

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

Thursday 27 July 2023
London Office

Hybrid Meeting

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Robert Chote (Chair)

Dr Jacob Abboud

Professor Sir John Aston

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Ed Humpherson

Sian Jones

Alison Pritchard

Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter

Penny Young

Also in attendance

Owen Abbott (for item 8)

Robert Bumpstead

Holly Baldwin (shadowing)

Philippa Bonay (for item 9)

Sally Jones (Secretariat)

Sarah Moore

Emma Rourke (for item 8)

Ruth Studley (for item 8)

Tom Taylor

Will Marks (for item 11)

Jason Yaxley (for item 10)

Apologies

Professor Dame Carol Propper

Nora Nanayakkara

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Professor Dame Carol Propper and Nora Nanayakkara.

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 29 June were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(23)44]

- 4.1 Non-Executive Directors had met prior to the Board meeting. They had discussed the senior level structure of the organisation, ahead of a further discussion scheduled in September.
- 4.2 On 24 July Sir Robert Chote and Professor Sir Ian Diamond had attended a meeting with Simon Case, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, to discuss the breadth and delivery of work by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Topics discussed included the review of public sector productivity, progress of delivery of the Integrated Data Service programme and the ongoing consultation regarding ONS' plans for the transformation of population and migration statistics. The implications of the ONS funding model in such areas as public health monitoring was also discussed.
- 4.3 Sir Robert had delivered a speech at the Local Government Association conference on 5 July, which included a question and answer session covering a range of issues including the consultation on population and migration statistics.
- 4.4 Sir Robert informed the meeting that he had agreed to join a conference committee for an event being led by Better Statistics Community Interest Company (CIC) in September. The outcome would inform the ongoing review of the Authority by Professor Denise Lievesley.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(23)45]

- 5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:
- i. as part of the review of the Authority Prof. Lievesley continued a programme of stakeholder engagement, which included attendance at Sir Ian's senior leadership team meeting, the Analysis Function Board meeting and at the International Statistics Institute's World Statistics Congress;
 - ii. completion of the work on business planning, with Sir Ian and the senior leadership team concluding prioritisation decisions ensuring statistical quality remained central to delivery of an agreed set of outputs within budget for this financial year. There were some areas of work that would be discontinued. Directors General were in the process of finalising the underpinning operational plan;
 - iii. Sir Ian had attended a workshop facilitated by Megan Cooper, Deputy Director Finance and Planning to discuss non-delivery of a small number of targets for the financial year 2022/23. It was noted that in some cases targets had been very ambitious and stretching and only narrowly missed and others were due to a reliance on delivery by third parties;
 - iv. the work by ONS to lead a cross government Public Sector Service Productivity Review with confirmation of funding by HM Treasury;
 - v. an enquiry by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) regarding future COVID-19 and respiratory infection public health monitoring. The COVID-19 and Respiratory Infections Survey, which had formally closed on 30 June, had allowed ONS to develop an infrastructure in-house to support future surveillance as needed, subject to the appropriate level of funding;
 - vi. the launch on 5 July of ONS's UK Measures of National Well-being dashboard;
 - vii. Sir Ian had met the Secretary of State for Education covering plans for migration statistics and future work on the analysis of skills in the IDS; and
 - viii. a launch event at the Manchester office with Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester Combined Authority, as speaker highlighting the engagement with ONS Local.

5.2 Board members discussed the update and commended the work on business planning, particularly the collegiate approach by Sir Ian and the senior leadership team to stop or pause specific areas of work to ensure ONS maintained delivery and quality. Decisions had been informed by user insight. Members also welcomed the new ONS National Well-being dashboard.

6. Report from the Director-General for Regulation [SA(23)46]

6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity, highlighting the launch of a number of publications by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). On 6 July as part of OSR's programme of enhanced scrutiny of economic statistics, OSR published the first output on *ONS Producer Price Inflation Statistics*. On 12 July a report was published on *Data sharing and Linkage for the Public Good*.

6.2 Board members commended OSR on the Data Sharing report noting the clarity of the conclusion and concise set of actionable recommendations.

6.3 Ed Humpherson had also attended the recent International Statistics Institute's World Statistics Congress noting that it had focussed on data ethics and misinformation with the UK statistical system being world leading and referred to throughout the event as a source of expertise and practical experience.

7. Report from the Chair of the Regulation Committee Chair

7.1 The Chair reported on the work of the Regulation Committee which had last met on 13 July.

7.2 The Committee had considered:

- i. the progress of work by National Records Scotland to meet the requirements of OSR's assessment report published in April of the 2022 Census in Scotland. OSR had reported good progress by NRS of their compliance with the Code of Practice. The decision on National Statistics designation would be considered by the Committee in September;
- ii. a draft Assessment Report on Accident and Emergency Activity Statistics in Scotland, produced by Public Health Scotland;
- iii. progress of the National Statistics Designation Review with agreement on the preferred designs of badges for official statistics and official statistics in development, which would be included in the public consultation in the Code of Practice Stocktake scheduled in the autumn;
- iv. progress of OSR's ongoing review of census gender identity data;
- v. resourcing work in preparation for any potential surge in activity;
- vi. a draft report of the Annual Review of Authority Casework 2022/23; and
- vii. the annual review of effectiveness of the Committee.

7.3 Members welcomed the update and discussed the work by the International Steering Group, set up by National Records of Scotland in May 2022, providing external assurance and expert advice on the Scotland Census 2022.

8. Excess Mortality Review [SA(23)47]

8.1 Ruth Studley provided the Board with an update on progress in developing a single cross-government method for assessing excess mortality.

8.2 The Board heard that the ONS led an expert working group to make a recommendation to the National Statistician on a single methodology for assessing excess mortality. The expert working group comprised of members from across the Government Statistical Service. The group had considered a long list of viable methods for defining the baseline.

8.3 It was noted that feedback from the Methodological Assurance Review panel, commissioned to provide an independent review of the approach adopted, had overall been positive with formal recommendations to follow.

8.4 Board members discussed the update. The following points were considered in discussion:

- i. the process in reaching the shortlisted methods;

- ii. concern regarding the broader issue of the impact of registration delays compared to using deaths by occurrence on mortality statistics in England and Wales due the disparity in the coronary processes across the UK. This issue continued to be a focus for Sir Ian and Emma Rourke who had recently met the Chief Coroner of England and Wales; and
- iii. on completion of the work the need for effective communications to users setting out clearly the strengths and limitations of the different models and the recommended approach.

8.5 It was noted that subject to feedback from the National Statistician, further developments would continue throughout August focussing on a number of areas and further discussions with coroners across the UK to help in reporting and minimise registration delays across the four nations. An implementation plan would be agreed in September.

9. People Update [SA(23)48]

- 9.1 Philippa Bonay provided the Authority Board with an update on the work across the organisation to mitigate the Authority's strategic people risk and support delivery of the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good. An update was also provided on the Authority's approach to handling employee concerns.
- 9.2 The Board heard that the ONS were among winners of the annual Glassdoor Employees' Choice Awards in the UK's top 50 best places to work. The organisation's Disability Confident Leader status had been renewed until 2026, and the ONS had been shortlisted for the Chartered Institute of Personal Development People Management Awards 2023 in the category of Best Flexible Working Initiative.
- 9.3 A sustainable approach to estates across all sites continued with the opening of the central Manchester office in January 2023. The Manchester office and the Darlington Economic campus provided the opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration attracting critical skillsets for the organisation.
- 9.4 Trade Union relations across the Civil Service had improved following the package of measures by the Cabinet Office in June 2023. Departments were enabled to make a £1500 one off, non-consolidated payment which was implemented quickly across the organisation.
- 9.5 The People Plan focussed in three areas: strategic resourcing; inclusion and diversity; and skills. It was noted that in recent months the strategic resourcing approach had focussed on aligning financial budgets with the organisations' people resources. Resourcing control processes had been reviewed and deployment of colleagues had been increased where there was an appropriate skills match to priority work. Progress had been made across all organisational inclusion and diversity targets.
- 9.6 Board members discussed the update and highlighted the need for clarity, following discussion by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in June, of the extent to which the Executive was concerned about the budgetary challenge for this financial year; the need for a significant headcount reduction; and the ability of the workforce planning approach to deal with the issue. Members discussed to what extent the planned audit on resource management scheduled for discussion at September Audit and Risk Assurance Committee would provide the assurance needed.
- 9.7 Sir Ian and Tom Taylor acknowledged the scale of the challenge and highlighted a number of points. As with any National Statistical Institute following a census collection there was a need for a reduction in headcount and budget. In addition, as reported to the Board previously in the financial year 2022/23, the organisation had not received £10 million at the supplementary estimate point as expected, and for this financial year the organisation would have to absorb inflationary pressure.
- 9.8 In order to address these issues Sir Ian and Tom Taylor alongside the senior leadership team had undertaken a rigorous business planning exercise, including the introduction of resourcing controls. It was clarified that the aim had not been to achieve the entire headcount reduction

exclusively through a reduction in contractors, (albeit the organisation had reduced its contingent labour through the controls in place), deployment, redeployment, efficiency savings, business survey transformation and automation were part of a range of levers being implemented to address the issue. Sir Ian informed the Board that he was confident that the budget would be met and while the headcount challenge was a concern Sir Ian remained confident but not complacent.

9.9 The Board noted the update and welcomed the award received by the organisation.

10. Integrated Data Service [SA(23)49]

10.1 Alison Pritchard and Jason Yaxley provided the Authority Board with an update on the Integrated Data Programme, responsible for delivery of the IDS.

10.2 Jason Yaxley reported that meeting the requirements of the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP) to achieve Digital Economy Act Accreditation and increasing the number of use cases and accredited users was a key focus for the programme. The next Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) Gateway Review was scheduled at the beginning of October, aligning with further Business Case discussions with HM Treasury.

10.3 Alison Pritchard highlighted that as the application for interim Digital Economy Act (DEA) accreditation had failed in June the programme would not resubmit an application for DEA accreditation unless all controls were 'green'.

10.4 Board members discussed the update. The following points were considered in discussion:

- i. that it was critical that the programme took the time needed to ensure all controls were 'green' before resubmitting an application for DEA accreditation;
- ii. delivery confidence of the Programme Senior Responsible Owner that all controls would be met to resubmit the application for DEA accreditation in September, and if not feasible it was noted that the next opportunity would be at the December RAP meeting;
- iii. development of the data pipeline with new datasets expected in the coming months; and
- iv. the programme's hope that following a meeting on 10 July by the Departmental Directors of Analysis up to four new use case in areas where linked data could enhance public policy had been identified with the potential for progress in these areas through the IDS.

10.5 The Board would continue to remain engaged as the work progressed.

11. Strategy Mid-term Review [SA(23)50]

11.1 Will Marks provided the Authority Board with an update on progress towards the mid-term review of the Authority strategy, Statistics for the Public Good.

11.2 The mid-term review included the evaluation of what ambitious, inclusive and sustainable meant in 2023, and looked ahead at the remaining and emerging challenges for the rest of the period. The conclusion of the work was a proposed focus on key themes including: a greater focus on the effective communication of statistics; improving awareness of statistics; improving statistical literacy in partnership with others; the emerging role of both automation and artificial intelligence within the statistical and analytical system.

11.3 The Board welcomed the update and endorsed the areas of focus. It was agreed that further information would be provided for the Board setting out the underpinning activities across the areas of focus including large language models such as ChatGPT. The Board agreed there was no need to delay the strategy review given the ongoing Cabinet Office review of the Authority, and its findings now be disseminated.

12. Board Effectiveness Review [SA(23)51]

12.1 Sally Jones introduced a paper which covered the results of the Authority Board's self review of effectiveness highlighting the key issues raised and proposed improvements.

- 12.2 The Board is invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis to identify where it is performing well and where improvement might be made. The analysis highlighted sustained improvement over the last year. The Chair continued to provide an open and supportive culture to allow an inclusive environment for discussion. The Board had considered strategic issues with papers focussing on delivery of the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good including progress of delivery of the Integrated Data Service Programme and the transformation of economic statistics.
- 12.3 Members discussed the results and highlighted the need for clarity of papers setting out the challenges and areas of concern for the Executive. There was a general consensus that the Board met with the correct frequency. It was agreed that the format of the agenda and frequency of regular updates to the Board on different topics would be considered. It was noted that hybrid meetings offered the right level of flexibility.

13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 Sir Ian congratulated Professor Sir John Aston on the recommendation by the Royal Statistical Society Council as choice for the next RSS president in January 2025.
- 13.2 The next meeting of the UK Statistics Authority Board will be on 28 September.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

27 July 2023, 11.00-14.00
London Boardroom, Hybrid Meeting

Chair: Sir Robert Chote

Apologies: Nora Nanayakkara, Prof. Dame Carol Propper

Attendees: Philippa Bonay (for item 7), Will Marks (for item 9), Emma Rourke (for item 6), Ruth Studley (for item 6), Jason Yaxley (for item 8),

NED Session: 10.30- 11.00

1 11.00-11.05 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 27 June 2023
2 11.05-11.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(23)44 Sir Robert Chote
3 11.15-11.40 25 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(23)45 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 11.40-11.50 10 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(23)46 Ed Humpherson
5 11.50-12.00 10 mins	Report from Committee Chair Regulation Committee	Oral update Penny Young
6 12.00-12.20 20 mins	Excess Mortality Review	SA(23)47 Emma Rourke Ruth Studley
12.20-12.25 5 mins	Break	
7 12.25-12.50 25 mins	People Update	SA(23)48 Philippa Bonay
8 12.50-13.10 20 mins	Integrated Data Service	SA(23)49 Alison Pritchard Jason Yaxley
9 13.10-13.30 20 mins	Strategy Mid-term Review	SA(23)50 Will Marks
10 13.30-13.45 15 mins	Board Effectiveness Review	SA(23)51 Sally Jones
11 13.45-13.50 5 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 28 September 2023, Cardiff

Chair's Report, July 2023

Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board with an overview of the Chair's activity in late June and July.

Review of recent activities

2. On 28 June, I spoke at the launch event for Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) State of the Statistical System report, an annual report which provides commentary on the main opportunities and challenges facing producers over the last year. The report found that the system continues to perform strongly, responding to different social and economic issues but should be prepared for increasing financial and resourcing challenges.
3. As part of Evidence Week in Parliament, I appeared on a panel with Dame Margaret Hodge MP, Katherine Fletcher MP and Professor Paul Dolan on the topic of trade-offs in decision making. In my introductory remarks, I encouraged policy-makers to communicate their intentions and objectives clearly when proposing decisions that affect behaviour or spend public money, drawing on OSR's principles of intelligent transparency. The panel reconvened on Times Radio later that week to discuss the topic again.
4. I also gave a plenary speech at the Local Government Association conference on 5 July discussing some of the ways in which the Authority engages local government including the census, Office for National Statistics (ONS) Local, the Integrated Data Service and the Health Index. I also encouraged participation in the population statistics consultation over the summer. The Question-and-Answer session that followed demonstrated the ongoing interest in and demand for data by this group, asking questions on housing projections, environmental and economic analysis, and how to tackle misuse of statistics.
5. On 6 July, I presented the Champion Award for Excellence in Official Statistics to the Department of Education at the Royal Statistical Society Awards. The ONS Census teams were highly commended for their innovative release of 2021 Census outputs.
6. On 12 July I met with Tony Dent and Phyllis Macfarlane from the Better Statistics CIC where we discussed the independent review of the UK Statistics Authority and their plans for a seminar in September.
7. I also held my regular catch-ups with the National Statistician, Director General for Regulation, Chief of Staff, Deputy Chair, and the Chairs of the Regulation and Audit and Risk Assurance Committees.

Casework and correspondence

8. On 4 July, I wrote to Robert Jenrick MP regarding statistics on asylum seekers.

Sir Robert Chote, Chair, 20 July 2023

Chief Executive's Report, July 2023

Purpose

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

Summary

2. This month has seen the launch of our consultation on the future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales. Alongside this, we have reached critical milestones in our plans to radically transform the Labour Force Survey and continue to build our capability and innovative uses of administrative data through an exciting national wellbeing release. This month, I am also particularly proud that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been externally recognised for its ambition, through our receipt of a Royal Statistical Society Champion award for our work on census dissemination, and for its inclusivity, with the ONS maintaining its status as a Disability Confident Leader.

Review of recent activities

3. The Public Call for Evidence has now closed in the **UK Statistics Authority** (the Authority) **Review** and Professor Denise Lievesley continues to gather evidence via stakeholder interviews. This month she will be joining an ONS senior leadership team meeting, a meeting of the Analysis Function Directors, and an ONS staff panel. The Policy Liaison Unit is leading the Authority's engagement with the Review Team to oversee and coordinate information requests.
4. We have now laid before Parliament our **Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23**, on 11 July, two days ahead of schedule. The report reflects our continued achievements, evidences our successful management of the financial risks that emerged in Q3 2022/23, and was produced ahead of schedule despite some last-minute technical audit challenges. It comes with an unqualified (i.e., "clean") audit opinion from the Comptroller and Auditor General.
5. The **Welsh Affairs Committee** visited the Newport office on 13 July, hearing from Mike Keogh and Libby Richards about our workforce in Newport and ONS local and coherence work in relation to Wales.
6. On the 7 July, the Chief Statisticians of the Devolved Administrations and I met at the **Inter Administration Committee** to discuss progress made on producing comparable health statistics and other cross-UK coherence initiatives. Excellent work is being made, but collaborative efforts are needed to ensure future support for this approach.
7. This month saw our Communications and Digital Publishing and Census Outputs teams "highly commended" by the **Royal Statistical Society Champion Awards** for their entry into the Excellence in Official Statistics category. The award recognises outstanding developments that improve the user experience. Our entry centred on innovative use of Census 2021 content. The judges said: "The team behind the 2021 Census in England and Wales ... produced a range of products to ensure the results were accessible to different audiences – including statistical bulletins, a census dictionary, interactive maps and engagement via the media. In a unique innovation, a 'create a custom dataset' tool was developed to release billions of anonymised census statistics more quickly than before." Dev Virdee, Chair of the Champion Award committee, said "the entry is a real showcase of government statisticians going above and beyond in their commitment to meeting user needs."
8. We are delighted to have been awarded a further three years of official accreditation as a **Disability Confident Leader**. This accreditation is given for our inclusive approach towards colleagues with disabilities and is a significant achievement that recognises our efforts in inclusive practices in recruitment and providing an inclusive working environment.

9. In addition, we have been shortlisted for the **Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development People Management Awards 2023** in the category of Best Flexible Working Initiative. This is recognition of our hard work and colleague-centred approach to ensuring we are an organisation that is inclusive and provides a great working environment for our colleagues.
10. On 29 June, we launched the **consultation on the future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales**. Over 250 stakeholders attended launch events in London and Cardiff, which were followed by three webinars to set out more of the technical details for audiences, including local authorities and charity and community groups. Alongside the events, we undertook extensive engagement to alert organisations and the public to the consultation and raise awareness of how to respond. We sent out emails and notifications to around 20,000 stakeholders, including promoting our Statistically Speaking Podcast episode and our video that explain our transformation journey. On the morning of the 29 June, we secured an op-ed in the Times flagging the launch of the proposals and welcoming views. Media coverage and feedback so far has been constructive and has encouraged individuals to take part.
11. To support the consultation launch, our Population Statistics Directorate have released **additional evidence** (over 20 articles) including Local Authority case studies, Dynamic Population model admin-based population estimates (as Experimental Statistics), admin-based international migration estimates, daytime populations and characteristics. Alongside this, the census outputs phase three has been progressing, including National Parks Geographies published.
12. The **COVID-19 and Respiratory Infections Survey (CRIS)** was formally closed-down on Friday 30 June 2023. The final releases were published on 10 July on the topics of Long COVID, impacts of respiratory infections, and survey methodology. CRIS has allowed ONS to develop a unique infrastructure in-house to support future pandemic preparedness and a unique social survey relating to health in the community which can be expanded to incorporate biological sampling, if needed. Insights from this study and the COVID-19 Infection Survey are being utilised within our Wellcome Trust funded Pandemic Preparedness Toolkit project.
13. We have been developing the delivery plan for a proposed **Public Service Productivity measurement review** which builds on and seeks to extend our work in this area. This will be presented to a joint steering group on 20 July. Pursuit of the review is funding dependant; we are hoping to confirm by end-July.
14. On 3 July an important milestone was hit for the **Transformed Labour Force Survey** when we shared an initial set of data with key stakeholders. This is to get early feedback on the results of the new survey and inform and help with the on-going quality assurance.
15. On 6 July, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) published its inaugural **Spotlight on Quality report of the Producer Price Indices**. The ONS published a response to the OSR report which welcomed the findings and sets out some of the work already underway to address requirements, such as a wider ONS strategy to move the production of statistics away from the Ingres relational database, and to migrate business surveys from paper-based collection to electronic collection. We plan to update users on our plans to address the issues raised in this report in September.
16. July also saw the publication of our first ever quarterly estimates of **greenhouse gas emissions** (on a residence basis) for Q1 of 2023, part of our GDP & Beyond work. Environment indicators also feature strongly on the relaunched [Measuring National Wellbeing dashboard](#) and accompanying [article](#), following consultation feedback.
17. Colleagues have developed an initial **proof of concept web application** that complements the ONS website. The app generates a series of relevant links and summarised text in response to natural human questions. In the future it could conceptually augment the more traditional search functionality on the ONS website. Currently named 'StatsChat', the product has two components. One component is an enhanced search functionality which utilises the latest algorithms to

generate recommendations for the user. The second component uses generative AI to 'read' the relevant documents and provide a summary answer to the question.

18. This month also saw the launch of our new [Survey Development Toolkit](#) on the Analysis Function website. This has been developed to support the professions in applying an Agile approach to survey design and development and was a collaboration between the Data Quality Hub and the Harmonisation teams.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, July 2023

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(22)46

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

20. Our main areas of focus since the last Board meeting have been:

- i. **Data linkage report:** We published our report '[Data sharing and Linkage for the Public Good](#)' on 12 July.
- ii. **Sex and Gender/Gender Identity:** We are continuing to work on our review of census gender identity data and highlighted in our [letter to ONS](#) that we will conclude our review following the publication of the remaining articles. We are also revising our guidance on collecting and reporting data about sex in official statistics.
- iii. **National Statistics Designation Review:** At Regulation Committee this month we discussed badges and with some edits agreed a set to move forward with in consultation with producers and users.
- iv. **Enhanced Scrutiny of Economic Statistics Programme:** We published the first key [ONS Producer Price Inflation Statistics](#) output in July. We propose the next assessment should be of Profitability of UK companies' statistics and the statistics on the Gross Operating Surplus of private non-financial corporations published by ONS as part of the National Accounts. We are also starting to engage with stakeholders about economic statistics classifications following concerns raised around the independence of classification decisions and the risk of political interference, whether real or perceived, in public sector classifications.
- v. **State of the Statistical System 2022/23:** This was [published](#) on 28 June. We also hosted a launch event with over 100 attendees (despite UK wide technical difficulties affecting teams that meant many others could not join). We also published [OSR's Guide to the UK Statistical System](#). Both documents have been well received and we have shared a recording of the launch event with those who were unable to join the event live.

Casework

21. We have received 84 cases so far in 2023/24. Since the last Board meeting, we received concerns regarding children in poverty, Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZ), minimum unit pricing, emissions, and cancer screenings.
22. We have closed 13 cases since the last meeting. The Chair responded publicly to [Robert Jenrick MP](#) regarding asylum backlog statistics. We responded privately on teacher numbers, energy trends, ULEZ, affordable homes and problem gambling rates. On the Home Office, the Chair has now received a reply from the Home Secretary, proposing a meeting with a Home Office Minister (Lord Murray).
23. On problem gambling rates, the Gambling Commission (GC) recently highlighted an issue where the latest [National Health Service Digital \(NHSD\) Health Survey for England 2021](#) Official Statistics on gambling behaviour had been used in a misleading way by the Betting and Gaming Council (BGC). They had compared 2021 figures with 2018 figures in a press release despite both NHSD and GC informing them of the caveats on avoiding comparisons between the two years. We met with BGC, informed them of our remit and asked them to amend their press release to be clear that NHSD advised against direct comparisons with previous Health Survey data because of the difference in methodology and data collection used during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, in consultation with us, they changed their press release later in the day. This has avoided the need to send a public letter which demonstrates great impact we have had with an industry body and user of official statistics.

24. We also submitted a first draft of the Casework report to the Regulation Committee this month. We will finalise the report for publication in September.

Wider reach

25. Suzanne Halls and Anna Price ran a training session on intelligent transparency for Sense About Science's [Evidence Week in Parliament](#). There were about 30 attendees from a wide range of backgrounds – researchers, analysts, communications professionals, and others working in a variety of government departments, organisations and for MPs at Westminster. We had some great questions on communicating limitations, UK-wide comparisons, and impartiality.
26. I was invited to deliver a keynote address at the Public Finance Live annual conference this month and discussed how to build (and how to destroy) trust in evidence and data. I joined the opening Evidence Week in Parliament session and used it as an opportunity to highlight the work of OSR. I also presented at the National Statistician's Data Ethics Committee this month at the request of the ethics committee. Feedback from the chair was that the examples were excellent, and the committee was pleased with my clear and open input.
27. The Royal Statistical Society's Trustworthiness, Quality and Value Awards were held this month where we [announced the 2023 winner](#) for the Statistical Excellence Award in Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV) was Fable Data. Fable Data sources anonymous consumer and small-to-medium-enterprise spending data from banks across Europe for use in commercial and policy research. Fable used the principles of TQV to create the 'Data for Good programme,' encouraging new opportunities for combining and extrapolating economic insights for key institutions. These included HM Treasury, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Deutsche Bundesbank.
28. I attended the International Statistics Institute's World Statistics Congress in Ottawa last week. I participated in three sessions: I spoke at a session on statistical leadership, and another on trust in statistics; and I chaired a session on customer value-based strategies for assessing the value of statistics. OSR's Head of Research also contributed to this last session, presenting our own work to understand how people value statistics and how this relates to statistics delivering public good.

Issues on my mind

29. We continue to contribute constructive input into the Cabinet Office review of the UK Statistics Authority. Denise Lievesley met with several OSR colleagues this month to understand their perspective of how the governance arrangements work in practice, as well as answering a number of other questions from Denise informing the review. We are also providing written information to Denise on request, for example on the volume of casework we have handled over the last three years.
30. I highlighted to the Regulation Committee this month that OSR is facing significant finance pressures. As a result, we have relooked at our resource budget and will temporarily hold back recruitment for some positions that are currently vacant.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 19 July 2023

Excess Mortality Method Development

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on progress in developing a single cross-government method for assessing excess mortality.

Background

2. Excess mortality refers to the difference in observed numbers of rates of mortality compared to a baseline. Several different organisations across UK Government and the Devolved Administrations publish results on excess mortality, but several different methods are used.
3. To avoid confusion and ensure coherence across government, the Board commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to lead an expert working group to make a recommendation to the National Statistician on a single methodology that could be applied across the four nations of the UK, and at a local level. Additionally, there has been ministerial interest in this work, who will be briefed on the decision.

Discussion

4. The MARP were commissioned to provide an independent review and advice relating to the approach adopted.

Process

5. The expert working group was comprised of members from across the Government Statistical Service, including analysts and statisticians from ONS, OHID, National Records of Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, NHS Wales, Welsh Government, and experts from the Actuarial profession. We have also been working closely with relevant Heads of Profession (HoPs).
6. Much of the difference between various methods is driven by the selection of the baseline against which observed deaths are compared. The group considered a long list of 14 viable methods for defining the baseline, some of which themselves included several possible variants. The majority were rejected on one or more decision criteria, leaving a short-list of two methods.
7. The equally weighted shortlisting criteria are:
 - i. Be suitable at the levels of UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and, thus, include only data available and comparable for each.
 - ii. Be sufficiently transparent and easy to calculate for public understanding and replication by a range of interested stakeholders.
 - iii. Takes account of long-term mortality trends, demographic change (population size and age distribution) and expected seasonal variation in mortality.
 - iv. Be appropriate for reporting on all standard lengths of periods – annual, and more importantly, weekly and monthly.
 - v. Allows disaggregation by geography to at least lower tier local authority level.
 - vi. Allow disaggregation by sex and preferably other demographic characteristics for which data may be available.
 - vii. Allow calculation of a point estimate and interval measure of uncertainty.

Next Steps

8. Subject to feedback from the National Statistician, further developments will continue throughout August. These developments will focus on:
 - i. accounting for the effect of weekends and bank holidays;

- ii. determining the best way to treat the pandemic period;
- iii. investigating the impact of registration delays compared to using deaths by occurrence; and
- iv. further discussions with coroners across the UK to help ensure greater consistency in reporting and minimise registration delays across the four nations – this is likely to be recommended formally by MARP.

Ruth Studley, Director, Health Analysis and Pandemic Insights, July 2023

People Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides a People update to the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board), with a focus on the work taking place to mitigate our Strategic People Risk and support delivery of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) strategy - Statistics for the Public Good.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to note and comment on the continued development and success of the People Plan activities since its launch in 2020, and refresh in 2022, in support of the delivery of the Authority strategy.

Background

3. Following on from the People update provided in November 2022 (SA(22)63), we continue to make good progress against Strategic Risk 5, which remains within tolerance following the most recent discussions at People Committee in March 2023.
 - i. *SR5 'Our People': The UKSA is unable to attract, engage, retain, and deploy individuals with the best analytical and professional skills; we are unable to build a diverse and inclusive pool of talent; we are unable to build a workforce that is agile and adaptable to change; and/or we are unable to enhance the sustainability and wellbeing of our workforce.*

Discussion

4. The Board will be interested to know that we continue to receive strong external recognition for our work across the Authority, most notably having won a further two awards since our previous update. In January 2023, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) were among the winners of the annual Glassdoor Employees' Choice Awards, twenty-first in the UK's Top 50 Best Places to Work 2023. We are the only Civil Service department to make it onto the list in the nine years that Glassdoor have run this annual award in the UK, as well as the only organisation with its headquarters in Wales. Further recognition can be seen in the renewal of our Disability Confident Leader status until 2026, as well as the ONS being shortlisted for the Chartered Institute of Personal Development People Management Awards 2023 in the category of 'Best Flexible Working Initiative'.
5. Having been shortlisted in three other categories for Smarter Working Live (a cross public sector event), we won the overarching 'Beyond Smarter Working' award after being put forward by the judges in March 2023. This award is a combination of all Smarter Working Live awards and celebrates projects that combine various factors to achieve true smarter working excellence. Of particular recognition was the ONS' actions on wellbeing, office environment, hybrid working, enhanced technical support and leadership.
6. The Authority's sustainable estates approach has continued to go from strength to strength since our previous update, with continued strong working relationships with Government Property Agency (GPA). In January 2023, we opened a central Manchester office. This expansion aims to bring us closer to other government departments and universities for the purposes of collaboration, to help us attract critical and scarce skillsets for the organisation, and build on the levelling up agenda. As of 5 July 2023, we have recruited/have start dates for 49 new colleagues to Manchester, with a further 10 offers in the pipeline, and 52 internal transfers (across all grades); this will give us 101 individuals based at this location. Similar success can also be seen at our Darlington Economic Campus, where since opening we have exceeded our 2022/23 targets with 153 individuals now based there. With regards to our sustainability agenda, we have consolidated floor space in both Newport and Titchfield, improving cost and energy efficiencies as well as colleague wellbeing. This consolidation will continue to be monitored before any future commitments are made in relation to hand back of space to GPA in 2024.

7. The Board are asked to note full-time equivalent (FTE) projections in the below table, reflecting our SR21 position in addition to funding that has been received post SR21 settlement:

FTE Trajectory	31-Mar-23	31-Mar-24	31-Mar-25
	5,509	5,212	4,892

8. Our People Plan focuses efforts on the three priority areas required to support delivery of the Authority Strategy:
- i. Strategic Resourcing;
 - ii. Inclusion and Diversity; and
 - iii. Skills.

Strategic Resourcing

9. Overall turnover (which includes fixed term appointments and dismissals) within the Authority has maintained since our previous update, now at 14.5 per cent overall, with a continued decrease to both of our most critical skills groups to 14.5 per cent and 11.9 per cent for Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) and Analytical (our critical skills groups) respectively. “Voluntary turnover” for the Authority is at 12.4 per cent overall, with 13.5 per cent and 8.7 per cent for DDaT and Analytical respectively. Following an affordability review of our workforce plan, our fill rates¹ have also improved, now overall at 91.1 per cent. DDaT and Analytical fill rates have also increased, at 84.0 per cent and 91.7 per cent respectively. Whilst the improvements across both turnover and fill rates are positive, we continue to be mindful of the challenges in continuing to attract and retain scarce skills such as digital and analytical in the current labour market.
10. Focus has been given over recent months to ensuring that we align financial budgets with our people resources in an effective and sustainable way. To ensure these resourcing controls have effective longevity, we have reviewed our processes in this space and increased deployment of colleagues where there is an appropriate skills match to priority work and refined controls around external recruitment.
11. This approach maximises our use of internal skillsets and offers opportunities for development and progression; working with Heads of Profession in the deployment of individuals with the right skillsets and experience to prioritised workstreams and programmes where possible. This also allows closer alignment of financial and people resources and brings together our priorities and effective management of changes seen through the lifecycle of a programme. Recruitment of scarce or limited skillsets will continue where required. In relation to contingent labour engagement, we continue to manage down the costs associated with this, particularly considering financial pressures. We do still use this skills route to provide flexibility, supplement critical skill gaps and for specific areas of work; with part of the approval process for this including assurances around an exit strategy so that we are not permanently reliant on this relatively more costly form of resourcing.
12. Our Careers Microsite, due to launch late summer, is aimed at increasing attraction of scarce skills, entry talent and for those who may not currently be considering our organisation, or even the Civil Service, as an employer. Providing a more cohesive, innovative and future focused approach to attraction, it will present us as a modern employer with a wide range of opportunities. A particular focus of the site is on real colleague stories to promote us as an employer, providing direct insight into the organisation for prospective candidates. Alongside our various external awards, this should continue to ensure a solid pipeline for our critical skills.

Inclusion and Diversity

13. Inclusion remains a key strategic driver for the organisation, and one of the four Authority Strategy pillars. In our November 2022 update, we advised the Board of positive movement

¹ Fill rates refer to the percentage of our vacancies that are filled.

made across all our organisational targets (see SA(11)22), which we are pleased to update on the continued improvement. In December 2022, we reached gender parity at Grade 6, reducing the differential by 8.8 percentage points over 12 months. We continue to strive for gender parity at Senior Civil Service (SCS) also, which currently sits eight percentage points off at 42 per cent women.

14. Representation of individuals from an ethnic minority (EM) background continues to increase, now at 9.7 per cent (well above our travel to work area at 8.7 per cent), as well as disability representation which has increased to 17.2 per cent and LGB+ to 7.7 per cent. This demonstrates the positive impact of our attraction approach, talent acquisition, and entry talent programmes.
15. As mentioned in SA(22)63, we have created and embedded Inclusion, Culture and Wellbeing Dashboards throughout the organisation which were then utilised in the first round of Hold to Account (H2A) meetings with Sir Ian Diamond; challenging senior leaders on their action to date and continued improvement. The H2A meetings were a great success, with all Directors building on their existing Inclusion goals to accommodate three specific objectives to achieve from their data story. The second round of meetings are now underway.
16. In May 2023 we continued to see a decrease of our mean gender pay gap from 7.1 per cent in 2022 to 6.3 per cent, with the mean bonus gender pay gap now negative and in favour of women at -1.9 per cent compared with 3.3 per cent in 2022. Positive trajectories can also be seen in our 2022 data for ethnicity, where the mean pay gap fell to 3.6 per cent from 6.8 per cent, and disability which fell to 6.0 per cent from 7.5 per cent. These improvements across the pay gaps we believe to be the outcome of our targeted 2021 pay award, as well as our refresh of the recognition scheme and our successful targeted development programmes.
17. In February 2023, we launched the Inclusion Interactive Experience across the Authority based on the feedback of our colleagues. The initiative is a team learning experience in a virtual game environment, based on the lived experiences of colleagues from an ethnic minority background (though can be applied to wider inclusive behaviours). Our target is to have all colleagues having completed by December 2023.
18. A below-the-line paper accompanies this paper providing assurance on the Authority's approach to handling employee concerns following recent events at other high-profile organisations. Please see Information Paper for further details.
19. In April 2023, the new Wellbeing Plan and accompanying Wellbeing Hub was launched, creating a holistic approach to wellbeing across the Authority and setting out the strategic approach to supporting the workplace wellbeing of our people. This plan is split into five wellbeing pillars: Workplace, Mental, Physical, Social, and Financial. This plan will underpin our Authority Strategy and People Plan, supporting their success by creating an environment where people can reach their full potential through positive multifaceted wellbeing.

Skills

20. In March 2023, the Analysis Function (AF) launched the first development programme for under-represented groups, which will focus in its pilot year on colleagues from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, the team continues to partner with the Fast Stream and Early Talent (FSET) team in the Cabinet Office to influence the future direction of Fast Stream 2024 and ensure the AF can still make the most of this crucial early talent pipeline.
21. The AF have also seen considerable success in the take up of their online skills tool, with a membership of just under 6,000 cross government analysts as of May 2023. The Analysis Function Online Skills Tool enables government analysts to understand the various role profiles and career pathways across the function, conduct comprehensive learning needs analyses for those of interest, and access learning opportunities to close any skills gaps.
22. In SA(22)63, we advised of the launch of "Connected", a programme aimed at driving more positive outcomes for our Grade 7/Grade 6 EM colleagues. Despite the programme being still in

its infancy, feedback to date has been phenomenal; with our other three leadership programmes continuing to go from strength to strength (Diversity, Women and Ethnic Minority in Leadership).

23. We have focused in recent months on developing our leadership, culture and engagement; driven predominantly by the strategy sessions for our Grade 6, Grade 7 and SCS1 colleagues with Sir Ian Diamond, as well as interviews with senior women in the organisation and an 'Attitudes to Promotion' survey. The outcomes of these work strands were discussed at length and with great positivity at the April 2023 SCS Away Day, an action plan from which will now be put in place to implement recommendations.
24. We have led on the development of a new Civil Service People Data & Analytics strategy in collaboration with Cabinet Office, guiding thinking on appropriate metrics and Key Performance Indicators to measure performance of Human Resource (HR) as a function and provide a Civil Service People Dashboard, as well as improving data literacy and analysis among HR professionals. The strategy and prototype dashboard were shared in May 2023 with Fiona Ryland, Government Chief People Officer, and has been adopted by Government People Group. We are investigating developing a centre of expertise for people analytics for Civil Service HR.

Conclusion

25. Since November 2022, we have continued to achieve and deliver against our People Plan and will hold focus on the three key areas of Strategic Resourcing, Inclusion and Diversity, and Skills going forward; all of which requires a whole organisation effort for us to be successful.

Philippa Bonay, Director for People and Business Services, 19 July 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 Board are invited to note:
 - i. next steps towards Digital Economy Act (DEA) accreditation;
 - ii. priority analysis and the related data pipeline; and
 - iii. wider communications on Secure Research Service (SRS) transition as agreed with the Economic and Social Research Council and ADR(UK) have now been sent to all SRS users, outlining SRS and the IDS will have a longer period of parallel running as part of the transition process.

Background

3. The IDS remains in Public Beta; with a focus on meeting the requirements of Research Accreditation Panel (RAP) to achieve DEA accreditation and scale up the number of use cases and accredited users.

Discussion

Programme Update

4. The programme is currently running at Amber/Red, reflecting the known DEA accreditation slippage and scale of challenge on the SRS transition. To mitigate and drive towards Amber, the programme is replanning, and reprioritising key activities outlined below:
 - i. Improving user experience of the live operational service, with a critical mass of active users by September;
 - ii. focus on priority use cases;
 - iii. development of a higher-quality data catalogue integrated with Google tooling; and
 - iv. development of the deposit model and resubmission for DEA accreditation by September, which is anticipated to support a return to an Amber status.
5. The next IPA Gateway 0 Review will take place at the beginning of October, aligning with further Business Case discussions with HM Treasury.
6. The programme's Plan on a Page has been updated to reflect current priorities and a focus on evolving current capability.

DEA Accreditation update

7. Following our unsuccessful accreditation in June RAP has invited the programme to resubmit to the September RAP meeting. Prior to this the programme aims to provide an update to RAP on 28 July.
8. All actions have an initial target date of completion of 18 August to enable a view on meeting the required Capable rating. Discussions between the RAP Chair, Professor Paul Boyle and the National Statistician with Alison Pritchard will be held accordingly in support of resubmission for DEA accreditation for the September panel.
9. Chris Mullin, Chief Economist and Director of Analysis at Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), chaired a special session with the Departmental Directors of Analysis (DDANs) on 10 July. This identified an initial list of areas where linked data could enhance public policy. The list will be further developed and refined by DDANs. Alongside this, the session identified a focused

set of areas within that wider list where progress could be made through the IDS in the immediate future. There is an ambition to develop up to four new use cases from this for inclusion in the pipeline.

Developing the Data Pipeline

10. There are currently 34 datasets available on the platform.
11. The data roadmap for the next three months is considered 'locked-in', with the next three months and beyond updated and reviewed according to new demands and priorities. This allows certainty on immediate deliverables and resourcing, provides a clear direction of travel beyond three months, whilst also allowing new requirements to be introduced effectively.

Strategic Engagement

12. The programme will attend Digital and Data Board (DDB) once DEA accreditation is secured, with a view to reinforcing the clear and strategic link to the Government Digital and Data Strategy and Mission Three, relating to better use of data by government.
13. The programme will also set out the conditions of success for the programme and role of others in contributing.
14. The co-chair of the DDB, Paul Willmott, has sought the views of the National Statistician on progress against Mission Three. This has provided an opportunity for the programme to set out where progress has been too slow.
15. Further engagement includes:
 - i. Sir Robert Chote, Chair of UK Statistics Authority, presented an overview of the IDS as part of his session at the Local Council Association Conference.
 - ii. It was agreed at the Inter-Administration Committee to establish a strategic delivery partnership approach with each of the Devolved Administrations (DAs) to support the focus on driving analytical benefit from the platform.
 - iii. The programme presented a deep dive on the data sharing model and technical architecture to Government Statistical Service Heads of Professions. This has led to the request from the Department for Business and Trade for a further conversation on how they can collaborate with the IDS.

Alison Pritchard, Deputy National Statistician for Data Capability, July 2023

Update on the UKSA mid-term strategy review

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on progress towards the mid-term review 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 the latest progress on the mid-point strategy review and agree its key themes; and
 - ii. agree that we should not delay work on this for the Authority Cabinet Office Review.

Background

3. We are now into the third year of the strategy, and work continues at pace to meet our key strategic objectives. We have just published the Annual Report and Accounts and are now well into the 2023/24 financial year where our focus continues to be on delivery.
4. We have also recently finalised budget allocations for 2023/24 with the financial planning round culminating in budget sign-off at the Executive Committee on 31 May. We have distributed delegation letters setting out initial budgets and responsibilities via Director's General (DG). Whilst we have provided flexibility to DGs to act in the context of their accountabilities and objectives, we have removed the ability to over-programme at the outset of the financial year considering the constrained financial environment.
5. The work of the statistical and analytical system is currently taking place against a tight financial and human resources backdrop – one in which cash budgets are being stretched by inflation and pay pressures, and in which some increasingly important skills are harder and more expensive to attract and retain, for example in data science. This has already required tough decisions on prioritisation and discussions will be ongoing.

Discussion

6. As discussed at the April 2023 Board meeting, we are currently reviewing the Authority strategy to mark its mid-point during the five-year period, updating our strategic ambition to reflect a changing context. The strategy was published just after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and since then the statistical and analytical system has responded to the challenges of rising cost of living; economic and social impacts of industrial action; inactivity in the labour market; and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, among others.
7. The mid-term review takes stock of progress to date, evaluates what radical, ambitious, inclusive, and sustainable mean in 2023, and looks ahead to the remaining and emerging challenges for the rest of the period. With evidence and analysis closer than ever to the centre of government decision making, the stakes have never been higher to show the strength and relevance of the statistical system.
8. This, combined with the emergence of new technologies (such as Artificial Intelligence and large language models) and the increased challenges of skill retention, resource constraint, and maintaining public trust, provides a real moment to reflect on the strategy so far, and our priorities looking forwards, not just over the next two years but further ahead. As our users become ever more connected and demanding of instant data in different formats that is tailored to them, we must ensure public trust is maintained in official statistics and work across the statistical system to assure the public where necessary.
9. In the next strategy period, just within the Office for National Statistics (ONS), we will see the full launch of the Integrated Data Service, deliver the recommendation on the future of population and migration statistics, go 'beyond GDP', transform economic statistics, and enhance

subnational data. Overarching this must be an even greater focus on ever more inclusive data, listening to our users and exciting citizens through our statistics. However, all of this must be done more efficiently within a tighter financial envelope, reducing legacy and increasing automation wherever feasibly possible.

10. In March, we held a consultation event with stakeholders from across the statistical system at Great Ormond Street. This conversation provided users with an opportunity to shape the future of Statistics for the Public Good. Engagement was strong and over 200 people attended in person and online, reflecting on achievements and priorities going forwards. This has been combined with views from across the Authority (Office for Statistics Regulation, ONS and Government Statistical Service) in an all-colleague survey which was ran earlier this year.
11. Users and stakeholders feel the statistical system must be ever more responsive, local, inclusive and relevant. More responsive in continuing to provide the insights needed to address the critical questions for the country at pace, with ever more rapid surveys, new data sources and building further relationships across central government. More local in both the importance of equipping local leaders and local people with the local data to make local decisions, but also providing statistical insights at a more granular level.
12. More inclusive in furthering the importance of work to understand the experiences of groups not previously captured well in data, and innovative tools which allow us greater reach with the public. More relevant in statistics continuing to evolve to capture the best possible insights on societal, economic, and environmental progress, such as wellbeing, and climate change but also how our dissemination needs to evolve to keep pace.
13. Alongside the above, following our consultation and conversations with users over the past months, we are intending to focus on the following key themes in the review:
 - i. there should be a greater focus on the effective communication of statistics and analysis, including to policymakers and the public through new mediums;
 - ii. improving awareness of statistics, data and analysis for policymakers to reduce the misuse of statistics and promote better use of evidence within government;
 - iii. promoting the need to better integrate policymakers and analysts together from the outset in answering the key questions of the day within government;
 - iv. improving statistical literacy in partnership with others, especially in relation to education around statistics, making data more accessible and engaging to the public, and focusing on our potential role within the education system;
 - v. exploring career opportunities and pathways within the statistical and analytical system, especially for young people entering the system in a competitive market;
 - vi. we should tackle the emerging role of both automation and artificial intelligence within the statistical and analytical system, including both the opportunities and challenges, as well as assessing its wider social and economic impacts;
 - vii. explore the role that automation can play within statistical and data processes;
 - viii. the need to restructure surveys across the statistical system so that they keep pace with changing social and economic contexts, including making the case for the better sharing and use of linked and administrative data across government; and
 - ix. the improved comparability and coherence of statistics both internationally and domestically across nations, especially across the Devolved Administrations.
14. We have reflected on the interaction between the mid-term strategy review and ongoing Cabinet Office review of the Authority led by Professor Denise Lievesley. While there is a small risk of a later contradiction once the Authority review is published, we are minded not to delay the strategy review given its narrower focus, our strong ongoing engagement with the review team and uncertain timelines on completion of the Authority review. As part of our continuous iteration, we will of course though factor in these recommendations.
15. Given the ongoing funding pressures across the statistical system and within the Authority, we must also be conscious of the need to match our strategic ambition with available resource, both

human and financial. While we continue to be ambitious and radical in everything we do over the coming years, the mid-term strategy review will also emphasise the need to be sustainable in how we do that to avoid over-promising and under-delivering.

16. Finally, given the recent re-appointment of Professor Sir Ian Diamond for a further five years, neither the National Statistician nor the Authority Chair roles align with a five-year strategy period. As discussed before at the Board, as part of the mid-term strategy review there is an opportunity to signal a move away from clearly demarcated arbitrary five-year periods of strategy creation to a more iterative approach should the Board be inclined.
17. Should the Board agree to the key themes of focus for the strategy refresh, the next steps will be to finalise the analysis of engagement responses so far and then complete a draft document for circulation to the Board. As we work to re-energise the strategy, the Board will be involved in a continued conversation, as well as our users more broadly.

Conclusion

18. This paper sets out the recent progress on the mid-term strategy review, including the suggested high-level key themes of focus for the Board to agree. The mid-term review of the Authority strategy has seen strong engagement with users and helpful feedback so far. It also notes the interactions of the mid-term strategy review with both the ongoing Authority Review by Cabinet Office, constrained financial and resource environment, and whether to move towards a more iterative strategy.

Will Marks, Principal Private Secretary to the National Statistician, July 2023

Authority Board Self Review of Effectiveness

Purpose

1. This paper covers the results of the Authority Board's self-review of effectiveness highlighting the key issues raised and proposed improvements.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note the results of the questionnaire and consider proposals for action.

Background

3. The Board is invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis to identify where it is performing well and where improvements could potentially be made.
4. The results of the last year's self-review of effectiveness had indicated improvements on the previous year. The Chair had continued to provide an open and supportive culture for discussions and the Board had focussed its attention on the delivery of the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good.
5. Areas of focus for the Board highlighted in 2022 included monitoring delivery of the strategy, the Integrated Data Service (IDS), post census recommendation and transformation of population and migration statistics and people issues, all areas the Board has engaged with over the last 12 months.

Discussion

Summary of findings

6. The results of last year's self-effectiveness review indicated improvements on the previous year. This year's review has indicated sustained performance by the Board with the Chair continuing to provide an open and supportive culture. The Board has considered the important strategic issues with papers focussing on the delivery of the strategy.
7. Members agreed that the Board spends sufficient time of the issues that matter; and Executives and Non-Executive Directors value each other's respective contributions.
8. In the coming year the Secretariat will continue to focus on ensuring papers are well balanced with clear recommendations to inform the discussion. Members commented that:
 - i. overall papers were good but on occasion they could highlight the issues more clearly as well as the successes;
 - ii. papers should set out what is 'worrying' the Executive and engage the Board as a source of support; and
 - iii. given the volume of papers for consideration perhaps standing items on the agenda could be taken as read, in order to discuss strategic items sooner in the meeting.
9. The business planning process worked well with input by the Board ahead of publication.

Forward agenda

10. The annual review of effectiveness provides an opportunity to consider the Board's forward agenda.
11. The forward agenda includes regular discussion on the areas of focus highlighted by members for the coming year including:
 - i. quarterly progress update on the delivery of the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good, with the next update scheduled for October; and
 - ii. updates at every meeting for the Integrated Data Service Programme; and quarterly updates on the Ambitious Radical Inclusive Economic Statistics programme.

Programme of Activities

12. The Programme of Activities (PoA) provides Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) with the opportunity to engage with colleagues below Board level across a range of divisions. This has proven to be successful with teams across the organisation who benefit from NEDs expertise in an informal setting outside of Board meetings. This year the PoA has included meetings with teams in the following areas:
- i. Post census recommendation;
 - ii. Integrated Data Service;
 - iii. Economic Statistics;
 - iv. Legacy transformation;
 - v. Work on violence against women and girls;
 - vi. Efficiencies; and
 - vii. Communications.
13. The PoA will continue with a combination of remote meetings and in person visits. The Secretariat will liaise with Board members on areas of interest for the next 12 months.

Risk

14. Members agree that they are kept abreast of risks through updates from the Chief Executive and Director General for Regulation. Strategic risks are scheduled for the Board six monthly. The Integrated Performance Report, a standing item for the Board, includes Management Information on the strategic risk profile. At the June Board meeting members welcomed the deep dive on the overarching strategic risk on 'Independence and Trustworthiness'.
15. The Risk and Assurance Team are planning workshops as part of the refresh of the strategic risk profile, ahead of the next discussion by the Board in November.
16. The [Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23](#) reflected the continued progress made in our approach to risk and governance this year with a moderate Head of Internal Audit opinion for a third year in a row. Professor Sir Ian Diamond and the Senior Leadership Team are committed to continued improvement in this area.

Diversity

17. As highlighted by feedback from members the Board is diverse in experience and skills. The diversity of the Board will continue as part of the recruitment process for new members.

Meeting format and frequency

18. There were a number of views on the format of meetings with an acknowledgement that meeting in person is ideal as it provides the opportunity for additional discussion in the margins, but hybrid is the preferred format as it allows for greater flexibility.
19. With regard to the frequency of meetings, while the majority of responses agree that the Board currently meets with the correct frequency additional comments suggest that we may want to reconsider the frequency of meeting.

Conclusion

20. The Authority's annual self-review affords members the opportunity to reflect on what is working well and where we may need to improve our ways of working. This year Board members have requested we focus in the following areas in the coming year:
- i. Post census recommendation including the findings from the consultation;
 - ii. delivery of the Integrated Data Service including how best to support data sharing and linkage;
 - iii. transformation of economic statistics through the ARIES programme;
 - iv. a focus on the Authority's strategic risks and mitigation;
 - v. delivery of the business plan and effective management of the budget;
 - vi. communications and user engagement;

- vii. the Government Statistical Service; and
- viii. Excess Mortality statistics.

21. The Board forward agenda will include the areas of focus noted by members. Secretariat will resolve to seek improvements for the issues highlighted in the paper.

Sally Jones, Central Policy Secretariat, 24 July 2023