

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

***Minutes***

**Thursday 26 March 2026**

**London Office**

**Hybrid Meeting**

**Members Present**

Penny Young (Chair)

Dr. Jacob Abboud

Peter Barron

Ed Humpherson

Professor Dame Carol Propper

Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter

Professor Mairi Spowage

Darren Tierney

Dr. Sarah Walsh

**Other Attendees**

James Benford

Lincoln Blair (for item 8)

June Bowman

Megan Cooper (for item 13)

Lucinda Eggleton (for items 6, 12 and 15)

Mary Gregory

Alex Lambert (for item 14)

Liz McKeown (for items 13 and 14)

Tom Taylor

**Apologies**

Sarah Moore

**Secretariat**

Sally Jones

Jo-Anna Hagen

## **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Sarah Moore.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1. There were no new conflicts of interest.

## **3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings**

- 1.2 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 February were agreed.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(26)17]**

- 4.1. The Chair reported on her activities since the Board last met. A session had been held for Non-executive Directors (NEDs) on 18 March, led by Megan Cooper on lessons learned from the Integrated Data Programme. Introductory meetings with NEDs had also been held with Megan Cooper in her new role as ONS Director Economic Statistics Improvement.
- 4.2. Interviews for the National Statistician recruitment process had concluded with an announcement on the appointment to follow in due course. As agreed a panel had been convened to assure key Government Statistical Service (GSS) guidance on behalf of the Board in the absence of a National Statistician and would be considering a range of topics.
- 4.3. It was noted that the draft ONS Business Plan would be circulated in correspondence to NEDs ahead of a substantive discussion at April Board. Timing for the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) report on the work of the Authority had not yet been confirmed. It was agreed Secretariat would schedule weekly meetings for NEDs to ensure an opportunity for early discussion on publication of the report. The Chair and Permanent Secretary agreed that it would be useful to provide a further update to PACAC on delivery to date.
- 4.4. With regard to the Board dashboard it was agreed that further information on Internal Audits completed would be included as well as the total number.

## **5. Report from the Permanent Secretary [SA(26)18]**

- 5.1. Darren Tierney provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting highlighting the following:
  - i. the proposed new hybrid working principles developed jointly with the unions had been shared with colleagues across the organisation. Union members would be voting on these until the end of the month;
  - ii. the business planning process was near completion including a delivery pipeline, which would need further prioritisation with a focus on deliverability. The Executive Committee (ExCo) would provide the forum on how to balance competing priorities across ONS major programmes including census and economic statistics;
  - iii. the recruitment process for Director General for Digital, Data and Technology had concluded with an announcement on the successful candidate to follow; and
  - iv. following the 2025 People Survey anonymous quarterly pulse surveys would be undertaken with the first in April to provide a regular view of colleague sentiment across the year;
- 5.2. Members discussed the update and highlighted the importance of the policies in place in relation to psychological safety, safeguarding, speaking up and whistleblowing and hybrid working principles including the responsibility of bystanders.

## **6. Report from the National Statistician's Office [SA(26)19]**

- 6.1. Lucinda Eggleton provided an update on activities across the National Statistician's Office (NSO) highlighting the following:
  - i. NSO colleagues had conducted the final phase of international statistical leadership training programme, which had been co-developed with the UN Economic Commission for Africa in 2019 and would be handed over to an African institution to increase sustainability;

- ii. James Benford led the ONS delegation at the 57<sup>th</sup> UN Statistical Commission held in March. The Board heard that James Benford had subsequently been invited to give a keynote speech for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to talk about the approach by ONS to its recovery plans. The Commission had considered Artificial Intelligence (AI) Readiness and had agreed the establishment of a City Group on AI Readiness;
  - iii. NSO's analysis and methods team had undertaken analysis for the Department of Work and Pensions to feed into an interim report for the Young People in Work Report, due for publication later in the year;
  - iv. focus groups had been held for the Young Voices project exploring how young people from diverse backgrounds feel about sharing their views with government for research purposes. An update would be provided for the Board at a future meeting; and
  - v. a potential risk in relation to the seniority of Head of Profession (HoP) positions with some evidence that a few departments are debating the seniority of HoP posts in response to departmental funding pressure. This is a potential concern when the GSS is aiming to enhance the talent pipeline.
- 6.2. Members discussed the report and expressed concern about the potential risk to seniority of HoP roles. It was agreed the Chair would discuss this as part of her regular meetings with the Deputy Heads of GSS. It was noted that a workshop for the Chair and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee NEDs on system wide risks was in the process of being scheduled and would take place ahead of the April Board meeting.
- 6.3. Members highlighted the importance of learning lessons from the previous attempt at developing a GSS wide dissemination platform, which had proven extremely challenging and failed, to the ongoing work to developing a vision of a unified government platform for statistics.

## **7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(26)20]**

- 7.1. Ed Humpherson updated the Board on the work by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) since the last meeting focusing on OSR's themes as set out in its strategy published in November 2025: OSR as a credible and rigorous regulator, system catalyst and public use of statistics.
- 7.2. OSR had published its compliance review of Gross Domestic Product Seasonality and had written to Mary Gregory, ONS Executive Director, Population, Census and Social Statistics, acknowledging ONS's revised plans for the 2025 midyear population estimates continuing with existing methods.
- 7.3. OSR colleagues had been invited to present to a group of special advisors at No.10 on the expectations for Ministers and officials when they use data and analysis in public life. In advance of the elections in Scotland and Wales OSR published a series of explainers on the statistics on key issues that are likely to arise in election campaigns.
- 7.4. Members discussed the update including the information provided on the current position of de-accreditations. It was clarified that the largest by volume related in some way to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The second category related to those that would likely be reaccredited at some point and a third category that would not be reaccredited due to fundamental structural reasons on quality.
- 7.5. The Board noted the update and agreed that as the regulator for the statistics system it would be appropriate for the public to hear from OSR colleagues.

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

- 8.1. The Chair reported on the work of the Regulation Committee, which had last met on 11 March 2026
- 8.2. The Committee had considered:

- i. the work on Intelligent Transparency;
- ii. the approach to developing the annual State of the Statistical System Report;
- iii. OSR's plans for regulatory oversight of ONS population and migration statistics and delivery of recovery plans;
- iv. exploratory work into filling the evidence gap left by the discontinuation of the Public Confidence in Official Statistics Survey; and
- v. delivery progress on OSR's evaluation strategy and development of key performance indicators.

8.3. The Board noted the update.

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

9.1. The Chair reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which had last met on 12 March 2026.

9.2. The Committee had considered:

- i. the financial position of the organisation, the forecast year end surplus and the approach to managing the financial strategic risk in 2026/27 to avoid a surplus position at that point;
- ii. the strategic risk profile, with over half of the risks reporting outside of appetite and a focus on mitigating activities and route to green plans;
- iii. the refreshed strategic risk profile following workshops, ahead of a substantive discussion at April Board;
- iv. follow up audits on Reproducible Analytical Pipelines and Data Governance and an audit on Website development;
- v. delivery of the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26; and
- vi. the draft Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 and agreement that it required further consideration to ensure it focused on the right topics and ONS had the capacity to deliver it, alongside delivery of recovery plans.

9.3. The Board noted the update.

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

10.1. The Chair reported on the work of the Population Statistics System Committee, which had last met on 25 March 2026.

10.2. The Committee had considered:

- i. an update from the Executive Director for Population, Census and Social Statistics including the response to the Census topic consultation and the ethnicity harmonised standard and the first iteration of Management Information;
- ii. plans for the mid-year population estimates using the current methodology;
- iii. programme resourcing; and
- iv. development of the key strategic risks to the delivery of the Census programme, with the need for further work.

10.3. The Committee had also discussed the interplay between the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Population Statistics Committee to the oversight and scrutiny of the Census Strategic Risk (SR). Following discussions by Mary Gregory, Jason Zawadzki, Secretariat with Dr Sarah Walsh and Dr Jacob Abboud an approach had been agreed. The PSS would provide detailed oversight of the Census Strategic Risk and underpinning key risks, with risk a standing item at PSS. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee would provide oversight of the Census SR as part of the overall update on the strategic risk profile to every meeting supported by oral updates on PSS risk discussions by Dr Walsh, (who is a member of both ARAC and PSS). ARAC will also have the opportunity to commission Census risk deep dives as needed.

## **11. Communications Update**

- 11.1. Peter Barron reported on recent media coverage since the last meeting. Media coverage and sentiment continued to be more balanced. The annual update of the inflation basket of goods had achieved positive coverage.
- 11.2. The Board noted the report and the value of monitoring the range of ONS media coverage.

## **12. National Statistician's Office Model [SA(26)21]**

As this area is policy in development, this part of the minute will be published upon completion.

## **13. Economic Statistics Plan [SA(26)22]**

- 13.1. Megan Cooper and James Benford introduced a paper, which focused on the next quarterly progress update for the Economic Statistics Plan and Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan scheduled for publication on 15 April. The publication reflected feedback from non-executive directors, ExCo and the external senior level steering group. Feedback included the need for clarity on the realism of the plans and delivery confidence, the impact of missed milestones and the practical impact of items in the 'waiting room'. It was noted that further work was needed on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with plans in place to publish some examples of KPIs on the day of publication.
- 13.2. The Board heard that key achievements since the last publication included the incorporation of grocery scanner data into consumer prices statistics and the introduction of data rotation for the Transformed Labour Force Survey. Areas of focus for future improvement included the implementation of International Macroeconomic Statistical Standards for implementation by 2030.
- 13.3. Members discussed the paper. The following points were made in discussion:
  - i. the timing of publication for both the next ESP/SIEP and Labour Market Transformation update quarterly publications with confirmation that both would be published on the same day, which the Board supported;
  - ii. the importance of KPIs and the need for clarity on achievements to date, and issues and remaining challenges, would be beneficial for users;
  - iii. whether it would be beneficial to include details of LFS and TLFS response rates in the Executive Summary and further detail of the progress of the recently approved project by ExCo to examine the feasibility of mandating household surveys. It was noted that further detail on various aspects of LFS quality including response rates were available in both the in-depth articles on LFS quality, with the next publication in April and the quarterly LFS performance and quality monitoring reports with the next publication in May;
  - iv. care was needed when referencing response levels as opposed to response rates throughout the publications;
  - v. clarity on the work in the 'waiting room' would be provided later in the year, on conclusion of business planning and further work on prioritisation; and
  - vi. the importance of implementing international standards in line with G7 peers. A new programme had been set up to implement new macroeconomic statistical standards, which would now identify the path to implementing them, testing the ambition to implement the core of the new standards by 2030/31. Further consideration on governance would be needed following the outcome of the Internal Audit on Economic Statistics governance.
- 13.4. The Board commended ONS on the ESP/SIEP Report scheduled for publication mid-April highlighting the need to clear on areas of challenge and areas of success.

## **14. Transformed Labour Force Survey [SA(26)23]**

- 14.1. Alex Lambert introduced a paper which focused on the response to the recent Gateway Review and the next quarterly progress update on the TLFS. As already noted as part of the previous item the next quarterly TLFS communication would be published on the same day as the combined ESP/SIEP publication (mid-April). The data rotation milestone had been met

and a decision had been made to proceed with a test later in the year on Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC), following a period of research development and testing on potential solutions for the SIC data quality issue.

- 14.2. The Board heard that the publication had been drafted to reflect the strategic communication objectives, to be transparent about programme risks, trade-offs and uncertainties especially around timelines and quality. The draft publication had received broad support from key users at the Labour Market Technical Group and Stakeholder Advisory Panel.
- 14.3. Members discussed the draft narrative fully and highlighted the need to provide clarity on what would happen and when set in the wider context. It was noted that the Gateway Review aligned to the programme position that further data collection and assessment would be required post July 2026, which would be reflected in the April publication. By July 2026 only one quarter of data reflecting the latest set of design changes would have been collected and as such further data collection and assessment would be needed to provide sufficient assurance to begin the process of moving away from the Labour Force Survey and as ONS headline labour market statistics. The publication would be underpinned by proactive engagement with users and the media.

## **15. UK Statistics Assembly [SA(26)24]**

- 15.1. Lucinda Eggleton introduced a paper which provided an update on delivery of recommendation arising from the inaugural UK Statistics Assembly in January 2025. The Assembly was one of the key recommendations from the review of the Statistics Authority undertaken by Professor Denise Lievesley in March 2024. The Assembly Report set out four priorities: user engagement; granular statistics; greater use of administrative data and UK-wide coherence, each with an ONS and GSS lead to co-ordinate progress.
- 15.2. The Board heard that a tracker had been launched to understand progress, and where work had been deprioritised. Going forward regular meetings would be held with Peter Barron to monitor progress with regular updates to the Board. The aim was to publish an update on progress in June and consideration would be given to engagement ahead of the next Assembly.
- 15.3. Members discussed the update fully. The following points were made in discussion:
  - i. progress had been impacted by resources constraints across the GSS with many departments reducing in size and departmental priorities taking precedent;
  - ii. the recommendations provided the basis as a way of maintaining momentum with users;
  - iii. the need to identify a sponsor to lead the work as part of ONS's business planning process to ensure meaningful progress is made, which would have a multiplier effect across the statistical system;
  - iv. this work naturally fit with the National Statistician's Office; and
  - v. the need for further consideration on engagement, specifically the suggestion to arrange mini assemblies including resources.
- 15.4. The Board stressed the importance of this work and the need for a senior level sponsor to ensure meaningful progress is made in the coming months. The issue of resources would be considered by ONS as part of business planning. A meeting would be scheduled for the Chair, Permanent Secretary and Lucinda Eggleton to ensure momentum.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### Agenda

Thursday 26 March, 11.00-14.30

London Boardroom,

Hybrid Meeting

**Chair:** Penny Young

**Apologies:** Sarah Moore

**Attendees:** Lincoln Blair (for item 8), Megan Cooper (for item 9), Lucinda Eggleton (for items 4,8 &11), Alex Lambert (for item 10), Liz McKeown (for item 10),

**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 26.02.26
2 11.05-11.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(26)17 Penny Young
3 11.15-11.30 15 mins	Report from the Permanent Secretary	SA(26)18 Darren Tierney
4 11.30-11.45 15 mins	Report from the National Statistician's Office	SA(26)19 Lucinda Eggleton
5 11.45-11.55 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(26)20 Ed Humpherson
6 11.55-12.10 15 mins	Update from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulation Committee</li><li>• Audit and Risk Assurance Committee</li><li>• Population Statistics System Committee</li></ul>	Oral update Prof Dame Carol Propper Dr Jacob Abboud Penny Young
7 12.10-12.20 10 mins	Communications update	Oral update Peter Barron
12.20-12.40 20 mins	Break	
8 12.40-13.15 35 mins	National Statistician's Office Model	SA(26)21 Lucinda Eggleton Lincoln Blair
9 13.15-13.45 30 mins	Economic Statistics Plan	SA(26)22 James Benford Megan Cooper
10 13.45-14.05 20 mins	Transformed Labour Force Survey	SA(26)23 Alex Lambert Liz McKeown
11 14.05-14.25 20 mins	UK Statistics Assembly Update	SA(26)24 Lucinda Eggleton
12 14.25-14.30 5 mins	Any Other Business	

**Next meeting: Thursday 30 April, Newport Boardroom**

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)17

## *Chair's Report, March 2026*

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of the Interim Chair's activity in March. We will have an opportunity under this item to discuss our priorities as a Board over the coming months.

### **Review of recent activities**

2. On 24 February, Darren and I attended an introductory meeting with our responsible minister, Satvir Kaur MP. The conversation covered the Board Effectiveness Review, expectations around the forthcoming Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) report, organisational priorities (including the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) decisions due in July and key upcoming Census 2031 decisions) and recruitment of the next permanent National Statistician. Darren updated the minister on efforts to rebuild trust and progress recovery at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and progress on relationships with the trade unions.
3. On 3 March, I met with the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Harmonisation Team to discuss progress against delivering harmonised GSS guidance for the collection of data on sex and gender. The Board have previously noted their concern about the pace of this work and the discussion focussed on using the work that has already been done to generate some useful content and guidance for producers and users as soon as possible.
4. On 13 March, I published an article on the ONS intranet updating on the February Board meeting and answering questions that were posed at the February ONS Direct session; maintaining Board engagement with colleagues across the organisation.
5. On 17 March, the panel concluded the final interview in the recruitment process for the National Statistician. The panel hope to be able to make an announcement on the appointment in due course.
6. On 17 March, I met with Catherine Little CB, Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office to discuss a number of current issues.

### **Correspondence**

7. On 5 March, I wrote to Craig Hoy MSP regarding the presentation of Local Government Finance figures in the Scottish Government's Budget for 2026-27.
8. On 12 March, I wrote to Rt Hon Eluned Morgan MS, First Minister for Wales, regarding the use of Welsh apprenticeship statistics.

### **Looking ahead**

9. The next meeting of the Population Statistics System Committee will be on 25 March to discuss Administrative Based Population Estimates, Resourcing and Risks, opportunities and assurance.
10. Ahead of May's upcoming elections in England, Scotland and Wales I plan on writing to the leaders of political parties asking for their support and commitment in ensuring the appropriate and transparent use of statistics during their election campaigns.

**Penny Young, Interim Chair, 19 March 2026**

*Permanent Secretary's Report, March 2026*

**Purpose**

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of activity since the last Board meeting on 26 February 2026.

**To try and avoid the risk of future underspend and over-commitment, I am ensuring we apply previous lessons learned to the business planning process**

2. I am pleased that we are now nearing the end of the business planning process. I am keen that we learn the lessons of the last two years and make choices about the sequencing of our improvement work, identifying the work we must do immediately, and work we must do later to ensure the Office for National Statistics (ONS) can deliver successfully across our change programme. As part of this we are developing a 'delivery pipeline' and a rapid assurance process to ensure that our improvement work will deliver the outcomes we need, only committing resource and funding to change work when we know those conditions for success can be met.
3. Like all government departments, we operate on an annual fiscal cycle with no ability to hold reserves and budgets that are legal limits. Although any underspend is a missed opportunity, it's important to consider this in the context of a gross annual budget. Nonetheless, my assessment is that our current very low stated financial risk appetite has contributed to this pattern of underspending.
4. I am keen that we learn from this experience. As such, in 2026/27 we will be: increasing our financial risk appetite including over-programming; phasing work more realistically over time; and maintaining a shortlist of investment opportunities to be deployed early in the financial year. The biggest contributory factor to underspending by far is business areas' forecasting optimism for onboarding of additional staff. As such, we will be offering further support to business areas including the introduction of recruitment timeline assumptions into their planning, which will feature in a new forecasting model ready for deployment soon.

**We have announced the proposed new Hybrid Working principles that have been developed jointly with Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and Prospect which have been taken forward to a ballot**

5. We have announced the hybrid working principles, jointly agreed with PCS and Prospect, with union members voting on these until the end of the month. These principles have been created with inclusion and trust at their core. A positive result will bring an end to the current dispute. The principles aim for:
  - i. 40 per cent overall organisational attendance targeted;
  - ii. attendance with purpose: colleagues attend the office where there is clear organisational or individual benefit;
  - iii. inclusive by design: activities should enable meaningful participation, including for colleagues with adjustments and flexibilities;
  - iv. trust-based approach: existing flexibilities remain; attendance issues addressed pragmatically, with formal action only as a last resort; and
  - v. ongoing consultation: future changes will be consulted on, with impacts monitored and mitigated.
6. We have conducted 360 feedback for all our Senior Civil Servants (SCS) population and circulated individual feedback reports to colleagues. Positive feedback focussed on the openness and transparency of the group, as well as their mindset of welcoming

challenge and diverse views. Other positive themes included their continuous improvement mindset, their decisiveness and reliability, inclusive leadership and their willingness to listen and act on feedback. Common opportunities for growth focussed on psychological safety gaps, a lack of visibility of the group, managing change fatigue, a perceived defensiveness of the group as well as SCS colleagues avoiding dealing with difficult behaviour. Ahead of end-of-year conversations, I have encouraged the SCS community to reflect on their feedback and share with their teams what actions they are taking or plan to take as a result of this feedback. This is key to us demonstrating a learning culture that listens and responds as set out in the leadership statement.

### **Work is ongoing to minimise delivery risk across our portfolio**

7. Seven of the eleven strategic risks (SR) are now reporting outside of risk appetite, following the score of SR1 'User needs' increasing. However, there is positive progress with a number of these strategic risks, including for SR2 with business planning nearing a conclusion, and SR5, with positive action being taken to support improvements in culture and pace of resourcing. SR12 (Legacy) remains an area of concern with further work required to understand the risks and impacts we face.
8. Strategy and Change Directorate are focusing attention on clarifying the nature and scale of the issues relating to our legacy estate by categorising the issues into three groups (legacy which we can tolerate; legacy which we are addressing through existing change programmes; and legacy which we want to address but still need to develop realistic plans for). This work will allow us to take informed choices about prioritisation between, and sequencing of, the work strands - consistent with our new approach to business planning. This will equip us to have more accurate conversations about the level of risk and agree which remaining issues need urgent attention.
9. At the programme level, our portfolio is reporting amber/red for the end of February 2026, with a number of programmes reporting amber (Integrated Data Programme; IDP), or amber/red (Business Surveys Transformation Programme; BSTP, Transformed Labour Force Survey; TLFS). Census 2031 remains amber/green.
10. In regards to our entire Economic Statistics portfolio, at the latest meeting of the ESP Steering Group, members assessed delivery confidence for the remaining ESP and SIEP milestones scheduled for completion at the end of this month. Current projections indicate that we will have delivered approximately 70 per cent of these milestones. The principal finding was the need for enhanced delivery predictability across all areas. To address this, measures are being implemented to strengthen planning, bolster risk management, and provide greater visibility and tracking of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
11. Labour market statistics continued to be referenced in wider political and economic narratives. While this remains a sensitive area, coverage broadly reflected the data rather than focusing on institutional or commentator criticism, representing an improvement on patterns seen in 2025. Further attention to labour market issues triggered by the 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) figures, amplified by external commentary, cut through into national coverage. This was framed as part of the broader economic story rather than as a critique of ONS itself.
12. For a fourth consecutive month our media sentiment is rated amber, marking a sustained improvement following eight consecutive red ratings covering much of 2025. While recovery remains incomplete, the low level of negative mentions among the high volume of coverage this month point to increasing stability in our media profile.
13. Earlier this month, we launched our new Census 2031 Strategy for England and Wales, an important milestone in our Census journey. Through this strategy we now have a framework which will help guide thousands of vital decisions over the coming years. It

will inform stakeholders, enable our partners to see how they fit in and demonstrate our commitment to being open and transparent about how we operate.

14. Last month, I made you aware of an issue regarding Exceptional Pre-Release Access. I am pleased to update that we were able to grant the Bank Pre-Release access to our Labour Market Statistics for this month, to ensure the work of the Bank and the Monetary Policy Committee was supported. In the absence of a National Statistician, we will continue to update the Authority Board on matters related to exceptional pre-release access, handling these on a case-by-case basis.

**Darren Tierney, Permanent Secretary, 19 March 2026**

*National Statistician's Report, March 2026*

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of the National Statistician's Office (NSO), and wider Government Statistical Service (GSS), activity since the last Board meeting on 26 February 2026. The National Statistician's Report will continue over the coming months whilst recruitment for a permanent National Statistician is ongoing.

**National Statistician's Committees and Panels**

2. Following the Executive Committee (ExCo) decision in February on interim reporting arrangements for the National Statistician's Committees and Panels, it has been decided that updates from committees and panels that are GSS/wider statistical system focussed will continue to be included in the National Statistician's Report.
3. Professor Evelyn Collins, Chair of the **National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee (NSIDAC)**, met with representatives of Equally Ours earlier this month to tell them about the Committee's work and hear about any issues they have with inclusive data and evidence. Equally Ours (previously the Equality and Diversity Forum) is a UK charity that brings together people and organisations working across equality, human rights and social justice.
4. The **National Statistician's Data Ethics Committee (NSDEC)** held their latest quarterly meeting on 3 March 2026. The Committee covered a range of topics, including a presentation by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census Statistical Design team on initial proposals for the inclusion of SMS reminders in the 2027 Census test and a discussion on the ethical considerations surrounding this decision. Paul Boyle, Chair of the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP), also attended as a guest speaker to provide the Committee with an overview of RAP's statutory role under the Digital Economy Act (2017) and the Panel's remit in accrediting researchers, Trusted Researcher Environments and research projects seeking access to de-identified government data. Plans for continued reciprocal engagement are being explored.
5. The **National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC)** met on 5 March 2026. The ONS Permanent Secretary, Darren Tierney, attended the Committee discussion on ONS Business Planning and Prioritisation. The Committee noted the risk of focusing too much on big ticket stakeholders but understood why ONS were prioritising such users at the moment and welcomed the engagement with Darren.
6. NSEUAC members discussed follow up from the UK Statistics Assembly and the potential of Penny Young, Interim Chair of the Authority, participating in an event as per Assembly and Lievesley outcomes. The Committee Chair was still keen to have a joint horizon scanning meeting with the Chairs of other advisory committees but agreed they would wait until a new National Statistician had been appointed/was in post to ensure it would provide maximum benefit for the incoming National Statistician. Members heard from James Benford on the Economic Statistics Plan (ESP) – members appreciated the transparent approach and engagement with stakeholders. They also welcomed the offer of Penny attending a future meeting.

**NSO Activity and Engagement**

7. I attended a Ministerial meeting for government departments in receipt of **Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)** funding. I presented on our approach which focuses on providing technical assistance to strengthen statistical systems and to work alongside partners to build capability and solve challenges. This is in line with the UK government's

new approach to ODA, and I noted how closely we are working with Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) missions to ensure that our plans dock in with country business objectives and in line with FCDO key themes.

8. NSO colleagues conducted the final phase of our flagship international **statistical leadership training programme** with a double training session in Tanzania ahead of the official handover to the Eastern Africa Statistics Training Centre (EASTC), marking the culmination of seven years' work. This popular course was co-developed with the UN Economic Commission for Africa in 2019 and has reached 650+ beneficiaries and has built a strong reputation throughout national statistical systems across Africa and beyond. Handover of the course to an African institution aims to increase sustainability and reach, whilst reducing the need for ongoing ONS involvement.
9. The UK sent a delegation to the 57<sup>th</sup> **UN Statistical Commission (UNSC)** in New York at the start of March, which brings together national statistical offices from across the world to agree international statistical standards, frameworks, and priorities. This year's Commission agreed several significant outcomes that will shape the future global statistical landscape. Key decisions included endorsing the creation of a new Central Framework for Population and Social Statistics, establishing a City Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Readiness (the Kigali City Group) to coordinate global AI initiatives across national statistical offices, approving updates to the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework, and endorsing updated international manuals on trade and business statistics. The Commission also agreed to establish a Task Team on Industrial Statistics to revise international guidelines, and to continue work on well-being measurement, including how Beyond GDP metrics can relate to sustainable development goals (SDGs) post-2030. The UK expressed interest in joining the new Committee of Experts on Population and Social Statistics, which will oversee coordination of social and demographic statistics at the UN level.
10. The delegation contributed to several important outcomes including working closely with Rwanda and other partner countries to shape the terms of reference for the Kigali City Group on AI Readiness, ensuring it does not duplicate existing initiatives. The delegation also advanced discussions with Eurostat on deepening collaboration, building on conversations with European statistical offices who expressed interest in UK involvement in wider European Statistical System discussions. On environmental accounting, the UK aligned with like-minded countries to ensure the SEEA update process is inclusive and that member countries are meaningfully involved.
11. Alongside the main sessions, the delegation engaged in a series of bilateral meetings including with the acting Director of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), Shantanu Mukherjee. We discussed potential for knowledge exchanges on data infrastructure and productivity measurement with Statistics Finland, building on my visit to their offices in February. We also explored joint projects and collaboration on AI measurement and big data with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and collaboration on National Accounts with Germany.
12. The **Standards for Official Statistics on Climate-Health Interactions (SOSCHI)** project achieved a major milestone on 4 March 2026 at UNSC, where indicators developed by the team were approved as the key measures of climate change impacts on human health, within the authoritative UN Global Set of Climate Change Indicators and Statistics. Practical implementation of the indicator methods is in progress in Ghana and Rwanda, whose National Statistical Offices have engaged with the project since 2023. Tanzania is the first country new to the project to request technical assistance and training, while at least six other countries have shown interest. An open-source R package supporting the methods has been released on CRAN (the main public R code repository) and the project's own GitHub.

13. The Analysis and Methods team have also been undertaking rapid response analysis for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to feed into an interim report in Spring for the **Young People in Work Report (Milburn Review)**, due for full publication in Summer 2026. The NSO produced a descriptive investigation of the characteristics of young people who are not in employment or education (NEE) compared to a group of non-NEE using 2021 Census data linked to administrative datasets, which has been shared with DWP and will be published on the ONS website on 27 March. Further commissions are being considered for the next financial year.
14. Focus groups for the **Young Voices** project among young people aged 11 – 24 are now underway with three of the five groups completed. The discussions have explored how young people from diverse backgrounds feel about sharing their views with government for research purposes and what makes them feel more or less comfortable doing so. The remaining groups will be completed by 21 March 2026.
15. Since February, the GSS Coherence Team have been working on the development of a **coherence strategy and implementation plan** to support collaborative cross-government and four nations working towards improved coherence and comparability of key statistics, the draft of which will be shared with the Inter-administration Committee (IAC) in April. The Housing Statistics Steering Group will be held on the 24 March 2026, currently chaired by the Coherence Team (with plans to redistribute organisation and chairing of the group going forwards).

### **Broader UK Statistical System**

16. GSS Deputy Heads hosted their latest **GSS drop-in session** which prompted reflections on the Future Statistician report and how to continue shaping the USP of the government statistician community.
17. The latest **GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) quarterly meeting** took place on 17 March 2026 and covered a range of topics:
  - i. the GSS Web Dissemination Platform Task and Finish group produced their Phase 2 report, which included recommendations that were discussed to move the GSS forward towards the vision of a unified government platform for statistics;
  - ii. following a meeting of the GSS People Advisory Group to consider the 2026/07 People Priorities plan, this was presented for discussion and agreement by HoPs;
  - iii. key strategic risks facing the statistical profession, mapped to the GSS Vision, Future Statistician vision, and the refreshed Code of Practice, were discussed by HoPs to inform development of a GSS Risk Register; and
  - iv. the Deputy Heads continue to progress the leadership development proposition, with a push to determine resource to take this forward following the Board discussion last month, which was discussed with HoPs.
18. In line with the GSS Vision, mandatory **HoP GSS-wide objectives** have been introduced to strengthen expectations and recognition of cross cutting GSS-wide activities.
19. A potential risk being monitored is the seniority of HoP positions being questioned. The Deputy Heads are seeing some evidence that a few departments and arms-length bodies (ALBs) are debating the seniority of HoP posts in response to departmental funding pressures. This downward pressure is a potential concern at a time when the GSS is seeking to enhance the talent pipeline. The Deputy Heads will continue to monitor.
20. Notable departmental successes include the **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)** launched a new quarterly official statistics series on the energy efficiency characteristics of new dwellings, using administrative data to provide timely insight ahead of the Future Homes Standard and improving the quality of related housing statistics.

21. The **Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)** have also had recent success having published an interactive subject uptake dashboard using open data, providing UK-wide insight into higher education delivery and student characteristics. The tool has already informed media coverage and parliamentary debate.
22. Winners of the [Analysis in Government awards](#) were celebrated on 11 March 2026, and key lessons learnt shared between award winners. The Analysis Function (AF) team are continuing to take expressions of interests for content at **Analysis in Government (AIG) Month** in May, where the theme is 'Impact in Action'. 64 percent of sessions are already booked, including AIG award winners and sessions from David Spiegelhalter and Ed Humpherson. Alongside the webinars, the team will also be sharing 'Day in the Life' blogs from members of the different analytical professions to help improve understanding across the AF.
23. The **Data Sharing Taxonomy** was agreed with minor changes at the AF Data Access Working Group in February. The AF team are sharing plans around the Taxonomy more widely with the Data Sharing Network of Experts, run by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). The working group also continues to consider case studies on a regular basis to understand if there are other blockers the working group can help address alongside developing a hub of useful resources.
24. The **AF AI working group** met on the 3 March 2026 and approved the initial content to be included in the AF AI Hub, which aims to launch on the AF website in April. The working group also discussed two pieces of proposed guidance on high level principles to support the use of AI in analysis and on being transparent on how AI is being used in analysis.
25. The **AF People Board** in March agreed the key capability challenges across the analytical professions which need addressing over the coming year. Initial work will include mapping out what departments and professions are doing around recruitment, career development and Learning and Development to help share best practice across the function and identify gaps. There will also be a focus on responding to Places for Growth, promoting regional working groups, sharing best practice and providing other targeted support. The AF Board also agreed to proposed changes to AF governance and heard an update from Ed Humpherson on how all analytical professions can support the updated Code of Practice.

**Lucinda Eggleton, Director, National Statistician's Office, 19 March 2026**

*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. Key regulatory activities since the last board meeting include:
  - i. [Compliance Review of GDP Seasonality](#): Our review examined a persistent pattern in recent GDP data, with stronger growth in the first half of the year than in the second. While there is currently no statistical evidence that this pattern reflects a problem with seasonal adjustment, we consider it important that producers and users remain alert to it and continue to monitor developments closely. To strengthen confidence and manage this risk, the review made three recommendations for the Office for National Statistics (ONS);
  - ii. there are two related issues around the Family Resources Survey (FRS). Firstly we have suspended the accreditation of [Northern Ireland](#), [Scottish](#) and [Welsh](#) statistics based on the FRS. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are undertaking a major programme of methodological developments of the FRS, which enhances the use of administrative data through benefit and earning linkages. We have agreed to requests from the Chief Statisticians in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales for the accreditation be temporarily removed from their statistics based on the FRS due to the degree of uncertainty the scale and ongoing nature of the changes is introducing, which is particularly noticeable for estimates below the UK level;
  - iii. secondly, and following the discussions with the Chief Statisticians in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, OSR requested that DWP should set out its plans for its FRS based publications. [DWP has now written to us](#) outlining its plans not to request a suspension of the Accredited Official Statistics (AOS) badge from its FRS related publication, as much of the outputs are based on UK level data and having analysed the data they judged that the data is robust enough. We note the judgement reached by DWP's Head of Profession (HoP) and highlight our concern that DWP should be particularly clear about what the sub-UK level estimates can and cannot be used for, given the differences between the judgements reached by the Chief Statisticians and the DWP HoP. We plan to perform a compliance review of the FRS-based output, starting in April;
  - iv. following my [letter to Ben Henshall](#), Chief Analyst at No.10, about the steps No.10 is taking in response to OSR's intelligent transparency review, we have been invited to present to a group of special advisors on 25 March to set out the expectations for Ministers and officials when they use data and analysis in public statements; and
  - v. I have [written to Mary Gregory, Executive Director, Population, Census and Social Statistics at ONS](#) acknowledging ONS's revised plans for the 2025 mid-year population estimates, noting that ONS has set out the evidence, challenges and rationale for continuing with existing methods. I also note that the existing methods for the mid-year population estimates have some known limitations which may lead some users to question the continued reliance on existing methods. In this context, I emphasise the importance of continued openness in presenting both the strengths and limitations.
3. At the last Board meeting, a question was raised about current deaccreditations. We have provided a paper summarises the current position on deaccreditations.

### **Casework**

4. We have opened 17 cases since the February Board taking our total for the year so far to 156. We currently have cases from Lord Udney-Lister and Sir Paul Beresford, and Max Wilkinson MP which we expect the Chair to issue responses to in the near future.
5. The Chair wrote a [public response to Rt Hon Eluned Morgan MS, First Minister of Wales's](#) regarding Welsh apprenticeship figures. This is a particularly direct letter, highlighting that the First Minister chose to use a less reliable measure of apprenticeships in Wales. The Chair also wrote to [Craig Hoy MSP in relation to Scottish local government funding](#).
6. Shortly before last month's Board meeting, I wrote [to Ben Connah about the presentation of modelling in the Module 2 report of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry](#).
7. In advance of the elections in Scotland and Wales we published a [series of explainers](#) on the statistics on key issues that are likely to arise in the election campaigns.

### **Engagement**

8. In addition to my usual round of engagements with HoPs and chief analysts in Government:
  - i. I met with Tess White MSP and Pam Gosal MSP at the Scottish Parliament to discuss data on sex and gender;
  - ii. I met the new head of the Government Communication Service, David Dinsmore; and
  - iii. I spoke at an ONS event launching the new ONS wellbeing framework.

### **Issues on my mind**

9. I noted above that my team has published explainers ahead of the Scottish and Wales elections. I think they are an excellent resource. While we have received some positive feedback from stakeholders who have engaged with them, I am concerned that we need to make sure that people are aware of them. We have contacted journalists in Scotland and Wales to help raise awareness

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 19 March 2026**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(26)21

***National Statistician's Office Update (Part 2)***

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

***Economic Statistics and Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan  
Update, March 2026***

**Purpose**

1. This paper sets out the combined Economic Statistics Plan (ESP) / Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan (SIEP) Quarterly Progress Update.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. note the quarterly progress update due to be published 15 April 2026 and the accompanying communications plan.

**Background**

3. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) ESP, [Restoring confidence, improving quality: The plan for ONS economic statistics](#), and [Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan](#) were published on 26 June 2025 alongside the Devereux Review.
4. The plans set out a range of improvements across every stage of our statistical production and form the bedrock of our ambition to secure the long-term sustainability quality and impact of our critical statistics. As discussed at February Board, following completion of business planning, ESP and SIEP will be brought together into a single recovery plan for economic statistics, comprising a mix of continuous improvement, projects and programmes
5. We are committed to publishing updates on progress on a quarterly basis in response to feedback from the Office for Statistics regulation (OSR).

**Discussion**

6. The second quarterly update on progress across both ESP and SIEP provides a concise, public facing account of progress made between December 2025 and March 2026, including key improvements delivered and challenges being actively managed. It sets out – at a high level – our priorities for the period ahead, and items that may be put into the ‘waiting room’ for later consideration (the waiting room section will evolve in the coming week as we agree the finer details on business planning).
7. The update reflects increased organisational stability and clearer prioritisation and includes information on our programme of quality reviews and legacy management as set out in the OSR recommendations following the last progress update in December 2025. We are also sharing the progress update with OSR colleagues ahead of the Authority Board meeting and will incorporate their feedback.
8. The publication will be accompanied by a variety of internal and external communication and engagement activities. We aim to clearly communicate the breadth of work and progress against milestones in ESP/SIEP, acknowledging that there is more to do; ensure stakeholders can understand the key messages without having to read the detail; instil trust in our decision making, being transparent about ongoing challenges, how we are gripping them and making changes because we are learning; and explain how we are engaging users, including gathering feedback that will feed into our plans and what they can expect in future updates. Our approach includes a round of engagement before and on the publication day to prepare users and commentators for what they can expect in terms of progress, momentum, challenges and decisions to minimise criticism and build advocacy where possible.

9. The March External Steering Group, scheduled for Monday 23 March will include two new members following departures at HM Treasury and Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). The meeting will be focussed on progress to date, our priorities, plans and approach as business planning nears conclusion, the quarterly progress update and our risk position. Given timing, James Benford will provide board with a verbal update on discussions.

### **Conclusion**

10. The publication marks an important point in our progress to date and sets out the challenges ahead. We have set out our areas of focus and how we will continue to build our delivery predictability through effective prioritisation and sequencing alongside the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Executive Committee.
11. We continue to strengthen relationships with our stakeholders and look forward to receiving feedback on the publication.

**Megan Cooper, Lisa Evans, James Benford, Surveys and Economic Statistics (SES),  
ONS, 13 March 2026**

***Transformed Labour Force Survey – March 2026 Update***

**Purpose**

1. An update to the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) on the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) Programme focusing on the Gateway review and communications.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
  - i. note the programme developments since the previous Board update;
  - ii. comment on our proposed actions in response to the Gateway Review; and
  - iii. comment and approve our updated communication narrative for April publication.

**Programme Update**

3. The TLFS Programme continued to report Amber/Red at the TLFS Programme Board on 26 February, but with an evolved strategic risk landscape following recent positive progress and new emerging risks/issues. With delivery milestones now on track for April 2026 and progress continuing with Northern Ireland data integration, the programme is focused on accelerating TLFS Plus development and addressing concerns over Measures of Change precision. Both topics will be reported at future Boards.
4. Providing an update across the programme as a whole:
  - i. TLFS underwent a Hybrid Gateway 0/2 Review in January 2026. Board feedback on the report and our proposed response is welcomed – see paragraph five;
  - ii. the next labour market transformation update is on 10 April. Board feedback and approval on the proposed narrative is requested – see paragraph ten;
  - iii. April 2026 milestones: Data rotation testing is complete for Waves 1–3 with an anticipated March ‘go live’ decision with a level of acceptable risk. Respondent incentives will also be increased from £10 to £20 from April 2026 to address declining response rates;
  - iv. quality assessment (QA) of the first two distinct quarters of TS9 data has identified a new issue around the precision of the measures of change as recently introduced to board members. A task and finish group has been stood up to consolidate evidence and identify and impact assess options with a view to reporting back in early April;
  - v. an agreed approach is now in place between the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and ONS to integrate Northern Ireland Labour Market Survey (LMS) data into the GB Labour Force Survey (LFS). While additional processing introduces some early-stage timeliness risk, mitigations are in place and current UK publication timelines are expected to be maintained; and
  - vi. the culmination of research, development and testing on potential solutions for the Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) data quality issue has resulted in a decision to proceed with a large-scale test on a SIC Search as you Type question later this year, with a view to informing a decision to implement on to the live survey thereafter.

**Discussion Focus – Gateway Review**

5. The programme underwent a Hybrid Gateway 0/2 Review in January 2026. This review is part of the programme’s strategic assurance pathway and provided an independent assessment of both the programme’s strategic direction (Gateway 0) and the robustness of its emerging delivery approach and Outline Business Case (Gateway 2).
6. The Review Team issued two delivery confidence ratings. A Red rating against the ambition for a November 2026 transition and based on the current TLFS Plus delivery plan. This rating aligns to the programme position that further data collection and

assessment will be required to provide both us and our users with sufficient assurance and confidence. The gateway provided an additional Amber rating for a November 2027 transition and based on the ability to ensure critical TLFS Plus user needs are met.

7. The Gateway review provided a valuable set of recommendations and it was encouraging that *“The RT heard a consensus that after previous challenges the programme is now on the right path, with well-functioning governance”*. The full report has been shared with Board members, and we welcome feedback and comment on the recommendations captured and our proposed response/actions.

### **Discussion Focus – Communications and Engagement**

8. The Household Socioeconomic and Local (HSL) workstream on the programme has now started a second phase of extensive user engagement to gather detailed user requirements to inform May TLFS Plus development and recommendations. Recent engagement across the HSL space has already highlighted heavy reliance on annual TLFS datasets, especially among existing Annual Population Survey (APS) users concerned about transition readiness. In-line with Gateway recommendations, the programme is increasing resource and focus on HSL/TLFS Plus and the annual dataset. The HSL resource will grow from 12 to 25 heads over the coming months and we are assessing options to analyse annual data quality, making use of earlier versions of data.
9. More broadly, extensive engagement with our main users has continued, including across technical working groups, to the ScotStat board and with the Stakeholder Advisory Panel on Labour Market Statistics. Recent technical working group engagements have focused on collaboratively developing and ratifying the criteria and conditions for transition to the TLFS alongside progressing engagement on HSL Phase 2. In-line with the Gateway review recommendations, the programme is currently developing an Integrated Communications Strategy.
10. The 10 April Labour Market Transformation article represents a key external update on the programme. The TLFS narrative within this publication has been drafted to reflect our strategic communication objectives, notably to be transparent about programme risks, trade-offs and uncertainties especially around timelines and quality. The narrative has been updated in-line with recent Board direction and has received broad support from key users at the Labour Market Technical Group and Stakeholder Advisory Panel. We request Board comments and endorsement of the proposed narrative within the full draft article.

### **Senior Responsible Owner Conclusions**

11. The TLFS Programme has made tangible progress since the previous Board update, for which credit is due to extensive effort of the teams involved. The Gateway Review aligns to the programme position that further data collection and assessment will be required post July 2026 and this will be reflected in the April publication.
12. The July 2026 readiness assessment remains an important milestone to take stock of progress and outline the way forward. Strategic focus on the programme is preparing for this assessment, while ramping up effort on the HSL workstream and investigating the emerging Measure of Change precision issue.
13. With thanks to Katy Nicholls and Matt Hughes for supporting this paper.

**Dr Alex Lambert, TLFS SRO, 16 March 2026**

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)24

## *Response to the UK Statistics Assembly*

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on delivery of the recommendations arising from the inaugural UK Statistics Assembly in January 2025 and future plans, including further engagement with stakeholders and what can be done to increase the pace of response.

### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. note the progress being made on delivering against the recommendations; and
  - ii. provide views on planned next steps, and the support and challenge the Board can provide, particularly around prioritising resourcing, as flagged by priority owners.

### **Background**

3. The inaugural UK Statistics Assembly was held in January 2025 with the [independent report](#) published in March 2025. The Authority Chair [welcomed the report](#) and committed to a detailed response. In addition to the four cross cutting priorities outlined in the Assembly report, the report made numerous detailed recommendations around the 15 sessions. Each priority has a UK Statistics Authority owner (across four directorates) and a cross-Government Statistical Service (GSS) owner allocated to drive forward and coordinate the work, who must balance this work with their other duties. Individual recommendations will be taken forward by teams throughout the GSS. Both the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and Office for National Statistics (ONS) Communications and Digital Publishing (CDP) directorate are supporting the coordination and engagement follow up activity following the Assembly.
4. In December 2025, following a commission from the then Acting National Statistician, we published an [update](#) on the four high level priorities. We also agreed to publish a response to the detailed recommendations in the first half of 2026.
5. The Authority Board has been clear throughout that recommendations from the Assembly are advisory. However, it is a reasonable expectation of Assembly attendees and others to be kept informed of progress against the report's recommendations and doing so aligns to the user engagement recommendations.

### **Discussion**

6. Progress on the Assembly was presented to National Statistician's Executive Group<sup>1</sup> (NSEG) and National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee<sup>2</sup> (NSEUAC) in December 2025. NSEG were cautious on committing to future publications without further information to help members understand the response by the system to the recommendations. NSEUAC "[expressed disappointment](#) in the delay to publication on the detailed points". The need to maintain momentum on progress was also expressed by the Director General of Regulation in a [blog](#) published on 22 January 2026.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Statistics Executive Group is the most senior executive committee in the statistical system. Members include: the National Statistician (Chair), the Deputy Head of the GSS (Deputy Chair), ONS Deputy National Statisticians, two GSS Heads of Profession from departments other than ONS and all three Chief Statisticians of the Devolved Administrations

<sup>2</sup> The [National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee](#) is a forum to provide strategic advice on how the National Statistician should best engage all users. It was involved in the development of the plans for the UK Statistics Assembly and produced the subsequent report.

## Progress against the recommendations

7. Since the NSEG discussion in December and the published update, we have been working with priority owners to better track progress, including on the detailed recommendations. Work is progressing against the recommendations that are being taken forward across the four priority themes, with 33 per cent of those rated as in progress and 12 per cent completed. Given that the recommendations are advisory, 45 per cent are rated as no action required and 7 per cent are not being taken forward, mostly reflecting limited dedicated resource. The main challenges outlined by owners are resource pressures, competing priorities or recommendations being unviable. Many of the actions will also take time to deliver. A summary of progress is included below:
  - i. **User Engagement:** We have developed draft principles for user engagement going forward, building on the Assembly report and a round table led by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and the Royal Statistical Society. Next steps are to further engage both Heads of Professions (HoPs) and a more diverse range of users in what a good user engagement strategy looks like and working to those principles, alongside developing a published strategy;
  - ii. **Granular Statistics:** We are promoting collaboration among local government organisations and other regional stakeholders to share resources in a variety of ways, including webinars and workshops. The ONS prioritisation process included reviewing subnational outputs to ensure resources are being focused in the right places;
  - iii. **Admin Data:** A new cross-GSS admin data group has been established. Statistics across the GSS make significant use of administrative data already. Progress has been made to make more use of administrative data in core ONS statistics, including key datasets such as PAYE and Registration and Population Interaction Database created by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), but also through new projects established in the labour market portfolio and in population statistics; and
  - iv. **Coherence:** A long-term coherence strategy is being developed and will explore different options for improving governance. One core strategic pillar will focus on building an informed and evidence-based understanding of user needs at different geographical levels. Accountability for the delivery of coherence improvements must be considered as part of this.
8. There were also more detailed recommendations outside the four priority areas, and we have been working to allocate owners across the GSS to these. Progress on these will be tracked as part of future updates.
9. We have implemented a tracker to help build momentum and increase the pace in delivering the recommendations. The tracker will increase our visibility of progress and help coordinate activity, while facilitating understanding of any further delivery risks that can be mitigated. Information from the tracker will also be used for the planned external update in June 2026, which will for the first time include progress on the detailed recommendations. This update will be shared with Authority Board and NSEUAC members for comment before publication. It is important that we continue to be transparent with users and manage expectations during these updates, particularly any areas where priority owners are experiencing resource constraints or where clear prioritisation decisions have been communicated.

## Further engagement

10. One of the successes of the Assembly was its ability to convene stakeholders and users from across sectors. Now a year on, and reflecting Professor Lievesley's recommendation of a three-year cycle, we are beginning to plan the future timetable for engagement. We **recommend** holding the next full Assembly in January 2028 and would welcome the Board's views. We will also seek advice from the permanent National Statistician once appointed. Successfully delivering an event of this scale requires a long

lead-time, so a commitment would be needed around nine months in advance to enable planning and resourcing to begin.

11. There has been discussion among stakeholders and within the GSS about three years being a long gap between assembly events. We **recommend** bridging this gap through further engagement, such as organising roundtables or 'mini-assemblies', on some or all of the four high level priorities to ensure stakeholders have the opportunity to feedback where tangible progress has been made and to discuss emerging themes. We can also consider bringing together specific groups of users, such as the business sector. If the Board supports this approach, we will scope out detailed plans for this.

### **Resourcing risks**

12. Delivering the actions associated with the Statistics Assembly requires considerable support from colleagues across the Authority and wider-GSS (not just the priority owners who oversee delivery), with the Authority supporting delivery of all recommendations to some degree. Whilst there is a strong desire across the GSS to deliver against the recommendations, this activity conflicts in places with ONS and Departmental prioritisation exercises, so progress is slower that we would like. We welcome the Board's ongoing support for the prioritisation of this work where possible, and the Board may wish to write to priority owners to express your support for both progress made and for mitigating any delivery risks.
13. Tracking progress on recommendations and the delivery of future engagement is a significant piece of work for NSO and CDP. CDP has previously provided most resource for both elements of this work. Looking forward, dedicated resource within NSO will allow for a stronger, proactive role to be taken in driving and tracking progress, working with priority owners around their plans and challenging if more can be done. This resource ask has been included in all but one option of the NSO Organisational Design Paper (a separate agenda item at this Board). We **recommend** that the Board supports those options which maintain GSS and Standards teams resources (the latter are delivering actions in the coherence priority), given the current pressure they are under. CDP has included development of the refreshed user engagement strategy in 2026/27 business planning. If we want to proceed with mini-assemblies, CDP will lead the delivery of these within existing capacity, which may require other activity to be deprioritised.
14. These proposals are in line with earlier NSEG discussions. There will be a subsequent NSEG discussion on this topic following this Authority Board discussion, where we can update NSEG on the Board's direction. We would therefore welcome the Board's commitment to the process and their support in prioritising this work more widely in advance of the NSEG discussion.

### **Conclusion**

15. This paper has set out progress following the UK Statistics Assembly and planned next steps. We welcome Board members' feedback on the plans included within the paper.

**Lucinda Eggleton and Sarah Moore, NSO and CDP, ONS, 19 March 2026**