

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

Thursday 25 April 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
Professor Dame Carol Propper
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter
Penny Young

Other Attendees

Sally Jones
Will Laffan (for item 8)
Sarah Moore
Emma Rourke (for item 8)
Ruth Studley (for item 8)
Tom Taylor

Apologies

Nora Nanayakkara
Alison Pritchard

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Nora Nanayakkara and Alison Pritchard.

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 21 March were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(24)17]

- 4.1 Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) had met before the meeting. They had discussed topics including the draft recommendation for the Future of Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS) and the NED recruitment.
- 4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activities since the Board last met. Sir Robert alongside Professor Sir Ian Diamond had attended a presentation by Home Office statisticians and analysts about their work in supporting policy. Sir Robert had met with Tom Taylor regarding the review of the Central Policy Secretariat division. Sir Robert had completed the annual round of NED annual appraisals.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(24)18]

- 5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:
- i. delivery progress regarding the draft recommendation document for the FPMS including extensive stakeholder engagement;
 - ii. the interim year-end financial position, which was forecast to be a small under expenditure;
 - iii. completion of the ONS business planning process 2024/25 with publication of the plan and work ongoing to identify further efficiencies in the enabling areas;
 - iv. HM Treasury's Main Estimate exercise was yet to complete and related to funding for the FPMS programme, survey transformation and public sector productivity;
 - v. media attention around hybrid working with confirmation that PCS members would be taking part in action short of strike following a ballot on increased office attendance;
 - vi. Pete Benton would be leading Data Capability in the absence of Alison Prichard, which included the role of Senior Responsible Owner for the Integrated Data Service Programme. Nigel Green had joined the ONS from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) as interim Director General to lead the delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS);
 - vii. progress of the Transformed Labour Force Survey;
 - x. Sir Ian had responded to a letter from Andrew Bridgen MP on the topic of excess deaths by vaccination;
 - xi. the work by the Data Science Campus with the publication of consumer card spending across the UK: 2019 to 2023 on 25 March;
 - xii. ONS had repurposed the Winter Covid Infection Survey platform to an NHS funded survey examining experiences of health services, which would start in June; and
 - xiii. the Authority's response to the Lievesley Review, which was scheduled for the May meeting.
- 5.2 Members discussed the update. The following comments were considered in discussion:
- i. the approach to hybrid working by ONS was in line with central Civil Service policy;

- ii. progress of the IDS included agreement on timing for transition from the Secure Research Service to the IDS. The aim across government was to provide easy access to the IDS for analysts;
- iii. the recent phishing email security test had resulted in 15 per cent of colleagues clicking the email. It was noted that phishing formed part of mandatory security training and further cross office communications were planned to raise awareness;
- iv. the May Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting was scheduled to discuss a risk based plan on legacy and website transformation, ahead of a discussion at the May Authority Board; and
- v. the publication of time series of age-standardised mortality rates, (monthly), by both date of registration and date of death, and consideration of inclusion in the weekly provisional death figures.

5.3 The Board noted the update.

6. Report from the Director General of Regulation [SA(24)19]

- 6.1 Ed Humpherson provided update on regulation activity highlighting the development of this year's State of the Statistical System Report, which would provide the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) view of the performance of the statistical system. It was noted that recommendation one of the Lievesley Review referred to the State of the Statistical System report as part of the development of the Statistical Assembly and annual public lecture by the Authority Chair.
- 6.2 The Board heard about OSR casework for 2023/24, the annual number of cases was the lowest since pre pandemic, but the complexity had increased significantly.

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 11 April.
- 7.2 The Committee had considered:
 - i. the development of the State of the Statistical System Report;
 - ii. progress of the review of ONS gender identity statistics in the 2021 Census;
 - iii. an update on review of the Code of Practice for Statistics;
 - iv. Transformation of the Labour Force Survey and OSR's review of ONS LFS derived labour market statistics;
 - v. emerging findings of the review of ONS's Administrative Based Population Estimates;
 - vi. OSR's Economic Statistics programme of work; and
 - vii. the Police Recorded Crime draft report ahead of publication in May.
- 7.3 The Committee had considered and approved the proposal by OSR to accredit official statistics status for the Annual Business Survey and the Graduate Outcome Statistics.

8. Future of Population and Migration Statistics Draft Recommendation [SA(24)20]

- 8.1 Emma Rourke introduced a paper which presented the draft recommendation document on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS); and an update on the planned oversight over the next two years, supporting activities and the forward work programme.
- 8.2 The Board heard about the stakeholder engagement that had been undertaken since the last meeting. External, in person round table sessions with academics, had been held in Edinburgh, London, Southampton and Manchester. The events had provided an opportunity to discuss the vision, the consultation and recommendation and plans, with a focus on listening to feedback, developing an ongoing rapport and establishing partnerships.

- 8.3 Feedback from the Manchester event highlighted an appetite to support ONS to make the best use of administrative data. It provided the opportunity for partnership working with hard to reach groups in relation to protected characteristics. The event in London had indicated support for an administrative based census but as an additional offer to a decennial census rather than an alternative. Other feedback highlighted the attachment to a decennial census as a recognised ONS brand, and an emotional attachment to a point of time national event. An annual census day was proposed as a potential alternative. The events had enabled ONS to highlight their plans, to continue to develop their relationship with users and citizens based on trust. Overall the events had provided the opportunity for ONS as a listening organisation to collaborate with users. Other ongoing engagement included the Devolved Administrations to ensure a coherent UK wide outcome including sharing data to support population statistics; Central Digital and Data Office and HM Treasury.
- 8.4 Board members discussed the draft recommendation document and the draft Terms of Reference for the subcommittee of the Board. The following points were made in discussion:
- i. The importance for users to have a clear understanding of who is leading on each action (the Authority, UK Government and ONS) and the dependencies. ONS is dependent on government to deliver a reliable supply of high-quality administrative data as well as the necessary resources. The recommendation document clearly set out the three principal actions, to ensure that ONS is not perceived by users as accountable for delivery in all three areas.
 - ii. The clarity of tone and content of the recommendation document, which clearly set out roles and responsibilities with the Authority as the overall sponsor.
 - iii. The recommendation document showed that the feedback by users had been considered. The areas of user concerns would continue to be an area of focus by ONS in the coming two years.
 - iv. The recommendation document represented a significant opportunity for statistics in England and Wales, and the UK as a whole.
 - v. The need to ensure the recommendation document was clear that the FPMS programme would collect individual level data, but that it would not be disclosed at an individual level in statistics.
 - vi. Members welcomed the detail in the recommendation document including increased references of the timeline for accreditation of Admin Based Population Estimates (ABPEs), which demonstrated the clarity of intent by ONS to seek accreditation of ABPEs at the appropriate time for priority characteristics only in the first two years. The document also provided clarity on the critical administrative datasets required across government.
 - vii. The need to undertake a final sense check on the consistency of tone in the main body of the recommendation document and the summary, with reference to the areas the Methodological Assurance Review Panel (MARF) noted.
 - viii. The accompanying press release could reference the citizen privacy issue more by emphasising data security, noting that the Authority as an independent body was best placed to lead on this work. Also being clear that the government would not have access to individual level data but rather access to the analysis through data sets on the IDS.
 - ix. In terms of assurance for the FPMS programme, as a major government programme the IPA would provide oversight through gateway reviews. Further detail on the overall assurance map for the programme would be provided for the subcommittee, which would include the IPA, and as part of the ONS Internal Audit programme 24/25. The role of the National Audit Office would also be considered.

- x. Feedback on the Terms of Reference for the subcommittee included the need for clarity of purpose including how it would hold all those leading on actions to account, and further consideration of membership.
- 8.5 The Board endorsed the draft recommendation document as ready to be issued, subject to two minor amendments. The first, a sense check to ensure consistency of tone throughout the main body of the document and the summary. Secondly consideration of the information included in relation to the citizen and security of individual data. The date for publication of the recommendation was not yet confirmed and was subject to resolution of discussions with HM Treasury on funding for the FPMS.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 The Board would next meet on Thursday 30 May.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Thursday 25 April, 11.15-14.00

London Boardroom

Chair: Sir Robert Chote

Apologies: Alison Pritchard, Nora Nanayakkara

Attendees: Will Laffan (for item 6), Emma Rourke (for item 6), Ruth Studley (for item 6),

NED Session: 10.30-11.15

1 11.15-11.20 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 21 March 2024
2 11.20-11.30 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(24)17 Sir Robert Chote
3 11.30-12.20 50 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(24)18 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 12.20-12.30 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(24)19 Ed Humpherson
5 12.30-12.40 10 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regulation Committee	Oral update Penny Young
12.40-12.50 10 mins	Break	
6 12.50-13.55 65 mins	Future of Population and Migration Statistics Draft Recommendation	SA(24)20 Emma Rourke Ruth Studley Will Laffan
7 13.55-14.00 5 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 30 May 2024, London Boardroom

Chair's Report, April 2024

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of the Chair's activity in late March and April.

Review of recent activities

2. On 26 March, Ed Humpherson and I attended the second strategic regulatory roundtable hosted by the Electoral Commission. This was a follow up to the roundtable in October and we discussed actions from the last meeting, shared risks, and reaffirmed our collective commitment to work together during the upcoming general election to uphold public confidence. The working level group will now take forward the agreed actions between organisations.
3. On 2 April, John Aston and I met with the team drafting the recommendation on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS) to discuss the draft document.
4. On 10 April, I met with Tom Taylor to discuss the review of the Central Policy Secretariat division which has been commissioned by the National Statistician following Rob Bumpstead's departure.
5. On 12 April, Sir Ian Diamond and I attended a presentation from Home Office statisticians and analysts about their work in supporting policy. We also discussed intelligent transparency, with an action for Office for Statistics Regulation to follow up with some guidance on applying intelligent transparency principles to social media content.
6. Throughout the last month I have been conducting annual performance appraisals with the non-executive directors. I will be meeting with Baroness Neville-Rolfe next month for my own appraisal.
7. I also held my regular catchups with the National Statistician, Director General for Regulation, Deputy Chair, and the Chairs of the Regulation and Audit and Risk Assurance Committees.

Casework and correspondence

8. On 21 March I responded to Karin Smyth MP about statistics on availability of NHS hospital beds over the winter.

Upcoming activities

9. On 26 April I will be attending a meeting of Chairs of independent public offices, hosted by the Chair of the Committee for Standards in Public Life.

Sir Robert Chote, Chair, 18 April 2024.

Chief Executive's Report, April 2024

Purpose

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of activity for April 2024.

Summary

2. In **business planning**, we have now been able to confirm budgets for 2024/25 as well as our prioritisation framework. Delegation letters have now been issued to Director Generals and the ONS's 2024/25 Strategic Business Plan has been published setting out our priorities for the year ahead. Work now continues engaging our users around these changes.
3. In **resourcing**, Pete Benton will lead Data Capability, as well as taking on the Integrated Data Service (IDS) Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) role. Separately, we have welcomed Nigel Green from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) as an interim Director General to lead the delivery of the IDS during this period.
4. April has also seen our first new ONS senior **stakeholder forum** to further develop relationships with over 70 senior stakeholders from across various sectors and to build their confidence and understanding. This is on the back of three successful engagement events on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS), with one more event to go.

Review of recent activities

5. The ONS's 2024/25 **Strategic Business Plan** was published this week setting out our priorities for the year ahead. This follows significant effort by the entire organisation to reset our planning approach to focus on our priority outputs and programmes. The work done to drive sustainability and control costs over the last year has put us on the right trajectory for 2024/25, having reduced staff numbers by 500 since April 2023. We have successfully planned for a 5 per cent real terms reduction in funding and a cap on staff numbers in full-time equivalent terms of 4,892 compared to 5,049 currently in post.
6. At the start of April, I responded to a letter from **Andrew Bridgen MP**, which was cosigned by seven other MPs, on the topic of deaths by vaccination status in England. A decision was made not to do the additional analysis as it was determined it would not add "*substantial, high-quality insight to the existing evidence base*" when considering the resource it would require. We are continuing to monitor parliamentary activity on this topic.
7. At the end of March, Mike Keoghan met with the **Interparliamentary Finance Committee Forum**, which is made up of representatives from the finance committees in the respective devolved parliaments, in a private session. This was a great opportunity to have significant engagement with several devolved parliamentarians. The meeting was successful and covered a range of economic topics including labour market and inflation statistics.
8. Mike Keoghan and Emma Rourke also **met with Neil O'Brien MP**, who is a regular user of ONS statistics and a regular correspondent. This covered questions Mr O'Brien had on household income statistics and about our work in the migration and population statistics space. The meeting was successful, and we have followed up on outstanding questions and the Household Income team are currently carrying out further analysis.

9. The **pre-election period** of sensitivity for the May Local Authority and Police and Crime Commissioners election has begun. Guidance has been issued to ONS staff and Government Statistical Service Heads of Professions on how best to continue statistical activities in line with the Code of Practice, while being mindful of actions that could have a bearing on or detract from the elections.
10. At the end of April, I am meeting with Prof **Alice Sullivan** of University College London to give evidence to the government's independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender in public bodies. The review aims to identify obstacles to accurate data collection and research on sex and gender identity in public bodies and in the research system and set out good practice for how to collect data on sex and gender identity.
11. The beginning of April marked a key milestone in the **Travel and Tourism Reform** Project as we have harmonised collection of travel and tourism data with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). This means that from 1 April, we have stood down our International Passenger Survey (IPS) data collection in Northern Ireland and instead, we will be using data provided by NISRA going forward. Offering both financial savings and quality improvements, this move is part of a larger project which will deliver significant changes to the operation of the IPS from July.
12. At the **CIPD** Wales Awards in March, we were awarded "highly commended" in the category of Best Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative. Our submission highlighted the incredible work to develop and embed the Inclusion, Culture and Wellbeing Dashboard, and our team learning Inclusive Interactive Experience and hold to account sessions run by myself; all of which aim to further our UK Statistics Authority strategic principle of 'Inclusive'.
13. The March National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee agreed the revised reporting strategy for the Inclusive Data Taskforce commitments and to focus on the following key themes during the year: children and young people; disability; nonhousehold populations; and to progress the development of a social charter. Our inclusive data work is now integrated in FPMS characteristics work.
14. ONS Executive Committee endorsed the refreshed **Health and Social Care Strategy**, comprising a five-year vision underpinned by a two-year rolling plan for implementation. Part of this strategy is to pivot pandemic investment into a sustainable model for population health measurement. We have successfully repurposed the Winter Covid Infection Survey platform and cohort to an NHS England funded survey examining experiences of health services, which starts in June.
15. On the **IDS**, Alison Pritchard, SRO, is currently on leave. From the beginning of April Nigel Green from the IPA has taken on Director General responsibilities for delivery of the programme for an expected period of three months. Pete Benton has taken over the SRO role and will ensure IDS vision delivers value for money and meets the needs and expectations of users and stakeholders.
16. A timeline for the **transition from the SRS to the IDS** has been agreed with the National Statistician and external partners and communicated to all SRS data owners, users and the wider research community. The SRS will close to new projects from September 2024, with all remaining active projects being transitioned to the IDS or reaching their existing end dates by March 2026.
17. **CORD** has been successfully migrated to the Oracle Cloud with minimal disruption to users, following months of work. Migrating the system has mitigated a substantial increase in support costs, contributes to legacy reduction in Crown Datacentres and ensures that CORD is now on a Cloud based solution in line with the Digital ONS

strategy. IT is anticipated the project will act as an enabler for future moves to other cloud providers and general service improvements across ONS to make the best-use of cloud-based technology and ways of working.

18. A final report has been submitted to Central Digital and Data Office as part of their crossgovernment **Data Management Maturity Assessment**. Overall, all ONS maturity scores are within the highest two classifications, indicating a mature organization. Some mitigating actions have been identified to improve maturity further, with an expectation that the assessment be repeated every three years.
19. The Data Science Campus (DSC) published our latest [Visa big data article](#) on the flow of consumer card spending across the UK, containing unprecedented insights into the relationship between where people live and where they spend. The centrepiece is the interactive map (and the big underlying dataset) which users can select any of 3000+ postal district and see the distribution across of the country of where residents go and spend money/local merchants get their revenues from, and how those patterns changed since 2019.
20. The DSC, alongside the International Development Team and ONS Evaluation network, have concluded a formal evaluation of the **International Data Science Accelerator**, a mentoring programme we facilitate by pairing experienced data scientists with mentees in a range of international National Statistics Offices and organisations, focusing on Official Development Assistance eligible countries. The findings showed positive benefits to both mentees and mentors – with all interviewed mentees identifying they had now embedded data science skills in their regular work.
21. In **economic statistics**, our **Annual Inclusive Income estimates** were published on 9 April, providing new sustainable growth estimates for the UK. The Wellbeing and Beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) theme day will launch in May, publishing one day before GDP to contextualise these data. Separately, **fieldwork for Wave 3 of the Management and Expectations Survey (MES)**, our survey of UK firm innovation, productivity and management practices, has been completed. We are preparing initial findings which we will publish in May and present at the upcoming *Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence* annual conference. We are also preparing a similar survey of UK public sector organisations as part of the Public Services Productivity Review; this will go live at the end of April.
22. March was a bumper month for subnational statistics in ONS with the launch of our [Explore Local Statistics](#) beta tool alongside a [blog](#), which has driven a huge amount of website traffic. We have also released estimates of [Gross Disposable Household Income](#) at 'building block' level to complement our previous releases of Gross Value Added at this level of geography, enabling flexible, user defined geographies and improving the way that locally targeted policy can be evaluated. We have also released new data on local [access to amenities](#), including supermarkets, sports facilities and museums. Finally, we have delivered amazing new insights into [geographic mobility of young people between towns and cities](#) and this has been picked up by the Resolution Foundation and the Economist highlighting that this is evidence they have never has access to before.

Communications

23. A new ONS senior stakeholder forum was held on 11 April to further develop relationships with **senior stakeholders** from across sectors and to build their confidence and understanding. The session was timed with the publication of the 2024/25 ONS strategic business plan, with Sir Ian Diamond talking through our priorities for the year ahead and Fiona James updating on the ONS Data Strategy. The event was wellreceived with over 70 stakeholders participating and it provided the opportunity for

them to ask a range of questions and raise interesting discussion points. The intention is for this to be a regular forum for stakeholder feedback and two-way engagement.

24. The annual updating of the '**Basket of Goods**' we use to measure consumer price inflation goods brought very positive media coverage for the ONS in March, enabling us to extend our reach to those not usually exposed to ONS and to raise understanding of our inflation statistics. Our proactive communications activity focused on the return of vinyl records to the basket, which enabled wide pick up of the story in consumerorientated media channels, resulting in 161 media mentions that led to an estimated reach of 93 million people, including in The Sun, Retail Week, Music Week and Rolling Stone magazine.
25. Digital Publishing launched our [explore subnational statistics](#) dissemination service in March, in collaboration with the Public Policy Analysis team. This user-centred approach allows people to find, visualise, compare and download local data in one place – aligned to our new communications and dissemination model. In the first week we had 22 thousand views from 4.8 thousand users, and we continue to receive positive feedback from *Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities* and other government departments and local media, including BBC East. We also received excellent feedback and re-posting of our semi-automated data tool on the Geographical Mobility of Young People, including from the Resolution Foundation.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, 18 April 2024.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY BOARD

SA(24)19

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the 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:
 - i. Ongoing work:
 - **State of the Statistical system:** This will be the fifth year that we have published this report, which draws together evidence from our regulatory work and from targeted engagement to provide OSR's view on how the statistical system is performing. It will also be the first of these reports to feed in directly to the Statistical Assembly proposed by the Lievesley review, so it takes on added importance this year. We are currently working on a draft report for sharing and comments for publication before the summer.
 - **Future proofing the Code of Practice for Statistics:** We are developing a proposal for a Code v3.0, which we plan to publicly consult on later this year. The proposal is that we will:
 - a. clarify the fundamental concepts of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV) and their relevance to the wide range of situations faced by statistical producers and others working with data and analysis;
 - b. propose specific changes to the detailed practices in the Code that relate to communication of statistics, user engagement and quality/methods;
 - c. tie together these core materials with a wider range of guidance outputs created by both OSR and Government Statistical Service (GSS), so there is a more coherent landscape of support for statistical production; and
 - d. As I have reported previously to the Board, we also received some concerns about the 7am release time for economic statistics. We have now completed our review of this issue and see no compelling case for a reversion to the 930am time. We did however hear an interesting range of perspectives from financial market participants and regulators, and we will recommend to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) that they keep the needs and opinions of financial market participants under review.
 - **Population estimates:** Our first phase of the assessment of ONS' Admin Based Population Estimates (ABPE) for England and Wales continues. We expect to publish our findings at the end of June, alongside ONS' next publication of ABPE.
 - **Gender identity and the 2021 census review:** Our interim report, which set out our expectations on what was needed to provide assurance on the gender identity census data and the GSS harmonised standard, was published in October 2023. Following this, ONS published its census research in November 2023. We are working on a final report for publication before the summer which will share our findings and any recommendations on both the gender identity census data and the harmonised standard.

- **Election preparation:** We have produced pre-election guidance for departments that we will publish as part of our election webpage launch on 7 May. We plan to write to Permanent Secretaries ahead of this, seeking continued commitment on intelligent transparency and analytical leadership, with the guidance provided as an annex.
- ii. Published work:
- **Future proofing the Code of Practice for Statistics:** We published the [findings and next steps](#) from our review.
 - **Labour Force Survey (LFS):** We published our [review of reintroduced LFS-derived Labour Market Statistics](#) in March. Our review concluded that ONS should continue to build on clarity in its communications approach and embed this across all labour market communications.
 - **Analytical Leadership:** We published a report on [analytical leadership](#) in Government at the end of March. We identified six enablers of analytical leadership that everyone in government, regardless of profession or seniority, can draw on to facilitate a stronger, data-driven culture.

Casework

3. Our 2023/24 casework year ends with 231 cases, 21 cases since the last meeting. Our new casework year has started with five cases since 1 April. We have closed 17 cases since the last meeting with one public letter [from Sir Robert to Karin Smyth MP](#) regarding hospital beds.
4. As recommended in the Lievesley review, we have also prepared and provided the *Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee* with an overview of casework linked to our quarterly release of casework management information yesterday.

Wider reach

5. **Evaluation Registry:** The Evaluation Task Force (ETF) has now launched the Evaluation Registry across government. Registering evaluations will be mandatory for departments from April 2024. We have agreed with the ETF to support their work to increase Departmental compliance with the requirement to publish evaluations on the Registry. If a department is not adding their evaluations to the registry, we have confirmed that will support the ETF's work with Departments to encourage compliance. This is an evolution of our partnership with ETF and gives us an opportunity to support transparency and confidence in government evaluation.
6. **Blogs:** We published a blog about our position on [regulating, responding to and using Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) which discussed the benefits and risks of AI in official statistics and outlines our strategy for AI in the year to come. We also published a blog on [what it means to be an accredited official statistic, and](#) a guest blog from Bettin Baraki and Johnny Runge from the Policy Institute at Kings College London discussing how [individuals may use statistics in their personal lives](#).
7. **External meetings:** Sir Robert and I attended an Electoral Commission round table this month, further building relationships with other regulators who have an interest in the upcoming election. I also hosted a roundtable on the five Safes with members of ONS and UWE Bristol. Last week I also attended a casework sharing meeting with the Advertising Standards Authority and Ofcom where we discussed recent cases and what we have learned from them.
8. **External events:** Earlier this month I delivered the keynote talk at the annual statistics conference in Vienna run by Statistics Austria. I focused on the future of our Code in a

changing world. I met a number of academics who are working to validate and certify AI systems.

Issues on my mind

9. **ONS Transformation programmes:** We continue to work with ONS to support the implementation of significant programmes of change. We are convening those leading transformation in ONS in May to discuss how the Code of Practice can be a useful tool to drive change and set out how our assessment process works when considering transformed outputs.
10. **Developing OSR's capability and flexibility:** Alongside our shorter-term election preparation we have initiated work to develop a capability framework for our staff to drive the skills and capabilities that we will need for the future.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 17 April 2024.

Annex A Regulatory Activities Dashboard

Children, Education and Skills

▲ We are in the process of finalising the assessment report of the Graduate Outcomes statistics, produced by Jisc. Planning to publish the report once it has been approved. Undertaking a compliance check on Jisc's Higher Education Student Statistics to assess the quality of the statistics following their recent Data Futures transformation programme.

Crime and Security

▼ Police recorded crime review - we are finalising the report and have shared a draft with stakeholders. Stop and search statistics compliance check - we are continuing our desk research.

Economy, Business and Trade

▲ Drafting assessment report on Business Enterprise Research and Development statistics, and report of our review of ONS's Public Sector Classifications Process.

Health and Social Care

▲ Inviting producers to Blog about the statistics they publish to measure Health Inequalities in all UK administrations. Ongoing compliance reviews of the Scottish Health Survey and the Winter Coronavirus Infection Study.

Housing, Planning and Local Services

▲ Published compliance check review of Valuation Office Agency Council tax levels and Council tax challenges and changes statistics, and reaccreditation of Scottish House Condition Survey Statistics.

Labour Market and Welfare

▲ We are continuing to challenge and support ONS's transformation of its Labour Force Survey. Our review concluded that ONS should continue to build on clarity in its communications approach and embed it across all its labour market communications.

Population and Society

▲ Assessment of ONS' Admin Based Population Estimates continues. We are now at the stage of pulling out our key findings and will start writing in the report in the coming weeks. We will publish our phase one report at the end of June.

Transport, Environment and Climate Change

▲ We are undertaking a rapid review of DfT's Road Casualty statistics given changes to police reporting of casualty severity.

Casework (16 April 24)

Economy, Business and Trade	We received a case from Andrew Gwynn MP who raised concerns with comments the Chancellor made on increases to social care in the Autumn budget. We also received a case from Sarah Olney MP who raised concerns with comments the Chancellor made that the Conservative Government is bringing taxes down.
Population and Society	We received two letters from Michael Ellis MP and UK Lawyers for Israel with concerns about the Government's use of Gaza casualty statistics.

Planning/Delivery (Jan 24 - Mar 24)

Cross-cutting	Analytical Leadership
Policy and Standards	Code Refresh
Data and Methods	Data sharing & Linkage follow on report
Health and Social Care	Scottish Health Survey (Scottish Government)

Published/Follow up (Jan 24 - Mar 24)

Cross-cutting	Sex and Gender Programme
Health and Social Care	England Mental Health Statistics Review - follow up
Health and Social Care	Winter Covid-19 Infection Study (UK Health Security Agency and Office for National Statistics)
Housing, Planning and Local Services	Council Tax statistics (VOA)
Housing, Planning and Local Services	Scottish House Condition Survey (Scottish Government)
Labour Market and Welfare	Reweighted Labour Force Survey estimates (Office for National Statistics)
Policy and Standards	Testing potential new badges for official statistics
Research	Defining the Public Good of Government Statistics

Closed (Dec 23 - Mar 24)

Policy and Standards	Testing potential new badges for official statistics
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Data and Methods

▲ We have initiated work on the follow on report to our 2023 review of data sharing and linkage. We plan to publish this in July 2024.

Insight

▲ State of the Statistical System report - work underway for this years report. Currently in evidence gathering phase for the 9 themes/gaps informing this years report. Reducing Outputs Pilot - project team in discussion with Comms team on the output and have written a proposal paper for project sponsor.

Policy and Standards

▲ Finalised and published Code review response report. Planning introduction of AOS badge - aiming for end May. Began Code refresh - planning and engaging with stakeholders. VA award - open for 2024 entries

Research

▲ We are progressing the research project exploring the role of official statistics in decision making by the public. For example, we are arranging a public engagement session for April to ensure members of the public can feed into our research materials. To complement this research that looks at the public, we are also continuing to refine our literature review about the role of official statistics for public policy.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY BOARD

SA(24)20

The Future of Population and Migration Statistics

Purpose

1. This paper presents the draft Recommendation on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS), and a plan for publication of the document and provision to UK and Welsh Government ministers. This paper also provides an update on the planned oversight, supporting activities and provides a detail of the forward work programme to deliver the next phase of the Recommendation within the FPMS Programme.

Timing

2. The Recommendation will be published and put forward to the UK Government following the UK Statistics Authority Board's (the Board) full agreement.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Board are invited:
 - i. to provide any final comments on and agree the draft Recommendation Document;
 - ii. to note the two-year roadmap;
 - iii. to note the communication and engagement to support the Recommendation; and
 - iv. to note the draft terms of reference for the sub-committee of the Board which will oversee progress against the roadmap.

Background

4. The Authority, on the advice of the National Statistician, is making a recommendation to the Government on the future production of high-quality population and migration statistics that serve the public good. The Recommendation reflects the research conducted over the last few years by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and has been informed by the evidence gathered prior and during the public consultation. It is also informed by research and expert assurance including advice from the Methodological Assurance Review Panel and the National Statisticians Inclusive Data Advisory Committee.
5. In January 2024 a Board paper providing an overview and direction of the recommendation was agreed. Further detail was provided in a Board paper in February 2024 on the progress of the delivery of an administrative based census, including an appraisal of the risks and benefits of the proposed system. The February paper also outlined our two-year plan to utilise further data sources, how we will continue to understand user needs, and further develop and industrialise the production of new population and migration statistics.
6. The draft Recommendation documentation has been informed by this initial Board discussion and has also benefitted from an early review by both the Chair and John Aston before all non-executive members of the board were given the opportunity to review and comment. This has facilitated a draft to be prepared in the Authority's voice, in particular with the inclusion of a Chair's foreword.
7. The purpose of the Recommendation document is a strategic policy document for the Board to make the recommendation to Government on the future of population statistics. This will be supported by documents including the Consultation Outcomes document and the Equalities Impact Assessment. This public document will need to galvanise support for the direction of travel through a clear rationale and transparent balance of risks. The

proposed terms of reference for the sub-committee reflect the attention to these risks and challenges, regular progress monitoring against the success criteria, and the wider challenges across government are a part of the routine reporting.

8. Significant time and careful calculation has gone into pitching the draft Recommendation document at the right tone for its varied audiences, including helpful early feedback from the Board. In this draft we have sought to strike a balance, acknowledging the substantial challenges and risks to delivering the vision it articulates, while offering leadership to the statistical community. Our dependency on government to deliver a reliable supply of high-quality administrative data as well as the necessary resources to capitalise on it, are central to the Recommendation. It cannot and should not guarantee success, but as a statement of the Authority's policy it aims to build the momentum necessary for users and suppliers of data to embark on this transformation with us. The tone of the Recommendation document must provide confidence in the ONS's ability to deliver the work programme outlined without pre-empting the 2026 position to demonstrate openness to alternative outcomes.
9. The draft Recommendation is supported by extensive evidence, advice and public engagement. As presented to the February Board, it is also underpinned by full programme documentation, including a business case with a full analysis of risks to delivery.

Recommendation

10. The National Statistician, advises the Board, following a review of all evidence to recommend the three principal actions:
 - i. that the UK Government commission and adequately resource the ONS to operationalise a record-level administrative-based census, from which to publish high quality annual estimates of the population, its key characteristics, and migration;
 - ii. that the UK and Welsh Governments provide a binding commitment to the regular, reliable and ongoing flow of the critical administrative datasets required, ensuring that data owners deliver on that commitment, and invest in the required improvements to those sources and address the known points of friction that prevent data transfer; and
 - iii. that the Authority monitor and publicly report progress made by the ONS and the UK Government on each of the preceding actions over the next two years, before making an assessment in 2026 of the system of population and migration statistics that sustainably meets users' needs.
11. The National Statistician further advises the Board that the power to call a traditional census for England and Wales rests with government ministers. Such a decision is not necessary at this time. The decision on a traditional census should be kept under consideration pending the Authority's assessment of progress in 2026.
12. The Recommendation document is supported by the Equalities Impact Assessment which will be published alongside the Recommendation document.
13. As agreed in a previous Board meeting there is no justification for another public consultation in 2026. ONS' ongoing engagement with users will continue building on the 2023 consultation conversations, with a focus on co-creation and collaboration with other government departments, local authorities and other key stakeholders.

Two-year roadmap

14. In February we provided an update on our two-year plan and the success measures for the FPMS programme. The roadmap will be published alongside the Recommendation document publication, to allow a transparent, high-level assessment of delivery of the next few years.

15. The roadmap outlined builds upon the success criteria that were presented to the board in February 2024 and are aligned with the FPMS Outline Business Case and the Recommendation document.
16. The sentiment and responses gathered during the 2023 user consultation process have been analysed and evaluated to understand user priorities including for characteristics data needs. This used the methodology criteria adapted from the 2016 Census consultation process which allows consistency in decision making and ensures user needs are central to the forward workplan. The broad priority characteristics that are emerging and will be reflected in the roadmap are ethnicity; health status and disability; labour market status; and education. This will be complemented by the ability to undertake multivariate analysis across these characteristics, enabled by the demographic index. This team is now established (as per the commitment in the February board paper) and detailed workplans are being developed for the utilisation of priority data sources, more widely the population coverage of under-represented groups and associated geographical granularity.

Recommendation - Launch and Engagement

17. The Recommendation document will be published when the Board are in agreement with its content and tone. Alongside publication, the Recommendation will be formally provided to the UK and Welsh Governments in a letter from the Chair. The goal is to publish within a few weeks of Board members approval, allowing for translation, type-setting and other administrative matters.
18. To support the publication of the Recommendation, ONS has planned pre-publication stakeholder engagement activity, culminating in a soft launch on the day of publication. We will be using established networks as well as those we have fostered as part of the consultation. The engagement strategy outlines the various approaches we are taking to engage with our audiences including:
 - i. External, in person round table sessions have commenced, to directly engage with users who previously raised concerns through the consultation. We are holding these sessions in Edinburgh, London, Southampton and Manchester with academics recognised as leaders in their field. These will cover the vision, the consultation and recommendation and our progress and plans. The focus of the sessions will be to listen to feedback, develop ongoing rapport and establish co-creation partnerships as appropriate. Feedback from the event in Scotland was particularly positive with the overwhelming thrust of the conversation being one of support for the vision and desire to work with ONS to deliver the plans. Devolved Administrations will be involved in some of these discussions, as ONS seeks to demonstrate the priority of coherence. A similar event in London indicated support for an admin-based census but as an additional offer rather than an alternative. There was a much stronger desire to retain a 2031 census for reasons of comparison, the trust ONS has established by producing a high-quality decennial census that is a recognised brand, and an emotional attachment to a “point of time national event”. The Sub-committee may wish to review if the citizen engagement is sufficient at this stage to address this;
 - ii. Engagement with the Devolved Administrations to cement the areas where we can make a tangible difference to ensure the programme has a coherent UK wide outcome including sharing data to support population statistics and a focus on areas which are of key interest to each nation whilst learning for all; and
 - iii. Internal engagement with colleagues across ONS, including the Analytical Hub and ONS Local, to maximise awareness, understanding and advocacy of the latest work in the programme.
19. The pre-publication activities provide additional opportunities to seek collaboration and support across the identified user clusters. These activities and the soft launch are also

opportunities to showcase delivery achieved to date, the need for regular data flows across government and next steps within the FPMS Programme.

20. On publication day we propose an official letter is sent from The Chair to UK Government, published on the Authority channels and linking to the UK Government and Welsh Government's statement of acknowledgement, when they become available. In support, ONS will deliver a suite of proactive communications to stakeholders, commentators, and the media. Our narrative will focus on:
 - i. the Recommendation enabling ONS to realise the full potential of administrative data;
 - ii. our confidence in the future statistical design and the underlying methods we have set out;
 - iii. the assurance provided on access to the data to meet user need; and
 - iv. the importance of listening to users - recognising there is more work to do and we will continue to work with them over the next two years, ahead of the review point.
21. We will issue a letter from the National Statistician to key stakeholders and conduct proactive communications and engagement activity. The focus will be on the additionality this programme can provide rather than becoming a focal point for losing the census. User community webinars will be offered in the weeks following the Recommendation and we are developing content such as a video to help communicate the admin-based census in an engaging and accessible way.

Subcommittee

22. In February, Board members agreed a new advisory sub-committee which will be convened by the Board as soon as possible, under its statutory remit. 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. Additional expert members could be invited at the discretion of the sub-committee Chair.
23. The Sub-Committee should expect the ONS to report against the key milestones and the agreed indicators that underpin the success criteria above. The Sub-Committee would be empowered to challenge milestones for expected progress and may wish to report after each meeting to the Authority Board. It would advise the Board of the adequacy and sustainability of actions taken, as well as ongoing risks or issues for resolution and escalation on a continual basis.

Conclusion

24. The Board are asked to endorse the Recommendation document and note the associated plans and engagement, to allow ONS to progress to publication.

Ruth Studley, SRO, Director of Population Transformation, Amanda Bowen, Interim FPMS Programme Director, Will Laffan, Head of Policy Group, Central Policy Secretariat, ONS, 18 April 2024.