

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Minutes*

**Thursday 30 October 2025  
London Boardroom**

### **Hybrid Meeting**

#### **Members Present**

Penny Young (Chair)  
Dr Jacob Abboud  
Peter Barron  
Ed Humpherson  
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter  
Professor Mairi Spowage  
Professor Dame Carol Propper  
Emma Rourke  
Darren Tierney  
Dr Sarah Walsh

#### **Other Attendees**

June Bowman  
Sarah Moore  
Tom Taylor  
Stephanie Howarth (for item 9)  
Alastair McAlpine (for item 9)  
Henry Watson (for item 11)

#### **Secretariat**

Sally Jones  
Sarah Cobden

#### **Apologies**

James Benford

## **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from James Benford.

## **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 25 September 2025 were approved.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(25)51]**

- 4.1 The Chair reported on her activities since the Board last met. The Chair had met the Cabinet Office Parliamentary Secretary, Josh Simons MP, who was the Authority's new sponsoring Minister at the Cabinet office. The discussion covered the progress of ONS's recovery. The Chair alongside June Bowman, Director of Policy and Strategy had met the potential lead reviewer for the upcoming external review of Board effectiveness.

## **5. Report from the Permanent Secretary [SA(25)52]**

- 5.1 Darren Tierney provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting highlighting the following:
- i. the Permanent Secretary alongside the Acting National Statistician had met Minister Josh Simons MP on 27 October;
  - ii. regarding the senior leadership team, interviews for the ONS Executive Director of Population Statistics and Census were scheduled later in the month; a recruitment process would be undertaken for a new ONS Director General for Digital, Data and Technology; and the advert for an ONS Director for Strategy and Change was live;
  - iii. Pete Benton's role would focus on mapping out how the organisation can best contribute to advancing data and digital innovation across government including such initiatives as the National Data Library and Digital ID scheme;
  - iv. changes to ONS's executive governance framework were being made. The Executive Committee (ExCo) would continue as the most senior decision-making forum in ONS focusing on strategic issues underpinned by establishment of three ExCo subcommittees aligned to the Permanent Secretary's priorities for ONS recovery;
  - v. following the Spending Review 2025 three year settlement ONS would be undertaking a business planning cycle for a three year period. Work had already commenced with a business planning discussion with all directors. A subgroup of directors were working to develop strategic objectives;
  - vi. delivery progress of ONS's recovery plans was ongoing. The Economic Statistics Plan had established a baseline view of delivery confidence across its portfolio;
  - vii. there had been a number of errors and revisions across the economic statistics portfolio including an error relating to the application for retail sales, which had been corrected and a blog published explaining the error. The correction of an error, relating to the compilation of Value Added Tax receipts by HM Revenue and Customs that feed into Public Sector finances had also been accompanied by an explanatory blog; and
  - viii. the Census 2031 Business Case was being developed in line with the agreed timeline to submit to HM Treasury in the coming months.
- 5.2 Members discussed the update noting support for the changes being made to the executive governance framework and that it would be helpful for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to discuss the changes. It was noted that the digital delivery framework would input into the strategic design subcommittee being chaired by James Benford. The Board heard that cultural behaviours, specifically around trust, amongst the Senior Civil Service cadre was a key area of focus for the Permanent Secretary.

Separately with regard to ExCo the Permanent Secretary was looking to bring in an external coach to review and provide feedback on how it was working and where it could be more effective as well as how the members could best work together. The prioritisation process by ExCo was near completion and next steps would include engagement with users.

## **6. Report from the National Statistician [SA(25)53]**

6.1 Emma Rourke provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting highlighting the following:

- i. the National Statistician had been approached regarding intervention in the production of statistics. In addition Penny Young would write to Ministers on publication of the Code of Practice for Statistics 3.0 to reiterate the importance of independence. This was a key area of focus for Emma Rourke. Departmental Directors of Analysis were empowered to highlight issues with the National Statistician as needed;
- ii. Emma had visited National Records Scotland on 29 October. Areas of discussion had included Census 2031, the use of administrative data and digital ID, which would all be areas of discussion for the new Board subcommittee – Population Statistics System Committee; and
- iii. the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies were meeting regularly regarding pandemic preparedness and exercise Pegasus, (the national tier one pandemic preparedness exercise), at which the need for statistics and capability was noted.

6.2 Members discussed the update and noted that it was good that the Integrated Data Service would help inform the approach to the National Data Library (NDL). In addition, the whole federation of Trusted Research Environments would help inform the approach. The closure of the IDS to users outside of ONS, and the ongoing need for a collaborative research platform with access to linked data, continued to be talking points across the Government Statistical Service (GSS). The recent meeting of the National Statistics Executive Group had considered an update on the NDL and the issues around data sharing.

## **7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(25)54]**

7.1 Ed Humpherson provided an overview of regulatory activities since the last meeting. Following approval by the Board the refreshed Code of Practice for Statistics would be published on 30 October and formally launched at the beginning of November, accompanied by a series of events across the four nations and online learning seminars for statistical producers. Ed Humpherson had delivered a keynote talk at the 65<sup>th</sup> International Statistical Institute World Statistics Conference earlier in the month.

7.2 The Board heard that OSR had been developing a strategy for 2026-2029, which had been discussed and approved by the Regulation Committee at its recent meeting. The aim was to publish a final version in November. The strategy set out that OSR would focus on four strategic themes: Credible and Rigorous Regulator; System Catalyst; Champion of Analytical Evidence; and Enhance our Own Trustworthiness Quality and Value.

7.3 OSR had written to ONS to confirm the reaccreditation of domestic abuse statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. With regard to casework a letter had been sent by Professor Dame Carol Propper to Seamus Logan MP about water pollution.

7.4 Members discussed the update and provided feedback on OSR's strategy. The reference to OSR as a credible and rigorous regulator could be reframed along the lines – OSR continued to be a credible and rigorous regulator. Under the catalyst

theme more could be made of OSR's relationship with the National Statistician. Data sharing could be referenced as an issue earlier in the document.

## **8. Report from the Chair of Regulation Committee**

8.1 The Chair reported on the work of the Regulation Committee which had last met on 16 October.

8.2 The Committee had considered:

- i. the draft report on Intelligent Transparency and approved the report and plans for publication;
- ii. OSR's draft strategy document ahead of consideration by the Board at this meeting;
- iii. the re-accreditation of ONS domestic abuse statistics following OSR's review; and
- iv. the re-accreditation of Northern Ireland's Tourism Statistics.

8.3 Non-Executive members of the Regulation Committee had met OSR colleagues and separately with Government Statistics Service Heads of Profession.

## **9. Strengthening Coherence and the UK Statistical System [SA(25)55]**

9.1 Stephanie Howarth and Alastair McAlpine introduced a paper which provided an update on plans to improve the coherence of UK-wide statistical production, respond to the Office for Statistics Regulation report on the adequacy of UK-wide data, and Cabinet Office's plans for a detailed response to recommendation five of the Lievesley review.

9.2 The Board heard about the purpose and benefits of coherence to inform policy decision making across the UK. A lack of coherence reduces the quality of decision making. Existing areas of work are dedicated to improving the coherence of UK-wide statistics and developing a more UK wide statistical system. These include the work of the Inter Administration Committee and the UK Census Committee, GSS Harmonisation and the GSS coherence work programme.

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

- i. there was support for greater Board engagement to raise the visibility of work that supports a more efficient system and greater coherence/comparability across the UK;
- ii. an acknowledgement that the comparability of official statistics should not be reduced to league tables;
- iii. the challenges and barriers to effective collaboration across the UK statistical system, which was evidenced by the Integrated Data Service in relation to data sharing. Systemic issues such as data sharing and shared resourcing constraints were barriers to success. An appropriately prioritised approach and the right legal basis would help enable efficient data sharing;
- iv. coherence and barriers to data sharing would be a key focus for the National Statistician with the need for clear success criteria;
- v. OSR's systemic review on the Adequacy of UK-wide comparable statistics and data published in June 2025 supported by the work by the Fraser of Allander Institute sets out the recommendations that would help resolve this complex issue; and
- vi. understanding user needs and considering a public good lens for UK-wide comparable statistics and data. Political and societal user needs were also relevant.

9.4 The Board welcomed the discussion and it was agreed that Chief Statisticians would be invited to attend Board regularly to discuss system wide issues and those areas the Board could support with. The incoming Chair's annual lecture would also provide the opportunity to cover system wide issues.

## **10. National Statistician and ONS Permanent Secretary and Division of Roles and Responsibilities [SA(25)56]**

- 10.1 The Chair facilitated a discussion on the implications of the division of roles and responsibilities between the National Statistician and ONS Permanent Secretary.
- 10.2 The Devereux Review concluded in June 2025 and produced three core recommendations on ONS delivery, leadership and governance. It recommended the splitting (at least temporarily), of the role of the National Statistician (NS) role to create two Permanent Secretary level roles the National Statistician and a new ONS Permanent Secretary post that would lead ONS's operational delivery.
- 10.3 A significant proportion of the responsibilities had been tied down, and reflected the new day-to-day practice since the arrival of the new Permanent Secretary. The ONS Permanent Secretary was responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation, including leading ONS's organisational transformation. As Chair of the Executive Committee (ExCo) they would set the strategic direction of ONS, in consultation with the National Statistician and the UK Statistics Authority Board. The Permanent Secretary, as Accounting Officer for ONS, was accountable for regularity of expenditure, ensuring value for money, delivery of ONS's functions and performance. They would also be responsible for the production of ONS outputs supported by the ONS HoP for Statistics.
- 10.4 The National Statistician would remain the Principal Adviser on statistical matters to the Authority Board as well as to Ministers and Parliament, acting as the public face of UK statistics<sup>1</sup>. In providing advice, the National Statistician would draw on the senior statisticians within ONS and across GSS, as well as the National Statistician's Advisory Committees across which they would provide strategic leadership. The National Statistician would remain head of the GSS and the Analysis Function with a focus on developing skills. The National Statistician would also provide international leadership, fronting the UK's representation in international statistical fora and negotiations, collaborating across government and supporting subject matter experts to maximise impact and shaping international standards in support of UK interests. It was recognised that senior leaders in ONS/GSS would continue to engage and where appropriate deputise. The National Statistician role would focus on system-wide strategic leadership and areas of challenge and strategic importance such as data sharing and coherence This also included promoting shared standards and methodologies to support high quality analysis, joined-up government and evidence-based decision-making.
- 10.5 The aim of this Board discussion was to discuss and provide feedback to inform a Memorandum of Understanding that was being developed to specify ways of working and outline the division of responsibilities in more detail. One unresolved issue was the nature of the interface between the National Statistician and ONS; and how this should compare to other GSS departments. Three models were discussed: National Statistician as ambassador and system wide leader; National Statistician as independent office with a larger team resourced for both methodological work and priority/crisis or cross cutting analytical work; or National Statistician as chief methodologist within a National Statistics Institute (combined with system wide leadership).
- 10.6 Members discussed the update. The following points were made in discussion:
  - i. the importance of the National Statistician role and the opportunity of having the bandwidth to provide system wide leadership and focus on system wide issues;
  - ii. the risks and opportunities associated with a centralised methodological team outside of ONS in the National Statistician's Office. Specifically, the need for clear separation

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<sup>1</sup> Although under legislation this function cannot be delegated to an interim.

between the National Statistician's office and ONS methodology in terms of focus, while recognising the importance of working well together, sharing best practice, and building trust;

- iii. the value of feedback from the GSS and Chairs of the National Statistician Advisory Committees, before finalising the MoU;
- iv. comparison with other models such as the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) and their impact. The National Statistician could be supported by an appropriate but modest expert team to deliver on critical and cross cutting issues; and as statistical advisor to government;
- v. the need for clarity in the MoU that the National Statistician was not responsible for statistical production;
- vi. the potential for the National Statistician to become the recipient for OSR recommendations on system wide issues with both the National Statistician and the OSR having an ambassador role;
- vii. the need to ensure the MoU took account of the whole UKSA system and referenced OSR where appropriate;
- viii. the potential for some form of National Statistician Quality Reviews to be undertaken; and
- ix. consideration of resource requirements for the National Statistician and the potential for the National Statistician to seek external funding from other government departments or ad hoc funding for specific work as well, such as the development of data linkage.

10.7 The Board noted the progress made to date on clarifying responsibilities with further work to be done. The model similar to the CMO/CSA had the potential to work for the National Statistician supported by a modest but highly impactful expert team. Further work would be undertaken and the details formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Board, the National Statistician, the Permanent Secretary and the Director General for Regulation to ensure roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear to all. Input would be sought from both Deputy HoPs and some National Statistician Advisory Group Chairs to feed into the MoU. There was a sequencing point for the development of the MoU to align with the recruitment of the National Statistician, while acknowledging that it would need to iterate over time.

## **11. People Plan [SA(25)57]**

- 11.1 Henry Watson introduced a paper which outlined the approach to improving the employee experience and capability across the organisation in the short-medium term. The high level plan was structured around six key themes: senior appointments and leadership development; office attendance; pay and reward; performance management; skills and learning; and engagement and culture. A longer term plan would be required and would be developed in consultation with the Executive Committee. It was noted that the People Plan would underpin the strategic people risk.
- 11.2 The Board heard that ExCo had endorsed a refreshed approach, led by senior leaders role modelling through their own office attendance. Negotiations with the unions were ongoing to find a resolution to the current disputes. A refreshed approach was being taken for managing performance within the Senior Civil Service, which would help address issues of accountability and focus on consistency and impact.
- 11.3 Members discussed the update. It was noted that the aim of the People Plan was to address the cultural issue around a lack of trust amongst colleagues, which would be a key area of focus. The Permanent Secretary would be holding monthly meetings with the Grade 6 and Grade 7 cadre to provide the opportunity for direct engagement. It was noted that the planned work on skills capture later in the year would help inform an understanding of the ONS current skills profile.

- 11.4 The Board noted the plan and agreed that the culture of an organisation reflects the behaviours and values of its most senior leaders, and that it is important to foster trust across boundaries when organisations encounter challenges.

**12. ONS Turnaround Communications Strategy [SA(25)58]**

- 12.1 Sarah Moore and Peter Barron introduced the strategy and the summary of media and stakeholder sentiment towards the ONS for September and early October.
- 12.2 The Board heard that the success of the communications strategy was aligned to the organisation's progress on improvements and delivery. The objectives were to influence the external narrative positively; increase stakeholder support; maintain public trust; and improve internal communications with an increase in colleague understanding of ONS priorities and confidence in ONS leaders.
- 12.3 The Board welcomed the communications strategy and highlighted the need to focus on those strategic risks currently outside of risk appetite given potential to lead to reputational damage.

**13. Any Other Business**

- 13.1 The Board briefly discussed the announcement of Digital ID Scheme; and the previous approach to media lock-in briefings.
- 13.2 The Authority Board would next meet on 27 November 2025.

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Agenda

**Thursday 30 October 2025, 11.00-14.30**

**London Boardroom,  
Hybrid Meeting**

**Chair:** Penny Young

**Apologies:** James Benford

**Attendees:** Stephanie Howarth (for item 7), Alastair McAlpine (for item 7), Henry Watson (for item 9)

**NED Session: 10.30-11.00**

1 11.00-11.05 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 25.09.25
2 11.05-11.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(25)51 Penny Young
3 11.15-11.30 15 mins	Report from the Permanent Secretary	SA(25)52 Darren Tierney
4 11.30-11.45 15 mins	Report from the National Statistician	SA(25)53 Emma Rourke
5 11.45-12.00 15 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OSR Strategy</li></ul>	SA(25)54 Ed Humpherson
6 12.00-12.05 5 mins	Report from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Regulation Committee</li></ul>	Oral update Prof. Dame Carol Propper
12.05-12.15 10 mins	Break	
7 12.15-12.40 25 mins	Strengthening Coherence and the UK Statistical System	SA(25)55 Stephanie Howarth Alastair McAlpine Emma Rourke
8 12.40-13.40 60 mins	Implications of the separation of the National Statistician's role	SA(25)56 Penny Young
9 13.40-14.05 25 mins	People Plan	SA(25)57 Henry Watson
10 14.05-14.25 20 mins	Communications Strategy and update	SA(25)58 Peter Barron Sarah Moore
11 14.25-14.30 5 mins	Any Other Business	

**Next meeting: Thursday 27 November, London Boardroom**



***Chair's Report, October 2025***

**Purpose**

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

**Review of recent activities**

2. This month saw the publication of the Board's open letter to the Government Statistical Service (GSS) setting out our priorities for the statistical system. Our letter formally draws our previous five-year strategy, *Statistics for the Public Good*, to a close and sets out our current values, priorities and ambitions for the system. These are informed by feedback from colleagues across the system, users and producers of official statistics, and recent independent reviews, and is designed to complement existing plans like the GSS Vision.
3. On 13 October, I met with the Canadian Chief Statistician, Andre Loranger, who was in London to meet Authority colleagues enroute to the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau meeting in Switzerland. We discussed governance with a particular interest in the outcomes of the Devereux review and subsequent splitting of the National Statistician role. We also discussed survey response rates in the UK and Canada, their approach to mandating certain surveys and their work on the Canadian Labour Force Survey.
4. On 17 October, I met with Steffan Jones, the Authority's senior sponsor in the Cabinet Office to share updates and discuss key priorities. Steffan said that Ministers and the wider Cabinet Office are keen to support us through this recovery period, with a particular focus on areas like people and technology. We also discussed latest progress of the Chair and National Statistician recruitment.
5. Throughout this month, I have continued to hold my regular meetings with senior leaders from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). Discussions have continued to focus on prioritisation, recovery efforts, and the role of the National Statistician. I have also discussed our individual areas of responsibility with each Non-Executive Director (NED), in the context of our agreed priorities for the coming months.
6. I have discussed the Board Effectiveness Review with our preferred lead reviewer and we await confirmation that they are able to take on the assignment.

**Looking ahead**

7. In early November I will be presenting at the GSS Conference alongside Mairi Spowage. We will be joining Ed Humpherson on a panel to discuss the principles of trustworthiness, quality and value followed by hosting a parallel session on strategy and priorities, hearing directly from the GSS on how as the Board we can provide direction and support to the system.
8. I am also looking forward to chairing the first meeting of the new Population Statistics System Committee at the end of November.

**Penny Young, Deputy Chair, 23 October 2025**

**Permanent Secretary's Report, October 2025**

**Purpose**

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of activity since the last Board meeting on 25 September 2025.

**I have continued to make changes to our Senior Leadership structure, as well as our governance structure, to ensure that the organisation is set up for success.**

2. I am acutely aware of the increased focus on advancing data and digital innovation across government, of exploring the transformative potential of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, and of advancing the impact of administrative data sharing. To consider how we best feed into these areas, I have asked Pete Benton to focus his time and experience mapping out how the organisation can do this most effectively, ensuring we tap into the right initiatives at the right time to improve our statistics and ensure we are fit for the future.
3. Linked to this, I have recently communicated my intentions to go live with a recruitment campaign for a new Director General for Digital, Data and Technology who will be responsible for developing a plan for our digital and technology infrastructure, and for moving us off legacy technology. This will be a critical role that allows us to take the steps required to put our technology architecture on a sustainable footing and stop it from impeding our ability to deliver quality statistics.
4. Later this month, I will be interviewing candidates for the role of Executive Director of Population Statistics and Census. This is a critical leadership position for the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the wider statistical system, and I look forward to welcoming the successful applicant into the leadership team to oversee population statistics, and to drive forward our work on the 2031 Census.
5. Alongside these structural changes, I am also undertaking changes to our governance structure. Whilst the Executive Committee (ExCo) will continue as the most senior decision-making forum in ONS with responsibility for decisions relating to strategic issues, business planning and prioritisation, we will establish three subcommittees of ExCo which are broadly aligned to my priorities for ONS recovery. This will create significant additional bandwidth for ExCo to focus on the organisation's strategic direction. These subcommittees would be:
  - i. ONS People Committee;
  - ii. ONS Strategic Design Committee; and
  - iii. ONS Performance and Change Committee.

**We have continued to take decisions on prioritisation and business planning as part of our sustained effort to refocus on our core functions.**

6. The Executive Committee (ExCo) has continued to examine our portfolio for de-prioritisation options. These discussions have been productive, and we are now preparing to announce the findings alongside a planned engagement exercise with users. In sum, we will review our suite of statistics and analysis across the health, crime, subnational and non-core economic space, exploring options for either stopping, reducing or slowing down this work, including understanding what work can be undertaken in other government departments.
7. This month, we have held a business planning discussion with all directors, to discuss the current context and opportunities presented by a three-year planning horizon. A sub-

group of the director cadre are now working to develop strategic objectives aligned with our mission, to consider our capabilities and vulnerabilities linked to these objectives, and to design a process for engaging staff with these.

8. Period 6 (September month-end) has closed with further progress made on the affordability risk first reported in July. We have now realised our target of a broadly balanced overall financial position at the half year point, but we have an imbalance between resource and capital budgets beneath the headline figure which will need to be resolved.
9. Staff numbers (FTEs) have continued to grow in the month to 30 September, and significant further growth is forecast by year-end but at a level that seems over-optimistic. This and other factors are being considered in detail through the quarterly review process which is ongoing.

**We are continuing to make progress across our recovery plans for economic and population statistics, as well as for surveys.**

10. The Economic Statistics Plan has established a baseline view of delivery confidence across its portfolio, with two-thirds of initiatives showing some level of control. Ten risk clusters have been identified within the portfolio, covering areas including delivery, governance, resourcing and culture. Work is underway to assign risk leads to these and develop comprehensive mitigation plans for each. The delivery and governance of the plan has been supported through the formation of an internal and external steering group, both of which have been established and met since the last Board.
11. There are around 80 posts that remain unfilled within the Economic Statistics Plan. These are predominantly analytical roles affecting National Accounts and the Labour Market. The Deployment Co-ordination Group is working to fill these vacancies quickly through internal deployment.
12. Despite progress, there continues to be a number of errors across our Economic Statistics portfolio. In September, there was one correction of a major error relating to the application of the seasonal adjustment for retail sales. Upon correcting the error, we published a blog explaining how this had happened, what the impact was and explained the steps we would take to learn from this. This error was widely reported, though there was positive feedback for the open and transparent approach with the blog. In October, there was one correction of a major error, relating to the compilation of Value Added Tax (VAT) receipts by HM Revenue and Customs that feed into Public Sector Finances. We again published a blog which helped shape the narrative of reporting.
13. We have recently launched 'supported in-home completion' for the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), with over 300 trained interviewers ready to boost response rates and data quality among digitally excluded groups. However, testing data rotation remains a critical area of work, with the programme experiencing challenges finding suitable external testing resource. Alongside this, challenges remain with regards to testing on the Northern Ireland transition to Labour Market Survey ongoing concerns for the timely delivery of Standard Industrial Classification and Standard Occupational Classification D (SIC/SOC) coding.
14. This month, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) have confirmed that our redeveloped domestic abuse statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales comply with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value and should be labelled as accredited official statistics. The OSR review also identified four recommendations for us to take forwards to enhance the quality and value of these statistics.

**I am committed to improving ONS culture, with our new People Plan being at the centre of this.**

15. Henry Watson has been developing a new People Plan, to be discussed at today's Board. This sets out a clear and coordinated approach to improve the employee experience across the organisation in the short-medium term. It aims to support a more engaged and motivated workforce underpinned by strong leadership and a positive organisational culture. A longer-term, more comprehensive plan will also be required, and will be developed in due course.
16. Both Public and Commercial Services (PCS) and Prospect unions have achieved mandates for ongoing industrial action regarding office attendance. PCS met with Henry and People and Business Services colleagues this week to discuss the ongoing industrial dispute and explore in principle how we might move forward. The meeting was constructive, and a shared statement was issued on 17 October to confirm that positive discussions are happening and will continue. Prospect have responded positively to an invitation to hold a similar initial meeting in the near future. FDA are not in dispute with the UK Statistics Authority but have been informed of the discussions.
17. Recent ExCo discussions have focused on our Senior Civil Service (SCS) workforce. We have agreed to implement a 60 per cent office attendance requirement for this group to help demonstrate leadership, enhance visibility and create an environment which encourages office attendance. ExCo have also agreed to a refreshed approach for SCS performance management to help address inconsistent practices. This approach will help us to understand the strength and development needs of the cohort.

**Work continues to ensure we are on track to deliver Census 2031 and our Population and Migration statistics.**

18. The Census 2031 Business Case has been shared with senior stakeholders, with the planned submission scheduled for late Autumn remaining on track. We have ensured continued engagement with HM Treasury and Cabinet Office throughout the development process.
19. The Census topic consultation is set to launch at the end of October to help inform which topics are most important for inclusion in the next census to ensure it provides the most valuable outputs for informing policy decisions and meeting wider user needs.

**Darren Tierney, Permanent Secretary, ONS, 23 October 2025**

*National Statistician's Report, October 2025*

**Purpose**

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of the National Statistician's activity since the last Board meeting on 25 September 2025. This is the second iteration of the National Statistician's Report since the split of the National Statistician role. I welcome feedback on the content of the report to ensure it best meets the needs of Board members.

**Role of the National Statistician**

2. Since the last meeting of the Board, Darren Tierney and I have continued to engage and work closely on the **split of responsibilities** between the National Statistician and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Permanent Secretary. The Authority Board are seeking assurance that the split of responsibilities is in the best interests of the ONS and wider statistical system and, as such, a substantive discussion item is being brought to the October meeting of the Board.
3. The National Statistician's Office, led by Lucinda Eggleton, is starting to take shape and will further adapt following the Board's advice. The Analysis Function (AF) and Government Statistical Service (GSS) Coordination teams have moved across from what was the Methodology and Quality Directorate (MQD), as well as the international and health data linkage and analysis teams from what was the Health and International Directorate (HID).
4. Darren and I have also agreed on further moves that will be taking place at the start of November. These include core life events moving from what was HID to the Population Statistics Directorate (PSD) to consolidate our demography service, Harmonisation and Coherence moving from PSD to the National Statistician's Office, and the Centre for Equalities and Inclusion moving from the Census Taskforce.
5. As a result of ongoing discussions on the split of responsibilities, the Board requested that the Commissioner-chaired panel slow down recruitment of the **Chief Methodology and Statistics Advisor (CMSA)** position. The recruitment campaign was launched towards the end of September and it was fantastic to see such a strong, international candidate pool express interest. I look forward to recommencing with the sift once a consensus is reached on the roles and responsibilities of the National Statistician.

**National Statistician's Committees and Panels**

6. Following the resignation of Dame Julia Cleverdon as Chair of the **National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee (NSIDAC)**, and recommendations from the Lievesley Review, a successful recruitment campaign was held over the summer resulting in a new Chair, Professor Evelyn Collins, and new Committee members being appointed to the Committee. The first NSIDAC meeting with the new committee, which I will attend, is taking place on 28 October 2025. The agenda for this first meeting will include: a review of the Census Topic Consultation evaluation principles; update on the harmonisation workplans; and an overview of the Cabinet Office Equalities Office inclusive data workplans.
7. Following advice from the **National Statistician's Advisory Panel on Migration Statistics**, I approved the methods for the Long-term International Migration release on 27 November 2025. Darren will provide an update at the November Board on the delivery of the publication.

## Broader UK Statistical System

8. The month started with me chairing an **Inter Administration Committee (IAC)** meeting on 2 October where a particular focus was our readiness for a review of the Concordat on Statistics in 2026. This followed a successful in person workshop with the Chief Statisticians of the Devolved Governments on 29 September in Manchester where the focus was UK coherence. Another workshop will be taking place at the start of December to maintain progress towards the Lievesley Review and Statistical Assembly recommendations.
9. I also chaired the first meeting of the **UK Census Committee (UKCC)** – a subcommittee of IAC – focussing on Census 2031 which convened on 13 October. The group reviewed an early proposal for a cross-four nations partnership for Census 2031 to ensure cross-government alignment and strategic integration.
10. I joined an ONS delegation at the **ISI World Statistical Congress** in The Hague on 7 October where I met with the Polish National Statistician and the South Korean Head of Economic Statistics. I also attended a dinner hosted by the National Statistician of the Netherlands along with our counterparts where we discussed the challenges faced by National Statistics Institutes (NSIs). The delegation also presented progress on “Analysis for Action”, a Wellcome-funded global partnership, led by the UK Statistics Authority, that focuses on capability and capacity building for response to health emergencies.
11. On 9 October, I was a presenter and discussant at a roundtable organised by the Association of Chief Executives and the Public Chairs’ Forum at the Institute for Government on “**Leading for trust in turbulent times**”. I touched on transparency, accountability, and rebuilding confidence through leadership and meaningful engagement.
12. Economic Statistics Production and Analysis (ESPA) in ONS, with support and strategic advice from the International Division, have reached a milestone in the provision of technical leadership and assistance for the **Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)**. The GSS published its first ever edition of “Monthly Indicator of Economic Growth”, with ONS’s central role being referenced on launch. This work has also supported internal capability building, as providing leadership and guidance to others has enabled staff to apply their expertise in a challenging context.
13. The closure of the **Integrated Data Service (IDS)** to users outside the ONS, and the ongoing need for a collaborative research platform with access to linked data, continue to be talking points across the Government Statistical Service (GSS). Both concerns were raised at the most recent meeting of the National Statistician’s Executive Group (NSEG) on 14 October, where an update on the National Data Library programme was welcomed. The Deputy Heads of the GSS have clearly articulated that the IDS closure poses a risk to the GSS’s ability to collectively address data sharing challenges. This issue, identified as a priority in the GSS Vision, currently lacks strategic leadership. Clarifying leadership roles and responsibilities around data sharing is essential to maintain momentum and deliver on our shared objectives. Welsh Government’s Chief Statistician remarked that IDS would be the preferred route to access data securely as it is proportionate to Welsh Government needs, compared to setting up a data share of sensitive information.
14. A dedicated task and finish group has developed the latest version of the **GSS Vision Metrics** dashboard. This was also discussed, and presented, at NSEG on 14 October. This iteration includes insights from a new survey of the GSS community conducted in August 2025. The presentation supports a discussion on progress made in delivering the GSS Vision one year on from its launch. Areas of notable progress are capability and community, and coordination, cooperation and leadership.

15. To mark **World Statistics Day** on 20 October, the Deputy Heads hosted a full week of engaging events. The sessions were designed to celebrate our community, strengthen connections, and promote quality in everything we do as a profession. Highlights include: a Community Call with the Deputy Heads of the GSS; Regional and Champion Network events; interactive presentations from a range of GSS departments; and in-person and online networking sessions centred around shared GSS-wide challenges.
16. The **Analysis in Government Awards** closed on Friday 24 October and the response has been very positive. The awards are a great way to recognise good analytical work going on across government as well providing examples of best practice for the wider community. The shortlist will be announced in mid-December and winners will be announced during 'Awards Week' in mid-January 2026.
17. Work is also progressing well against the priorities included within the new **Analysis in Government Strategy**, with meetings of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Access working groups taking forward key central activities in these areas. Ensuring the appropriate use of AI is a key focus for Departmental Directors of Analysis (DDANs) as it is one of the ways we are collectively mitigating the impact of a challenging Spending Review outcome for all departments. Some function priorities emerging are data linkage, data visualisation and better use of agentic AI to support enquiry.
18. Career pathways were a central theme of a conversation I had with **Government Chief Scientific Advisor** (CSA), Angela McLean, earlier this month. We have agreed to bring the CSAs and DDANs together on a regular basis to ensure learnings are shared across these communities, especially in relation to topics such as AI and research integrity. Alignment in thinking across these groups will strengthen best practice within departments on topics where there is not yet a consensus on approach.

**Emma Rourke, Acting National Statistician, 23 October 2025**

*Update from the Director General for Regulation*

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board with an overview of Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) activities.

**Discussion**

2. **Refreshing the Code of Practice for Statistics:** Following final sign-off from the Board, we will publish Code 3.0 on 30 October and formally launch it at the beginning of November. We will also be hosting in-person launch events across the four nations and online learning seminars for statistical producers in November and December. Alongside we will publicise the refreshed Code through news stories, blogs and social media posts. We are also planning longer-term activities to help embed the Code.
3. **OSR Strategy:** We have been developing OSR's strategy for 2026-29 over the last six months, and I have updated the Board regularly on progress, in particular on our ambition to develop a stronger voice for OSR's regulatory work.
4. We are now in a position to share a near-final strategy. This has been discussed several times in the Regulation Committee, and the Committee has commented on the most recent version.
5. We welcome any further comments from Board members. We aim to publish the final version in late November.
6. Key regulatory activities since the last board meeting include:
  - i. **Reaccreditation of domestic abuse statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.** On 21 October we [published](#) our review of domestic abuse estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This review considered ONS's work to redevelop the domestic abuse statistics and the extent to which they met the evaluation criteria, with a view to deciding whether to accredit these estimates. Based on our findings we have written to ONS to confirm that these statistics can be accredited. We also set out four recommendations to further enhance their quality and value.
  - ii. **Temporary suspension of accredited official statistics: adult social care activity statistics.** On 22 October [we wrote](#) to the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) agreeing to their request to temporarily suspend accreditation for their Adult Social Care Activity Report. This is due to a change in data source for the activity statistics and the work DHSC is carrying out to understand the strengths, limitations and completeness of the new data source.
  - iii. **Assessment of statistics about the NHS workforce in Scotland.** On 23 October [we published](#) our assessment of statistics about the NHS workforce in Scotland, produced by NHS Education Scotland (NES). We identified six requirements that NES needs to address for these workforce statistics (both annual and quarterly) to become accredited official statistics. NHS Education Scotland should meet these requirements within six months and update us on its progress.

**Casework**

7. We have opened a further 17 cases since the September Authority Board taking our total for the year so far to 88. The mean closure time for the year to date is 23 days and the median is currently 16 days.

**Engagement**



8. Earlier this month I attended the 65<sup>th</sup> International Statistical Institute (ISI) World Statistics Congress and gave a keynote talk on the importance of openness and vulnerability in statistics producers in a challenging, and sometimes hostile, environment. I am happy to share the text of my talk if any Board members are interested.
9. My team and I are in the process of arranging a range of online and in person events across the four nations to support the launch of the new Code of Practice.

**Issues on my mind**

10. **Implementing OSR's strategy:** It is very important that OSR's work lives up to our strategic ambition to be a *credible and rigorous regulator*. Putting this ambition into practice will require us to adapt how we form our judgements, and how we communicate those judgements in our report. This may feel like a significant shift to statistics producers, so we need to manage the shift carefully.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 22 October 2025**

## Strengthening coherence and the UK Statistical System

### Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board with an update on plans to improve the coherence of UK-wide statistical production, respond to the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) report on the adequacy of UK-wide data, and Cabinet Office's plans for a detailed response to recommendation five of the Lievesley review and considers the support needed from the Board on this area. This will be the first stage of updates to the Board on the [Concordat on Statistics](#).

### Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. note and comment on current and future initiatives to create a more joined-up statistical system and the ambition for more coherent and comparable official statistics across the UK; and
  - ii. consider how they could be involved in raising awareness of this work, engaging with the UK statistical system and enabling the strategy development to support this work.

### Background

3. Although statistical production on devolved topics is the responsibility of the devolved governments, the Authority (with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as the National Statistical Institute) has overall responsibility for promoting and safeguarding official statistics, and therefore certain cross-UK statistical concerns, such as coordination, standards, and harmonisation. Our collaborative approach to addressing these challenges is set out in our Concordat on Statistics. The Concordat is subsequently upheld by the Inter Administration Committee (IAC), chaired by the National Statistician with each devolved Chief Statistician as a member.
4. The Concordat calls for join up across the UK statistical system on:
  - i. a shared understanding of user needs of the UK and Devolved Governments and international organisations for UK and disaggregated statistics, and subsequently how to prioritise these needs;
  - ii. a collaborative programme of work to develop coherent/comparable statistical outputs and underlying infrastructure in a way that provides good value for money;
  - iii. shared input into influencing and contributing to international reporting;
  - iv. efficient and safe sharing of data and information across the UK;
  - v. consulting on areas of shared interest; and
  - vi. cooperation on the statistics profession and capability matters.
5. Coherence is a fundamental dimension of the quality of Official Statistics as set out in the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007. The importance of a joined-up statistical system and evidence base goes beyond statistical coherence (and the related concept of comparability) and has been reinforced by findings from the Lievesley review, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) and OSR reviews on the adequacy of UK-wide data, and feedback from the first UK Statistics Assembly. The OSR has since covered the need for greater consideration of statistical coherence in the next Code of Practice for Statistics. A joined-up statistical system can also lead to other benefits, such as realising efficiencies, sharing of expertise, and better exploitation of administrative data.
6. However, ongoing resource challenges facing statistical producers has exacerbated efforts to improve statistical and structural coherence. Departments are having to heavily

prioritise and can only focus on a limited number of activities; this is particularly acute for the devolved governments who must balance both local and UK-wide priorities while navigating structural and systemic issues. Systemic issues such as data sharing and shared resourcing constraints are barriers to success. These challenges from a devolved perspective were set out by Philip Wales, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and Registrar General for Northern Ireland, in his September presentation to the Board:

- i. user demands for information, which is both comparable and detailed, while also timely, requires statistical trade-offs. User needs also vary considerably between detailed data requirements, against more high-level outputs;
- ii. ineffective use of existing government owner data to improve services, hindered by the slow progress in acquiring and sharing administrative data across departments;
- iii. traditional survey modes have low response rates and are increasingly expensive;
- iv. fiscal restraints and budgetary challenges are significant and are unequal across the Four Nations. Where recruitment is proceeding, processes are often slow; and
- v. analytical capabilities and data fluency vary across departments, as does the focus on key performance metrics.

## Discussion

7. There are existing areas of work dedicated to improving the coherence of UK-wide statistics and developing a more UK wide statistical system. These include: the forward agendas of the IAC and UK Census Committee (UKCC), work to improve data acquisition, Government Statistical Service (GSS) Harmonisation, and the GSS coherence work programme.
8. This latter workstream has been a focus of recent efforts to improve the availability of UK-wide data. The coherence priorities for 2025-26 were set in consultation with GSS HoPs and the devolved governments of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, including the Chief Statisticians. The team also gathered feedback from the UK Statistics Assembly, the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee (NSIDAC), the Union and Devolution Team in the Cabinet Office, and the OSR. The coherence priorities were signed off by the National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) in early April and presented to the IAC in late April. The [coherence workplan](#) was then updated on 2 October to reflect these priorities.
9. Alastair McAlpine, Chief Statistician for Scottish Government, and the current Deputy Director overseeing this work have met to ensure that the UK Statistics Assembly high-level priority area to 'Recognise the needs for UK-wide statistics and advocate for, and support, harmonised data where desirable' is incorporated into future GSS coherence work.
10. In line with her new system-wide role, the Acting National Statistician convened a workshop with the Chief Statisticians of the devolved governments and other key stakeholders to consider how we address the issues raised around UK wide data. The following points were considered, alongside options to address the identified barriers:
  - i. if we have an appropriately prioritised approach and the right legal basis for efficient data sharing. Reducing and non-ringfenced support from the ONS as the National Statistical Institute of the UK was affecting its role to safeguard coherent statistics and assure prioritisation;
  - ii. how statistics producers can support improving data standards across the system;
  - iii. how we can champion the longer-term strategy for the UK Statistical System;
  - iv. what are the individual roles and responsibilities for progressing a coherent UK statistical system, including the Authority Board, GSS and other governance structures;
  - v. what the process of determining specific UK-wide user needs should look like;
  - vi. how we can best measure and assess the comparability of official statistics; and

- vii. what are the common skills and experiences required for the GSS to carry out cross-UK work more effectively, and how can we improve our learning offer to address these.
11. The National and devolved Chief Statisticians subsequently agreed that alongside plans to update the Concordat on Statistics (as the framework for cooperation across the UK) we require an overarching strategic vision and clearly identified enablers (highlighted in the paragraph above) which are underpinned by specific workplans addressing key areas. These agreements should be established through consultation and the backing of producers across the UK and devolved governments, including the wider GSS, at both senior and working level. This strategic vision should set out the scale of our ambitions, while also recognising the need for pragmatism and expectation management. This work will culminate in formally refreshing the Concordat on Statistics in 2026.
12. During the workshop with Chief Statisticians, a range of options were discussed on how to address these areas, ranging from quick wins we know we can deliver within existing resources, to more significant strategic pieces of work, which we do not currently have established resourcing for. The strategic vision will help set out the level of ambition for these activities, from long-term goals to more achievable shorter-term objectives. The Cabinet Office (CO) are supportive of this work as they look to respond in detail to recommendation five of the Lievesley review. Comparable UK-wide data allows the telling of stories of unique experiences of people in every corner of the UK. It allows decisionmakers from all four governments to draw insights on what works in public policies across the UK, enables better evaluation, and supports smarter decision-making as a result. The CO welcomes a more strategic approach to the UK-wide data landscape and will be looking ahead to the renewing of the Concordat and how it can be strengthened to support this strategic vision whilst respecting constitutional arrangements. The elections in May could also provide an opportunity to reaffirm the political mandate for this work through the renewed Concordat.
13. There are already areas of positive progress. Major onward shares of data have successfully occurred due to collaborative working. ONS has securely onward shared HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI) administrative data with NISRA, this data was processed by the ONS for analysis purposes before it was shared, and plans to onwardly share PAYE RTI data with National Records of Scotland (NRS) soon. The development of the 2031 Census has emphasised cross-UK collaboration and coherence from the outset. The Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) Programme has also recognised cross-UK challenges: GB and Northern Ireland (NI) transformations are progressing to different designs and timelines with the NI Labour Market Survey being more locally tailored to meet NI requirements and likely to go-live before the ONS TLFS. ONS will be combining and processing both GB and NI data to create UK estimates and continue to work closely with NISRA to overcome challenges with production timelines and maintaining aggregate UK labour market statistics. These are likely to be major user priorities and provide a foundation for improving system wide coherence.
14. The National Statistician and Chief Statisticians of the devolved Governments would welcome increased engagement with the Board as the UK statistical system navigates these challenges. It is proposed that the frequency of updates be increased from just the annual board visits to each devolved government, but to also include the Chief Statisticians providing standing updates around every six months on priority areas and progress on meeting the Concordat. These could include regular strategic discussion on improving coherence and the progress with this work plan, but also on work programmes such as the 2031 Census, labour market statistics, specific coherence enablers or more local matters which merit cross-UK consideration and support from the Board.

15. The National Statistician and Chief Statisticians would also welcome greater Board engagement with statistical teams across the UK to raise the visibility of work that supports a more efficient system and greater coherence/comparability. These could include departmental visits and participation in other events in all parts of the UK, recognising the role of the whole of the GSS in improving coherence.

**Michael Willmott, Head of GSS Policy and Coordination, ONS; Philippa Robinson, Head of the Analysis Function Central Team, ONS; Emma Rourke, Acting National Statistician, ONS, 22 October 2025**

***Discussion note: Creation of two UK Statistics Authority Permanent Secretary level roles (National Statistician and ONS Permanent Secretary) and division of roles and responsibilities***

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with a basis to support discussion and decision-making around the division of roles and responsibilities between the National Statistician and ONS Permanent Secretary.

**Recommendation**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to consider the key themes set out in the discussion note.

**Background**

3. In April 2025, the Authority Board and the Cabinet Office jointly commissioned an independent review of the performance and culture of the Office for National Statistics. The review, led by Sir Robert Devereux, concluded in June 2025 and produced three core recommendations on ONS delivery, leadership and governance. It recommended splitting, at least temporarily, of the National Statistician role to create a new ONS Permanent Secretary post that would lead ONS's operational delivery. The ambition was that this would allow greater focus on ONS's statistical recovery, therefore leaving the National Statistician to focus on the provision of statistical advice to the Board and system-wide leadership. Darren Tierney was appointed as ONS Permanent Secretary in August 2025.
4. Good progress has been made to date through joint efforts by the Permanent Secretary and National Statistician to codify the split of responsibilities. This has been supported by the Deputy Chair and the wider Board, with input from policy colleagues and those in the legal profession regarding the delegation of powers under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

**Discussion**

5. Members of the Board are asked to consider the discussion note with a view to agreeing the substantive division of responsibilities between the ONS Permanent Secretary and the National Statistician to inform a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will specify ways of working. In doing so, the Board may wish to consider:
  - i. aspects of the dual roles that still need further development and clarification, particularly in terms of the National Statistician's 'reach' into ONS, and how they discharge their advisory role to the Board;
  - ii. which operational model seems most likely to maximise the benefits of the two roles, ensure they are complementary, and help them deliver the Authority's key objective of turning round ONS and rebuilding stakeholders' confidence in [economic] statistics; and
  - iii. whether a phased approach to the evolution of the roles is most appropriate given the ongoing Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) inquiry and during the National Statistician recruitment campaign.

**June Bowman, Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy, 27 October 2025**

## People Plan

### Purpose

1. This paper seeks the Board's endorsement of the new People Plan, which sets out a clear and coordinated approach to improving the employee experience and capability across the organisation in the short-medium term. A longer-term, more comprehensive plan will also be required, and will be developed in consultation with the Executive Committee (ExCo) and others in due course. It aims to support a more engaged and motivated workforce underpinned by strong leadership and a positive organisational culture. The People Plan will underpin our updated People Risk (SR5).

### Recommendations

2. The Board are invited to:
  - i. endorse the People Plan to address workforce challenges and improve employee experience;
  - ii. support and champion visible leadership engagement across all six thematic areas to ensure successful implementation; and
  - iii. note the enabling role of the People and Business Services (PBS) team in coordinating delivery and providing support across the organisation.

### Background

3. Over the past year, the organisation has navigated a period of considerable challenge and scrutiny, including the publication of the Devereux report and two appearances before the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC). These events have brought to light cultural concerns affecting parts of the workforce, with implications for morale, motivation and overall productivity.
4. Industrial relations have also been strained. The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) has held a mandate for action short of strike for 18 months, during which time staff have been encouraged not to attend the office. Prospect allowed their mandate to lapse during 2025, however they have recently secured new approval for industrial action from their members. Resolving the dispute with PCS and Prospect remains a key priority for the organisation's leadership.

### Discussion

5. To address the cultural and operational challenges highlighted over the past year, there is a clear need for a focused and coordinated approach to improving the employee experience and organisational capability. To achieve this, a new People Plan has been developed, setting out targeted actions and priorities to tackle the most pressing workforce issues and opportunities in the short-medium term. A longer-term plan will follow in due course.
6. The plan is structured around six key themes: senior appointments and leadership development; office attendance; pay and reward; performance management; skills and learning; engagement and culture.
7. Each of the issues are summarised below. Successful delivery of the plan will depend on visible and sustained leadership support across the organisation at all levels. Without this, efforts to improve the employee experience and capability risk being fragmented and less impactful. Leaders have the greatest influence on their people, and colleagues are more likely to respond to the example and priorities set by those they work most closely with. PBS will play a central role in enabling and supporting the organisation to take forward the actions required to meet the plan's priorities.

### Senior appointments and development

8. Recent changes to senior structures have resulted in several vacancies that require short-term resourcing and longer-term succession planning. To address this, we will work collaboratively across the organisation and with the Cabinet Office to ensure timely appointments and a sustainable leadership pipeline. Senior leaders will be expected to:
  - i. identify and report on critical roles within their areas;
  - ii. hold regular, structured development conversations with their teams; and
  - iii. actively support succession planning by recognising and nurturing potential talent, particularly for our most critical roles.
9. These actions will help build leadership resilience and ensure continuity in key roles.

### Office attendance

10. Inconsistent office attendance continues to impact organisational culture, collaboration and team cohesion. To address this, ExCo has endorsed a refreshed approach led by senior leaders, aimed at encouraging more regular in-person presence. As part of this, leaders are expected to model positive behaviours by attending the office at least 60 per cent of the time. We will also consider re-introduction of a desk booking system.
11. We have also restarted negotiations with PCS and Prospect to find a swift resolution to the current disputes.
12. Looking ahead, we will evolve our location strategy to support more consistent team co-location, enabling stronger collaboration and a more connected working environment.

### Pay and reward

13. Pay is one key reason colleagues leave the organisation and continues to influence perceptions of organisational value and fairness. We will undertake a comprehensive review of our pay and reward offer, with the intention of identifying areas for improvement. Although realistic about the prospect of success, we will also work with our Trade Union colleagues to develop a pay flexibility case as part of the 2026/27 award.
14. It is essential that senior leaders provide consistent and transparent messaging around pay and reward decisions to maintain trust and alignment across the organisation.

### Performance management

15. Performance management practices remain inconsistent across the organisation, limiting our ability to drive accountability and support development effectively. To address this, ExCo has agreed to a refreshed approach for managing performance within the Senior Civil Service (SCS), with a focus on clarity, consistency and impact.
16. Senior leaders are expected to role model this approach — setting clear expectations, providing regular feedback, and embedding performance and development conversations within their teams.

### Skills and learning

17. We do not yet have a comprehensive understanding of our current skills profile or future capability needs. This limits our ability to plan effectively and ensure the right skills are in place to meet organisational priorities. The completion of Skills Capture Two later this year will be a critical step in addressing this gap. Senior leadership endorsement and active support will be essential to achieving a high completion rate and ensuring meaningful insights.
18. Beyond data collection, senior leaders will play a vital role in shaping and prioritising skills development — helping to embed learning into day-to-day delivery and supporting investment in capability across the organisation.

### Engagement and culture



19. Some colleagues have experienced cultural issues affecting morale, motivation and productivity. Work is underway with refreshed mission and leadership statements launched. Now, senior leaders need to translate expectations into personal/team commitments, role modelling expectations and holding constructive conversations where expectations are not being met.

### **Conclusion**

20. The People Plan sets out a clear and coordinated response to the workforce challenges currently facing the organisation. It provides a practical framework for improving employee experience, strengthening leadership, and building capability over the next 6–12 months. Delivery will require visible commitment from senior leaders, consistent messaging, and a shared focus on cultural and operational improvement. With Board endorsement, the organisation can move forward with confidence and clarity in implementing the plan.

**Henry Watson, Chief People Officer, ONS, October 2025**

## **ONS Turnaround Communications Strategy and Reputation Tracking**

### **Purpose**

1. To seek feedback on the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Turnaround Communications Strategy and to share the latest metrics that enable us to track the reputation of the ONS with external audiences.

### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. comment on the ONS Turnaround Communications Strategy, in particular how the phases build over the next 18 months;
  - ii. consider that the Strategy requires increased media engagement, in order to secure coverage of improvements, and whether the Board is content with this risk; and
  - iii. note the summary of media and stakeholder sentiment towards the ONS for September and early October, for discussion.

### **Background**

3. Following a difficult period for the ONS's reputation, a communications strategy is required to renew trustworthiness as a high quality, relevant, independent statistics institute.
4. The metrics we are capturing on a monthly basis enable us to regularly assess the reputation of the ONS. These metrics also provide a benchmark for the Strategy and enable us to evaluate progress.

### **Discussion**

5. The ONS Communications team has developed an 18-month Turnaround Communications Strategy, with the support of Peter Barron. This sets out measurable objectives and a proactive, multi-staged approach,
6. The draft Strategy has already been guiding our recent communications activity, including around our new ONS leadership. We now need to increase the level of proactive engagement with the media.
7. Our usual monthly ONS reputation tracking metrics summarise media and stakeholder reaction to announcements and ONS publications over September and early October.
8. We recognise that the Strategy will need to continue to evolve as we monitor movement across the metrics. It will also need to adapt to changing context and arising opportunities and issues. We welcome views on our proposed approach.

**Sarah Moore, ONS Communications and Digital Publishing, 20 October 2025**