

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

Tuesday, 23rd April 2024
via video conference

Present

Members

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

Advisors

Ross Young (Data Protection, UKSA)
Rhys Nadin (Data Protection, UKSA)

Secretariat

Matt Short (also present for item 3)
Nitya Raghava

In attendance

Debbie Curtis, Surveys, ONS (for item 2)
Amy Large, Methodology and Quality, ONS (for item 2)

1. Minute and matters arising from the previous meeting

- 1.1 Members of the Committee had approved the minutes from the February meeting in the interim period via correspondence.
- 1.2 The Secretariat updated the Committee with progress on actions from the February 2024 meeting. All actions were completed or in progress.

**2. Dependent sampling and clerical matching of survey and admin data to support the production of admin-based population estimates
NSDEC(24)12**

- 2.1 Debbie Curtis, from the ONS Surveys team, and Amy Large, from the ONS Methodology and Quality division, presented this item to the Committee.
- 2.2 The paper discussed the proposal to develop a dependent sampling and clerical matching methodology to support the production of population

estimates to:

- i. provide more timely and accurate data; and
- ii. address over and under-coverage.

2.3 The Committee had previously received this paper via correspondence and subsequently invited the team to meet with them to discuss the project further.

2.4 The Committee acknowledged the evident public good of this project, and appreciated the relevant explanations of terminology by the research team. They raised the following points in discussion:

- i. There is a need to undertake public engagement around the concepts of clerical matching and dependent sampling.
- ii. The Committee acknowledged that over and under-coverage in statistical production represent a risk which should be addressed.
- iii. Further development of the sampling approach to maintain the ONS commitment to data privacy should be considered.
- iv. ONS should further develop a consistent approach to data quality for administrative data provided by other departments and organisations.

2.5 The Committee emphasised the importance of considering public views and concerns when using administrative data.

2.6 The Committee also discussed that:

- i. The volume of surveys could represent a significant additional burden to respondents and that this should be taken into account by the team. The Committee emphasised the importance of proportionality and transparency in data collection and use.
- ii. Consent to participate should be informed and participants should be aware that the research participation is fully voluntary.
- iii. Interviews and interactions with participants should be structured to ensure full compliance with ONS policies and procedures.
- iv. Asking if someone has moved from the address and enquiring about where they live now would raise significant issues.
- v. ONS to consider an effective strategy to ensure sufficient engagement.
- vi. The Committee raised questions about whether it would be feasible, reasonable, or proportionate to ask providers of administrative data to undertake additional quality assurance activities.

2.7 Action –

- i. The research team to continue to engage with NSDEC on the points raised in paragraph 2.6 via the Secretariat, and to share with

the Committee further information about the format of engagement with respondents, alongside the slides presented.

- ii. The research team to finalise a Data Protection Impact Assessment for the Committee's reference.
- iii. The research team to update the Committee at a future meeting on this proposal.
- iv. The Secretariat to provide the Committee with an outline of the range of functions and services supporting and assuring data protection and research governance across DGLP.

3. Centre for Applied Data Ethics Update – Metrics and Operations

3.1 This item was presented by Matt Short to update the Committee on the work of the Centre for Applied Data Ethics (CADE).

3.2 The Committee greeted this paper with interest and made the following points in discussion:

- i. The Centre's role in promoting ethical consideration and scrutiny in work involving data usage remains critical.
- ii. The user base of the CADE's ethics self-assessment services has continued to expand over time and is being adopted by more users from beyond the ONS.
- iii. The Centre should support the ONS in forming a consistent view of what constitutes an acceptable and appropriate ethical review and risk for the spectrum of projects that CADE and NSDEC advise on.

3.3 NSDEC noted the importance of appropriate resource to support and maintain the work of CADE in the future.

3.4 The Committee thanked Matt Short for his work with CADE and the Secretariat, and wish him well going forwards in his new role.

3.5 **Action** – The Secretariat to update the Committee on resourcing at the following meeting.

4. Presentation: The Future of Data Compliance Reviews

4.1 This item was presented by Rhys Nadin, Head of Data Protection Compliance and Assurance and Deputy Data Protection Officer.

4.2 The presentation covered a proposal to support the NSDEC in ensuring the appropriate use of the UKSA's ethical principles by maturing the focus of the ethical compliance reviews from specific NSDEC projects to the range of projects advised on by both the NSDEC and the CADE.

- 4.3 Projects would be identified as higher risk based on the purpose, data and methods used and then sampled for review.
- 4.4 The Committee endorsed this proposal and look forwards to the results.
- 4.5 **Action** – The Secretariat will update the Committee about the further development of the programme of reviews.

5. Data Ethics Compliance Review

- 5.1 The NSDEC received the data ethics compliance review of the Longitudinal Cohort Study for Refugees (now renamed the Refugee Integration Outcomes Cohort Study, RIO) which was first presented to the Committee in 2021.
- 5.2 This review confirmed that the research teams had taken the advice of the Committee and had implemented the Committee's comments throughout the analysis they conducted.
- 5.3 The Committee thanked the UKSA's Data Governance, Legislation and Policy team for these reviews.
- 5.4 The Committee's next meeting will be held on the 23rd of July 2024.