

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Regulation Committee

**Thursday 11 April 2024
London Boardroom/ Hybrid Meeting
13:00-16:00**

Members Present

Penny Young (Chair)
Sir Robert Chote
Ed Humpherson
Professor Dame Carol Propper
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter

Other Attendees

Lucy Dady (observer)
Marianthi Dunn (for item 6)
Marie McGhee (for item 7)
Jonathan Price (for item 6) (observer)
Mark Pont
Gail Rankin
Elise Rohan
Job de Roij (for item 9)
David Ross (observer)
Siobhan Tuohy-Smith (for item 5)
Vicky Stone (for item 8)

Secretariat

Sally Jones
Fran Wigley-Jones

Apologies

Rob Kent-Smith
Helen Miller-Bakewell

1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Rob Kent-Smith and Helen Miller-Bakewell.
- 1.2 The minutes of the meeting on 1 February were agreed and actions were reviewed.

2. State of the Statistical System SA(RC)(24)10

- 2.1 The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) presented plans for developing and publishing the annual State of the Statistical System report. The report would be evidence-based and drawn from targeted engagement with producers and users to provide a regulatory view on how the statistical system in the UK was performing. Members were asked for their input on key successes and challenges that the system had faced.
- 2.2 The Committee heard how the recent Lievesley Review recommendations would build on the report with Recommendation 1 stating that 'The UK Statistic Authority should lead the establishment and delivery of a Triennial Statistical Assembly; An annual public lecture from the Chair of the Authority should be delivered to provide an update on the work of the statistical system and the priorities for the year ahead; This should build on the OSR's State of the Statistical System report.'
- 2.3 Members discussed successes and areas where the statistical system had excelled during the previous year. The following particular examples were highlighted in discussion:
 - i. The successful roll out of Census 2021 data, and the way census outputs had been communicated in imaginative ways through interactive programmes, including personalised outputs.
 - ii. The Scottish Census response had been a success following the challenges it had faced. There had been willingness by National Records of Scotland to engage with OSR and address issues following support and advice from the International Steering Group.
 - iii. Communication around the ONS excess deaths methodology had been a good example of effective collaboration by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
 - iv. ONS communication and collaboration with users had improved, with members highlighting the positive communication around migration statistics publication in November 2023.
- 2.4 Members discussed challenges. The following comments were made in discussion:
 - i. Resourcing challenges and the wide range of skills needed across the statistical system.
 - ii. Ongoing issues around communicating data and uncertainties.
 - iii. Social media amplifies misinformed views on data. This puts more pressure on producers to engage effectively on social media.
 - iv. Broader support was required for statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs).
 - v. A suggestion was made for a central listening body which could inform and support departments or groups producing data, particularly when data was being misused.
 - vi. The continued challenge of falling survey response rates, and the associated pressure on resourcing.
 - vii. The potential opportunity to use Artificial Intelligence productively but the associated challenges too.
 - viii. The system would always have imperfections and trade-offs due to uncertainty or biases, but it was important to carefully consider controversial material and how that was communicated.
- 2.5 The Committee noted the work by OSR in developing the State of the Statistical System report for this year. The first draft would be a working draft shared with

statistical Heads of Profession, the OSR insight committee and the Regulation Committee for feedback in order to develop the work.

3. Update from the Director General for Regulation SA(RC)(24)11

- 3.1 The Director General for Regulation provided the Committee with an overview of the OSR's priorities and activities and highlighted some of the key areas of focus since the last meeting.
- 3.2 The Committee heard of areas of focus for the OSR, including preparation for the General Election, which involves collaboration with Statistical HoPs in order to set a clear approach to responding to statistics that may emerge. The OSR sex and gender guidance was published on 29 February and was well received; it was a good example of how user engagement was vital.
- 3.3 The DG for Regulation had recently shared his view with the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee that UK Government should make more of its analysis available publicly each time it was used in a public statement. This expectation was reiterated by the OSR report on analytical leadership.
- 3.4 Members discussed the update noting successes and challenges. Members also noted the review by ONS on the UK Statistics Authority Central Policy Secretariat (CPS) and noted that clarity was needed around governance of the Authority to ensure that it remained the central function, independent from ONS. The Authority required CPS support in order to have the capacity to deliver.
- 3.5 The Committee agreed the proposal by OSR to approve accredited official statistics status for the Annual Business Survey.
- 3.6 The Committee agreed the proposal by OSR to approve accredited official statistics status for the Graduate Outcome Statistics and publish the Graduate Outcome Statistics assessment report at the end of April. It commended the quality of Jisc's approach to statistics, for example the positive response rates and engagement.

4. Sex and Gender Identity SA(RC)(24)12

- 4.1 This section will be published following the publication of the OSR 'Review of statistics on gender identity based on data collected as part of the 2021 England and Wales Census (produced by the Office for National Statistics)'.

5. Transformation of the Labour Force Survey (TLFS) update SA(RC)(24)13

- 5.1 OSR provided an update on the ONS TLFS, highlighting amendments to the planned timetable. ONS planned to provide a public communications update on the TLFS on 26 April 2024. The Committee was also updated on changes made to the TLFS questionnaire by ONS which had improved some data quality issues.
- 5.2 It was noted that the recent OSR review on reintroduced LFS-derived labour market statistics determined that there was a need for ONS to be more open and clear in its communications. The TLFS would be reviewed again in summer 2024 and the Regulation Committee would be provided with a further update following this.
- 5.3 The Committee noted the update and agreed that further discussion would need to take place following the ONS public communications announcement on 26 April and discussed how accreditation would only be able to take place when stable solutions to key data quality issues were in place and users had been able to use the data.

6. Economic Statistics Update SA(RC)(24)14

- 6.1 OSR provided an update on activities relating to the regulation of Economic Statistics, including the findings from the Alternative Release Time (ART) review, draft findings from the review on Ensuring Confidence in Public Sector Classifications process, and

progress made on the Spotlight on Quality assessment on Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD) statistics.

6.2 The Committee heard an update on the following points:

- i. There had been a few responses to the ART review. Concerns included how ART could affect one of the UK financial market's ability to facilitate risk management and trading needs on a real-time basis. Other markets were broadly content with the earlier release time.
- ii. OSR had noted that the evidence received during the ART review was not sufficient to change the public interest case and revert to the 9.30am release time.
- iii. It was noted that the ONS should engage and communicate better with its stake holders in relation to ART, including the need to undertake a wide and thorough engagement exercise in advance of the next ART review.
- iv. A review was taking place on Ensuring Public Confidence in Public Sector Classification process to address any improvements were needed. One such area being looked at was how the ONS built and maintained classifications expertise.
- v. A review was taking place on BERD Statistics. Significant improvements had been made to the methodology and further development was taking place. The ONS was working to apply the new methodology to the historic time series of the BERD statistics, which would enable the new statistics to feed into GDP estimates.
- vi. There had been good engagement with the international community.
- vii. Users had requested to access information about the quality of these statistics and articles explaining the new methodology in one central location on the ONS website.

6.3 Members noted the activities relating to the regulation of Economic Statistics. The following comments were made in discussion:

- i. The ART review demonstrated the public good being adequately met and the response to raised concerns was a good indication of how the OSR operate.
- ii. ONS should further improve consultation and engagement on ART going forward.
- iii. The importance of the role of Office for Budget Responsibility in relation to Public Sector Classifications.
- iv. On BERD Statistics members noted positive engagement between ONS and the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development.
- v. There would be merit in the ONS engaging optionally with the international community.
- vi. A review was taking place on Economic Statistics, OSR were identifying areas where they could support work and Terms of Reference would be shared with the Regulation Committee.

6.4 The Committee noted the programme of work relating to the regulation of Economic Statistics. OSR would provide further updates on activities at the June Regulation Committee meeting. The draft report on BERD statistics would be shared with the Committee via correspondence for approval in May.

7. Code of Practice for Statistics Review SA(RC)(24)15

7.1 OSR provided an update on recent activities relating to the review and refresh of the Code of Practice for Statistics and outlined plans for next steps and key milestones for the project.

7.2 The Committee heard that the review would use the Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV) approach to provide a high-level sense of what good statistics should look like. The framework of TQV would be supported by core practices to create a coherent landscape.

7.3 Members discussed that the restructure of the Code was important as the statistical landscape was becoming more complex. There should be a clear split between core

practice and guidance for the Code, and this would help the OSR to be prescriptive and challenging to statistics producers where necessary, whilst providing confidence to users of statistics.

- 7.4 The Committee agreed the refresh of the Code. A workshop would be scheduled in June to discuss high level principles and how practice and guidance may look.

8. Population Statistics Update SA(RC)(24)16

- 8.1 OSR introduced a paper providing members with an update on the review of Admin Based Population Estimates produced by the ONS. The Committee heard that an independent academic expert, Dr Arkadiusz Wisniowski, had now been commissioned to help inform judgements and would be invited to attend the June Regulation Committee meeting to take questions. There was positivity around the work, but it was complex and the speed at which the work was taking place was a challenge.

- 8.2 The Committee noted the update and discussed the process for accreditation of ONS Admin Based Population Estimates and how there was need for clarity around ONS timelines. OSR would share a draft report at the June Regulation Committee meeting.

9. Police Recorded Crime Review SA(RC)(24)17

- 9.1 OSR shared the final draft report on the Police Recorded Crime Review and publication plans.

- 9.2 The Committee heard that recommendations had been refined to include:

- i. Improving quality framework around oversight, understanding quality assurance, and the strengths and limitations of IT systems used to record crime.
- ii. Transparency to assure users in the quality of data.
- iii. Better collaboration at all levels to improve oversight and transparency.

- 9.3 The report had been shared with Key Stakeholders and the final report was due to be published in May 2024.

- 9.4 Members discussed the report, highlighting the positive work done within police forces. Members commented that recommendations should be moved to the start of the report to be identified easily and the summary needed to be refined to enhance impact.

- 9.5 The Committee agreed the proposal by OSR to approve publication of the final report in May.

10. Business Delivery SA(RC)(24)18

- 10.1 Members were asked to provide comments by email. Secretariat would collate and share comments with members.

11. Annual Report and Key Performance Indicators (RC)(24)19

- 11.1 Members were asked to provide comments by email, particularly around Key Performance Indicators which would drive OSR work over the coming months. Secretariat would collate and share comments with members.

12. Horizon Scanning

- 12.1 Members were asked to provide suggestions for future items by email.

13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 The Committee would next meet on Thursday 6 June.