

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Minutes*

**Thursday 27 November 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**

Mo Baines (observer)  
June Bowman  
Sarah Moore  
Tom Taylor  
James Benford (from 13.30)  
Kirsty Campion (for item 13)  
Grant Fitzner (for item 14)  
Alex Lambert (for item 12)  
Liz McKeown (for items 12 and 14)  
Natalie Tarr (for item 13)  
Jennet Woolford (for item 12)

### **Secretariat**

Sally Jones  
Tom Marsh

### **Apologies**

None

## **1. Apologies**

1.1 There were no apologies.

## **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 30 October 2025 were approved.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(25)59]**

4.1 The Chair welcomed Mo Baines to the meeting as an observer, as part of her external review of Board effectiveness. Emerging findings from the review would be discussed at the December meeting ahead of the final report in January.

4.2 The Chair reported on her activities since the Board last met, noting thanks to Professor Mairi Spowage for attending the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Conference to co-lead a session on the challenges faced by colleagues within the GSS and for participating in a panel discussion with Ed Humpherson on the benefits of the refreshed Code of Practice for Statistics. The Chair would be joining Darren Tierney for a visit by the Minister Josh Simmons on 1 December to the Newport office. The first meeting of the Population Statistics System Committee had been held on 25 November.

## **5. Report from the Permanent Secretary [SA(25)60]**

5.1 Darren Tierney provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting highlighting the following:

- i. the importance of prioritisation given the efficiency target for departments announced as part of the budget announcement on 26 November, which would impact ONS's spending review settlement for 2028/29;
- ii. the positive reference by the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) in a recent report about their confidence in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and improving quality;
- iii. the work ongoing to check publication processes were appropriate and would not lead to accidental publication of statistical releases following the OBR leak;
- iv. changes made to ONS's senior leadership structure with the appointment of Mary Gregory as Executive Director for Population Statistics and Census. Interviews were underway for the Director of Strategy and Change role and the post of Director General for Digital, Data and Technology had been advertised;
- v. ONS had published the outcomes of the work on prioritisation, stakeholder engagement was underway, and consideration was now being given to how the decisions would be implemented as part of the three year business planning process; and
- vi. the approach to supporting and challenging the Senior Civil Service cadre on the work around culture, behaviours and trust.

5.2 Members discussed the update and highlighted the importance of effective risk management to the delivery of ONS recovery plans. This was in the context of challenges reported in papers to this meeting (discussed later) with a high number of red RAG status milestones reported. It was noted that the refreshed executive governance framework would also be a key part in providing oversight and assurance on delivery of recovery plans.

5.3 With regard to the outline plan for the technology strategy members noted the importance of presenting a balanced view of the potential for Artificial Intelligence (AI). Members noted the scale of the challenge to overhaul technology (and the associated process redesign and upskilling needed) and asked that an assessment of the strategy by the Director General for Digital, Data and Technology took place once in post. The

Director of Strategy when in post would be able to provide a view of integrated delivery across the organisation. It was noted that the proposals to develop reproducible analytical pipelines linked to the work on developing the role of statisticians to empower them to develop the skills needed.

## **6. Report from the National Statistician [SA(25)61]**

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

- i. on 18 November Emma Rourke had presented at the inaugural HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Data Analysts Conference, which was an opportunity to encourage and enhance multidisciplinary working through the Analysis Function. The discussion had also covered the opportunities, risks and limitations to the use of AI;
- ii. Emma had met the newly appointed Chief Statistician to the United States, Mark Calabria to discuss opportunities for collaboration;
- iii. meetings had been held with Analysis Function leaders to consider the governance and purpose of the function; and
- iv. the work ongoing around data standards by the Department for Science Innovation and Technology. Discussions were ongoing with them regarding the National Data Library including the work by ONS on harmonised data standards.

6.2 Members discussed the update, which demonstrated the breadth of the work by the National Statistician, including the opportunity for the National Statistician role to consider how government departments resolve data sharing issues. As part of the discussion with HMRC, Emma had encouraged them to be more visible on their work around data and approach to managing risks around data sharing.

6.3 The Board welcomed the update noting that it demonstrated the value of the role of the National Statistician delivering across the statistical system.

## **7. Report from the Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance**

7.1 The Chair reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which had last met on 13 November.

7.2 The Committee had considered:

- i. the financial position of the organisation;
- ii. the strategic risk profile, which still has half of the risks reporting outside of appetite;
- iii. the work by the Risk and Assurance team on first and second line assurance across the organisation;
- iv. a risk deep dive on cyber security;
- v. an update on the digital delivery framework, which would underpin legacy transformation;
- vi. a report on the implementation of audit actions in response to the data governance audit;
- vii. delivery of the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26; and
- viii. the mid-year fraud report.

7.3 A separate session for members was scheduled in January 2026 on legacy and technology architecture.

## **8. Report from the Chair of Population Statistics System Committee**

8.1 The Chair reported on the inaugural meeting of the Population Statistics System Committee which had met on 25 November. She welcomed the challenge that the members would bring, both individually and collectively.

8.2 Mary Gregory and Jason Zawadzki had presented an overview of the approach to population and migration statistics; and the governance and decision making that would underpin census preparations. The Committee had considered the ongoing

Census 2031 topic consultation and the stakeholder engagement activity to support the consultation. The consultation had launched on 28 October and would close on 4 February 2026.

8.3 At the next meeting, a timeline of decision making for Census 2031 which would underpin the forward agenda and set out decision points for this Board.

**9. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(25)62]**

9.1 Ed Humpherson provided an overview of regulatory activities since the last meeting, highlighting the publication of OSR's strategy on 26 November, which set out its priorities for the next three years, focused on strengthening trust and confidence in official statistics.

9.2 Following errors with some HMRC statistics that impacted on ONS' work, OSR would be undertaking a review of how HMRC complies with the Code of Practice. Following the launch of the refreshed Code of Practice OSR were considering holding an event for data suppliers to reinforce the importance of ensuring the quality data in their role as suppliers.

9.3 Ed Humpherson had presented at a number of events during this period to underpin the launch of the Code of Practice including the keynote speech at the GSS Conference; and the keynote speech at the ISI World Statistics Conference on how official statistics producers need to embrace vulnerability in a time of crisis.

9.4 OSR had taken a collaborative approach to its prioritisation process working with Heads of Profession across the GSS.

**10. Communications Update**

10.1 Peter Barron and Sarah Moore reported on recent media coverage of ONS since the last meeting, highlighting the proactive approach being taken by the Communications team. Media coverage in October overall had been more balanced. The Census Topic Consultation had been launched and ONS's prioritisation announcement had received positive coverage. The coverage of the error impacting public sector finances early October had noted that HMRC data had been the cause of the error.

**11. Memorandum of Understanding**

11.1 The Chair noted the discussion at the last Board meeting which had helped inform the ongoing work on the development of the Memorandum of Understanding on the division of roles between the National Statistician and ONS Permanent Secretary. Following the October Board meeting the Chair had met Emma Rourke and Darren Tierney to progress the work further with a focus on resourcing for the National Statistician's office. Lucinda Eggleton, Director of Health and International, would be undertaking further work with Henry Watson on the structure and resourcing for the National Statistician's Office, with the potential for changes.

**12. TLFS/LFS [SA(25)63]**

12.1 Alex Lambert and Liz McKeown introduced a paper which provided an update on the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) Programme.

12.2 The latest Labour Market transformation update on progress and plans had been published on 14 November 2025. The publication noted ONS's aim to transition to the TLFS Survey for headline labour market statistics in November 2026, while also highlighting that this may extend into 2027, depending on readiness and assessment of quality requiring more data to be assessed. The readiness assessment was scheduled for July 2026.

12.3 The Board was informed that the TLFS programme continued to report Amber-Red given the data quality risks associated with the integration of Northern Ireland data, the

collection of Standard Industrial Classification/Standard Occupational Classification data and decision to move the January 2026 TS11 milestone to April 2026. TS11 was intended to represent the final key improvements to the survey before six months of stable data collection. The milestone was reporting red and would not be met.

- 12.4 It was noted that the publication on the progress and plans for the labour market transformation on 14 November had set out that less data would now be available for the assessment in July as a result of TS11 changes, but did not pre-empt what the conclusion of the July assessment would be. The work around scenario planning for TLFS readiness was ongoing and would outline how the final transition decision would be agreed to provide clarity and accountability, including how to manage any trade-offs and conflicting perspectives amongst stakeholders. The outcome of this work would be reported to the Board in January 2026.
- 12.5 The Labour Force Survey Advisory Group chaired by Jonathan Portes had met and were interested in how to increase response rates more broadly and international comparisons. It was noted that James Benford had attended the International Monetary Fund conference in November and had discussed the work by the IMF on the comparison of labour force surveys around the world.
- 12.6 Members discussed the update, noting their concerns at the extent of red and amber RAG status delivery reported in the paper. The Board wanted a realistic understanding of the level of concern they should have. The following points were made in discussion:
  - i. to provide the required level of clarity needed the Board needed an overall view of the programme with a high level summary of the programme's position in terms of delivery, specifically the areas rated red and amber. The Board also needed insight on ONS's ability to address these based on the current resources and expertise in place. There was concern amongst members around slippage in delivery;
  - ii. in terms of scenario planning on key decision points, it was suggested that the team should explore detailed prioritisation within the programme to improve the current position;
  - iii. ONS clarified that the instances of red status reporting in the paper related to the work on scenario planning and was due to the timing of these scenarios. At specific points, criteria were marked red if the evidence was not available. It did not represent a fundamental lack of confidence by the ONS team. There were clear criteria in place to inform the decision on transition to the TLFS. At this point, the programme was not reporting any new risks or challenges;
  - iv. the impact of improved quality to the LFS on TLFS readiness, considering the range of users' views on the level of assurance required to support the transition date. Work was ongoing to improve the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, which was important for policy making for the minimum wage but not central to the LFS/TLFS;
  - v. in terms of financial planning the current position assumed that ONS would not be dual running the LFS and TLFS in 2028/29. Should the position change financial planning would need to be recalibrated considering value for money; and
  - vi. as part of both the updates by ONS on labour market transformation in March and November clarity had been provided that the timing of transition to the TLFS remains an evidence led decision as agreed at the March 2025 Board meeting.
- 12.7 The Board noted the Amber Red status of the programme and the change in timing for the TLFS Programme Board decision for implementation of the design changes to the TLFS as part of Transition State 11 by April 2026 – a shift from January 2026. The Board also noted that the first readiness assessment on the timing of transition to the TLFS scheduled in July 2026 would be an evidence led decision. Based on the work on scenario planning and this discussion the Board noted that the direction of travel for

transition to the TLFS in November 2026 was not certain but that it may extend to 2027.

### **13. Strategic Risk Profile [SA(25)66]**

- 13.1 Natalie Tarr and Kirsty Campion introduced a paper which provided an update on the Authority's strategic risk profile following discussion by the Executive Committee and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- 13.2 The Board was reminded that since the last update, six out of eleven strategic risks had moved outside of risk appetite, which ExCo and ARAC had agreed was an accurate reflection of the current position. The key themes identified across the strategic risk profile included the need for continued prioritisation, which would form part of the business planning process. There was a need to ensure resources were in the right place with the right skills to deliver key priorities. Improvements in executive governance would underpin the assurance on the management of key risks and issues. The Risk and Assurance team had worked with Henry Watson on the rearticulation of the strategic people risk reflecting the cultural aspects of the risk. The overarching risk on 'Trustworthiness, impact and independence', had been reviewed with Darren Tierney who had taken responsibility as the risk owner.
- 13.3 Members discussed the update with a focus on the overarching risk on Trustworthiness, impact and independence to ensure the rearticulation covered the right areas, specifically with reference to independence. The controls in place were comprehensive but it was noted that the wording should be reconsidered to reflect the perception and reality of the risk around independence. It was noted that consideration would be useful more broadly around changes to public sentiment to the resilience of the Authority and public confidence in official statistics in the context of societal change in the future.
- 13.4 The Board noted the current position of the strategic risk profile and agreed that Darren Tierney would consider further the overarching strategic risk. This would form part of the workshops planned by the Risk and Assurance team with members to refresh the strategic risk profile from the perspective of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.

### **14. Economic Statistics Plan [SA(25)64]**

- 14.1 James Benford introduced a paper providing an update on the progress of the Economic Statistics Plan (ESP).
- 14.2 The Board heard that progress had been made including enhancements to governance arrangements. Resourcing had strengthened ESP delivery with over 90 new ESP posts successfully filled and the remaining vacancies were in the process of being filled. Further consideration might need to be given to redeployment. In terms of milestone delivery the timeline for the adoption of Statistical Business Register had slipped by a few months, with actions in place to address the slippage. Longer term risks included the impact of the Census on the rest of the organisation, and the work on international standards.
- 14.3 Members were provided with the draft reports scheduled for publication by ONS on 4 December. This would be the first quarterly update in response to OSR's Report on Economic Statistics and also served the purpose of updating users on delivery progress. It was noted that a single integrated Surveys and Economic and Social Statistics plan would be adopted, bringing together the ESP, Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan and business as usual into an integrated plan in March 2026.
- 14.4 Members discussed the update and the draft plans scheduled for publication. The following points were made in discussion:

- i. consideration was needed on the level of detail required in the plans scheduled for publication. Members welcomed the transparency of reporting in terms of delivery against the ESP and the Survey Improvement Enhancement Plan but noted that an executive summary for the overview document would be important in drawing out the key points;
- ii. streamlining delivery of ESP, SIEP and business as usual into an integrated plan of agreed priorities from March 2026 would underpin delivery and would also help management of the risk profile including alignment with strategic risks;
- iii. the three year business planning process would also enhance ESP delivery in helping to provide clarity on dependencies on the enabling functions and competing priorities; and
- iv. the organisational change bringing end to end statistical production within ESEG would ensure a joined up approach to business planning and reduce the risk of silo working.

14.5 The Board welcomed the approach to a joined up plan and noted that resourcing remained a significant risk to delivery and in the longer term the risk posed by the census.

**15. GSS Vision [SA(25)67]**

15.1 Jane Naylor introduced a paper which provided an update on the progress made implementing the GSS Vision, 'Strength in Numbers'. The last Board discussion in July 2025 highlighted the need to focus on a small number of key priorities. The GSS Vision Metrics dashboard provided a visual update of progress against agreed actions for each of the four pillars of the vision.

15.2 The Board heard that the dashboard had provided a useful basis for tracking delivery and had been used for various sessions with Heads of Profession. The GSS Conference on 4 November had been successful and included a session led by the Chair and Professor Mairi Spowage discussing challenges for colleagues across the GSS.

15.3 Members discussed the update. The Chair noted that the GSS Conference had provided the opportunity to engage with GSS colleagues discussing challenges for colleagues working across the GSS and the challenges and opportunities on the approach to AI. A realistic position on the approach to AI was needed rather than polarised viewpoints. On governance work was ongoing on the description of roles and responsibilities including the National Statistician. Earlier in the meeting there had been a discussion on the role of statisticians in relation to changes in technology. Members noted the value in considering how the skills profile of the GSS evolve including the development of statistical leaders. With regard to data sharing the potential for senior sponsorship and implications of the closure of the Integrated Data Service was a key area of focus to establish other mechanisms for joining up to address the cultural and legal barriers to data sharing.

15.4 The Board noted the update and endorsed the three key strategic priorities in principle for future focus: Embracing modern approaches and techniques; GSS leadership and governance; and inspiring the next generation of future statistician.

**16. Any Other Business**

16.1 The Authority Board would next meet on 18 December 2025.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### Agenda

Thursday 27 November 2025, 11.00-14.30  
London Boardroom,  
Hybrid Meeting

**Chair:** Penny Young

**Apologies:**

**Attendees:** Kirsty Campion (for item 10), Grant Fitzner (for item 11), Alex Lambert (for item 9), Liz McKeown (for items 9 & 11), Natalie Tarr (for item 10), Jennet Woolford (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 30.10.25
2 11.05-11.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(25)59 Penny Young
3 11.15-11.25 10 mins	Report from the Permanent Secretary	SA(25)60 Darren Tierney
4 11.25-11.35 10 mins	Report from the National Statistician	SA(25)61 Emma Rourke
5 11.35-11.45 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(25)62 Ed Humpherson
6 11.45-12.00 15 mins	Report from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Audit and Risk Assurance Committee</li><li>Population Statistics System Committee</li></ul>	Oral update Dr Jacob Abboud Penny Young
7 12.00-12.10 10 mins	Communications update	Oral update Peter Barron Sarah Moore
8 12.10-12.20 10 mins	Memorandum of Understanding	Oral update Penny Young
12.20-12.35 15 mins	Break	
9 12.35-13.00 25 mins	TLFS/LFS	SA(25)63 Alex Lambert Liz McKeown Jennet Woolford
10 13.00-13.20 20 mins	Strategic Risk Profile	SA(25)66 Natalie Tarr Kirsty Campion
11 13.20-14.05 45 mins	Economic Statistics Plan	SA(25)64 James Benford Grant Fitzner Liz McKeown

12 14.05-14.25 20 mins	GSS update	SA(25)67 Jane Naylor Jason Bradbury
13 14.25-14.30 5 mins	Any Other Business	

**Next meeting: Thursday 18 December, London Boardroom**

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(25)59

### ***Chair's Report, November 2025***

#### **Purpose**

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

#### **Review of recent activities**

2. On 31 October, I attended the first meeting of the Network of Standards Bodies hosted by Doug Chalmers, Chair of the Ethics and Integrity Commission (EIC), formerly the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Part of the EIC's new remit is to convene standards bodies from across government and parliament with the aim of sharing best practice and identifying and discussing areas of common concern. The group will look to meet around four or five times a year, with the next in January.
3. On 4 November, I attended the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Conference. Mairi Spowage and I led a session discussing challenges for colleagues working in the GSS, and we also joined Ed Humpherson on a panel discussing the benefits of the Code's principles of trustworthiness, quality and value to the system. It was helpful to engage with so many members of the GSS directly and will help us as we consider how the Board can best support the system.
4. On 10 November, I attended the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) London launch event for the new Code of Practice for Statistics 3.0. The event was attended by a wide range of statistical professionals and leaders from across government. I joined Professor Denise Lievesley and Baroness Alexandra Freeman on a panel to discuss the benefits of the new Code to the system and taking questions from attendees. I will also be attending the Newport Code event next Wednesday (26<sup>th</sup>).
5. This month, on 12 November, I held my first of regular engagements with the Royal Statistical Society, meeting with Professor Sir John Aston and Dr Sarah Cumbers to discuss latest updates including recruitment of the National Statistician, Office for National Statistics (ONS) prioritisation and user engagement. We will look to meet quarterly as a matter of course.
6. And finally, on 19 November, Mairi and I attended the GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) quarterly meeting for an item where we discussed the Board's priorities, following our published letter last month, and our career journeys which led us to joining the Authority Board. HoPs said they appreciated the engagement.

#### **Correspondence**

7. This week I wrote to Ministers in the UK and Devolved Governments to draw their attention to OSR's report on intelligent transparency, seeking their continued support in ensuring statistics are produced and communicated in a way that serves the public good, and to notify them of the updated Code of Practice.

#### **Looking ahead**

8. Next Tuesday (25<sup>th</sup>) I will be chairing the first Population Statistics System Committee meeting which I will verbally report on at the Board meeting.

**Penny Young, Deputy Chair, 20 November 2025**

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(25)60

### *Permanent Secretary's Report, November 2025*

#### **Purpose**

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of activity since the last Board meeting on 30 October 2025.

#### **I continue to make changes to our Senior Leadership structure to reset, refocus and delivery high quality statistics**

2. This month, I am delighted that we have appointed Mary Gregory to the post of Executive Director for Population Statistics and Census. This is a critical leadership post overseeing the delivery of Census 2031, one of our key priorities for the organisation. Alongside James and Mary, I have taken the decision to move a number of teams from Surveys and Economic and Social Statistics (SESS) over to the new Population Statistics and Census Group, namely colleagues working on Crime and Office for National Statistics (ONS) Local. These structural changes will ensure we are best set up to deliver our mission.
3. We are currently interviewing for the Director of Strategy and Change role and hope to announce an appointment in due course. We have also advertised the post of Director General for Digital, Data and Technology. This role is critical to tackling some of the legacy technology that the Devereux Review identified as a key issue at the ONS. We are also looking to appoint a new permanent Chief People Officer, as we look to enhance and improve our organisation's culture, building on the work that Henry Watson has started since his arrival.

#### **We have announced the decisions of our prioritisation work, to ensure we have the space and focus to successfully deliver on our mission in a sustainable way**

4. This month, we have announced the outcomes of our prioritisation work, allowing us to focus on quality over quantity, enabling us to deliver trustworthy statistics on prices, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the labour market, population, and preparations for the 2031 Census. These choices have been made to relieve pressure and rebuild quality where it matters most and are based on what we need to focus on right now.
5. Media coverage of our prioritisation announcement landed well, with most outlets reporting this as part of our wider turnaround efforts and emphasising our focus on quality over quantity. Overall, stakeholders have welcomed the move but some, including the Royal Statistical Society, have expressed concern that any change is temporary.
6. We are now looking at how these decisions can be implemented through our upcoming three-year business planning process, setting a clear direction to last through to April 2029. This is proceeding at pace, with a director-led task and finish group co-creating our strategic priorities and objectives, and the approach for end-to-end business planning being shared with all directors for comment.

#### **Whilst we continue to make progress with our recovery plans, several milestones are reporting red, with limited recruitment having an impact**

7. At the November meeting of the Economic Statistics Plan (ESP) Steering group, it was decided that ESP, Population Statistics, Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan (SIEP) and SESS business-as-usual activities should be brought together under an integrated plan of agreed plausible priorities with an initial view of these expected by the

end of November. This enhanced delivery approach will focus on transparency, control, autonomy and improved governance, aligning with updated ONS assurance frameworks.

8. As part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen ESP delivery, a total of 93 new ESP posts have now been successfully filled. However, 71 vacancies remain, with the majority concentrated in three critical areas: data analyst roles, data science and systems, and Methods. A number of the red milestones in the ESP highlight these critical gaps in analytical capacity, especially in the National Accounts and GDP themes. We continue to run targeted recruitment campaigns with the aim of addressing these gaps.
9. Several red milestones also remain across the SIEP, with these issues being addressed by colleagues. As our understanding of delivery targeted adjustments are being made to delivery sequencing, managing interdependencies, and refining priorities to better support effective and coordinated processes. A further update will be provided on this work at the Board meeting in February.
10. We are, however, making continued progress with moving off legacy systems, with two surveys transitioning from legacy to strategic platforms, with another on track to make this transition in early December. As we continue to tackle our legacy technology issues, I have asked colleagues to revisit our Digital Strategy and Architecture which integrates technology, people and processes as we look to address these challenges.
11. At the end of October, this year's Blue and Pink Books were published, the result of significant collaboration and work across the office. This year's publications saw the successful implementation of 47 scope items, driving meaningful quality improvements across the office.

#### **We're making solid progress with regards to delivering our People Plan**

12. Following Board endorsement of the short-term People Plan last month, action is now being taken across the priority areas, and the plan has been shared with members of our Senior Civil Service, noting that their visible and sustained leadership is vital for the successful delivery of the plan. Henry Watson will continue to work on a longer-term plan to follow in 2026, consulting with colleagues across the organisation on this.
13. We have recently received ministerial approval for a revised approach to our pay remit for delegated grades. This follows meaningful negotiations with our Trade Unions who had significant concerns that our previous offer meant that most colleagues would not receive an increase of at least 3.25 per cent. Whilst this does not address our priority of improving the retention of critical skills, I am committed to working with the unions to produce a pay flexibility case next year should we have that opportunity. I hope to be able to update colleagues shortly and ensure they receive this pay award at the earliest possible opportunity.
14. Henry Watson continues to meet with Union representatives as we look to end the ongoing industrial action regarding office attendance. In collaboration, they are working on a shared set of agreed principles to guide our attendance going forwards. These principles state their agreement that colleagues should attend the office when there is a clear purpose for doing so, either at an individual or organisational level.

#### **Work continues to ensure we are on track to deliver our population and migration statistics, and Census 2031**

15. This month, we have released our latest set of publications related to International Migration. This included papers describing new methods for the estimation of migration flows of British Nationals and European Union Nationals, with a revised back series on 18 November, followed by the latest Long Term International Migration estimates on 27 November. There is a known data issue, affecting family emigration for visa holders,

impacting some of these estimates. This issue is mainly focused on provisional figures and does not mislead from the overall narrative. We have been sure to note this issue where relevant in the publications.

16. We remain on track to submit the Census 2031 Business Case to HM Treasury at the end of this month following discussions at ExCo. Colleagues in the programme are working with People and Business Services to manage the risk around building sufficient capacity and capability for Census 2031, and to maintain the critical path for a planned 2027 test. As we work through the organisational change processes needed to set up the Census 2031 programme, we continue to explore resourcing options including outsourcing, apprenticeships and other routes to market.

**Darren Tierney, Permanent Secretary, 20 November 2025**

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(25)61

## *National Statistician's Report, November 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 30 October 2025.

### **Role of the National Statistician**

2. Discussions on the **roles and responsibilities** of the National Statistician have continued throughout November. I have been pleased to engage with the interim Chair of the Board and the Permanent Secretary for Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the subject and look forward to continuing the conversation as needed.
3. As aligned with Statistics and Registration Service Act (SRSA) accountabilities, and the system-wide focus of the National Statistician, I agreed with the Permanent Secretary a suite of initial moves of key personnel. On 3 November 2025, the GSS Harmonisation and Coherence teams moved to the National Statistician's Office (NSO). The Centre for Equalities and Inclusion moved into the NSO shortly after, on 10 November 2025, from the Census Taskforce, reflecting the Government Statistical Service (GSS) wide nature of the activity.
4. These structural changes are in addition to the October moves of the Analysis Function (AF) and GSS Coordination teams, which moved across from ONS Methodology and Quality Directorate (MQD). Additional professional support teams enable the international leadership, statistical advisor and ambassadorial roles of the National Statistician through international and technical expertise. These are expected to be the final structural changes prior to the permanent appointment to the role of National Statistician.

### **National Statistician's Committees and Panels**

5. The first meeting of the **National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee** (NSIDAC) with the new Chair (Professor Evelyn Collins) and committee members was held on 28 October 2025. During the meeting, the committee were walked through the evaluation criteria for the Census 2031 Topic Consultation and Ethnicity Harmonisation Consultation and have subsequently provided written feedback on the evaluation criteria for both consultations which teams are taking on board.
6. Constructive conversations have taken place with Sir Bernard Silverman, Chair of the **Methodological Assurance Review Panel** (MARP), on the expansion of the committee to include the wider GSS once a permanent National Statistician is in post. I am grateful to Sir Bernard for his support to these proposals which will not require a significant overhaul of the terms of reference. The change in committee status also allows us to publicly recruit for new membership.

### **National Statistician's Engagements**

7. On 3 November 2025, I had a productive bilateral with Jennifer Banim, Director General at the **Central Statistics Office** (CSO), Ireland. We covered a range of topics, including digital ID, engagement with users of statistics (where I mentioned the triennial UK Statistics Assembly), hard-to-reach communities, and data infrastructure. I used this meeting, as I have done in others, such as my bilateral with the Canadian National Statistician, André Loranger in October, to reaffirm our commitment to cooperate, and

highlight the importance of international collaboration to address our specific and global challenges.

8. The **GSS Conference**, with this year's theme '*Ahead of the curve: preparing for the future of statistics*', was held on 4 November 2025 with around 350 attending in person in Manchester and 900 joining online. I was delighted to do the opening address for the conference, touching on the values that should underpin the work we all do across the statistical system. Despite some technical issues with the online experience, the organising committee delivered their objective of a flagship event for the GSS. There were clear links to our **GSS Vision**, '*Strength in Numbers*', throughout the day and emphasis on the important themes of innovation, transformation and coordination.
9. Also on 4 November 2025, I presented at an **Evidence Week** panel event in Westminster Hall. The panel discussed 'hidden hunger' and other challenges of evidence and data for decision makers.
10. On 12 November 2025, I had a productive introductory meeting with the co-chairs of the **Assistant Statisticians' Committee**. We discussed improvements to the learning journey, broader technical development opportunities through the fast stream and future career prospects within the civil service.
11. I presented at the inaugural **HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Data Analysts Conference** in Manchester on 18 November 2025. This was an excellent opportunity to extend the boundaries of the AF beyond existing professional groups to encourage and enhance collaboration and multidisciplinary working. I was able to showcase the support available through the AF across several areas. Attendees expressed a strong interest in what was covered, a good indication that there is appetite for cross-government analytical collaboration.

### **Broader UK Statistical System**

12. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) are two departments that deserve special mention this month. **UKHSA** have launched a pilot of a new operational access policy that aims to ensure data can be shared more widely than previously allowed for operational purposes to ensure our statistics have more impact improving public health outcomes whilst complying with the Code. Early feedback on the pilot has been positive. On Thursday 30 October, **MHCLG** published the latest English Indices of Deprivation 2025. This release has involved sustained collaboration across government to manage some significant data sourcing and linking challenges, but this update will open the indices to broader policy use, such as understanding more about deprivation in rural areas.
13. Following the deadline for the **Analysis in Government (AiG) Awards**, the AF central team are now managing the sifting process, in advance of releasing the shortlist in December. The AiG Awards highlight the quality and diversity of analysis in government in areas such as innovation, collaboration and impact.
14. Analysis Function working groups met recently on two of the priorities included in the **Analysis in Government Strategy** released earlier in the year. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) working group will oversee work to ensure that AI is being used appropriately within the function, and the Data Access working group will consider how we can overcome barriers and make more of the data we have available. The actions are still being agreed but are likely to include areas such as sharing examples of best practice and guidance in these areas and developing narratives to steer progress.
15. Steve Ellerd-Elliott and Jason Bradbury, two of the Deputy Heads of the GSS, held a very useful discussion with members of the **Regulation Committee** and shared statistical Heads of Profession's (HoPs) experiences of working with the Office for Statistics

Regulation (OSR) and the application of the Code. GSS HoPs have welcomed the launch of the **new Code of Practice** and will be raising awareness and support the adoption of Code 3.0 across the GSS. The OSR have provided helpful materials for HoPs to run sessions in their own departments and HoPs are contributing to OSR webinars to promote the new edition of the Code.

16. The need to develop senior **talent pipelines** within the GSS continues to be a point of concern raised across the GSS. This is a topic the Deputy Heads of the GSS and I are talking about regularly to increase the likelihood of a 'home-grown' National Statistician in the future. A proposal has been put forward to develop a leadership development programme, but resources to undertake this are yet to be identified.
17. The **2025 Annual Report of the Inclusive Data Taskforce** (IDTF) was published on the UK Statistics Authority website on 18 November 2025. This is the final report outlining progress across government to meet the recommendations of the taskforce. The Centre for Equalities and Inclusion, which now sits within the NSO, will continue to promote and support IDTF recommendations across the GSS.
18. We hosted a visit from the **Statistical Bureau of Japan**, covering topics including inflation, leadership and surveys. We also set out plans for future cooperation on shared priorities.
19. The Wellcome-funded Pandemic Preparedness Toolkit project has been rebranded as **Analysis for Action**, reflecting its potential as a resource for National Statistical Institutes on emergency response more broadly. This was communicated at the recent ISI conference and has been well received by stakeholders. The Wellcome Trust are very positive about our partnerships on this and climate and health, particularly in terms of statistics having a policy impact.

**Emma Rourke, Acting National Statistician, 20 November 2025**

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(25)62

## *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. **OSR Strategy:** We have made changes based on comments at the last Board meeting, and a small number of other comments we have received. We will publish the strategy in early December, highlighting our role in supporting trust and confidence in statistics, and emphasising the four strategic themes of:
  - i. credible and rigorous regulator;
  - ii. system catalyst;
  - iii. champion of statistics; and
  - iv. enhancing OSR's Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.
3. Key regulatory activities since the last board meeting include:
  - i. **Compliance review of Northern Ireland tourism statistics.** We carried out a high-level review of the extent to which the statistics on trips, nights and associated expenditure included in the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) tourism statistics compendium comply with the standards of the Code;
  - ii. **Care home census statistics and social care assessment and care at home services management information.** We responded to Public Health Scotland (PHS) in welcoming their plans to define a care home minimum dataset and to progress broader data transformation efforts; and
  - iii. **HMRC review:** In the light of errors with some HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) statistics, we have [announced](#) a review of how HMRC complies with the Code of Practice. This review will draw on HMRC's own internal review into recent errors and if considered necessary a second phase will take a more strategic lens considering the extent to which HMRC has implemented the recommendations of OSR's 2021 review of the quality of HMRC statistics.

### **Casework**

4. We have opened a further ten cases since the October Authority Board taking our total for the year so far to 98. We [responded](#) publicly to Seamus Logan MP on statements on water quality. The letter was accompanied by an OSR [explainer](#) published on our website. We have also responded to Max Wilkinson MP on the number of refugees in the UK, compared with other European countries.

### **2025 Intelligent Transparency Review**

5. We published our [2025 review of Intelligent Transparency](#) on 19 November. This review provides systematic insights into how well embedded intelligent transparency is within governments across the UK. We found that there has been good progress, but there is still work to be done to ensure that intelligent transparency is the default approach. We make six recommendations to support improvements.
6. We have also written to Ministers and Permanent Secretaries about the review and the launch of the third edition of the Code of Practice for Statistics. In these letters, we seek a commitment to support Heads of Professions in their efforts to work in line with the

Code and state our ambition for departments to publish public commitments to intelligent transparency.

### **Engagement**

7. Earlier this month I attended the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Conference and gave a keynote talk about the refreshed Code of Practice. The new Code received a warm reaction by attendees.
8. I spoke at Evidence Week in Parliament which included a reverse select committee in which members of the public quiz MPs and experts (of which I was one) on the evidence available to inform policy. I was asked about correcting misstatements and also about revisions. I also spoke at a London School of Economics (LSE) Open Research community event on the importance of openness.
9. I also attended the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Conference in Athens which was about dissemination and the communication of statistics. I spoke about the importance of Intelligent Transparency – which, while familiar in a UK context, was relatively new to an international audience of National Statistical Institutes and central banks. The extent of questions I received confirmed the high level of interest in, and growing awareness of, the role OSR plays within the international statistical community.
10. Before the Board meeting, I will be delivering a keynote address to the Transport for London analyst conference and another keynote as part of Public Health Scotland's public lecture series.
11. 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. We had over 400 attendees at our first online event, which was open to producers and users of statistics.
12. Finally the text of my World Statistics keynote on openness and vulnerability is now available on our [website](#). My key argument is that if statistics producers want to maintain public confidence, demonstrating integrity and competence are not on their own sufficient; in addition, producers need to demonstrate benevolence – putting users' interests first, and that this entails a willingness to be open and vulnerable to users.

### **Issues on my mind**

13. **Implementing OSR's strategy:** It is very important that we put in place the projects and programmes deliver on OSR's work strategic themes, in particular the ambition to be a *credible and rigorous regulator*. Putting this ambition into practice will require us to improve how we communicate our judgements, and how we track implementation of our recommendations. We also need to develop an effective prioritisation tool. So there is a lot to do in the first half of 2026 to make this strategy a reality.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 19 November 2025**

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(25)63

### ***Transformed Labour Force Survey – November 2025 Update***

#### **Purpose**

1. An update to the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) on the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) Programme.

#### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Board are invited to note:
  - i. recent progress and key risks across the TLFS Programme;
  - ii. the Programme Board decision to aim for implementation of the design changes as part of Transition State 11 (TS11) by April 2026, instead of January; and
  - iii. the scenarios and key decision points presented.

#### **Discussion**

3. The TLFS Programme reported Amber/Red at the TLFS Programme Board on 6 November given data quality risks associated with the integration of Northern Ireland data, the collection of Standard Industrial Classification/Standard Occupational Classification (SIC/SOC) data and decision to move the January 2026 TS11 milestone to April 2026. TS11 was intended to represent the final key improvements to the survey before six months of stable data collection. It is now rated Red and will not be met.
4. This update briefly summarises broader progress and risks, before focusing on TS11 timeline decision, scenario planning and key decision points.
5. Progress continues with the development and implementation of design and methods improvements:
  - i. the short Core Survey (the streamlined, longitudinal, labour-market-focused questionnaire) successfully launched in July 2025, and provisional data indicate that it is reducing the number of partial household responses and improving representativeness by increasing the proportion of larger households responding;
  - ii. Supported Completion, which enables interviewers to assist respondents within their own homes to complete the TLFS online, went live on 20 October 2025;
  - iii. a crossover survey to understand and interpret differences in response between the TLFS and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) has launched;
  - iv. the quarterly sample size for the TLFS Plus survey has increased from October from 50,000 to 90,000 households – matching the Core survey sample size; and
  - v. a strategy for dealing with missingness and partial responses in the TLFS data using a combination of imputation and weighting has been endorsed by users and methods experts as the optimal method for maximising the quality of TLFS data.
6. These activities are supported by timely and transparent stakeholder engagement and communication:
  - i. the latest Labour market transformation – update on progress and plans: November 2025 article was published on 14 November 2025. This included our latest position on transition timing (see paragraph 15 below); and
  - ii. engagement is underway to ensure both Core and Plus Surveys are meeting the need for additional labour market, and wider household, socioeconomic and local (HSL) data. Early conversations with stakeholders have emphasised the importance of quality and achieved sample size for the TLFS Plus survey. This feedback has been echoed in recent official correspondence from the Minister for Employment

Rights and Consumer Protection at the Department for Business and Trade seeking assurance that we are providing sufficient support and investment for the Plus Survey.

7. Continued focus on strengthening collaboration across the Programme remains a priority, and this was the central theme of our recent TLFS Leadership Away Day. With over 60 leaders in attendance, the event provided opportunity to share delivery achievements and celebrate collaboration successes. Key sessions included scenario planning for delivery confidence and a workshop on addressing “wicked issues” such as managing uncertainty and embedding cultural values.
8. We are currently in the process of finalising the Outline Business Case for the TLFS Programme which will be presented to December Programme Board. The business case follows traditional five-case best practice and will go to Investment and Delivery Assurance Group (IDAG) in January and subsequently HM Treasury. There are significant costs with running the TLFS and LFS in parallel and the business case will provide a clear overview of these costs, funding sources and affordability, covering the period from 2025/26 to 2027/28.
9. In parallel, significant work continues to mitigate the Programme’s two main risks:
  - i. we are continuing to engage closely with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) as we work through potential solutions to maintaining UK data outputs and publication timelines as they transition to their new Labour Market Survey (LMS). NISRA have confirmed that they are able to provide their processed Northern Ireland data earlier than previously expected. Teams are now testing whether this will allow the continued, timely publication of UK data when NISRA transition to their new LMS. Outcomes of the testing are expected at the end of this year; and
  - ii. ensuring that data on complex variables, SIC and SOC, are collected to a sufficient quality continues to be a priority for the TLFS Programme. While progress has been made, further time is needed to refine and test innovative solutions for these such as search-as-you-type questions and respondent-centred activity frames. Initial testing shows promise, but more development is required before these can be fully implemented in the TLFS.

#### Transition State 11 Delivery

10. As reported to the Board previously, the TLFS Programme aimed to introduce all major survey changes necessary to meet critical user needs on the TLFS by January 2026, followed by three months of parallel running and data collection and then a data assessment from April to July 2026 (while the parallel run continues). The design changes are data rotation, improvements to the pay and earnings questions and implementation of Search As You Type (SAYT) for the SIC question.
11. At the end of October 2025, the Programme held a testing checkpoint to determine whether January 2026 could be met for any of the planned scope, but the assessment and subsequent decision taken by the Programme Board is that January 2026 will not be achievable, with efforts now focused on delivery in April 2026.
12. The Programme continues to grip this issue by implementing the following mitigating actions:
  - i. data rotation tested in parallel to other questionnaire changes;
  - ii. utilisation of automated testing scripts for pay and earnings changes;
  - iii. rapidly sourcing six additional testing experts;
  - iv. end-to-end test manager to align, coordinate and ensure cohesion; and

- v. data rotation design review to provide additional design assurance.
- 13. Data rotation has a number of anticipated statistical benefits, including increased data stability and an improved respondent experience, and has been highlighted by stakeholders as a necessary quality improvement. Given the complexities of data rotation, contingency planning is exploring any viable alternatives that could bring the same quality improvements. Although there is more to do to test this thinking, at this stage any alternative would not give the same suite of statistical benefits as data rotation.
- 14. Within this context, the current Programme position is to maintain the Level 0 Data Quality Assessment Milestone in July 2026 to still provide a formal assessment of the data quality benefits offered from the short Core and in-home Supported Completion and enable future Programme plans to be confirmed.
- 15. The latest external messaging outlined in the *Labour market transformation – update on progress and plans: November 2025* article on 14 November 2025 reiterated our aim to transition to the TLFS for our headline labour market statistics in November 2026 if we and our users are ready, while being clear that this may extend into 2027 if our (or users') assessment of quality requires more data to be collected and assessed. It also acknowledged the potential impact of moving the implementation of data rotation to April – which may affect the decision as to whether more data will be required as it will mean only one quarter of data post implementation will have been collected, allowing for only limited quality assessment of its impact in July 2026.
- 16. We will keep the impact of this under review and provide further updates to the Board, our key users and as part of the regular series of labour market transformation articles.

#### Scenario planning, key decision points and pathways

- 17. The scenarios for expected TLFS transition readiness, spanning from the most optimistic to the most realistic are presented. The scenarios align to the uncertainty planning carried out at the start of this year and communicated through the Office for National Statistics (ONS) governance in the run-up to the decision in March 2025. It recognises the lessons learned in the previous phases of TLFS delivery around committing to firm 'decommission decision' dates, that don't recognise the uncertainty around data quality that cannot be known until it is collected and assessed.
- 18. As the Programme and projects have matured, and the delivery has progressed, an updated assessment of expected confidence at different points in time has been carried out against measures of success. The measures of success are a comprehensive set of quality criteria covering different aspects of survey performance, including achieved sample size, precision, stability, and timeliness.
- 19. The measures of success criteria will be re-tested over the next eight months with stakeholders to ensure they can provide evidence to support relative judgements between TLFS and LFS. Understanding and evidencing these relative judgements will be central to effective decision making and to handling the differing views among stakeholders as we conduct the data quality assessment and make decisions at the first readiness assessment in July 2026.
- 20. A monthly review of confidence assessments of each of the measures of success have been scheduled and is an area that will be kept under regular review as we learn more about the data and the effectiveness of the survey design changes.
- 21. It should be noted that the measures of success refer to the minimum acceptable level for transition, and that in any scenario, there will be further work required post transition to continue to mature the other success measures. The Programme cannot end at the

point of transition to ensure the sustainability of the survey beyond that point. Equally, recent discussions have outlined the potential value of transitioning to the TLFS as a gradual process rather than a single big event. We will explore this concept further in the coming weeks, particularly the role of potentially publishing experimental TLFS data prior to any formal transition decisions.

### **Conclusion**

22. The Programme has demonstrated a strong commitment to delivering survey improvements, but recent assessments have necessitated a shift in the implementation timeline to ensure the quality and robustness of the remaining key design changes.
23. The Programme's approach to transition readiness is grounded in scenario planning that recognises both the inherent uncertainties of large-scale survey transformation and the lessons learned from previous phases.
24. Critical work is underway to outline how the final transition decision will be agreed to provide clarity and accountability, including on how to manage any trade-offs and conflicting priorities and perspectives amongst stakeholders. This will form part of the next TLFS update for the Board in early 2026.
25. While the path to transition is complex and requires careful navigation of multiple perspectives and priorities, the Programme's commitment to a structured, inclusive, and evidence-based decision-making process will be central to its success.

**Dr Alex Lambert, Senior Responsible Owner, TLFS Programme, 17 November 2025<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Some information has been redacted and will be released following the next public March TLFS update.

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(25)64

## ***Economic Statistics Plan Update, November 2025***

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on progress of the Economic Statistics Plan (ESP).

### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board (the Board) are invited to:
  - i. note progress made since September's update, including governance enhancements, milestone delivery, and resourcing improvements;
  - ii. note the decision to adopt a single integrated Surveys and Economic and Social Statistics (SESS) plan from March 2026, uniting ESP, Population Statistics, Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan, and business as usual (BAU), supported by a cross-functional federated team; and
  - iii. endorse the quarterly update on progress of ESP scheduled for publication on 4 December.

### **Background**

3. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Economic Statistics Plan, [\*Restoring confidence, improving quality: The plan for ONS economic statistics\*](#), was published on 26 June 2025 alongside the Devereux Review and [Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan](#) (SIEP).
4. ESP represents an ambitious series of change which is highly integrated with areas across ONS including several elements of the SIEP and methodology and technology improvements. Establishing Surveys and Economic and Social Statistics (SESS), provides opportunities for optimising how we achieve this integration alongside our BAU commitments.

### **Discussion**

#### Setting up for success

5. ESP Steering Group oversees delivery of ESP. At its 10 November meeting members agreed ESP & Population statistics, SIEP and SESS BAU activities will be brought together under an integrated plan of agreed plausible priorities with an initial view of priorities expected by the end of November
6. We will build on progress to date, enhancing ESP delivery approach to balance transparency, control, and autonomy. Improvements through to year-end will include holistic reporting, targeted communication and engagement, and proportionate governance and assurance to support effective decisions and business planning. Further this will align with wider ONS assurance including the refreshed People, Performance & Change, and Strategic Design Authority which will support the management of our top strategic risks.
7. Strategic stakeholder engagement is receiving attention, the first ESP External Steering Group convened on 7 October with HM Treasury, Office for Budget Responsibility, and Bank of England. The group expressed strong support, emphasising a need for early visibility of delivery risks and output impacts. They highlighted priority areas for trade-off decisions this financial year, including Labour Force Survey/Transformed Labour Force Survey (LFS/TLFS) transition, the role of Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF) in inflation weights, and public sector finances, providing valuable insight and challenge. The next

meeting of the group is scheduled for 20 November and is expected to focus on horizon scanning of 2026/27 priorities.

#### Progress to date

8. Progress has been made across improvements, including resourcing. Current milestone status:
  - i. 5 Complete (an increase of three this month);
  - ii. 15 Green;
  - iii. 15 Amber; and
  - iv. 5 Red.
9. Completed milestones include the successful reinstatement of the monthly producer prices bulletin, the transition of business prices data collection to an electronic platform and implementation of interim improvements to house price methodology to improve revisions.
10. Red milestones highlight critical gaps in analytical capacity in the National Accounts and GDP themes and increasing complexity, particularly for Statistical Business Register (SBR) adoption, end to end transformation of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and testing challenges for TLFS for data rotation. Back to green actions include bolstering test resource and parallel testing for TLFS, clarifying way forward on utilising legacy technology for SBR adoption and end to end alignment of ASHE improvements and accountabilities.
11. As part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen ESP delivery, a total of 93 new ESP posts have now been successfully filled. However, 71 vacancies remain, with the majority concentrated in three critical areas: data analyst roles, data science and systems, and Methods. Targeted recruitment campaigns are currently underway or have recently concluded, with the aim of addressing these gaps.

#### Challenges

12. ESP delivery faces several key challenges: increasing clarity on the scale and complexity of work through ongoing implementation, managing demand on enabling partners, and securing cross-office agreement on end-to-end scope. Recruitment delays have created knock-on impacts for some teams despite progress in onboarding critical role. Further work on prioritisation, sequencing and end to end planning is underway to address these and will require trade-offs to protect high value improvements and BAU.

#### Quarterly Update

13. In response to Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) for publication of ongoing updates the first quarterly publication is attached for review by the Board. The publication is scheduled for 4 December and will include a summary, supported by more detailed ESP update. Detailed updates on SIEP and the Data Sources strategy will be published at the same time.
14. The reports provide details of departmental and strategic changes along with progress across ESP, SIEP encompassing BAU activity, including reflections on our learning during this time.

#### **Consideration for Priority Outcomes**

15. This Plan plays a key part in delivering ONS Priority Outcome 2 and bringing Strategic Risk 7 (Quality economics statistics) back into tolerance through its focus on end-to-end quality improvements for our core economic statistics.

#### **Conclusion**

16. ESP is maturing and making progress with some key improvements now in place and onboarding of critical roles well underway. Challenges remain, particularly resource pressures, recruitment delays, and the need for cross-office alignment on end-to-end scope.
17. The integration of SESS activities is laying the foundations for a more robust approach to business delivery, mitigating these risks and positions us well to manage complexity, safeguard delivery, and achieve our long-term objectives.
18. Stakeholder engagement is maturing with publication of the first quarterly review providing an ideal opportunity for gathering further feedback and insight.

**Lisa Evans, Strategy, Planning, Innovation, Delivery, Assurance and Support (SPIDAS), 13 November 2025**

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(25)66

## ***Strategic Risk profile Update***

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Authority Board (the Board) with an update on the strategic risk profile following liaison with strategic risk owners and discussions at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on 13 November 2025.

### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
  - i. review analysis of the wider strategic risk profile, including exposure scores against risk appetite ; and
  - ii. review the analysis of the strategic risk owned by the Permanent Secretary, overseen by the Authority Board – ‘Trustworthiness, impact and independence’.

### **Background**

3. The strategic risk profile demonstrates the most significant risks to the successful delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives, owned by the senior leadership. The latest version of the strategic risk profile and appetite ranges were signed off by the Board at its March 2025 meeting.

### **Discussion**

#### *Trustworthiness, impact and independence risk (SR0)*

4. The overarching risk SR0 is currently operating outside appetite largely due to the ongoing challenges related to trust in the organisation and outcomes of the Sir Robert Devereux review and Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) Inquiry.
5. As Permanent Secretary, Darren Tierney has taken ownership of SR0 and supported the increase in score and has subsequently worked with the Risk and Assurance (R&A) team and his private office to provide an updated risk articulation and full refresh of controls.
6. The new controls bring in management of the wider strategic risk profile, governance, and delivery of our improvement plans. Alongside this, ongoing controls have been reviewed and improved including Executive Committee (ExCo) remit, engagement with stakeholders and how we respond to public reviews and parliamentary inquiries.
7. October's control updates report an improving picture although notes there is still further work required before this risk can return to within appetite.
8. Positive media and stakeholder sentiment is increasing, supported by the Turnaround Communications Strategy and greater leadership visibility and transparency.
9. We are on track to respond to the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR's) request for quarterly public updates. The first of these is expected to be published in early December 2025. Discussions have also been held between Ed Humpherson and James Benford.
10. Changes to executive governance are imminent which will help address the challenge posed by the current ExCo set-up, which is unsustainable in the long term.

#### *Wider Strategic Risk Profile*

11. Since the last update to Board, six out of eleven strategic risks have moved outside of risk appetite. As noted above, SR0 is currently outside appetite, a summary of the other out of appetite risks is provided below and some risks have been rearticulated (SR0, SR1 and SR5).
12. Key themes identified across the strategic risk profile include the need for continued prioritisation enabled by successful business planning process, ensuring resources are in the right place with the right skills to deliver our priorities and support our improvement plans and rebuild trust. Improvements in governance further support us in assuring management of our key risks and issues and this also requires sufficient capacity, engagement and maturity to supportive effective risk management and assurance.
13. SR2 'Delivery of strategic ambition': Positive progress has been made, with ExCo finalising and communicating prioritisation decisions to staff and on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website on 12 November. These decisions will enable focus to deliver our mission in a sustainable way. The implications require some working through with staff, users and stakeholders and the next steps will be to operationalise these decisions through the upcoming business planning process, when we will re-assess the scoring for this risk.
14. SR5 'Our people': was moved out of appetite due to operational challenges in relation to ensuring the right skills are pivoted to our key priorities at pace, alongside cultural challenges surfaced in recent reviews. SR5 has been rearticulated, and a new people plan has been developed, setting out targeted actions to address key risks and challenges and support managing SR5 within appetite. Controls, metrics and assurance activities will be reframed to support the management of this risk.
15. SR7 'Quality Economic Statistics': There has been cross-office effort to enable delivery of the improvement plans alongside key improvements to quality including a boost to household survey sample sizes, methods improvements and the restart of producer price indices. The dual running of Labour Force Survey/Transformed Labour Force Survey (LFS/TLFS) is likely to extend and there are ongoing resourcing gaps with slow recruitment. Governance is in the early stages of being applied to allow for greater assurance and better join up, with current delivery confidence as amber/red. Recent metrics have remained largely static, including Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) risk assessments, cancellations, and postponements with a slight increase in errors including two majors reported in September. We do not have an agreed set of controls for SR7 that are being reported against.
16. SR9 'Quality Population Statistics': Resourcing is still impacting the mitigation of key risks including developing methods, embedding recommendations from the statistical quality management plan and ensuring appropriate skills to support systems used in our statistics (which requires a wider strategic view on our IT infrastructure, linked to SR12). Parallel running of the Admin Based Population Estimates (ABPE) and Mid-Year Population Estimates (MYE), plus ongoing issues with data resulting from the movement from legacy systems to cloud platforms continue to exacerbate these challenges. Quality concerns and forthcoming revisions to migration statistics due largely to improvements in methods are expected, with changes communicated in advance. However, there are also likely to be some revisions from data provided to ONS which will need to be carefully managed.
17. SR12 'Technological resilience' continues to report as out of appetite due to the lack of a detailed and assured plan to reduce the organisation's use of legacy technology. An organisational strategic view of our optimal IT infrastructure is required. A three-month trial of a new Digital Delivery Framework has been agreed by ExCo, which aims to provide clarity over the legacy systems posing the highest risk to ONS outputs, how the

organisation plans to prioritise moving away from these systems and introduces a new governance forum to monitor progress against these plans. More clarity over the timelines for tangible plans for organisation wide IT infrastructure and legacy reduction is necessary.

#### Assurance update

18. At the request of ExCo and ARAC members, the R&A team were commissioned to understand first- and second-line assurance in place across the organisation. The outcomes of the commission established what first and second line assurance is in place and where we may require additional or strengthened first or second line assurance. It also identified where further work is required to gain a better understanding of assurance across the organisation and how we might get more integrated approach to assurance.
19. High level thematic findings were as follows:
  - i. lack of clarity around assurance activities and a misunderstanding of assurance and the three lines;
  - ii. limited assurance capacity, with some second line teams operating with limited oversight and varied capacity and capability of R&A leads; and
  - iii. lack of integrated assurance.
20. Whilst areas of improvement were identified, there was a good level of assurance in many areas, and it was noted that many of the issues currently faced by the business were identified through existing assurance and raised. However, better integration and visibility of their outcomes is required to ensure we are addressing key risks earlier. A refreshed Assurance Working Group (chaired by the Head of Internal Audit) will facilitate better integrated assurance reporting to ExCo and ARAC moving forwards.
21. The R&A team proposed a series of recommendations to address the thematic findings above. ExCo discussed and agreed the findings and recommendations noting they were a fair reflection of the current position. However, given the current funding constraints, the R&A team were asked to prioritise the recommendations to consider how they could best utilise current resource (including the R&A leads) and factor this into business planning.

#### **Conclusion**

22. This paper has highlighted some challenges that the Board should be aware of in relation to the strategic risks outside of risk appetite. It has also touched on the importance of business planning and prioritisation to ensure we can deliver out priorities without compromising on quality, including addressing our legacy estate and current operational and cultural people issues. Significant work is required to bring these risks into appetite with greater clarity on timelines needed, recognising that the risks and issues faced will take time and cross office support to address.

**Natalie Tarr, Head of Assurance and Kirsty Campion, Head of Risk, November 2025**

***GSS Vision - 'Strength in Numbers' – progress and priorities***

**Purpose**

1. This paper and accompanying dashboard provide an update on the progress made implementing the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Vision, 'Strength in Numbers'. Proposed areas of focus for the next six months are outlined. Three key areas of strategic focus are highlighted.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
  - i. note the progress made towards implementing the GSS Vision;
  - ii. endorse the proposed areas of focus for the next six months and three key strategic priorities; and
  - iii. identify how the Board can support GSS leadership to address the three key strategic priorities.

**Background**

3. The GSS Vision 'Strength in Numbers' was launched in October 2024, setting out how the GSS achieves and can strengthen cross-government statistical collaboration and impact. The implementation of the vision is being taken forward by members of the GSS with assurance from the National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG).
4. Our previous paper to the Board in July highlighted areas of challenge and opportunity for the GSS identified through our work to implement the GSS Vision. Board advice was to primarily focus on a small number of key priorities.
5. As well as providing a high-level overview of progress towards implementation of the GSS Vision across all objectives, this paper highlights three key strategic priorities for future focus.

**Discussion**

6. The GSS Vision Metrics Dashboard provides a visual update of progress against agreed actions and the impact of these actions using both qualitative RAG status and quantitative metrics for each of the four pillars of the Vision. The dashboard includes results from a new survey of the GSS community that was open during August 2025.
7. Significant areas of progress towards implementation of the Vision alongside areas of action for the next six months are set under each of the four pillars.

**Coordination, Cooperation, and Leadership**

8. Decision making in partnership across departmental boundaries:
  - i. continue to influence the scope of the role of the National Statistician and how this sits alongside the Permanent Secretary for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to ensure benefits are realised for the GSS. Revisit sustainability of the GSS resourcing model following ONS restructure and the creation of the Office for the National Statistician;
  - ii. present recommendations from the review of GSS Governance (focused on committees/boards, GSS champions and Head of Profession (HoP) objectives towards GSS initiatives) at NSEG in December and if approved, move forward with implementation. This will strengthen and clarify GSS Governance.

- iii. publish GSS workplan summaries for key GSS Theme Groups on an annual basis and ensure alignment with Statistical Assembly priority areas to promote system-wide coordination and collaboration.

#### Capability and Community

- 9. Supporting a diverse, inclusive and vibrant community:
  - i. building on the momentum of the quarterly GSS Community Calls (which have attracted over 1000 attendees) the GSS delivered a successful conference on 4 November and brought the GSS community together to celebrate World Statistics Day on 20 October. Survey results show that overwhelmingly people feel included and are proud to be a member of the GSS community which values diversity;
  - ii. focus on diversity and inclusion activities for the GSS – through implementing a communications plan to boost Diversity and Inclusion activities (including publishing blogs, newsletter pieces, LinkedIn spotlights); exploring disparities in recruitment processes across departments; and scoping out the potential for a mutual mentoring scheme;
  - iii. launch and publish the reports (consultation response and main report) from the [future role of the statistician](#) in collaboration with the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) in November and begin implementing key actions identified in the report responding to the needs to think about the future of the GSS; and
  - iv. share results from the GSS survey with Heads of Profession, facilitating discussions on priority actions and next steps. Continue to iterate the GSS Vision metrics and dashboard.

#### Setting Standards

- 10. Promoting high-quality, trusted statistical production:
  - i. promote and implement Code of Practice for Statistics 3.0; and
  - ii. focus on GSS coherence through Statistical Assembly priority work.

#### Transformation and Innovation

- 11. Evolving the data estate to support future decision making:
  - i. identify a senior GSS champion for Artificial Intelligence (AI) to fill this leadership gap;
  - ii. consider the need for senior sponsorship for data sharing and implications for reduced scope of the Integrated Data Service (IDS);
  - iii. continue to hold cross GSS methodological knowledge sharing sessions on priority topics to share and build expertise; and
  - iv. task and finish group on a GSS-wide dissemination platform to continue to explore options and make a recommendation early in 2026.

- 12. Informed by the Vision implementation and discussions with HoPs and NSEG we have identified three key strategic priorities for the GSS reflecting the 'what', 'how' and the 'who'.

#### **13. What: Embracing modern approaches and techniques whilst managing the risks.**

The GSS has historically led the way in adopting modern analytical approaches across the Analysis Function (AF), including innovations like reproducible analytical pipelines and analytical data science. However, a gap remains in strategic leadership for AI within both the GSS and the wider AF. In contrast, the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) profession has successfully positioned itself as a leader in AI across government. To keep pace, the GSS must establish its own leadership from an analytical standpoint—championing the opportunities AI presents in data processing, automation, and generating deeper insights, while also addressing critical risks such as bias,

transparency, and ethical considerations. The GSS needs to embrace learning and experimentation in this space to develop the necessary capability. As a first step, we are appointing a senior GSS AI champion to drive coordination and momentum. Additionally, an AF working group has been formed to provide strategic direction and ensure a cohesive approach. Consideration should be given to the role of the National Statistician and members of their team in providing strategic statistical leadership to issues such as AI.

14. **How: GSS leadership and governance.** The separation of the ONS Permanent Secretary role from that of the National Statistician presents a positive opportunity for the GSS. It allows the National Statistician greater scope to actively lead the strategic direction of the GSS. However, it's essential that this opportunity is fully realised and fully resourced. While we acknowledge that some aspects of the role split will evolve over time—and that initial attention will naturally focus on statistical issues within ONS outputs—we must not lose sight of the potential for enhanced support across the GSS. The Office for the National Statistician must have the right structures and sufficient resource to deliver for the GSS. Building on reflections from our previous paper to the Board, it is crucial that the GSS has a clear and influential voice in discussions around future governance and resourcing and business planning to ensure its priorities and perspectives are well represented.
15. **Who: Inspiring the next generation of future statisticians.** We are actively working to strengthen the identity of the GSS, but there is still more to be done. Our collaboration with the RSS has helped shape our thinking around the evolving role of statisticians, particularly in relation to recruitment, retention, and career development—issues frequently raised by members of our community. To build on this momentum, we must take deliberate action to inspire the next generation of statisticians and establish a clear, sustainable talent pipeline that supports long-term, fulfilling career pathways within the GSS. As identified in our previous paper to the Board there needs to be particular focus on senior talent pipelines in order to increase the likelihood of a future 'home-grown' National Statistician. We are grateful to Board members for agreeing to engage with our HoP community and sharing their career journeys. A proposal has been put forward to develop a leadership development programme, but resources to undertake this are yet to be identified.

## Conclusion

16. Good progress has continued to be made towards implementing the GSS Vision. Proposed areas of action have been identified that will be taken forward over the next six months to continue this progress. Three key strategic priorities have been identified. These will be championed by the Deputy Heads of the GSS and the National Statistician and we would welcome support from the Board.

**Jason Bradbury, Jane Naylor, Steve Ellerd-Elliott, Deputy Heads of the GSS,  
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