

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

Thursday 25 July 2024
London Office

Hybrid Meeting

Members Present

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

Other Attendees

Hannah Bloxham (for item 11)
Kate Davies (for item 10)
Sarah Henry (for item 8)
Nigel Green (for item 9)
Mary Gregory (for item 13)
Sally Jones
Sarah Moore
Tom Taylor
Ian Townsend (for item 12)
Gemma N Thomas (for item 12)
Yifan Zheng (for item 13)

Apologies

Pete Benton
Professor Dame Carol Propper
Mike Keoghan

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were noted from Professor Dame Carol Propper, Pete Benton and Mike Keoghan.

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 27 June were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(24)36]

4.1 Non-Executive Directors had met before the meeting.

4.2 The Chair reported on his activities since the Board last met.

- i. Sir Robert and Sir Ian had met Alastair McAlpine, Chief Statistician Scottish Government to discuss plans for the Authority Board meeting in Edinburgh in September;
- ii. on 8 July Sir Robert had attended a presentation by Professor Jonathan Haskel hosted by the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence;
- iii. on 10 July Sir Robert had attended the Royal Statistical Assembly awards to present the Champion Award for Excellence in Official Statistics. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Explore Subnational Statistics team won the award.
- iv. on 15 July alongside other Non-Executive Directors Sir Robert had attended a briefing session on progress of the Transformed Labour Force Survey / Labour Force Survey, ahead of the publication of Labour Market statistics on 18 July;
- v. on 24 July Sir Robert had attended a meeting of the Chairs of Independent Offices, hosted by the Chair of the Committee for Standards in Public Life.

4.3 The Board heard that Georgia Gould MP had been appointed Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office, replacing Baroness Neville Rolfe as the Minister responsible for sponsorship of the Authority.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(24)37]

5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:

- i. the publication of a number of statistical outputs including mid-year 2023 population estimates for England and Wales and inflation statistics on 17 July; and Labour Market statistics on 18 July;
- ii. the publication of the Blue Book 2024 scheduled in August;
- iii. the publication of the Module 1 Report of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, which included a recommendation relating to the need for better systems of data collection;
- iv. Emma Rourke had attended the National Situation Centre on 23 July to discuss links to the work of ONS;
- v. ONS's strategic partnership through the Cabinet Office and Joint Data and Analysis Centre (JDAC) alongside the new Mission Delivery Unit would help identify how ONS statistics could be enhanced to support mission monitoring and identify any data gaps. ONS had been invited to join the mission boards that would cut across departments;
- vi. ONS's engagement with the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) with Lord Patrick Vallance, Minister for State for Science, Research and Innovation;
- vii. the potential impact on ONS of the review by HM Treasury (HMT) of government programmes;
- viii. Cabinet Office pay guidance had not yet been received. On receipt it would be considered by the Executive Committee;
- ix. ONS engagement in the review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender being led by Professor Alice Sullivan, which was due for publication in the coming months; and
- x. the work by ONS regarding gender identity, following the publication by National Records of Scotland of Scotland's Census 2022 sexual orientation and trans status statistics on 27

June. Welsh Government were due to publish Welsh language by sexual orientation and gender identity (Census 2021) on 30 July.

- 5.2 The Board heard that a Sir Ian would be joining a new group, the Senior Analytical Leadership Group alongside others including the Government Chief Scientific Adviser and Chief Medical Officer. Emma Rourke had attended an Analysis Function Board meeting, which had considered the role of the Analysis Function in the context of government missions.
- 5.3 Board members discussed the update highlighting the increased number of milestones with a red rag status in the Integrated Performance Report relating to resource challenges and the recruitment pipeline. It was noted that this was partly due to timing to onboard colleagues including security clearance, which is outside the Authority's control. Work was already underway by People and Business Services to further refine the recruitment process. ONS analytical capacity would be used flexibly in line with the priorities set out in the business plan, which had been mapped across to the missions. Members noted the importance of the approach by ONS in supporting government insight through data for its five missions and engagement with DSIT. The recent media coverage of ONS statistics - avoidable mortality in England and Wales was noted. Sir Ian continued to work with the Ministry of Justice regarding coronial data.
- 5.4 With regard to hybrid working, it was noted that there was good attendance across all ONS sites. Industrial action was ongoing with Public and Commercial Service Union members taking part in action short of a strike in relation to hybrid working.

6. Report from the Director General of Regulation [SA(24)38]

- 6.1 Ed Humpherson provided update on regulation activity, highlighting OSR's role during the General Election. OSR had published a number of statements covering key topics and a principles guide to their judgements.
- 6.2 OSR had provided input into the briefing activity by the Authority's Policy Liaison Unit, which included an offer of teach ins on intelligent transparency and analytical leadership. OSR had published its assessment of ONS admin-based population estimates. Sir Ian noted thanks for the report and the work ongoing in response to the recommendations, with some already complete.
- 6.3 Board members discussed the Public Confidence in Official Statistics 2023 survey conducted by the National Centre for Social Research as an independent assessment of public trust in government statistics.
- 6.4 The Board noted the update and the importance of raising awareness of the principles of intelligent transparency for key officials across the new government including special advisers, ministers and communications teams.

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 July.
- 7.2 The Committee had considered:
 - i. agreement of accredited official statistics status for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Butterflies Statistics; and the Department for Work and Pensions Personal Independence Payments Statistics;
 - ii. the quality and decommissioning framework for the Labour Force Survey;
 - iii. approval of the draft assessment report of ONS admin-based population estimates;
 - iv. the scope of the review of economic statistics produced by ONS and development of the Terms of Reference;
 - v. review of the Code of Practice and plans for the public consultation;
 - vi. OSR's approach to the regulation of transformation activity; and
 - i. the Committee's annual self-review of effectiveness;

7.3 The Committee had also considered the near final draft report on gender identity data in the 2021 England and Wales Census. Ahead of the formal meeting Mary Gregory and Emma Rourke had attended to provide a brief update on the work by ONS around the topic of gender identity. The Committee had discussed the draft report at length and agreed that the final report would be circulated in correspondence including a decision on accreditation.

8. TLFS/LFS [SA(24)39]

8.1 Sarah Henry introduced a paper which provided an update on progress of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS). The TLFS project had completed a short strategic design review to inform the forward plan, which would be underpinned by three key principles: focusing on labour market data and outputs, ambitious continuous improvement using a scientific approach and data led delivery in collaboration with users. The Executive Committee had met on 8 July and had agreed to continue the parallel run with key decision points in January and March 2025.

8.2 The Board had received a briefing session on 15 July ahead of the publication of Labour Market Statistics and statement on the developments of the TLFS and LFS on 18 July. The Board heard that stakeholder feedback from the wider communications on 18 July had overall been positive. An overarching strategic group was in the process of being convened with Sir Ian as Chair. Membership was being finalised and would likely include senior leaders from the Bank of England, Office for Budget Responsibility, Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury.

8.3 Board members discussed the progress of the TLFS/LFS, noted the impact of the recent communications, and noted thanks for the briefing session held on 15 July, which had enabled the Board to provide a steer on the approach to communicating with transparency.

9. Integrated Data Service [SA(24)40]

9.1 Nigel Green introduced a paper which provided an update on the progress of delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS).

9.2 The Board heard that a key focus of the programme was about making the platform ready for use by government analysts, establishing opportunities to bring in valuable new data sources to showcase the value of IDS as a service. This would include key ONS and departmental datasets for analysis, indexed to the address business and demographic indexes. Discussions were ongoing with colleagues across government to showcase the value of the IDS. The Research Accreditation Panel would meet on 20 September to consider processor re-accreditation of the IDS. The timing of the Secure Research Service transition and closure would be agreed at a later date.

9.3 Board members discussed the update. The following points were made in discussion:

- i. the reporting of monthly maturity states against critical success factors to the most recent programme board showed that the programme was on target this month. The programme board had agreed an overall assessment of the programme as amber red;
- ii. the potential scope to simplify the accreditation process for analysis projects while still providing the right level of assurance around privacy and security and appropriate use of data for the public good. This would include consideration of the legislative mechanism for governing the IDS;
- iii. the challenges around data sharing including the impact on varying levels of data quality across departments;
- iv. the impact post-election of machinery of government changes regarding data and timing of any potential impact on the IDS; and
- v. delivery to date and the view that the programme could perhaps have delivered more by this point, which linked to the cost benefits of continuing, future costs and long-term viability.

9.4 The Board noted the update and highlighted that September would be key point for the programme, following a focused period of engagement to demonstrate the value of the IDS. It

was agreed that the updated key performance indicators would be reported to the Board at the next meeting.

10. Business Survey Transformation Strategy [SA(24)41]

- 10.1 Kate Davies introduced a paper which provided an update on progress of the Business Survey Strategy over the last year and the plans to strengthen its delivery approach through the Future of Business Surveys and Statistics programme.
- 10.2 The Board heard that the aim of the programme included an overall reduction in the number of business surveys conducted by ONS; integrated and modularised surveys to improve operational efficiency and statistical quality; and an improved respondent experience. Since April 2023 the survey portfolio had reduced by two. The aim for the 2024/25 financial year was to reduce to around 60 business surveys through legacy reduction.
- 10.3 Board members discussed the update. It was noted that the pandemic had impacted on business survey response rates, although not in the same way as household surveys. The transition from paper to an online survey, such as the Annual Business Survey, had seen a significant increase in the response rate year on year as a result of the survey being online. An enforcement strategy was also in place through the use of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947. Work was ongoing on the use of Artificial Intelligence coding for occupational coding for surveys.
- 10.4 The Board noted the update and would remain engaged as the work progressed.

11. Whistleblowing [SA(24)42]

- 11.1 Hannah Bloxham introduced a paper which provided the annual update on Whistleblowing and Raising a Concern framework, which had recently been refreshed.
- 11.2 The Board heard that following completion of a self-assessment to benchmark effectiveness of the framework, a number of enhancements had been made to raise further awareness across the organisation. The appointment of Emma Rourke as the Speak Up Champion, an increased number of nominated officers and improved training provision. The refreshed framework focused on supporting colleagues to feel comfortable to speak up.
- 11.3 Board members discussed the update and provided feedback on approaches that had worked in other organisations to address cultural issues, such as, engaging collectively at a more local level. It was noted that the framework provided flexibility and empowered colleagues to deal with issues in a range of ways. The community of champions including respect contacts and nominated officers complemented the framework.

12. Board Effectiveness Review [SA(24)43]

- 12.1 Sally Jones introduced a paper which covered the results of the Authority Board's self-review of effectiveness highlighting the key issues raised and proposed improvements.
- 12.2 The Board is invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis to identify where it is performing well and where improvement might be made. The analysis highlighted that the Chair continued to provide an open and supportive culture to allow an inclusive environment for discussion. The Board had considered the right strategic topics, while also noting that there had been some surprises in important topics experiencing challenges this year. The candour and transparency of reporting challenges to the Board had improved, which had impacted positively on making the best use of the Board to the Executive. The NED Programme of Activities this year had focused the future of population and migration statistics, the TLFS/LFS and the transformation of economic statistics.
- 12.3 Members discussed the results. With regard to frequency of meetings it was agreed to revert to a rhythm of ten meetings a year, with the cancellation of the December meeting. It was noted that hybrid meetings offered the right level of flexibility. The induction programme for new NEDs would provide an opportunity for refresher training for other members.

13. Presentation: Population Statistics Projections

13.1 Mary Gregory and Yifan Zheng gave a live demonstration of the system for population projections. The presentation demonstrated the system ONS used for its production of population projections. It had increased the speed and reduced the risk of errors when producing the projections and addressed legacy issues.

13.2 The Board noted their thanks for an excellent presentation.

14. Presentation: RAP in Environmental Statistics

14.1 Ian Townsend gave a presentation on the application of Reproducible Analytical Pipelines across a number of outputs: Natural Capital Accounts, Quarterly Emissions and Environmental Goods and Services. In all areas this had addressed legacy issues, increased quality, reduced resources and upskilled colleagues on processes and methods.

14.2 The Board noted their thanks for an excellent presentation.

15. Any Other Business

15.1 The Board would next meet on Thursday 26 September.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Agenda
Thursday 25 July, 11.15-14.00
London Boardroom, Hybrid Meeting

Chair: Sir Robert Chote

Apologies: Pete Benton, Mike Keoghan, Professor Dame Carol Propper

Attendees: Hannah Bloxham (for item 9), Kate Davies (for item 8), Nigel Green (for item 7), Sarah Henry (for item 6), Alex Lambert (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 27 June 2024
2 11.20-11.30 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(24)36 Sir Robert Chote
3 11.30-12.00 30 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(24)37 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 12.00-12.10 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(24)38 Ed Humpherson
5 12.10-12.20 10 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation Committee 	Oral update Penny Young
12.20-12.25 5 mins	Break	
6 12.25-12.40 15 mins	Transformed Labour Force Survey/Labour Force Survey	SA(24)39 Sarah Henry
7 12.40-12.50 10 mins	Integrated Data Service	SA(24)40 Nigel Green
8 12.50-13.10 20 mins	Business Survey Transformation Strategy	SA(24)41 Kate Davies
9 13.10-13.20 10 mins	Whistleblowing	SA(24)42 Hannah Bloxham
10 13.20-13.35 15 mins	Board Effectiveness Review	SA(24)43 Sally Jones
11 13.35-13.45 10 mins	Presentation: Population Statistics Projections	Mary Gregory
12 13.45-13.55 10 mins	Presentation: RAP in Environmental Statistics	Ian Townsend
13 13.55-14.00 5 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 26 September 2024, Edinburgh

Chair's Report July 2024

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of the Chair's activity in late-June and July.

Review of Recent Activities

2. On 27 June, Sir Ian and I met with Alastair McAlpine, Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government. We discussed plans for September's Authority Board meeting which will be hosted in Edinburgh and will include presentations on key topics and challenges for Scottish statistics.
3. On 8 July, I attended a talk by Professor Jonathan Haskel, formerly of this Board, which was hosted by the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence. His talk focused on UK inflation, exploring the reasons for the recent spike in inflation, the challenges of real-time policy making, and the outlook for inflation in the future.
4. On 10 July, I attended the Royal Statistical Assembly awards evening to hand out the Champion Award for Excellence in Official Statistics, which is sponsored by the Authority. This year's winner was the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Explore Subnational Statistics team, who had developed this service to find, analyse, visualise and compare subnational data, and make it accessible to all types of users. The judging panel was very impressed with the efforts made to engage with a range of users, including both policymakers and the wider public.
5. On 15 July, I attended a Board briefing on the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) to discuss ONS's plans for extending the TLFS dual run, high-level timelines for TLFS development and testing, and the communications plan to update users on these plans.
6. On 16 July, I attended a meeting at the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to contribute to its 2024/25 External Review. Under legislation, the OBR must appoint a person or body to review and report on the organisation at least once in every five-year period. Previous reviews took place in 2014, 2015 and 2020. This year's review is being led by Laura van Geest, former Director of the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Analysis and current Chair of the Dutch Authority for Financial Markets.
7. I also held my regular catchups with the National Statistician, Director General for Regulation, and the Chairs of the Regulation and Audit and Risk Assurance Committees.

Casework and Correspondence

8. On 21 June, I responded to Rt Hon Richard Holden about party spending claims during the General Election.
9. On 25 June, I responded to Paul O'Kane MSP about Scottish Government child poverty statistics.

Sir Robert Chote, 16 July 2024

Chief Executive's Report, July 2024

Purpose

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

Summary

2. Following the **UK General Election (GE)**, July has been dominated by preparations for the new government. The pre-election period saw no significant issues and was well managed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), giving advice to several departments and continuing with our publications in a sensitive way.
3. Attention has now turned to introducing our work to new ministers and ensuring that our statistics, data and analysis informs policy development in the most effective way to ensure the best evidence is provided for government and the public. In particular, we are working with the centre and lead departments on how to support the Government's missions.
4. Following the end of the pre-election period, progress has been made on the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** and our transformation work with the **Transformed Labour Force Survey**. An article setting out our next steps was released on 18 July.

Summary of activities

5. The Parliamentary Unit team has commissioned content from across the Authority to feed into the first draft of the Authority's response to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee's (PACAC) report for their inquiry Transforming the UK's Evidence Base. The Authority's response will comprise of a leading letter from Sir Robert Chote which will contain separate responses from ONS and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) going into detail on their responses to recommendations specifically for their respective organisations. The current plan is for senior leadership team approval being sought over the course of August, ahead of a final draft going to the Board in September. This will allow final amendments to be made between the September Authority Board meeting and the reforming of PACAC, which is estimated to be in October.
6. During the general election, we also undertook some engagement with our colleagues working in the House of Commons Library and parliamentary staff more widely. We hosted a short-term secondee from the House of Commons Library into the Public Sector team and Mary Gregory, Director for Population Statistics Directorate, delivered a presentation on the use of administrative data to colleagues from the House of Commons Library as part of their Learning and Development (L&D) offering to parliamentary staff during the dissolution. We are looking to build on this by seeking a recurring secondment scheme and seeing what regular L&D we can offer to parliamentarians and their staff in partnership with the House of Commons Library in coming months.
7. ONS's strategic partnership with the Cabinet Office through the Joint Data and Analysis Centre (JDAC) means that we have intelligence about the new Government's vision and needs of ONS at a pace and in ways we have not had before. Alongside the new Mission Delivery Unit, No10 Data Science, and the Economic and Domestic affairs Secretariat, we and JDAC are working to identify current evidence gaps, how current ONS statistics can be enhanced (more timely, frequent, robust, or granular) to support mission monitoring, and where we may want to develop in the longer term. Our rapid Opinions and Lifestyle Survey is in the field and asking questions of the public that will give the Government insight for its five missions.
8. The National Statistician will sit on a new group, the Senior Analytical Leadership Group, alongside the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Economic

Adviser to the Treasury, and the Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee. This group aims to play an active systems leadership role to increase the impact and influence of evidence, analysis, and expert judgement across government and challenging potential confirmation bias within government, both as individuals and as a collective. This will be critical in the delivery of cross-cutting missions.

9. The Explore Local Statistics Service was thrilled to receive the Royal Statistical Society Champion Award for excellence in official statistics. The service allows users to find, compare, visualise and download the data they need for their local area. The development of the service started with user needs and we have already seen tangible examples of our data being used to make local decisions. This project was an excellent example of collaboration across ONS and involved colleagues across multiple divisions. The Excess Mortality team and the Refugee Integration Outcomes teams have both been highly commended in this year's Champion Award for Excellence in Official Statistics as well.
10. Economic statistics colleagues presented to the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee on 12 July. We covered topics including measurement of Gross Domestic Product, transformation of the labour market and price statistics. This is now an annual seminar series, allowing the Monetary Policy Committee to hear and engage with our experts directly on key topics.
11. [Mid-year 2023 population estimates for England and Wales](#) were published on Monday 17 July alongside Admin-Based Population Estimates (ABPEs). [UK population estimates 2011 – 2022](#) was published on the same day. A [blog](#) was also published.
12. The OSR has published its phase one assessment report of ABPEs, whilst recognising further work to be done, it also acknowledges the “groundbreaking and innovative new method” used in future population estimates. ONS has already addressed some of the areas highlighted through the outputs on the 15 July, for example, publishing more information on quality and methods for ABPEs. In the publication on 15 July, we also committed to publishing criteria for transition to ABPEs, and further information on quality and coverage of Statistical Population Dataset and ABPEs. Our intention is to publish these at the same time as our action plan for OSR, in October this year. The activity will continue to be monitored by the Programme Management Office, reporting into ONS governance.
13. Avoidable mortality in England and Wales was published on Tuesday 18th June, which was postponed from 28th May to expand upon the commentary, providing clearer explanation for the breadth of statistics included in the release, so communication of the results did not rely on supporting activity by Media and Communications colleagues – which is limited during the pre-election period. Findings from this publication were reported on by *The Mail Online*, *The Telegraph*, Royal Society of Public Health, King's Fund and many local media outlets. Avoidable mortality and other health outcome measures are in the process of planning to be disaggregated to a quarterly cadence to support the five missions recently announced by the new Government.
14. We are currently engaging with stakeholders on a revised Government Statistical Service (GSS) Harmonisation workplan, including Chief Statisticians and the Devolved Administrations. The updated workplan will set out current priorities for revised harmonised standards and expected timelines and will be published on the Analysis Function website on 31 July.
15. Our Communications team arranged a strong ONS presence at the recent Civil Service Live events, with speakers including Sir Ian Diamond and Emma Rourke, as well as exhibition stands at the Edinburgh, Birmingham, Blackpool, Newport and London events. We will also have presence at the Exeter event in October. Civil servants across all grade levels visited our stands and asked us a broad range of questions from what it's like working at the ONS and information about our statistics. The Integrated Data Service team also had a dedicated stand and hub space to build further understanding of how Integrated Data Service (IDS) brings together data to enable faster and wider collaborative analysis across government.

16. We achieved good coverage of our rents and childcare statistical releases in the media this month. The [BBC](#) used data from several of our digital content products in their Cost of Living feature, in response to thousands of people indicating that was their biggest concern ahead of the GE. The BBC's article drew on our localised, [searchable analysis of childcare accessibility](#) as well as [our semi-automated local authority level rent prices bulletins](#) to put public perceptions into context.
17. In June we launched our new internal communications events programme to align with increased office attendance and to encourage colleagues to further connect with each other and senior leaders. We have introduced two new formats in response to staff feedback and to enable opportunities to engage in more open and personable ways. Over 2,200 colleagues online and in Newport attended our inaugural ONS Live session on 11 July, to hear from Sir Ian and the panel about priority topics and to get answers to their questions. Our new ONS Community events are led by leads across our sites and enable colleagues to talk about issues specific to that location and hear about local initiatives. Our popular 'Chat with the Nat Stat' series of sessions also continue every month, where colleagues can raise questions with Sir Ian Diamond directly on our work, priorities and direction.
18. On 4 June, our first annual "Your Experience" report was launched. This report reflects on colleague insights from the 2023/24 business year and provides a fresh approach to sharing employee experience insights, combining survey data and real-life narratives to foster a deeper understanding among leaders and colleagues to inform our current and future people practice. This report is available for all colleagues to view.
19. July has also seen the launch of new benefits platform. We have introduced a new benefits hub for all colleagues in the organisation, providing an accessible, clear and wide-ranging benefits offering.
20. In surveys, plans are now being finalised to reweight the LFS data, based on the latest population projections. The reweighting is planned to cover the period back to 2019 with the reweighted series being introduced to Labour Market estimates by the end of 2024. In Business Surveys Directorate, we have been working collaboratively with other stakeholders to support Economic, Social and Environmental Group in delivering against priorities – addressing quality challenges in delivery of this year's Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings dataset and supporting Financial Sector Accounts and International Development implementation of a transformed Financial Services Survey. This work is aiming to manage wider delivery impact, though risk remains.
21. Internationally, we hosted a delegation from the Namibia Statistics Agency focussing on data science and geography. The objective was sharing of ONS experience in areas of data science strategic planning and scoping; data infrastructure architecture/engineering for Geographic Information Systems products/datasets, administrative data and big data; management and deployment of Geography portal and exploring skills and priorities for data science work within Namibia. We also recently (10 July) signed a memorandum of understanding with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for a new UK partnership to build selected sub-Saharan country capability on population statistics. This project is ONS' contribution to a wider FCDO programme to support Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in priority countries in Africa, and will focus on supporting census, vital statistics and demographic analysis in these countries between 2024 and 2029.
22. The Inter Administration Committee is scheduled to meet on 30 July, hosted by Welsh Government in Cardiff. Sir Ian and the Chief Statisticians will consider UK-wide data and coherence priorities for 2024-25, receive updates from the census offices on current and future census and population and migration statistics work, and engage with GSS Harmonisation work on Sex and Gender Identity in response to the OSR regulatory guidance.

23. The IDS has gathered and submitted all necessary evidence (over 600 documents) for its Digital Economy Act processor accreditation annual review submission. The Research Accreditation Panel will meet on 20 September to review the submission following the assessors report.
24. Data Capability is offering Python and R coding classes to ONS employees as a way of upskilling non-data experts across ONS and to support the delivery of the data capability pillar of the data strategy.
25. Finally, the Government Digital and Data Academy and People and Business Services Entry Talent Team collaborated with Airbus to design and deliver an on-site ONS work experience week for year 10 students planning to take science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects at A level with a view to having a digital or technical career. The feedback from the students was very positive so we're hoping to do repeat events both in Newport and at other sites.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, 18 July 2024

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.

Election

2. Our main area of focus since the last Board meeting has been the general election. During the period 23rd May and 5th July, we:
 - i. handled 70 cases related to the election;
 - ii. intervened publicly on five occasions publishing a [statement](#) and [letter](#) on party spending claims, a statement on claims regarding [disability benefits and out of work statistics](#), a letter on [child poverty statistics in Scotland](#), and a statement on the [presentation of political polling support statistics](#) in campaign materials; and
 - iii. proactively monitored claims made in manifestos, social media and TV debates reviewing 121 claims across seven televised debates.
3. We have received good media coverage from our interventions, and we were encouraged to see our interventions on party spending claims being referred to by journalists during TV interviews with candidates. Our interventions appeared in the top three examples of the BBC Verify round up of fact checks during the election.
4. Following the election, we are now focused on getting OSR's key messages into preparations for the new government. We have inputted into the briefing activity being coordinated centrally by the UK Statistics Authority Policy Liaison Unit and have focused on areas in which OSR can support Ministers and departments, as well as putting a renewed offer of teach ins on intelligent transparency and analytical leadership.
5. Overall, we are positive about our contribution to the election. We had robust mitigations in place to manage general election demands and our preparation enabled us to respond quickly and effectively to issues raised during the campaign. Our summer intern will be leading an elections lessons learned exercise, which will form a chapter in our annual review of casework.

Published work

6. Given the election period of sensitivity is over we have published a number of outputs that were placed on hold during the election.
7. **Spotlight on quality framework:** On economic statistics, we have [published our quality framework](#) following the need for enhanced scrutiny of the quality of economic statistics. This framework provides indicators against which to assess quality and is intended to supplement the 'Code of Practice'. We will report on the indicators that are most relevant to explaining our judgements and requirements for the statistics that we assess. Not all indicators will be relevant for all sets of statistics, and we do not intend to score and rate sets of statistics against them. We are publishing this framework to provide transparency around our Spotlight on Quality assessments. We want to ensure that our framework will provide users and stakeholders of UK economic statistics with continued assurance around quality. We also want producers of economic statistics to understand the framework that we will be using to assess the quality of their statistics and strive to make sure that their statistics are meeting these standards. We welcome feedback on this framework and will review, refresh and re-publish it as appropriate:
 - i. **Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD) statistics:** We [published](#) our quality-focused assessment of BERD statistics this month, the third in assessment in our spotlight on quality programme. We have identified two requirements to improve the quality of BERD statistics, highlighting the importance of providing transparency, ensuring user

understanding and communicating uncertainty. We expect the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to update us on its commitments to meet the requirements ahead of the next release of BERD data, anticipated to be published in November 2024.

- ii. **Northern Ireland Business Enterprise Research and Development statistics:** We [published](#) our quality-focused assessment of NI BERD statistics this month, the fourth in assessment in our spotlight on quality programme. We have identified two requirements to improve the quality of NI BERD statistics, highlighting the importance of providing transparency, ensuring user understanding and communicating uncertainty. We expect Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to update us on its commitments to meet the requirements ahead of the next release of NI BERD data, anticipated to be published in December 2024.
8. **Admin Based Population Estimates (ABPE):** We [published](#) our assessment of ABPE statistics this month, as well as the [independent review](#) we commissioned from Professor Arkadiusz Wiśniowski. In our view, ONS should improve its governance and develop criteria to be able to benchmark the state of readiness of ABPEs to replace Mid-Year (Population) Estimates. More development work is needed to fully test the capabilities of the Dynamic Population Model, quantify the quality of data inputs going into the model and quality-assure the ABPEs to support appropriate use. And this should be done in collaboration with users and methods experts, with ONS encouraging external scrutiny and assurance through improved communication and engagement channels. ONS taking these steps will ensure that users have more confidence in the new method, and therefore the ABPEs.
 9. **Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW):** Following a request from ONS we [temporarily suspended the accreditation](#) of the estimates from the CSEW and we have completed a [quality review](#) to consider reinstating the accreditation. We commended ONS's approach to reviewing data quality and welcome the assurances provided to users about the limited impact of the lower response rate on the quality of the estimates. However, given the recent concerns raised by some users about the communication of the CSEW statistics, we consider it necessary to carry out additional work on the value of the statistics before we reach a decision on reinstating the accreditation. This will take into account the findings of ONS's internal review of the communication of the crime statistics, which was commissioned to address the user concerns.
 10. **Data sharing and Linkage for the Public Good: Follow-Up Report:** We concluded that, despite welcome pockets of innovation, there continues to be a failure to deliver on data sharing and linkage across government, alongside many persisting barriers to progress. The [report](#) outlines some of the steps that can be taken towards that ambition and highlights examples of good practice in data sharing, access and linkage over the last year.
 11. **State of the Statistical System 2024:** This [report](#) shares our views on the performance of the statistical system and the challenges facing it, highlights areas of progress and innovation, and sets out our recommendations for advancing the system. We found:
 - i. Producers have continued to see increased demands for new statistics and insight, but with less focus on a single high-profile issue than we have seen in previous years. In the main, producers have been able to respond to these demands. However, financial and resource pressures and recruitment challenges have meant that several producers have had to cut back existing outputs to invest in new priorities.
 - ii. Long-standing challenges with household survey response rates became more critical, with impacts such as the suspension of UK survey-based labour market estimates in October 2023 due to falling response rates in the ONS Labour Force Survey, which covers England, Scotland and Wales. Surveys will remain essential in some areas, but it has become more challenging and expensive to maintain quality.
 - iii. We have seen a range of innovative transformation programmes across the statistical system. To maximise the benefits, we want to see more join-up and coherence across developments. Overarching plans and priorities should be set with, and communicated to, users of statistics.

- iv. We have seen producers effectively communicating key messages from rich and complex datasets through a variety of means that are tailored to different audiences. Census outputs in particular were not just published as data tables and bulletins, but through innovative interactive maps, tools and games which allow users to better engage with and understand data related to their own lives and geography. However, more needs to be done to embed high-quality communication around quality, uncertainty and revisions when data are published and used, including sharing best practice.

Casework

12. Since the last Board meeting, we have received 37 cases on topics including GE leaflets, immigration, pension tax, crime and 20mph accident data. We have closed 50 cases on Ofsted inspection data, NHS funding, waiting lists, vaccine harm and the Conservative Campaign Headquarters X account name.
13. We have published two public interventions from Sir Robert Chote. We sent a letter to [Paul O'Kane MSP](#) following his concerns about statements "lifting" an estimated 100,000 children out of poverty. The second letter was to [Rt Hon Richard Holden](#) following his concerns with Labour Party's analysis of Conservative Party commitments.

Wider reach

14. **External events:** Following the interest in working more closely together with ONS and OSR I met with the Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi (SCAD) to provide an overview of OSR and understand SCAD's plans in the quality assessment space. I have also agreed to be an Advisor to SCAD to share expertise, experience, and perspective with the SCAD's leadership team as a member of the International Strategic Advisory Committee.
15. Later today I am attending another information paradox session where Tracey Brown and Laura Gilbert will be talking about initiatives that could give government and other bodies confidence in adopting or rejecting data and artificial intelligence products.
16. **Voluntary Adoption Award:** We are delighted to [announce](#) the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority as winner of the Award for Statistical Excellence in Trustworthiness, Quality and Value, awarded in partnership with the Royal Statistical Society and Civil Service World. This year there is also a highly commended award for the UK Health Security Agency (a previous winner in 2022 for their COVID-19 dashboard). This is the [fifth award](#) to recognise excellence in the voluntary application of the 'pillars' of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value that stand at the heart of our [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Issues on my mind

17. **Gender Identity:** We are finalising our review of Gender Identity statistics from the England and Wales Census. After a full discussion at their July meeting, Regulation Committee are due to consider the final report by correspondence in the next month ahead of publication in late August. It will be important to successfully land the review with a diverse range of interested stakeholders.
18. **Transformation programmes:** Now that the election is over and our post-election work is progressing my thoughts return to our regulatory work. Specifically, I want OSR to focus on our approach to transformation programmes and how we can support producers undergoing transformation.
19. **Communicating uncertainty:** I also want OSR to refocus our thinking and advocacy on communicating uncertainty, not just in the gross domestic product space but advocating for communicating uncertainty to become the norm in all areas.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 17 July 2024

Transformed Labour Force Survey – July 2024 Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides the monthly update to the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board), capturing the way forward on the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) project as communicated to some Board members on 15 July 2024.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the three key principles guiding the TLFS project going forward;
 - ii. the indicative high-level plan and continued parallel run;
 - iii. the new strategic engagement group and acceptance criteria; and
 - iv. the communications and engagement now being undertaken.

Background

3. Since the last Board update, the TLFS project has completed a short strategic design review, reflected on lessons learnt and the recommendations of the full external academic review and defined a high-level forward plan. The way forward described here is an opportunity to reset the project without previous strict financial constraints driving timescales. It recognises the requirement for a longer Labour Force Survey (LFS)/TLFS parallel run and that the TLFS is not currently meeting required quality criteria. Executive Committee approval to continue the parallel run was received on 8 July and Board members subsequently provided their support in the recent dedicated TLFS briefing.

Discussion

Key Principles

4. The TLFS project is being taken forward guided by three key principles:
 - i. Focusing on labour market data and outputs – With the need to better manage complexity and risk and, increase alignment to strategic priorities, the project will focus first on improving the quality of labour market outputs in a sustainable manner aligned to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Survey Strategy and key user input. In parallel, we will continue to collect data for other outputs and engage with non-labour market users on a future data collection approach that meets their needs;
 - ii. Ambitious continuous improvement using a scientific approach – There is a consensus on the need to extend the parallel run and improve the TLFS. Design improvements will be tested in an innovation hub¹ and changes transitioned into the parallel run at key decision points based on an end-to-end evaluation of benefits, costs and risks. The process will separate development, testing and production in accordance with good practice; and
 - iii. Data led delivery in collaboration with users – Starting with labour market, users will be transitioned onto the TLFS data when transparent success criteria are met. These criteria will incorporate user readiness. A revised strategic engagement approach will ensure key users are close to project decision making and collectively hold each other to account for their preparation and readiness. ONS will not commit to a labour market adoption date or LFS decommissioning date now, instead using interim milestones, scenario planning and a timeline that will be updated at formal reviews based on the latest data, research and user feedback.

¹ This innovation hub would form part of a sustainable testing bed for further development, enabling innovative ideas to be tested without risk to the live survey and providing an essential component for evidence-based decision making on further design improvements' (on the TLFS and potentially other social surveys too).

High Level Plan and Parallel Running

5. TLFS Design Review – Survey design work to date has helped improve the quality of headline labour market estimates from the TLFS, although quality challenges remain. Recent workshop and discussions have confirmed the three priority design issues with the current TLFS are missingness, bias and the collection of complex variables (i.e. standard industrial classification /standard occupational classification). Shortlisted potential solutions to address these issues include a shorter questionnaire and questionnaire changes to help complex variables.
6. With a conscious move to focus on the transition of labour market users onto the TLFS, non-labour market user needs will be met through an integrated TLFS design, finalised with them in the coming months. This work remains important as it will only be possible to decommission the LFS once both labour market and non-labour market users have transitioned.
7. Timelines and Planning – Initial estimates of the key work and milestones over the remainder of this year have been completed. Further work over the next few weeks will develop the detailed plans and validate assumptions and dependencies, enabling formal milestone changes within the Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive Economic Statistics (ARIES) programme and Survey Transformation Programme. Key aspects of the indicative high-level plan include:
 - i. multiple re-designed versions of the survey will be implemented in the coming weeks, with testing starting in October, broken down into three consecutive testing blocks. Results from the first stage of testing will be available in December. While this testing takes place, the TLFS will continue to run as the additional data remain a critical input to discussions and decisions both within ONS and with key users;
 - ii. January 2025 is a key point at which to decide whether to implement this first set of tested changes into the parallel run from April 2025; and
 - iii. In March 2025 the readiness of the TLFS for labour market users will be formally reviewed and the plans for the year ahead confirmed in a formal stocktake.
8. During the next six months, further TLFS data, test results, a finalised integrated design and user engagement will enable informed plans for future years. At present, scenarios for future years include labour market adopting the TLFS in mid-2027 should a further five quarters of data on the updated shorter survey be required, with potential opportunities to reduce this if a brief single quarter validation of the shorter survey is sufficient. The baseline comparator with five quarters of parallel run data and no survey changes is mid-2025. The boards recent positive feedback for a data-led approach that may not see transition until 2027 is appreciated.
9. LFS Sustainability – With the LFS/TLFS parallel run continuing, an LFS sustainability plan will be finalised in the coming weeks and reported to the board in the autumn. This sustainability plan will encompass not only the recently approved re-weighting exercise (reported at the last board), but continued work to improve the quality of the LFS, implement essential question updates and sustain the data capture and processing systems. We will continue to engage users closely in the development of this sustainability plan. If users require further alignment of the LFS methods with those used in TLFS (for example applying an attrition bias adjustment), further LFS revisions are to be expected. The trade-offs will be discussed with users to inform decisions.

Strategic Engagement and Acceptance Criteria

10. Proposed Strategic Engagement – Developments since November have demonstrated the importance of involving key users (and funders) more formally in TLFS decision making. ONS is now creating an overarching strategic group, chaired by the National Statistician. We are currently finalising membership, but this group will likely include senior leaders from Bank of England (BoE), Office for Budget Responsibility, Home Office, Department of Work and Pensions and HMT. Each of these partners will be required to influence and agree the detailed acceptance criteria and be transparent about their plans to migrate to TLFS outputs. We will also continue with the technical engagement at working level with these organisations that has proven valuable in recent months. Collectively, this will ensure more timely insight when requirements change and set the project up to succeed.

11. Acceptance criteria – The readiness to transition labour market users onto the TLFS will be regularly assessed against the three elements:
- i. statistical and data quality – The TLFS can produce all key labour market content within the agreed quality tolerances, with a sufficient stable time series and with explainable differences to the LFS;
 - ii. user confidence and readiness – users are prepared for the transition to the TLFS and are confident with the data produced; and
 - iii. operational readiness – a sustainable operational and statistical process to user accepted labour market publication schedules.

Communications

12. Following the Board's support on the way forward, ONS plans to publish an update article on the TLFS and LFS on Thursday 18 July to accompany the labour market release. The Board's recent review of the draft article and steer to communicate with transparency and humility, explain our thought process, and ensure realism on the likelihood of a continued parallel run was appreciated.
13. Ahead of the 18 July, we will engage key stakeholders to secure their support. Once the article is published we will communicate with a wider cohort of stakeholders via email, a webinar and our regular channels, including providing specific information for non-labour market users. Internal communications to staff will align in timing and message to external communications.
14. In terms of the broader role communications plays in encouraging participation in our surveys, we are setting out a plan to strengthen our citizen-facing activity on the importance of their data to our statistics.

Conclusion

15. TLFS is the strategic solution to long-running quality concerns on the LFS and will move forward focusing first on meeting labour market user requirements, adopting a scientific testing and data led approach to improve the survey with users at the centre of final decision making through a new strategic engagement group. The project will test a series of design options to improve data quality throughout the autumn, leading to a decision point to implement them into live, in January 2025. We are transparently engaging externally on the direction of the project and being realistic with users as to the likely timescales going forward.

Sarah Henry Director of Methodology and Quality and Alex Lambert, Director of Social Surveys, ONS, 16 July 2024

Integrated Data Service – July 2024 Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an update on the progress of the Integrated Data Programme (IDP), responsible for the delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to note the programme progress and revised delivery model approach.

Background

3. The IDS remains in public Beta; its focus is on providing key data to government analysts.

Programme Delivery Approach

4. The programme has been delivering major milestones (Epics) in Quarter five to mature the platform, with a focus on making it ready for use by government analysts. This includes prioritising and ingesting key Office for National Statistics (ONS) and departmental datasets for analysis, indexed to the address, business, and demographic indexes to enable rapid analysis of linked data.
5. As presented to the Board at its June meeting, the senior leadership team have implemented a revised delivery model focussed on monthly maturity states for each of the IDS critical success factors. Delivery teams have now aligned activity to achieve these maturity states, with the priority being on high value, UK wide linked datasets that can be accessed rapidly by Government analysts.
6. Discussions with Google have resulted in agreement for Google to provide additional resource to enable the delivery of these key datasets into IDS as quickly as possible on a 'match funding' basis – i.e. google will fund their delivery team, working alongside ONS staff to begin, this will focus particularly on metadata remediation, data engineering and data governance.
7. As presented to the Board at its June meeting; to allow the Programme focus to shift to Government Analysts, the Programme Board has now ratified the decision that closure of the SRS (Secure Research Service) front door to new applications had been pushed back from September. The timing of the eventual closure of the SRS front door will be subject to a rolling series of reviews, to determine when the IDS is ready.
8. The programme has now set out monthly maturity states until September against the Critical Success Factors driving development. These focus effort on increasing the number of key datasets available, streamlining access for government users, and ensuring the right tools are available.
9. The recent submission for processor accreditation annual review was completed in June, with over 600 pieces of evidence, which assessors will review in the coming weeks. The Research Accreditation Panel (RAP) will meet on 20 September to review the submission following the assessors report.
10. The accreditation process for analysis 'projects', which again appropriate for approving specific pieces by academic for example, is too restrictive for government analysts and effectively prevent the broad-based analysis that the IDS is intended to enable.
11. These issues were discussed at a RAP workshop on 28 June. The Panel recognised that there may be scope for improvement in some of these areas.
12. The Programme is exploring how these processes might be simplified whilst still providing the required assurance around privacy, security, and appropriate use of data for public good. This

includes reviewing whether the Statistics and Registration Service Act might be a more appropriate mechanism to govern the IDS.

13. We are focusing on making linked datasets available to ONS analysts in the short term whilst these processes for wider government uses are resolved.

Nigel Green, Interim Director General for the Integrated Data Programme and Pete Benton, Integrated Data Programme Senior Responsible Officer, ONS, 16 July 2024

Business Survey Strategy

Purpose

1. This paper provides members of the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an update on the achievements of the Business Survey Strategy (BSS) over the last year, and details of the continued work to strengthen its delivery approach through the 'Future of Business Surveys and Statistics' (FBSS) Programme. This programme is a collaboration between Business Surveys and Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics Group (ESEG) to deliver the BSS and other organisational priorities through end-to-end statistical design and delivery.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. note progress since the last update, including the high-level timeline for Business Surveys and Statistics;
 - ii. note the next steps of the programme and what will be achieved;
 - iii. note the current key challenges and associated actions; and
 - iv. offer feedback and guidance within the context of alignment with wider Office for National Statistics and UK Statistics Authority priorities and plans.

Background

3. The BSS, presented to the Board in 2023, defines a new vision for the future of business surveys to transform business data collection to better measure the modern economy and adapt to the future. Specifically, it set out three core elements:
 - i. new integrated and modularised survey designs which move us away from siloed operations to a business-centred and quality-focussed model, with sustainable technology, methods, and processes, including the ability to flex and react to changing user requirements;
 - ii. a new engagement model to improve ONS relations with businesses. This will reduce respondent burden, critical to response rates and quality, through improved education, communication, and support, shaping our future operating model to increase capability across our core collection operations; and
 - iii. new innovative methods for data collection to include new technologies to reduce our reliance on legacy and automate our data collection, removing blockers, adding value and improving efficiency.
4. Through collaboration and partnership with ESEG, the BSS and resulting FBSS now focuses on end-to-end transformation.
5. We have developed a high-level timeline for Business Surveys and Statistics which enables the delivery of a wider set of quality improvements and wider benefits across ONS and sets strategic direction going into the next Spending Review.

Discussion

6. In establishing the FBSS, we have developed the following strategic objectives of the three-to-five-year programme:
 - i. overall reduction in the number of business surveys conducted by ONS;
 - ii. integrated and modularised surveys to improve operational efficiency and statistical quality; and
 - iii. improved respondent experience, including a response strategy centred on education and engagement of businesses.
7. Following the closure of the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP), the completion of the Moving Surveys Online Project is now within FBSS. Building on the success of CDCTP where 88 per cent of survey questionnaires were moved to digital collection,

the programme will move three more surveys online during 2024/2025, bringing our digital by default total to 96 per cent and reducing the total number of paper-based surveys from 2.6 million to just under 100,000. This will deliver considerable improvements and efficiencies within our internal operations and improve the respondent experience.

8. Since April 2024, the number of business surveys conducted by the ONS has reduced from 77 to 75. Proof of concepts to better understand how businesses interact with our surveys, how we manage the collection process and non-response have been implemented, and the statistical and technical design for the first integrated and modularised business survey is in progress. The following paragraphs provide more detail on this work along with the next steps and challenges faced.

Key Achievements

9. To reduce the size of our survey portfolio we will focus on how we can stop or merge surveys through streamlining our processes, as well as how we can reduce the size of surveys by removing redundancy.
10. The ONS now conducts 75 business surveys a year, our aim for the 2024/2025 financial year is to reduce to circa 60 business surveys and over the lifetime of the programme to circa 40. By September 2024, we aim to rationalise a suite of surveys covering the Insurance sector from eight to one. Several other early impact initiatives have been identified to allow us to meet the March 2025 milestone.

Integrated and Modularised Business Survey Design

11. The focus of this strategic objective is an Integrated Annual Business Survey (IABS) which will collect data through themed modules to improve data validity and coherency across surveys and statistical outputs. A core spine will replace the current Annual Business Survey and be necessitated by changes across the statistical value chain, from results processing to integration in the National Accounts. The core spine will provide the foundation for the integration of ONS' portfolio of annual surveys which will reduce respondent burden and ensure that design is both sustainable and future-proofed to adapt to emerging user needs.
12. Most of the remaining paper-based business surveys are in scope of the IABS and will be delivered online through these plans.
13. Critically, the delivery of the IABS will enable the delivery of other organisational priorities, otherwise not achievable with the current survey portfolio. The changes to collection will require changes to the results and processing across the statistical value chain to achieve these benefits. These include:
 - i. adoption of agreed international standards across the System of National Accounts (SNA25), Balance of Payments (BPM6) and changes to Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) which will be crucial for ONS to maintain international comparability;
 - ii. a further reduction in the ONS legacy estate, which will build a foundation for other integrated and modularised business surveys; and
 - iii. adoption and exploitation of the new Statistical Business Register (SBR), which will provide us with improved business population coverage, quality and capability, alongside opportunities for future exploitation to enhance design and data linkage.
14. The statistical and technical design for the core spine will be developed in the 2024/2025 financial year, allowing build of the capability needed for dispatch of the contemporary design in January 2026.

Improved Respondent Experience

15. The BSS vision for a new business engagement model builds on the successes of ONS' Large Case Unit (LCU), which provides a bespoke account management service to some the UK's largest multinational businesses. Over the past year we have increased the capacity of this unit, expanding our coverage to the defence and aerospace, oil, gas and energy sectors.

16. Recognising the benefits of this approach, we are now mid-way through a six-month Proof-of-Concept (POC), to demonstrate the business value and tangible benefits of this approach across the wider data collection operation. Using a sample of businesses selected for multiple business surveys, we have been able to evidence the key challenges to adopting this approach with current systems and capabilities and highlight the opportunities to add value to both ONS and businesses, through design and the future operating model.
17. The POC has emphasised the non-response challenges that we encounter across all surveys and the need to understand this complex response picture in more detail. Whilst surveys can use imputation to address non-response, we cannot become reliant on this with an ever-changing economy.
18. Business Surveys Directorate have created new innovative tools to bring together business feedback and response metrics across a multitude of platforms and systems to allow us to better understand patterns of response and address key areas of concern. Our next step is to use this information to trial innovative ideas to engage businesses and improve response, learn-by-doing, and embed these new ways of working into our core operations.
19. Our objective is to move away from an enforcement strategy to generate response to a non-response strategy centred on education and engagement of businesses.

Challenges to Delivery

20. FBSS spans organisational boundaries and a continued alignment as part of wider office prioritisation ahead of the Spending Review will be fundamental to ensuring funding and resources to take IABS into delivery. In addition, there is an opportunity for alignment with other projects across ONS, such as the Legacy Reduction Project, to accelerate delivery and benefits realisation through an alternative approach.
21. The IABS will deliver the largest change to annual surveys seen in 20 years and an opportunity to improve our core statistical outputs, fundamental to ONS' measurement of UK economy. Critical to our success is getting design right, to ensure our business case is robust and change across the organisation is coherent and understood. We are working in collaboration with delivery and enabling partners to manage and deliver the design process across multiple specialisations and disciplines to ensure integrated and iterative delivery.

Conclusion

22. The BSS has strengthened its delivery approach through the FBSS Programme, and in partnership with ESEG, we have achieved organisational alignment to deliver a wider set of organisational priorities and objectives.
23. FBSS has set the strategic direction for the next Spending Review and delivery of the IABS will be complex and not without challenge. Prioritisation of the design for the IABS will support the future business case and strengthen delivery confidence into 2025/2026.
24. Business Surveys Directorate continue to focus on early impact initiatives which will add value across the data collection operation, and Proof-of-Concepts are enabling us to test and develop new approaches at pace to better inform strategic design decisions and the future business case.

Kate Davies, Director for Business Surveys and Philip Davies Deputy Director Business Surveys and Registers Transformation, ONS, 16 July 2024

Whistleblowing and Raising a Concern

Purpose

1. This paper provides the annual update to the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) on UK Statistics Authority's Whistleblowing and Raising a Concern activities to provide assurance on the visibility, accessibility and understanding of the approach to 'speaking up' in the UK Statistics Authority.

Background

2. The Authority's current Speak Up and Raise a Concern Framework enables navigation between the Resolving a Concern procedure for concerns related to inappropriate behaviour and unfair treatment, and the Whistleblowing policy for concerns related to breaches of the Civil Service Code, suspected illegal activity, or fraud. The Framework succinctly clarifies the difference, sets out who colleagues can talk to, details full procedures, and signposts to available sources of support.
3. Ensuring clear, accessible procedures for handling Whistleblowing concerns remains a priority across the Civil Service. The Cabinet Office undertakes an annual data collection exercise for all government departments to ensure an accurate picture is held centrally of departmental practice relating to policies, reporting mechanisms and organisational actions. In addition, departments have access to a self-assessment tool to benchmark effectiveness which the UK Statistics Authority has completed. Process enhancements, opportunities to raise further awareness, and developing related skills and behaviours were identified. Actions taken in response include the appointment of a senior leader (Emma Rourke) as the Speak Up Champion, an increase in the number of nominated officers, and an improved training provision.
4. The National Audit Office (NAO) also investigated [whistleblowing across the Civil Service](#) last year and published their findings and recommendations in December 2023. The NAO made four recommendations which the government has accepted: improving the quality of data; learning from the whistleblower's experience; doing more to understand the extent of intimidation/harassment; further work on sharing best practice. Government People Group in Cabinet Office is leading a programme of work to support departments with further investment in these areas, which will be considered once finalised.
5. Since July 2024, UK Statistics Authority's Resolution Policy has been replaced with the refreshed Resolving Concerns procedure, sitting within the rebranded Speak Up and Raise a Concern Framework. The refreshed framework focuses on user experience and best practice to drive meaningful changes, with a focus on informal resolution, enabling greater flexibility and reducing timescales. The language has been simplified, procedures clarified, and new, supportive resources are now available. As part of the July launch, there was a focus on supporting colleagues to feel safe and comfortable to speak up, and on promoting the avenues of support available where additional help may be needed.

Discussion

Accessibility and visibility of the Speak Up and Raise a Concern Framework in UK Statistics Authority

6. Onboarding: All new entrants to UK Statistics Authority are required to sign a contract of employment which sets out the binding General Conduct policy and Civil Service Code. This is also available on the Intranet, along with the Speak Up framework being referenced in the employment policy section of the mandatory ONS induction, and Civil Service Code information provided in the Civil Service Induction.

7. **Employment Policy Visibility:** All Employment Relations (ER) policies are accessible to all colleagues via the SharePoint policy library, accessed via the front page of Reggie. This library is also linked via the People Portal available on the Reggie homepage which includes a specific link for raising a concern. Colleagues are also able to use the Reggie search bar using key words, which direct to the relevant People Portal pages, linked to the master policy database. The Speak Up Framework is cross referenced in all ER policies, including the General Conduct Policy, with specific information regarding the Civil Service Code. The Whistleblowing Policy also features in additional corporate policies such as the Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, and the Safeguarding Policy.
8. **Encouraging Colleagues to Speak Up:** Several communication and engagement events take place throughout the year to maintain awareness and to regularly encourage colleagues to speak up if holding concerns. 'Speak Up' weeks consist of all colleague communications, including messages from our Speak Up Sponsor, Emma Rourke, reminders of the routes to share concerns, and targeted learning interventions

Handling a Speak up Concern in the Authority

9. **Diverse Channels:** Speaking Up concerns can be raised via several routes, depending on the nature of the concern. Practice suggests these are typically raised via either the line management chain, colleague networks or nominated contacts. In most instances, casework support is then accessed to ensure concerns are handled in the appropriate manner.
10. **Specialist casework service:** The casework service is a team of employment experts within Employment Relations in People and Business Services. Caseworkers will ensure complaints are handled under the correct procedure, applying statutory rights and responsibilities, and ensuring relevant parties such as Security or Fraud are involved where necessary. The casework service can be accessed directly by all colleagues via a service desk call for advice. If colleagues log a Speaking Up concern directly with Casework, a caseworker is assigned, and the colleague supported to ensure appropriate handling. The Casework team will also support all parties involved, including decision managers, nominated officers, investigation managers and appeal managers.
11. **Low numbers and high confidence:** In Financial Year (FY) 2023/2024, no concerns were formally raised under the Whistleblowing Policy, a reduction from three concerns formally raised in FY2022/2023. Additionally, one historical grievance was reframed during employment litigation as including Whistleblowing elements, which are being challenged in the tribunal process. The team received 13 requests for support for concerns under the Resolution Policy. By comparison, the Government People Group Annual Report on Whistleblowing for 2023-2024 reported a total of 388 concerns raised across government. The UK Statistics Authority's numbers are considered low given UK Statistics Authority's headcount of more than 5,000 colleagues. However, this is not indicative of a lack of understanding of the Civil Service Code or a lack of confidence in the appropriate handling of concerns given our 2023 People Survey results are broadly in line with the Civil Service benchmark in all relevant questions:

12.

	I understand the Civil Service Code and what it means for my conduct	Are you aware of how to raise a concern under the Civil Service Code?(Yes per cent)	Are you confident that if you raised a concern under the Civil Service Code in [my organisation] it would be investigated properly? (Yes, per cent)
Civil Service Benchmark	88	70	76

UK Statistics Authority	86	66	78
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Positive Actions Taken in the Authority to Enhance the Framework

13. Organisational communication and engagement: The UK Statistics Authority participates in the annual Civil Service Speak Up week to raise awareness. Key features of the 2023 Speak Up campaign included:
 - i. the recruitment of additional nominated officers, increasing from three to seven,
 - ii. the appointment of Emma Rourke, Deputy National Statistician for Health, Population and Methods into the role of Speak Up Champion,
 - iii. the publication of an e-learning package for Whistleblowing and Raising a concern; and
 - iv. an information session run in partnership between employment relations, respect contacts, nominated officers and mediators.
14. Senior leadership sponsorship: As Speak Up Champion, Emma Rourke endorsed the 2023 campaign confirming her commitment to 'ensuring ongoing investment in inclusion and fair treatment for those raising concerns and continuously promoting a supportive culture under our Speak Up Framework.' The Deputy Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Jacob Abboud, is also being appointed as one of UK Statistics Authority's Nominated Officers, providing a route for colleagues to raise a concern outside of current employees.
15. Developing Nominated Officer capabilities: Initial work focused on the onboarding of our new nominated officers with three internal events held to inform on relevant training, share best practice and establish mentoring relationships between current and newly appointed officers. Now established, the Employment Relations team are working with Emma to maintain touch points with the Nominated Officers throughout the year to collectively embed awareness of UK Statistics Authority's approach to Speaking Up.
16. Learning and development: The Employment Relations team held 34 training sessions with 832 attendees during 2023 where whistleblowing and raising a concern were covered. A newly developed e-learning package was launched, as well as bespoke information sessions delivered, jointly facilitated by employment relations, nominated officers and respect contacts as part of the 2023 speak up week.
17. Cross government engagement: The Employment Relations team attended the cross civil service nominated officers' event in October 2023 which re-established a cross-government network focused on improving speak up activities across the Civil Service. A newly available core learning package for nominated officers was shared at the event which the team have since incorporated into the onboarding requirements for our new nominated officers. A follow up cross government event was held in February 2024 during which an evaluation of the 2023 speak up campaign was shared, and discussion groups formed to share insight to inform the upcoming Speak Up campaign for 2024.
18. Increasing frequency of engagement: Activities are ramping up this year, with Speak Up weeks now running twice a year, once in quarter One/two, and another in quarter three/four. The quarter one/two Summer event took place earlier this month, focussing on the launch of the refreshed Speak Up and Raise a Concern Framework, agreed with departmental trade unions.
19. Comprehensive stakeholder engagement: The new Speak Up and Raising a Concern framework was revised following engagement with diversity networks and focus groups comprised of colleagues who have been directly involved in raising and responding to concerns within UK Statistics Authority. As part of the relaunch of the updated framework, colleagues will be reminded of the importance of acting when concerns arise.

Conclusion

20. The Authority's approach to handling colleague concerns is summarised in the Speak Up and Raise a Concern Framework, providing concise information and sources of support.
21. Employment Relations policies, including Whistleblowing, are available to all colleagues in SharePoint, accessed either directly, via the People Portal or using the search bar function.
22. Awareness campaigns are championed by a senior leader twice a year, supported by nominated officers with training provided as part of the manager learning pathway, and e-learning with specific support available from our Employment Relations casework team.
23. The Employment Relations team are actively involved in the re-established of cross government Speak Up Network to share best practice and input into future Speak Up campaigns.
24. Whistleblowing cases remain low, with high colleague awareness of how to raise concerns, and employee confidence in appropriate investigation handling.

Hannah Bloxham, People and Business Services, ONS, 16 July 2024

Authority Board Self Review of Effectiveness

Purpose

1. This paper covers the results of the Authority Board's self-review of effectiveness highlighting the key issues raised and proposed improvements.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note the results of the questionnaire and consider proposals for action.

Background

3. The Board is invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis to identify where it is performing well and where improvements could potentially be made.
4. The results of the last year's self-review of effectiveness had indicated improvements on the previous year. The Chair had continued to provide an open and supportive culture for discussions and the Board had focussed its attention on the delivery of the strategy, Statistics for the Public Good.
5. Areas of focus for the Board highlighted in 2023 included;
 - i. post census recommendation including the findings from the consultation;
 - ii. delivery of the Integrated Data Service including how best to support data sharing and linkage;
 - iii. transformation of economic statistics through the ARIES programme;
 - iv. a focus on the Authority's strategic risks and mitigation;
 - v. delivery of the business plan and effective management of the budget;
 - vi. the Government Statistical Service;
 - vii. Excess Mortality statistics; and
 - viii. communications and user engagement
6. These are all areas the Board has engaged with over the last 12 months.

Discussion

Summary of findings

7. This year's review has indicated sustained performance by the Board with the Chair continuing to provide an open and inclusive culture. The Board has considered the important strategic issues with papers focussing on the delivery of the strategy.
8. Members agreed that overall the Board has considered the right topics, while also noting that this year there have been some surprises in important topics experiencing challenges and setbacks.
9. Executives and Non-Executive Directors value each other's respective contributions.
10. In the coming year the Secretariat will continue to focus on ensuring papers are well balanced with clear recommendations to inform the discussion.
11. The business planning process worked well with input by the Board ahead of publication.

Forward agenda

12. The annual review of effectiveness provides an opportunity to consider the Board's forward agenda.
13. The forward agenda will include the areas of focus highlighted by members for the coming year including;
 - i. statistical outputs;

- ii. taking forward the recommendations of the Lievesley review
- iii. engagement with new ministers to ensure adequate financial resources for the Authority;
- iv. the transition from the Labour Force Survey to the Transformed Labour Force Survey; and
- v. data linkage and sharing and the Integrated Data Service.

Programme of Activities

14. The Programme of Activities (PoA) provides Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) with the opportunity to engage with colleagues below Board level across a range of divisions. This has proven to be successful with teams across the organisation who benefit from NEDs expertise in an informal setting outside of Board meetings. This year the PoA has included meetings with teams in the following areas:
- i. the future of population and migration statistics;
 - ii. risk and assurance;
 - iii. excess mortality methodology; and
 - iv. Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive, Economic Statistics programme with a focus on legacy transformation.
15. The PoA will continue with a combination of remote meetings and in person visits. The Secretariat will liaise with Board members on areas of interest for the next 12 months.

Risk

16. Members agree that they are kept abreast of risks through updates from the Chief Executive and Director General for Regulation. Strategic risks are scheduled for the Board six monthly. The Integrated Performance Report, a standing item for the Board, includes Management Information on the strategic risk profile.
17. The Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 reflected the continued progress made in our approach to risk and governance this year with a moderate Head of Internal Audit opinion for a fourth year in a row. Professor Sir Ian Diamond and the Senior Leadership Team are committed to continued improvement in this area.

Diversity

18. There are currently some skills gaps on the Board in relation to strategic communications, commercial business skills and audit expertise. This is due to the departure of Non-Executive Directors compounded by the delay to the recruitment campaign due to the General Election. The diversity of the Board will continue as part of the recruitment process for new members.

Meeting format and frequency

19. There were a number of views on the format of meetings with an acknowledgement that meeting in person is ideal as it provides the opportunity for additional discussion in the margins, but hybrid is the preferred format as it allows for greater flexibility.
20. With regard to the frequency of meetings, while the majority of responses agree that the Board currently meets with the correct frequency additional comments suggest that we may want to reconsider the frequency of meeting.

Conclusion

21. The Authority's annual self-review affords members the opportunity to reflect on what is working well and where we may need to improve our ways of working.
22. The Board forward agenda will include the areas of focus noted by members. Secretariat will resolve to seek improvements for any issues highlighted in the paper.

Sally Jones, Central Policy Secretariat, 17 July 2024