

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

Thursday 30 July 2026

London Office

Hybrid Meeting

Members Present

Penny Young (Chair)

Dr. Jacob Abboud

Peter Barron

Ed Humpherson

Professor Dame Carol Propper

Professor Mairi Spowage

Darren Tierney

Dr. Sarah Walsh

Other Attendees

Neil Bannister (for item 13)

James Benford

June Bowman

Matt Hughes (for item 12)

Claudia Jenkins (for item 13)

Alex Lambert (for items 12 and 13)

Cat Little (for item 11)

Jane Naylor (for item 6)

Sarah Southerton (for item 8 and 12)

Jennet Woolford (for item 12)

Apologies

Mary Gregory

Sarah Moore

Tom Taylor

Secretariat

Sally Jones

Tom Marsh

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Mary Gregory, Sarah Moore and Tom Taylor.

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 25 June were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(26)46]

- 4.1. The Chair reported on her activities since the Board last met. Work was progressing on the development of a harmonised standard for collecting data on sex. The ad-hoc panel in the absence of the National Statistician were scheduled to consider the publication before publication. Following her attendance at the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Group, the Chair had also held meetings with members Professor Alice Sullivan and Professor Wendy Sigle to understand some of the different perspectives.
- 4.2. Members were reminded that the September Board would take place in Cardiff and that further information on the meeting would be shared shortly.

5. Report from the Permanent Secretary [SA(26)47]

- 5.1. Darren Tierney provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting highlighting the following:
- i. the Office for National Statistics (ONS) had undertaken their first quarterly review as part of the refreshed business planning approach;
 - ii. a Lessons Learned Review had been conducted on the Labour Force Survey operational error and immediate actions were being implemented;
 - iii. a new strand of work would be launched on the organisation's culture to emphasise the importance of everyone taking pride in the basics and process excellence;
 - iv. the 2026/27 Pay Remit Business Case Pay had been submitted to the Cabinet Office and further pay flexibility cases were planned for the future;
 - v. the target of 60 per cent office attendance among Senior Civil Service staff had broadly been met; and new processes had enabled accurate recording of attendance for delegated grades;
 - vi. in light of the Prime Minister's focus on devolution the Executive Committee would consider what improvements were possible to ONS's local statistics.
- 5.2. Members discussed the proposed budget transfer, which would need to be approved by HM Treasury. In response, it was noted that work was underway to set out the implications of the request not being approved.
- 5.3. The Chair suggested that the proposed efficiency exercise would be more motivating to staff framed as increased productivity, which was agreed.
- 5.4. It was agreed that Luke Ashton would attend an upcoming Board meeting to outline his initial reflections ahead of a full paper on the technology strategy in the new year.
- 5.5. The Board reflected on a recent deep dive session on the LFS operational issue which demonstrated that, whilst there was no single cause which led to the issue materialising, there had been some lack of engagement in the unusual figures as they emerged. Members therefore welcomed the focus on culture and noted that the continued improvement in office attendance may also assist in spotting such issues sooner.
- 5.6. Members referred to the reduced delivery confidence of the portfolio, specifically in the Content and Website Transformation Programme (CWTP), and queried if there would be any impact on the Strategic Risks or the work on data governance which the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had been overseeing. Darren Tierney confirmed that further work was required to scope CWTP; whilst there was confidence in the delivery of the public facing

element there was too much complexity in the data architecture element and the incoming Director General for Digital, Data and Technology would consider this as part of his strategy. Darren Tierney also confirmed that the data governance work was unaffected and that continuing with the original approach would have been more detrimental to the Strategic Risk.

6. Report from the National Statistician's Office [SA(26)48]

- 6.1. Members welcomed Jane Naylor who had recently taken up post as Director of the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and thanked her for her service as Deputy Head of the GSS. A process was underway to identify a replacement Deputy Head.
- 6.2. Jane Naylor updated members on progress made to publish progress against the four priority areas identified in the Independent Report on the 2025 UK Statistics Assembly. Attention would now turn to where the Office needed to focus its attention in preparation for the arrival of the National Statistician.
- 6.3. The NSO's analysis unit had been investigating the impact of the LFS operational issue and determined it to be minor. Members agreed that it would be important to include this in the next public update.
- 6.4. Work was progressing to develop a Government Statistical Service (GSS) harmonised standard for collecting data on sex. A draft standard and the underpinning research had been considered by the Ad-Hoc Panel in the absence of a National Statistician, but the Panel would consider the standard again following legal advice and further feedback from the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee.
- 6.5. Members discussed how important it would be to have a considered communications plan and not to underestimate how much attention the standard would garner once published.
- 6.6. The feedback from NSIDAC would be welcome, and members agreed that the Board would benefit from greater visibility of the work of the advisory committees and have sight of their work periodically.

7. Director General for Regulation [SA(26)49]

- 7.1. Ed Humpherson provided the Board with an update on recent work by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). He highlighted three positive developments in relation to population statistics: the significant move towards using administrative data for migration statistics, the closure of OSR's compliance review, and progress on mid-year population estimates.
- 7.2. Several recent interventions by OSR had received public, political challenge. The Board reiterated its support for OSR's work and noted that its growing profile and influence were markers of OSR's increased impact and welcomed work underway to refine the underlying processes which support response to such challenges.
- 7.3. Ed Humpherson referred to OSR's statement on the federated data platform, noting that whilst it had been a measured intervention it had nevertheless been impactful. He observed that the case illustrated the risk of overclaiming in relation to data platforms and artificial intelligence.
- 7.4. The Board noted that OSR had published a blog on crime statistics, addressing public perceptions of crime and misleading claims about crime trends, including those relating to London and the UK more widely.
- 7.5. Members reflected on discussions at the International Conference on the independence of official statistics to meet the needs of society, which had shown interest in the UK model of statistical regulation.

8. Communications Update

- 8.1. Peter Barron updated the Board on the overall communications position which was a mixture of neutral reporting and negative coverage around the LFS operational issue.

- 8.2. Members discussed recent Financial Times coverage. It was noted that, while the article reflected a difficult period for ONS, it had not led to a wider media response which reflected the overall direction of the recovery journey.
- 8.3. Sarah Southerton reported that July was looking more positive than June.
- 8.4. On the Transformed Labour Force Survey, the communications approach would need to identify clear milestones between the current position and the planned transition point, recognising that some audiences would remain sceptical until successful transition.
- 8.5. The Chair emphasised the importance of demonstrating the credibility of the plans, including by setting out evidence that progress was being made.

9. Update from the Population Statistics System Committee Chair

- 9.1. The Chair updated members on the recent Population Statistics System Committee. The Committee had considered the change in date for the Census rehearsal. The Committee was assured that similar changes had occurred ahead of the 2011 and 2021 Censuses, and that the change was a strategic decision.
- 9.2. The Board noted the Committee's discussion of programme risk. The team, supported by Sarah Walsh, had restructured the risk position into a more streamlined set of risk domains with clear ownership. The next step would be to add risk scores and controls for consideration by the Committee in September. Members also welcomed work to consider scenarios where it would be possible for several risks to materialise simultaneously, and agreed that the Committee would continue to assess the level of concern and escalate issues to the Board where necessary.
- 9.3. Members discussed the evolving Census methods, including the increased use of administrative data. It also considered the consequences of the timing of the decision to conduct a Census, and noted that, while the timetable was challenging, the programme would need to deliver within the time available. The Committee had considered risks currently concerning the team, including the sustained pace of mobilisation and the difficulty of securing some specialist resources.
- 9.4. There was a consistent theme from Committee members on the range of political risks associated with the Census and the importance of early stakeholder engagement. Members agreed that it was never too early to begin engaging externally and that clear messaging would be important throughout.
- 9.5. The Committee had been briefed on the considerations in relation to the question on sex to be used for the Census Test. Members noted that the sequencing was not ideal, as the harmonised standard was not yet available and the Census team had not yet reported on the topic consultation. The decision would require careful consideration and clear communication.

10. Update from the Regulation Committee Chair

- 10.1. Carol Proper updated members on the recent Regulation Committee meeting. The Committee had considered OSR's current regulatory activity, including work on population estimates, labour market and economic statistics, use of statistics in public debate, and OSR's developing approach to AI. The Committee also approved OSR's Annual Report and Casework Report, and discussed the forthcoming State of the Statistical System report.
- 10.2. The Chair noted that OSR was continuing to prioritise the backlog of accredited official statistics requiring review, including exploring the use of automation to support triage. The Committee had also supported OSR's proposed reset of its regulation of ONS economic statistics, moving towards more rounded annual reporting on progress, cross-cutting issues and longstanding recommendations.
- 10.3. The Chair highlighted that producers are being invited to join Regulation Committee meetings at the start, before the formal meeting begins, to support engagement and provide members with direct insight from across the statistical system.

11. Devereux Review: One year on

- 11.1. Cat Little, Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary and Chief Operating Officer of the Civil Service joined the meeting to reflect on the previous year, following the Devereux Review.
- 11.2. Cat began by thanking the Interim Chair for stepping into the role following the departure of the previous Chair, Sir Robert Chote. Cat also thanked the remaining Non-Executive Members, some of whom had only joined just ahead of the Review.
- 11.3. On recruitment, members discussed progress on the National Statistician appointment and agreed that, following the announcement, the Cabinet Office would progress quickly on the recruitment of the permanent Chair and vacant Non-Executive Director posts.
- 11.4. Members briefly discussed the considerations that would be needed in considering the longer term roles and responsibilities of the National Statistician and whether it should be re-merged with the Permanent Secretary role in due course. It was noted that, whilst the Review had suggested the split could be temporary, it would be important that any future arrangements ensure that ONS and the wider statistical system are both properly supported. A review would consider the permanent arrangements in due course, and after the publication of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee's (PACAC) report. It would be important to engage the Board fully and the wider statistical community as part of this.
- 11.5. Members discussed the forthcoming PACAC report, including any potential recommendations relating to Board governance and sponsorship. Independence would need to be recognised as a fundamental, underpinning principle. Consideration of the report would also need to consider how to ensure that events would not be able to repeat themselves through bolstering the effectiveness of governance controls and any further strengthening of the sponsorship arrangement with the Cabinet Office.
- 11.6. Many users and stakeholders had already recognised that significant progress had been made, but some commentators may have a limited perspective on the progress made since the Devereux Review. It is understandable that key stakeholders will judge the situation in line with ONS' recovery journey. Continuing to rebuild trust and confidence requires strong communication of the progress already made, while also understanding that further work remained.
- 11.7. The Board reflected on the role of the Office for Statistics Regulation, noting that not all international statistical systems had a regulator. It was agreed that OSR had provided robust, constructive challenge on important issues in a clear and timely way and Cat Little shared that OSR's interventions demonstrated that there was an effective level of challenge within the system, while noting that the key test was whether regulation led to improvement in statistical outputs and outcomes and their impact could be reduced if used too frequently. Ed Humpherson emphasised that OSR considered carefully when and how to intervene, calibrating interventions to preserve impartiality and effectiveness, particularly on the most significant issues and members noted the level of impact compared to other domestic regulators with formal enforcement powers, which the OSR did not have.
- 11.8. The Government's priorities were becoming clearer, including a strong emphasis on devolution and the wider principle of devolving decision-making. Members discussed whether national and local statistics, including place-based and geographical statistics, were sufficiently developed to support the transfer of significant fiscal and economic levers. The Chair observed that the benefits of data linkage were well understood, including in relation to migration statistics, but that significant friction remained in securing and sharing data for those who could make effective use of it. Members agreed that improving data linkage would be critical to the development of local data, and that the most effective examples of data linkage were often supported by strong relationships as cultural barriers were often as problematic as technical or legal ones.

- 11.9. Data linkage could be supported by the effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and members agreed that statisticians were well placed to support the safe and effective use of AI and the incoming National Statistician would have an important role in advancing this agenda.
- 11.10. Cat Little informed members that Dan Tomlinson MP had been appointed as the UK Statistics Authority's responsible minister, as part of a joint portfolio with HM Treasury.
- 11.11. The Chair thanked Cat Little for her engagement and welcomed the opportunity of a further discussion at the Board in due course.

12. Transformed Labour Force Survey [SA(26)50]

- 12.1. The Chair reiterated how important this issue was to the Board and recognised the progress that had been made as well as the scale of the challenge.
- 12.2. Matt Hughes presented the findings of the July readiness assessment which confirmed that the ONS was not yet ready to transition to the Transformed Labour Force Survey; and the most credible date for a decision transition would be in 2027.
- 12.3. Updates to the Board had tended to focus on the delivery of the programme milestones. This was vital, but members also requested that more detail be provided in future papers on the results of the TLFS itself. The Board would need to be assured on the quality of the statistical outputs and the credibility of explanation of differences between the TLFS and LFS as those issues would be most important to stakeholders and policy makers. It was agreed that a separate session would be organised with NEDs to focus on outputs of the transformed survey.
- 12.4. Members discussed the extent of contingency within the programme and what consideration was being given to alternative scenarios should that date become less feasible. The Executive responded that the transition strategy had been developed allowing for the likelihood that further issues were likely to arise before July 2027. The plan sought to build in as much headroom as possible, including by engaging stakeholders early on the possibility that some areas may initially be delivered at a lower but still acceptable level of quality. Additional contingency had been built into the programme, but if a material issue arose which could not be mitigated within that contingency, the decision should remain data-led, with the ultimate fallback being a later transition.
- 12.5. The Board recognised the strong desirability of being able to decide in July 2027 that transition in November 2027 could go ahead, but agreed that this should not be an artificial decision and that transition should only happen once the statistics were sufficiently usable. Members were keen that the Executive built itself as much contingency as possible, particularly given the need to allow recent survey changes time to bed in. The Board encouraged the ONS to continue exploring whether further parallel development activity could be undertaken, including on SIC and SOC, without distracting the programme team from delivery to strengthen contingency and increase confidence ahead of the proposed transition point.
- 12.6. James Benford noted that continuing a parallel run was challenging, both financially and operationally. Other National Statistical Institutes had typically introduced digital modes onto existing surveys, rather than undertaking a transition of this nature. A key objective would be for stakeholders to understand and accept that the quality of the survey would continue to improve after transition.
- 12.7. The Chair noted that, while members understood the desirability of reaching a decision to proceed in July 2027, the Board would welcome greater clarity on what could be expected following the end of the parallel run. In particular, members asked for further detail on the timing and sequencing of the benefits expected to flow through after transition, to support understanding of the path beyond the go decision. This would be important for stakeholders too.

- 12.8. Members suggested that research outputs should be used to build external confidence in the transition. It was suggested that the programme consider publishing targeted analysis to help users familiarise themselves with the data and understand the differences between the Labour Force Survey and the Transformed Labour Force Survey. This could include, for example, analysis focused on a particular geographic area or a specific topic such as SIC codes, to help demonstrate progress and lay the groundwork for transition.
- 12.9. The Board discussed the challenges in producing all four datasets ahead of transition. The Executive clarified that the baseline plan remained to deliver all four datasets, but options to reduce to two were being explored as a potential trade off to create head room. It was recognised that key users would need to be consulted as to whether this could be tolerated.
- 12.10. The Board noted that work was underway to develop a longer-term communications plan, setting out the key opportunities to engage with stakeholders and demonstrate progress. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring authentic engagement and that it is an important source of insight and assurance to the Board.
- 12.11. The programme would continue reporting to the Board every two months and those updates would need to focus clearly on the critical path to transition.

13. Social Survey Strategy Update [SA(26)51]

- 13.1. Neil Bannister introduced the Social Survey Strategy update, noting that the work was intended to support a long-term vision for social surveys, recognising that aspects of ONS's future operating model remained uncertain.
- 13.2. Members considered the primary objective of the strategy should be to focus on the future survey model. As part of this, a key step is to identify what would constitute a meaningful definition of recovery, but that should not be the final aim in itself.
- 13.3. The Board noted that, if the term recovery continued to be used, it would need to be clearly defined, including whether it meant the point at which users no longer had material concerns about the reliability of social survey outputs.
- 13.4. Members sought clarity on the technology component of the strategy, including whether the focus was on modernising legacy systems or developing new technology and infrastructure. It was noted that the immediate focus was on modernisation, with scope for greater ambition over a longer-term horizon.
- 13.5. The Board agreed that the strategy would need to be framed around reinvention and transformation. Surveys were expected to remain an essential part of the statistical system, particularly since data linkage could not yet replace all the needs surveys address. Members also highlighted the need to consider future capability, the interpretation of low response rates and comparisons with wider industry practice.

14. Census annual publication against the FPMS Recommendation [SA(26)52]

- 14.1. This section of the minutes will be published following publication of the annual report.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Agenda
Thursday 30 July, 11.00-14.30
London Boardroom,
Hybrid Meeting

Chair: Penny Young

Apologies: Mary Gregory, Sarah Moore, Tom Taylor

Attendees: Neil Bannister (for item 10), Matt Hughes (for item 9), Claudia Jenkins (for item 10), Will Laffan (for item 11), Alex Lambert (for items 9 and 10), Jane Naylor (for item 4), Sarah Southerton (for item 6), Jennet Woolford (for item 9)

NED Session: 10.30-11.00

1 11.00-11.05 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 25.06.26
2 11.05-11.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(26)46 Penny Young
3 11.15-11.30 15 mins	Report from the Permanent Secretary	SA(26)47 Darren Tierney
4 11.30-11.40 10 mins	Report from the National Statistician's Office	SA(26)48 Jane Naylor
5 11.40-11.50 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(26)49 Ed Humpherson
6 11.50-12.00 10 mins	Communications Update	Oral update Peter Barron Sarah Southerton
7 12.00-12.15 15 mins	Update from Committee Chair - Population Statistics System Committee - Regulation Committee	Oral update Penny Young Prof. Dame Carol Propper
8 12.15-13.05 50 mins	One year on	Cat Little Penny Young
13.05-13.20 15 mins	Break	
9 13.20-14.00 40 mins	Transformed Labour Force Survey	SA(26)50 James Benford Alex Lambert Jennet Woolford Matt Hughes
10 14.00-14.15 15 mins	Social Survey Strategy Update	SA(26)51 Alex Lambert Neil Bannister Claudia Jenkins

11 14.15-14.25 10 mins	Census annual publication against the FPMS recommendation	SA(26)52 Will Laffan Penny Young
12 14.25-14.30 5 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: Thursday 24 September, Welsh Government

Chair's Report, July 2026

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of the Interim Chair's activity in July. 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 2 July the Authority hosted a reception event at the QEII Centre, which included the Chair's inaugural annual lecture, as recommended by Prof. Denise Lievesley. The event was well attended and offered a valuable opportunity to engage with stakeholders on the Authority's priorities. The arrival of Jane Naylor as head of the National Statistician's Office (NSO) is an opportunity to assess the Assembly priorities and ensure we are driving progress appropriately.
3. On 7 July I had the pleasure of attending the Pride of Office for National Statistics (ONS) Awards which offered an opportunity to recognise and celebrate colleagues across ONS and the exceptional work they do.
4. On 15 July I met with our responsible minister Satvir Kaur MP. This annual meeting is outlined in the revised framework agreement between the UK Statistics Authority and the Cabinet Office and provides the minister an opportunity to conduct the Chair's appraisal. It was a positive meeting where the minister recognised the progress made in recovery over the past year.

Correspondence

5. On 24 June I wrote to the Leader of the Opposition regarding claims that for the first time ever, the total welfare bill is now higher than total receipts from income tax which was not wholly accurate. We have subsequently received a related Freedom of Information (FoI) request and several Parliamentary Questions (PQs) on the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) underlying processes.

Looking ahead

6. I will shortly be writing to the new First Ministers of Scotland and Wales to introduce the role of the Authority, our regulatory function and highlight their responsibilities on the appropriate use of statistics in line with the Code of Practice and Ministerial Codes.

Penny Young, Interim Chair, 20 July 2026

Permanent Secretary's Report, July 2026

Purpose

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of activity since the last Board meeting on 25 June 2026.

Improved financial oversight and prioritisation are enabling earlier decision-making

2. I am pleased to report that our Annual Report and Accounts for 2025/26 were laid before Parliament on 9 July as planned. I am grateful to colleagues across the organisation and the support provided by the Board, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and their members in drawing this intensive period of activity to a successful conclusion.
3. Using data at the end of June, our provisional view of the financial position is that based on current recruitment activity we are heading towards an underspend.. The introduction of additional processes and mechanisms from the start of this financial year will allow the Executive Committee (ExCo) to make decisions much earlier in the annual cycle and with full sight of how those decisions might impact the financial position in future years.
4. Ahead of this meeting of the Board, ExCo will meet to review the finances at Quarter 1. It is my intention to consider investment options for deployment in year balancing this with options for easing the affordability challenge that we face in future years. Whilst we will need to consider uncertainties in making initial decisions the nature and timing of these early conversations represent a step change when compared with prior years where these considerations were typically made post Quarter 2.
5. This month, we also published the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Strategy (2026-28), bringing together in one place for the first time the key components of our strategic framework. As the Board are aware from our discussion in June, this is an important staging post as we operationalise the prioritisation approach set out in our business plan. Work has already begun to ensure we are turning our minds to the bigger strategic questions which face both the ONS and wider Authority over the medium and longer term. This work will inform the development of the next Authority strategy.
6. In July, we completed the first cycle of the quarterly prioritisation rounds described in our business plan. Across the organisation, we have now completed a deep dive looking at our latest financial picture, performance across both our delivery and change portfolios, and exposed for the first time what capacity is available across key enabling functions. Performance and Change committee met on 21 July to consider the Q1 position and taken an initial view on key trade off decisions ahead of ExCo consideration. This has been the first real test of the prioritisation we have introduced and has helped shine a light on a range of decisions which need to be taken and communicated across the organisation. It has also provided a key opportunity for a rounded consideration of delivery confidence across the organisation, including our top priority programmes, and collective decision-making on how key risks and challenges should be addressed.

The People Plan is now in place, with continued focus on leadership accountability, performance, office attendance and workforce culture

7. I am pleased to share that the long-term People Plan has now been published following extensive colleague consultation and review from ExCo and the Board. Our vision for the People Plan is to create a culture where agile, highly skilled people collaborate to deliver our mission. Our people priorities to achieve these aspirations are:
 - i. employee experience – creating a culture of collaboration;
 - ii. capability – building the skills we need now and in the future;
 - iii. pay and reward – rewarding and retaining the talent we need;

- iv. optimising performance – fostering a strong performance culture;
 - v. recruitment and resourcing – rigorous approaches to how we attract talent; and
 - vi. leadership and management development – leading and managing with openness, direction and trust.
8. As discussed last month, we are looking to strengthen our approach to measuring and reporting office attendance with a revised methodology being developed to provide a more accurate understanding of colleague presence and attendance with purpose. Subject to ExCo consideration in August. This will support improved oversight of hybrid working arrangements and enable more consistent tracking of progress. Data has shown attendance levels are slowly increasing, with London, Newport and Titchfield being our most attended sites. For the week ending 13 July, Senior Civil Servants (SCS) had a 59 per cent attendance level, a figure consistent across the last three months, with attendance levels for the latest week remain approximately 9 to 11 percentage points higher than in mid-April. Of all SCS, 60 per cent are hitting 60 per cent or more across the entire four-week period.
 9. In the recent Quarterly Stocktakes, office attendance figures were used to hold ExCo members to account for improving attendance in their areas in line with their divisional office attendance plans. Over the Summer, internal comms activity has focused on promoting attendance with purpose. Evaluation of this activity has pulled out three areas of focus for comms activity moving forwards:
 - i. measurement – building a more trusted baseline and address questions about measurement transparency;
 - ii. experience it – prioritise the practical factors that make office attendance easier, more inclusive and more worthwhile; and
 - iii. show it – create a visible narrative that shows why, when and how hybrid working adds value.
 10. 2025/26 end-year SCS performance ratings and associated awards were submitted to Remuneration Committee for ratification this month, with outcomes to be communicated in August. Objectives for 2026/27 are now in place for all SCS, and communications will shortly be issues to reinforce expectations for Q1 performance reviews as well as providing an update on performance arrangements for delegated grades.
 11. Ahead of Parliamentary Recess, colleagues submitted our pay remit to Cabinet Office for approval and we await a response. As we wait to hear back, we will continue to work closely with Departmental Trade Union Side (DTUS) and other colleagues to develop the evidence base for future pay flexibility proposals.

Delivery confidence for the portfolio has reduced, reflecting ongoing scope, delivery and dependency risks and issues across the portfolio

12. Content and Website Transformation Programme (CWTP) delivery confidence has worsened to red due to the lack of agreed scope for the programme. In August, ExCo will meet to discuss options for the programme including the possibility of the movement of data transformation out of the scope of the programme and into the waiting room. Colleagues are currently working to scope the dissemination and website programme to balance tactical delivery needs with longer-term strategic transformation, ensuring that immediate priorities can be addressed while shaping the future direction of ONS digital dissemination services.
13. Census 2031 continues with a delivery confidence of amber/green, with the current phase of Design Validation reporting amber. Work on digital products, supplier onboarding and statistical/operational design is progressing in line with plans, however there is a significant volume of work to get through to meet the critical path. Resource fill rate has increased to 90 per cent following a review of role start dates, however challenges remain with recruiting Business Analysts and Architects which may delay operational design. Recent planning work has determined that the March 2029 Rehearsal date will not be feasible, as such the programme is working with devolved governments to agree revised timings ahead of the November HM

Treasury submission. A new issue has also emerged with Methodology and Quality Directorate's delivery of Census methods set to be delayed due to a lack of decision on which platform to use. This is beginning to affect work that lies on the critical path for 2027 though discussions are taking place to mitigate risk where possible.

14. Business Surveys Transformation Programme delivery confidence remains amber. Statistical Business Register is now fully baselined for transition state 1, but longer-term plans are uncertain and dependent on Digital Services discovery activities which are scheduled to complete in September. Both Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings and Integrated Annual Business Survey are progressing with the known risk that Digital Services capacity is constrained meaning delivery is uncertain.
15. Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) delivery confidence remains amber/red, driven by the impact of data quality on research outputs and the need for ONS to transition fully to TLFS in 2027. ExCo discussions in early July assessed the risks and impacts of proceeding with transition in 2027, which could mean accepting adjustments to the minimum acceptable criteria for data quality. ExCo agreed that a 2027 transition remains achievable, but will require targeted interventions, strategic trade-offs and a managed post-transition improvement approach, with residual quality, stakeholder and reputational risks managed through to a genuine July 2027 go/no-go decision.
16. Stakeholder sentiment remains broadly positive and similar to last quarter. However, concerns persist among local government stakeholders about data quality issues affecting Annual Population Survey and Labour Force Survey (LFS) outputs. Increased demand for local and regional data under a potential devolution agenda could further affect sentiment in 2026/27. While our transparent handling of LFS issues generated negative coverage, including in the Financial Times (FT), reporting also reflected our accountability and explanations. The FT also carried a negative editorial criticising the lack of a National Statistician. They published my letter in response, highlighting that their original article omitted the improvements we have made and misunderstood the respective leadership roles.

Recovery momentum continues, with notable improvements in key statistical outputs alongside persistent operational challenges

17. In July, we published the latest quarterly Surveys and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan update following extensive engagement with relevant stakeholders who encouraged us to make a bigger statement about the significant progress while maintaining a sense of balance about the challenges we continue to face.
18. Issues remain for social survey response rates and interviewer headcount. In May, the latest data available, none of our six priority social surveys met their response targets for the month. Interviewer headcount remains below the minimum target with the current strategy for boosting interviewer numbers not delivering the necessary headcount, although attrition has reduced. Until we have enough interviewers, we will continue to see issues with collecting the required number of survey responses to deliver high-quality data.
19. Earlier this month, the Centre for Crime and Justice published the latest set of crime estimates for the year end March 2026. It was decided to withdraw domestic abuse, stalking and the combined domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking metric in order to allow the team the time needed to understand and clearly explain the change in the domestic abuse estimates from last year, some of which may be a consequence of improvements to the survey as opposed to changes in abuse behaviours.
20. We have also published Mid-2025 population estimates for England and Wales alongside additional quality and uncertainty information, as well as articles describing different quality aspects of the estimates, the effect of the pandemic on the estimates and our plans on improving them in line with the recommendations set out by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) earlier this year.

21. OSR have also made us aware that given the considerable progress made in improving long-term international migration estimates they are closing their systematic review of these outputs.
22. Colleagues have been working on household-level income analysis which has been successfully delivered to Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) ministers this month through the application of advanced data linkage capabilities, keeping sensitive data secure while driving analytical value. This work highlighted the significant value of our data linkage capabilities and linked data assets, with further opportunities to leverage these approaches being explored across the organisation.

Darren Tierney, Permanent Secretary, 23 July 2026

*National Statistician's Report, July 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 25 June 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. On 30 June 2026, I chaired the **National Statistician's Executive Group (NSEG)** meeting. A number of strategic issues affecting the GSS were discussed. Members reviewed progress against the UK Statistics Assembly recommendations, welcoming a more comprehensive approach to reporting and emphasising the importance of stronger engagement across the wider GSS and government to support delivery. There was also discussion of a new GSS risk register, with members supporting its development as a tool for strengthening oversight of key system risks, including those relating to artificial intelligence (AI), capability and public trust.
3. NSEG also considered the development of the National Statistician's Analysis Unit and ongoing work on innovation, AI and machine learning. Members supported the ambition to build stronger cross-government analytical capability, promote collaboration across the GSS and ensure that emerging technologies are used effectively to support analysis and statistical production. The Group additionally discussed proposals for future GSS governance arrangements, supporting efforts to improve clarity of roles, reporting lines and decision-making across the statistical system.
4. The **Methodological Assurance Review Panel (MARP)** had a special session dedicated to the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) on the 16 July 2026. A high-level overview of the methods development and choices was discussed.
5. The **National Statistician's Data Ethics Committee (NSDEC)** is undertaking two correspondence reviews this month. The first relates to the Implementation of Differential Incentives on the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). The team previously sought NSDEC advice on the proposed trial and is returning, following the Committee's recommendation, to seek further advice as they look to implement the approach as business as usual. The second review concerns the Online Survey Development of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) Feasibility Test, specifically the testing of an Address Based Online Sample (ABOS) and Personal Demographic Service (PDS) sampling framework. Both correspondence reviews are expected to generate valuable discussion and insight from the Committee.
6. NSDEC also has ongoing engagement with census teams on a range of broader ethical considerations and emerging areas of work, helping to provide advice and assurance where needed.

NSO Activity and Engagement

7. The [next update](#) on progress against the **UK Statistics Assembly Independent Report** recommendations was published on the UK Statistics Authority website on 20 July 2026. This includes a transparent assessment of progress on the four high-level priorities and, for the first time, an update on progress against each of the 227 recommendations identified in the report, highlighting where work is complete or advancing, where decisions have been taken to pause activity, and where further collaboration is needed across the GSS. An immense amount of work went into producing this update, with input from colleagues across the ONS and wider GSS. Our thanks to the Board for your support throughout this process.
8. Plenary sessions for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) **Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP)** and the United Nations Economic

Commission for Europe (UNECE) **Conference of European Statisticians (CES)** took place from 22-26 June 2026 in Paris and Geneva. James Benford represented the UK and gave a keynote speech on modernising data sources and methods, reducing burden, and building trust. This was very well received and numerous countries reached out personally to James to thank him for his candour, whilst reflecting on similar difficulties faced by their own National Statistical Offices. James also delivered an impactful intervention that amended the CSSP's terms of reference, reflecting the need to measure the impact of AI on the economy, a key issue across the GSS. The UK delegation delivered further interventions to support key activities aligned with ONS priorities, including modernisation, survey innovation, and the Data Gaps Initiative.

9. On 29 June 2026, the **National Statistician's Analysis Unit** published: [Impact of multiple cardiometabolic conditions requiring hospitalisation on monthly employee earnings and employment status, England: April 2014 to December 2022](#). This is a project commissioned by NHS England to better understand the economic consequences of cardiometabolic disease for individuals and society. Using linked administrative data, the research measures changes in monthly employee earnings and the likelihood of remaining in paid employment following hospital admission for one, two or three cardiometabolic long-term conditions. The findings will help inform decisions on prevention, treatment and support for people living with multiple long-term conditions.
10. The **GSS International Committee** took place on 30 June 2026. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) presented on their international engagement, including a recent visit to the Global Leadership Exchange in Canada on data for youth mental health. The exchange provided valuable insights on Canada's progress in areas that DHSC is also working on. This included a case study on the application of measurement-based care at community youth hubs treating youth mental health, substance use and addiction. Relevant lessons for the GSS included processes for embedding data collection in public services, inclusive approaches to data collection and governance, and methods for ensuring data standardisation. International speakers from IBGE Brazil (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) and the Statistical Office of Slovenia presented on innovations in geospatial and statistical data linkage and how the UK can draw on international expert networks to improve our evidence base. GSS members also discussed how to mobilise existing networks to build a GSS international community and agreed to draft an engagement plan for action over the next year.
11. On 15 July 2026, Mary Gregory and Fiona Dawe met Cornish MPs to discuss their request for Cornish to be recognised as a Minority Nationality in the **GSS ethnicity harmonised standard** (which is being developed by the GSS Harmonisation team within the NSO) and the 2031 Census.
12. Statisticians within the Analysis Unit supported an investigation of the effect of the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** operational incident on the headline labour market figures published on 21 July 2026. They simulated a similar issue using past data and looked at the impact on key indicators. The analysis suggested that the impact will be negligible. This was included in the [LFS quality update](#).
13. Analysis Unit colleagues presented at the **Administrative Data Research UK (ADR-UK) Board** on their plans to develop a data asset linking census, deaths data, hospitalisation data, and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) tax records, which will be made available on the Secure Research Service (SRS). The data asset can be used for a range of purposes, from investigating health inequalities, to looking at the economic effects of health conditions and interventions. The work was described as groundbreaking and members praised its significance.
14. An ONS, Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), and Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Roundtable will be held on 16 July 2026 to explore user needs for statistical coherence. Coherence was identified as a key priority by the UK Statistics Assembly and understanding user needs a recommendation. The outcomes from the roundtable will inform the **GSS Coherence Strategy** which is in development.

15. Research has concluded for the **GSS harmonised sex guidance** and analysis is in train to deliver a finalised draft for review by the Ad Hoc Panel on 4 August 2026.

Broader UK Statistical System

16. At the June GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) quarterly meeting, there was a discussion on the **GSS Risk Register** which led to a focussed session on Risk GSS-06: Technology, data and AI undermining trust and quality, and the work which is starting as part of the GSS AI Steering Group.
17. I started in post as **interim Director of the NSO** on Monday 20 July. My phased introduction to the organisation started on 6 July to ensure a period of overlap with my predecessor, Lucinda Eggleton, before she departed. As a result of the close working relationship between the Director of the NSO and the Deputy Heads of the GSS, I have decided to step down as one of the three Deputy Heads. An Expression of Interest (EOI) campaign for my replacement is currently underway, with applications closing on 19 July 2026. The remaining Deputy Heads and I will keep the Board informed of progress with recruitment.
18. The **GSS Conference** is a flagship event for the statistical community and will be held in Bristol, on 20 October 2026, and online, on 4 November 2026. The theme of the conference is '*Data storytelling: What statistics can tell us*'. A call for abstracts has been sent out across the GSS community as well as ticket allocations for the in-person event. We hope that members of the Board will attend and support the conference.
19. We have launched our **annual survey** of GSS members with a closing date of 7 August. This short survey is a chance for members of the community to share their views and experiences. The insights provided will inform planning for the future and allow us to measure progress against delivery of our GSS Vision. A short, more focused survey has also been sent to all GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs).
20. There was a positive **Departmental Directors of Analysis Network (DDANs)** meeting earlier in July 2026 which signed off the Analysis Function (AF) priorities for the year, agreed the approach around assessments against the AF Standard, and discussed local government reorganisation and a planned visit to the Darlington Economic Campus. There have also been AF briefing meetings on the Cross-Government Forecasting and Modelling network, reducing reoffending strategy, data.gov.uk, and privacy enhancing technologies, ensuring DDANs are aware of the latest position in these areas and can shape the work. The AF People Board agreed work plans around regional support, AI skills, learning and development, and resourcing.
21. The **AF AI Working Group** has begun work on developing high-level guidance on the appropriate use of AI in analysis and is now in the second phase of development for the AI hub, which will include case studies and practical tools.
22. The **Department for Education (DfE)** were delighted to report that DfE's statistical work programme and quality management of official statistics policy were both published on 30 June 2026. What was until recently the **Department for Business and Trade (DBT)** published their suite of statistics policies and statistical workplan on 17 July.
23. After two years of development, planning and engagement by what was the **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)**, the first official statistics from DSIT's new Public Engagement Survey (PES) were published on 16 July 2026. The cross-cutting survey captures the views of the UK adult population on a range of DSIT topics including digital inclusion, internet connections and devices, government digital services, attitudes towards science, technology and data, and use of and attitudes towards AI. The survey was established to bring together content from a range of smaller existing surveys and will provide evidence of citizen engagement with a range of DSIT policies. It also contains new questions designed to address currently unmet evidence needs, including use of government digital services and AI adoption within households. The large, achieved sample size provides the department's primary source of reliable data on public engagement by demographics, such as population sub-groups or regions of the UK.

24. The NSO and Deputy Heads of the GSS are supporting AF and GSS colleagues affected by recently announced **Machinery of Government changes**, ensuring support for leaders within relevant departments, continuity of analytical work and adherence to standards and support to the community. The Deputy Heads and I are engaging and meeting with HoPs from the affected departments – namely DBT, DSIT, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – and have reached out to offer support to Directors of Analysis.

Jane Naylor, Interim Director, National Statistician's Office, 23 July 2026

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

Annual Report

2. The UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2025/26 has been published. OSR's Annual Report is included as an annex to the Authority report and [has also been published separately on the OSR website](#).

Credible and Rigorous Regulator

3. Highlights from our regulatory compliance work include:
 - i. [Compliance Review](#) of War Pensions Scheme statistics published by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). We identified significant concerns about data quality and concluded that the statistics no longer comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. I therefore [approved MOD's request](#) to cancel accreditation for these statistics;
 - ii. [Compliance Review](#) of Welsh Government's Labour Market Overview. The review focused on how effectively the Labour Market Overview communicates quality and uncertainty, and the appropriate use of different labour market data sources. The review found that overall, the bulletin communicates these aspects clearly. We made two recommendations to support improvements in these areas. These statistics remain official statistics; and
 - iii. [Compliance Review](#) of Labour Market Survey statistics in Northern Ireland published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). This report is the first in a series of reviews looking at NISRA's transition to its new Labour Market Survey (LMS). The review found that NISRA has taken a considered approach to developing a shorter labour market survey, balancing response rates, data quality and user needs, and has engaged widely with users and stakeholders. The review also identifies six recommendations for NISRA to take forward to provide users with greater clarity about the transition, the quality of the new labour market statistics and how user need will be met.
4. To reduce our historic Accredited Official Statistics (AOS) debt we have developed a risk-based, auditable and proportionate approach that supports a rolling programme of assurance. As part of this approach, we have developed a tool to enable us to triage the whole AOS list. On 13 July we began the triage process. We will be providing an update on this work at September Regulation Committee.
5. On 17 July, I published a [blog](#) on progress on the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) migration statistics. My blog recognised that the shift to an entirely-admin data driven measurement approach is significant but maybe has not been sufficiently acknowledged in discussions of migration statistics.

System Catalyst

6. OSR published the annual [State of the Statistical System report](#), which sets out our regulatory view of a system making progress but operating under pressure. Most recommendations are directed to the incoming National Statistician, reflecting the need for visible system leadership on resources and capacity, survey quality, Assembly priorities, Artificial Intelligence (AI) use, and implementation of the revised Code. The report formed one of the main inputs into the Chair's inaugural annual lecture.
7. I represented the UK statistical system at a conference in Paris hosted by the French Statistics Authority, who are interested in the UK model of governance. The conference, at which James Benford also spoke, looked at the contrasting systems in the UK, US, France and at the

European level. There was a lot of support for the UK model from other speakers and from the audience, especially our role in providing independent assessments of Code compliance, and for our casework role.

8. The seventh Statistical Excellence Award for Trustworthiness, Quality and Value, presented by OSR in partnership with the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) and Civil Service World, [has been awarded to the Violence Research Group at Cardiff University](#) for its work on the National Violence Surveillance Network and linked Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention. The award recognises excellence in voluntary application of the Code's TQV principles, and this year's winner shows how Accident and Emergency (A&E) data can improve understanding of serious violence, support prevention activity and strengthen public policy and official crime statistics.
9. I attended a meeting focused on developing a Royal Society Code of Practice for science communication, modelled on the Code of Practice for Statistics, reflecting wider interest in the Code as a framework for supporting trustworthy communication beyond official statistics.

Public Use of Statistics

10. We have published our [Annual review of casework 2025/26](#). The report focuses on the volume and type of issues raised with us during 2025/26 and includes a section that specifically covers work we completed during the 2026 election period, which began in March 2026 and ended on 7 May 2026.
11. Casework: We opened a further 15 cases since our last paper to the Board, taking us to 68 cases in 2026/27 so far (as of 14 July). Since the last Authority board, we have [written publicly to the Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP](#) regarding National Health Service (NHS) England Elective Waiting Time Statistics and [the Chair has written to the Leader of the Opposition](#) on welfare spending. We expect to write publicly to James Cartlidge MP on statements about Defence spending in the coming weeks.
12. Our casework has come under increased scrutiny recently: we have received several Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) and Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and have been the subject of a Conservative Party Press release, all relating to an intervention on Universal Credit claimants, where [the Chair wrote publicly to Kemi Badenoch MP](#) during the pre-election period. The correspondence and questions we have received does not question the accuracy of our intervention. Instead, it questions OSR's approach to casework and our impartiality. We expect this scrutiny to be maintained but remain confident in the processes we follow to ensure we are impartial in our judgements. This increased scrutiny and the ongoing pressure the team has felt in some areas from repeat complainants has signalled the need for continuous improvement to our processes though.
13. On 22 July, OSR published a [public statement](#) following a casework investigation into the communication and presentation of data from NHS England's Federated Data Platform (FDP). OSR was contacted by several journalists and members of the public around concerns that NHS England's presentation of FDP-related benefits had been misleading. The addition of a caveat led many users to believe there has been significant change in how NHS England was communicating the benefits of FDP data in relation to NHS performance. As a result of our casework, NHS England has committed to multiple actions to improve its communication of FDP-related insights.
14. In June OSR's Head of Policy and Standards presented at Q2026, the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics, on how Trustworthiness, Quality and Value provide an ethical framework for building confidence and combating misinformation. We have recently published her [paper](#) because it demonstrates how the Code provides a practical model for strengthening confidence in public debate.
15. We have also published a [think piece](#) revisiting the role of statistics in the public sphere, showing how the new Standards for the Public Use of Statistics support equality of access, understanding and better decision-making and leadership in the public debate.

16. I spoke at two events focused on the public use of statistics:

- i. I was an expert witness at the opening session of Evidence Week in Parliament, providing advice to members of the public on evidence questions they could ask MPs; and
- ii. I spoke at the Presidential Address by the new President of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications.

Enhance Our Own TQV

17. The Authority and OSR websites are currently being redesigned and redeveloped, with launch planned for August 2026. The new OSR website will incorporate the Code of Practice and enable users to browse OSR outputs and judgements by topic area. This approach places user needs and feedback at the centre of the design, improving access to key regulatory content and supporting a more intuitive user experience.

On my mind

18. I have been discussing the environment in which we deliver casework with my senior team, Peter Barron and the Chair. In short, we are seeing evidence of an increasingly contested space, in which our work is subject to challenge and criticism. This reinforces the need for us to be clear about our policies and our approach.

19. Finally, I was very pleased to be awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Market Research Society, receiving the award on 15 July.

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

Transformed Labour Force Survey – July 2026

Purpose

1. An update on the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) July 2026 readiness assessment and the 2027 transition strategy for the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. agree that now is not the right time to transition from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to the TLFS as the source for our headline labour market statistics;
 - ii. comment on the transition strategy for 2027 and the communication approach;
 - iii. comment specifically on Standard Industrial Classification/Standard Occupational Classification (SIC/SOC) progress and mitigations as this remains the area of highest uncertainty; and
 - iv. confirm whether the Board would like sight of the external Labour Market Transformation article before publication in August.

Discussion

July 2026 Readiness Assessment

3. This first readiness assessment provided a clear stocktake of TLFS progress, its current and projected ability to meet user and transition requirements, and the forward plan needed to support a safe and credible transition.
4. The readiness assessment drew on information gathered through intensive internal analysis and external engagement. The evidence is summarised, with supporting detail in a Ready Reckoner and one-page briefings. The TLFS Programme Board and ONS Executive reviewed the evidence and collectively agreed that:
 - i. TLFS is not ready to transition now;
 - ii. TLFS research outputs should not be published now, as imminent methods changes and revisions would undermine confidence;
 - iii. January 2027 should be treated as a progress checkpoint towards July 2027, not a full readiness assessment. It will confirm the programme trajectory and update only on key issues, including SIC/SOC, UK data development, Transition State 11 (TS11) performance and Household, Socioeconomic and Local (HSL) progress.
5. By July 2027, readiness is projected to improve materially as programme work continues at pace. Most criteria are expected to reach minimum or target level, though key risks remain:
 - i. precision on measures of change is a key requirement for macroeconomic policymakers to provide confidence that changes in estimates between quarters are reflecting real change in the labour market, rather than sampling variability. The strategy agreed at the Programme Board in June is forecast to bring TLFS within tolerable levels, assuming the early positive impact of TS11 is sustained. This will be closely monitored, with the first precision estimate based solely on TS11 data available in November, and mitigations will be established if required;
 - ii. complex data capture remains a key uncertainty. SIC success depends on a Search As You Type (SAYT) test which went live on 6 July (to 30,000 households over three months). SOC data quality is stronger than SIC and macro-level coding is coherent, but lower-level coding concerns still need to be tested and may require a data-quality trade-off to support a 2027 transition. Further detail around points raised on SIC/SOC at the workshop with non-executive directors is provided at; and
 - iii. user acceptance is not yet at the required level but is expected to improve for the Bank of England in November if measures of change evolve as forecast, and for the Department for

Work and Pensions in November if later delivery of household data can be accepted, and for Department for Business and Trade in January if the SIC/SOC stocktake is successful.

6. A TLFS 2027 Transition Strategy has therefore been developed to manage the remaining uncertainty, mitigate the key risks and maintain a credible path to a 2027 transition.

TLFS 2027 Transition Strategy

7. Given the complexities and resource involved, neither the LFS nor the TLFS will reach their quality potential whilst we are running the two surveys in parallel. The dual run is also restricting progress with moving off legacy systems and improving other household surveys. Our approach is therefore to get the TLFS data quality to an acceptable level for us and our key stakeholders to have confidence in turning off the LFS. This will then allow the quality of the TLFS to improve further post transition, where additional resource will be available.
8. The TLFS 2027 Transition Strategy sets out the targeted improvements, expectation management, delivery interventions and trade-offs needed to move safely to transition while continuing to improve quality after go-live.
9. The strategy has four mutually reinforcing elements:
 - i. **Improve data quality and understanding before transition**
The priority is to strengthen the areas that matter most for transition confidence: Measures of Change precision, missingness, dataset coverage and SIC/SOC quality. TS11 improvements will continue to flow through the five survey waves; interim imputation will reduce missingness; and work will focus on maturing four priority datasets. Administrative data may provide contingency for SIC if SAYT testing does not deliver the required improvement, and lower-level SOC coding will be investigated further. Once TS11 improvements flow through we will need to consider publishing TLFS data to build wider confidence in it ahead of the decision to transition. Quality improvements will continue after transition;
 - ii. **Align expectations about transition**
In-line with the long-standing plan for TLFS, transition in 2027 should be presented as the start of a managed improvement journey, not the point at which all development ends. Stakeholders will need to understand that further methodological upgrades, revisions and some discontinuities are likely after transition, particularly as SIC and SOC, and HSL data quality improves. A clear post-transition roadmap will be produced to show how quality, methods and output coverage will develop over time;
 - iii. **Strengthen delivery confidence**
Targeted programme interventions are already being used to reduce delivery risk. These include ongoing scrutiny of Management Information (MI) and survey data, visibility of month-by-month progress, additional processing and analysis resource, project management support for Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), senior oversight of recruitment and retention, increased scrutiny of SIC/SOC delivery, and greater focus on the Controlled Test Sample needed to enable post-transition improvements; and
 - iv. **Make explicit strategic trade-offs**
Delivering a credible 2027 transition will require active choices. The programme is testing where lower-priority activity can be de-scoped until after transition, and where some specific data quality limitations may need to be accepted at transition. Two data quality trade-offs have already been agreed within the programme, and a further decision is being tested with users to ensure the final approach is credible, transparent and supportable.
10. Taken together, these actions provide a controlled route to a 2027 transition: improving the evidence base, managing user expectations, focusing delivery effort and making the trade-offs needed to transition safely.

A Picture of Transition

11. We are preparing a high-level visual representation of the path between now and transition to the TLFS in 2027. It will include the key milestones and waypoints for when we expect current uncertainties to be resolved or clarified.
12. Transition should be understood as the start of a managed improvement period, not the final end state. Over the next year, the programme will need to build confidence in this approach by securing wider stakeholder support and closely managing the strategic dependency on NISRA's Labour Market Survey transition.

Starting the Process of Transition

13. With a clear objective to transition in 2027, it is important to recognise that this will be a managed process over the next eighteen months, not a single event. A comprehensive communications plan will support this by setting out the key waypoints when we will be able to report progress on remaining uncertainties, an approach to socialising the TLFS data and a clear and consistent narrative on the immediate and longer-term value of TLFS; explaining how remaining risks, limitations and discontinuities will be managed; and showing how quality will continue to improve after transition through the post-transition roadmap. The plan will also cover the publication of impact articles and research outputs, which will be critical to building confidence, managing expectations and securing support for a 2027 transition.
14. As part of the transition process, we will continue our regular engagement with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and are committed to taking the necessary steps to secure accredited official statistics status for TLFS outputs as early as possible, as accreditation is an important signal of trustworthiness, quality and value for users.
15. External engagement will need to step up over the next year, with tailored engagement for ministers, key government users and wider public audiences. This will include proactive messaging on the current quality and sustainability challenges with LFS, the value for money case for ending the dual run, and the strengths of TLFS as the sustainable long-term basis for labour market statistics.
16. The programme's next key communications milestone will be in August 2026, when external users, including the media, will be updated via the next in the series of Labour Market Transformation articles. The article will be a critical next step in communicating the 2027 transition strategy and will be centred around the following narrative:
 - i. TLFS remains the right strategic direction for the ONS;
 - ii. recent design improvements are showing encouraging signs, but as previously announced, it is not yet the right time to transition;
 - iii. a safe 2027 transition remains the most likely and credible path, but the decision will be data-led balanced with the growing cost and quality constraints of continuing the TLFS/LFS dual run; and
 - iv. neither the LFS or TLFS can meet their quality potential during the dual run. Transition will therefore begin a managed improvement journey, not mark the end of development.
17. The Board are invited to review the latest draft messaging and to confirm whether they would like sight of the article before publication in August.

Conclusion

18. TLFS has made substantial progress and the July 2026 readiness assessment provides a clear evidence base for the next year. TLFS is not ready to transition now, as expected, and January 2027 is not a credible transition point either. The January 2027 assessment should therefore be a focused trajectory check, not a full readiness decision. It should test whether SIC/SOC, TS11 performance, UK data, HSL, NISRA alignment and the wider risk profile are moving sufficiently in the right direction. It will also reassess whether it is the right time to publish data from the TLFS. This reflects an evidence-led position, not a loss of confidence in the programme.
19. July 2027 remains the right objective and is achievable, but only if ONS, stakeholders and users accept a managed improvement approach. The communications plan is therefore an important

element for successful transition. Focus will remain on the risks that matter most, making explicit trade-offs where full resolution is not possible before transition, and recognising that some residual quality, dependency and reputational risks may remain at go-live.

20. As part of the transition process over the next eighteen months, the substantive go/no-go decision should remain in July 2027, when the Board will need to agree that the transition is credible, supportable and in the wider organisational interest.

**Dr Alex Lambert, Senior Responsible Owner, Transformed Labour Force Survey Programme,
ONS, 20 July 2026**

ONS Social Surveys Strategy: Update

Purpose

1. This paper updates the Authority Board on progress in developing the refreshed Office for National Statistics (ONS) Social Survey Strategy, including the emerging themes identified through the discovery and engagement phase. It also highlights the key strategic choices now requiring Board consideration.
2. Social surveys remain a vital component of the UK's data infrastructure, but the current operating model continues to face significant challenges. At the same time, there is ongoing debate among stakeholders, commentators and users about the extent to which the social survey system has recovered and what good looks like in the longer term. As ONS develops its future approach to social data collection, there is a need for greater clarity on the role surveys should play within a broader and evolving data ecosystem.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Board are invited to:
 - i. note the progress to date on the Social Survey Strategy, including emerging themes from the discovery phase;
 - ii. discuss the challenges with defining a recovered survey system; and
 - iii. advise on how the Social Survey Strategy should align with a longer-term, strategic vision for ONS.

Background

4. Following engagement with ExCo 26(11) and the Strategic Design Committee in May 2026, work is ongoing to develop a refreshed ONS Social Surveys Strategy. This will be structured using a phased approach: recovery in the short term, development of a sustainable system in the medium term, and a longer-term vision for the social survey system to the mid-2030s.
5. We are on track to deliver the first draft of the strategy in the autumn. Extensive engagement has just been completed across Deputy Directors, Directors, and Executive Directors in ONS and the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). This engagement has covered the end-to-end survey system and has looked to define the principles for the three strategic phases. In addition, several workshops and focus groups have been run at the working level. A Strategic Steering Group has been formed that includes external survey experts from the Economic and Social Research Council and University of Essex.
6. Emerging principles – informed by international evidence - include a clear need to stabilise our survey operations and statistics across the whole system, improve our ability to respond proactively to user needs, and to capitalise on the work of Census 2031 and wider ONS statistical design strategy development in the longer term.
 - i. the emerging themes);
 - ii. data collection (operational delivery and workforce stability);
 - iii. technology (digital infrastructure and data system/automation);
 - iv. citizen (engagement, participation, trust and public value);
 - v. quality (representativeness, accuracy and standards); and
 - vi. methods and alternative data (innovation and integration of non-survey data).

Discussion

7. We are now moving into the analysis phase of the strategy development. The engagement exercise has generated a broad range of perspectives on the actions needed to stabilise social survey operations and outputs in the short term, while laying out the foundations for a more

sustainable survey system over the medium term. We are now inviting the Authority Board to provide a steer into the strategy development process.

8. A key challenge emerging from the engagement is that there is no single, shared definition of "recovery". Views span a wide spectrum each with their own opportunities and risk. At one end, recovery is seen as a return to pre-pandemic response levels and operational performance. At the other end, it is viewed as a longer-term (several years) transformation, characterised by a survey system that meets user needs, and has stronger citizen engagement. Other perspectives focus on specific milestones, such as the successful implementation of the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), as indicators that recovery has been achieved. Reconciling these differing perspectives will be a central part of the analysis and strategy development process. The Board's views will therefore be valuable on:
 - i. what should constitute a realistic and meaningful definition of recovery for the social survey system?
 - ii. how should we balance short-term operational recovery with longer-term transformation and sustainability?
 - iii. what indicators or milestones would provide confidence that recovery has been achieved?
9. A further emerging challenge is the development of a long-term vision for social surveys beyond 2031. Stakeholders consistently noted that it is difficult to define a future state for social surveys without greater clarity on the strategic direction of ONS and the wider statistical system. Key dependencies include decisions on the future data sourcing model, the balance between survey and non-survey data sources, and the future approach to census and population statistics.
10. There was broad agreement that social surveys will remain an essential component of the statistical system as they will always provide unique insights that other sources cannot such as attitudes and opinions, experiences (e.g. crime), well-being, unpaid care, to name a few. However, views differed on their future scale, purpose and operating model for social surveys with the development of administrative and alternative sources. This raises a fundamental strategic question for ONS and the board as we develop a statistical design strategy. We would welcome insight from the board on this question:
 - i. what role should social surveys play in a data ecosystem increasingly shaped by administrative and alternative sources of data?

Conclusion

11. The discussion set out in this paper highlights a broader strategic choice for ONS: are we seeking to optimise and sustain the current survey model, or to redesign the social surveys system around a mixed-data future? Addressing this question is critical to shaping the long-term ambition for social surveys and informing investment and prioritisation decisions over the coming decade and will be considered as part of the wider work being done to develop a statistical design strategy for population and social statistics.
12. The Board's views will help inform the long-term purpose, ambition and strategic direction of social surveys as part of a broader, evolving statistical system.

Neil Bannister, Claudia Jenkins & Ian O'Sullivan, Social Survey Strategy and Quality Team, Office for National Statistics, July 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)52

Proposal for the annual report on the recommendation on the future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales

This paper will be published following publication of the annual report