

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Thursday 29 February 2024
London Office**

Hybrid Meeting

Members Present

Sir Robert Chote (Chair) Dr
Jacob Abboud
Professor Sir John Aston
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Ed Humpherson
Sian Jones
Nora Nanayakkara
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter
Penny Young

Other Attendees

Robert Bumpstead
Megan Cooper (item 6)
Alex Lambert (item 9)
Prof. Denise Lievesley (item 7)
Liz McKeown (item 9)
Emma Rourke (item 8)
Ruth Studley (item 8)
Tom Taylor
Jason Zawadzki (item 9)

Apologies

Alison Pritchard
Professor Dame Carol Propper

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Alison Pritchard and Professor Dame Carol Propper.

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 25 January were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(24)06]

- 4.1 Non-Executive Directors had met prior to the Board meeting. They had discussed the appointment process for Non-Executive Directors, which had launched and would close on 27 March.
- 4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activities since the Board last met. Sir Robert had met with Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Minister of State for the Cabinet Office. Alongside Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Sir Robert had met with Alex Chisolm, Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(24)07]

- 5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:
- i. a change to funding of the Analysis Function from ONS only funding to a subscription based model across departments;
 - ii. the appointment of Cat Little, the current Second Permanent Secretary at HM Treasury and Head of the Government Finance Function as the new Civil Service Chief Operating Officer and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office, with effect from 2 April;
 - iii. the launch of the review of Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender, being led by Professor Alice Sullivan of University College London, on 29 February, which ONS would engage with;
 - iv. the reintroduction of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to Labour Market Statistics on 13 February;
 - v. publication on 20 February of the change in methodology for estimating excess mortality in the UK;
 - vi. plans for a short review of ONS Crime statistics and preparation ahead of the forthcoming release of Crime statistics in England and Wales to ensure a clear narrative alongside the publication;
 - vii. Sir Ian's attendance at the COVID-19 inquiry on 29 February (ahead of this meeting);
 - viii. Sir Ian's virtual attendance at the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau, which had discussed topics including migration, mobility and population; and
 - ix. the work by ONS with the UK Research Institute and the Economic and Social Research Council on data sharing.
- 5.2 Sir Ian noted that Tom Taylor had transformed the approach to business planning across the organisation, which continued at pace with the aim of setting budgets by 1 April. In a continued constrained financial environment for 2024/25 the Senior Leadership Team were considering the key priorities for the organisation including funding of survey transformation.
- 5.3 Members discussed the importance of stakeholder engagement as part of business planning and separately in relation to the transformation of the LFS. With regard to the website the Board heard that mitigating actions had been put in place to stabilise the website, with further work ongoing to produce a plan to address the longer term issues.

- 5.4 The Board commended ONS on the approach to the recent publication of population projections and the publication of the revised methodology for excess mortality statistics.

6. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(24)08]

- 6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity, highlighting the publication on 29 February of OSR's new guidance on collecting and reporting data about sex and gender identity in official statistics.
- 6.2 Ed Humpherson had given evidence at the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC), Transforming the UK's Evidence Base on 6 February.
- 6.3 OSR had received a request from the ONS to assess its Admin Based Population Estimates for England and Wales. OSR would conduct a phased review focussing on quality.
- 6.4 OSR had presented findings from its review of the Code of Practice (CoP) for Statistics to the February Regulation Committee. The Committee had endorsed OSR's recommendation to refresh the CoP with no change to Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. It was noted that a small number of respondents to the call for evidence for the CoP review had queried the 07.00 release of economic statistics.
- 6.5 Casework during this period included public interventions on asylum backlog figures, NHS waiting lists and National Insurance Contributions.

7. Report from the Chair of the Regulation Committee

- 7.1 The Chair reported on the work of the Regulation Committee which had last met on 1 February. It was noted that ahead of the main meeting the Committee had received a presentation on the work by ONS on the transformation of population and migration statistics.
- 7.2 The Committee had considered:
- i. OSR's draft Business Plan and Budget 2024/25;
 - ii. new guidance on sex and gender identity to support statistical producers;
 - iii. an update on ONS's transformation of the LFS;
 - iv. OSR's thinking around their regulatory approach, including accreditation, to departments undertaking major transformation programmes; and
 - v. progress and planning for the pre-election period and the potential implications for OSR.

8. Strategic Risk Profile and Risk Appetite [SA(24)09]

- 8.1 Megan Cooper introduced a paper providing an update on the Authority's strategic risk profile, which reflected the most significant risks to the successful delivery of the Authority's strategy. Following strategic workshops held with the Senior Leadership Team and Non-Executive Directors a major transformation of the profile was not being proposed.
- 8.2 The Board heard that that the Executive Committee (ExCo) and its sub committees regularly considered the risk profile, with a focus on strategic risks outside of appetite, and the interplay across the strategic risk profile, such as the SR12 Technological Resilience, SR3 Quality Statistics and SR6 Communications.
- 8.3 Members discussed the update. The following comments were made in discussion:
- i. the need to also focus on the strategic risks that were just within appetite in addition to those that were outside of appetite;

- ii. the interplay between SR12 and SR3 and the challenge for the organisation in systematically addressing legacy issues. A cross office approach was needed to bring together Digital Services and Technology, Statistical Methodology and output owners to be able to transform legacy;
 - iii. the need to focus on the interplay across the strategic risk profile in delivering the strategy, not only those currently outside of appetite;
 - iv. the impact of external factors on the risk profile, such as the impact of the upcoming election on SR0 Independence and Trustworthiness;
 - v. ONS had made improvements on the communication of statistical releases including the aim of pre-empting the misuse of statistics; and
 - vi. ExCo would continue to focus its discussion on the interconnectivity across the strategic risk profile.
- 8.4 The Board agreed that the strategic risk profile including risk appetites reflected the top level risks for the Authority.
- 8.5 Tom Taylor noted that the strategic risks should not be too composite in nature to ensure clear ownership and accountability by the risk owner.
- 8.6 With regard to SR0 Independence and Trustworthiness and the link with SR3 Quality and SR6 Communications it was noted that Ed Humpherson and Penny Young would have a follow up discussion.
- 9. Independent Review of the Authority by Prof. Denise Lievesley**
- 9.1 Sir Robert welcomed Professor Denise Lievesley to the meeting noting thanks on behalf of the Board for all of her work in undertaking the review. The timing for publication of the review had not yet been confirmed by the Cabinet Office. Professor Lievesley was scheduled to attend the PACAC on 12 March.
- 9.2 Professor Lievesley noted her thanks for all those involved in the review, which had included extensive engagement across the statistical system. The review had focussed on the structure of the statistical system in relation to the production of quality data. Professor Lievesley highlighted the following:
- i. The reputation of the UK Statistical System was high and had been enhanced by the work of ONS throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - ii. The role of the Office for Statistics Regulation was considered internationally as a strength of the system.
 - iii. Other National Statistical Offices were facing similar issues such as falling survey response rates and the ability to use administrative data in a sustainable way.
 - iv. The recommendation that the Authority should lead the establishment and delivery of a Triennial Assembly involving key organisations and across the four Nations with the remit of setting the UK's needs for statistics. This would help raise the profile of the Authority Board with an annual lecture by the Authority Chair, linking to the State of the Statistical System report, produced by the Office for Statistics Regulation. It was noted that this was an opportunity for the Authority to lead the way as there was no model currently in existence.
 - v. The need for the centre of government led by the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury to resolve the systemic barriers to data sharing between departments.
 - vi. The use of the Integrated Data Service in facilitating the greater use of administrative data.
 - vii. The need to consider the talent development and talent pipeline for the role of National Statistician.
- 9.3 Board members discussed the review. The following points were considered in discussion:

- i. The recommendation that the expertise at a senior level in the ONS would be enhanced by the appointment of a Director General for Methodology with a focus on the communication of data. It would also provide the opportunity to engage with other national statistical offices and in academia.
- ii. The value in the Authority building partnerships outside of government including universities and think tanks, with clear economic and social benefits to this collaboration.
- iii. The range of actions around communications including the urgent improvement of the website.
- iv. Appointment of a Non-Executive Director with relevant communications experience to enhance the Board.
- v. The opportunity for further detail in the Authority's strategy on how it would engage with global organisations, and the recommendation to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with Eurostat.

9.4 The Board welcomed the update by Professor Lievesley and looked forward to the publication of the report.

10. Future of Population and Migration Statistics [SA(24)10]

- 10.1 Ruth Studley introduced a paper which provided an update on the work towards the recommendation on the future of population and migration statistics.
- 10.2 The Board heard about the plans for the next two years supported by the Future Population and Migration Statistics; the risks and benefits of the proposed administrative based system when compared to the previous system with a decennial census; and the approach to stakeholder engagement. Since the last meeting the Board had the opportunity to comment on revised drafts of headline recommendation.
- 10.3 Board members discussed the update. The following points were considered in discussion:
- i. the development of a heatmap of administrative data sources needed aligned to outputs including a rag status to enable the Board to evidence progress over time; and to help inform a decision after the two year period alongside clearly articulated milestones, success criteria and measures of assurance;
 - ii. the need, at this point, to focus on articulating the recommendation document precisely; and
 - iii. concern that the risk or loss of public acceptability was perhaps not clear enough in the risk profile.
- 10.4 The Board noted the update. The Board would be updated on progress of work in between meetings.

11. ARIES Programme [SA(24)11]

- 11.1 Jason Zawadzki provided an update on delivery of the ARIES programme.
- 11.2 The Board heard that Prices had progressed including the incorporation of both transformed second-hand cars and rents administrative data into headline consumer price statistics. There were a number of challenges in relation to the delivery of the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS). In January ExCo had agreed to extend the dual running of the TLFS and LFS until mid-July 2024. The aim was that the TLFS would become the primary source of labour market statistics in September. Users would continue to be kept updated with clear communications as the work progressed. With regard to Legacy Ingres it was noted that a solution was currently being considered through the executive governance framework.
- 11.3 Board members discussed the update and highlighted the importance of effective stakeholder engagement throughout the transformation. It was noted that the dual

running of the LFS and TLFS would continue until September. As part of the business planning process funding would be maintained for survey transformation.

11.4 The Board noted the update.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 The Board would next meet on 21 March.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Agenda
Thursday 29 February, 13.45-17.00
London Boardroom, Hybrid Meeting

Chair: Sir Robert Chote

Apologies: Alison Pritchard, Prof. Carol Propper

Attendees: Megan Cooper (for item 6), Alex Lambert (for item 9), Prof. Denise Lievesley (for item 7), Liz McKeown (for item 9), Emma Rourke (for item 8), Ruth Studley (for item 8), Jason Zawadzki (for item 9)

NED Session: 13.00-13.45

1 13.45-13.50 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 25 January 2024
2 13.50-14.00 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(24)06 Sir Robert Chote
3 14.00-14.30 30 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(24)07 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 14.30-14.40 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(24)08 Ed Humpherson
5 14.40-14.50 10 mins	Report from Committee Chair • Regulation Committee	Oral update Penny Young
6 14.50-15.10 20 mins	Strategic Risk Profile and Risk Appetite	SA(24)09 Megan Cooper Tom Taylor
15.10-15.15 5 mins	Break	
7 15.15-16.10 55 mins	Independent Review of the Authority by Prof. Denise Lievesley	Oral update Prof. Denise Lievesley
8 16.10-16.35 25 mins	Future of Population and Migration Statistics	SA(24)10 Emma Rourke Ruth Studley
9 16.35-16.55 20 mins	ARIES Programme	SA(24)11 Jason Zawadzki Alex Lambert Liz McKeown
10 16.55-17.00 5 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 21 March 2024, Newport Boardroom

Chair's Report, February 2024

Purpose

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

Review of recent activities

2. On 25 January, I met with Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Minister of State for the Cabinet Office, to discuss the Lievesley review, the provision of UK-wide data and statistics, and recruitment to the Board. I met the Minister again on 14 February to discuss Board recruitment further.
3. On 2 February, the National Statistician and I met with Alex Chisholm, Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office, to conduct the Office for National Statistics (ONS)'s mid-year stocktake. We discussed the future of population and migration statistics, the Integrated Data Service, and required support from the centre to help ONS deliver on its ambitions.
4. 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

5. On 24 January, I responded to James Murray MP on communications by HM Treasury about changes to national insurance contributions.
6. On 2 February, I wrote to Baroness Neville-Rolfe about the availability of UK-wide data and statistics following our meeting, as above.
7. On 19 February, I responded to Dame Angela Eagle MP about statements on changes to personal taxation.

Upcoming activities

8. On 29 February, I will be meeting with Max Tse, Executive Director of the National Audit Office (NAO), to discuss the NAO's strategic review.

Sir Robert Chote, Chair, 22 February 2024

*Chief Executive's Report, February 2024***Purpose**

1. This provides the Authority Board with an overview of activity for February 2024.

Summary

2. February has seen progress on key challenges outlined last month, especially in relation to economic statistics. The **Labour Force Survey** was reintroduced following significant stakeholder engagement and we are managing the knock-on prioritisation impacts on social survey **response rates**. This included managing labour market, prices, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and retail sales all within one week, and setting out the nuances of a technical recession.
3. Internally, **business planning** and prioritisation continues in the tight financial situation, but we are in a more proactive space earlier than achieved this financial year. We have now received the finalised revise of the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) from **Denise Lievesley** and are now exploring the recommendations, our response, and looking ahead to when it is published by Cabinet Office. Finally, work is progressing at pace on the **recommendation on the future of population and migration statistics (FPMS)** as we near publication in April.

Review of recent activities

4. Guided by our new communications playbook approach, **population projections** landed well in the media in January and our approach praised by stakeholders, including at the Home Office and HM Treasury. We received good coverage of our messaging that distinguished projections from 'forecasts', highlighting the nature of uncertainty in our figures so if migration comes down, so will future projections. Our blog post was widely quoted and helped to balance and de-politicise the reporting, and our graphics were embedded in media articles. Nigel Henretty also expertly put the scale of our population projections into context on BBC Radio's More or Less programme.
5. We have reintroduced the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** that had been disrupted by ongoing issues with the survey's response rates. Coverage was largely factual and focused on the numbers. Strong stakeholder management before and after publication, media briefing and social media explainers on our improvements and transition plans to allow a longer consistent time series, meant that criticism was largely confined to one Financial Times (FT) article. This work involved extensive work to re-weight the LFS with new population estimates. Work continues to improve the quality of LFS response with the reintroduction of the sample boost from January 2024. The additional sample is on top of other improvements (such as returning to face-to-face interviews) that were introduced in October.
6. The ONS has continued their response to the **Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) rapid review of GDP** and their quality review of profitability and Gross Operation Surplus (GOS), publishing a [response](#) and [workplan](#) respectively, setting out how we plan to take the recommendations forward.
7. In challenging coverage, an article in the Sunday Telegraph picked up on a recent allstaff ONS communication supporting colleagues who might have been affected by some of the **media coverage of gender identity and the census**. The piece, which mentioned the forthcoming government review of the collection of sex and gender data, quoted several sources criticising the ONS for issuing the communication. A statement from an ONS spokesperson quoted in the piece explains that we "always welcomed" the review

and we will “continue to support our colleagues who are delivering ONS statistics with utmost professionalism and impartiality.”

8. The end of January also saw the publication of **the latest estimates of Crime in England and Wales** which saw mostly positive pick-up but also some criticism from the BBC and the chair of the Home Affairs Committee, Dame Diana Johnson. This was largely focused on how total crime is presented in our releases, and what it is and isn't included. Following a meeting with Dame Diana, we have committed to provide a more inclusive view of crime, which we will do ahead of our next major releases on crime.
9. This month we published a progress report in collaboration with other departments on the **Public Services Productivity Review**. The next publication of new data is 1 March ahead of the Spring Fiscal Statement, giving insight into administrative burden on public sector workers from the Time Use Survey and associated qualitative research. The next significant improvements to productivity estimates are on track for release..
10. **Productivity statistics** were also published on 15 February. This has been challenging due to the LFS issues mentioned above. We have merged the flash and main overview publications to present all available data and are looking to take this model forward in future for users. This means a slight delay to the industry level detail but allows a single articulation of productivity data, which is under increasing interest more widely.
11. Our **business planning** exercise for 2024/25 continues at pace, with details now in place for the end-to-end cost of our priority activities. We continue to test costing assumptions and the implications for our wider programme of activities next year. Our target of settling budgets by 1 April remains.
12. ONS was short-listed for two awards at the recent **Government Project Delivery Awards**. The Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) team won the Project Delivery Award in the same week as receiving a green delivery confidence assessment from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, ahead of programme closure in March 2024. This bodes well as many of the team transition into FPMS now that the business case has been endorsed by HM Treasury.
13. The Data Science Campus has been conducting a range of **Artificial Intelligence (AI) projects** in recent months within ONS to demonstrate the organisational benefit of using Generative AI on cloud platforms and identifying barriers to deployment. Projects include Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)/Security Operations Centre (SOC) classification for TLFS, StatsChat, HR Chat, and parliamentary summaries (based on over 100 hours/week of debate content). These projects have enabled us to explore and articulate the technical and organisational barriers we face in ONS to fully realising the benefits.
14. The Data Science Campus gained approval from the Analysis Function Board (AFB) to proceed with a business case to evaluate the benefits/disbenefits of a **data science profession**, following survey results which demonstrated broad support for a data science profession. Feedback at both AFB and Departmental Directors of Analysis (DDANs) established that at a leadership level there were strong views both for and against a profession, which the business case will address.
15. February saw the **launch of the pilot “young person’s safety survey”** which will be an online only survey aimed at understanding children’s and young people’s experiences of crime and behaviour that can affect their chances of being a victim of crime. It is hoped that following a successful pilot when can replace the current Children’s Crime Survey for England and Wales, which is suffering from particularly low response rates.
16. We also hosted a series of highly successful **“ONS Local Presents” webinar workshops** in collaboration with Birmingham City Council, focusing on Power BI and Application Programme Interfaces (APIs). Over 600 stakeholders joined these workshops. This received excellent feedback. At our latest quarterly Combined Authority

Liaison Group, we began a conversation about co-creating a spending review bid to move the ONS Local onto a more sustainable funding model.

17. At the end of March, we will **launch the Beta for our Explore Subnational Statistics service** which allows users to find, visualise, compare and download subnational data easily. Our first output on [short term lets](#), through our partnership with AirBnB, Expedia and Bookings.com, will be published shortly.
18. In the **Data Quality Hub**, the Quality Standard for Analysis has been published to Quality Central (the ONS wiki pages on quality related guidance). The Quality Standard sets out the minimum requirements for assuring quality in ONS across the full data lifecycle. It is relevant for all analytical work, including statistical production, ad hoc analysis and research. The application of the standard supports the effective end-to-end quality management of analytical work, acting as part of the mitigation in place against Strategic Risk 3 (statistical quality).
19. The **Pandemic Preparedness Toolkit** has been rolling out. Nepal, Malawi and Argentina have accepted our invitation to become project partners and draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) have been sent to National Statistics Office (NSOs) within each country. The project will be working across these countries and with a global network of stakeholders to build on ONS successes and lessons learned during the covid pandemic; including tools and methods for data collection, analysis, data science, statistical leadership and cross-boundary collaboration for health development.
20. At the end of January, we published [National Population Projections: 2021-based interim](#). The projections will underpin fiscal projections to assist with the Spring 2024 Budget. Alongside the publication we published a blog, Understanding our future population: [Why projections are not predictions](#). This involved significant stakeholder management.
21. Separately, we have also identified options for accessing the **Advanced Passenger Information** data from Home Office so that we can assess its ability to replace the International Passenger Survey data in migration estimates for British Nationals. We have also written to OSR requesting an assessment of **admin-based population estimates** with a view to the outputs becoming accredited official statistics.
22. The IDS is proactively acquiring, indexing, and onboarding data with an ambitious target of onboarding indexed versions of all ONS Essential Shared Data Assets by the end of June. We are also working to increase both the numbers of projects and users on the platform at pace. The options for accelerating the Secure Research Service (SRS)-IDS transition are also being considered.
23. The BBC will be launching the playground survey - **a collaboration with ONS, BBC and micro:bit** in February. This is an opportunity for primary school children to collect and analyse data about their playgrounds using a micro:bit. Uptake of micro:bit by primary schools across the UK has been high. The survey itself will take place over the summer term, with ONS publishing data from the activities in the autumn (via the data science campus website). This is a highly positive way to engage primary school children in data.
24. In **surveys**, we have trained around 500 colleagues in the use of the Process Portal, the replacement for Lotus Notes. Lotus Notes is being closed except for applications used for two business surveys, for which Digital Service and Technology (DST) are working on replacement systems. Separately, we have signed an MoU with DWP for the ongoing provision of data for the Family Resources Survey over the next three years. Operationally, given a focus on LFS and Living Costs and Food (LCF) data collection as a priority, the Survey on Living Conditions will be paused for three months.
25. Internationally, ONS were represented in Geneva at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Conference of European Statisticians Bureau

discussing migration, mobility, population and subjective poverty measures. The UK will also attend the upcoming UN Statistical Commission in New York later this month. Items of significance will include the System of National Accounts review and an upcoming proposal to expand the size of the commission from its current 24 members.

26. Finally, we have started having some initial conversations with the **House of Commons Library** about working together on a module on good use of statistics as part of the induction for new Members of Parliament (MPs) after the General Election. The conversations were productive and the Library were keen for us not only to be involved in this, but also some ongoing training offerings for MPs and their staff.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, February 2024

*Update from the Director General for Regulation***Purpose**

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

Discussion

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

Ongoing work

- i. **Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee:** I was invited to give evidence for transforming the UK's Evidence base. I was asked questions on a range of topics including analysis in government, our role, our interventions, ONS statistics, user engagement and UK wide data comparability. The session went well, and I was able to highlight key messages on Intelligent Transparency and Trustworthiness, Quality and value (TQV). I have since followed up with a letter to the Committee highlighting how Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Welsh Government have made progress in addressing the challenge of cross-UK data comparability;
- ii. **Business planning:** I have been engaging with a number of external stakeholders over the past month to understand their priorities for the coming year and get their thoughts on our priorities. We have had great engagement so far and also advertise on our [website](#) for anyone to contribute to our business planning;
- iii. **State of the Statistical system:** Our 2023/24 project to report on our position on the statistical system is underway. Phase 1 - research and reporting, will continue through March/April;
- iv. **Election planning:** We submitted a paper to Regulation Committee summarising our recent engagement and lessons learned around misinformation, focusing on what this might mean for the 2024 election. We are starting to finalise our position statements on key topics and continue to engage with Full Fact and other regulators in the lead up to the Election to ensure we promote messages with 'one voice';
- v. **Sex and Gender identity:** We are finalising the updated guidance and plan to publish at the end of February;
- vi. **Future proofing the Code of Practice for Statistics:** We presented findings from our review of the Code of Practice of Statistics, which ran throughout autumn 2023, to the Regulation Committee in February. The Committee endorsed our recommendation to refresh the Code in 2024, to reflect feedback heard. We will update the Board when we have a draft Code 3.0 for consultation. The Committee also endorsed OSR's recommendation to replace the current National Statistics badge with an 'Accredited Official Statistics' badge, and our decision not to introduce new badges for non-accredited official statistics. We are developing an implementation plan for this change: in doing so, we will consult with ONS Communications Team. A subset of respondents queried the release of economic statistics at 7am, and two of them highlighted aspects of market liquidity. We are going to speak to ONS, and key users like the Bank of England, to explore these questions further;
- vii. **Population estimates:** I'm pleased to have received a request from the ONS to assess its Admin Based Population Estimates for England and Wales. We support its ambitions to improve methods and make use of technology advances in the production of population estimates. We will be agile in our approach and conduct a phased assessment to review the new approach in the production of population statistics for England and Wales;
- viii. Our first phase will focus on quality covering three broad areas:

- the suitability and quality assurance of the data and methods used in the Dynamic Population Model to produce population estimates in England and Wales;
- the extent to which ONS is benchmarking the state of readiness of population estimates to replace the cohort component method previously used; and
- an initial investigation into user understanding of, and confidence in, the proposed new method, and ONS communications on this.

ix. **Labour Force survey (LFS):** We are undertaking a short follow up review following the reintroduction of Labour Force Survey based estimates, the review will focus on the suitability of the revised methodology, communication, transparency, user needs, and further actions planned to improve the quality of the LFS during the transition period to the Transformed Labour Force Survey.

Published work

- How statistics serve the public good:** This month we published a [think piece](#) setting out our current view on how official statistics can serve the public good, alongside the thought processes that led to these conclusions. As part of this think piece, we have asked readers to share their thoughts on what it may mean for official statistics to serve the public good. We intend to develop a shared understanding that can guide both our regulation and the production of statistics across the statistical system; and
- Personal Independence Payment statistics:** We published our [assessment report](#) covering Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)'s Personal Independence Payment (PIP) statistics and identified one requirement to improve the overall value of the statistics focusing on user engagement.

Casework

3. We have received 201 cases so far in 2023/24, including 18 cases since the last meeting. These cases include concerns around mortality, house price index, fly tipping, NHS, cost of living, pollution, wages, fraud, schools and election leaflets.
4. We have closed 21 cases since the last meeting including public interventions on: asylum backlog figures where Sir Robert wrote to [Alistair Carmichael MP](#) and [Stephen Kinnock MP](#), NHS waiting lists where I wrote to [Veronica Hawking](#) and National Insurance Contributions where Sir Robert wrote to [James Murray MP](#).

Wider reach

5. **Voluntary adoption:** We are now accepting entries for our [2024 Award](#) for statistical Excellence in Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. This award recognises excellence in the voluntary application of the 'pillars' TQV. Deadline for entries is midnight Sunday 21 April 2023.
6. **Blogs:** I published a [blog](#) this month on the evolution of the 5 safes model of data access. We also had a [guest blog](#) from Helen Barugh, Head of Statistics Policy and User Engagement on UKHSA statistics.

Issues on my mind

7. **Code Review:** We were pleased to see widespread support for the Code and its pillars, even if there were areas that people felt could be developed on. We now need to draw together our proposals on how we update aspects of the Code to reflect what we heard. This is likely to include changes to materials that support the Code, as well as direct changes to the Code itself.
8. **Election:** One of the main areas of focus for OSR this year is the upcoming election. We have already seen an increase in casework that focuses on government targets and manifesto pledges, we expect this to continue throughout the year. We are continuing to

work on the actions we highlighted in the Regulation Committee paper and work is progressing well for the casework trial team structure.

9. **Hybrid:** In line with the rest of the Authority, we introduced minimum 20 per cent office attendance in January, this will increase to 40 per cent in April. Early indications are that people are attending as we would expect, and we will be increasing our in-person collaboration over the coming months.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 21 February 2024

Children, Education and Skills

Our main piece of work is the Graduate Outcomes assessment. We have discussed our findings within OSR and will be writing our report with the view to complete it for the April Reg Comm.

Crime and Security

Finalising the draft report for our review of the quality of police recorded crime statistics. We discussed key findings and draft recommendations with ONS, the Home Office and HMICFRS. We will be sharing the draft report with Regulation Committee and all stakeholders.

Economy, Business and Trade

Spotlight on Quality of Business Investment statistics and the Business Enterprise Research and Development statistics. Spotlight on Quality framework is currently undergoing peer review by a variety of producer teams, users and other stakeholders ahead of publication. Finalising key findings from our review of the public sector classification process. Continuing to scope a systemic review on 'Ensuring that Economic Statistics are fit for the future'.

Health and Social Care

Follow up review of Mental Health statistics in Northern Ireland, engaging with stakeholders. Engaging with stakeholder views for review of the statistics the Winter Coronavirus Infection Study, Mental Health statistics in Wales and Health Inequalities across the UK.

Housing, Planning and Local Services

Finalising review of Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax levels and Council Tax challenges and changes statistics and Scottish Government's Scottish House Conditions Survey statistics to inform reaccreditation decision.

Labour Market and Welfare

Follow-up review of ONS's reintroduction of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data in its monthly Labour market release, and their plans to improve it further. Ongoing support for ONS on its development of the Transformed LFS (TLFS). ONS outlining their revised timescales against our recommendations following delays to their plans.

Population and Society

Phase one of the Assessment of the Office for National Statistics' Admin Based Population Estimates underway. Planning for Census Phase 3 (England/Wales and Northern Ireland). Finalising review of the Scottish Household Survey statistics to inform reaccreditation decision

Transport, Environment and Climate Change

Continue discussions with Defra team regarding meeting requirements from the Assessment of Butterfly statistics. Supporting statistical development - ongoing discussions with Transport for Wales on Welsh travel survey and 20mph implementation reporting

Casework

Health and Social Care	Due to respond to the shadow minister for health, Karin Smyth MP, about the Department for Health and Social Care's claim that it has delivered 5,000 extra hospital beds this winter.
Population and Society	Due to respond publicly to Sir George Howarth MP about vaccine excess deaths analysis presented at a non-governmental briefing event for MPs

Period - 01/12/23 - 21/02/2024

Planning/Delivery

Population and Society	Dynamic Population Model Admin Based Population Estimates: Phase 1 (Office for National Statistics)
Population and Society	Excess deaths including follow up of mortality CC
Economy, Business and Trade	Household Costs Indices (Office for National Statistics)
Economy, Business and Trade	Price Index of Private Rents (PIPR) and owner-occupiers' housing element of Consumer Price Inflation statistics (Office for National Statistics)
Economy, Business and Trade	Research and development expenditure statistics (Office for National Statistics)
Labour Market and Welfare	Reweighted Labour Force Survey estimates (Office for National Statistics)
Health and Social Care	Scottish Health Survey (Scottish Government)
Housing, Planning and Local Services	Scottish House Condition Survey (Scottish Government)
Crime and Security	Systemic Review of Police Recorded Crime statistics (Office for National Statistics and Home Office)

Published/Follow up

Economy, Business and Trade	Statistics on Profitability of UK Companies and Gross Operating Surplus of private non-financial corporations (Office for National Statistics)
Health and Social Care	England Mental Health Statistics Review - follow up
Health and Social Care	Urgent and emergency care waiting times (NHS England & Improvement)
Health and Social Care	Winter Covid-19 Infection Study (UK Health Security Agency and Office for National Statistics)
Labour Market and Welfare	Personal Independence Payment statistics (Department for Work and Pensions)

Closed

Data and Methods	Data Sharing & Linkage Review
Population and Society	Follow up to Compliance Check of Transformed Migration Statistics



Data and Methods

Drafting a blog post on OSR's position on AI, after a discussion at our Regulation Committee. Starting work on a follow on report to our 2023 report on data sharing and linkage across government

Insight

State of the Statistical System 2023/24 - Taking a top down approach this year, and therefore workshops are being held with SLT and the wider OSR team on issues across the system the report will cover. Reducing Outputs - continuing to collect content and produce a narrative. Final product is currently in design stages.

Policy and Standards

Code review: analysed the responses from the call for evidence and submitted a paper to the Regulation Committee. Finalising a response paper to publish in early March. Voluntary application: launched our fifth award for statistical excellence in showing TQV with the RSS. Added The Office for Environmental Protection to our list of adopters.

Research

Published our think piece on 'How Statistics can serve the Public good'. We have initiated our research project about the role of statistics in decision making by individuals, working with Kings College London and the Behavioural Insight Team

Strategic Risk profile Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board (the 'Board') with an updated Strategic Risk profile following strategic risk workshops and discussions at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on 16 November 2023.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. review the updated Strategic Risk profile and risk appetite levels;
 - ii. review analysis of the wider Strategic Risk profile, with particular focus on the two risks outside of appetite; and
 - iii. review the analysis of the strategic risk owned by the National Statistician, overseen by the Authority Board – 'Independence and Trustworthiness'.

Background

3. The strategic risk profile demonstrates the most significant risks to the successful delivery of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) Strategy and its strategic objectives, owned by the Authority senior leadership. The latest version of the strategic risk profile, appetite ranges and statements were signed off by the Board at its November 2022 meeting, with an update on the Authority's Strategic Risk Profile presented in June 2023.

Discussion

Strategic Risk Profile Update and Risk Appetites

4. Following our emerging risk work, and strategic risk workshops with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and non-executive directors, we have worked with risk owners to present an updated strategic risk profile and appetite ranges for approval. We would welcome the Board's review of these both to ensure that they are a fair representation of the risks we face and the continued appropriateness of appetite calibration.
5. A major transformation of the profile is not proposed but additional risks will be added at an operational level to reflect discussions. Minor amendments have been made to most strategic risks.
6. The strategic risk profile will continue to be assured regularly by Executive Committee (ExCo) and its sub-committees at the executive level, plus ARAC at the non-executive level, with the Authority Board receiving an analysis of the entire profile on a bi-annual basis (November and June).

Independence and trustworthiness risk

7. Below is a summary of key activities contributing to its effective management:
 - i. continued monitoring of key themes in all parliaments across the UK, with interventions where required, for example, in relation to the Prime Minister's use of statistics relating to the asylum topic;
 - ii. engagement with the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) on the 'Transforming the UK's Evidence Base' inquiry and involvement in the Public Sector Bodies Review and independent UK public inquiry on the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - iii. the OSR continues to operate its casework function and has taken action and shared regulatory views on a number of issues such as UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

- revisions and ONS 2021 England and Wales Census data on Gender Identity, demonstrating that no distinction is made between the ONS and other producers;
- iv. as is usual, particularly in the period leading to a general election, careful consideration is being given as to how to effectively manage our reputation through our representation at external events and our use of consistent corporate messaging through our external engagements. An internal communications plan is in development, linked to government communications best practice, to support colleagues in pre-election planning and in understanding their responsibilities as civil servants during an election period; and
 - v. results from a recently commissioned brand survey will be used to track attitudes towards ONS and data over time. These will be available in April.

Wider Strategic Risk Profile

- 8. The Authority has largely been operating within the Board agreed risk appetite ranges. However, SR6 'Our Communications' and SR3 'Quality statistics' continue to operate outside of appetite, SR12 'Technological resilience' is under discussion at ExCo, and management of SR8 has been impacted by an organisational change.
- 9. SR6 'Our communications': SR6 was taken out of appetite in August 2023 due to website stability issues and media criticism in response to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures. Additional controls in relation to the website have been implemented with improvements in metrics noted, although there has been an increase in pressure and further rise in website traffic over the last two months. Further actions are underway to bring the risk back into appetite by the end of April, including improvements to monitoring, tracing and caching, and increasing website capacity, with further plans to ensure longer-term stability. In response to the scrutiny and lessons learnt from GDP, a new approach to identifying and managing reputational issues across ONS publications has been embedded, as well as the introduction of a communications playbook structure which was taken forward in the publication of migration estimates and is being used to plan forthcoming communications, including for labour market. As part of business planning for 2024/25, business areas have committed to transforming outputs by increasing the flexibility of our content, modernising data dissemination and enabling greater prioritisation, which will increase quality, reduce error, and increase impact with users.
- 10. SR3 'Quality Statistics': November's Quality Committee proposed an increase in the risk score from eight to 12 (out of appetite), which was subsequently agreed by ExCo. A 'back to appetite' plan was agreed at December's extraordinary Quality Committee. This includes actions to better understand the root causes of quality concerns which led to the change in risk likelihood (from two to three) and to ensure a robust mitigation plan is in place and delivered. Directors are required to ensure end to end processes are documented and an assessment is being conducted to ensure there is sufficient resource and capability to deliver priority outputs to the required level of quality. This will highlight any additional risk areas (and mitigations) and will also inform business planning for 2024/25 where it is recognised that some discretionary activity will need to be stopped in order to free up capacity to address quality risks. While it will not be possible to complete all actions within the plan by the end of the financial year, March's Quality Committee will evaluate whether sufficient progress has been made to bring the risk back within appetite.
- 11. SR12 'Technological Resilience': Following a deep dive of SR12, PIC discussed whether the likelihood of legacy risks was significant enough to drive the entire risk out of appetite, noting sound controls were in place for the technology estate more broadly, which remains resilient. Whilst the risks posed by the legacy estate will not fully impact

the organisation in the immediate future, prolonging the organisation's reliance on legacy increases the complexity and cost of resolving it. It was recognised that it will take time to address legacy and some unknowns and uncertainties need to be better understood to provide assurance that we can move away from legacy within sufficient time. ExCo subsequently discussed the issue and agreed clear actions including ringfencing funding as part of business planning for a sustainable legacy programme and that a plan to address legacy be presented back to ExCo for signing off whereupon the scoring of this risk will be revisited.

12. SR8 'Inclusivity in our statistics and analysis': a new team has been in post since January who are reviewing the current Inclusive Data Taskforce (IDTF) roadmap and monitoring process with a view to presenting a proposal to the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee (NSIDAC) in March 2024. The team has continued to support the quarterly NSIDAC meetings and a number of extraordinary sessions throughout Autumn 2023. An internal audit of the IDTF is due to report at the end of February 2024 which seeks to highlight where we are as an organisation and will support an understanding of the management and articulation of this risk. Positive steps are being taken towards finalising a plan for the ongoing management of SR8 including the risk controls, metrics and assurance map to ensure a regular feed of reporting mechanisms and to enable the Risk and Assurance (R&A) team to assure the risk score.
13. The wider strategic risk profile and the interplay between our strategic risks are discussed at ExCo. A continued theme of discussion is whether we are doing too much and whether we are appropriately balancing ambition and affordability whilst protecting quality and wellbeing. Additional areas of focus have included improving our external communications and priority investment areas such as legacy, survey transformation and automation.
14. Despite continued financial challenges and the need to reduce our headcount and live within our means, we are continuing to deliver our strategy. Business planning for 2024/25 is well underway and aims to balance ambition, resource and quality within the funding available. At the heart of this are several organisational priorities including enhancing the organisation's reputation for quality and trustworthiness and publishing top quality statistics for our six core areas. The refreshed planning approach will provide an enhanced understanding of the resource and cost of priority activities to ensure budget can be directed towards the highest priorities. Difficult decisions will be required, which involve stopping activities to protect these key priorities and quality, alongside the necessary cultural change to ensure we are managing our most significant risks within appetite, balancing ambition with affordability.

Conclusion

15. This paper has highlighted some challenges that the Board should be aware of in relation to SR3, SR6, SR8 and SR12. It has also touched on the need to maintain focus on understanding and assurance of delivering our ambitions in relation to resource affordability and the skillsets required to manage our strategic risks within appetite with a particular focus on quality; this being the normal pattern of dynamic business planning in an agile organisation. This is at the forefront of our minds as we continue with business planning activities and will inevitably lead to further decisions to stop or reduce activities, the associated risks and impacts of which must be understood.
16. We invite the views of the Board on the refreshed strategic risk profile, including updated risk appetite ranges.

Natalie Tarr, Head of Risk and Assurance

The Future of Population, Migration and Social Statistics System (FPMS)**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update to Office for National Statistics' (ONS) work towards the recommendation on the future of population and migration statistics, including details on the expected milestones for 2024/25 and 2025/26. The paper seeks to provide additional assurance on our assessment of risk and corresponding mitigation, our sequence of future research and our engagement strategy.

Timing

2. A recommendation is due to be put forward to UK Government in the Spring of 2024, (as committed in the original business case), following the public consultation that closed at the end of October 2023.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Board are invited to note:
 - i. the success criteria;
 - ii. the work plan and key deliverables;
 - iii. the benefits, limitations, and risks of the different systems; and
 - iv. agree the role of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) Board sub-committee.

Background

4. In January, the Board confirmed support on the direction of travel of the National Statistician's recommendation towards further work to develop a census primarily derived from administrative data. This paper provides further information on the following areas:
 - i. the plans for the next two years prior to a check point, supported by the Future Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS) programme;
 - ii. the risks and benefits of the proposed admin-based system when compared to the previous system with a decennial census;
 - iii. an update on our approach to engagement; and
 - iv. further details on the Board sub-committee proposal.
5. Since the January meeting, the Board have also received via correspondence revised drafts of the headline three parts of the recommendation for comment which unpin its conditionality.

Discussion**Vision and Success Criteria**

6. The production of population and migration estimates continually improves as the process to produce censuses changes and iterates. The move to an administrative-based approach is part of that evolution to produce a sustainable statistics system. This should provide more frequent, timely and inclusive statistics, and could obviate the need for a full Census in 2031. The transformed approach will be centred on an admin-based census, supported by:
 - i. population and migration statistics at national and local level, including (and additional to the business case) coherent UK estimates. These should be accredited official statistics, meeting the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value.
 - ii. statistics on characteristics and households, improving our understanding of society and communities at national and local levels;

- iii. population and household projections including variant projections in response to user needs;
 - iv. expert insight into structural demographic change and the related demographic challenges facing our society (including population migration, ageing, fertility and mortality), building understanding of demography across government;
 - v. cross-sectional and longitudinal data assets that allow for research and analysis. This will include enabling multivariate analysis;
 - vi. additional indicators and insights, including use of novel data sources, providing new or early insights into the population (e.g. seasonal population or time of day population); and
 - vii. information to support family historians and genealogists of the future ideally including citizen generated data.
7. With the introduction of an annual admin-based census we would seek to produce outputs on an annual cycle. We will also want to ensure our products are published in a timely fashion to enable the prompt start of the next production cycle. Having an individual level dataset will mean analytical tables and outputs can be determined by users, subject to disclosure.
 8. A government wide endeavour to undertake analysis and provide insights on key issues with ONS providing a central function to maximise the ability for all departments to contribute and benefit. Maximising partnership arrangements through thought leadership from the analytical community inside and outside government to deliver on key user needs, improved research and more focused policy questions and potentially enhanced data.
 9. The programme will continue to work across the organisation, using strategic approaches to publish and disseminate our statistical products. For example, we will increase the use of the Integrated Data Service (IDS) so that researchers and partners can access the data.
 10. These success criteria will be supported by indicators and metrics to transparently demonstrate progress through the period. These indicators, metrics, and progress and situation reports will be provided to the sub-committee.

Plans and Key Deliverables

11. The next two years will be a journey moving from research to industrialising our outputs. The work programme summarised below outlines the milestones that will be taken across the next 12-24 months. Progress and delivery will occur throughout this period and can report to the Authority Board or through the sub-committee (discussed later).
12. During this calendar year we plan to make de-identified individual level data underpinning the estimates available for research purposes. Over the next two years we will move to producing mid-year estimates based on administrative data. We are well on the way to achieving this, having used the new approach to produce official statistics in development in December 2023, as a way to enable users to engage in the development. We will complement this work with activity to build a more sustainable delivery model. Going forward, national and sub-national estimates will be published on a six-monthly cycle, with publications in June and December each year. Our intention is that the new approach becomes our headline mid-year population estimates from June 2024, subject to key criteria around quality and sustainability being met at this point. These will initially continue to be published as official statistics in development. We have written to the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to request an assessment seeking accredited official statistics status by June 2025, this covers estimates at national level down to local authority level. OSR will undertake and report on phase one of this assessment in advance of publication of estimates in June 2024. We plan to make individual level data available on the IDS by end 2024.

13. We are working in partnership with the devolved administrations to develop coherent UK statistics. Explicit agreement will be needed by Chief Statisticians and devolved governments on the approach to having a UK based admin census. We have had very positive discussions through the Inter Administration Committee to develop a plan to support this including setting up a task and finish group to take this work forward.
14. We have already made good progress on the move towards administrative based international migration estimates, with the next outputs due for publication in May 2024. During the summer we are planning further method improvements which will be included in the November 2024 publication. We are also aiming to have migration statistics accredited for this publication.
15. Over the next two years we will progress work on characteristics, prioritised by our understanding of user needs, including feedback from the consultation. In the first instance, the focus will be on disability and ethnicity. During 2023/24 there has been no official funding for the characteristics however, we have redirected resources to conduct feasibility studies into Disability and Ethnicity. At the end of March, a proof of concept will be shared internally around the findings from our research into the suitability of administrative data to produce estimates of disabled people. The proof of concept links a wide range of administrative data sources, conducts a set of analyses to assess their suitability and builds a predictive model to use to produce prevalence estimates.
16. As reported in January's paper; a proof of concept has concluded that there are data sources for ethnicity that can be used to produce administrative based estimates. Our research has been added to the statistical population dataset to estimate the ethnicity distribution. We are continuing to review the methods to support the feasibility of producing this data to the granularity required by users to the quality standards expected of ONS statistical products.
17. Responses to the consultation confirmed user need for population characteristic data at low levels of granularity and geography. We recognise that the provision of characteristic data that meets user needs will be challenging and will require focused resource, albeit the proofs of concepts have provided the confidence in our ability to deliver in this area. This is an area that was not funded during 2023/24, however we are now establishing a dedicated division (with dedicated leadership and resource) to progress this work at pace. Resource will be prioritised to enable us to do so. The division will also include the Inequalities teams and responsibility for monitoring and reporting against the Inclusive Data Task Force recommendations and secretariat for the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee. Incorporating these teams and functions within the division will strengthen and focus the research activity and outputs to ensure characteristic data is developed to maximise inclusivity in the Future of Population and Migration statistics (FPMS) data and deliver against the characteristics needs outlined by our users, with the initial focus on the protected characteristics.
18. The focus will be to increase characteristic data to achieve a balance between user needs for individual record level data that can be appended to the statistical population dataset and low level geographic estimates where initial data quality may be lower. Understanding the quality of the data, coverage and the limitations of use will be central to this work and estimates will be experimental in the first instance. Where administrative data is not easily available, we will rapidly explore innovative data sources and solutions, and if needed, develop surveys, as well as working collaboratively with supplier government departments to increase the availability and harmonisation of the population data we require in their administrative datasets, seeking to produce uniform information as standard for all characteristics. For example, we will use this approach to provide household and family composition data. We are taking forward work with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and Passport Office to seek to acquire their data, both

sources have the potential to provide key data for a large portion of the population with statutory requirement to be updated regularly by citizens.

19. Over the next two years we will continue to work with users to understand their user needs in relation to the data available via administrative and other sources. This ongoing engagement with users will provide direction, context and understanding of the key requirements and potential trade-offs that users have for each characteristic. Ongoing work with users such as Sandwell Council and Manchester City Council is underway to understand how well our data and estimates reflect the community and locality: working with Sandwell Council we are exploring data sources and requirements to improve inclusion of Sikh communities; and Manchester City Council are providing important insight into the identification of multi household and communal establishments within available data.
20. Work to deliver data flows for all protected characteristics during 2024/25 to produce publishable outputs and data appended to the admin-based census by end March 2025. Work has been completed on the data sets needed for the next set of publications and provides confidence in our ability to produce the June outputs. There is a full list of data sets we are exploring as part of the FPMS scope and showing the data flows for characteristics. An Admin-Data Pipeline Maturity Assessment Tool will be available before the start of 2024/25 to provide assurance and monitor data delivery. This will provide management information which we will use to brief the Board sub-committee.
21. We will finalise the source of data for the coverage estimation in partnership with other programmes, this may include options, such as Single Sign On or other data sources and methods.
22. The details of the deliverables with key milestones and swim lanes are available. This details the outputs and the critical data that are required to enable the delivery of our ambition, along with supporting actions. This plan is contingent on receiving funding from HM Treasury (HMT) as submitted during November 2023.

Risks and Benefits

23. Every approach to data collection has strengths and weaknesses. This is true of the new system and the previous system based on a decennial census. An increasingly mobile global population and increasing domestic internal migration has highlighted the need for ever more timely and up-to-date information about the population and society that can be used by decision-makers to gain faster and more detailed insight into changes across the population including small groups and local areas.
24. The previous model relies heavily on a decennial census which is a large costly programme of work that places burden on the public and has a huge impact on the organisation. Whilst the outputs from a traditional census are valuable, they are out of date quickly. Local Authorities who have been consulted after the initial release of 2021 Census data have already stated that they need further information to answer fundamental questions about their housing stock and population, be that residents, students, or refugees because many of these groups were not present during the Census due to lockdowns and restrictions on travel on Census Day.
25. The table below summarises the key benefits and limitations of the two systems. These include timeliness of system compared to user need, the reliance on data flows, the rigidity of the definition of resident population, the trust in the census brand and the social cohesion offered. The previous system does not give the timely statistics that users require during the intercensal period at the desired level of quality to gain insight and drive decision-making.
26. Table 1. Key benefits and limitations of each system.

Previous System	Proposed System
<p>There is a lack of flexibility in responding to new priority needs. Users are required to determine their needs about 3-4 years prior to the census day with results published about 2 years later.</p>	<p>More responsive to changing user needs as data updated more regularly and more responsive to changing needs (subject to data flows and availability).</p>
<p>Provides a usually resident approach to measuring the population, which limits its use when decisions are needed based on presence at a particular time of the day / week, or another definition</p>	<p>Capability to provide population present, which will allow local authorities for example, the opportunity to change service provision to meet seasonal and daily variations in the population</p>
<p>Data are used as the basis for many statistical outputs and is perceived as the backbone of the statistical world in the UK. Over the intercensal period that data are used to provide population and migration estimates (with the addition of further survey information) as well as provide the basis for many economic statistics.</p>	<p>Trust in the new system will need to be developed through an effective communications plan and cemented with the delivery of regular products meeting user needs.</p>
<p>Provides high quality statistics at a snapshot in time, yet this is out of date rapidly following the census date and suffers from intercensal drift.</p>	<p>Provides high quality statistics on a more frequent basis without intercensal drift.</p>
<p>A census relies wholly on citizens taking part, and whilst the 2021 had an excellent response rate, this is likely impacted by the pandemic. Response rates are now expected to be in the region of 85%-90%.</p> <p>There are increasing levels of uncertainty in mid-year population estimates. Administrative data that supports these are limited to a smaller set and hence any reduction in flow of that data will prevent the publication of mid-year estimates.</p>	<p>This relies on the effective flow of administrative data from other organisations. Interruptions to this flow are a risk, but the system developed is less sensitive to loss of a particular data set than the existing system, as many data sources are used.</p> <p>Changes to the definitions of the administrative data may impact the quality of the data provided. ONS's active role in the Uniformed Information Standard for Protected Characteristics will go some way to mitigate this. ONS can play a central role in supporting the co-creation of improved data quality across government.</p>
<p>Intercensal drift is well known, rebasing occurs to respond to this, though this takes place after a significant time period.</p>	<p>There is a risk that administrative data will drift, but the proofs of concept have demonstrated the admin-based estimates are improved over the ten-year period. Nonetheless it is a recognised risk that the individual sources may have data quality issues which we plan to respond to collaboratively with the source organisation to co-create and co-own the quality of this government data, along with other methodological responses.</p>

Much of the data collected in the census is already collected by organisations across the public sector. Continuing to hold a census every ten years would duplicate this data collection and miss the opportunity to make the public sector's approach to data more aligned and sustainable. Whilst this might be a benchmarking opportunity it can also lead to confusion if you are not comparing like with like, as has been demonstrated with Welsh Language.	The opportunity to link new types of data to create additional insight on the economy and society.
The Census creates a moment in time when the population is interested in population data and the brand of ONS is enhanced.	The engagement with others has enhanced ONS and demonstrates ONS as forward thinking and innovative. An annual admin-based census creates the opportunity to increase awareness on a sustainable and ongoing basis compared with a decennial census.
Census 21 demonstrates the need for a mechanism for harmonisation of questionnaire design and categorisation of responses.	The opportunity to have collective agreement across government on the use and need for administrative data alongside harmonised definitions to respond to need is progressing, such as the work on the Uniformed Information Standard.

27. The key risk to new system is the regular flow of good quality administrative data and the impact this has on our ability to deliver the programme objectives against the success metrics. To mitigate this risk and ensure the right level of oversight is given is a critical strategic risk for the Authority and also the programme.
28. In more detail, the strategic risk that administrative data are not available regularly and when required will lead to gaps in the delivery of outputs in the work plan on population and migration. Specifically we fail to accurately produce core population and migration statistics. This could lead to
- i. a reduction in public acceptability of the Authority holding and processing data from the general public and data providers;
 - ii. challenges to the Authority's integrity, legitimacy, and competence;
 - iii. failure to deliver the objectives and ambitions of the Authority strategy;
 - iv. missed opportunities for the Authority;
 - v. the Authority is unable to meet its public commitments.
29. The mitigations of this strategic risk are a condition within the recommendation on data flows, working towards a mutual benefit across government and underpinned by monitoring and review. Moreover, the approach taken dilutes the risk of reliance on a single data source as multiple sources are used. Details of the Strategic Risk (SR9) and its mitigation and progress along with a more comprehensive assessment of the risks that are being managed. The approach to the formal mitigation will be collaborative with data providers, pursuing a joint endeavour to collectively improve the data quality across government. Existing legislation in the form of the Digital Economy Act provides a statutory right of access to these data, however this has not yet translated into a sustainable data supply and clearer or more binding commitments must be considered.

Communications and Engagement

30. We will undertake a broad programme of communications and engagement to help set a constructive and supportive environment for the Recommendation. Our focus is on undertaking activity prior to the announcement to build awareness and understanding of this being a population census based on admin data and how ONS has, and will continue to, deliver an admin-based census.
31. Our communications objectives are to build awareness of our statistical design, to build a coalition of support by demonstrating we have listened and will continue to work together to meet users' needs, and to build confidence in our delivery plan as we develop our approach over the next two years. Our tone will be confident in our capability to evolve the census as a population dataset based on admin sources, while recognising the need to further assure users.
32. In advance of the announcement, we will engage key groups of respondents to the consultation, such as the Royal Statistical Society (RSS), British Society for Population Studies (BSPS) and experts on Methodological Assurance Review Panel (MARF), academics and genealogists through a series of events across the UK. While not wholly pre-empting the detail of the Recommendation, our messages will centre on the delivery achieved to date for the admin based census, our confidence in the underlying methods, the acceptance criteria and access to the data, and our planned roadmap of activity. We will also emphasise how we are addressing users' needs and feedback and our intention to continue to work with them, and provide reassurance that the review point provides time should we need to do things differently.
33. It is imperative that we engage government departments on the expectation of regular, reliable and ongoing flow of administrative data, including with Permanent Secretaries and Chief Data Officers, as well as through Heads of Professions and the Recommendation Sub Committee. The Communications team will also engage with Welsh Government, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and National Records of Scotland (NRS) communication colleagues about our plans via the Four Nations Task and Finish group.
34. During this pre-publication period, we will also undertake media, commentator and public engagement to minimise the opportunity for the announcement to be a focal point for losing a traditional census. Activity will include social media content and use of video to bring to life key elements of the admin based census in an accessible way, and to proactively reassure citizens on the use of admin data.
35. For the Recommendation publication day, we propose to follow a similar approach to 2014 with an official letter from Sir Robert to Government, published on the Authority's channels and linking to the Government and Welsh Government's statement of acknowledgement. ONS activity will include a letter from the National Statistician to key users, a stakeholder event and community webinars and will include outlining our programme of engagement across the two year period.
36. We are currently considering options for the publication date post the Authority Board meeting on 21 March. Options will take into account the need for pre-engagement with users and government and to avoid parliamentary recess, and will ensure views from Cabinet Office are taken into consideration.

Sub-Committee

37. The Authority Board indicated support for an Authority Board Sub-Committee. This should provide assurance to the board on progress over the next two years. Ongoing monitoring and review will be vital to ensure the recommended actions are delivered, both by ONS and by government and to provide an indication to the Board and users of population and migration statistics that their needs for will be met.

38. The new advisory sub-committee of the Board should be convened by the Board as soon as possible under its statutory remit. Draft terms of reference are being prepared in parallel with the recommendation, setting out a regular cycle of meetings that will bring together ONS and government partners to focus on progress at a strategic level.
39. The committee would be chaired by the Authority Deputy-Chair, and membership would comprise a small number of Board non-Executives and senior government officials representing key suppliers and users of data. Further, expert, members could be invited at the discretion of the Chair.
40. The committee should expect the ONS to report against the key milestones and the agreed indicators that underpin the success criteria above. The committee would be empowered to set milestones for expected progress and may wish to report after each meeting to the Authority Board. It would advise the Authority Board of the adequacy and sustainability of actions taken, as well as ongoing risks or issues for resolution and escalation on a continual basis. As outlined above the sub-committee will see progress and delivery throughout the next period.

Next Steps

41. In parallel with this paper the Authority Board will expect to receive a draft copy of the recommendation report at the beginning of March, to allow the Board to review and comment in good time for the feedback to be incorporated in a Recommendation to be presented to the March Authority board meeting.

Conclusion

42. The Board confirmed support on the direction of the National Statistician's recommendation in January 2024. This paper provides further information on the work plan over the next two years.

Ruth Studley, SRO, Director of Population Transformation, Mary Gregory, Director of Population Statistics, 22 February 2024

ARIES Programme Quarterly Delivery Report

Purpose

1. This paper provides a status update for the Ambitious, Radical and Inclusive Economic Statistics (ARIES) programme. Our last report to UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) was the 30 November 2023.
2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to consider:
 - i. our latest milestone status, programme delivery confidence assessment, key challenges, and associated management actions;
 - ii. note the changes to the transition plans for the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) resultant from the decision to extend the dual run until mid-July 2024; and
 - iii. in relation to Legacy Ingres Reduction, note the conclusions of the Proof of Concept and the proposed next steps.

Background

3. The ARIES programme brings together the four pillars of the Authority strategy, 'Statistics for the Public Good'; Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive, Sustainable, with the transformation aims of Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics Group.
4. The transformation of our Finance Sector Accounts (FSAID) was added to the programme in September 2023. This decision was made as part of the prioritisation and rationalisation of change delivery across the Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics Group (ESEG) in response to Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2023/24 Business Planning and affordability challenges.

Overall programme status

5. As was the case this time last year, the programme is now preparing for a planned refresh of the FBC in Q4 to gain sign-off for 2023/24 in addition to working through the ONS 2024/25 Business Planning Process. The outcome of the latter and its impact on ARIES cannot currently be assessed, but we expect to understand the impact in early Q1 assuming business planning concludes as planned. The main area of ongoing funding concern relates to Digital Services and Technology (DST) work for Legacy Ingres.
6. The January ARIES Programme Board robustly debated the delivery confidence for the programme and assessed it as Amber. Delivery of FSAID, Crime, Business Statistics, and Public Sector has progressed well, successfully overcoming several issues. Prices has progressed particularly well, including two recent go decisions to commence the incorporation of both transformed second-hand cars and rents admin data into headline consumer price statistics.
7. Four of the five planned milestones for the last quarter have all shown some degree of slippage.
 - i. one on track. The go decision for the incorporation of second-hand car data into headline statistics;
 - ii. two milestones have a minor delay, less than one month. These relate to Business Statistics Transformation and have no impact on the business case or other commitments to users; and
 - iii. two milestones have a major delay (greater than three months). These delays have been previously reported to the Board, that last in depth update being November 2023. Actions to progress the resolution of these issues have been undertaken over

the last quarter and the remainder of this paper provides an update on the outcome of these.

Challenges with the delivery of the TLFS

8. At the time of the last report to the Board on this issue, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) decommissioning decision was planned for January 2024 but with a high level of risk reported on this large and complex project. Since the last report, significant work has been undertaken within ONS and with external stakeholders (including Bank of England (BoE), HMT and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR)) to develop the best way forward.
9. Following this work, on 23 January 2024 ExCo supported the programme's recommendation to extend the dual running of the TLFS and LFS until mid-July 2024. This will allow for more data points to better understand the differences in selfemployment between the two surveys, and to assure ourselves and our stakeholders of the quality more generally.
10. The extended LFS collection will feed LFS outputs until the August 2024 publication, allowing for the TLFS to become the primary source of labour market statistics in September. Committing to transition in September allows us to make full use of the extended dual run in terms of:
 - i. stability of the data, and time to understand and clearly articulate the differences between the two surveys, including comparisons of changes as well as levels;
 - ii. providing certainty for our users, allowing them to firm up their own transition plans;
 - iii. time to build confidence in the data quality for ourselves and for all stakeholders, including through additional data shares and being clear about our criteria for quality;
 - iv. opportunity to implement and test planned data quality issue 'fixes' before the transition point; and
 - v. time to thoroughly test the end-to-end production process with the end state data to assure the timeliness of the outputs.
11. To support our stakeholders in readying themselves for the transition, the project proposes to publish an impact article in early July, comparing six months of TLFS and LFS data – but importantly avoiding the most recent period to avoid two estimates of the latest period being published at the same time – calling out and explaining the differences.
12. A high level summary of planned communication was set out as part of the decision to keep our users updated. The next two key elements are:
 - i. transformation article on 5 March providing details on the plans between now and September and providing any further implications for labour market statistics; and
 - ii. briefings and webinars will follow throughout March and April for Tier 2 users (local authorities, academia, think tanks, charities) and SRS and UK Data Service labour market output users.
13. With a revised timeline set out and agreed, and the process of updating our users ongoing, the three critical focus areas for the teams are:
 - i. we have assigned one of our analytical Deputy Directors with the task of enhancing, prioritising coordinating and driving the remainder of our analysis plan to address the key outstanding issue relating to self-employed as well as create a clear evidence base to support the decision to decommission the LFS. We are also reviewing the external data share plans and exploring options to further engage and prepare users in advance of the full transition date by testing the feasibility of implementing a Private Beta release in advance of the full transition point;
 - ii. we have assigned a single communications lead with the task of pulling together the 'sense of the

year' for our users, and a clear communications engagement plan by stakeholder group out to the end of March 2025 integrated into our delivery, analysis and assurance plans; and

- iii. ongoing work within the teams to complete enabling work on the survey, development work for future Labour Market publications, and deliver an improved solution aimed at resolving the online modal effect for Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)/Standard Occupation Classification (SOC).

Challenges on Legacy Ingres

14. Since the summer of last year, the programme has reported challenges with the delivery of Legacy Ingres. The first, in July 2023, related to insufficient resources and funding within DST that has become apparent post ONS business planning. The second, confirmed as an issue in August via assurance activities, is the inherent (technical and methodological) complexity associated with the removal of Ingres. The combination of these two issues has led to significant delays in progress. In the last update to the Board, the programme recognised that a change in delivery approach was necessary.
15. In response, the programme confirmed the initiation of a six week proof of concept which was completed in January 2024. The hypothesis tested by the proof of concept was to see if the family of surveys currently on Ingres could share the same Statistical Production Platform (SPP) results pipeline with minimal bespoke functionality between surveys. If true, this would result in increased simplification and standardisation of the pipeline, and significant reductions in lead times required to move away from legacy Ingres to Statistical Production Platform (SPP).
16. The main learning points from this proof of concept are summarised below:
 - i. during the proof of concept, the surveys analysed in detail (Monthly Business Survey (MBS), Construction, Quarterly Acquisitions and the Disposals of Capital Assets (QCAS), Annual Acquisitions and the Disposals of Capital Assets (ACAS), Quarterly Stocks Survey (QSS)), demonstrated that the removal of specific bespoke functionality from processing pipelines causes a sizeable shift in longitudinal data series. Following an internal review of the analysis and shifts it was concluded that this would push quality significantly outside of tolerance for these surveys;
 - ii. it was demonstrated that it is possible to remove some bespoke functionality and reconfigure business processes where data impact was deemed negligible however the removal of these doesn't result in a notable shift on DST build estimates, which is currently 18 months just for MBS; and
 - iii. remaining with this approach would mean not delivering any further migrations by the end of the project in March 2025 (with only the Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD)) data take-on and validation system migrated throughout the SR21 period).
17. It is clear that the current approach to delivering results processing pipelines on SPP is not sustainable for matching the organisation's ambition to reduce its legacy Ingres estate and runs the risk of reducing some of the necessary flexibility within pipelines needed by production teams to meet current and emerging needs.
18. Whilst SPP is suitable, and proven via BERD development, as a target architecture for data take-on and validation processing. The project is now developing alternative options for results processing. With two key aims:
 - i. achieving the migration of at least the MBS, Quarterly Business Survey (QBS), Construction systems away from Common Software by March 25, and ii. proving out and demonstrating a repeatable solution, development, and assurance approach for tackling similar issues across ONS, with improved confidence and predictability.

19. These options and a recommendation will be presented to the ARIES Programme Board in February. The recommendation will also progress through the ONS Design Authority, then onto Portfolio and Investment Committee (PIC) and Executive Committee (ExCo) as required. The programme's aim is to formally agree the revised solution and plan in March 2024 and secure any required funding through the ONS Business Planning process.

Conclusion

20. Following a strong three quarters of delivery, the programme has suffered some slippage in Q3 which was forecast and reported previously. It is no coincidence that two of our most high profile and complex projects are carrying the most risk; Transformed Labour Force Survey and Legacy Ingres Reduction. We continue to have a firm grip on our issues and proactively and pre-emptively drive action against them.
21. The remainder of the projects are on track with good delivery forecasts, but continued management attention will be necessary to maintain that.
22. Despite these challenges, we have a healthy delivery forecast for Q4 and early Q1 with the following key deliveries to look forward to:
- i. publication of used cars in headline measures of Consumer Price Statistics and stabilisation of rail fares (Prices);
 - ii. publication of new Private Rental Indices incorporating new data sources and improved methods – Great Britain (Prices);
 - iii. new local authority level estimates of education output delivered for inclusion in Regional Accounts and improved quarterly healthcare metrics delivered for inclusion in quarterly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Public Sector); and
 - iv. publish data on Research and Development expenditure by the UK government (GovERD) on the transformed BERD (Business Statistics).

Jason Zawadzki, Director, Economic Statistics Change and Senior Responsible Officer for ARIES, 22 February 2024