

National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group

**Draft Minutes
Thursday 7 December 2023
London**

Members Present

Professor David Hand (Chair)
Professor Paul Allin
Helen Boaden
Robert Bumpstead
Dame Diane Coyle
Dr Sarah Cumbers
Sir Ian Diamond
Professor Jane Falkingham
Edward Humpherson
Sarah Moore
Sir Bernard Silverman

Secretariat

Laura Evans
Tom Marsh

Apologies

Dame Kate Barker
Professor Paul Boyle
Professor Ann Phoenix

1. Minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Dame Kate Barker, Professor Paul Boyle and Professor Ann Phoenix.
- 1.2 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
- 1.3 Professor Paul Allin requested an update on the Integrated Data Service (IDS). The National Statistician confirmed that the IDS programme was operating with an Amber status following Digital Economy Act accreditation. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) had extended the operation of the Secure Research Service (SRS) to ensure certain software packages remained available for researchers until they would be available via the IDS.

2. Discussion with User

- 2.1 Morgan Wild, Head of Policy, Citizens Advice reflected on his experience as a user of official statistics. The following key points were made:
 - i. Morgan Wild described the impact the cost of living crisis was having on those receiving assistance from Citizens Advice and members discussed whether the ONS was able to improve its household statistics to better reflect the reality of those poorest; for example, prioritising the production of the Household Cost Indices (HCI);
 - ii. the ONS had worked closely with its networks during the cost of living crisis to improve current, and build alternative, inflation statistics;
 - iii. members discussed the global decline in response rates and the consequential challenge this brings to producing more granular statistics. The benefits and associated challenges of mandating responses was discussed to improve response rates but the rising costs of surveys in a constrained financial environment was noted as the most significant challenge when the ONS was trying to balance a portfolio of surveys; and
 - iv. Sarah Moore and Morgan agreed to meet to further discuss collaboration between ONS and Citizens Advice.

3. Public Understanding of Economic Statistics [NSEUAC(23)08]

- 3.1 Johnny Runge from King's College London attended to discuss Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence's (ESCoE) series of published research reports exploring public understanding of economic statistics.
- 3.2 Members discussed the difficulties associated with communicating, often complex, statistical messages and concepts with the public which is multifaceted as a group, in itself. It was suggested that statistical producers utilise universities and journalism schools to help educate both communicators and the public. Optimising search engines would also be a key tool to improve accessibility and public understanding. Sarah Moore confirmed that ONS was already exploring this and Sarah Cumbers offered the RSS' assistance.
- 3.3 Ed Humpherson added that OSR was fully supportive of ESCoE's work and was mainstreaming it into the communication and dissemination of statistics.

4. UKSA Strategy and ONS Strategic Priorities [NSEUAC(23)09]

- 4.1 Will Marks discussed the work underway to support the delivery of the UKSA strategy, Statistics for the Public Good and highlighted that the organisation would soon begin to consider the next strategy period.
- 4.2 Members agreed that the United Nations (UN) Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics would need to guide any new UKSA strategic priorities.

- 4.3 Members were invited to share their top three recommended priorities for the new UKSA strategy by correspondence which the Chair would collate.
- 4.4 The Chair asked that a representative of the Analytical Priorities Board was invited to a future meeting to share how it monitors the progress and delivery of the plan and Secretariat agreed to take this forward.
- 5. Future Proofing the Code of Practice for Statistics [NSEUAC(23)10]**
- 5.1 Ed Humpherson introduced a paper that explained the background of the Code of Practice for Statistics. The call for evidence was due to close on 11 December 2023 and members were asked to provide their views on ways to ensure the Code remained relevant.
- 5.2 Members discussed the three pillars (Trustworthiness, Quality and Value) and whether there was merit in updating these. Members also discussed the badging of official statistics and agreed that this should be more transparent and clearly indicate where statistics are not accredited.
- 6. Self-Effectiveness Review and Impact of the Committee [NSEUAC(23)11]**
- 6.1 Laura Evans provided a summary of the findings of the self-effectiveness review which assessed the Committee's performance over the last year.
- 6.2 Members discussed the findings and felt there was still work to be done to ensure stakeholders understood the role of the committee and its place in the organisation's model for user engagement. A critical part of the Committee's role was to utilise their networks to ensure stakeholders were informed and able to access and benefit from the Committee's expertise.
- 6.3 Members discussed the extent to which the UKSA promotes official statistics. Ian Diamond confirmed that the organisation regularly engages with media to share information in an accessible format but was always striving for continual improvement.
- 6.4 Secretariat had taken on board comments to allow members a longer period to review papers and more face-to-face meetings were also planned for the upcoming year.
- 7. Any other business**
- 7.1 The next meeting was due to take place on 7 March 2024 and members welcomed a hybrid approach to this meeting, meeting in person in London where possible.
- 7.2 Members were informed that the advert for new membership would go live within the next week and members were encouraged to reapply if they wished.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agenda
Thursday 7 December 2023, 11:00-13:00
Marsham Street

Chair: Prof. David Hand

Apologies: Kate Barker, Paul Boyle

Timing	Agenda item	
1 11:00-11:05 (5 mins)	Welcome, previous minutes and actions	Meeting of 07.09.2023 Prof. David Hand
2 11:05-11:40 (35 mins)	Discussion with User – Morgan Wild, Citizens Advice	Oral Update
3 11:40-12:05 (25 mins)	Public Understanding of Economic Statistics: Communication and Engagement with the General Public	NSEUAC(23)08 Johnny <u>Runge</u> , ESCoE
4 12:05-12:25 (20 mins)	UK Statistics Authority's Strategy and ONS Strategic Priorities	NSEUAC(23)09 Will Marks Megan Cooper
5 12:25-12:40 (15 mins)	Futureproofing the Code of Practice for Statistics	NSEUAC(23)10 Ed Humpherson
6 12:40-12:55 (15 mins)	Annual Review of Self Effectiveness and Impact of the Committee	NSEUAC(23)11 Laura Evans
7 12:55-13:00 (5 mins)	Any Other Business	Prof. David Hand

Next Meeting: Thursday 7 March 2024, Remote Meeting

Discussion with User



Morgan Wild
Head of Policy

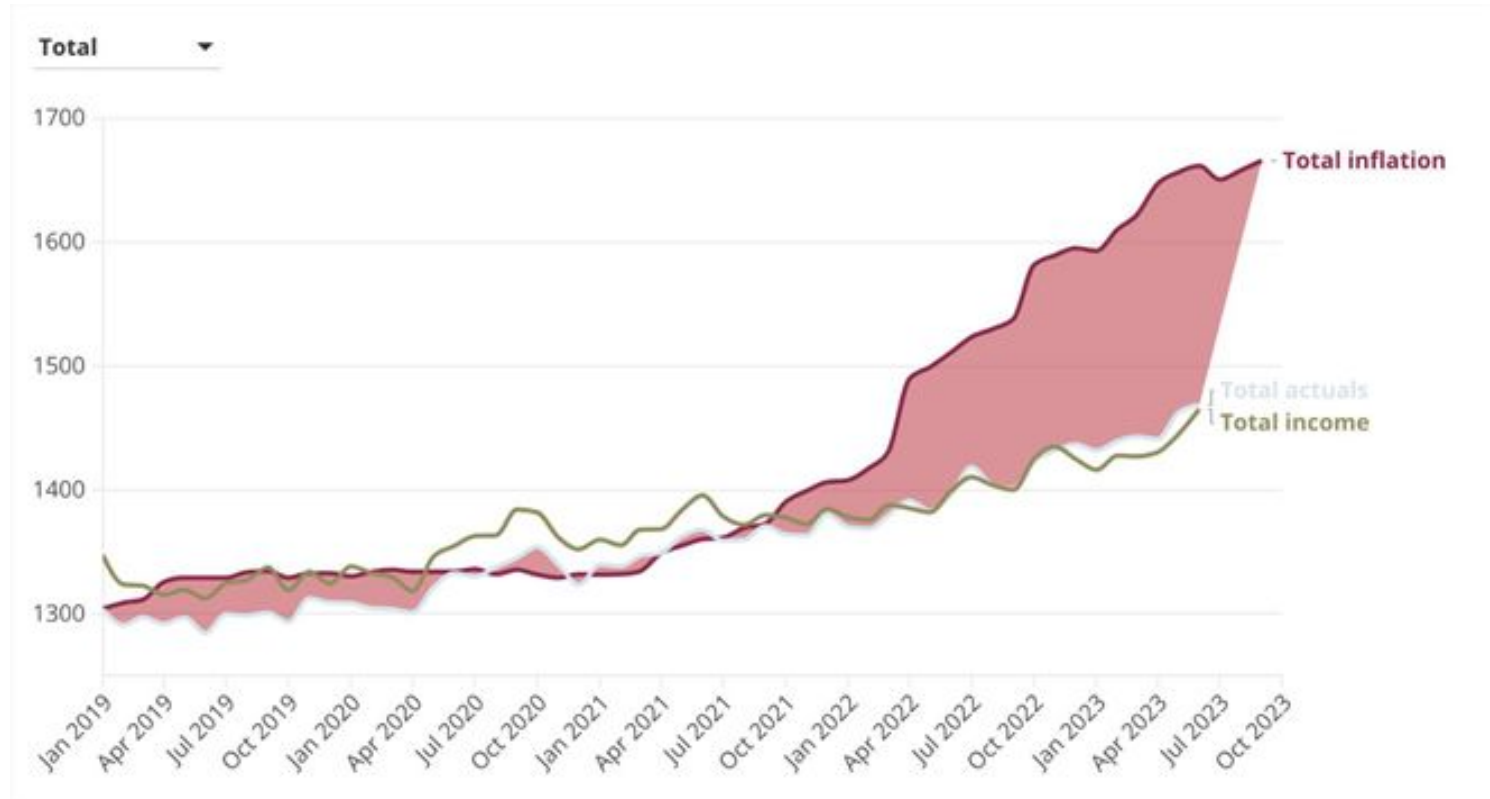
Who are we? Why do I care? Some basic facts

1. Help around 2.5 million people a year one-to-one and 30 million through our website
2. Biggest financial dataset of people's combined incomes, expenditures and debts
3. Founded at outbreak of World War 2 - dual mission to provide advice and tackle underlying causes
4. I got interested because the individual tragedies hitting our service the past two years were also a puzzle.
5. Interested and maybe slightly angry? I think ONS bears some responsibility for real terms cuts to people's incomes.

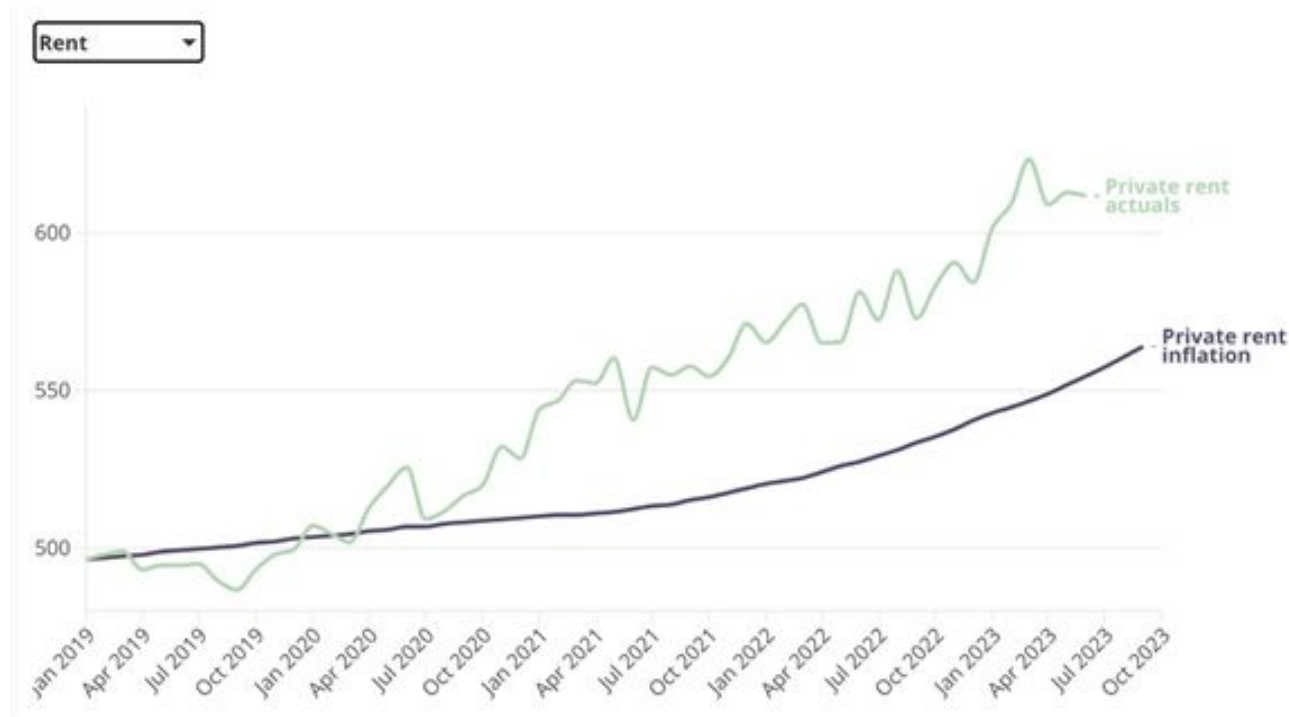
The inexorable rise of negative budgets



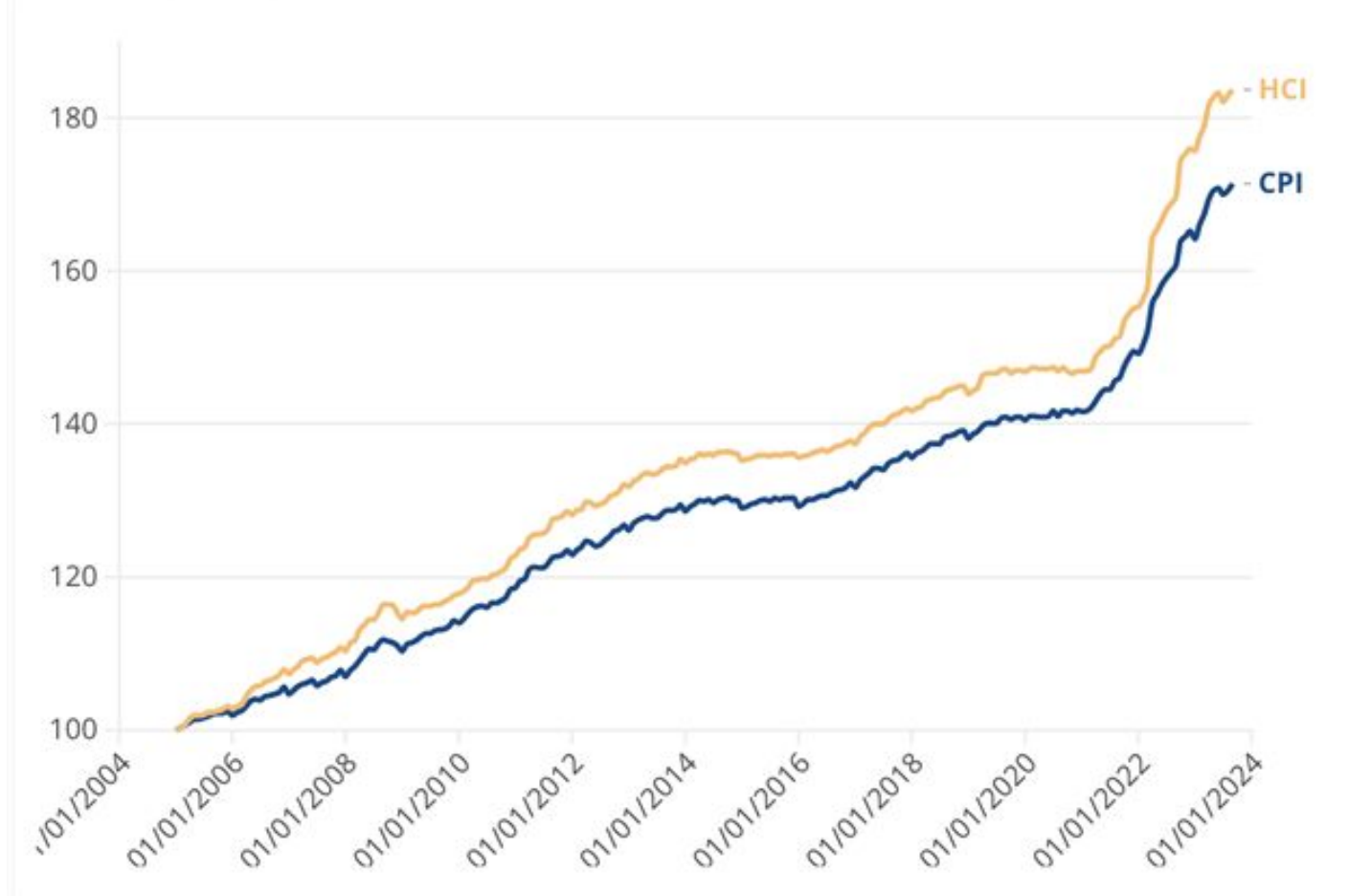
Triple hit for people coming to Citizens Advice



Rents hugely outpace inflation



Household Costs Indices (HCIs) for bottom third vs Consumer Price Index (CPI)



Real consumption for bottom third vs nominal



Some explanations and strategic provocations

1. **HCI's still not the best the ONS can do.** Formula effects are highly relevant for the poorest.
2. **Spend time with the people you're measuring.** *Not* because it's in vogue to listen to people because lived experiences. Because your spreadsheets are a low-res picture of reality and ONS is missing things.
3. **The direction of error matters when making uncertain estimates.** Making a judgement on that is value laden. Tough!
4. **Policy consequences should dictate your prioritisation.** That is the main (only?) reason public statistics matter.

Other thoughts

- 1. Good direction of travel on Household Statistics - uniting income & expenditure crucial.** People having more essential spending going out than income coming in should be a core living standards measure.
- 2. Response rates and small sample sizes.** Unsolicited advice klaxon. Make national statistics mandatory — for god's sake don't bet the house on nudges!

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(23)08

Public Understanding of Economic Statistics: Communication and Engagement with the General Public

Purpose

1. The general public is an important user of official economic statistics. This paper discusses how to improve the communication to the wider public.

Recommendations

2. Members of National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to consider the following recommendations:
 - i. **Recommendation 1:** Establish a 'Statistics for the Public, By the Public' unit that designs ways to communicate statistics specifically with the wider public in mind, and in collaboration with public participants through co-design approaches, to ensure their needs are met;
 - ii. **Recommendation 2:** Produce two separate publications for key the Office for National Statistics (ONS) releases: a technical version (the existing publication) and an accessible version aimed at the public and journalists;
 - iii. **Recommendation 3:** Take a bolder and more proactive approach to communicate statistics directly to the public with the ONS, and senior ONS staff, as messengers (rather than through intermediaries), including through apps, social media, podcasts, interviews, games, Artificial Intelligence, etc.;
 - iv. **Recommendation 4:** Explore how the public currently receives economic news on the platforms above, and what approaches are likely to be effective;
 - v. **Recommendation 5:** Test the effectiveness of changes to the communication of statistics, including the impact on comprehension, engagement and trust; and
 - vi. **Recommendation 6:** Undertake more research on public perceptions of uncertainty and limitations of statistical measurement, to provide a robust basis for communicating uncertainty pro-actively to public audiences.

Background

3. As part of the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence (ESCoE) research programme on communicating economic statistics, we have published a series of research reports exploring public understanding of economic statistics such as inflation, unemployment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the last five years, we have done in-depth interviews and focus groups with more than 275 members of the UK public and surveyed more than 10,000 people.
4. Based on the insights of this work, we have explored ways of engaging with the general public and communicating economic statistics more effectively. As examples, we have:
 - i. designed and tested different ways of communicating labour market statistics to the public ([Cathro et al., 2022](#));
 - ii. brought economists and statisticians into workshops with members of the public to learn about their perspectives and understanding of economic statistics ([Runge and Killick, 2021](#)); and
 - iii. explored the importance of 'intermediaries', such as the media, in communicating ONS economic statistics to the public, and how ONS can support these intermediaries more effectively ([Runge et al., 2022](#)).

Discussion

5. Our ESCoE research shows that large parts of the UK public have misperceptions about how economic figures, such as the unemployment and inflation rate are collected and measured, and who they are produced and published by ([Runge and Hudson, 2020](#)). This led some people to question the reliability of economic statistics. For instance, it is common for people to feel that the inflation and unemployment rate are higher than what the official figures suggest, and they do not feel the figures accurately reflect their day-to-day experiences. Our research has shown that the general public feel far removed from statistics, which are mostly designed by statisticians and for statisticians/experts. Our first recommendation is to involve public participants directly, through a co-design process, to make sure we are measuring and communicating what the public are actually interested in (Recommendation 1).
6. The UK public strongly believe that economic issues are important, and this is also true for otherwise disengaged groups. Research participants often say they wish economics were taught more widely in schools and that they were better able to interpret economic information and data ([Runge and Hudson, 2020](#); [Runge and Killick, 2021](#)). However, they feel it is currently communicated in an inaccessible way, and describe economic news as 'confusing', 'complicated' and 'difficult to understand', and as 'full of economic jargon'.
7. The User Engagement Strategy for Statistics states that statistics are produced to serve the public good. This means that statistics are widely accessed and used "outside government and within", and that statistics serve to "enhancing the public's understanding of social, economic and environmental matters."
8. Arguably, official economic statistics do not currently achieve these aims as effectively as they could and should.
9. The public can access and use official economic statistics in two ways:
 - i. directly, for instance through the website of organisations such as the ONS; and
 - ii. indirectly, through intermediaries such as the media.
10. Currently, official economic statistics mostly reach the public through intermediaries. We have done research on how the traditional news media communicates ONS economic statistics and found that the ONS outputs (e.g. press releases, quotes, statistical releases on the website) drive the subsequent media reporting, including in terms of the focus of those stories and the wordings used ([Runge et al., 2022](#)). This means that the ONS has an important responsibility to produce outputs for journalists that are easy to translate, and even to copy directly, into news stories aimed at the public. However, the current outputs on the ONS website (e.g. the Labour Market Overview) are aimed at expert audiences and contain a large amount of technical terms. The wordings cannot be copied directly into a news story, but journalists nevertheless do.
11. Therefore, for the key economic figures that are likely to be most interesting to the public (e.g. labour market, prices, GDP, public sector finance, public spending, taxes, housing), we would recommend that the ONS produces two separate releases: a technical version (which is currently published) and an accessible version aimed at the public and journalists. This would achieve two things: a) supporting journalists and other intermediaries better, and b) improving communication directly with the public, for instance if they google 'what is the UK unemployment rate?', they will be directed towards an engaging description on the ONS website (Recommendation 2). This is an approach we have tested successfully ([Cathro et al., 2022](#)), and it has been adopted by the Bank of England for their Monetary Policy Report ([Bholat et al., 2021](#)).
12. There is little robust evidence in the public domain about the extent to which the general public uses ONS economic statistics directly. Do they go on the ONS website? Do they see the Personal Inflation Calculator that is embedded on the BBC website? Do they

listen to ONS statisticians when they appear on the Radio 4 Today Programme? And more importantly, if and when they do, to what extent do people engage with it, do they find it useful and accessible? Simple website metrics on page views will not provide answers as to whether people understand and engage with what they see. If the ONS and other statistics organisations have this type of information, they should consider sharing it with others, so we can all learn from each other on how to communicate statistics.

13. We believe the ONS should consider taking a stronger and more proactive role in communicating their own statistics directly to the public, including through apps, social media, podcasts, games, etc. (Recommendation 3). Our research shows that people want to hear from trusted sources, such as the ONS, and they are tired of hearing about unemployment figures from politicians ([Runge and Hudson, 2020](#); [Runge and Killick, 2021](#); [Cathro et al., 2022](#)). Taking more ownership of how figures are communicated would not only contribute to avoiding misuse of official statistics, but also improve trustworthiness by increasing public awareness that the statistics come from an independent source, rather than government and politicians which is a common assumption.
14. A bolder approach would also include more focus on new sources where the public are increasingly getting their information on the economy from, including social media such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. To inform this, it is likely that more research needs to be done on how the public currently receive news on economic statistics these platforms, and what approaches are likely to be effective (Recommendation 4).
15. If the ONS decide to take a bolder approach, one of the main challenges will be to make communication interesting and relevant, without compromising its independence and impartiality. Caution is clearly needed, but the alternative may prove increasingly unsatisfactory in the modern information environment. Caution would be achieved by taking a gradual approach and establish a learning and evaluation unit to test any new approaches carefully with the public, through online experiments, interviews and focus groups (Recommendation 5).
16. Finally, our research reveals interesting insights about how people perceive the accuracy of statistics. Often, public participants expect statistics to provide an exact answer. Our survey work shows that communicating uncertainty in relation to GDP data can in fact improve public understanding that uncertainty exists, and it improves trust ([Galvao and Mitchell, 2023](#)) and other survey work also provides cautious evidence that explaining the methodology of labour market figures improves trust ([Cathro et al., 2021](#)). However, our interview research shows somewhat contradicting findings, with people questioning why uncertainty and limitations in measurement exists, and they especially question what they perceive to be small sample sizes in household surveys ([Runge, 2021](#); [Runge and Hudson, 2020](#)). More research needs to be done on this, for instance in relation to public reactions to communication about limitations of the Labour Force Survey, to provide a robust basis for communicating uncertainty pro-actively to public audiences (Recommendation 6).

Johnny Runge, Senior Research Fellow at The Policy Institute at King's College London and Research Associate at the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence (ESCoE), 22 November 2023

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(23)09

UK Statistics Authority's Strategy and ONS Strategic Priorities

Purpose

1. This paper provides an overview of the UK Statistics Authority's (the Authority) strategy and how the Office for National Statistics (ONS) sets its strategic priorities. It focuses on the organisational approach to planning and prioritisation to inform a discussion on the impacts of this across the statistical system and our users.

Recommendations

2. Members of National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEAUC) are invited to consider the latest updates on the Authority's strategy, ONS prioritisation in 2023/24 and the approach to business planning for 2024/25.

Background

3. The current Authority strategy 'Statistics for the Public Good', 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. Its mission is to deliver high quality data and analysis to inform the UK, improve lives and build the future.
4. We are now into the third year of the five-year strategy, and work continues at pace to meet our key strategic objectives where our focus is firmly on delivery.
5. However, the work of the statistical and analytical system is 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 required tough decisions on prioritisation.
6. As we work to re-energise the strategy in 2025, we welcome the involvement of NSEUAC as part of that conversation, as well as our users more broadly.

ONS Prioritisation

7. User demands for information on new topics, and the need to maintain and enhance quality statistics have required us to prioritise and align our ambitions and obligations within our available resources. Over the past three years the ONS has been working at an incredible pace, and like other organisations, it has been necessary to review our priorities and spending.
8. The ONS business planning and prioritisation has been aligned to the Authority's Strategy and informed by the ONS prioritisation framework, a review into our outputs, and the needs of users and stakeholders.
9. The 2023/24 business planning round was set against a backdrop of decreasing programme funding and an increasing cost base resulting from the inflationary impact on staff costs and third-party suppliers. As such preparations commenced in October 2022 with a series of scenario planning sessions to understand how we should adapt to the changing economic context.
10. The ONS Efficiency and Savings Plan is now fully embedded and monitors the delivery of several workstreams including corporate services, the survey strategy, a refreshed

commercial strategy, planned automation, and the content strategy that aligns our outputs with user need.

Discussion

11. Guided by our 'User engagement strategy for statistics' we have a continuous programme of user and stakeholder engagement across the lifecycle of our statistics and analysis. We listen to and act upon user feedback to inform our priorities, co-create statistical products and services, and maximise the reach, relevance and value of our statistics.
12. Despite the need to prioritise our outputs, we continue to deliver our suite of core statistics including Gross Domestic Product, inflation and the Labour Market Survey, as well as crucial insight on areas such as the size of the population, migration patterns and crime rates, striving to ensure all outputs are of the highest quality standard.
13. We have maintained our agility to respond innovatively to the changing environment, as we did so successfully for the humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine, the impact of the increased cost of living, and now as we progress our latest commission from HM Treasury on public sector productivity statistics. For example, we are currently responding at pace to several commissions from across government on the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the wider Middle East.
14. To enable us to continue to respond to user needs and to sustain the delivery of quality core statistics and our transformational work, we are changing the frequency and content of some of our outputs or moving to headline/data only, and ceasing a smaller number of publications.
15. As we move into the 2024/25 planning round, we will continue to engage our users through ongoing strategic and operational engagement including identifying priorities and needs through government networks (GSS, Heads of Profession, Departmental Directors of Analysis, Cabinet Secretary Foresight Group), local engagement (ONS Local), social listening and stakeholder insights research (stakeholder deep dive and satisfaction survey).
16. Users also inform ONS policy development and delivery through our expert user advisory groups (including NSEUAC, National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee, National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee and technical advisory panels), via stakeholder engagement (events, direct engagement), as well as on specific areas of work through consultations. We seek feedback on our dissemination and communications through user testing, analysis of insights into user needs and collaboration with user groups (such as the Royal Statistical Society and Forum of Statistics User Groups).
17. To ensure our statistics and analysis remain relevant, we facilitate open dialogue with users through a range of ways, including the ONS Assembly, our citizen panels and community outreach. We also review the impact and use of our outputs through our website, media and social media metrics, and feedback channels.

Conclusion

18. As with all organisations, over the last two years ONS has needed to review its priorities and spending approach. Decisions on priorities are guided by user need and communicated through existing governance and wider channels, including notifications on the last version of each release (or last version before changes to frequency or content) informing users of the changes and suggesting alternative data sources. As we head to the final year of the strategy period, and a potential Spending Review, this will remain even more important.

**Will Marks, Principal Private Secretary to the National Statistician and Megan Cooper,
Deputy Director, Finance and Planning, ONS, 24 November 2023**

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(23)10

Futureproofing the Code of Practice for Statistics

Purpose

1. This paper explains the background and design of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) (the Code) review (which we have called 'Futureproofing the Code of Practice for Statistics'), to assist the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group (NSEUAC) in considering their own feedback.

Recommendations

2. Members of NSEUAC are invited to:
 - i. consider the call for evidence questions; and
 - ii. discuss any views on ways to ensure the Code remains relevant such as:
 - the changing context in which statistics are produced in Government, and how expectations and standards need to evolve;
 - future issues that may impact statistics; and
 - any concerns you have with the current version of the Code itself.

Background

3. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is reviewing the Code. We initiated a series of activities to collect evidence for the review in September, which will run until 11 December 2023.
4. The second edition of the Code was released five years ago, in February 2018. It established a framework for the standards of statistics production grounded on three core principles or 'pillars':
 - i. Trustworthiness – confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data;
 - ii. Quality – data and methods that produce assured statistics; and
 - iii. Value – statistics that support society's needs for information.
5. Since that time, the Code has been firmly embedded into the work of official statisticians. Through OSR's [review](#) of the National Statistics designation we heard from Heads of Profession (HoP) for Statistics and analysts about how the Code guides their work. Furthermore, we have seen the Code be adopted more widely by a community of practitioners beyond official statistics. Voluntary application of the Code has grown steadily, with now more than 30 organisations represented in our list of adopters. The Code has proved itself a valuable tool to guide decision-making when considering how to work in a way that supports public confidence in data and statistics.
6. When we set out our reasons for producing a second edition of the Code in 2018, we highlighted the changing landscape of statistics and data (with more abundant data being used in ever more sophisticated ways). This changing environment has continued to evolve, arguably in more complex ways over the intervening years.
7. Our annual flagship review, [The State of the Statistics System](#), has highlighted how well over recent years producers have responded to urgent needs for data and statistics and have continued to innovate in challenging circumstances – such as during the COVID-19 pandemic and since Russia's invasion of the Ukraine in February 2022. However, declining response rates, sample biases, and data privacy concerns can have a significant impact on the quality of statistics. In a wider landscape of technological

advances, statistics need to remain relevant, accurate and reliable. The increasing use of new and alternative data sources and advances in technology are opportunities for the statistical system to embrace.

8. The role of the Code is to provide a clear steer for those producing statistics on the standards to be applied to ensure that statistics command public confidence. We have initiated a review of the current Code because we would like to hear from stakeholders across a wide range of settings on their thoughts about its suitability and on how it can be adapted to meet the challenges and opportunities on the horizon.

Discussion

9. We are collecting evidence for the review in several ways.

A written call for evidence

10. We opened a call for evidence on 18 September 2023 with a 12-week response period. This invites detailed written views about how the Code could be strengthened or may need to change (closing on 11 December 2023). The call for evidence also invites comments on new proposed badges for official statistics and on how voluntary application of the Code can evolve and grow.
11. Our call for evidence questions are open and enable stakeholders to respond in a broad way on areas that are of particular interest to them.
12. We welcome members reflections on all the questions within the call for evidence, both at the Committee meeting and through written submissions. We would find it helpful if you would consider specifically:
 - i. the changing context in which statistics are produced in government, and how expectations and standards need to evolve;
 - ii. future issues that may impact on statistics; and
 - iii. any concerns you have with the current version of the Code itself.

Events for people within and beyond government

13. To encourage and supplement responses to the call for evidence, we created a range of opportunities for stakeholders to discuss and share their views about the Code.
14. The review was launched on 13 September 2023 in an online event chaired by Ed Humpherson with guest speakers: Tracey Brown (Sense about Science), Catherine Hutchinson (Head of the Evaluation Taskforce, Cabinet Office) and Stephen Aldridge (Director of Analysis, Department for Levelling-Up Housing and Communities).
15. Following the launch, we held three public panel sessions with guest speakers followed by a Question and Answer (Q&A) with the audience. These each featured topics that we had identified as current challenges that may have a growing impact on statistical practice going forward (recordings of the events are available via our [Code review webpage](#)).
16. Our September session posed the question: 'In the light of concerns about survey response rates, use of personal data, and wider perceptions of the loss of trust in institutions, what can be done to manage risks to data quality?' Our speakers were Iain Bell (National Director for Public Health Knowledge and Research at Public Health Wales), Sarah Henry (Director of Methodology and Quality at the Office for National Statistics), Professor Roger Halliday (Chief Executive of Research Data Scotland), and Professor David Hand (Imperial College and Chair of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee).
17. Our October event asked: 'What are the key ethical issues in the era of AI: how do we balance serving the public good with the potential for individualised harms?' Our speakers were Areeq Chowdhury (Head of Policy at the Royal Society), Professor

Sabina Leonelli (Director of the Exeter Centre for the Study of the Life Sciences, University of Exeter), and Helen Boaden (Chair of the National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee).

18. Our November panel is considering: 'In an age that demands real-time data and increasing automation, how can official statistics remain relevant?' Our speakers are Sir Ian Diamond (the National Statistician), Neil McIvor (Chief Data Officer at the Department for Education), and Dr Janet Bastiman (Chief Data Scientist at Napier AI, and the Chair of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Data Science and AI Section) (to be held on 23 November 2023).
19. To help us hear from a range of stakeholders, the RSS is jointly hosting with us a public discussion in-person event on 30 November 2023. This event will have some invited speakers and allow opportunity for others to have some time to speak and share their views about the Code.
20. We also held four discussions sessions with HoP for Statistics and their teams, to look at more in-depth aspects of the Code, whether there are practices they would like clarified or extended. These sessions covered aspects of the HoP role and statistical leadership, the boundary between official statistics and management information, release arrangements, use of social media, innovation, user engagement and election challenges.
21. Finally, we ran three interactive webinars for government analysts. These sessions were participatory, aiming to generate insights and encourage further reflection on how the Code is working for producers and whether it can be strengthened.

Stakeholder conversations

22. Views, questions or challenges that have been raised with us about the Code during engagements with stakeholders will also be considered as part of the evidence for the review.

Next steps

23. The call for evidence closes on 11 December 2023. We will begin reviewing the evidence gathered across the events and conversations, as well as through the call for evidence.
24. The review will culminate in a paper to the UK Statistics Authority Board in early 2024 with the findings from the review and OSR's recommendations on whether to make changes to the Code.
25. The OSR will publish a paper summarising the findings and announce the decision of the Board regarding refreshing the Code.

Ed Humpherson, Office for Statistics Regulation, 23 November 2023

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(23)11

Annual Review of Effectiveness

Purpose

1. This paper provides the results of the recent self-review of the effectiveness of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group (NSEUAC) and provides a report on progress within the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) as a result of discussions which have taken place at NSEUAC.

Recommendation

2. Members of the Committee are invited to:
 - i. review the results of the self-review of effectiveness and discuss any themes arising; and
 - ii. note and discuss progress of topics since their discussion at NSEUAC.

Background

Self-Review of Effectiveness

3. In line with good governance practice, the Authority Board and National Statistician's Advisory Committees are committed to conducting annual self-review of effectiveness.
4. NSEUAC was established to provide the National Statistician with advice on a range of cross-cutting issues that extend beyond the remit of any single one of the existing user or advisory groups.
5. Members of NSEUAC were asked to complete statements against which they were asked to indicate whether they 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Respondents were also asked a series of questions about any concerns they may have in relation to the NSEUAC and things that the NSEUAC may conduct differently in the future. Of the 13 respondents who were asked, eight completed the questionnaire.

Impact of the Committee

6. A report on the impact of the Committee was last brought to the Committee in March 2023. Since that time, further feedback has been collated to assess the impact of the Committee's meetings on the different work topics considered, receiving updates and feedback from the relevant business areas to gauge progress and identify any potential areas to be further addressed. A commission was issued to all topic leads who had presented at NSEUAC, requesting that they share details on the impact the Committee discussions had on their work.

Discussion

Self-review of Effectiveness

7. The results of the self-review questionnaire are a prompt for a discussion and the key themes arising from this year's self-review questionnaire results are summarised below.
8. The key points highlighted by members were:

- i. members felt the Committee was broadly focused on discussing strategic priorities and promoting the value of official statistics to society but noted that little has been heard about the Government Statistical Service, beyond the Office for National Statistics (ONS);
 - ii. agendas focused on the right issues, although earlier sight of agendas would be welcome to allow time to consult with constituencies;
 - iii. remote meetings had worked effectively, but the Committee may benefit from meeting in-person, and the December in-person meeting was welcomed;
 - iv. members provide a sufficiently diverse mix of skills, experience and background but more users would be welcome, as well as guests;
 - v. the Chair encourages an open and supportive environment which gives all members the opportunity to contribute to discussions; and
 - vi. secretariat is accessible and provides the appropriate support to members.
9. Members of the Committee were asked what they would like the Committee to focus on over the next year. Comments included:
- i. statistics around issues of great public concern e.g. utilities and environment;
 - ii. early sight on new initiatives; and
 - iii. issues that affect the whole system such as future of Census; administrative data; user engagement and the link between the wider research community.
10. Suggestions from members on any further actions in light of the results would be welcome.

Impact of the Committee

11. Key activities that have arisen since the business areas attended NSEUAC:
- i. **Crime Survey:** the Committee was incredibly helpful in providing a steer on the quality and coherence issues identified at NSEUAC which will inform the work plan going forward in the coming year;
 - ii. **Post Census Consultation:** the consultation kept recommendation options open, clearly articulating this through the consultation document and all engagement activity, the deadline was extended to provide a longer response period. The need for continued use of the alternative data collection methods for certain characteristics was discussed in the consultation document. A data source overview was published providing information about data sources, articles on public acceptability were published and engagement with Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and National Records of Scotland's to discuss transformation strategy has continued;
 - iii. **National Wellbeing and Societal Growth:** ONS has published its review into the measures of national well-being. This review delivered a range of changes, including increasing the number of indicators to 60 (from 44), to incorporate new measures of national well-being based on feedback from technical experts. A revised dissemination plan was also implemented for the measures of national well-being, with data published in an updated dashboard and data tables, alongside quarterly Gross Domestic Product data;
 - iv. **Integrated Data Service (IDS):** ONS and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) have exchanged correspondence on plans for managing the Secure Research Service to IDS and widening the tooling options available beyond Python and R. ESRC will collaborate with ONS colleagues at a working level over the coming months to take the proposals forward and work through the detail with stakeholders and data owners. This engagement is ongoing as of November; and
 - v. **Government Statistical Service (GSS User Engagement Survey):** work continues to implement the GSS User Engagement Strategy following NSEUAC. In particular in

respect of joining up across government; for example, collaborative working on the upcoming health statistics consultation. The volume and range of responses to the recent Future of Population and Migration Statistics consultation shows the impact extensive user engagement and promotion can have. In line with the steer from NSEUAC, the Engagement Hub has been focusing on both building links to new users (especially in the business sector) and improving the service offered to existing users. Analysis of the findings from a stakeholder deep dive which covered some of our 45 key stakeholder organisations and designing of a quantitative survey to assess our engagement across a wider range of stakeholders.

Conclusion

12. The annual self-review provided members the opportunity to reflect on what is working well and where the committee may need to improve its ways of working.
13. This paper set out the findings of the impact that discussions at NSEUAC has had on the topics that were presented at the Committee. Progress has been made by all topic areas and the consultation with the Committee has been a key part of this as evident through recommendations suggested at the committee being implemented in the business areas. This indicates that NSEUAC has positively impacted discussions and is effectively working within its Terms of Reference.

Laura Evans, Central Policy Secretariat, ONS, 04 December 2023