

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group

**Draft Minutes**  
**Thursday 7 March 2024**  
**Hybrid**

#### **Members Present**

Professor David Hand (Chair)  
Eva Aizpurua  
Professor Paul Allin  
Dame Kate Barker  
James Brooks  
Robert Bumpstead  
Dr Sarah Cumbers  
Sir Ian Diamond  
Edward Humpherson  
Sarah Moore  
Phyllis MacFarlane  
Guy Nason

#### **Additional Attendees**

Andrew Banks (for item 5)  
Fiona James (for item 3)  
Jane Naylor (for item 4)  
Emma Rourke (for item 4)  
Director Finance, Planning and Performance (for item 2)

#### **Secretariat**

Laura Evans  
Tom Marsh

#### **Apologies**

Professor Paul Boyle  
Helen Boaden

## **1. Minutes and matters arising**

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Helen Boaden and Professor Paul Boyle. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
- 1.2 Regarding action 17, the Chair requested that each member share one key priority with him via correspondence. Actions 16 and 18 were closed.

## **2. Business Planning [NSEUAC(24)01]**

- 2.1 The Director of Finance, Planning and Performance at the Office for National Statistics (ONS), detailed the organisation's business planning approach for 2024/25 in the context of ONS's budget decreasing by one per cent. ONS would continue to prioritise and protect the quality of outputs, guided by five priority outcomes which had been identified, underpinned by six priority output areas.
- 2.2 Members provided the following steer:
  - i. it would be helpful to detail which outputs listed in the paper were interlinked, being discontinued, reducing in frequency or the most resource intensive;
  - ii. ONS priorities would need to be aligned to wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) planning; and
  - iii. ONS should be strategic and systematic about the criteria used and explore items such as environmental accounts and national wellbeing as these were items that were increasingly gaining public interest.
- 2.3 Guy Nason agreed to share a recent paper on time series modelling.
- 2.4 Members were thanked for their feedback which would inform decisions and further stakeholder engagement.

## **3. Public Statistics [NSEUAC(24)02]**

- 3.1 Paul Allin and Sarah Cumbers introduced a paper which recommended that that UK Statistics Authority pivot towards more public statistics in updating and implementing the current strategy.
- 3.2 Members supported the concept of public statistics and that official statistics would be a driver of public good, but not the only one. Members discussed the provision of data for multiple users and the need to identify and provide citizens with quality assurance on data.
- 3.3 A refreshed Code of Practice was being produced which would be brought to the committee at a future date.
- 3.4 Members were supportive of a pilot exercise to test the process.

## **4. Strength in Numbers – Delivery a Vision for the GSS [NSEUAC(24)03]**

- 4.1 Jane Naylor, Chief Statistician at the Department of Business and Trade and Emma Rourke, Deputy National Statistician at ONS, provided an update on the progress that had been made on a GSS vision and strategic delivery plan. The vision consisted of three pillars: capability, standards and transformation. Members were asked for their views on further engagement ahead of the planned sign off at the National Statistics Executive Group in June.
- 4.2 Members were pleased to see the horizontal approach across government that would reduce duplication. The challenges within the current statistician model

due to the decentralised nature of statisticians across government and the need for better management information to inform leadership was discussed.

- 4.3 Members provided their comments and suggested a focus on new and emerging topics, utilising artificial intelligence (AI) and further thought was given to outward engagement.

## **5. AI in Statistical Production [NSEUAC(24)04]**

- 5.1 Fiona James, Director of Data, Growth and Operations and Andrew Banks, Data Science Campus at ONS provided an update on the development of ONS' AI adoption plan and requested members' views on best practice and how to engage users.

- 5.2 ONS had established an Analysis Function AI Steering Group, chaired by Sir Ian Diamond and Dame Angela McLean. The group was set up to challenge, scrutinise and steer the development of cross cutting evidence and take a cohesive analytical approach.

- 5.3 ONS had identified 20 high level opportunities to use AI and members were supportive of separating the use cases into three areas of activity: statistics production, internal processes and external communication. ONS was encouraged to spend time mapping out each stage of the production process to establish any hidden costs in quality assuring the data.

- 5.4 Members advised a cautious approach when validating the trustworthiness of AI systems and that as AI tools could only discover visible data, often upfront work was required on data architecture.

- 5.5 Members spoke about trust and ensuring the organisation was in control of its own data, while utilising existing languages rather than developing its own. It was important to explain to users how the tools were being used to maintain their trust and this was another area for further stakeholder and user engagement.

- 5.6 Members encouraged ONS to engage with the Alan Turing Institute and Imperial College who would be able to provide assistance when testing the six planned pilot projects.

## **6. Any other business**

- 6.1 The next meeting was due to take place via MS Teams in June 2024.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Draft Agenda**  
**Thursday 7 March 2024, 11:00-13:00**  
**Hybrid, Marsham Street**

**Chair:** Prof. David Hand

**Apologies:** Paul Boyle

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	
1 11:00-11:10 (10 mins)	Welcome, previous minutes and actions	Meeting of 07.12.2023 Prof. David Hand
2 11:10-11:45 (35 mins)	Business Planning	NSEUAC(24)01 Director Finance, Planning and Performance
3 11:45-12:10 (25 mins)	Public Statistics	NSEUAC(24)02 Paul Allin
4 12:10-12:35 (25 mins)	Strength in Numbers - Delivering a Vision for the Government Statistical Service: Progress Update	NSEUAC(24)03 Emma Rourke Jane Naylor
5 12:35-12:55 (20 mins)	Artificial Intelligence in statistical production	NSEUAC(24)04 Fiona James
6 12:55-13:00 (5 mins)	Any Other Business	Prof. David Hand

**Next Meeting: Monday 3 June 2024, Remote Meeting**

Information	Summary of Previous Committee Topics	
-------------	--------------------------------------	--

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)01

#### *ONS Business Planning Update*

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) with an update on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) business planning for 2024/25 and requests feedback on the approach taken and trade-offs required.

#### **Timing**

2. We are undertaking stakeholder engagement before the end of the 2023/24 financial year in order to inform finalisation of our 2024/25 business plan.

#### **Recommendations**

3. Members of NSEUAC are invited to:
  - i. comment on the approach taken to ONS business planning including application of principles that inform prioritisation decisions; and
  - ii. provide a stakeholder view on the trade-offs required in relation to the activities and outputs.

#### **Background**

4. The ONS budget decreases by 1 per cent in nominal terms moving from 2023/24 into 2024/25, but we continue to face rising costs which make the real terms impact larger. To protect the quality of our outputs we need to invest in the stabilisation of our systems, processes, and data. As such, and to ensure that we protect the quality of our key outputs, prioritisation of our activities will be essential.
5. We have identified five priority outcomes for 2024/25 that focus on our statutory functions and provide the nation with the data it most needs while driving forward innovation using radical and ambitious approaches to modernise how we work. These priorities will be made public in April in the 2024/25 ONS business plan:
  - i. an enhanced reputation and trustworthiness for delivering independent and high-quality statistics and analysis;
  - ii. top quality published statistics on health, population, and migration;
  - iii. top quality published statistics on prices, gross domestic product (GDP), and employment;
  - iv. greater linked data capabilities that result in faster, evidence-based decisions across government; and
  - v. modernised and sustainable digital infrastructure using a secure, modularised approach.

#### **Discussion**

6. To prioritise investment in the outcomes above, some trade-offs are required in the way we currently operate and the statistics and analysis that we deliver. We have used the following principles to prepare for the decisions required:
  - i. delivering our core statistical outputs related to GDP, employment, prices, population, migration and health;

- ii. continuing to deliver existing commitments that are funded by other government departments;
  - iii. protecting the quality of outputs that are critical to the delivery of ONS's mission and where ONS is uniquely placed to deliver; and
  - iv. continuing to deliver our core programmes (Integrated Data Programme (IDP), Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive Economic Statistics, and the Future Population and Migration Statistics).
7. In addition to the above, we need to maintain the processes, systems, and data that underpin the production of quality statistics. We also recognise the need to maintain some responsive analytical provision.
8. We seek NSEUAC feedback on application of the principles above. In the context of required trade-offs next year, we also seek NSEUAC consideration of the outputs that have the biggest impact on users.
9. We will continue to drive internal efficiencies and reduce both overheads and areas that do not contribute to statistical production. It is likely that there will be some impact on the format, frequency, and volume of our statistical outputs so that we can continue to deliver quality across the above priorities. Changes will only be after engagement with users of the statistics. We will also focus on content quality, producing concise, clear and impactful statistics that are easier for users to find, understand and explore.
10. As we continue to work through our final plans at the organisational and local level, we have developed a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure we have considered user need in any decisions, and any impact is communicated early. This includes discussing our prioritisation and engagement plans with the Royal Statistical Society to gain its members' insight.

### **Conclusion**

11. ONS business planning is progressing well and has a clear focus on agreed priority outcomes. However, trade-offs will be required to ensure we can continue to invest in these priority areas within a constrained financial environment. We are seeking NSEUAC input on where these trade-offs may have the biggest impact on users, to inform finalisation of our plans.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)02

#### *Public Statistics: A proposal from the Royal Statistical Society (RSS)*

#### **Purpose**

1. The [United Nations \(UN\) Principles of Official Statistics](#) set out a vision for official statistics, embedded in the United Kingdom (UK) statistics system, to provide impartial, reliable information for the public good. This paper summarises why the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) is calling on the UK Statistics Authority to pivot towards more public statistics in implementing its current (2020-2025) [strategy](#) and then in continuing to work with all stakeholders in preparing its subsequent strategy.

#### **Recommendations**

2. Members of National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to comment on the proposal for more public statistics and how it might be taken forward, and to offer further examples of where public statistics are already being delivered or where there is a need for more public statistics.

#### The problem

3. Determining how the public good is best served is a significant challenge for national statistical organisations. There is an innate – and understandable – tendency for producers of official statistics to prioritise government users over other users. In providing information to support government users, statisticians can be confident that they are working towards the public good in the sense of assisting the development of public policy. It will not always be clear cut that this is all that needs to be done to serve the public good. For example, there are public interest questions on the performance of government and on issues that are not current government priorities.
4. The nature of public good is kept under review by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). We welcome OSR's current research programme into how the official statistics system can serve the public good. Their recently published [think piece](#) is a valuable contribution to the debate about delivering the vision for UK official statistics that we look forward to exploring with OSR and the rest of UK Statistics Authority (the Authority), the Government Statistical Service (GSS), and all with an interest in the outcomes we envisage.

#### The challenge

5. We live in an increasingly data-rich world. There is a huge quantity of data available beyond official statistics that could be used to promote the public good. The Authority makes efforts to incorporate some of this into official statistics, but the process is not widespread. There are great opportunities to be gained by incorporating a wider range of data into official data. When needs are identified, opportunities for using data in this way should be evaluated (as well as identifying areas where the costs do not outweigh the benefits).

6. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of official and non-official data sources, with a number of good examples of more public statistics. Over recent years the Office for National Statistics (ONS), using new legal powers, has been able to obtain regular flows of administrative data from other government departments. There are barriers, which are more than likely to be encountered in approaching other potential data sources, whether official or non-official – capacity, capability, cost, culture.
7. Part of the benefit in establishing a firmer, more balanced partnership between producers and users is to increase the legitimacy and sustainability of the overall statistical system. The way forward involves statisticians recognising and responding to the evolving data ecosystem: quickly moving to be data takers as much as data makers, building public trust in information, building even better relationships with users and potential users. It is also timely to make the case for public statistics recognising that all public investments are under scrutiny.

#### What are public statistics?

8. Public statistics is about having an official statistics system that starts from the questions that need statistics to help answer them. It recognises that data needed to promote the public good may need to be drawn from a wider range of sources than those maintained within the official statistics system. This means:
  - i. pivoting the strategy for delivering official statistics – and reallocating or investing resources - towards understanding the public demand for a range of statistics;
  - ii. then publishing and using data above and beyond that which government requires to inform their decision-making; and
  - iii. the goal of identifying and delivering a wider ranging statistical system that provides the information needed for good decision-making and accountability.
9. We believe greater public value can be unlocked by a more balanced, user-focused, and more diverse portfolio of official statistics. The UK official statistics system should be ambitious and should seek to support a society of knowledgeable, represented, and empowered citizens, healthy public debate, wellbeing, an inclusive and sustainable economy, and effective government (demonstrating good governance).
10. This is a big vision. As Ken Roy, has reported in an [OSR blog](#), none of the national statistics offices he has looked at “has been brave enough to commit to delivering” this full set of outcomes. There are, nevertheless, examples of strong commitment to supporting public debate, holding government to account, enabling an informed society, and aiding business decision-making – all of which addresses the need for more public statistics.
11. We are compiling case studies of public statistics to illustrate our vision of active ongoing engagement with users (and potential users) and a stronger foundation of shared information about the current provision of official statistics.

#### What's needed for more public statistics?

12. We have identified the following ways in which the official statistics system should generally and routinely provide more public statistics:
  - i. regularly assessing the unmet need for public statistics, and understanding why the needs are unmet;



- ii. enhancing current internal processes for deciding on development and production priorities to make them more inclusive of users outside of government;
  - iii. this should include an ambition of a work programme that is co-produced by producers and users - publishing and maintaining a statistical work programme covering planned outputs and developments. Part of this would be to document the statistical outputs available for the public good, with details of how and when they are published;
  - iv. extending the scope of the Code of Practice for Statistics to provide relevant guidance where necessary on the appropriate use of non-official data sources, and encouraging further compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics on a voluntary basis by non-official producers of data and statistics;
  - v. importing more data from a wider range of non-official sources for ONS/GSS statistical outputs;
  - vi. curating and quality assuring sets of statistics drawn from both governmental and other sources so that these can be called on for the public good;
  - vii. undertaking and regularly publishing more analysis of public interest topics and issues, drawing on multiple sources; and
  - viii. reflecting on the resources available to the Authority and, if necessary, making the case for government to provide additional, ring-fenced, funding to enable the GSS/ONS to regularly explore the unmet need for statistics and analysis for the public good and to work to meet this need by drawing on relevant data from across the public sector and beyond.
13. Much of this is about building on existing processes and sharing current good practice. All of this, however, now needs to be grounded more on questions of public interest. We have four main themes to support this:
- i. a more open and ambitious focus on user need, increasing the public good secured from official statistics, including producers and users working together to better capture the value that is delivered through use of official statistics;
  - ii. more transparent, partnership-based approach to building the formal portfolio of official statistics;
  - iii. a more strategic approach to maximising the value of available data, recognising the radically changing data landscape; and
  - iv. remodelled governance, especially around how the role of a statistical council and a full statistical programme can best be integrated into the UK statistical system.

*RSS recommendations and next steps*

14. Our main recommendation is that the Authority should pivot towards more public statistics in updating and implementing its current (2020-2025) strategy, covering all the eight points and four key themes listed above as components of a public statistics system.
15. To support this work in drawing on a wider set of data sources, we refer to the [RSS recommendations to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee inquiry](#) on transforming the UK evidence base (these look mainly beyond ONS, for example that data design allowing for wider use should be considered from the outset in administrative systems).

16. The RSS stands ready to work with the Authority and all with an interest in more public statistics. This could include:

- i. helping identify gaps in the national and local evidence needs that can be filled with statistics from non-governmental providers;
- ii. showcasing good practice in data handling, statistical production, and multi-source analysis in different sectors (local and regional government, other local public services including police and health, third sector, private sector);
- iii. finding partners for pilot work and case studies; and
- iv. assisting in making the case for the value of statistics in society to be fully recognised.

17. This paper draws from our draft prospectus for public statistics, which we will be finalising and publishing shortly. We presented the case for more public statistics in our input to Professor Denise Lievesley's [independent review of UK Statistics Authority](#) for the Cabinet Office. The review report had not been published at the time of writing this paper.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)03

#### ***'Strength in Numbers' – Delivering a vision for the Government Statistical Service***

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper sets out the rationale for and progress towards developing a vision and strategic delivery plan that will ensure the Government Statistical Service (GSS) can increasingly deliver 'Statistics for the Public Good' in the most impactful and efficient way.

#### **Recommendation**

2. Members of National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to:
  - i. consider the latest updates on the progress towards developing a vision and strategic delivery plan for the GSS; and
  - ii. discuss how the vision might reflect the future role of the statistician.

#### **Background**

3. The GSS is integral to the UK Statistics System, requiring a well-articulated vision for the part the GSS should play in delivering 'Statistics for the Public Good' and beyond. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has a business plan that sets out how ONS is delivering the strategy; a GSS orientated plan would support wider coherence of activity and ensure we become greater than the sum of our parts.
4. Over the past year, impactful initiatives increasingly driven by GSS Heads of Profession for Statistics (HoPs) have emerged within the community. A series of discussions involving HoPs have facilitated a GSS vision and associated strategic delivery plan. Four thematic areas for focus define this plan - coordination and cooperation, capability, standards, and transformation. In some cases, there is good join up across the GSS, for other areas there is a lack of support and/or coordination.
5. Early proposals set out in this paper highlight where we will strengthen cross-GSS work. This is being driven forward by GSS HoPs with community feedback at the GSS conference and ongoing senior steer from the National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) and the Authority Board. To ensure external scrutiny, we are engaging with the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) and will take the outcomes of the Lievesley review, due to be published this calendar year, into account.
6. A version of this paper has been shared with the Authority Board for information, with a substantive item planned for March 2024 around the future role of the statistician, statistical leadership, and analytical prioritisation.

## Discussion

### Scope of the GSS vision and strategic delivery plan

7. This vision and strategic delivery plan do not cover what and how each individual organisation produces official statistics and contributes to the GSS. Instead, our proposal focuses on where and how the GSS needs to collaborate across organisational boundaries to maximise impact and realise 'Statistics for the Public Good'. Hence the vision statement of, '*Strength in Numbers*'.

### Coordination and Cooperation - leadership, governance, prioritisation

8. Other than Sir Ian Diamond's role as National Statistician and Head of the GSS, the oversight of HoPs leadership requires strengthening in both visibility and clarity around cross departmental GSS leadership. In addition, HoPs are seeking greater influence over cross-GSS issues, which ONS is keen to encourage. Ultimately, success represents creating a community of HoPs engaged and well-acquainted with GSS operations, who feel both passionate and empowered about creating meaningful change across the GSS community. This vision and strategic delivery plan will need to have the right GSS leadership in place to be successful.
9. The following proposals have been endorsed by NSEG to achieve this objective:
- i. the National Statistician plans to extend an expression of interest for a Deputy Head of GSS position from outside Office of National Statistics (ONS), who would provide closer leadership to the community on his behalf;
  - ii. HoPs will also consider whether they should all have an explicit objective that x per cent of their time is spent on cross GSS initiatives (rather than relying on willing volunteers) and the challenges around implementing such a change. This will require senior support from other departmental leaders;
  - iii. a more formalised connection between NSEG and HoPs facilitating more input and influence; and
  - iv. quarterly HoPs meetings should represent more of a decision-making board than an information sharing forum, with more formal reporting from the People Advisory Group (PAG), Presentation and Web Dissemination Committees, and Champions networks.
10. There is also a need to better establish ways of working that enable the ONS and the rest of the GSS to work together on agreed high priority analytical areas. Collaboration and collective delivery should represent the default, consistent with a shared goal across organisations to remove duplication and optimise value for money from the statistical system. A set of key priority analytical areas should be agreed that provide maximum benefit across the GSS. 2024/25 business planning and the next spending review round will be key alignment opportunities for the GSS.
11. This activity will be strengthened through engagement with the Royal Statistical Society (RSS), increasing strategic alignment between our respective organisations and engaging the GSS with the wider professional community.

### Capability

12. To deliver 'Statistics for the Public Good' we need the right capabilities across the GSS, and a diverse, inclusive, and thriving community. There are multiple strands of the capability theme that require join-up across departments that can be taken

forward through existing governance, in particular PAG. We require a standardised, forward-looking, and formalised recruitment policy across departments that will attract high-level talent, and a thorough induction and onboarding process to ensure all new staff have a consistent, positive experience upon joining the GSS. A connected learning and development (L&D) programme will be essential to ensure a consistent knowledge base across departments, which ultimately eases movement of GSS members across organisations to provide more varied and diverse experiences. It is therefore sensible to provide career frameworks/support across the GSS rather than just within departments.

13. This GSS Strategic Delivery Plan will address these current capability issues but will also lay the foundations for future initiatives. Work has begun to consider the future of the statistical profession in the longer term and what this means for the GSS. In potential collaboration with the RSS (to be agreed by their board in March) we are planning a think piece that addresses this question. Although at an initial scoping phase a framework has been proposed that considers:
- i. what aspects of the work of a statistician remain constant over time, e.g. data collection, analysis, trust, transparency, quality;
  - ii. what aspects of the work of a statistician evolve over time, e.g. tools, data sources, technologies, ways of working, pace; and
  - iii. for those areas that evolve over time, what will influence these areas over the next ten years.

14. We welcome steers from the Committee on this work that will feed into future strategic work for the UK Statistical System, beyond 'Statistics for the Public' (which runs to 2025).

#### Standards

15. The GSS is unique within the Analysis Function in that we have the Code of Practice and associated protocols to set the standards for our work and ensure we collectively uphold the integrity of statistics. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and informal GSS HoPs networks ensure consistent application of the Code.

#### Transformation

16. 'Statistics for the Public Good' sets out a vision for the statistical system to be "boldly innovative with our methods and sources", to continue to drive momentum in data sharing, and to deliver statistics in unique and sustainable ways. Maximising data sharing and linking (including driving forward use of the Integrated Data Service (IDS)), investing in the implementation of reproducible analytical pipelines, and harnessing new methods are key levers for delivering these ambitions across the GSS. To continue to drive forward a transformed statistical service, we will take forward:
- i. central leadership for the Reproducible Analytical Pipeline champions network;
  - ii. enhanced coordination and sharing of methodological good practice across the GSS;
  - iii. establish how the GSS can uniquely contribute to improved data sharing and linking; and
  - iv. retain a GSS voice in the development of IDS.

Metrics

17. As work progresses to further develop this GSS strategic plan, we will identify metrics that measure progress against achieving our vision for the GSS.

**Conclusion**

18. This paper has set out the progress that has been made towards a GSS vision and strategic delivery plan. It is in equal parts about leadership and cultural change across our community as it is about securing the right resource and alignment across the service.

19. We welcome steers from the NSEUAC on all elements of the plan.

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY****NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

NSEUAC(24)04

***Large Language Models for Analysis and Statistics*****Purpose**

1. This paper updates on the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and ONS's role to co-ordinate across the Analysis Function.

**Timing**

2. ONS is finalising its initial return on AI adoption plans to the Central Digital and Data Office, to respond to a government-wide commission in advance of the next Spending Review period.

**Recommendations**

3. Members of NSEUAC are invited to provide direction and feedback on the AI adoption plan and our key areas of focus for the Analysis Function.

**Background**

4. Generative AI and large language models (LLM) are emerging from their infancy. The technology is moving fast. Best practices and widespread use are developing. This will require constant effort to stay up to date.
5. The government has a duty and opportunity to ensure that AI is used for the benefit of citizens by improving public services and to boost public sector productivity. The government has a vision that the public sector leads its safe, responsible, and transparent use; that the public benefits from services using AI; and, that civil servants and society has the tools, information, and skills to use AI.
6. A national [AI strategy](#) was published in 2021 alongside an [algorithmic transparency reporting standard](#), to put public engagement at the heart of the approach. In November 2023, there was an [AI safety summit](#), attended by many countries, with a [Generative AI framework](#) for government organisations published in January 2024, updating on [earlier guidance](#). The government is looking at developing shared AI infrastructure and solutions across government, creating guidance and frameworks, and building skills and capability.
7. The Analysis Function is coordinating efforts across government analysis, alongside the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, who are responsible for AI policy.
8. ONS has identified around 20 high level opportunities to use AI, largely to drive efficiency and productivity, with an overriding principle to maintain trust and quality as a National Statistics Institute.

**Discussion****Priority Areas for the Analysis Function**

9. The Analysis Function is focusing efforts on building capability, leadership, and providing strategic methodological direction. We conducted a cross-government

stocktake across the Function of AI projects and delivered an AI workshop jointly with 10 Downing Street for all Departmental Directors of Analysis.

10. We have also established an Analysis Function AI Steering Group, chaired by Sir Ian Diamond and Dame Angela McLean. The group is set up to challenge, scrutinise and steer the development of cross cutting evidence and take a cohesive analytical approach. The workstreams include future AI scenarios, impact on the labour market, impact on public sector productivity, and AI risks and safety.
11. There is currently no formal guidance on the use of AI in Analysis, both within the public sector and externally. We are initiating new work that aims to publish new guidance on this topic, covering opportunities, tools and techniques, ethical use and quality assurance considerations.

#### Artificial Intelligence Adoption Plans for ONS

12. ONS's adoption plans are centred on understanding the capabilities that LLMs offer and the potential impacts, so that we have sufficient awareness and familiarity before implementing an AI strategy. The 20 high level opportunities for use cases in ONS broadly fall into three buckets of activity:
  - i. **statistics production:** Code conversion (e.g. Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) to R/ Python), debugging code, automatically classifying dense text to statistical classifications, educational and training purposes, generating metadata;
  - ii. **internal processes:** Generating emails or preliminary reports, templates, presentations, retrieving and summarising information, comparing content; and
  - iii. **external communication:** StatsChat, improving content for users (summaries, personalise for different audiences, Question and Answer (Q+A) generation), data visualisation and data dissemination.
13. Our adoption plans include six pilot projects which address business problems and which we believe can add value (as set out in **Annex A**), but also where we are evolving our understanding to avoid and mitigate risks associated with the AI. These include unintentional bias which is then reproduced in analysis, incorrect or nonsensical information, and unfamiliarity with the technology. We are also exploring the potential to offer AI to assist users with data analysis as part of the Integrated Data Service, as the lead delivery partner for government.
14. The AI adoption plan is overseen by the ONS Data Governance Committee, a sub-committee of the ONS Executive Committee. A critical component of the plan involves the establishment of clear, measurable key performance indicators to assess and compare the success of AI initiatives. Our technology infrastructure review indicates that our new systems are well-prepared for the integration of AI technologies, given their built-in capabilities for handling complex data processing and analytics workloads.
15. This implementation approach focuses on developing our own 'knowledge hub' and to empower colleagues to learn and develop their expertise within our security and risk appetites. There is a philosophical question emerging around how official statistics stays relevant in an age of LLMs. It is important to stay focused on the services that LLMs cannot do by themselves alone, i.e. providing



high quality, trusted, accurate, timely source of choice options for our users. It is therefore important to see them as a key enabler, rather than them taking over.