

**National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee
Minute**

Tuesday, 27th February 2024
via video conference

Present

Members

Helen Boaden (Chair)
Stephen Balchin
Vanessa Cuthill
Isabel Nisbet
Monica Magadi

Advisors

Ross Young (Data Protection, UKSA)

Secretariat

Matt Short (also present for items 8 and 9)
Nitya Raghava (also present for item 7)

In attendance

Alex Lambert, Surveys, ONS (for item 2)
Dani Evans, Centre for Crime and Justice, ONS (for item 3)
April Lampard, Centre for Crime and Justice, ONS (for item 3)
Anna McCarthy, University of Edinburgh (for item 3)
Franziska Meink, University of Edinburgh (for item 3)
Julia Rudolph, University of Greenwich (for item 3)
Ruth Studley, ONS (for item 4)
Gareth Love, ONS (for item 4)
Sarah Cummins, ONS (for item 5)
Rachel Huck, ONS (for item 5)

Apologies

Rob Bumpstead (Deputy Chair)
Colin Godbold

1. Minute and matters arising from the previous meeting

- 1.1 Colin Godbold and Rob Bumpstead gave their apologies.
- 1.2 Members of the Committee had approved the minutes from the November meeting in the interim period via correspondence.
- 1.3 Matt Short updated the Committee with progress on actions from the November 2023 meeting. All actions were completed or in progress.

2. ONS Safeguarding Update to NSDEC NSDEC(24)03

- 2.1 Alex Lambert, ONS Chief Safeguarding Officer, from the Surveys team presented this item.
- 2.2 This paper was an update on the ONS safeguarding policy and how it is currently being put into practice. This included anonymised case studies and examples of how these were handled by the team according to the current policy.
- 2.3 The Committee praised the diligent approach of the safeguarding team and found the use of specific examples of the policy in action especially helpful. They encouraged the use of such examples in other papers coming to NSDEC.
- 2.4 The Committee asked about the following points:
 - i. How the wellbeing of ONS interviewers is currently supported via this policy.
 - ii. How the ONS safeguarding policy is being operationalised through partnership working.
 - iii. How ONS's safeguarding policy can remain relevant to changing national policy and precedents.
- 2.5 The Committee agreed that a yearly update to NSDEC on safeguarding would be valuable.
- 2.6 **Action –**
 - i. The safeguarding team to follow up on how understanding and oversight of ONS suppliers' safeguarding can be achieved, and to update the Committee on this when appropriate.

3. Update: Consideration of questionnaires and safeguarding procedures for the Child Abuse Prevalence Survey NSDEC(24)04

- 3.1 This item was prepared by April Lampard and presented by Dani Evans, both from the ONS Centre for Crime and Justice, alongside Julia Rudolph from the University of Greenwich.
- 3.2 This paper was a final update on the Child Abuse Prevalence Survey (CAPS), which has come to NSDEC previously for feedback and assurance.
- 3.3 This included a finalised version of the questionnaire and presented their safeguarding approach for children participating in the CAPS, which will be piloted in a number of schools before a wider launch.
- 3.4 The NSDEC praised the comprehensive work and engagement undertaken by the research team and was assured by the team's approach to safeguarding the different parties involved.

- 3.5 The Committee:
- i. Requested that the team consider how children with intensive supervisory requirements could participate anonymously in the survey.
 - ii. Suggested the team conduct further engagement with parents and guardians regarding consent to participate in the research.
 - iii. Advised that the team consider the feasibility and reach of the survey further with educational partners.

3.6 **Action –**

- i. The research team to provide the Committee with an update after the pilot scheme is complete.

4. Update on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics Consultation and National Statistician’s Recommendation NSDEC(24)05

- 4.1 Ruth Studley, senior responsible owner of FMPS in ONS presented this item.
- 4.2 As this area of work is policy in development, the minutes from this item will be published upon completion.

5. Reference Data Management Framework: Research to understand and provide evidence for an ‘indexing first’ approach to data linkage NSDEC(24)06

- 5.1 Sarah Cummins and Rachel Huck from the ONS Data Linkage Hub presented this item to the Committee.
- 5.2 This item covered the proposed plans to establish an evidence base for a new approach to data linkage.
- 5.3 The Committee:
- i. Asked for more extensive assurance on transparency, communications and engagement, and data subjects’ consent to be provided by the research team.
 - ii. Highlighted the importance of compliance with ONS quality standards, especially given the importance of the linkage framework.

5.4 **Action –**

- i. The team to provide assurance to the Committee for the points raised in 5.3 via the Secretariat.
- ii. The team to provide the Committee with further updates on the project at a future meeting.

6 Presentation from the Data Ethics Advisory Group Aotearoa (New Zealand) NSDEC(24)07

- 6.1 This item was a presentation from the Data Ethics Advisory Group Aotearoa (New Zealand).
- 6.2 The Committee were pleased to receive the presentation from DEAG NZ and appreciated the information about how the DEAG functions in the context of New Zealand.
- 6.3 NSDEC looks forward to working closely with Statistics New Zealand and other international partners in future.
- 6.4 The Committee raised that they would like to establish efficient working patterns to engage with international partners.
- 6.5 **Action –** The Secretariat to provide an update to the Committee with more information about activities and engagement around data ethics internationally, including other National Statistical Institutes.

7. Ethical Stewardship for Artificial Intelligence NSDEC(24)08

- 7.1 This item was presented by Nitya Raghava from the Centre for Applied Data Ethics within the UK Statistics Authority.
- 7.2 This item reviewed existing frameworks for ethical stewardship of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and proposed how the UKSA ethical principles could function to assess projects involving AI.
- 7.3 The Committee welcomed the paper and praised the clear structuring and provision of links to relevant sources.
- 7.4 NSDEC raised questions about how the principles might need to respond to different contexts.
- 7.5 The Committee agreed that:
 - i. The UKSA ethical principles are a good starting point to develop further to address the ethical issues raised by AI in the use of data for statistical and research purposes.
 - ii. NSDEC would be interested in engaging with specialists in the field in future.
 - iii. The Committee would welcome the opportunity to review some examples of projects and work to test the current application of the UKSA ethical principles.
- 7.6 **Action –**
 - i. The Secretariat to provide the Committee with an update on how the UKSA's ethical principles are being used to support ethically appropriate AI projects, with examples to review.

8 NSDEC Self-Assessment Update NSDEC(24)09

- 8.1 This item was presented by Matt Short from the Centre for Applied Data Ethics within the UK Statistics Authority and covered the results of the last Committee self-assessment.
- 8.2 The Committee discussed the results following a successful annual review and agreed that the self-assessment had brought up relevant talking points.

9. Data Ethics Compliance Review NSDEC(24)10

- 9.1 The NSDEC discussed the data ethics compliance review of two projects undertaken and reviewed in 2020 and 2021.
- 9.2 This review confirmed that the research teams had taken the advice of the Committee and had implemented the Committee's comments throughout the analysis they conducted.
- 9.3 The Committee thanked the UKSA's Data Governance, Legislation and Policy team for these reviews.
- 9.4 The Committee discussed the future scope for compliance reviews and considered a new approach to how projects could be audited.
- 9.5 The next NSDEC meeting will be held on 23rd April 2024.