



**11th Meeting of the National Statistician's Expert User
Advisory Committee**

Agenda and Papers

Monday 21 October 2024

13:00-15:00

Microsoft Teams

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agenda
Monday 21 October 2024, 13:00-15:00
Microsoft Teams

Chair: Prof. David Hand

Apologies: Paul Boyle, Ed Humpherson

| Timing | Agenda item | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 13:00-13:10 (10 mins) | Welcome, previous minutes and actions | Meeting of 03.06.2024 Prof. David Hand |
| 2 13:10-13:45 (35 mins) | Discussion with User - Shelter UK | NSEUAC(24)12 Mette Isaksen |
| 3 13:45-13:55 (10 mins) | User Engagement and StatsUserNet | NSEUAC(24)13 Paul Allin |
| 4 13:55-14:10 (15 mins) | Update on the UK Statistics Assembly Plans | NSEUAC(24)14 Sarah Moore Neil Townsend |
| 5 14:10-14:30 (20 mins) | Content Strategy and Website Transformation | NSEUAC(24)15 Liz Evans Sarah Moore |
| 6 14:30-14:50 (20 mins) | Transformed Labour Force Survey | NSEUAC(24)16 Liz McKeown |
| 7 14:50-15:00 (10 mins) | Any Other Business | Prof. David Hand |

Next Meeting: TBC December 2024, Remote Meeting

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group

**Draft Minutes
Monday 21 October 2024
Via Videoconference**

Members Present

Professor David Hand (Chair)
Professor Paul Allin
Eva Aizpurua
Dame Kate Barker
Helen Boaden
Professor Paul Boyle
Sarah Cumbers
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Ed Humpherson
Phyllis MacFarlane
Sarah Moore
Guy Nason

Additional Attendees

Nicola Fulton (for item 4)
Liz Evans (for item 5)
Mette Isaksen (for item 2)
Liz McKeown (for item 6)

Secretariat

Kerri Gourley
Tom Marsh

Apologies

James Brooks

1. Minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from James Brooks. Action 02/24 remained open. Members heard that whilst action 04/24 had been closed at a previous meeting, a follow up meeting was due to take place to capture Carers UK's data needs with regards to whether the Future of Population and Migration Statistics would sufficiently meet their needs.
- 1.2 It was noted that the Code of Practice Refresh was due to take place with a consultation taking place imminently.
- 1.3 Members were informed that, following the Lievesley Review, the organisation was seeking to improve the transparency of the various National Statistician advisory committees and the proposed steps would be considered at the November UK Statistics Authority Board meeting.

2. Discussion with User (Mette Isaksen) [NSEUAC(24)12]

- 2.1 Mette Isaksen Head of Research at Shelter UK joined the meeting to reflect on their perspective as a user of statistics. The following key points were made:
 - i. the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) recent consultation on homeless deaths data was discussed, Shelter UK were pleased this data collection would continue, however there were ways the data could be improved, such as using the statutory definition of homelessness to improve the accuracy of deaths reporting. A high proportion of homeless deaths were reported to a coroner which often caused delays to the reporting process. ONS agreed to work with the Ministry of Justice to try and improve how quickly data relating to these deaths would be included in official statistics;
 - ii. Shelter UK would encourage the use of additional variables to provide a better breakdown of homelessness demographics data and improve analysis of characteristic intersectionality and understand communities disproportionately affected by homelessness. Members discussed the importance of reporting against consistent definitions, and reflected on recent reporting of significant changes to the cost of housing homeless persons which was due to varying definitions year on year;
 - iii. on social housing demand, data was collected on the social housing applicant but not for the rest of the household which would help understand the experiences of different characteristics;
 - iv. private rent affordability was discussed as publications by ONS and across government published data on housing affordability and both use gross income, rather than the net measure, which may be less reflective of a household's expendable income. It was acknowledged that getting accurate data on affordability would be crucial and the ONS would look to work with Shelter UK to obtain more granular data on affordability; and
 - v. the National Statistician agreed the ONS would continue to collaborate with Shelter UK to improve the quality and usefulness of homelessness and housing affordability statistics.

3. User Engagement with StatsUserNet [NSEUAC(24)13]

- 3.1 Professor Paul Allin introduced a paper on proposed changes to the StatsUserNet website and explored engagement between users and producers of official statistics. Members heard that the ONS was re-platforming the StatsUserNet website and users were concerned with the loss of archived

content older than three months. Members also heard three proposals to improve engagement between users and producers of official statistics which included, reinstatement in the Code of Practice, to the reference to consulting users before producers make substantial changes to data collection or outputs, as referenced in the Lievesley Review; re-energising the GSS User Engagement Strategy, and using the upcoming UK Statistics Assembly as an exemplar of effective and sustained user engagement between producers and users of official statistics. Members agreed that it would be important to archive historic material on StatsUserNet to retain access.

- 3.2 On user engagement, members discussed ways to make the National Statisticians Expert User Advisory Committee more accessible and easier to contact. Correspondence had been sent to the Chair by Tony Dent on this topic which included three recommendations:
- i. minutes of the National Statistician's Advisory Committees to be published within two weeks of the meeting and announced on StatsUserNet;
 - ii. members of National Statistician's Advisory Committees to engage in discussions on StatsUserNet and engaged in the production of statistics; and
 - iii. the UK Statistics Authority to advertise the existence of StatsUserNet to a wider audience and participation from a wider audience.
- 3.3 Members agreed that it was unrealistic to expect minutes to be published within two weeks. However, the National Statistician committed to ensuring minutes of National Statistician Advisory Committees would be submitted to the respective committee Chair within ten working days of the meeting, and published as soon as is practicable thereafter but marked as draft until adopted by the committee. Members also agreed that it would be beneficial to introduce an introductory page to StatsUserNet to provide information about the website's purpose. Members also requested an item on the GSS User Engagement Strategy at a future meeting.
- 4. Update on UK Statistics Assembly Plans [NSEUAC(24)14]**
- 4.1 Sarah Moore provided an update on plans for the UK Statistics Assembly. Members heard that approximately 285 attendees had signed up and there had been 13 calls for contributions. Members of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) would be drafting a report from the Assembly which would be submitted to the UK Statistics Authority Board. Members also heard that, following feedback from NSEUAC, the team had been working to make the event as inclusive and interactive as possible.
- 4.2 Members discussed the size of the breakout groups at the assembly, and asked that each session was provided with a facilitator and rapporteur, who would support the production of NSEUAC's report to the UK Statistics Authority Board. Members also discussed that the majority sign-ups for the assembly were from the public sector and asked ONS to encourage attendees from elsewhere, such as the financial sector, to sign up as key users of statistics.
- 4.3 Members welcomed the progress on the Assembly and it was agreed that a rapporteur would be in attendance at each group at the Assembly.

5. Content Strategy and Website Transformation [NSEUAC(24)15]

- 5.1 Liz Evans introduced a paper on the ONS Content Strategy and Website Transformation. Members heard that whilst the ONS website was a critical channel to deliver statistics it was urgently in need of improvement, as outlined in the Lievesley Review. Members heard that users would be at the heart of website transformation and the goals of website transformation were outlined.
- 5.2 Members were pleased with the focus on Application Programming Interfaces as this was necessary to improve the website. Members also discussed the importance of including users throughout the website transformation process. It was noted when deciding to take pages off the website there needed to be a balance between ensuring the website was accessible for present users and ensuring historic data would remain accessible.
- 5.3 Members welcomed the update and were pleased with the progress made.

6. Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) [NSEUAC(24)16]

- 6.1 Liz McKeown provided an update on the TLFS. Members discussed the challenges associated with transitioning to the TLFS and the associated user engagement approach to ensure users were kept informed of progress and enhance understanding. A stakeholder advisory panel had also been set up for labour market statistics to provide external expertise.
- 6.2 Reweighting and survey response rates were discussed, including the feasibility of introducing mandatory responses; however it was noted that this would be a significant change to survey collection in England and Wales as it would entail a change in legislation. Members also discussed changes to ONS incentivisation for interviewers to help improve response rates, and shortening survey length.
- 6.3 Members noted the progress made in transitioning to the TLFS and welcomed the level of user engagement underway which would lead to a more effective and useful product.

7. Any other business

- 7.1 The next meeting was due to take place via MS Teams on 12 December 2024.

SHELTER: USE AND EXPERIENCE OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS NSEUAC



1. WHO ARE SHELTER

2. HOMELESSNESS

3. SOCIAL HOUSING

**4. PRIVATE RENTING
AFFORDABILITY**



3

SERVICES AT A GLANCE



Telephone and online advice services (TOAS)
Frontline services to prevent homelessness encompassing the helpline voice, helpline webchat and helpline plus telephone



Digital Advice
Online housing and homelessness advice to help people understand the law and their rights



Communities (hubs)
Working with local communities to tackle the root cause of local housing and homelessness issues and increase our understanding of the impact of the housing emergency



Legal Services
Expert legal advice and representation for those facing poor housing, the loss of their home or homelessness, and taking strategic legal action, using the law to change systems



National Contracts
Delivering contracted provision of national and local services for various activities that drive systems change



Shelter for Professionals (SfP)
Delivering external training and resources to build knowledge and expertise across the housing sector so that more people know their rights and can fight for home

WE ALSO CAMPAIGN...



**THE
UNWELCOME
HOME WITH
IKEA**



**LABOUR PARTY
CONFERENCE**



**WINTER CAMPAIGN
FOR HOME**



WALK

POLICY AND CAMPAIGNING RESEARCH

WHAT

We develop analysis that informs the development of our policy and campaigns and impactful evidence that convinces people of the need to act

HOW

- We do desk research and data analysis
- We carry out primary qual and quant research
- We speak directly to people with lived experience of the housing emergency
- We commission research from opinion polling to academic analysis

IMPACT

- Policy changes
- Legal decisions
- Media coverage
- Political interventions

Building for our future
A vision for social housing
The final report of Shelter's commission on the future of social housing

1. The housing crisis
2. How have we got here?
3. The rise and decline of social housing
4. The consequences of the decline

SHELTER

BRICK BY BRICK

A PLAN TO DELIVER THE SOCIAL HOMES WE NEED

Venus Galarza, Hannah Rich, Charlie Trew, Sam Bloomer, Charlie Berry and William Matthews

The economic impact of building social housing

A Cebr report for Shelter and the National Housing Federation, February 2024

INDEPENDENT

Number of families in overcrowded private-rented housing almost doubles in 10 years, figures show

SHELTER

Housing advice | Get help | Support us

[Shelter England](#) > [Media](#) > [Press releases and statements](#) > At least 309,000 people ho

At least 309,000 people homeless in England today

Posted 14 Dec 2023

Homelessness rises by 14% in a year as housing emergency escalates

Cashing in
How a shortage of social housing is fuelling a multi-million-pound temporary accommodation sector

HOMELESSNESS DATA

1. Homeless deaths data
2. Intersectionality
3. Temporary accommodation spend clarifications
4. Comprehensive measure of repeat homelessness



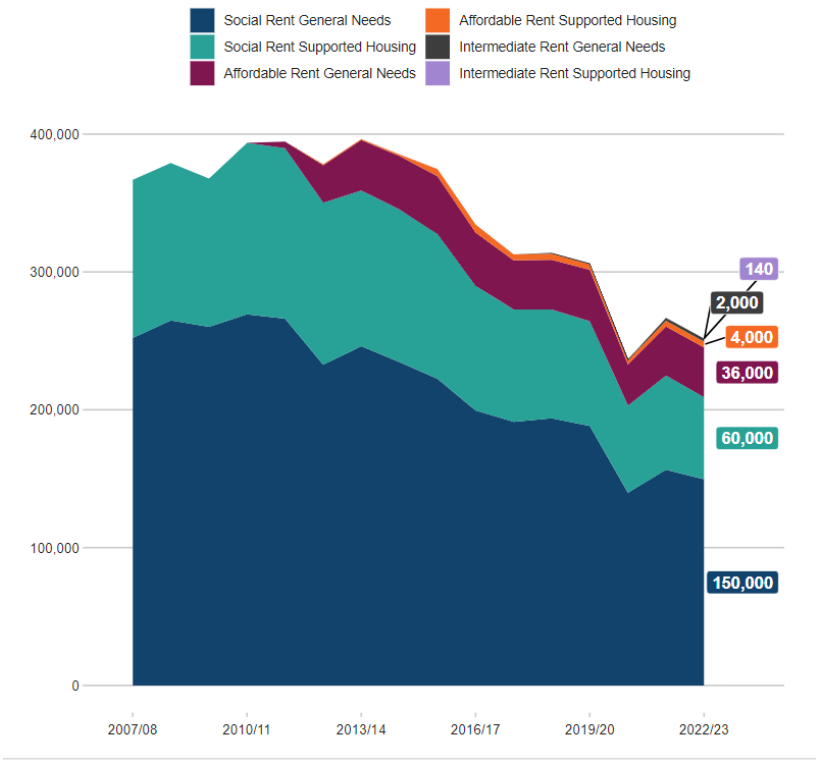
The screenshot shows the BBC News website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a 'For you' button, a notification bell, and links for Home, News, Sport, Weather, and iPlayer. Below this is a red banner with the word 'NEWS' in white. Underneath the banner is a horizontal menu with links for Home, InDepth, Israel-Gaza war, US election, Cost of Living, War in Ukraine, and Climate. Below the menu is another row of links for Business, Market Data, Economy, Technology of Business, and AI Business. The main content area features a large headline: '£1bn spent housing homeless families in England'. Below the headline is a photograph showing the back of a person's head looking out a window at a residential building.

SOCIAL HOUSING DATA

1. Social rent separated from other 'affordable' tenures
2. Detail on social housing waiting lists

New social lettings decreased in 2022/23 by 6% from the previous year continuing the long term trend in decreasing lettings

Figure 1: Number of new social lettings by type 2007/08 - 2022/23



PRIVATE RENTING AFFORDABILITY

- Gross vs net income-to-rent ratios
- Tracking the property vs the renter



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Accredited official statistics

English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023: affordability and cost of living - fact sheet

Published 18 July 2024

Applies to England

Contents

1. [Proportion of income spent on housing](#)

The English Housing Survey (EHS) collects data on costs and finances of households in England to monitor affordability of housing and understand better how this might impact people's relationship to their housing. Analysis for this report shows that, while

[Home](#) > [People, population and community](#) > [Housing](#) >

Private rental affordability, England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Private rental affordability, England, Wales and Northern Ireland: 2022

Private rent prices by country and English region, expressed as a percentage of gross monthly income of private renting households. Part of our additional measures of housing affordability series.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)13

User Engagement and StatsUserNet

Purpose

1. This note, although prompted by current concerns of users of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website StatsUserNet, seeks to explore wider issues around engagement between users and producers of official statistics, with a view of encouraging further developments in engagement processes and practices across official statistics.

Recommendations

2. Members of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to:
 - i. draw on their recent experiences of user engagement in the official statistics system; and
 - ii. discuss what lessons can we learn? How might things be improved, including by re-energising the 2021 [GSS user engagement strategy](#) and with an eye to the forthcoming UK Statistics Assembly, along with the preparations and follow-up, which all rely on effective and sustained user engagement between producers and users of official statistics?

StatsUserNet

3. [StatsUserNet](#) is a long-running website, now hosted and maintained by ONS, to stimulate information exchange and discussion between users and producers of official statistics. It is also used for communication and sharing within user and producer groups. StatsUserNet provides a unique online community space for statistics producers and users to make contact, learn about each other's work and share information, documents and views. Unlike other online sites, this is a dedicated space for a wide range of people interested in statistics, and enables a fuller sharing of views and information, as the site allows longer posts and uploading of documents.
4. It is open to anyone with an interest in statistics - both people who are expert in using statistical products and datasets, and non-experts who are interested to find out more about statistics and connect with the producers of statistics on their topic of interest.
5. ONS is looking at changes to the website and has consulted users of it. However, users are now concerned this will result in the loss of all material on the existing website, beyond that posted in the last three months. Users who are particularly anxious for the preservation of their user group material, given that ONS has not yet come up with an archiving solution, are finding that ad-hoc ways of retaining material are time-consuming and complicated.

User engagement

6. A PACAC report in 2019 concluded "We agree with the evidence we received that those producing official statistics do not understand all of today's users and potential users of statistics and how statistics are used". The Government Statistical Service (GSS) user engagement strategy of 2021 is at the heart of improvements to address this. User engagement can rightly attract praise e.g., see this [selection](#) of Statistical Excellence Awards and other Office for Statistics Regulation case studies.

7. However, three years on, there is still more to do. The case of StatsUserNet does not appear to be an isolated one. In Professor Denise Lievesley's 2024 independent review of the UK Statistics Authority she envisaged that a Statistical Assembly and annual public lecture would, among other things, further user engagement. She also recommended reinstatement, in the Code of Practice, of the reference to consulting users before producers make substantial changes to data collections or outputs.
8. In the case of StatsUserNet, users have pointed to generic concerns about engagement, such as:
 - i. unwillingness by the producer to treat this as a co-designed initiative (rather than a 'build it and they will come' mindset);
 - ii. discounting of user volunteer time and the benefits to users in assessing the cost and benefits of options (and with producer costs not being transparent to users);
 - iii. lack of access by users to technical support in considering and in coping with various archiving options; and
 - iv. missing an opportunity to increase the value of the service, rather than reducing its value to users.

Conclusion

9. This paper is not intended to lead NSEUAC into detailed discussion of StatsUserNet, although any observations would of course be welcome and fed into the ongoing conversations with ONS. We note that stewardship of digital archives is under scrutiny in other sectors, such as TV and film.
10. Rather, we welcome NSEUAC members' observations on current engagement between users and producers of official statistics, and on further developments in engagement processes and practices across official statistics, such as that proposed by Professor Lievesley for the Code of Practice. Refreshing the Code, as is intended for later this year, will not of itself necessarily lead to change and will need to be surrounded by training, guidance, and leadership.
11. Finally, can we call for, and support, a re-energising of the 2021 GSS user engagement strategy, and can we look to the forthcoming UK Statistics Assembly, along with the preparations and follow-up, to be an exemplar of effective and sustained user engagement between producers and users of official statistics?

Paul Allin, Honorary Officer for National Statistics, RSS, 11 October 2024

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)14

Update on the UK Statistics Assembly Plans

Purpose

1. This paper is to update the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) on planning for the UK Statistics Assembly. Initial plans were presented and discussed at NSEUAC in June 2024 in paper NSEUAC(24)06. This paper outlines developments since that meeting.

Timing

2. As plans are progressing quickly for the Assembly, an additional verbal update may be provided at this meeting to cover developments since the production of this paper.

Recommendations

3. Members of NSEUAC are invited to:
 - i. note the progress towards the UK Statistics Assembly;
 - ii. consider how they want to work with us to produce the report from the Assembly (paragraph 9); and
 - iii. provide any other comments to assist planning of the Assembly.

Background

4. Recommendation 1 from Professor Lievesley's Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) was for the Authority to lead the establishment and delivery of a statistics assembly. This should determine the UK's needs for statistics through a wide consultative process that includes representatives from all sectors and including both users and producers.
5. Since the release of the report, the Authority, and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) have been working together to develop plans for the Assembly.

Discussion

6. A delivery group has been set up to advise on the planning and delivery of the Assembly. The group is chaired by Neil Townsend, Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Head of External Affairs. Membership includes representatives from the official statistics system and a range of external organisations, including the RSS and two members of NSEUAC. We thank NSEUAC members for their support. The group has met monthly since July 2024. We continue to work with the delivery group on the details for the event including the agenda and speakers and format of the day (to ensure it is an 'assembly' not a conference).
7. The Assembly will take place on Wednesday 22 January 2025 at 10 Union Street in Central London. We are planning for up to 300 attendees in person, with dial-in available to maximise accessibility. Invitations were issued in early September and as at 1 October we have 244 attendees registered from a broad range of sectors. We continue to promote the event to stakeholders in all sectors and monitor registrations with the aim of securing a diverse attendance which is not dominated by any one sector or interest.
8. Accompanying the invitations and promotion of the event was a call for contributions. This enables Assembly participants to indicate the topics and themes they wish to discuss at the event, as well as submit evidence on statistical priorities, gaps and needs to help shape the discussions. The final agenda for the event will be agreed by the UK Statistics Authority, following advice from the delivery group.

9. As previously agreed, it is planned that the report arising from the Assembly deliberations will be written by NSEUAC, with support from the Authority. NSEUAC is asked to consider how they want to work with us to produce this and agree this ahead of the event to ensure the relevant information is captured.
10. This advisory report will be submitted to the Authority Board and then published. It will also inform the content of the inaugural public lecture by the Authority Chair (which was a further recommendation from the Lievesley Review). The evidence gathered will inform the development of the next five-year UK Statistics Authority strategy, as well as departmental multi-year Spending Review submissions in spring 2025. It may also identify fresh opportunities for non-official statistics to be produced and used to complement official statistics for the public good.
11. We are keeping Professor Denise Lievesley informed of plans, including inviting her to speak at the event.
12. The main risks we need to address to ensure we deliver a successful Assembly are:
 - i. ensuring attendance is representative of all sectors and interests;
 - ii. ensuring a range of topics are discussed in a way that enables us to identify priorities while avoiding an extended wish-list of needs (which can't be fulfilled); and
 - iii. managing expectations given the financial constraints on statistics producers.

Neil Townsend, Communications and Digital Publishing Directorate, ONS, 8 October 2024

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)15

Office for National Statistics Website and Content Transformation

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the content and website transformation work that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is leading. This includes technology developments, including a new content management system, that will enable a refreshed website presentation with new features and functionality, and an improved user experience, underpinned by a streamlined and efficient publishing process.

Recommendations

2. Members of National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to:
 - i. review and discuss the progress to date and the approach to improving the user experience on the ONS website;
 - ii. review and comment on the ONS 'super' user needs; and
 - iii. discuss how to best engage with NSEUAC going forward.

Background

3. The independent review of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) raised important issues about improving the ONS website to meet the needs of users and improve reliability.
4. We have made considerable progress this financial year with addressing performance issues with our website, stabilising access to the site at busy times and improving reliability.
5. Through the introduction of a new communications and dissemination model, we are taking a user-centred and evidence-based approach to increase the impact of our work and help our users to:
 - i. be aware of the ONS and trust our data and insight;
 - ii. find ONS information wherever our users are looking;
 - iii. understand ONS information quickly and easily;
 - iv. explore and tailor ONS data and tools so users can understand their world; and
 - v. act on the range of statistical and analytical outputs by making decisions at a national, local and individual level.
6. User research, understanding and engagement will underpin all of the decisions we make to support the new website presentation.

Discussion

7. Everyone who visits the ONS website has a need or task they want to complete – whether it is getting the latest figure, understanding complex data or learning about ONS and our methods.
8. We already have a good understanding of the challenges that users face when navigating the website to build upon. Over the past few months, we have reviewed the wealth of information we have about needs, including from users themselves, through stakeholder engagement and from the insight of colleagues who are in regular contact with our users and stakeholders.

9. We brought the most commonly reported user needs together in a series of workshops, to group and theme them and identify gaps and omissions. This has led to a common understanding of ONS 'super' user needs, which we can build on and prioritise, and summarise a broad range of more specific user needs. We continue to work with statistical teams across the organisation to review and improve our content and gain valuable user insight to shape our approach.
10. This financial year, we have prioritised addressing feedback from users through improvements to our website. We introduced a more concise and clearer way of presenting outputs, starting with the Retail Sales publication. This takes a 'news-led' approach to communicating our release in the most impactful way with a 50 per cent reduction in content. This approach will be rolled out across a wider set of releases throughout this year.
11. Retail sales will be the basis for a public prototype, scheduled to go live in the autumn, that will be shared widely with stakeholders to gain early feedback, in line with the independent review of the Authority recommendation to engage with users early in the content transformation process.
12. Building on the success of the innovative dissemination techniques pioneered in Census 2021, ONS has continued to develop new web-based tools to facilitate access to statistics, such as the ['Explore Local Statistics'](#) tool launched in March 2024 to enable users to compare and visualise statistics about places in the UK. This tool won the Royal Statistical Society Champion Award for excellence in official statistics as it "considerably improved the availability and access to local data in the UK". The tool hosts 57 local indicators across topics including health, education and the economy, in a well-structured and consistent data format – the model approach to meet users' data needs in future.
13. ONS is now working urgently to build on these developments through an upgrade in technology, further transforming the publication of data and insight to better meet the needs of users and modernise our data dissemination.
14. The goal is to start migrating new statistical releases to the new website presentation later this financial year.
15. We are prioritising regular ONS statistical releases in this first phase of work, with additional workstreams to improve our corporate pages, microsites and other non-statistical content coming later.

Conclusion

16. Significant activity is under way to transform ONS content and our website, underpinned by a user-led, evidence-based approach. This work will be presented in more detail at the meeting in September to enable NSEUAC member comment and contribution.

Liz Evans, Communications and Digital Publishing, ONS, 8 October 2024

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

NSEUAC(24)16

Transformed Labour Force Survey**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) with an update on the user engagement activity around the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) project and how this engagement has informed our future plans.

Recommendations

2. Members of NSEUAC are invited to:
 - i. note the user and expert engagement activity and feedback to date;
 - ii. note the indicative high-level plans given feedback and user needs; and
 - iii. note the engagement activity going forward and emerging user informed acceptance criteria.

Background

3. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a key source of information on the UK labour market and its statistical outputs are crucial to economic decision-making. To counter the trend of falling response rates, seen across countries, and to help respondent burden and data quality, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is transforming the way we collect and produce LFS data. We have been developing a new survey design, the TLFS, and new methods of estimation and analysis. This is a complex and challenging project with the UK being one of the first countries in the world to move to an online-first approach for a survey of this nature and scale.
4. We are committed to robust quality assurance of the new survey, and close engagement with users to ensure they will be ready and confident to transition from the LFS to the TLFS. We have been running the TLFS and the LFS in parallel, with consistent TLFS data available since October 2023 providing opportunity to assess data quality, methods and user readiness of the transformed survey. In the first half of 2024 the TLFS project team commissioned a full external academic review, engaged with users through a new advisory panel, shared data with a set of users, and completed a short strategic design review.
5. While this recent work has reconfirmed confidence in the original concept of the TLFS it has also shown that it is not currently meeting required quality criteria. It has provided clarity on the areas where further improvement is needed. As such the LFS/TLFS parallel run will continue while some test activity takes place to explore whether TLFS design changes can help improve quality. While we further develop the TLFS, we will continue to use the LFS as our lead measure of the labour market, with the recovery plan for LFS continuing and data being reweighted to latest population estimates.

Discussion

6. We have developed detailed readiness criteria for the TLFS, which will be regularly assessed. At a high level these are:
 - i. statistical and data quality - the TLFS can produce all important 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.
7. To help assess the quality and readiness of the TLFS against the criteria above we engaged heavily with users and experts including:
 - i. An external academic review of TLFS by Professor Ray Chambers and Professor James Brown (University of Wollongong) - this concluded that the original concept of the TLFS of a short online survey collecting data on core LFS variables, is sensible and should remain the long-term design objective, however, the current TLFS is too long and complex which likely contributes to response and attrition issues. There are also not currently enough data periods or data sets to fully assure data quality where at least five quarters of stable data would strengthen quality assurance across the range of outputs, including accounting for any seasonal behaviour; and
 - ii. Established an external Stakeholder Advisory Panel for Labour Market Statistics - this group is chaired by Professor Jonathan Portes and the membership includes representatives from government, analysis bodies and academia. The panel met for the first time on 13 June 2024 with a deep dive on the TLFS. The group acknowledged the improved user engagement and refinements to the survey following feedback which had made some headline estimates from the TLFS more plausible. However, they stressed the importance of an extended period of dual running of the TLFS and LFS to enable data comparison, and to allow assessment of the whole range of datasets, including flows, annual and household data; and
 - iii. Two quarters of consistent TLFS data have been shared with key users in May. Discussions with these users found that most headline labour market estimates were more plausible following survey improvements but confirmed three remaining priority design issues: bias, missingness and collection of complex variables such as industry and occupation. This was followed up by a data update for the same group of users at the end of September which shared a third quarter of data:
 - i. conducted a design review to identify options for mitigating the design issues identified above; and
 - ii. sought advice from the ONS Economic Experts Working Group on our emerging plans which were supported, with the reminder to consider and explore further the use of administrative sources in the production or quality assurance of the data.
 8. To ensure that we can fully investigate these challenges, and provide more comparable data for users, on [18 July](#) we provided the latest in a series of update articles for users, announcing our plans to extend the dual run of the TLFS and LFS. During this period we will conduct a series of discrete online design tests starting mid-October to assess the impact of a shorter labour market focused variant of the TLFS questionnaire, with a few new questions, on bias, partial responses and collection of complex variables. These tests are designed to provide information on respondent behaviour and response patterns rather than providing labour market estimates. While this testing takes place TLFS will continue to run as it is to inform future recommendations.
 9. Ahead of 18 July, we engaged key stakeholders to secure their support. Once the article was published we communicated with a wider cohort of stakeholders via email, a webinar and our regular channels, including providing specific information for non-labour market users.
 10. The content for the shorter test has been informed by previous user engagement activity. While the testing is being carried out, we will engage users on what the final content of a shorter core labour market TLFS should be, so we are ready to implement this if the testing indicates the quality benefits outweigh the downsides.
 11. With a conscious move to focus on the transition of labour market users onto the TLFS, non-labour market user needs are likely to be met through an integrated TLFS design,

refined through user engagement 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.

12. In the New Year, in collaboration with the established user groups mentioned above, we will assess the results from the online tests and decide whether to implement changes into the ongoing dual run. We will also review the wider TLFS integrated design proposals. We will keep users informed of progress on the next stages of this project and will report back in the first quarter of next year.
13. As we will continue to use the LFS as our lead measure of the labour market, we have engaged with users (through the channels mentioned above) to understand needs given quality concerns and to inform plans. The recovery plan for LFS is continuing to progress with a higher achieved sample due to the sample boost. Following a strong steer from stakeholders we agreed to a further partial reweighting of LFS to reflect the latest interim population estimates to be included in the December 2024 labour market release, with a full reweighting to be carried out next year. We will continue to engage with users on their priorities for reweighting, communicate our plans in advance, and provide notice of likely changes to the outputs.
14. The Annual Population Survey (APS) (made up of waves one and five of the LFS with the addition of a sample boost) provides more detailed labour and non-labour market data for users. While the APS will see some benefit from improvements to the LFS, we have recently hosted an APS workshop with external users to provide an assessment of quality. This evidence will be used to help determine what further action is required to improve quality of the outputs produced from this data source.

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 around user concerns, with users at the centre of final decision making including through, for example, the new advisory panel. The project will test a series of design options to improve data quality throughout the autumn, leading to a decision point in early 2025 on what will be taken forward into the live TLFS. We are transparently engaging externally to inform the direction of the project and being realistic with users as to the likely timescales going forward.

**David Freeman and Heather Bovill, Economic, Social and Environmental Group, ONS,
4 October 2024**