

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

Thursday 25 June 2026
Hybrid Meeting

Members Present

Penny Young (Chair)
Peter Barron
Ed Humpherson
Professor Mairi Spowage
Darren Tierney
Dr. Sarah Walsh

Other Attendees

James Benford (for item 13)
June Bowman
Megan Cooper (for item 13)
Fiona Dawe (for item 12)
Lucinda Eggleton (for items 6 and 12)
Steve Ellerd-Elliott (for item 11)
Mary Gregory
Joe Moore (for item 14)
Sarah Moore
Jane Naylor (for item 11)
Philippa Robinson (for item 12)
Rachel Skentelbery (for item 11)
Tom Taylor
Ross Tivey (for item 14)

Apologies

Dr. Jacob Abboud
Professor Dame Carol Propper

Secretariat

Sally Jones
Tom Marsh

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Dr Jacob Abboud and Professor Dame Carol Propper.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1. There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

- 3.1. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 May were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(26)37]

- 4.1. The Chair reported on her activities since the Board last met. Penny Young had attended the Inter Administration Committee held in Welsh Government on 22 June; and alongside Darren Tierney had attended an informal session with the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) as part of their ongoing inquiry into the work of the Authority on 24 June. Preparations were well underway for the Chair's inaugural annual reception on 2 July. The draft speech would be circulated to members for comment.
- 4.2. The Chair noted thanks to Non-executive Directors for providing comment in correspondence on ONS's long term People Plan. The recruitment process for the Director of the National Statistician's Office had concluded with the appointment of Jane Naylor.

5. Report from the Permanent Secretary [SA(26)38]

- 5.1. Darren Tierney provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting highlighting the following:
- i. the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26 had been discussed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting on 23 June with a recommendation that the Board approve the report at this meeting ahead of laying early July;
 - ii. the annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit (HIA) 2025/26 is 'limited', which although disappointing was not unexpected given the pace at which ONS had been able to address weaknesses identified in 2024/25 internal audit reviews. That said the HIA recognised in her opinion that ONS is in a stronger position to address the challenges and priorities in 2026/27;
 - iii. following work across the organisation including a new mission statement, leadership commitment and publication of a three year ONS business plan, and following consultation including with NEDs (and a discussion at this meeting), these elements of ONS's strategic framework had been brought together to inform an ONS Strategy 2026-28, which would be published on 1 July;
 - iv. following extensive consultation, including with NEDs, the ONS long term People Plan would be published mid-July;
 - v. the quarterly update on the Survey and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan was scheduled for publication mid-July;
 - vi. progress in addressing the recently reported Labour Force Survey (LFS) operational error, which had led to temporary under resourcing in LFS telephone collection operations. James Benford had updated the Board immediately in correspondence and published a blog on 19 June 2026, 'Learning from an operational issue temporarily impacting LFS data, in support of our continued recovery';
 - vii. the Content and Website Transformation Programme reported 'amber' with work in development to address uncertainty around resources, funding and operating model; and
 - viii. the Executive Committee (ExCo) had discussed how best to further strengthen the measuring and reporting office attendance following agreement on hybrid working principles. Implementing the hybrid working principles continued to be a key focus for the Senior Leadership Team.
- 5.2. Members discussed the LFS operational error fully and were keen to understand the root cause of the error and whether it was a symptom of a more general problem amongst colleagues and teams having a full understanding of how their contribution fits into producing

the end statistical product. It was clarified that people cultural improvements had not yet permeated throughout the organisation although progress had been made.

- 5.3. Members discussed the latest position on the Field Interviewer upscale with a focus on challenges in achieving the required levels despite a range of interventions around sourcing, onboarding, training and retention.
- 5.4. The Board noted with thanks the immediate and transparent reporting by James Benford to the Board regarding the LFS operational error. With regard to hybrid working principles it was acknowledged that it was important to give sufficient time to embed the principles across the organisation. The Board agreed that going forward office attendance would be reported to Board as part of the Permanent Secretary's report.
- 6. Report from the National Statistician's Office [SA(26)39]**
 - 6.1. Lucinda Eggleton provided an update on activities across the National Statistician's Office (NSO) highlighting the work by the NSO Analysis Unit on the potential use of administrative data as part of a cross-government initiative.
 - 6.2. The Board heard that a report on the UN conference currently being attended by James Benford would be provided at the next meeting. The International Team had played a key role in the Global Data Festival in Nairobi. The ethnicity harmonised standard consultation on user needs had progressed with next steps to include research including focus groups and roundtables with users in July. The aim was to deliver the revised harmonised standard for use in the 2027 Census Test. The Inter Administration Committee had met on 22 June and discussed coherence with progress being made by Chief Statisticians.
 - 6.3. The Chair noted thanks to Lucinda Eggleton for her work as Director of NSO. It was noted that work was on target to deliver the new harmonised standard for sex, which would be considered by the ad hoc panel chaired by the Interim Chair at the end of July. It was agreed that the draft wording would be shared with the Panel in advance of the discussion.
- 7. Director General for Regulation [SA(26)40]**
 - 7.1. Ed Humpherson updated the Board on the work by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) since the last meeting.
 - 7.2. The Regulation Committee had agreed confirmation of accreditation for ONS Business Enterprise Research and Development statistics. OSR had published its response to ONS's report on progress on economic statistics in April noting the progress made and remaining risks and challenges. It was noted that OSR would likely do one more formal response to ONS quarterly updates.
 - 7.3. OSR had published the State of the Statistical System Report that day (25 June), which would feature in the Chair's inaugural event on 2 July. The report highlighted the strategic areas of focus for the incoming National Statistician when in post. The report showed a statistical system that, as a whole, was working well despite challenges faced by ONS. There remained clear structural challenges around resources, response rates and publishing statistics in a contested environment. This had been seen with a recent piece of casework relating to misleading references to the increase in the number of people in receipt of Universal Credit a member of the Shadow Cabinet, which had been dealt with in line with standard procedures as detailed in the Authority's Intervention policy.
 - 7.4. Members discussed the update and noted the continuing growth of OSR's impact. It was noted that OSR's new prioritisation triage tool would help inform the review of statistics OSR had not reviewed in some time in a proportionate and risk-based way. A more detailed update on the new tool was scheduled for the next Regulation Committee meeting after which an update would also be provided for the Board.

8. Update from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair

- 8.1. Dr Sarah Walsh reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which had last met on 23 June.
- 8.2. The Committee had considered:
 - i. the Head of Internal Audit annual opinion of 'limited' for a second consecutive year, and highlighted the need for timely completion of audit actions by the business to address control weakness early in the financial year in working towards an improved HIA year end opinion in 2026/27 financial year;
 - i. the Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26. External Audit would be recommending to the Comptroller and Auditor General that he should certify the 2025/26 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion;
 - ii. the production of an Interim Governance Statement by ONS at month nine at the request of the Committee had been effective in the production of the Annual Report and Accounts and would be retained as part of process going forward;
 - iii. the annual update by the Office for Statistics Regulation including additional information on OSR's approach to risk management as previously requested by the Committee, which had provided a high level of assurance;
 - iv. the annual update by the Data Protection Officer on the Authority's compliance with data protection legislation and the programme of work by the Legal and Data Services Team, which had provided a high level of assurance;
 - v. an update on the financial position at the end of May 2026;
 - vi. an update on the Authority Gifts and Hospitality Register; and
 - vii. the approach to the Committee's annual review of self-effectiveness to be undertaken over the summer.
- 8.3. The Committee had welcomed the unqualified audit opinion. The Committee had approved the Authority's financial statements and confirmed the Accounting Officer should sign the Letter of Representation and Letter of Understanding, subject to the resolution of a few minor issues ahead of consideration by the Comptroller and Auditor General early July and laying in parliament on 9 July.
- 8.4. The Board noted thanks to the Committee for their work in 2025/26 and endorsed the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's annual report including the opinion Dr Jacob Abboud, Chair of ARAC.

9. Communications Update

- 9.1. Peter Barron and Sarah Moore reported on external sentiment since the last meeting, which had overall been good, but with some critical coverage of Gross Domestic Product seasonal adjustment and the Labour Force Survey operational issue. Blogs were published by James Benford providing clarity and transparency on both of these topics for users.
- 9.2. It was acknowledged that there were opportunities for media coverage in the coming weeks. The twelve month anniversary of Darren's appointment as Permanent Secretary would provide opportunities to report on ONS delivery progress. In due course the report by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry on the work of the Authority would be published and the announcement for the new National Statistician would be made. Additionally the inaugural event by the Chair on 2 July would also be an opportunity to share our view on the strengths and challenges of the system.

10. UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2026/26 [SA(26)41]

- 10.1. Tom Taylor and Rhys Thomas introduced the near final version of the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26, which had been approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee subject to a small number of issues being resolved, including an issue on remuneration disclosure being dealt with in accordance with due process and procedure.

- 10.2. ARAC members noted their thanks to the finance team, highlighting that the process for the production of the report had been effective and much improved on the previous year. The report accurately reflected a balanced view of the year recognising the challenges faced by ONS and areas of improvement. It was acknowledged that the report focused on ONS with a separate annex on the Office for Statistics Regulation.
- 10.3. The Board approved the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26 in readiness for certification by the Comptroller and Auditor General and laying the report before Parliament early July.

11. Government Statistical Service Vision [SA(26)42]

- 11.1. The Chair welcomed Jane Naylor, Jason Bradbury and Rachel Skentelbery to the meeting and congratulated Jane Naylor on her new role as Director of the National Statistician's Office. The Deputy Heads of GSS introduced an update on the implementation of the Government Statistical Service Vision, 'Strength in Numbers' with a focus on the work underway to assess and embed the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the GSS.
- 11.2. The Board heard that in implementing the GSS vision, progress had been made in all areas. Following engagement with the Board and Heads of Profession a GSS Strategic Risk Register reflecting system level risks was in place. With regard to system leadership the absence of a National Statistician was creating ongoing uncertainty and a gap in analytical influence at the most senior levels in government. The first meeting of GSS leadership development programme group had been held comprising representatives from across the statistical system including Professor Mairi Spowage on behalf of the Board. Progress had also been made assessing and embedding AI – with the GSS AI group established in March focusing on understanding the current AI landscape within the GSS; identifying and addressing gaps in AI use/guidance for statistics; establishing mechanisms for sharing and updating best practice; and identifying any actions to develop AI capability within the GSS.
- 11.3. Members discussed the update. The following points were made in discussion:
- i. the vision provided a clearly prioritised view of where the incoming National Statistician should focus on appointment;
 - ii. the impact of the lack of a National Statistician across the statistical system, including with other Permanent Secretaries providing senior level influence to drive evidence based decision making through the use of statistics. It was noted that Darren Tierney could be utilised more to influence and update the Permanent Secretary forum as needed;
 - iii. in relation to AI, the use of Copilot for quality assurance and drafting statistician's commentary, and the importance of always having human input as part of the process;
 - iv. the range of views on the use of AI across the statistical system and the importance of safe testing environment for AI to effectively mitigate the risks;
 - v. the impact on the coding community of experts on the growth of coding by AI; and
 - vi. the need to apply clear guidance on what could be processed with AI with consideration of the legal and data security perspective.
- 11.4. The Board noted thanks for the significant progress made on the implementation of the GSS Vision led by the Deputy Heads of the Government Statistical Service working with colleagues across the GSS.

12. UK Statistics Assembly Update [SA(26)43]

- 12.1. Philippa Robinson introduced a paper which provided a update on delivery against recommendations from the inaugural UK Statistics Assembly in January 2025. Since the last update to the Board in March the NSO had worked with recommendation owners to track progress. The draft report reflected feedback from GSS Heads of Profession, the National Statistics Executive Group and the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group. The aim was to publish the report in July.

- 12.2. Members discussed the progress made and draft report. The following points were made in discussion.
- i. as reflected in OSR's State of the Statistical System Report 2026 the Board endorses its suggestion to publish a clear time-bound plan for taking forward the four Statistics Assembly priority areas;
 - ii. the need to provide clarity and specificity on the top four priorities out of the Assembly reflecting the work by ONS on the development of the refreshed user engagement strategy and work on coherence of UK wide statistics by Chief Statisticians; and
 - iii. the draft report could be improved by quantifying progress made including infographics and charts.
- 12.3. The Board noted the progress made and highlighted the need to provide clarity from priority owners summarising actual progress for the four priority areas: user engagement; granular statistics; and great use of administrative data and UK wide coherence. It was agreed that the draft report would be updated to reflect the Board discussion and circulated to members in advance of publication.

13. Survey and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan [SA(26)44]

- 13.1. Megan Cooper and James Benford introduced a paper, which focused on an early draft of the next quarterly progress update of the Surveys and Economic Statistics improvement plan scheduled for publication on 15 July. This would be the first publication of the Economic Statistics Plan and Survey Improvement Enhancement Plan. In terms of timing of the next Transformed Labour Force Survey publication it had been agreed that it would follow later in the summer. The Board heard about progress since papers had been circulated. ONS had engaged with the Head of Profession's office and OSR and had undertaken a deep dive on ONS statistics that had lost their accreditation to provide clarity in the published update on ONS's forward path to accreditation.
- 13.2. Board members discussed the draft quarterly report. The following comments were made in discussion:
- i. the reference to the Statistical Business Register search and view capability roll out to users with a suggestion to include the total volume of users to provide context;
 - ii. the need to include a brief explainer on the Waiting Room concept and to clarify that legacy is not something that would be solved quickly;
 - iii. for a future update ONS may want to provide further detail on stakeholder sentiment; and
 - iv. the importance of referencing actual survey response rates rather than reframing as an indexed measure.
- 13.3. The Board welcomed early sight of the draft SES publication. It was agreed that it would be useful to include a reference in the publication to the recent LFS operational error. A further draft would be circulated for comment in advance of publication. It was noted that OSR's response to the publication would likely be the last of its kind given the progress to date.

14. ONS Strategy [SA(26)45]

- 14.1. Joe Moore and Ross Tivey introduced a paper which set out a draft organisational strategy for ONS. Since publication of the Board's priorities in October 2025 ONS had agreed a new mission and leadership statements, strategic objectives and outcomes and published its three year business plan.
- 14.2. The Board heard that the draft ONS strategy brought together the elements of the ONS strategic framework into one coherent strategy, sitting below the Authority's system-wide priorities and above ONS's business and recovery plans. It is a two year strategy, and hence focused primarily on recovery rather than the longer term strategic questions.
- 14.3. Members discussed the draft and highlighted that it would be useful to reference the UK Statistics Assembly and to include detail on ONS assurance more generally with reference to risk management, Internal Audit and National Audit Office alongside OSR as independent

regulator. Reference could also be made to potential AI opportunities to support legacy transformation.

14.4. The Board endorsed the ONS Strategy ahead of publication on 1 July.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Thursday 25 June, 11.00-14.30

Microsoft Teams

Chair: Penny Young

Apologies: Prof. Dame Carol Propper, Dr Jacob Abboud, James Benford

Attendees: Jason Bradbury (for item 9), Megan Cooper (for item 11), Fiona Dawe (for item 10), Lucinda Eggleton (for items 4 & 10), Jane Naylor (for item 9), Philippa Robinson (for item 10), Rachel Skentelbery (for item 9), Rhys Thomas (for item 8),

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 21.05.26
2 11.05-11.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(26)37 Penny Young
3 11.15-11.30 15 mins	Report from the Permanent Secretary	SA(26)38 Darren Tierney
4 11.30-11.40 10 mins	Report from the National Statistician's Office	SA(26)39 Lucinda Eggleton
5 11.40-11.50 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(26)40 Ed Humpherson
6 11.50-12.00 10 mins	Update from Committee Chair Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	Oral update Dr Sarah Walsh
7 12.00-12.10 10 mins	Communications Update	Oral update Peter Barron Sarah Moore
8 12.10-12.20 10 mins	Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26	SA(26)41 Tom Taylor Rhys Thomas
12.20-12.40 20 mins	Break	
9 12.40-13.10 30 mins	GSS Vision	SA(26)42 Jason Bradbury Jane Naylor Rachel Skentelbery
10 13.10-13.30 20 mins	UK Statistics Assembly	SA(26)43 Fiona Dawe Philippa Robinson Lucinda Eggleton
11 13.30-14.00 30 mins	SES Improvement Plan	SA(26)44 Megan Cooper
12 14.00-14.20	ONS Strategy	SA(26)45

20 mins		Joe Moore Ross Tivey
13 14.20-14.30 10 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: Thursday 30 July, London Boardroom, 11.00-14.30

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)37

Chair's Report, June 2026

Purpose

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

Review of recent activities

2. On 27 May, I met with Catherine Little, Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office to discuss progress on the appointment of the National Statistician. Whilst the process has taken longer than desired, it is progressing through the various steps, and we hope it will be concluded soon.
3. On 2 June, I met with Simon Hoare MP, Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC), to discuss the UK Statistics Authority's upcoming reception event.
4. On 10 June, I held discussions with the shortlisted candidates for the Director of the National Statistician's Office (NSO) – to share and discuss the Board's view on priorities for the NSO. These did not form part of the formal process.
5. On 18 June, I attended the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee to discuss the work of the Board, including our involvement in harmonisation work, and our oversight of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) prioritisation exercise.

Correspondence

6. Last month, I updated the Board that I had written to the Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch MP, about her use of official statistics about trends in Universal Credit claimants. Subsequently, on 8 June, we have published a response to a related Freedom of Information request.

Looking ahead

7. On 22 June, I will attend the Inter-Administration Committee which will be held at the Welsh Government in Cardiff to support the Board's priority on system-wide leadership in the absence of a National Statistician.
8. On 24 June, Darren Tierney and I have been invited to a private and informal session with PACAC as part of their ongoing inquiry into the Authority.
9. Preparations continue for the UK Statistics Authority's reception event on 2 July where I will give a speech as Interim Chair setting out the role of the Authority, the Board and look to the future of the UK statistical system. This will fulfil the third part of Professor Denise Lievesley's first governance recommendation: for an annual public lecture from the Chair of the Authority on the state of the system and the priorities of the Board. It will naturally follow, as Professor Lievesley's recommendation does, from the UK Statistics Assembly held in 2025 and provide an opportunity to engage with users and stakeholders. I am delighted that Professor Lievesley has agreed to give a formal reply to the speech at the reception.

Penny Young, Interim Chair, 18 June 2026

Permanent Secretary's Report, June 2026

Purpose

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of activity since the last Board meeting on 21 May 2026.

Recovery is beginning to translate into firmer control and better information, but material financial and assurance risks remain

2. We are in the final stages of the 2025/26 Annual Report and Accounts production cycle, with a near-final draft now submitted to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and the Board for review. Feedback to date has been positive and suggests the process has improved compared with last year.
3. Our provisional financial position at the end of May indicates that, on current recruitment activity, we are heading towards an underspend unless corrective action is taken. Given our higher financial risk appetite for 2026/27, I intend to consider investment options once Quarter 1 results are available, while balancing these against the affordability challenge we face in 2027/28. In parallel, HM Treasury has agreed our plans for use of the census ring-fence in 2026/27.
4. The annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit for 2025/26 is 'Limited'. This is disappointing, but not unexpected, given the pace at which we were able to address weaknesses identified in 2024/25 internal audit reviews. The disruption of the first half of the year was a contributing factor. That said, both the Head of Internal Audit's opinion and the Chair of ARAC's annual report acknowledge the clear signs of improvement by year-end. Since August 2025, we have increasingly been able to evidence tangible delivery, sharper strategic focus, an improving strategic risk picture and better people indicators. While resolving all of our issues will take time, I am confident that we now have the focus, intent and capability to do so.
5. Work also continues to formalise the Office for National Statistics (ONS) demand management process, which is central to controlling the volume of activity we attempt to deliver. This will culminate in a Quarter 1 deep dive into organisational financial and delivery performance, giving the Executive Committee (ExCo) the evidence needed to take controlled decisions on any further work we are able to commit to in 2026/27. This will be a first for ONS and is an important demonstration of the lessons we have put in place following the 2025 performance reviews. Ahead of these, I will be meeting with each business area as part of our new quarterly Permanent Secretary's Stocktakes. These will provide an opportunity for a holistic look at each business area, covering the full performance picture including financial, people, delivery and risk.
6. Refreshed milestone commissions and reporting processes are also being rolled out this month. These should improve clarity on performance against the Business Plan and strengthen accountability across the organisation.

We are making steady progress on our long-term People Plan, while maintaining focus on leadership accountability and attendance

7. Following extensive colleague consultation, we have finalised the first draft of the plan and shared it with ExCo, the People Committee and Board members for comment. We have also continued discussions with other government departments facing similar people challenges so that we can learn from their experience. I am pleased that we remain on track to publish the plan internally in mid-July.
8. ExCo also discussed how we can further strengthen our approach to measuring and reporting office attendance. Our methodology for adjusting raw occupancy data to better

reflect true attendance is now close to finalisation. While overall occupancy remains relatively flat, I have asked all Senior Civil Servants (SCS) to put in place immediate action plans to improve purposeful attendance in their areas. ExCo will review these plans in more detail this month so that areas can learn from one another. I have also ensured that all SCS members now have an individual objective focused on creating the conditions for regular and effective attendance across their teams, and attendance at SCS level is now nearing the required 60 per cent.

9. We have now concluded the moderation process for SCS year-end performance ratings. Ratings and performance awards will be submitted to the Remuneration Committee for ratification in late July, ahead of outcomes being communicated in August.

The portfolio position is improving, but delivery remains finely balanced in several critical areas

10. The overall portfolio position is one of cautious improvement. However, material delivery, dependency and assurance risks remain across a number of programmes, and these will require sustained senior oversight and continued challenge at portfolio level.
11. Following an independent external gateway review, delivery confidence for the Business Surveys Transformation Programme has improved to Amber, supported by business case approval and the prioritisation of the Statistical Business Register. Delivery remains feasible, though further work is needed to strengthen plans and resource alignment. The programme will now move into implementation of the review recommendations.
12. For the Statistical Business Register, a ten-week reset has helped address delivery risks and establish a more predictable path forward. A staged transition approach has been agreed, allowing early value to be released sooner. Progress has also been made in aligning integration and enabling functions around this approach and a revised governance and assurance model. The next phase of work will focus on turning assumptions into evidenced delivery plans, finalising sequencing and strengthening testing and assurance.
13. Census 2031 continues to report amber/green delivery confidence, with mobilisation progressing. However, the programme is already on the critical path, with ongoing concerns around scaling capability and capacity. While visibility has improved through workforce planning, a significant resourcing gap remains. Unless this is addressed in line with the required profile, pressure across key milestones will persist and confidence in future delivery will reduce.
14. The Transformed Labour Force Survey continues to report amber/red, with delivery still finely balanced because of tight timelines and dependency on delivery partners. Programme contingency remains limited, and colleagues are testing plans to identify viable trade-offs. The programme is forecasting an overspend, which has been agreed with Finance teams and HM Treasury and is being managed as an organisational pressure. Ahead of the July readiness assessment, delivery remains highly sensitive to further slippage, with potential consequences for readiness timelines and scope if pressures cannot be absorbed.
15. The Content and Website Transformation Programme has commenced portfolio reporting at Amber, but it remains at an early stage of maturity. Scope and plans continue to develop, with some uncertainty around resources, funding and operating model. Progress is being made, but confidence remains constrained by reliance on external partners and enabling functions, evolving plans that are not yet fully baselined, and interdependencies across the wider portfolio.
16. Stakeholder and media sentiment remains at amber for the second consecutive month. Overall, our statistics have landed smoothly, with economic figures, net migration and births data all generating good coverage despite a busy news landscape. Following scrutiny from some commentators on seasonality adjustment for Gross Domestic

Product (GDP), James Benford published a blog to ensure we remain transparent about our position and the work underway in this area.

Recovery work and core delivery continue to move forward, although operational pressures remain in key areas

17. This month, we completed our approach for key population groups who may require additional support to overcome barriers to responding to the census. The resulting framework will help us to design tailored interventions and support an inclusive census in which everyone can take part.
18. Following the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) review of the mid-year population estimates, we are preparing a package of information to publish alongside the July estimates. This will set out more clearly our view of the associated uncertainty, alongside the actions we are taking to improve the estimates over time.
19. Work is also progressing on the publication of the Survey and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan (SESIP). The Portfolio Board has agreed to separate publication timing, with the SESIP to be published in July and the TLFS readiness assessment in August. Work continues to refine the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) section, confirm the key deliverables to be highlighted for the year ahead and strengthen the visual presentation of the report in response to OSR feedback.
20. Last month I updated the Board on social survey mandation. By the end of this month, we expect to have the team in place and early governance and stakeholder engagement established. The project will take forward eight workstreams, including legislation and ethics, public acceptability and methodological design. External work will shortly begin to test public views on this issue, ahead of a recommendation being brought to ExCo by January 2027.
21. Despite previous interventions, interviewer headcount in May remains below the minimum target of 875 and is now at its lowest point since July 2025. Without sufficient interviewer capacity, we will not meet our response targets, with consequent implications for the quality of our statistics. The main drivers continue to be lower-than-planned onboarding and ongoing attrition. Colleagues in Social Surveys are exploring options to address this.

Darren Tierney, Permanent Secretary, 18 June 2026

National Statistician's Report, June 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 21 May 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. Three new lay members have been successfully onboarded to the **National Statistician's Data Ethics Committee (NSDEC)**. The Committee held its second meeting of the year on 2 June, with key discussions including the use of AI within the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), findings and challenges arising from the Safety During Childhood Survey field test 1, and a proposed refresh of the Committee's ethical principles. NSDEC have also conducted one correspondence review relating to Census Test 2027, specifically considering engagement approaches and the cognitive testing of materials.
3. The **National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC)** met at the start of June 2026, covering a range of important topics. Amongst other things, there was an interesting retrospective reflection from Paul Allin, the outgoing Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Official Statistics lead on developments in official statistics since he joined the GSS. There was also an item on migration and population statistics where members discussed recent improvements driven by administrative data alongside ongoing challenges in measuring migration flows and stocks. Members also reviewed a draft of the next update on progress against the inaugural UK Statistics Assembly recommendations ahead of publication of the next progress update on the UK Statistics Authority website, noting the importance of clear and transparent reporting against recommendations and distinguishing responsibilities across the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and wider GSS. The Committee's feedback has been taken on board by the NSO whilst preparing a near final version for the Authority Board's review at the June Board meeting.
4. The most recent meeting of the **Methodological Assurance Review Panel (MARP)** took place on 15 June. Papers covered four key areas: 1) a framework for identifying and prioritising key population groups for Census 2031, 2) geospatial machine learning methods for small area population estimates, 3) census question testing, and 4) continuous improvement work on mid-year estimates.
5. The most recent meeting of the **National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee (NSIDAC)** was on Thursday, 18 June. The meeting included a session with Penny Young who had been invited to discuss how the changes noted in the UK Statistics Authority letter published in October 2025 on prioritisation and reduced activity may impact on inclusivity of data and how this has been considered and mitigated. Other items on the agenda include an overview of how inclusiveness is being approached in development of the next census in England and Wales and new developments in relation to trust and public confidence in official statistics with a range of contributors including representatives of Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and Statistics Canada.

NSO Activity and Engagement

6. On 26 May, the **Analysis Unit** released a [publication](#) on the impact of employment advisors in NHS Talking Therapies on employee earnings and employment.

7. June has been a busy month for NSO colleagues coordinating and collating feedback on a draft of the next public update on progress against the **UK Statistics Assembly** recommendations. A draft has been shared with members of NSEUAC, National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) and GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) for comment, as well as seeking sign off from recommendation owners on the line-by-line updates and the progress update. Both the progress update and the line-by-line updates (housed in an Excel spreadsheet) will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website once final sign-off has been received from the Authority Board.
8. In the first week of June, the International Division played a key role in the **Global Data Festival** in Nairobi. ONS worked closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data on the agenda for this high-level event involving 1,200 delegates from 65 countries, focussing on resilience and innovation through data and technology. ONS presented on the Analysis for Action toolkit, the Open Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) platform, managed the "inclusion pavilion" (sharing ideas on inclusive data), and chaired an event on the use of AI in health provision in Africa and the implications on official statistics. Several International Development Team (IDT) projects were also showcased by our partners, including using reproducible analytical pipelines in Consumer Price Index (CPI).
9. On 9 June, the **Standards for Official Statistics on Climate-Health Interactions (SOSCHI)** project team published the final Statistical Framework Report. This marks the end of a four-year project to develop global standards for climate and health statistics. SOSCHI has produced freely available, UN endorsed standards and tools that are openly accessible through the [online platform](#). This is a major milestone, bringing together stakeholder engagement, technical development, and international collaboration. A smaller team will continue to support countries in putting these standards into practice, helping to build stronger national statistical systems and better climate and health decision-making.
10. The **ethnicity harmonised standard** consultation on user needs for additional response options in the revised question design has now progressed through scoring for Stage 1 and 2. Stage 3 research will include focus groups and roundtables with members of the communities and statistical users, these are in the process of being set up to take place in June and July. The work is on target to deliver the revised harmonised standard for use in the 2027 Census Test.
11. Following publication of an interim statement and updated workplan on 21 May for the **sex harmonisation** workstream, the first iteration of testing for a new harmonised standard for sex completed in the first half of June, and iteration two is due to complete in early July. The work is on target to deliver the new harmonised standard for sex for review by the Ad Hoc Panel (convened by the UK Statistics Authority) at the end of July.
12. Recruitment is underway to build a capability team within the NSO to develop and implement a talent and succession building strategy for the GSS. This will include actions relating to [the Future Statistician report](#) and proposals for a **GSS leadership talent programme**.
13. The next quarterly **Inter Administration Committee (IAC)** is taking place in Cardiff on 22 June followed by a UK Census Committee (UKCC) meeting in the afternoon. The Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Government, Dr Andrew Goodall, will attend the meeting. Progress is being made in drafting the Blueprint for the UK Statistical System which will be shared with the IAC before final review in September. This is in advance of updating the Concordat in Statistics.
14. A draft **GSS Coherence Strategy** will be presented to the IAC in June. This strategy responds to the recommendations in the OSR guidance, "*The adequacy of UK-wide*

comparable statistics and data", published June 2025, and aligns with the UK Statistics Blueprint which is in draft.

15. The latest UK coherence article, "*Investigating the comparability and coherence of UK statistics and data about empty homes*", is due to be published at the end of June 2026.
16. The **Centre for Equalities and Inclusion (CEI)** have shared initial findings from discovery research on the **Young Voices** project in two workshops convened with: 1) stakeholders from across ONS, and 2) external stakeholders from across the GSS and wider, including Department for Education (DfE), the Children's Commissioner, Ada Lovelace Institute, Government Data Service (GDS), and the Devolved Governments, among others. The purpose of the workshops was to situate our findings in the wider context of other work happening in this area and to discuss ideas of what could most usefully be included in further research on the topic. Participants were very enthusiastic about the relevance of the project and the need for further, more granular work to understand children's and young people's views about participating in government research.
17. CEI have also finalised the revised draft of the report on **Roma Lived Experiences** which will be discussed by the project's advisory group in early July with publication of the report planned for September.
18. James Benford, supported by International Relations Team (IRT) colleagues, will be representing the UK at the **UN Conference of European Statisticians** in Geneva and the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy** in Paris w/c 22 June.

Broader UK Statistical System

19. **Analysis in Government Month** was the most successful yet with record breaking attendance rates. Over 5,000 people attended sessions over the course of the month, with over 700 attendees recorded for an individual session ("*Communicating uncertainty in an uncertain age*" with Sir David Spiegelhalter). Analysts across government are able to catch up on learning outcomes from the sessions through the Analysis Function (AF) website and recordings of key sessions will be included on our YouTube channel.
20. Planning is underway for the next **Departmental Directors of Analysis (DDANs)** and **Analysis Function People Board meetings**, both taking place in July. There was an ad-hoc discussion with DDANs on the new data valuation framework and how this might be applied within analysis. The AF Central Team also have spotlight sessions planned with DDANs on the Cross Government forecasting and modelling network, Local Government Reorganisation, Data.gov.uk, and Privacy enhancing technologies.
21. The **Analysis Function Standards Steering Group** met on 18 May 2026 to discuss the results of organisations' assessments against the AF Standard, which showed good compliance and increasing engagement from Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs). The group also discussed what further support was needed on meeting the standard, with the focus being on support to ALBs. The Group also approved plans for a high-level summary guidance on the use of AI within analysis, which the AF AI Working Group will be taking forward.

Lucinda Eggleton, Director, National Statistician's Office, 18 June 2026

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

Credible and Rigorous Regulator

2. Highlights from our regulatory compliance work include:
 - i. Confirmation of accreditation for Office for National Statistics (ONS) Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD) statistics. Based on the evidence provided, we recommended to our June Regulation Committee that the actions taken, together with those formally committed to by ONS, sufficiently address the requirements set out in our July 2024 [assessment report](#). The Committee agreed with our recommendation and our letter to ONS, confirming this is due to be published on 24 June;
 - ii. [Assessment report](#) for the third and final phase of our assessment of National Records of Scotland's (NRS) outputs for the 2022 census in Scotland. We concluded that NRS has met all the requirements set out in our 2023 Phase 2 assessment and confirmed the continued designation of the statistics as accredited official statistics;
 - iii. [Letter](#) to the census offices of Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales outlining our planned approach to the 2031 census outputs across the UK;
 - iv. OSR [response](#) to the April 2026 ONS report on progress with economic statistics. We found the ONS's latest update demonstrates genuine and welcome progress since the first update, published in December 2025. However, critical challenges and risks remain, and we set out what ONS now needs to do to ensure that all our recommendations are met in full; and
 - v. [Compliance review](#) of Energy Performance of Buildings Certificates in England and Wales. We found that these official statistics meet the standards of the Code and identified a small number of recommendations to improve the statistics.
3. We have developed a new prioritisation triage tool to support us in looking at those statistics that we have not reviewed for some time. In its pilot phase the tool is effectively supporting us in reviewing statistics in a proportionate, risk-based, and auditable way.

System Catalyst

4. Following discussion at the June Regulation Committee on the State of the Statistical System report, we plan to publish on 25 June. The report recognises the progress ONS has made but also highlights the challenges facing both ONS and the wider statistics system. It will form an important input to the Chair's lecture on 2 July.
5. On 18 June, OSR's Research team will engage with the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee (NSIDAC) on OSR's work on trust and trustworthiness in official statistics.
6. I have delivered talks at the following key events since the last board meeting.
 - i. code of practice for statistics workshop – Weaving the Golden Threads of Trust organised by Transport for London. This promoted the Code to Transport for London and other parts of the Greater London Authority; and
 - ii. at the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence conference, I convened a panel session on top down and bottom-up approaches to regional and sectoral economic statistics; Jonthan Price chaired a session on the final report of the UN High Level

Expert Group on Beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and Rob Kent-Smith organised and spoke on a panel alongside James Benford on ONS's recovery, a session which was chaired by Darren Morgan.

7. I have accepted an invitation to be co-editor of the policy section in the Harvard Data Science Review.

Public Use of Statistics

8. Casework: We opened a further 19 cases since our last paper to the Board, taking us to 53 cases in 2026/27 so far (as of 16 June). We have not published any casework responses since the May board meeting. We do however have a number of cases relating to use of crime statistics due to publish in the next few weeks.

Enhance Our Own TQV

9. We have finalised three key corporate documents: our annual report, our annual summary of casework and our annual statement to the Audit and Risk Committee.
10. On 28 May we published our [Evaluation strategy](#), which sets out an approach for monitoring and reporting our progress against the commitments set out within the OSR Strategy. The activity supporting the strategy will provide a transparent and proportionate approach to evaluating OSR's work, outline how we will assess whether our activities lead to our intended outcomes and impacts, detail an approach for embedding learning and continuous improvement, and enable us to report publicly on progress against our strategy.

On my mind

11. I have set out what is currently on my mind below:

- i. implementing our new prioritisation tool;
- ii. finalising and publishing the State of the System report;
- iii. managing an apparent increase in our casework volumes;
- iv. developing an approach to understanding and managing workloads of OSR staff; and
- v. revising our approach to economic statistics one year after the launch of ONS's recovery plans.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 17 June 2026

Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26

Purpose

1. This paper introduces the final draft version of the Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26, which has been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and has been subject to audit by the National Audit Office (NAO).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the assessment of delivery and the challenges we have faced during 2025/26 set out in the Performance Report (Chapter 2) and Accountability Report (Chapter 3) of the Annual Report and Accounts;
 - ii. note the financial performance that is set out in the Resources and Organisation section (Performance Report Chapter 2) including the overall financial position that has been presented to ARAC and the Board, via the Integrated Performance Report, during the year;
 - iii. note that the final published version of the document will be subject to further proof reading, potential amendment pursuant to further auditor comments and visual design refinement; and
 - iv. subject to the above authorise the Accounting Officer to sign the Annual Report and Accounts and provide the final signed version to the NAO for certification, prior to it being laid before Parliament (scheduled for 9 July).

Background and discussion

Delivery Performance

3. The Annual Report and Accounts provides an annual summary of the performance of the UK Statistics Authority, a statement on the governance of the organisation and the detailed statutory financial statements and supporting notes. The 2025/26 version provides a transparent view which balances the positive outcomes achieved in the year, with a candid assessment of the challenges we have faced and the actions we have taken in the period to address them.
4. We have achieved all but one of our key deliverables in year (as set out in the 2025/26 Business Plan) – the exception being progress on stakeholder and user engagement which is partially complete.
5. A summarised view of other achievements and improvements is set out below:
 - i. **Tangible improvement in statistical quality and methodology**
The organisation made measurable progress in improving the quality and robustness of key economic and population statistics, including integrating scanner data into inflation measures and strengthening labour market survey design. These changes represent a methodological step forward and help to maintain the alignment of UK statistics with international best practice.
 - ii. **Delivery of core statistical outputs despite operational pressures**
Core outputs such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), labour market statistics, population estimates and price indices continued to be delivered consistently across the year. The organisation published the majority of releases to time and quality, demonstrating resilience despite the challenges that have been faced.
 - iii. **Strong progress against strategic recovery and improvement plans**
Following the external reviews in the early part of 2025/26, the organisation first designed plans in response and then delivered over two-thirds of the milestones within its Economic Statistics and Survey Improvement plans. This reflects

strengthened prioritisation, governance and quality assurance frameworks, which in turn has helped to rebuild trust and demonstrate visible recovery momentum in the latter half of the year.

iv. **Modernisation of data and governance frameworks**

Work has been done to develop a comprehensive data governance framework, including a new Data Governance Hub, consolidated data policies, and clearer data ownership models. This represents a fundamental redesign of how data is managed, improving accountability and supporting long-term quality. Whilst progress has been made, we must acknowledge the fact that we have moved from an unsatisfactory internal audit rating to limited in year. Clearly, we have started from a low base with more work to do.

v. **Cultural and governance improvement**

Governance reviews highlighted a positive cultural shift, with the executive demonstrating an increased openness to challenge and a stronger focus on collaboration and accountability. This has been supported by strengthened Board oversight, improving management information, and clearer governance processes.

6. Whilst the improvements we have made are evidence based, the Annual Report and Accounts conveys the message that this remains a work in progress and in some cases this progress has only just started. The document is very clear that we have continued to face challenges during 2025/26.
7. The organisation continued to face issues with data quality, including corrections, postponed releases and the continued suspension of accreditation. Despite the availability and prioritisation of funding, delivery was constrained by shortages in specialist skills, including analysts, interviewers and digital expertise. These gaps affected survey performance, transformational activity and broader delivery capacity. The organisation faced strain from running transformational programmes whilst balancing a gradual movement away from legacy systems. The scale, pace and interdependencies of change introduced delivery risk and placed pressure on statistical production systems.
8. Initial financial challenges and the need to reduce the workload on an organisation 'trying to do too much' required an ongoing sharp focus on prioritisation of core outputs, often at the expense of other activities. These trade-offs created tension with user demand and led to difficult decisions about reducing scope and reallocating resources. The governance statement also highlights pervasive and increasing risks from cyber threats, expanding data holdings and the need for secure, modern digital infrastructure. Alongside this, successful implementation of new data governance and technology models depends on sustained investment, skills and organisational change, which remain ongoing challenges.
9. The annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit is 'Limited' for the second year running. This is disappointing and a reflection that the organisation did not make sufficiently rapid progress in addressing some of the weaknesses identified by internal audit reviews in 2024/25. However, the opinions of both the head of internal audit and the Chair of ARAC recognise clear signs of improvement by year-end. All of which points to an organisation in a state of transition.

Financial performance

10. The report describes the Authority's financial outturn for the year. This shows overall net expenditure (resource plus capital less income) which is within the range previously reported to the Board. To note this excludes depreciation which is the subject of a separate ring-fenced resource budget (it being 'non-cash' and a factor of prior capitalisation).

11. All control totals remained within expected parameters. We have provided HM Treasury with a debrief of the financial performance for the year.

Conclusion

12. This paper sets out a summary of the key elements of the Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26. We recommend that the document should be signed by the Permanent Secretary as Accounting Officer for the Authority, following the Board meeting.
13. The NAO will then pass the Annual Report and Accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General for his signature, prior to the report being laid before Parliament (scheduled for 9 July).
14. The Board is asked to note that the organisation has delivered significant achievements across the year in a period of intensive structural change and external scrutiny. Whilst sizeable challenges remain the organisation's outlook is far more positive now than it was 12 months ago. The Board is also asked to note and provide final approval of the document prior to signature subject to any minor amendments emerging through final proof reading.

Rhys Thomas, Deputy Director Finance and Commercial, 17 June 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)42

Government Statistical Service: Vision implementation and progress with assessing and embedding AI

Purpose

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an update on the implementation of the Government Statistical Service Vision (GSS Vision), 'Strength in Numbers'. Following discussion at the last meeting, this includes updating the Board with our progress to establish a leadership development programme but will major on work underway to assess and embed the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the GSS.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. note the progress with implementing the GSS Vision;
 - ii. note our progress in establishing the governance and priorities for a GSS leadership programme; and
 - iii. comment/challenge us on the work we are undertaking to assess and embed AI across our work.

Background

3. The GSS Vision, 'Strength in Numbers', launched in October 2024, set out ambitions for cross-government statistical collaboration, increased impact, and a strengthened professional identity. The Vision is underpinned by four pillars: Coordination, Cooperation and Leadership; Capability and Community; Setting Standards; and Transformation and Innovation.

GSS Vision Progress Update: Achievements and Ongoing Initiatives

4. Since our last update progress continues to be made, particularly in the priority areas for 2026 previously agreed with the Board. These are:
 - i. to embrace modern approaches and techniques whilst managing the risks - championing the opportunities AI presents in data processing, automation, and generating deeper insights, while also addressing critical risks such as bias, transparency, and ethical considerations;
 - ii. leadership and governance - working closely with (pending arrival of) the new National Statistician to provide strong and visible GSS leadership to respond to wider changes and challenges across the GSS and the Civil Service in 2026; and
 - iii. future statisticians - taking deliberate action to inspire the next generation of statisticians and establish a clear, sustainable talent pipeline that supports long-term, fulfilling career pathways within the GSS, with a particular focus on senior talent pipelines.
5. We have also made good progress, including with the Board, on the identification and mitigation of GSS risks. With a GSS Strategic Risk Register now in place, we have a clear, shared view of the key system-level risks facing the profession, focused on a small number of interconnected strategic themes. Unsurprisingly, and in close fit with our priorities, the most material risks relate to system leadership and coherence, skills and capacity pressures, and the impact of technology and AI on standards and professional judgement, alongside crosscutting risks on independence, collaboration, and reputation.
6. Initial progress has focused on embedding these risks into existing governance, such as the National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) and the GSS People Advisory Group (for capability and skills related risks). At the Heads of Profession (HoPs) Quarterly in

June, we are focussing on the risks associated with AI and technology. The next phase is to strengthen feedback and assurance, so that risks are assessed and mitigations can be adjusted in response. Overall, the key message is that these are system-level risks that cannot be managed in isolation and require collective leadership.

7. We have also provided support and senior steer to ensure renewed momentum to the work on the Statistical Assembly ensuring that GSS-wide views and initiatives are reflected in the draft response.

Coordination, Cooperation, and Leadership

8. In the absence of a National Statistician the system continues to draw on its strength as a community with key leadership support through a combination of the Deputy Heads of the GSS, Director, National Statistician's Office, Permanent Secretary Office for National Statistics (ONS), Head of Professions (particularly the Devolved Governments) and our relationships with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and Chair of the Board. The absence of a National Statistician is, however, creating ongoing uncertainty with some projects/priorities awaiting the National Statistician's view/direction, and a gap in analytical influence at the most senior levels in government. As time passes, the risk of strategic drift, loss of community cohesion and loss of strategic analytical influence increases.
9. Since our last meeting with the Board, at which full support was given for work to establish a leadership development programme, we have held further discussions with the Heads of Profession community and held our first GSS leadership development programme steering group. This agreed the programme's scope, offer and priorities. The steering group includes representatives from across the statistical system including from the ONS, wider GSS, devolved governments, National Statistician's Office, OSR and, very kindly, Mairi Spowage, on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority Board. The steering group is chaired by Jason Bradbury as one of the Deputy Heads of the GSS and administrative and practical executive resource is being provided by the National Statistician's Office.

Capability and Community

10. The GSS identity and community have continued to be strengthened and refreshed via the GSS Community Calls and drop-in sessions. We have also refreshed the scope and membership of our vision focused task and finish groups, which include one devoted to furthering the work on the Future Statistician.
11. The Future Statistician programme has now moved into delivery, with a joint GSS-Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Senior Governance Board established to provide system-level oversight and integration; and a GSS Task and Finish Group established to support delivery across the five priority areas covering skills, professional identity, career pathways, system integration and the role of statisticians as trusted arbiters of evidence. There is already substantial activity underway across the system; the immediate priority is coordination and alignment rather than new initiatives. The next step is to bring this together into a single, prioritised delivery plan, resolving overlaps and setting clear direction.

Setting Standards

12. The new Code of Practice for Statistics (Code 3.0) continues to be embedded across the GSS with an additional focus on seeking out opportunities to improve coherence. Feedback from HoPs suggests that the new code is embedding well with work underway in departments to update their published commitments to the code.

Transformation and Innovation

13. The establishment of GSS Artificial Intelligence (AI) group has helped us increase focus in their important area, building on the good work within departments and across the analysis function. The remainder of this paper focuses on AI and how we will ensure its safe, legal and ethical use.

Progress with assessing and embedding AI across our work

14. The establishment of GSS Artificial Intelligence (AI) group has helped us increase our GSS focus and maintains a clear link to the work we did with the RSS on the Future Statistician. This included recommendations around Technology and AI Readiness; to “Equip statisticians with training in data science, artificial intelligence, and emerging analytical tools to future-proof capabilities”. The creation of the GSS AI Champions Group and the Analysis Function group on AI both play a key role in delivering this recommendation.
15. The GSS AI group was established in March with representatives from across departments. Its scope is ‘AI in the production of official statistics’, rather than use of AI more generally in government analysis. We are focusing efforts across four areas:
- i. to understand the current AI landscape within the GSS;
 - ii. identify and address gaps in AI use/guidance for statistics;
 - iii. establish mechanisms for sharing and updating best practice; and
 - iv. identify any actions needed to develop AI capability within the GSS.
16. The progress so far has been on the first two of these priorities. This has included linking with other AI work across departments and professions. For example, the Analysis Function AI group have recently launched an [AI hub](#), which pulls together guidance, resources and learning materials. This is a great start in bringing together relevant best practice and learning for the Analysis Function, however there are some gaps in the guidance and some is unable to be published at present as it is department specific.
17. To address gaps in guidance, for example on assessing statistical quality when utilising AI, we have put a call out for a task and finish group to report into the GSS AI group. Their role will be to develop the guidance, where there are gaps. There has been a lot of interest in joining the task and finish group with some great applications. We expect the first meeting to take place in July, with a sponsor from the GSS AI group.
18. The third area is to set up mechanisms for sharing and updating best practice. Some of this role will be taken on by the task and finish group with an initial push to set up a seminar series to share case studies in the use of AI for the production of official statistics. There is a lot of great work happening on AI across the GSS and limited opportunities to share this across departments so we expect there will be a lot of interest in both presenting at and attending these seminars.
19. Some examples of case studies are shown below. The group are in the process of getting these case studies written up and investigating a safe place for these to be shared for access across the GSS:
- i. the use of agentic AI to assure against standards, for example on Reproducible Analytical pipelines;
 - ii. using Copilot for quality assurance and drafting statistician’s commentary;
 - iii. utilising AI to classify occupations to create efficiencies and increase quality of coding;
 - iv. use of Large Language Models to provide follow-up questions based on a respondent’s input to a survey; and
 - v. testing/designing questionnaires utilising AI.
20. The fourth area of focus is on AI capability. There are already a number of training courses on AI (shared on the Analytics Function (AF) AI hub). However, given the pace

of developments it can be difficult to keep up with progress in this area. The sharing of case studies will help, but we are also collaborating, via the Future Statisticians workstream, with the RSS to provide appropriate training. This will be the next area of focus, following the set-up of the task and finish group.

Conclusion and Board Recommendations

21. The GSS continues to make substantial progress in implementing its vision, strengthening leadership, capability, standards and innovation across the statistical system. Important foundations are now in place to assess and embed AI safely and effectively, while sustaining momentum on future talent, community coherence and collective leadership across government statistics.

Rachel Skentelbery, Jason Bradbury, Jane Naylor, Steve Ellerd-Elliott, Deputy Heads of the GSS, June 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)43

Progress Update on the UK Statistics Assembly Recommendations**Purpose**

1. Following the March Authority Board discussion on delivery against the recommendations arising from the inaugural UK Statistics Assembly (the Assembly) in January 2025, this paper provides a further update on progress, notably covering all 15 sessions from the inaugural Assembly for the first time. The draft update to be published on the UKSA website will be shared separately for the Authority Board's review.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the progress being made on delivering against the recommendations,
 - ii. provide feedback on the draft progress update to be published on the Authority website, and
 - iii. agree that, subject to making any changes needed following Authority Board feedback, the final version of the update report will be signed off by a smaller subset of the Board before publication.

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 high-level priority has an Authority owner and a cross-GSS owner assigned to drive forward and coordinate the work, who must balance this work with their other duties. Individual recommendations will be taken forward by teams across the GSS. Both the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and ONS Communications and Digital Publishing (CDP) directorate are supporting the coordination and follow-up engagement activity.
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, doing so also aligns with the user engagement recommendations. A discussion at the March Authority Board endorsed the importance of responding to the Assembly report comprehensively and the need to publicly feedback.

Discussion

6. Since the last update to the Board, we have continued to work with recommendation owners to track progress and fill in gaps, particularly with regards to the detailed points and recommendations outside the four high-level priorities in section 5 of the Assembly report.
7. Progress against the detailed recommendations has, for the first time, been included in the draft progress update (which will be shared with Authority Board members separately). This draft reflects feedback from the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC). Feedback from the GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) and the National Statistician's Executive Group (NSEG) has mostly been incorporated in the draft, but given the timings of these meetings, there is a little more to be done.

Further elements of feedback from the GSS HoPs will be incorporated into the next progress update given timings.

8. The report is 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 15 topics (economic statistics, coherence, data sourcing and quality, user engagement, health disparities, public sector performance, data linkage, net zero, census, business statistics, equalities, AI, crime, labour market and granular statistics); and
 - iii. a line-by-line response to the detailed points and recommendations from section 5 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), this will be included as a separate excel table.
9. This update will ensure 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. The report will also outline where recommendations do not yet have a status agreed.
10. We will continue to work with recommendation owners to ensure the tone and content of the report is accurate, and to ensure the report is accessible prior to publication. We would welcome the Board's feedback on the tone and overall direction of the report.

Future plans

11. 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, with recruitment currently underway for a post dedicated to this work. Over the next 6 months, the post holder will support monitoring of the recommendations, engage with recommendation owners and build momentum and involvement across the GSS. This will help in ensuring future updates are more reflective of the whole GSS, something we acknowledge could have been done better for this update.
12. Delivering the actions associated with the Assembly requires considerable support from colleagues across the GSS (not just the recommendation owners who oversee delivery). It should be noted that in places Assembly recommendations are inconsistent with ONS and Departmental prioritisation exercises, which is reflected in the progress update. We will continue to engage with the Board if there are areas where we require your assistance in unblocking issues.
13. 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 to the next Assembly. ONS and NSO are currently planning for the inaugural Chair's Reception, a recommendation from the independent review of the Authority by Professor Denise Lievesley CBE. This will be held on 2 July 2026 and will include the interim Chair outlining priorities for the statistical system, a response by Professor Lievesley, followed by a panel session and audience questions. We are aiming to publish the update report before Summer recess but will ensure that the Interim Chair can refer to the upcoming report within the event.
17. We will also seek advice from the Board and the permanent National Statistician once in post about the timing of the next Assembly.

Conclusion

14. 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, particularly the draft report.

Fiona Dawe, National Statistician's Office, 18 June 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)44

Economic Statistics and Survey Improvement Plan Update, July 2026**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with a high-level update on progress in strengthening economic statistics and surveys through the developing Surveys and Economic Statistics (SES) improvement plan. It highlights the main messages expected to be reflected in the July 2026 public update and the broader shift towards a more coherent, prioritised and deliverable recovery approach.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the quarterly progress update due to be published in July 2026 and the accompanying communications approach;
 - ii. note the continued move towards a single, prioritised SES improvement plan, including a clearer approach to sequencing, performance reporting and delivery confidence; and
 - iii. note the main risks and dependencies that continue to shape delivery confidence across the plan.

Background

3. The Economic Statistics Plan and Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan were published in June 2025 in response to the Devereux Review. Since then, ONS has published quarterly progress updates and continued to refine the way this work is prioritised, governed and communicated. The July 2026 update reflects a further step towards a single SES improvement plan, bringing together improvement activity within a more coherent strategic and delivery framework.

Discussion

4. The July update marks a further shift from early recovery activity towards a more disciplined phase of portfolio management across surveys and economic statistics. A central message of the publication is that work previously described through separate plans is now increasingly being managed as a single SES portfolio, with greater emphasis on prioritisation, sequencing and realism about what can be delivered confidently.
5. Compared with earlier updates, the July publication is intended to provide a clearer and more mature account of progress, combining evidence of delivery in priority areas with greater transparency about dependencies, trade-offs and the need to phase work overtime. It reflects the outcome of business planning and wider organisational learning over the past year, including a stronger focus on aligning delivery ambition with available capacity.
6. The publication also signals a shift towards a more rounded account of performance, moving beyond milestone reporting alone and beginning to introduce a clearer framework for assessing whether activity is improving quality, resilience, trustworthiness, timeliness and capability. This remains an evolving area, but it represents an important step towards more outcome-focused and evidence-led reporting and evaluation.
7. As with previous updates, the publication will need to balance transparency with realism about delivery confidence. The main challenges remain the scale and complexity of the portfolio, dependence on constrained enabling capacity, ageing systems and specialist workforce pressures. The current draft is stronger than earlier updates in acknowledging

these challenges more openly and in signalling that some work will need to proceed more slowly, or wait, in order to maintain credibility and focus.

8. The publication will be supported by communications and engagement activity intended to explain the main messages clearly to users and stakeholders, while reinforcing the organisation's commitment to transparency about both progress and ongoing challenges. This will be important in supporting confidence in the direction of travel and in demonstrating that decisions on pace and prioritisation are being taken in a disciplined and evidence-led way.
9. Early opportunities for engagement include informal comments from OSR already received, Surveys and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan External Steering Group (30 June) and Inter Administration Committee (22 June).
10. The publication is currently in draft with updates for the Key Performance Indicator section and addition of an Annex covering milestones to be added.

Conclusion

11. The July 2026 SES Improvement Plan publication reflects a more mature phase of recovery, with stronger emphasis on prioritisation, sequencing, transparency and delivery confidence across surveys and economic statistics. While significant challenges and dependencies remain, the update provides a better basis than earlier publications for explaining both the progress made and the realism now being applied to future delivery.

Rob Doody, Surveys and Economic Statistics, ONS, 17 June 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)45

*Development of an ONS Strategy: 2026***Purpose**

1. This paper presents a draft organisational strategy for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the Board's consideration.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. note the plans for publishing a strategy for the ONS and its relationship with existing strategic documents, including the Board's strategic priorities set out in October 2025 (paragraphs 3 to 5); and
 - ii. **agree** the contents of the enclosed draft document and proposed approach to publication (paragraphs 6 to 11).

Background

3. In October 2025, the Board agreed its new priorities for the statistical system, drawing upon feedback and observations from colleagues across the statistical system, as well as users and producers of official statistics and recent independent reviews. In a letter from the Interim Chair, the Board set out strategic values, priorities and ambitions for the work of the statistical system¹, formally superseding the 2020-2025 strategy, *Statistics for the Public Good*.
4. The Board's letter was not intended as a detailed delivery plan in itself; rather, it set the mission, values and direction, with the different parts of the system then expected to produce their own operational plans and business plans to deliver it. For example, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) Strategy for 2026–2029 and the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Vision: *Strength in Numbers*. The Board and its sub-committees, including the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, will scrutinise regular updates on the delivery of these plans. In time the Board will publish an updated Authority strategy, led by a new Chair and a new National Statistician.
5. Since October, the ONS has agreed new mission and leadership statements², strategic objectives and outcomes, published its business plan and is now progressing plans to strengthen the foundations of its work. These include:
 - i. **The Surveys and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan.** Previously two separate plans, these have now been combined and quarterly progress updates continue to be published (next in July);
 - ii. **The Digital and Data Plan.** This will set out how the ONS develops the technology, data architecture and digital capability needed to support quality, resilience, security and efficiency. This is still in development pending the arrival of the new Director General for Digital, Data and Technology; and
 - iii. **The People Plan.** This will replace the short-term plan agreed by the Board in October 2025. The Plan will be informed by consultation and is due for publication in July.

¹ <https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/strategic-priorities-for-the-uk-statistical-system/>

² In the October 2025 Priorities letter the Board welcomed 'the steps taken already [...] including the agreement of a new ONS mission statement "To deliver trustworthy, independent, high-quality statistics that underpin the UK's most critical economic and societal decisions and inform the public" and accompanying leadership commitment'.

6. This paper presents a draft strategy which brings the elements of the ONS strategic framework together into one coherent strategy forming part of the 'golden thread', sitting below the Authority's system-wide strategic priorities and above ONS's business and recovery plans.

Discussion

7. Bringing these elements together will provide a clear articulation of the ONS's current focus, specifically the commitment to put quality before quantity, devote resource to essential improvement work and deliver the ONS mission.
8. **Publication.** The strategy will be published and available for both ONS colleagues and external stakeholders (as with the OSR Strategy and GSS Vision). Recent public updates on the work of the ONS, including via correspondence to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC), have provided insights into progress on different elements of the strategic framework. The publication of the strategy will be the first time that these elements have been published together.
9. **Time Frame.** The ONS Executive Committee have agreed that the strategy should be time bound, focused on the immediate recovery period over the next two years. Given the documented ambition for organisational change and improvement across the ONS, it is likely that the strategic requirements and external context will have progressed significantly by 2028, affecting the accuracy, and therefore usefulness, of a longer-term strategic assessment. The Board's next formal articulation of its priorities for the statistical system, including an assessment of the context in which the system is operating, will be published following the arrival of a National Statistician and Authority Chair. This could feed into the subsequent iteration of the ONS strategy which could take a longer term (three years plus) strategic view for the ONS. Strategy and Change Division is giving some initial thought to the approach and scope this document could take.
10. **Tracking Progress.** Progress against the strategy will be measured through key indicators and metrics of the underlying plans which sit below the document. As noted in the recent ONS business plan, indicators are currently under review and expected to be revised later this year.
11. **Consultation.** The elements of the ONS strategic framework were developed in consultation with ONS colleagues. Additional consultation has therefore been limited to ExCo membership, Directors and strategy teams across the ONS.
12. **Route to publication.** Subject to the Board's feedback, 1 July has been earmarked for a low-key publication of the document (mindful that key elements such as the mission and objectives have already been launched including in the recent Business Plan). This will provide the opportunity for the Chair to reference the document in her reception address on 2 July. It is also proposed that the Permanent Secretary write to PACAC to inform them of the publication.

Conclusion

13. This paper has sought the Board's agreement to publish an ONS strategy, and the process and timeline for delivery.

Joe Moore and Ross Tivey, Policy and Parliament Unit, 17 June 2026