

# **UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

## **Regulation Committee**

### ***Minutes***

**Thursday 16 October 2025**

**London Boardroom**

**13:00-16:00**

#### **Members Present**

Prof. Dame Carol Propper (Chair)  
Peter Barron  
Prof. Sir David Spiegelhalter  
Ed Humpherson

#### **Other Attendees**

June Bowman  
Ben Kendall-Ward (for item 4)  
Rob Kent-Smith  
Helen Miller-Bakewell  
Nicky Pearce (for item 3)  
Anna Price (for items 3 and 6)  
Elise Rohan  
Vicky Stone (for item 5)  
Siobhan Tuohy-Smith

#### **Observing**

Luke Boyce  
Graham Brennan

#### **Secretariat**

Kate Beeslee  
Sally-Ann Jones

#### **Apologies**

Gail Rankin

## **1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members and observers to the meeting. Apologies were received from Gail Rankin. Previous minutes were approved and actions were reviewed.
- 1.2. The Director General (DG) for Regulation updated on the in-progress actions and informed members that comprehensive updates would be provided at the December and February meetings.

## **2. Update from the Director General for Regulation [SA(RC)(25)30]**

- 2.1. The DG for Regulation provided the Committee with an overview of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) priorities and activities and highlighted some areas of focus since the last meeting.
- 2.2. The Committee heard that the Code of Practice was approved by the Authority Board and OSR were preparing activities around its launch which was scheduled on 4 November. The processes governing the suspension of official statistics received a substantial internal audit assurance rating. OSR were undertaking work to evaluate their approach to communicating the findings of their regulatory work.
- 2.3. Members heard that four compliance reviews had been published since the last meeting. Regulatory guidance on dashboards was published on 21 August and the OSR Annual Report 2024/25 was published on 17 July.
- 2.4. Members discussed potential reasons why the volume of casework may be lower than in previous years. Members received a presentation on one piece of casework on comments made by a minister regarding water pollution in England and Scotland. The Committee heard OSR's plans to issue a public statement on the appropriate interpretation of statistics, and members supported using a strong tone.
- 2.5. The DG for Regulation had engaged in a number of external events, including at the Royal Statistical Society Conference and World Statistical Congress. Members heard that there was an external audience who were invested in OSR's work.
- 2.6. The Committee agreed the OSR recommendation to confirm accredited official statistics status on the Northern Ireland statistics on Business Expenditure, Research and Development.

## **3. Intelligent Transparency [SA(RC)(25)31]**

- 3.1. OSR provided an update on intelligent transparency. OSR planned to publish the review of how well intelligent transparency was embedded in governments on 19 November, following the momentum of launching the Code. Members commended the report and approved its publication.
- 3.2. OSR also reported on their exploratory work on intelligent transparency report cards. OSR presented the potential risks and asked for members' steer for taking this work further. Members heard that this followed a recommendation from the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) and OSR were considering how to take this forward while mitigating potential risks.
- 3.3. The following points were raised in discussion:

- i. members expressed concern at the risk of departments being ranked, and discussed how best to convey the complexity of the score, which OSR were investigating;
  - ii. the initiative should motivate producers to improve the standards of their statistics, and there was a risk of gaming the system;
  - iii. the work should be embedded in business-as-usual for OSR, so as not to become too burdensome; and
  - iv. members discussed redefining the report cards, with mention of a rolling review, and the risk of negative reception was considered.
- 3.4. Members supported embedding intelligent transparency into the Code of Practice. The discussion centred around the risks of introducing report cards and the Committee advised OSR to proceed cautiously. The success of the work should be measured on the ability to execute this alongside existing regulatory work, and, that it was driving up standards.
- 3.5. Members approved the draft report on intelligent transparency for publication.
- 4. Re-accreditation Review: Domestic Abuse Statistics [SA(RC)(25)32]**
- 4.1. OSR provided an update on their review of ONS domestic abuse estimates. Since presenting the Regulation Committee in July, OSR had engaged with a range of users and recommended that the statistics were re-accredited as official statistics.
- 4.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
- i. ONS should complete further and consistent user engagement to ensure the statistics were valuable to users;
  - ii. some users were frustrated with the break in the time series, but were satisfied the new questions better represented the victims and showed trends;
  - iii. members discussed the risk of lower response rates, and where certain groups and institutional abuse were omitted by virtue of this being situated within a household survey; and
  - iv. this was a high-profile issue and was likely to attract some attention when published, OSR would edit their re-accreditation letter to emphasise the need for continued user engagement and to capture the sensitivity of the subject.
- 4.3. The Committee approved the re-accreditation of the domestic abuse statistics within the ONS Crime Survey.

**5. Re-accreditation Review: Northern Ireland Tourism Statistics [SA(RC)(25)33]**

- 5.1. OSR shared Northern Ireland's Statistics and Research Agency's (NISRA) progress on their Tourism Statistics after accreditation was temporarily suspended due to unavailability of one of the data sets from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) of the Republic of Ireland. OSR recommended that official statistics status should be restored as the issues resulting in original suspension had been resolved.
- 5.2. Members discussed the recommendation and the quality assurance undertaken by CSO and NISRA to satisfy OSR that needs had been met. The Committee suggested to strengthen the wording of the recommendation and agreed to re-accredit as official statistics. OSR planned to publish the report at the end of October, before NISRA's quarterly publication.

- 5.3. The Committee approved the re-accreditation of Northern Ireland's Tourism Statistics, subject to strengthening of the recommendation.

**Action: OSR to strengthen the recommendation of NI Tourism Statistics before publishing.**

**6. Assessment Report: NHS Scotland Workforce Statistics [SA(RC)(25)34]**

- 6.1. OSR updated members on their assessment of NHS Scotland's Workforce statistics. OSR have worked closely with the producers, NHS Education Scotland (NES) to ensure compliance with the Code.
- 6.2. OSR issued six requirements and asked members for comments and approval to publish the report the week following the Committee.
- 6.3. The Committee approved the report and the timelines.

**7. OSR Strategy and Taking Stock of Change Across the Authority [SA(RC)(25)35]**

- 7.1. OSR provided an overview of their strategy and observations and potential issues following changes to the Authority. Members discussed the items in tandem.
- 7.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
- i. the OSR strategy should align with ONS and GSS strategic priorities, but should maintain the flexibility for OSR work to be driven by need;
  - ii. OSR observed that scrutiny on the Authority had proved where OSR was a rigorous regulator but reflected on times where a stronger voice may have been more powerful;
  - iii. OSR sought to further enhance their values of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value internally;
  - iv. the strategy should focus on the bigger picture and champion integrity in statistics;
  - v. OSR would develop a one page version of the strategy to publicise externally and for PACAC;
  - vi. the strategy needed to balance addressing failings in the statistical system head on while ensuring ONS did not dominate OSR's field of view. Members acknowledged this was a delicate balance and advocated a stronger tone that addressed bigger picture concerns, such as misinformation and integrity of statistics;
  - vii. the strategy would be published towards the end of November, comments would be taken on Board and a revised strategy would be circulated to Committee members before the October Board meeting;
  - viii. OSR reflected on the extent of change in the ONS and across the Authority and highlighted potential implications for their work;
  - ix. members discussed how OSR would work with ONS to monitor the recovery plans through quarterly updates, and questioned whether OSR was sufficiently recognised across the UK statistical system;
  - x. the implications on the split of the National Statistician role was discussed;
  - xi. OSR was a rigorous regulator for government produced statistics and should build partnerships with other bodies who have a role in maintaining the integrity of statistics from non-government producers; and

- xii. members were supportive of OSR's public engagements and emphasised the DG for Regulation's role in speaking to statistics misuse, OSR's external and international engagement proved there was interest in this work.

7.3. Members encouraged use of a stronger tone to emphasise OSR's influence as a rigorous regulator and were supportive of the DG's efforts to engage in external and international events. A revised strategy would be circulated to members in correspondence ahead of discussion and approval at the October Authority Board meeting.

**Action: OSR to circulate a revised strategy to Committee members before the October Board meeting.**

## **8. Horizon Scanning and Any Other Business**

8.1. Members discussed the risk of misuse of statistics in the current media landscape, OSR planned to bring an item on the fragmented public sphere and its implications for regulation to the Committee in early 2026.

8.2. The Committee would next meet on 4 December 2025.