlighting the positive feedback from members of ONS on the impact NSEUAC had on their work since engaging with the committee.
 - 4.2 Members agreed with the paper's findings and were reassured the committee was adding value in line with its Terms of Reference.
- 5. **Forward Agenda**
 - 5.1 David Hand asked members to consider the forward agenda included in the paper and consider any additional items by correspondence.
- 6. **Any other business**
 - 6.1 The next meeting would take place on Thursday 8 June 2023.