

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Regulation Committee

Minutes

**Thursday 19 September 2024
London Boardroom/ Hybrid Meeting
13:00-15:15**

Members Present

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

Other Attendees

Penny Babb (for item 6)
Helen Miller-Bakewell
Gillian Fairbairn (observing)
Oliver Fox-Tatum (for item 4)
Rob Kent-Smith
Marie McGhee (for item 6)
Gail Rankin
Elise Rohan (for item 5 and 7)
Job de Roij (for item 3)
Ben Kendall Ward (observing)

Secretariat

Sarah Cobden
Sally Jones
Fran Wigley-Jones

Apologies

Professor Dame Carol Propper

1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Professor Dame Carol Propper.
- 1.2 The minutes of the meeting on 11 July were approved and actions were reviewed.

2. Update from the Director General for Regulation SA(RC)(24)35

- 2.1 The Director General (DG) for Regulation provided the Committee with an overview of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) priorities and activities and highlighted some of the key areas of focus since the last meeting.
- 2.2 The Committee heard:
 - i. the recently published Gender Identity Report had received a lot of social and print media coverage;
 - ii. there was an ongoing discussion with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Devolved Governments about the quality of the Annual Population Survey;
 - iii. casework volume had reduced following the General Election but was expected to gain pace as the parliamentary session progressed; and
 - iv. a recent High Court judgement had concluded that a GB News programme had breached due impartiality rules. It included a welcome and helpful outline of the importance of media reporting taking account of the caveats included by statistics producers.
- 2.3 The Committee noted the update and commended the OSR team for their work in handling and publishing the Gender Identity report.

3. Crime Survey for England and Wales and Fraud and Computer Misuse (RC)(24)36

- 3.1 OSR introduced a paper providing members with a recommendation on reaccrediting the statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending March 2023 onwards.
- 3.2 The Committee was reminded that accreditation of the CSEW had been suspended in July 2022. A review of the CSEW had been carried out by ONS in response to quality concerns, which have now been addressed. OSR had also undertaken additional work on the communication of crime statistics. OSR recommended reaccreditation, subject to some improvements to the presentation of the statistics. OSR have also undertaken additional work on the communication of crime statistics .
- 3.3 Members discussed response rates to the CSEW, noting that while they had improved, they remained low in historical terms, but that sample representativeness was actually better. Focusing communication on different types of crime was sensible. Members noted that the CSEW estimates were based on wave 1 data only. They noted that ONS had plans to assure the quality of wave 2 data, and OSR would engage closely with ONS on this. Reaccrediting the CSEW would provide the opportunity to state the expectation of progress on subsequent waves, and also stress the need to seriously consider the development of an index approach to reporting, which would, for example, weight the seriousness of different crimes.
- 3.4 OSR introduced a paper providing members with a draft report on fraud and computer misuse statistics. The Committee heard that OSR did not have confidence in the quality of police recorded fraud and computer misuse statistics for England and Wales. OSR were not currently confident in there being a clear pathway to accreditation. It recommended that ONS and the Home Office explore the user need for the statistics in the first instance, before developing a set of recommendations.
- 3.5 Members discussed the need for OSR to consider the most appropriate intervention. OSR should work with the Home Office and ONS to enhance data quality by providing

clear guidance to the City of London Police on improving its data. The message should be made clear that users should not rely on the current police recorded fraud and computer misuse statistics and should instead use the CSEW data.

- 3.6 The Committee noted the update and considered the recommendation by OSR to reaccredit the CSEW and agreed reaccreditation with the expectation of progress and a seriousness-weighted index. The Committee agreed that the fraud and computer misuse statistics should not be considered for accreditation until significant improvement was made.

4. Economic Statistics Update SA(RC)(24)37

- 4.1 OSR provided an update on the range of activities relating to the regulation of Economic Statistics, including the assessment reports for the Price Index of Private Rents (PIPR) and Business Investment Statistics (BIS), and an update on Trade statistics.
- 4.2 Members discussed the update and OSR plans for engagement with user groups for PIPR and how clarity would be provided around methods and data quality. ONS were expected to engage further with additional user communities and the work was a good example of the benefits of data sharing.
- 4.3 Members discussed ONS trade statistics and the history of their accreditation status, particularly the challenges of asymmetries where mirror statistics for UK import and exports do not match those produced by other countries. Once ONS publish more work on how to use their data in the context of asymmetries, the Committee will likely need for the Committee to consider the case for reaccreditation of ONS trade statistics.
- 4.4 Members noted the update and approved plans to publish the PIPR assessment report, and BIS assessment reports.

5. Population Statistics Update SA(RC)(24)38

- 5.1 OSR presented an update on their work on population statistics produced by the ONS focusing on feedback from the Census Phase 3 engagement and highlighted cross cutting issues that had been identified.
- 5.2 The Committee heard that there was disconnect between feedback received from some Local Authorities and ONS, noting some disconnect between feedback from Local Authorities. The Committee was presented with options to review how the ONS engages with users and adopts user feedback.
- 5.3 Members noted the findings.

6. Code of Practice refresh: Public Consultation SA(RC)(24)39

- 6.1 OSR provided an update on recent activities relating to OSR's refresh of the Code of Practice for Statistics (the Code). Members discussed the draft consultation document on the proposed revisions to the Code, along with plans for stakeholder engagement.
- 6.2 The Committee heard that plans were progressing for a public consultation to take place between October 2024 and January 2025. The refreshed Code had been designed to enhance standards in official statistics, and to make intelligent transparency integral to the Code. The refreshed Code would sit within a new 'Code hub' on OSR's website, which would include guidance on understanding and using the Code. A prototype of the hub had been created by OSR's communications team to accompany the consultation.
- 6.3 The following points were raised in discussion:

- i. more clarity was needed in the consultation document to explain what was meant by Official Statistics, Public Statistics and Intelligent Transparency and who the standards for each applied to;
- ii. OSR should consider how the average person would read and understand the document to ensure each part of the Code and Code hub are targeted at and can be understood by the right audiences; and
- iii. OSR should revisit the proposed Standards for Intelligent Transparency, considering whether more detailed principles and simplified language would be helpful for those expected to follow them.

6.4 Members agreed that a reframed consultation document would be shared with the Committee by OSR for approval by correspondence before starting the public consultation.

7. Casework annual review report SA(RC)(24)40

- 7.1 OSR presented a draft of the Annual Review of Authority Casework 2023/24 report which summarised trends in casework and the OSR response to the general election.
- 7.2 Members commented that it would be helpful to highlight that there had been fewer instances of coordinated campaigns on single issues in order to compare metrics over time.
- 7.3 Members approved the report and publication plans, the report would be published during September 2024.

8. Horizon Scanning

- 8.1 The DG for Regulation advised the Committee to give thought to the new mission led Government. It was not yet clear if the five missions would have key performance indicators, but if so OSR would intervene early to ensure that they were used correctly.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 The Committee would next meet on Thursday 7 November 2024.