

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 15 September 2026 11:00 – 13:00

Draft Minutes

Microsoft Teams

Committee Attendees

Dame Kate Barker (Chair)
Eva Aizpura
Professor Paul Boyle
Ed Humpherson
Phyllis MacFarlane

ONS Attendees

June Bowman
Adrian Chesson
Mary Gregory
Jay Lindop
Natalie Morris
Nicola Shearman
Becky Tinsley
Neil Townsend
Penny Young

External Attendees

Emma Gordon (Item 3)

Apologies

James Brooks
Dr Sarah Cumbers

Secretariat

Oluchi Enunwa
Jo-Anna Hagen

1. Welcome, Previous Minutes and Actions

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted that apologies had been received from James Brooks and Sarah Cumbers.
- 1.2. The Chair invited comments on the minutes of the June meeting. Members welcomed the level of detail provided and were content with the minutes.
- 1.3. Members discussed the importance of identifying any appropriate follow-up arising from presentations by external speakers. The Chair suggested that, at the end of relevant items, the Committee should consider whether any further action was required, with secretariat ensuring that any agreed actions were clearly captured.

2. Update from the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority

- 2.1. Penny Young provided an update on the work and priorities of the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Authority). She noted the Board's intention to strengthen its relationship with the advisory committees.
- 2.2. Members heard that André Loranger had been appointed as the next National Statistician and was expected to take up the role within the coming months. The separation of responsibilities between the Permanent Secretary and National Statistician would remain in place and be reviewed in due course. Recruitment of a permanent Chair of the Authority and three new Non-Executive Directors would also progress.
- 2.3. Penny summarised the Authority's response to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee report, welcoming its recognition of the progress made in supporting ONS's recovery and its emphasis on statistical independence. She also highlighted work to deliver the UK Statistics Assembly priorities, develop harmonised standards, support ONS's recovery and strengthen the impact and visibility of the Office for Statistics Regulation.
- 2.4. Members thanked Penny for her update. The following points were raised in discussion:
 - i. members welcomed the progress and momentum across the Authority;
 - ii. members noted the need to consider the Committee's future role and membership, while allowing the incoming National Statistician to contribute to that discussion;
 - iii. members welcomed the work undertaken by the Office for Statistics Regulation; and
 - iv. the importance of demonstrating tangible progress against the UK Statistics Assembly recommendations and recognising the views of users beyond government.
- 2.5. The Chair thanked Penny for the update and for her leadership of the Authority during the interim period.

3. Administrative Data Research UK

- 3.1. Emma Gordon introduced the Administrative Data Research UK programme and outlined its development since 2018. She explained that the programme supported the creation and use of linked administrative datasets, working with government departments and data owners to overcome longstanding barriers to data access.
- 3.2. Emma highlighted flagship datasets including Education and Child Health Insights from Linked Data (ECHILD), the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset and Data First. She explained that Data First had supported the Ministry of Justice to improve its understanding and use of more than 50 data streams, while producing tools that could be used more widely. Once created, ADR UK's flagship datasets were made available to accredited researchers beyond those directly funded by the programme.
- 3.3. Members heard that the programme's priorities included improving links between health and administrative data and increasing access to linked economic data and

making the process of accessing data more straightforward. Emma also highlighted the Registration and Population Interactions Database (RAPID) dataset, which linked benefits and income data held by the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs and represented the first UK-wide dataset of its kind.

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

- i. members welcomed the progress made and the potential for linked administrative data to support better policy decisions and wider public benefit;
- ii. flagship datasets represented an important step forward and members discussed the importance of ensuring they remained responsive to emerging research and user needs. Also, confirmation that the datasets were not static and that participating data owners committed to their continued development;
- iii. progress continued to depend on the commitment of individual data owners and government departments, with participation varying across organisations;
- iv. the Digital Economy Act had helped to reassure data owners, but restrictions relating to health bodies remained a significant barrier;
- v. trusted research environments would need to adapt to developments in artificial intelligence and enable more flexible, programmatic access to data; and
- vi. local authorities and mayoral bodies might require faster access to data to support the Rewiring the State initiative, reflecting shorter operational timescales than those typically associated with academic research.

3.5. The Chair welcomed the progress made and asked whether the Committee could help address any of the barriers identified. She thanked Emma for an informative and encouraging presentation.

Action 05/26: Nikki Shearman to provide the Secretariat with the link to the consultation on the research accreditation criteria for circulation to members.

Action 06/26: Penny Young and Emma Gordon to meet to discuss the barriers to accessing and linking health data, including the restrictions relating to health bodies under the Digital Economy Act.

4. ONS Local

4.1. Becky Tinsley provided an update on ONS Local, outlining its role in identifying local data and evidence gaps and working with local government partners and across the Government Statistical Service to respond to user needs. She highlighted current priorities, including discovery work on subregional supermarket prices, productivity by industry and understanding the user need for tourism statistics.

4.2. Members heard about ONS's contribution to the Rewiring the State initiative, including work with partners across government to consider how ONS could better support place-based decision making. This included work on partnerships and capability building, improving local evidence and making data and analysis more accessible.

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

- i. the quality and reliability of subnational statistics was important, particularly where local data was being used to inform decision making;
- ii. improvements to ONS surveys and economic statistics would support improvements in the quality of subnational statistics, alongside clearer communication of uncertainty to enable users to interpret local data appropriately;
- iii. alternative data sources could provide additional evidence and context to support the interpretation of ONS statistics; and
- iv. members noted forthcoming work by the Office for Statistics Regulation on building local capability, including consideration of how users could better understand the limitations of ONS data and the role of alternative data sources.

- 4.4. The Chair thanked Becky for the update and requested that the presentation slides be circulated to members.

Action 07/26: Secretariat to circulate the ONS Local presentation slides to Committee members.

5. ONS User Needs Programme

- 5.1. Adrian Chesson and Jay Lindop provided an update on the ONS User Needs Programme, building on the discussion at the Committee's June meeting. They noted that while there were examples of strong practice across ONS, evidence on user needs was fragmented and was not always sufficiently visible to decision makers.
- 5.2. Members heard proposals for a time-limited taskforce to develop a more consistent approach to capturing, prioritising and using evidence on user needs. The aim was to improve the link between user evidence and decision making, and provide clearer feedback on how user needs had been considered. The Committee was invited to advise on the scope and proportionality of the approach, how its success should be assessed and how external users and experts should be involved.
- 5.3. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:
- i. external users and experts should be involved as the approach was developed, rather than the taskforce being solely internally focused. Members heard that external involvement would be considered as the work progressed;
 - ii. members welcomed the stocktake of existing practice and the proposed use of case studies to demonstrate where engagement with users had influenced decisions;
 - iii. a structured and transparent approach was needed to prioritise different user needs, recognising that not all needs could be met. The programme would seek to provide greater clarity on the user needs ONS was meeting, those it was unable to meet and the basis on which needs were prioritised;
 - iv. the quality and relevance of user evidence should be considered as part of prioritisation, including the significance of the decisions the data was being used to inform;
 - v. there should be a clear feedback loop so users understood how their needs had been considered; and
 - vi. members sought greater clarity on the relationship between the ONS User Needs Programme and the wider User Engagement Strategy. Members heard that the two workstreams were closely linked, with the User Needs Programme focused on ONS and the User Engagement Strategy having a wider GSS remit.
- 5.4. The Chair welcomed the work to develop a more systematic approach to understanding and responding to user needs and acknowledged the scale of the task. It was agreed that the programme would return to the Committee as the work progressed towards its second phase.

Action 08/26: Secretariat to circulate the ONS User Needs Programme presentation slides to Committee members.

6. User Engagement Strategy

- 6.1. Neil Townsend introduced the draft GSS User Engagement Strategy and the proposed ONS response. He explained that the GSS strategy was intended to provide high-level principles applicable across a range of statistical producers, while the ONS response would set out how those principles would be implemented within ONS. He noted the close relationship between this work and the ONS User Needs Programme.
- 6.2. Members heard that the strategy had been structured around seven principles informed by feedback from users. The approach would consider not only who users

were, but how statistics were being used and the significance of the decisions they informed. The Committee was invited to provide feedback on the principles, their application within ONS and any areas requiring further consideration.

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

- i. members welcomed the distinction between the GSS strategy and ONS response, but suggested greater clarity on what good engagement looked like in practice;
- ii. the relationship between user engagement and user needs, and between work undertaken at ONS and GSS level, should be clear, recognising the significant overlap between the workstreams;
- iii. the approach should remain proportionate to the resources and capabilities of different producers across the GSS;
- iv. the strategy should recognise both formal consultation and less structured, ongoing engagement with users, including opportunities for users to offer feedback and ideas outside formal exercises. It was acknowledged that the draft placed greater emphasis on formal processes than intended and this would be reviewed;
- v. one-to-one engagement remained an important part of understanding users and should not be lost through an overly structured approach;
- vi. members highlighted the importance of understanding which users were and were not engaging with producers, and whether additional targeted engagement was needed to hear from underrepresented users; and
- vii. consideration should be given to developing a clearer understanding of users across the statistical system and their interests, while recognising the practical challenges of doing so across the GSS.

6.4. The Chair thanked Neil for the update and the Committee's comments would be used to inform further development of the strategy.

Action 04/26: ONS External Affairs team to review the strategy to ensure it reflects ongoing and informal engagement with users, alongside formal consultation

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1. Members considered potential external speakers for future meetings. Suggestions included speakers on inequality, the voluntary sector's data needs and trusted research environments. Members also noted that there would be value in engaging with the incoming National Statistician on the future role and priorities of the Committee.
- 7.2. The Chair announced that she would step down as Chair of NSEUAC following the December meeting. Members thanked the Chair for her leadership of the Committee.
- 7.3. The Chair thanked members for their contributions. The next meeting would take place via Microsoft Teams on 2 December 2026.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agenda Tuesday 15 September, 11:00-13:00 Microsoft Teams

Chair: Dame Kate Barker

Apologies: James Brooks, Dr Sarah Cumbers

Timing	Agenda item	
1 11:00-11:05 (5 mins)	Welcome, previous minutes and actions	Meeting of 03.06.2026 Dame Kate Barker
2 11:05-11:15 (10 mins)	Update from the Chair of UK Statistics Authority	Oral Update Penny Young
3 11:15-11:35 (20 mins)	Administrative Data Research	Presentation Dr. Emma Gordon
4 11:35-11:55 (20 mins)	ONS Local	Presentation Becky Tinsley
5 11:55-12:20 (25 mins)	ONS user needs programme	NSEUAC(26)05 Adrian Chesson Paul Cotton Jay Lindop
6 12:20-12:45 (25 mins)	User Engagement Strategy	NSEUAC(26)06 Sarah Moore Natalie Morris Neil Townsend
7 12:45-13:00 (15 mins)	Any other business & Forward agenda	Dame Kate Barker

Next Meeting: Tuesday 2 December, Microsoft Teams

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(26)06

User Engagement Strategy

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on work to develop a Government Statistical Service (GSS) User Engagement Strategy and how the Office for National Statistics (ONS) will implement that strategy.

Timing

2. We are aiming for the strategy to be approved by the Authority Board and published by the end of 2026. Currently the strategy is in draft so this is an opportune time for Committee members to comment, and provide advice and feedback before a final version is produced for the Board.

Recommendations

3. Members of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to:
 - i. provide comments on the GSS user engagement strategy at **Annex A**;
 - ii. provide comments on the document setting out how the ONS will implement this strategy at **Annex B**; and
 - iii. provide advice on areas needing more or less emphasis, whether the documents broadly meet their expectations and suggestions of any further reviewers who could add value.

Background

4. One of the four cross cutting themes arising from the report produced by this Committee following the UK Statistics Assembly was user engagement. Improving user engagement has subsequently been a priority across the GSS and, in particular for the ONS. Some of the work to develop this strategy has been shared with the Committee in the past. This work has now been collated into a draft strategy for review and challenge by the Committee.

Discussion

5. The draft documents have been prepared based on work inside the ONS and the wider GSS, feedback from stakeholders at the UK Statistics Assembly and through other channels, including a roundtable hosted by the Royal Statistical Society earlier this year and one to one interviews with engaged stakeholders.
6. The GSS strategy has been reviewed by cross-government Heads of Profession who ultimately need to sign up to the strategy and implement it. The ONS strategy has been reviewed by a group of senior colleagues involved in engagement. Both documents have been informally reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) but are yet to go through any formal governance. Following this meeting we plan to share the GSS strategy and ONS implementation plan with attendees from the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) led round able as well as some other stakeholders.
7. One part of the ONS's implementation of the GSS user engagement strategy is the ONS User Needs Programme, which is the subject of a separate paper on today's agenda (NSEUAC(26)06). The engagement strategy sets the expectations for how the ONS listens to, involves and communicates with users. The User Needs Programme will strengthen how the evidence generated through that engagement is captured, assessed,

shared and used in organisational and local decision-making. Together, the two pieces of work are intended to provide a clearer route from engagement through to evidence based decisions for ONS activity such as prioritisation, delivery and feedback to users.

8. Key insights from developing the strategy that the Committee should note are:
 - i. we need to cover all the points in the Code of Practice but not structure it around them, instead it is better to structure the document around what we have heard from our users and our research;
 - ii. the need for this strategy to complement not overlap with existing guidance such as that from the OSR;
 - iii. there are many areas of good practice across the GSS and within the ONS whilst acknowledging there are improvements that can and should be made.
 - iv. feedback from producers that any strategy must be proportionate to resources; and
 - v. the challenge of ensuring the strategy works for the wide range of producers within the GSS, acknowledging that the size of producers varies. Similarly organisational structures and level of support to statistical teams from central communications and engagement teams vary greatly.
9. We would particularly welcome the Committee's views as expert users on the following issues and questions (alongside any more detailed comments on the documents):
 - i. areas needing more or less emphasis;
 - ii. whether these documents broadly meet their expectations and reflect user engagement best practice; and
 - iii. suggestions on any other useful reviewers or fora who could add value, bearing in mind that we are aiming for publication by the end of 2026.

Conclusion

10. As the user engagement strategy development work is concluding, now is an opportune time to receive comments from the Committee and further advice is welcomed.

**Neil Townsend, Communications and Digital Publishing Directorate, ONS,
7 September 2026**

List of Annexes

Annex A Draft GSS user engagement strategy

Annex B Draft ONS response to user engagement strategy