

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 3 June 2026 11:00 – 13:00

Minutes

Microsoft Teams

Committee Attendees

Dame Kate Barker (Chair)
Eva Aizpura (Online)
Professor Paul Allin
Professor Paul Boyle (Online)
Sarah Cumbers
Ed Humpherson
Phyllis MacFarlane (Online)

ONS Attendees

Adrian Chesson
Paul Cotton
June Bowman
Lucinda Eggleton
Mary Gregory
Sarah Moore
Phillipa Robinson

External Attendees

Madeleine Sumption

Apologies

James Brooks
Helen Boaden

Secretariat

Oluchi Enunwa
Jo-Anna Hagen

1. Welcome, Previous Minutes and Actions

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies had been received from Helen Boaden and James Brooks. The Chair invited comments on the minutes of the March meeting. Members were content with the minutes.
- 1.2. Members were informed that Paul Allin would be stepping down from the Committee. The Chair thanked him for his significant contribution and long-standing service to official statistics.
- 1.3. The Chair reflected that membership of the Committee would be reviewed once the new National Statistician is in post.
- 1.4. Looking ahead, the Chair noted that the September meeting would include external speakers, including contributions on Administrative Data Research (ADR). For the December meeting, it was proposed that the Committee meet virtually.
- 1.5. Members raised a point in relation to paragraph 5.2 of the March minutes, noting that references to exploring wider engagement approaches lacked detail and it would be helpful to understand what these activities would involve in practice. The Committee heard that a further update on engagement approaches would be provided as part of the UK Statistics Assembly update later in the meeting.

2. Reflections on Service to Official Statistics

- 2.1. Paul Allin reflected on his career in official statistics and thanked the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to its work. He noted that he had worked in the statistical system for over fifty years, beginning as a cadet statistician in the Central Statistical Office. He had retired from the Office for National Statistics forty years later, and had the perspective both as a producer and a user of statistics.
- 2.2. He reflected that some aspects of the statistical system had remained relatively unchanged, particularly the range of topics of interest and their relative prioritisation, compared to the increased resources available to statisticians.
- 2.3. Members heard that gaps in statistical provision continued to exist and were often only addressed where there was a clear government requirement. He noted that engagement with users beyond government had developed over time but remained largely rooted in formal consultation processes. He also reflected on the continued tendency for official statistics to prioritise government users over wider public interest, despite the stated aim of serving the public good.
- 2.4. Members thanked Paul for his reflections. The following points were raised in discussion:
 - i. members noted the observation that, while much had changed over time, many core features of the statistical system had remained consistent;
 - ii. the implications of changes in the wider public sphere, including the increasingly fragmented environment in which statistics were used and communicated ;
 - iii. that the Committee might wish to explore this further, including by inviting an external speaker to provide insight into public communication of statistics; and
 - iv. the ongoing balance between meeting government needs and serving the wider public, noting the importance of maintaining this balance in a challenging external environment and the role of the incoming National Statistician in supporting this.
- 2.5. The Chair thanked Paul for his reflections and for his longstanding contribution to official statistics and his work on the Committee.

3. Migration Data

- 3.1. Madeleine Sumption outlined the significant improvements made in migration statistics over recent years, particularly since the challenges experienced during the COVID-19

period. She noted that estimates of migration flows for non-EU citizens had improved substantially, supported by a shift away from survey-based approaches such as the International Passenger Survey (IPS) towards administrative data sources. She also highlighted improvements in the presentation and communication of migration statistics and the increasing use of expert consultation to inform methodological development.

- 3.2. Despite these improvements, there were a number of ongoing challenges. She emphasised that the lack of robust stock data limited the ability to provide context for other statistics and to support local-level analysis, and noted that uncertainty remained as to whether developments such as the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) would address these issues.
- 3.3. She reflected further on the limitations of historical data sources, noting that while headline estimates from the IPS had been useful, more detailed breakdowns had been less reliable. Members were informed of the long-standing challenges in survey-based approaches, including difficulties in capturing newly arrived migrants. While administrative data offered improvements in some areas, these sources were not without limitations.
- 3.4. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:
 - i. members noted the progress that had been made in improving migration statistics and welcomed the move towards administrative data sources, while recognising the remaining limitations in key areas such as British citizen flows and migration stocks;
 - ii. members discussed the reliability of historical migration data, noting that while earlier estimates retained some value, caution was needed when interpreting detailed breakdowns;
 - iii. members considered the role of the census in supporting migration estimates, noting that while it would remain an important source of benchmark data, its infrequency limited its ability to capture more recent migration patterns;
 - iv. members discussed challenges in the communication and accessibility of migration statistics, noting that while the statistical bulletins were clear and well-presented, users could find it difficult to locate them, and that wider public and media interpretation remained an issue;
 - v. members reflected on the balance between communication and subsequent use of statistics, noting that misinterpretation, particularly of administrative data or where inappropriate denominators were applied, could lead to misleading conclusions;
 - vi. members discussed broader issues relating to the availability and accessibility of data for research purposes, noting that limited access to UK administrative data may be contributing to a shift in academic research towards other countries; and
 - vii. members discussed the changing ways in which users access statistics, including increasing reliance on search engines and AI-generated summaries, and noted ongoing work to improve the visibility and accessibility of ONS outputs.
- 3.5. The Chair thanked Madeleine for her presentation, noting the progress made in improving migration statistics alongside the ongoing challenges highlighted, and thanked members for their discussion.

4. UK Statistics Assembly Progress against the recommendations

- 4.1. Lucinda Eggleton introduced this item and noted that a draft update report had been circulated earlier in the week. She explained that, since the last update, work had progressed with priority owners across the system and that delivery reflected a shared model across the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS).

- 4.2. The cross-system nature of delivery, combined with resource pressures across ONS and government departments, had impacted the pace at which some recommendations could be progressed. She noted that the report aimed to provide a transparent account of progress and that updates were also being discussed at the National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) and the UK Statistics Authority Board.
- 4.3. Philippa Robinson added that views were being sought from Heads of Profession across the GSS and from NSEG. She explained that the report would include overarching summaries across four priority themes, supported by a more detailed, line-by-line update on individual recommendations, likely presented in a supplementary format. The Committee's views were invited on the structure, clarity, and content of the report.
- 4.4. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:
- i. members welcomed the draft report and described it as comprehensive, clear and a helpful summary of progress;
 - ii. it was emphasised that clarity and transparency in the presentation would be important, including clearly distinguishing between ONS and wider GSS responsibilities;
 - iii. members supported the inclusion of a detailed line-by-line tracker, noting that this would be particularly useful if it allowed sorting and filtering, and was complemented by visual summaries;
 - iv. it was suggested that the report should be more explicit in places, particularly where prioritisation decisions had affected the pace or scope of delivery;
 - v. members highlighted the importance of clearly reflecting user engagement activity, including work with external partners such as the Royal Statistical Society;
 - vi. it was noted that while the principles set out were broadly supported, further consideration could be given to how continuous engagement would operate in practice, given resource constraints;
 - vii. members discussed the value of enabling wider participation and feedback, including exploring whether elements of the draft could be shared more broadly with users;
 - viii. the timing of the next UK Statistics Assembly was discussed, with a preference for maintaining momentum through an interim engagement event and ensuring the next full Assembly took place within an appropriate timeframe; and
 - ix. it was suggested that the report should clearly communicate that priorities may evolve over time, while maintaining transparency on current plans.
- 4.5. The Chair thanked colleagues for the update and welcomed the progress made to date. She noted the importance of maintaining clarity and transparency as the work progressed, and of continuing to engage widely with users in developing the final report.

5. ONS User Needs Steering Group

- 5.1. Adrian Chesson introduced the ONS User Needs Steering Group and outlined its purpose, noting that it had been established in response to strategic risks identified in the ONS business plan relating to understanding and delivering against user needs. He explained that the programme aimed to improve how user needs are identified, stored and used to inform prioritisation and outputs across the organisation.
- 5.2. Adrian outlined the three core strands of the programme: prioritisation, data, and dissemination. He noted that the work would consider how user needs are currently captured, how they could be more systematically recorded across the organisation, and how a clearer prioritisation framework could be developed. He added that the programme was at an early stage and that further detail would be brought back to the Committee in September.

5.3. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:

- i. members welcomed the intention to bring greater structure and consistency to the understanding of user needs across ONS;
- ii. it was noted that clarity would be important in how this work aligns with wider user engagement activity and the broader engagement strategy, and further work would be undertaken to strengthen this linkage;
- iii. the committee heard that the programme would be coordinated with the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy currently being developed by ONS;
- iv. members emphasised the importance of taking a system-wide perspective, noting that while it was sensible to begin within ONS, early engagement with the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) would be important to avoid duplication and ensure coherence, and this would be taken forward with relevant GSS groups;
- v. it was suggested that the programme would benefit from a clearer articulation of how users would engage with the process in practice, and further detail would be developed as the programme progresses;
- vi. members highlighted the importance of transparency in how user needs are prioritised and how decisions are made, and it was noted that this would form part of future development;
- vii. it was noted that clearer mechanisms for feeding back to users on how their input has been used would be essential, and that the approach would build on and complement existing engagement mechanisms rather than replace them;
- viii. members discussed how existing engagement approaches and initiatives, including “waiting room” models, would align with this work, and it was noted that this would be considered as part of developing a more coherent approach;
- ix. the Committee heard that the programme would take a phased and practical approach, including piloting new methods and refining these before wider implementation.

5.4. The Chair thanked Adrian for the update and welcomed the direction of the work, noting the importance of ensuring clarity, transparency and alignment with wider engagement activity as the programme develops.

Action 04/26: Secretariat to engage with the GSS Secretariat and relevant groups to ensure alignment and avoid duplication in approaches to capturing and prioritising user needs.

Action 03/26: Further detail on the commissioning forum and programme approach to be provided at the September meeting.

6. Any Other Business

- 6.1. The Committee noted that potential speakers for future meetings would continue to be reviewed and refreshed as appropriate.
- 6.2. The Chair highlighted that the annual effectiveness review of the Committee would be undertaken and that members would be circulated with a feedback form. It was noted that responses from all members, including those stepping down, would be welcomed.
- 6.3. The Committee heard an update on ongoing work to strengthen user engagement. It was noted that this built on previous discussions and focused on two key areas: broadening the range of users engaged and deepening the nature of that engagement beyond information-sharing. Members noted a number of initiatives being trialled to support this, including targeted briefings to accompany major statistical releases, dedicated sessions to discuss programme priorities with stakeholder groups, the development of an ONS stakeholder panel for specific user groups, and collaboration through external events and partnerships. The Committee noted that these

approaches would be tested and refined over time, and that a further update could be brought back to a future meeting to reflect on progress and lessons learned.

- 6.4. The Chair thanked members presenters and the Secretariat for their contributions and support in organising the meeting, and confirmed that the next meeting was due to take place in the London office on 15 September 2026.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agenda

Wednesday 3 June 2026, 11:00-13:00
London Boardroom, 2 Marsham Street

Chair: Dame Kate Barker

Apologies: Helen Boaden

Timing	Agenda item	
1 11:00-11:10 (10 mins)	Welcome, previous minutes and actions	Meeting of 05.03.2026 Dame Kate Barker
2 11:10-11:15 (5 mins)	Reflections on Service to Official Statistics	Oral Update Paul Allin
3 11:15-11:40 (25 mins)	Migration Data	Presentation Madeleine Sumption
4 11:40-12:20 (40 mins)	UK Statistics Assembly Progress against the recommendations	NSEUAC(26)03 Lucinda Eggleton Sarah Moore Philipa Robinson Neil Townsend
5 12:20-12:45 (25 mins)	ONS User Needs Steering Group	NSEUAC(26)04 Adrian Chesson Paul Cotton
6 12:45-13:00 (15 mins)	Any other business & Forward agenda	Dame Kate Barker

Next Meeting: Tuesday 15 September, London

Supplementary Information

7	Better Statistics: James Benford presentation	For Information
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UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(26)03

Response to the UK Statistics Assembly

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on progress against the recommendations arising from the independent report on the inaugural UK Statistics Assembly (the Assembly) in January 2025 and future plans.

Recommendations

2. Members of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to:
 - i. note progress being made on delivering against the recommendations both on the four priority areas and initial progress against the more detailed recommendations; and
 - ii. provide views on planned next steps, including the summer 2026 update.

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 also made numerous detailed recommendations from across the remaining 11 sessions.
4. The UK Statistics Authority Board has been clear throughout that recommendations from the Assembly are advisory and not binding. 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 with the user engagement recommendations. Each priority area has an assigned Office for National Statistics (ONS) or National Statistician's Office (NSO) owner and a cross-Government Statistical Service (GSS) owner who are responsible for driving forward and coordinating work in their area. They balance this work with their other duties. The remaining detailed recommendations will be considered by teams across the GSS. Both the NSO and ONS Communications and Digital Publishing (CDP) directorate are supporting the coordination and engagement of follow-up activity related to the Assembly.
5. 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.
6. Progress on the Assembly recommendations was presented to the National Statistician's Executive Group (NSEG) and the Authority Board in March 2026. Both groups endorsed the importance of responding to the Assembly report and the need to publicly feed back.

Progress against the recommendations

7. Since then, we have been working with priority owners, and assigning owners to the more detailed recommendations, to track progress. Work is progressing well against the recommendations that are being taken forward across the four priority areas, with 36 per

cent assessed as being in progress, 15 per cent completed and 7 per cent agreed but work has not yet started. Given that the recommendations are advisory, and a number of these are statements not requiring obvious action (apart from agreement with the statement), this has resulted in 34 per cent being assessed as no action required with a further 8 per cent not being taken forward (due to resource pressures, competing priorities or recommendations being unviable). Across the ONS and GSS, prioritisation decisions and business planning have played a role. 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 roundtable led by Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS). Work is ongoing to engage both GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) and a more diverse range of users in what a good user engagement strategy looks like and we are working to those principles alongside developing a published strategy. We plan to bring the draft strategy to the September NSEUAC meeting for the committee's input and feedback;
 - 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 on ONS priorities;
 - 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 on making more use of administrative data in core ONS statistics, including key datasets such as Pay as You Earn (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 GSS 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 over 150 detailed points and recommendations outside the four priority areas in section five of the Assembly report. There is a more mixed picture of progress on these wider recommendations than in the priority areas, with 19 per cent assessed as being in progress and 14 per cent completed. Given that the recommendations are advisory, 32 per cent have been assessed as no action required and 10 per cent are not being taken forward (again reflecting resource pressures, competing priorities or recommendations being unviable). 5 per cent have been agreed but work has not yet started and 20 per cent have not had a status agreed yet. In many instances, this is due to work being in the inception phase, with teams across the GSS thinking about how best to take activity forward in a collaborative way.
9. We have implemented an internal 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.
10. Information from the tracker will also be used for the planned external update in the summer 2026, which for the first time will include progress on the detailed recommendations. This update is currently being drafted and we have structured as follows:
- i. a headline narrative of overall progress;

- ii. a narrative summarising progress on the four high-level priorities, as well as a summary of initial progress against recommendations across the remaining 11 topics (economic statistics, health disparities, public sector performance, data linkage, net zero, census, business statistics, equalities, Artificial Intelligence (AI), crime and labour market);
 - iii. a line-by-line response to the detailed points and recommendations from section five of the Assembly report: outlining whether we have completed them (and a summary of action taken), we are taking them forward (and a summary of progress to date) or we are not taking them forward (and a reason why); and
 - iv. a timetable for future updates and further engagement, including the next Assembly.
11. The Committee requested to see this update ahead of publication; a draft will be shared for review at the meeting.
 12. It is important that we continue to be transparent with users and manage expectations in these updates, particularly any areas where owners are experiencing resource constraints or where clear prioritisation decisions have been communicated.
 13. Delivering the actions associated with the Statistics Assembly requires considerable support from colleagues across the GSS (not just the priority owners who oversee delivery), with the Authority supporting delivery of all recommendations to some degree. It should be noted that in places Assembly recommendations are inconsistent with ONS and Departmental prioritisation exercises. The Authority Board is providing ongoing support for the prioritisation of this work where possible.
 14. Tracking progress on recommendations and the delivery of future engagement is a significant piece of work for the NSO. Going forward, the NSO will be taking a stronger, more proactive role in driving and tracking progress, working with priority owners around their plans and challenging if more can be done.
 15. ONS is leading development of the refreshed user engagement strategy and will lead the delivery of engagement activity for the next Assembly and to bridge the gap in the interim. ONS and NSO are currently planning for the inaugural Chair's lecture, a recommendation from the independent review of the Authority by Professor Denise Lievesley CBE. The date and details are being confirmed, and an update will be provided in the meeting.
 16. We will also seek advice from the permanent National Statistician once appointed about the timing of the next Assembly.

Conclusion

17. This paper has set out progress and planned next steps. We welcome the Committee's feedback on the plans included within the paper.

Philippa Robinson, NSO, 19 May 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(26)04

ONS User Needs Programme - introduction

Purpose

1. Your attention is brought to a programme of work being carried out within the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the ONS User Needs programme. This is an introduction to the work, its purpose and how it is organised.

Timing

2. The ONS User Needs programme of work will run through into 2027. No fixed timescales have been laid down, yet.
3. This paper introduces the programme to the Committee. Members of the programme team will attend the next meeting (September 2026) to provide more detail, the latest progress and take your advice.

Recommendations

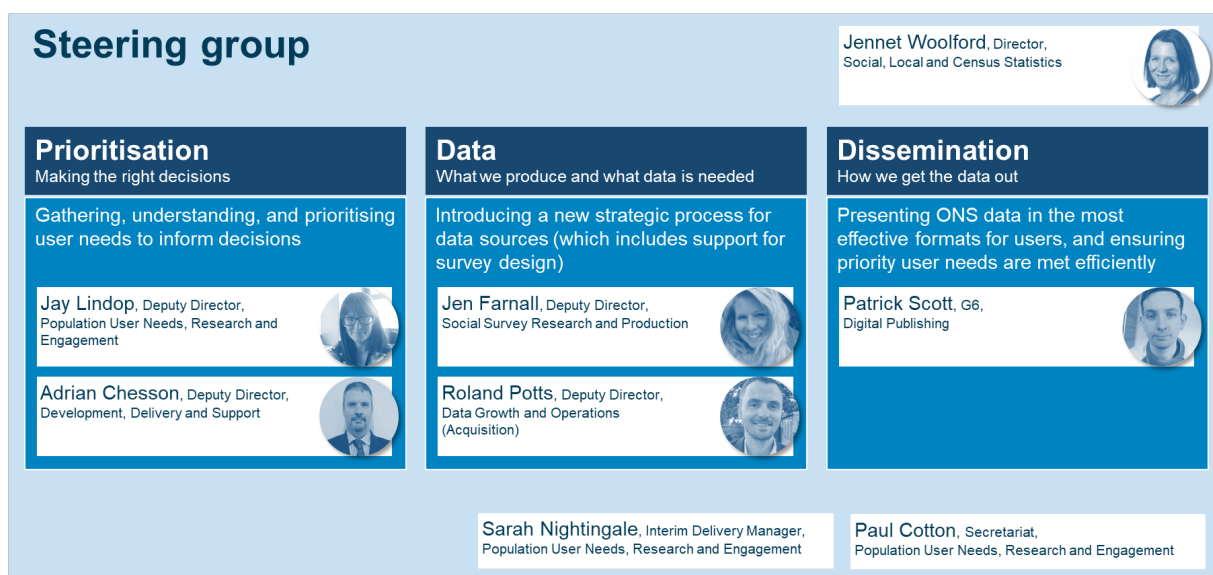
4. National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) members are not being asked for any specific feedback from this paper. Instead, members should be informed and updated about the existence of the ONS User Needs programme of work.
5. The Committee will be asked for its feedback on the programme's progress and plans at the next meeting (September).

Background

6. At ONS, we recognise a [strategic risk](#) (Optimising value for users, aligned with our strategic priorities – previously referred to as SR1) that we might not fully understand, prioritise, or effectively respond to user needs. This could lead to statistical outputs and activities that are not fully optimised to deliver public value and/or users does not understand how that ONS has prioritised user needs.
7. To help mitigate this strategic risk, we have set up a programme of work to look at how we can achieve [ONS' strategic objective 1](#). With regard to user needs, it states:
We will continue to be proactive in ensuring our prioritisation is informed by a good understanding of user needs through the ONS's range of feedback and engagement channels. By drawing on user needs identified through the recent Census Topic Consultation, alongside wider stakeholder and data user insights, we will further embed user perspectives into our processes. This will enable us to deliver outputs that better support meaningful, user-centred decisions for the public good.
8. This work is happening in parallel and in collaboration with the development of a new, more strategic, commissioning forum. We will develop process maps to explain how the two complement and strengthen each other.

Discussion

9. At ONS, we have established a group of colleagues from across the organisation to work together. We aim to develop understanding of how the organisation could utilise better understanding of "user needs" to inform decisions about prioritising aspects of our work. The ONS User Needs programme is structured as shown:



10. The Steering Group will provide strategic oversight and guidance for a programme aimed at developing a unified, organisation-wide approach to capturing and managing user needs. This approach will enable teams across ONS to share insights, avoid duplication, and work in a coordinated way.
11. The three strands will act like working groups to focus on different aspects of the programme. The strands will keep the Steering Group updated on progress and plans. The strands will also ask the Steering Group to ratify their plans to keep the programme's work on track.
12. The "Prioritisation" strand will focus on three issues:
 - i. Capture – recommendations on best practice for capturing user needs. This could include regular engagements, workshops, events or webinars. It would also cover recommendations on the format for recording the user needs when they are identified;
 - ii. Storage – developing the idea of a central repository of user needs from across the whole of ONS. We could use this to better understand common needs, to reduce duplication of effort and interrogate the information in a more holistic way; and
 - iii. Prioritisation – working towards a possible framework we could use to help us prioritise the relevant user needs so they can inform decisions about our work. Those decisions could be about resourcing or triaging work or sourcing new data or trialling new formats of published outputs.
13. The "Data" strand will have two perspectives – surveys and data. For surveys, the goal is to embed a more standardised process for gathering, documenting, and monitoring user needs. For data, the goal is to enable the Data Sources Board (DSB) to effectively guide data sourcing decisions by clearly defining and consistently capturing user data needs across ONS, while validating priorities and identifying gaps.
14. The "Dissemination" strand aims to help ONS deliver products in the best formats to meet user needs, ensuring that users can find, understand, explore and act on ONS data and statistics. The goal is a consistent and coherent website where information is findable and usable, underpinned by strong evidence of user need. This strand is informed by the work being done in the Content and Website Transformation programme and supports Strategic Risk 6: "Our communications".

Conclusion

15. ONS has set up a programme of work looking at how we can capture, document and then utilise better understanding of “user needs”. We are in the early stages of this work and will give the committee an update on progress and plans at the next meeting.

Adrian Chesson, ONS User Needs Programme, ONS, 22 May 2026