

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

***Minutes***

**Thursday 28 November 2024  
London Office**

**Hybrid Meeting**

**Members Present**

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

**Other Attendees**

Professor David Hand (for item 8)  
Professor Denise Lievesley (for item 8)  
Joe Moore (for items 8 and 9)  
Sarah Moore  
Emma Rourke (for item 8)  
Ruth Studley (for item 8)  
Tom Taylor  
Ross Tivey (for items 8 and 9)  
Neil Townsend (for item 8)

**Secretariat**

Tom Marsh  
Sarah Cobden

**Apologies**

Professor Dame Carol Propper  
Mike Keoghan

## **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Professor Dame Carol Propper 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 31 October were approved subject to a minor amendment.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(24)60]**

- 4.1 Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) had met before the meeting and had discussed topics including the recruitment process for NEDs and the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS).
- 4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activities since the Board last met:
- i. progress of the NED recruitment with interviews scheduled early December;
  - ii. on 12 November Sir Robert had attended a regulator's roundtable hosted by the Electoral Commission regarding the general election;
  - iii. Sir Robert had met with Professor Jonathan Portes, Chair of the National Statistician's Labour Force Group; and separately with Professor Graeme Roy, Chair of the Scottish Fiscal Commission to discuss a range of statistical issues including the labour market;
  - iv. on 12 November Sir Robert, Penny Young and Professor Sir John Aston had attended a demonstration of the ONS prototype website;
  - v. on 26 November Sir Robert alongside Professor Sir Ian Diamond and Ed Humpherson had met Simon Hoare, Chair of Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC); and
  - vi. Sir Robert had met a delegation from the Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi as part of a visit to the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

## **5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(24)61]**

- 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 long-term international migration statistics that morning, accompanied by live media appearances by Mary Gregory to explain the latest estimates;
  - ii. the recent media coverage of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and TLFS. The Governor of the Bank of England had given evidence to the Treasury Select Committee (TSC) on 19 November. The TSC had followed up with a request for information from ONS on LFS/TLFS by 4 December, which provided an opportunity to outline the programme of improvements;
  - iii. a review of the Integrated Data Service (IDS) being led by Cabinet Office, supported by HM Treasury (HMT) and the Department of Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT). ONS's response would be published on the website.
  - iv. progress by ONS working with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in relation to the long-standing issue of delays to coronial data associated with drug related deaths;
  - v. the development work by ONS teams on metrics and statistics for the government's Priorities for Change;
  - vi. ONS had initiated a cross-government innovation spring on household finances;
  - vii. on 8 November Sir Ian had presented at the launch of the Sudlow Review: Uniting the UK's Health Data. The review highlighted the importance of an appropriate linked data infrastructure, such as the IDS;
  - viii. the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) had written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer setting out their concern that tuition fees in England are to be uprated by RPIX, (Retail Price Index excluding mortgage interest payment);
  - ix. Sir Ian had convened a meeting with National Statisticians from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America regarding SNA25; and

- x. the ongoing work in preparation for phase two of the Spending Review 2025. The commission from HMT had not yet been received; and
  - xi. the StatsUserNet platform was being moved to a new platform in 2025. Options for an archive for the current platform were being explored.
- 5.2 Board members discussed the update, and noted the progress made by ONS since the last meeting regarding delays to coronial data. Emma Rourke had met Jerome Glass, (MoJ General, Policy and Strategy), and a further meeting was scheduled in the coming weeks to progress further. ONS would continue to work in collaboration with MoJ to address this issue. It was noted that the Board had discussed this issue previously, specifically the increasing incidence of drug related deaths linked to synthetic opioids and the need to measure them accurately. There was a role for the Office for Statistics Regulation in considering the impact on excess deaths statistics.
- 5.3 The Board heard that the Executive Committee had considered the opportunity of the predicted surplus this financial year to fund activities such as survey investment. It was acknowledged that the forecast underspend at year end was partly due to the central mandate introduced by HM Government in early 2024/25, which had limited headcount across all departments. During this period resourcing controls were implemented to align staff numbers with the central mandate. Following the general election, the headcount cap was lifted and resourcing controls were removed. At the half year point the organisation was in the process of recovering from the centrally imposed headcount target early 2024/25. It was noted that recruitment processes had been streamlined, and work was ongoing to improve retention of specific skills. Additionally effective management of third-party expenditure contributed to the predicted surplus.
- 5.4 Business planning 2025/26 was progressing at pace being led by finance and the Senior Leadership Team across the organisation. Non-discretionary activities would focus on core work delivering on all conditions set out by HMT in the Spending Review letter. Members discussed the costing model noting that the UK Statistics Assembly scheduled on 22 January, the refresh of the strategy, and preparation for the spending review all provided opportunities to consider areas of focus for the organisation going forward. It was clarified that an end-to-end costing/resourcing process was being taken across all activities to ensure accuracy. The outcome of the work on business planning on discretionary and non-discretionary activities for 2025/26 would be provided for consideration by the Board at the January meeting.
- 5.5 Sir Ian reported on the high-level results of the 2024 People Survey noting that overall results were broadly similar to 2023. A more detailed update would be provided for the January meeting.
- 6. Report from the Director General of Regulation [SA(24)62]**
- 6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulatory activity. The consultation for the Code of Practice for Statistics (CoP) had been launched on 23 October. The OSR were continuing to promote the consultation through a programme of stakeholder engagement, which had included a joint event with the RSS on 14 November; and a seminar for analysts on 26 November, with Chris Whitty as speaker. The key messages underpinning engagement included clearer communication with stronger support for analysts on intelligent transparency, a stronger emphasis on communication of statistics, and a clear set of principles. It was noted that the Code refresh was ongoing as part of the preparation and communication of the Assembly.
- 6.2 The Regulation Committee held on 7 November had considered OSR's regulatory model going forward. The Committee had approved an assessment report on statistics about the workforce employed by adult social services departments in England. The report set out the requirements that Skills for Care would need to address for its statistics to become accredited official statistics. Other items included an update on a review of ONS UK Trade statistics with

the view to future reaccreditation; and an update on the first stage of a systemic review on economic statistics produced by the ONS.

## **7. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report**

7.1 Professor Sir John Aston had chaired the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), which had last met on 14 November.

7.2 The Committee had considered:

- i. the financial position of the organisation with assurance provided on plans to manage the projected surplus at year end;
- ii. an update on the strategic risk profile with a focus on Strategic Risk three - Statistics Quality, which remained outside of risk appetite;
- iii. a risk deep dive into legacy transformation with progress made against the plans presented to ARAC and the Board in May 2024;
- iv. a risk deep dive into strategic resourcing and skills, the impact of the wider external context and underpinning metrics to provide assurance;
- v. delivery of the Internal Audit Plan 2024/25; and
- vi. the mid-year fraud report.

## **8. Lievesley Review: UK Statistics Assembly [SA(24)63][SA(24)64]**

8.1 Sir Robert welcomed Professor Denise Lievesley and Professor David Hand to the meeting. Sarah Moore introduced a paper which provided an update on plans for the UK Statistics Assembly. ONS were collaborating with the RSS supported by a delivery group with a wide range of external membership. The National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group (NSUEAC), chaired by Professor David Hand, had also been consulted. The Assembly was scheduled on 22 January and would be chaired by Professor Cathie Sudlow OBE. To shape the agenda and inform topic discussions on the day a call for contributions had been undertaken. The agenda comprised of a short introductory plenary session followed by 15 breakout group discussions across the day.

8.2 Professor Denise Lievesley noted thanks to Sarah Moore and Neil Townsend for their work in reaching this point, and to Professor David Hand for the role NSEUAC would play in producing the report. The assembly aimed to engage with a broad range of users to help them understand the challenges faced by the statistical system. Consideration was needed on achieving the right balance between expert users and passive users. Including intermediaries such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation would help given their understanding of the needs of people who were not represented. The breadth of cross cutting issues was important. Professor Lievesley noted that a measure of success for the Assembly would be the extent to which participants gained a greater understanding of the statistical system, its pressures and whether they felt heard. Professor Lievesley noted that she would be organising a session at the International Statistics Institute conference in 2025 on what statistical offices can learn from reviews.

8.3 Professor David Hand noted the excellent work by the delivery group and outlined the approach and timeline by NSEUAC to producing the report. A draft report of the Assembly would be produced for the February NSEUAC meeting ahead of providing it for the February Board meeting, and before publication. Professor Hand highlighted an initiative by a New York University – GovLab – 100 questions initiative which could be useful.

8.4 Board members discussed the update. The following points were considered in discussion:

- i. production of the report as planned by Professor Hand and NSUEAC in a short time although challenging was the right approach;
- ii. provision of an information pack for delegates in advance, which would include practical instructions, the agenda and how it was agreed, background on the statistical system - an infographic including some detail on expenditure across the statistical system;

- iii. managing expectations ahead of the Assembly was important. A pre-recorded video outlining some of the challenges and how things could be done differently, as well as what needed to be accomplished was an option. This would help attendees understand that the focus was on the broader statistical system, not just ONS;
  - iv. the need to manage the day's logistics efficiently, across the breadth of cross cutting discussions, enabling facilitators and chairs of discussion groups to provide feedback for the final plenary sessions. AI tools could help to summarise and capture questions;
  - v. OSR were conducting research on effective methods to engage passive users. Gathering insight from subject matter experts on which statistics outside of their domain they regarded most useful, in order to avoid focusing exclusively on their own area;
  - vi. the final plenary session could include an international example of how they would address the future challenges;
  - vii. a potential discussion topic could include tools or methods for quickly accessing relevant data during a crisis. The Social and Behavioural Science for Emergencies Group, formed in 2022, identified social and behavioural evidence and data gaps for emergency preparedness. ONS has also collaborated with the National Situation Centre; and
  - viii. undertaking a specific engagement exercise with a younger population, perhaps schoolchildren similar to Model United Nations.
- 8.5 The Board noted thanks to Professor Denise Lievesley and Professor David Hand for their contributions towards the Assembly, and to Sarah Moore and her team for all of their work in partnership with the RSS. There was a plan in place to provide Professor Hand with the output of the Assembly very quickly after the event in order for a draft report to be produced for the February meeting of NSUEAC and the Board.
- 8.6 Joe Moore and Ross Tivey introduced an update on the progress made against all recommendations set out in the Lievesley Review. Good progress was being made, including as already discussed, the development of the first UK Statistics Assembly. The following formed the key highlights:
- i. Authority Board recruitment (Recommendation 10) – the Non-Executive Director recruitment process had resumed following a pause due to the general election.
  - ii. Cabinet Office Memorandum of Understanding (Recommendation 14) – discussions had begun with Cabinet Office regarding potential updates.
  - iii. Eurostat and international engagement (Recommendation 13) was complete following Sir Ian's signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Eurostat.
  - iv. Framework for ad-hoc commissions (Recommendation 18) was complete following the introduction of the new framework for analytical outputs overseen by the ONS Strategic Outputs Committee.
  - v. National Statistician's Advisory Groups (Recommendation 11) – the Secretariat were working in collaboration with all advisory groups leads, to implement changes including a new process for appointments, which would be used for the forthcoming recruitment for the Chair of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel on Consumer Prices.
  - vi. Separation of OSR from ONS (Recommendation 3) – Professor Lievesley noted praise for OSR's statement, which was published on 24 October on the operational separation between ONS and OSR.
- 8.7 Board members noted the progress made and highlighted that Recommendation 9 relating to communications should reference the communication of understanding of uncertainty as an integral part of the new website. It was noted that this would be covered by the application of the new Code of Practice for Statistics to the new website.
- 9. Authority Strategy Refresh [SA(24)65]**
- 9.1 Joe Moore and Ross Tivey introduced a paper which outlined the proposed approach for refreshing the Authority strategy. The Authority's current strategy, Statistics for the Public Good, would conclude at the end of July 2025.

- 9.2 The Board heard about the progress against the current strategy and the proposed approach to developing the next. A collaborative approach would be taken across the statistical system. Engagement activities in the coming months would include a dedicated session for the Board; a consultation with colleagues across the Authority, ONS, OSR and the Government Statistical Service during December and January, external consultation including the Statistics Assembly and targeted engagement with key stakeholders such as Chief Statisticians across the Devolved Governments, the RSS and departmental permanent secretaries. Focus Groups would be undertaken by the ONS social research network. Recent reviews including the Lievesley Review, the PACAC report on Transforming the UK's Evidence Base and OSR's State of the Statistical System Review would help inform the context and stakeholder views. Alongside the strategy development the Policy Unit would work closely with colleagues across the Authority, ONS and OSR to ensure alignment with the spending review and business planning in terms of strategic priorities.
- 9.3 Board members discussed the proposal. The following points were considered in discussion:
- i. consideration on whether to retain the core principles: Ambitious, Radical, Inclusive and Sustainable for the next iteration of the strategy, or take a more prosaic approach setting out how the organisation would focus on core delivery of the essentials;
  - ii. support for not pivoting to a new direction and acknowledging that statistics for the public good is an effective way of delivering. A refreshed strategy that builds on the achievements; and
  - iii. ahead of the consultation process to help respondents - the value in setting out the contextual factors, external environment and how the statistical system should be set up in a way to respond and exploit the opportunities and address the challenges.
- 9.4 The Board agreed the approach to refreshing the next iteration of the Authority's strategy acknowledging that statistics for the public good remained the aim. The views of the Assembly would also be a valuable input.

## **10. Future of Population and Migration Statistics [SA(24)66]**

- 10.1 As this area of work is policy in development, the minute from this item will be published upon completion.

## **11. Any Other Business**

- 11.1 Sir Robert paid warm tribute to Professor Sir John Aston, as this was his last meeting with his term ending on 31 December 2024. Sir John had been a highly valued member of the Board as a Non-Executive Director and a member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. On behalf of the Board Sir Robert thanked Sir John for his excellent contributions during the course of his tenure and wished him well in his role as President of the RSS. Sir Ian also paid tribute to Sir John on behalf of the ONS.
- 11.2 The Board would next meet on Thursday 30 January.

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**  
**Agenda**  
**Thursday 28 November, 11.15-14.00**  
**London Boardroom, Hybrid Meeting**

**Chair:** Sir Robert Chote

**Apologies:** Professor Dame Carol Propper, Mike Keoghan

**Attendees:** Mary Gregory (for item 8), Prof. David Hand (for item 6), Prof. Denise Lievesley (for item 6), Joe Moore, (for items 6,7), Sarah Moore 9 (for item 6), Ruth Studley (for item 8), Neil Townsend (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 31 October 2024
2 11.20-11.30 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(24)60 Sir Robert Chote
3 11.30-12.00 30 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(24)61 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 12.00-12.10 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(24)62 Ed Humpherson
5 12.10-12.20 10 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit and Risk Assurance Committee</li> </ul>	Oral update Prof. Sir John Aston
12.20-12.30 10 mins	Break	
6 12.30-13.15 45 mins	Lievesley Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on plans for the UK Statistical Assembly</li> <li>• Update on Recommendations</li> </ul>	SA(24)63 SA(24)64 Sarah Moore Neil Townsend Prof. Denise Lievesley Prof. David Hand Joe Moore
7 13.15-13.30 15 mins	Developing the next strategy for the UK statistical system	SA(24)65 Joe Moore
8 13.30-13.55 25 mins	Future of Population and Migration Statistics	SA(24)66 Emma Rourke Ruth Studley Mary Gregory
9 13.55-14.00 5 mins	Any Other Business	

**Next meeting: Thursday 30 January, London Boardroom**

## *Chair's Report November 2024*

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of the Chair's activity in November.

### **Review of recent activities**

2. On 29 October I attended a meeting of chairs of independent offices, a group which meets quarterly chaired by the Committee for Standards in Public Life. I raised our longstanding recommendation that the Ministerial Code be updated to strengthen adherence to the Code of Practice when using statistics publicly (from 'being mindful' to compliance). This was not adopted in the latest version, however the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards has committed to raising this on our behalf in the event that the Ministerial Code is revised again. I will raise this with Simon Hoare MP, with the new chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) when Sir Ian, Ed and I meet him next week (26 November).
3. On 4 November, Sir Ian and I met virtually with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, Mark Drakeford MS and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS. We discussed the challenges around labour market statistics and the Office for National Statistics' plans for the future of population and migration statistics. The Ministers were particularly interested in quarterly regional Gross Domestic Product data for monitoring economic growth in Wales and the collection of data on Welsh language.
4. On 8 November, I met with my fellow panellists for the Non-Executive Director recruitment to conduct a re-sift, as requested by the Minister due to a change in the interview panel, with Zarin Patel (HM Treasury board) joining in Lord Hill's place. Nine candidates have been invited to interviews in early December.
5. On 12 November, I attended a regulator's roundtable hosted by the Electoral Commission which followed two other roundtable discussions earlier in the year, all on the topic of election planning. Attendees discussed our organisations' experience of the summer General Election, all agreeing that it had been quieter than expected but that the preparatory work we'd each conducted had proven beneficial in terms of managing workload. We also discussed findings of the Electoral Commission's report into the May and July elections. The official level working group will continue to meet to discuss how we can continue to work together.
6. Finally, this week I held meetings with Professor Jonathan Portes where we discussed labour market statistics, and with Professor Graeme Roy, Chair of the Scottish Fiscal Commission, to discuss a variety of statistical issues including the labour market.
7. I also held my regular catchups with the National Statistician, Director General for Regulation, Director of Finance, Planning and Performance and Committee chairs.

### **Looking ahead**

8. Next week, I will be meeting an international delegation from the Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi who are in the UK visiting the Office for Statistics Regulation following Ed Humpherson's visit there in October. As above, I will be meeting the new Chair of PACAC, and I will also be having an introductory call with the new Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy. I will verbally update on these at the Board meeting.

### **Correspondence**



9. On 19 November I responded to a letter from Andrew Griffith MP on claims about the impact of the Autumn Budget on household finances.

**Sir Robert Chote, Chair, 21 November 2024**

## *Chief Executive's Report, November 2024*

### **Purpose**

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

### **Summary**

2. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has worked closely with government over the past month on a wide range of different topics and priorities. This includes extensive work from teams across the office to feed into the Chancellor's Budget as well as developmental work on appropriate statistics and metrics for the governments upcoming Priorities for Change. We also launched two cross-government innovation sprints to establish a single measure of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and to discuss and agree priority information gaps on household finances.
3. It was my pleasure to speak at the launch of the Sudlow Review, which I commissioned with Sir Chris Whitty, which looked at the UK health data landscape and set out a bold vision for overcoming barriers and inefficiencies that currently delay the safe and secure use of health data to improve lives. The review is excellent in making the case for the Integrated Data Service (IDS) and the criticality of an appropriate linked data infrastructure to drive positive outcomes for the public.
4. On the international front, I recently convened a meeting with National Statistician's from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America to discuss our respective approaches to SNA25. It was an energetic and fruitful conversation with a consensus emerging on the vast majority of the outstanding uncertainties.

### **Summary of activities**

5. From a parliamentary perspective, Robert, Ed and I met with the new Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Chair Simon Hoare MP earlier this week and discussed the Future of Population and Migration Statistics, the Integrated Data Service and the ministerial code. Earlier this month, we welcomed local Newport MP's Ruth Jones and Jessica Morden to our Newport offices to discuss local matters and hybrid working.
6. Colleagues from The Economic Social and Environmental Group (ESEG) attended a roundtable on 18 November at the British Academy on how to design and implement regional economic growth and innovation policies to support the UK's industrial strategy. The roundtable had representatives from policy, practice, and research, including from the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research's (CIFAR) Innovation, Equity and the Future of Prosperity Program, and the British Academy's suite of programmes related to economic strategy and R&D and innovation policy.
7. The ONS were well represented at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Working Parties on National Accounts and Financial Statistics and their Conference on National Economic and Financial Accounts, with presentations from Eve Smith on infrastructure, Craig McLaren on our roadmap to implementing the new National Accounts manual (SNA25) and Luke Weston on our occupational pensions data.
8. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, name checked the ONS when announcing that the fiscal target referring to government debt will use the definition of Public Sector Net Financial Liabilities. Over the last couple of months, Public sector

division in ONS has been providing advice for HMT about what a change of definition used for the target means from a statistical perspective.

9. On 25 October, we published a response to the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) review of Economic Statistics Classifications; this details how we are actioning the six requirements set out in their review of processes. We will continue to collaborate with the OSR and teams across ESEG as we implement these actions.
10. We successfully published this year's annual Pink Book on 31 October, showing the UK's Balance of Payments with the rest of the world, bringing through updated Foreign Direct Investment and Trade data.
11. The Data Science Campus (DSC) are developing a classification microservice to improve the efficiency and quality of data processing in ONS. This uses artificial intelligence (AI) to assign any set of free text to any statistical classification (e.g. SIC/COICOP etc) and is a collaborative piece of work with colleagues in Data Growth and Operations, Methodology and Quality Directorate, Security and Business Data Operations Division. We are actively working to embed the tool into survey operations, initially with the Business Register and Employment Survey team.
12. ESEG Legacy uplift projects: DSC have completed the Solvency II project. This work has put the Financial Sector Accounts and Corporations team in a position to resume insurance data flows into Gross Domestic Product. This was not previously the case as there had been issues with the pipeline for the past three quarters. House Price Index (HPI) legacy uplift work is gearing up towards production. This work is re-platforming the UK HPI system from SAS legacy software to Python whilst making it more flexible, resilient and efficient thus reducing the risks to successful production.
13. The Analytical Hub released analysis looking at characteristics of hybrid workers, public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change in Great Britain, and analysis considering different aspects of the lives of sandwich carers, including finances, food insecurity, employment, life satisfaction, and health from the Understanding Society study.
14. We have initiated two cross-government innovation sprints. For the first, a single measure of VAWG from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. The second, on household finances, was an exploratory session involving Departmental Directors of Analysis and others from across departments to discuss and agree priority information gaps. There was strong agreement that the priority was to develop linked data assets to tackle key questions around distributional analysis and intergenerational income.
15. Across Public Policy Analysis we continue to work closely with the government missions leads and Child Poverty Taskforce. With No10 Data Science, HMT teams and several colleagues across ONS we have been supporting the Government's choice of priority metrics for improving living standards across every nation and region of the UK. We are providing extensive advice to the Safer Streets mission on the metrics being defined, many of which are derived from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. We have been in ongoing discussions with child poverty taskforce in relation to international comparability of metrics, and how ONS can contribute.
16. We've held focus groups to understand the revisions and assurance process as we move to estimate the population to Admin-Based Population Estimates (ABPE). Work on ABPE includes developing a timeline of outputs that align to key dates these estimates are required by HMT and Devolved Governments. On October 28, following a meeting with ONS, Westminster City Council expressed a keen interest in continuing collaboration on the program. As part of our ABPE Engagement Plan, we published an action plan in response to OSR's ABPE report, alongside an update on population and migration statistics

17. Preparation for Long Term International Migration is well underway, engaging with a cross civil service and wider expert community to validate our assumptions and understand the policy context in advance of publication in November. Further quality assurance and media handling preparations are continuing as we finalise the full scope and findings from the data.
18. Emma Rourke attended the annual conference of the Directors General of the National Statistical Institutes in Tallin, Estonia. The agenda covered the expansion many National Statistical Offices in Europe are making into data as a service, as well as the opportunities offered through effective use of AI. The visit included a formal bilateral with Estonian officials to learn about their administrative data-based approach. Discussions were also held with the Chief Statistician of the Netherlands and France regarding their respective population statistics designs.
19. The Government Statistical Service (GSS) strategy was successfully launched at the multisite GSS conference on 8 October. The theme for this year's conference was 'Beyond Numbers: Championing Interdisciplinary Collaboration with Statistics'. It was a dynamic and thought-provoking programme providing the space to foster new opportunities for collaboration across the statistical system.
20. The Analysis Function Board met on 20 November to consider Analysis Function alignment with the Digital Centre Design project, an initiative to bring together the Government Digital Service, the Central Digital and Data Office and the AI Incubator as the digital centre of government in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The Analysis Function Board agreed the high-level direction for the next Analysis Function Strategy.
21. The statistical Business Register project has released the first tranche of functionality to users, which will enable early value to be derived from development. This functionality will greatly enhance usability and will introduce users to the new system design.
22. The IDS has achieved a positive outcome from the first phase of the SR, which will enable the Integrated Data Programme (IDP) to continue into the financial year 2025/26. The IDP is in the process of defining its scope for 2025/26, and the subsequent two financial years, to feed into the second phase of the SR process in January. (This will include setting out how the IDS will work with the National Data Library).
23. The IDS have successfully signed a new data sharing agreement with NHS which will enable access to health data to non-ONS analysts via the service.
24. Analysis of healthcare interventions and employment outcomes, which was published on 23 October, is due to be rerun in the IDS as part of an exploratory phase into future opportunities for analysis using health data. The analysis and findings into the employment outcomes for patients of bariatric surgery supported the NHS in securing their funding in the most recent SR settlement of approximately £230 million.
25. In late October we launched our skills capture exercise to all colleagues. The outcome will be a better understanding of the skills we have across the organisation. It will notably support deeper organisational knowledge of our critical skills (digital, analytical and interviewer) defined as critical for the delivery of our priority outcomes. This is key to mitigating a number of strategic risks (2, 3, 5, 12) and a core priority for our skills development approach for the ONS in this financial year.
26. The 2024-25 pay award has now been implemented for all colleagues and will be received in the November salary. The increase will be backdated to 1 August 2024.
27. Following a Freedom Of Information request on ONS correspondence, the Financial Times (FT) covered the Bank of England's concerns from last May on the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The article included our statement that we have since addressed and made good progress on the issues raised. There was further article in the FT on

declining international response rates and the LFS, while acknowledging the progress ONS has achieved in introducing alternative data sources.

28. We continue to move at pace with our ambitious programme to transform our content and website. We met with Non-Executive Directors in early November to share the first website public prototype and were grateful for the positive comments and suggestions received. We are seeking feedback from key retail sales stakeholders as well as wider feedback on our approach through one-to-one meetings with key organisations and commentators.
29. Professional Cyber Standards – Security and Information Management will be progressing a number of colleagues through the UK Cyber Security Council professional standards across a number of cyber security specialisms, which delivers a chartered accreditation against an industry standard.
30. Field interview expansion continues with the current face-to-face field interviewer community now at 686 (134 agency and 552 permanent) interviewers. This is up from 540 in April 2024. ONS has now contracted an external recruitment agency who will support with an additional 350 interviewers and 40 Interview Managers coming through the door in the first week of January.
31. The Large Cases Unit (LCU) in Business Surveys Directorate presented the UK experience at a European Free Trade Association/European Union workshop, attended by over 200 people. The event demonstrated how widely the LCU contribution is recognised for improving economic statistics.

**Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, 21 November 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.

### **Discussion**

2. Our main areas of focus since the last Board meeting have been:
  - i. Refresh on Code of Practice for Statistics: We are continuing our promotion of the Code consultation through speaking at departmental sessions and in stakeholder meetings. On 14 November, we ran a very successful joint event with the Royal Statistical Society, highlighting how we have incorporated their earlier feedback in the proposed Code. We are arranging another joint session for January with the Market Research Society and hosting a seminar for analysts on 26 November, at which Sir Chris Whitty will speak. The consultation closes on 14 February; and
  - ii. OSR 2.0: We held a good session with the Regulation Committee to discuss how to evolve our regulatory model. This input, alongside team discussions and the insights from the Assembly and other stakeholder conversations, will form the basis for our organisational model from April 2025 and will inform our spending review proposals.
3. We have recently published:
  - i. Spotlight on Quality Assessment: Statistics on Business Investment: As part of our Spotlight on Quality Series we recently published a quality assessment of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Statistics on Business Investment, which offer a short-term indicator of business activity in the UK. We identified five requirements that ONS must fulfil to improve the quality of the statistics to the standards required by the Code of Practice of Statistics.

### **Casework**

4. Since the last Board meeting, we have received eight cases including three from Members of Parliament. Topics covered by these cases include concerns about the Scottish Government's gender coding guidance, and the potential savings from a proposed scrapping of the retrospective element of the duty to remove in the Illegal Migration Act. We have closed cases on several topics including the ten cases relating to the coordinated campaign concerned with the quarterly release of tuberculosis in cattle in Great Britain statistics.
5. We made one public intervention since the last Board meeting. The Chair wrote to [Andrew Griffith MP](#) regarding the changes to taxation announced in the Autumn Budget.

### **Wider reach**

6. External events: Since the last Board we hosted a round table discussion with Jenny Saul, philosopher and thought leader, alongside various international academics to explore the changing landscape of political discourse involving statistics. For this discussion we decided to focus the key theme around the recent UK General Election and our decision-making approach to casework interventions. One of the key takeaways from this discussion was around the challenges for regulating information in a fragmented public sphere. Since the last Board we also hosted a joint seminar as part of an ongoing discussion with Ofcom and the Advertising Standards Authority in sharing recent examples for our casework interventions. The latest seminar was focused around our involvement during in recent UK General Election. We have also engaged with a wide range of regulatory organisations on the UK General Election through a roundtable

hosted by the Electoral Commission, attended by our Head of Casework. This roundtable provided us with key insights into the experiences of other organisations, including lessons learned and enabled us to feed into the strategic aims and priorities of the Electoral Commission moving forward.

7. Delegation Visit: Statistics Centre-Abu Dhabi (SCAD): This week we hosted a seven-day exchange programme with delegates from the Statistics Centre-Abu Dhabi. As part of our ongoing exchange towards building ties and sharing perspectives, we hosted a series of meetings between OSR staff and SCAD. The core theme was around our approach to quality assessment and regulation.
8. Issues on my mind: Finally, I've been looking forward to the remainder of the year. Key priorities include seeking lots of input and engagement with the refreshed Code. We will also continue to promote intelligent transparency, including to the Special Advisors. And we have some important regulatory projects: ongoing work on labour market and population statistics; and reviews of economic statistics and on the adequacy of UK-wide comparable data.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 20 November 2024**

## *Update on plans for UK Statistics Assembly*

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on plans for the UK Statistics Assembly and asks the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) to comment on progress and advise on the issues identified.

### **Timing**

2. Timely advice is required to inform final planning for the Assembly on 22 January 2025.

### **Recommendations**

3. Members of the Board are invited to:
  - i. note progress on preparations for the Assembly;
  - ii. review the draft agenda, emerging topics from the call for contributions and format of the day; and
  - iii. provide feedback on the proposed principles to frame discussions.

### **Background**

4. Establishing a statistics assembly was recommended in the independent review of the UK Statistics Authority led by Professor Denise Lievesley. The Assembly will cover the whole statistical system. It aims to be inclusive of all stakeholders and enable participants to contribute to priorities and identify gaps for UK statistics, and to demonstrate we listen.
5. We have been working closely with the Royal Statistical Society and a delivery group is in place, with wide representation, to advise on design and implementation and mitigate risks. This is the first Assembly of its kind and there is no blueprint we are working to. We have consulted academic experts and taken advice from the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) and others to learn as we go. The first event will inevitably be experimental, from which we will learn lessons for future years.
6. The Assembly is being held on 22 January 2025. It was scheduled in line with non-executive directors' availability to allow for their attendance. To bring an independent perspective and encourage broad input, the event will be chaired by Professor Cathie Sudlow OBE. By 14 November 2024, we had 424 people signed up, of which 316 indicated they will attend in person and the remainder will be able to join elements virtually. We have representation from all sectors but are monitoring sign-ups and will target future communications to ensure we achieve a good mix.
7. To shape the agenda and inform topic discussions on the day, we ran a 'call for contributions' from 10 September 2024 to 3 November 2024. This resulted in over 60 submissions, which we are now analysing as well as considering any gaps or wider insights, for example the Government Statistical Service's (GSS) prioritisation plans.

### **Discussion**

8. We are designing the Assembly to be as inclusive and participatory as possible, through seeking input ahead, during and following the day itself. The agenda for the day aims to provide maximum opportunity for listening to views, with a short introductory plenary session and then up to 15 breakout group discussions across the day on the key topics from the call for contributions.
9. To support focused discussions with achievable asks, the breakout groups will seek to answer a deliberative question. Each group will have a facilitator who will be briefed to bring in pre-identified viewpoints and framing of trade-offs but allow most of the time for



contributions and discussion. Relevant GSS experts will add context but not lead the deliberations. We are consulting both the delivery group and GSS experts to agree the discussion topics and specific questions. An example question on the topic of economics could be: “how should we ensure the upcoming update to the System of National Accounts keeps pace with social and technological change to provide the insights policy makers will need over the next decade?”.

10. The last part of the event is designed to ensure attendees leave the day with a high-level understanding of what the Assembly has discussed and a clear understanding that the findings will follow in an advisory report written by NSEUAC. These sessions will be in plenary and provide summaries of the themes and points of note across the sessions.
11. NSEUAC aims to produce a draft of their report for the February Authority Board. The report will set out the financial context, advise on what the official system should prioritise for delivery in the coming years (and what it should not) and advise on where those outside government could align for public good.

*Proposed principles to frame discussions around understanding need and value*

12. To provide a consistent framework around the Assembly discussions and aid structure of the report, we recommend setting out some principles to support assessment of need and value of different UK statistics. We welcome the Board’s view on these principles:
  - iv. extent of impact for public good: from limited to extensive and coverage (e.g. to whole population or specific smaller groups);
  - v. timescale for public benefit: immediate, medium or long term;
  - vi. type of user benefitted: academia, business, civil society, public sector;
  - vii. advances the modern statistical system: in the immediate, medium or long term; and
  - viii. feasibility and capability for production by producer type: official statistics system, non-official (e.g. via private, charity or academic sectors).
13. We have defined critical success factors for the Assembly. Key to the success of the event and wider process is demonstrating that we have brought together diverse participants and listened to their views, and that these have fed into clear recommendations. We will also need to demonstrate evidence that the statistical system has responded to the Assembly asks, therefore it is paramount that recommendations are realistic in the current financial climate.

**Neil Townsend, Communications and Digital Publishing, 20 November 2024**

***Update on the response to the Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on the progress made against recommendations set out in the Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) by Professor Denise Lievesley.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. note the progress made against commitments detailed in the response to Professor Lievesley's review.

**Background**

3. As part of the Government's programme of Public Bodies Reviews, an independent review of the Authority was announced in June 2023, chaired by Professor Denise Lievesley. The Review was published on 12 March 2024, making 19 recommendations to the Government and the Authority.
4. The Authority's response to the Independent Review was published on 4 September 2024<sup>1</sup>.

**Discussion**

5. In addition to the progress on the UK Statistics Assembly detailed in a separate paper, work has continued on the Lievesley Review's other recommendations.
6. All commitments are now in progress or, in one case, pending further engagement with the Cabinet Office (Recommendation 14 on exploring mandatory household surveys was addressed jointly to the Authority and to government).
7. Since last month, two recommendations have moved from 'on hold' to 'in progress':
  - i. Recommendation 10 (Board recruitment): Cabinet Office Ministers have resumed the recruitment exercise which had been paused for the general election. The assessment panel has presented ministers with a shortlist of candidates for interview in December; and
  - ii. Recommendation 17 (Cabinet Office Memorandum of Understanding): Potential updates to the existing Memorandum of Understanding in line with HM Treasury's Framework Document Guidance have been shared at a working level with Cabinet Office counterparts, in preparation for a proposed draft being shared with the Authority Chair and National Statistician for review.
8. Recommendations are marked as 'complete' on the tracker when the central commitments made in the Authority's response have been fulfilled, and any longer-term aims have been clearly assigned to programmes of work. In addition to the recent completion of Recommendation 13 (Eurostat and international engagement), one further recommendation has been completed in November:
  - i. Recommendation 18 (Framework for ad-hoc commissions). The Strategic Business Plan for 2024-25, published in April, set out the Authority's approach to prioritisation

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<sup>1</sup> <https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/authority-response-to-the-independent-review-of-the-uk-statistics-authority/>

in a constrained financial environment, committing to securing the stability and quality of its core statistical outputs across five priority areas. In taking on additional work, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) seeks to align its resources to activities and programmes where it is uniquely placed to deliver, and that have the highest impact on the strategic priorities. The tracker gives details of the new framework for analytical outputs overseen by the ONS' Strategic Outputs Committee, including quarterly impact assessments. Subject to this framework, ONS will continue to work on new and changing topics as required to meet user need, and the report from the Statistics Assembly will further inform the Authority about relevant data gaps.

9. Actions in response to Recommendation 11 (National Statistician's advisory groups) are due for completion by December. Following a review, Secretariat are liaising with all advisory committee secretaries to implement changes, including the new process for appointments, improvements to the website, and more timely minutes. Guidance for the standardised process for advertising and making appointments has been agreed and will be published on the Authority website early December. This process will be used for the forthcoming recruitment for the chair of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel on Consumer Prices.

*The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) statement on operational separation*

10. Recommendation 3 concerned the separation of OSR from ONS, and the relationship between the arms of the Authority as described in legislation. The Authority's response welcomed Professor Lievesley's recognition that the Authority's governance is working well and that the two executive arms (the ONS and OSR) are sufficiently operationally independent in practice. It also committed to working with Government and Parliament on changes to legislation, should they wish to make any.
11. The response also committed to a statement on the operational separation between ONS and OSR, to increase public understanding of the de facto distinction between the arms of the Authority. This statement was published by OSR on 24 October<sup>2</sup> along with commentary in a blog post from the Director General for Regulation. The statement provided:
  - ii. a summary of the governance arrangements under which OSR reports to the Regulation Committee;
  - iii. a summary of the arrangements for setting OSR's strategy and budget, via the Regulation Committee and the Board; and
  - iv. a confirmation of the Director General for Regulation's personal reporting line directly to the Authority's Chair.

**Ross Tivey and Joe Moore, Policy Unit, 20 November 2024**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statement-on-osrs-separation-from-ons/>

## ***Developing the next strategy for the UK statistical system***

### **Purpose**

1. This paper explores options for the development of the next UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) strategy.

### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board (the Board) are invited to:
  - i. note progress against the current strategy 'Statistics for the Public Good' (set out at paragraphs 5 to 10);
  - ii. agree plans to refresh Statistics for the Public Good as the strategy for the UK statistical system for the period 2025-2030, to be supported by separate strategic delivery plans; and
  - iii. agree the timeline and engagement plans for the development of the next Authority strategy (at paragraphs 12 to 17).

### **Background**

3. The Authority's current strategy for the UK Statistical System, 'Statistics for the Public Good', was launched in July 2020 and will conclude at the end of July 2025.
4. This paper explores: high-level progress against the current strategy; a proposal to refresh the existing strategy instead of starting afresh; and next steps to develop the Authority's next strategy for July 2025.

### **Discussion**

#### **Statistics for the Public Good – 2020-2025**

5. At the heart of the Authority's strategy is the central mission stemming from our statutory objective to deliver 'High quality data and analysis to inform the UK, improve lives and build the future'. These unique responsibilities reach across the statistical system.
6. Building on this mission the current strategy was prepared following extensive consultation with the Board, staff of the Authority, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (including field force), The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) as well as external stakeholders. It sought, as it replaced the 2015-2020 strategy to; clarify the component parts of the statistical system; have a UK wide focus; set an ambitious and radical direction; be inclusive; expand beyond statistics to explicitly reference data; improve trust in official statistics; and support decision making at all levels.
7. Statistics for the Public Good implemented four strategic pillars against which progress has been mapped, Radical, Ambitious, Inclusive and Sustainable.
8. In addition, recent external reviews including that by Professor Denise Lievesley and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee (PACAC) report on Transforming the UK's Evidence Base have highlighted areas for further work across the statistical system. For example, in relation to improving data sharing, developing the communication of our statistics, capitalising on technology and collaborating with partners.
9. Whilst the context in which the Authority operates is changing, much remains the same. Subject to feedback, we consider that the mission and core of Statistics for the Public Good still have relevance for the next five-year period supported by separate detailed strategic business plans. Therefore, we propose that a brand-new strategy is not

required. Instead, working in close consultation with the Board, we recommend that a refreshed version of Statistics for the Public Good is prepared, reflecting feedback we gather from across the statistical system.

10. It is recommended that Members of the Board note progress against the current strategy and agree plans to refresh 'Statistics for the Public Good' as the overarching strategy for the UK statistical system for the period 2025-2030, supported by separate strategic business plans.

#### How will we develop the next strategy?

11. The Authority's current strategy was developed by the Board in consultation with colleagues across the Authority, ONS, OSR and wider GSS. External stakeholders were also engaged to inform its development. Separate strategic delivery plans and communications accompanied the document to ensure that the wide range of interested users across different sectors could engage with it. We plan to repeat this approach for the 2025-2030 strategy.
12. It is recommended that ahead of the publication of the new iteration of the strategy in July 2025, engagement commences now and includes;
  - Engagement with the Board - We recommend that the Board holds a standalone workshop in the new year to consider findings from stakeholder engagement, the external context the Authority is operating within and, updates to the strategy. We will provide regular updates on the development of the strategy seeking steers on content as the document develops, delivering a first draft for consideration in April 2025 and final version for sign off in June 2025 ahead of publication in July.
  - Colleague Consultation - As with 'Statistics for the Public Good' we recommend that we consult with colleagues across the Authority, ONS, OSR and the GSS during December 2024 and January 2025. We plan to engage with them about the challenges and opportunities facing the statistical system as well as their views on, and ability to connect with, the current strategy. We will supplement this with focus groups delivered by the ONS social research network, ensuring diversity amongst attendees and draw upon relevant documents such as the GSS Vision. Internal communications colleagues are considering communications plans to support this work.
  - External Consultation - The upcoming Statistics Assembly in January 2025 will provide an excellent opportunity to gather the views of many stakeholders as we develop our strategy. The survey sent to attendees in advance will contribute to the strategy planning. We will also draw from recent publications to understand stakeholder sentiment and the wider context in which we are operating, including the Lievesley Review, PACAC Report and OSR's State of the Statistical System Review. To supplement this, we recommend that some targeted engagement with key stakeholders also takes place including the Chief Statisticians across the Devolved Governments, the Bank, the Royal Statistical Society and departmental permanent secretaries.
13. Alongside the strategy development, the Policy Unit will work closely with colleagues across the Authority, ONS and OSR to ensure that ongoing spending review and business planning work is aligned with our strategic priorities.
14. It is recommended that members of the Board agree to the timeline and engagement set out in paragraphs 12-17.

**Conclusion**

15. This paper has sought the Board's agreement to update 'Statistics for the Public Good' to cover the 2025-2030 period, and the process for developing that strategy. It also invited consideration of the progress made against the current strategy to date.

**Joe Moore and Ross Tivey, Policy and Strategy Division, 21 November 2024**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(24)66

***The Future of Population and Migration Statistics Recommendation – update***

As this area of work is policy in development, this paper will be published upon completion.