UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

Thursday 24 September 2026
Welsh Government, Cardiff
Hybrid Meeting

Members Present
Penny Young (Chair)
Dr. Jacob Abboud
Peter Barron
Professor Dame Carol Propper
Darren Tierney
Dr. Sarah Walsh

Other Attendees
James Benford
June Bowman
Luke Ashton
Megan Cooper (for item 13)
Mary Gregory
Stephanie Howarth (for item 4)
Matt Hughes (for item 14)
Rob Kent-Smith
Alex Lambert (for item 14)
Liz McKeown (for item 14)
Joe Moore (for item 12)
Sarah Moore
Jane Naylor (for item 7)
Suzi Robertson (for item 12)
Tom Taylor
Ross Tivey (for item 12)

Apologies
Ed Humpherson
Professor Mairi Spowage

Secretariat
Sally Jones
Tom Marsh

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were noted from Professor Mairi Spowage and Ed Humpherson.

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 30 July were agreed.

4. Presentation by Chief Statistician, Welsh Government

4.1. Stephanie Howarth, Chief Statistician – Welsh Government and her teams gave a presentation to the Board setting out their approach to using statistics to improve decisions, delivery and public accountability. With the new government there were new expectations for stronger and timelier economic statistics, outcomes focused measures, credible targets and transparent progress.

4.2. The following key points were made:

i. Wales's scale supports agility and innovation but can also create fragility.
ii. The demand is growing for more timely, granular and locally relevant evidence while survey, administrative and financial pressures risk weakening parts of the evidence base.
iii. Modernisation is underway through survey redesign, reproducible methods and stronger use of data, although many challenges require partnership across the UK statistical system.

4.3. The discussion focused on embedding sub-UK evidence in statistical design, investing collectively in shared infrastructure and capability, and meeting user needs for more timely measures of progress.

4.4. The Board noted thanks for an excellent presentation.

5. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(26)53]

5.1. The Chair reported on her activities since the Board last met.

5.2. The Chair noted thanks to Tom Taylor, ONS Director of Finance, for all of his work since joining ONS. Tom would be leaving to join UK Research and Innovation as their new Chief Financial Officer from 19 October at which point Rhys Thomas would be appointed as Interim Finance Director.

5.3. The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) report on the work of the Authority had been published on 11 September. The approach to responding to the report was scheduled for discussion at this meeting. The Authority's draft response was scheduled for discussion at the next meeting.

5.4. The Board noted with pleasure that André Loranger had been appointed as the UK's National Statistician with a start date early November.

5.5. Following discussion by the panel convened (in the absence of a National Statistician) to assure key Government Statistical Service (GSS), the work on the GSS harmonised standard for collecting data on sex was near completion.

5.6. The Chair reported that final approvals were in place for the Non-executive Director appointment process, following a period of delay by the Cabinet Office. It was agreed that there could be no further delays given the critical importance of the Board having the required skills to deliver in its role.

6. Report from the Permanent Secretary [SA(26)54]

6.1. Darren Tierney provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting highlighting the following:

i. the ongoing work by finance colleagues alongside the Executive Committee (ExCo) to mitigate the forecast surplus at year end to ensure a sensible trajectory across the spend profile in 2027/28 and 2028/29;
ii. the launch of an in-person seminar series for all Grade 6 and Grade 7 colleagues to strengthen leadership capability across the organisation;
iii. the size of the field community had reached its target minimum level at the beginning of September; and
iv. ONS support of the local devolution agenda, Rewiring the State, including contributing to the White Paper with proposals on how ONS can build local analytical capacity and improve the timeliness, granularity and reliability of local evidence.

6.2. Members discussed ONS's approach to the forecast year-end position in the context of ONS's strategic delivery and sought clarity on the underpinning issues. It was noted that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had discussed the matter in detail at its meeting on 17 September, highlighting accountability issues within business areas, the need for improved forecasting and concerns around strategic delivery. It was clarified that work was ongoing to improve forecasting across the organisation, noting that ExCo decision making was based on using the central forecast position, which had proven to be accurate. The deliberate decision to over programme had created a degree of ambition within the business regarding delivery, which had subsequently proven unachievable (even allowing for the expected degree of optimism bias) given the unrealistic recruitment plans. It was acknowledged that plans had been based on a budget, which would not be fully spent. The surplus would therefore be used to smooth expenditure towards year end and maintain a sensible trajectory across the multi-year spend profile. The aim was to use the surplus as a budget transfer, subject to HM Treasury approval. This would be finalised as part of the Supplementary Estimate process. ONS were considering the implications for strategic delivery, including recalibrating what could be delivered this year with the resources available. This would be undertaken as part of the quarter two review and business planning process.

6.3. Members discussed the impact on strategic delivery and highlighted the importance of transparent engagement with stakeholders and users about the consequences of reduced delivery. It was noted that the planned reduction in ambition for the Survey and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan in 2027/28 would be signalled in the next quarterly update helping to mitigate the cost pressures over the following two years. The business planning process would provide the necessary clarity on organisational priorities, while protecting delivery of major programmes.

6.4. The Chair noted the need for the Board to understand the reduction in ONS delivery and ambition, its implication for timing, including effective communication with stakeholders and users on the changes.

6.5. The Board highlighted the need for a collective assessment on the organisational ability to deliver strategic programmes at pace, and to reach a baselined plan that was deliverable while maintaining real momentum. It noted that rebaselining programmes would not address longer term affordability pressures.

7. Report from the National Statistician's Office [SA(26)55]

7.1. Jane Naylor provided an update on activities across the National Statistician's Office (NSO). The appointment of André Loranger as the new National Statistician had been very well received amongst the Government Statistical Service and wider international statistical community.

7.2. The Board heard that preparations were ongoing for the annual GSS Conference comprising an in person event on 20 October and an online event on 4 November. Following a competitive process, Delphine Robineau, Head of Profession at National Records of Scotland, had been appointed as a Deputy Head of the GSS. The NSO had worked across the GSS on a subnational data review, which had contributed to the work on Rewiring the State. The Department for Education would be hosting a pilot of a new cross-government statistical dissemination platform. Work had continued on

delivery of the Future Statistician Programme and Leadership Development Programme, which aligned with the recommendations from the recently published PACAC Report on the work of the Authority and OSR's State of the Statistical System Report. It was noted that the National Statistics Executive Group meeting on 1 October would consider the GSS Strategic Risk Register and progress delivery of the GSS Vision, Strength in Numbers. The work of the NSO would also be considered to provide more scrutiny and transparency of their work.

7.3. The Board noted the progress made, welcomed the update on the broad range of work undertaken by the National Statistician Advisory Committees and commended the progress made on the GSS Risk Register. It was noted that the work on the Future Statistician Programme, competency framework and Leadership Development Programme would be brought together in response to the recommendations of the PACAC Report.

8. Office for Statistics Regulation [SA(26)56]

8.1. Rob Kent-Smith updated the Board on the work by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) since the last meeting highlighting that the PACAC report was fair and the observations were consistent with the evidence given at the committee. OSR had responded to the challenges through its strategy with a particular focus on being a credible and rigorous regulator.

8.2. As part of its work on reviewing the backlog of accredited statistics, OSR had implemented an Accredited Official Statistics tool and completed the triage process of 689 statistics over eight weeks. A final quality assurance process would be undertaken.

8.3. Following the completion of a compliance review of ONS mid-year population estimates in England and Wales and the substantial work undertaken by ONS in response to OSR's requirements, OSR had confirmed the continued accreditation of the statistics.

8.4. The Board noted the report and sought clarification on the number of statistics OSR had changed the accreditation status from 'suspended' to 'cancelled'. It was clarified that the accreditation was cancelled where it had been suspended for at least six months with no evidence of improvement. In some cases, producers made a strategic choice not to seek accreditation. The Board remains of the view that it would expect producers to seek accreditation for key data sets.

9. Communications Update

9.1. Peter Barron and Sarah Moore reported that external sentiment had been quieter overall since the last meeting. Media coverage had been limited following the announcement of André Loranger as the UK's new National Statistician on 8 September and the publication of PACAC's report on the Work of the Authority on 11 September.

9.2. The Financial Times had published a positive article on ONS's use of Artificial Intelligence. Darren Tierney had shared his perspective on ONS's cultural progress with the Global Government Forum. An article in the Times on 11 September, as part of its 'How to fix the jobs market' series had been critical but concluded with a quote by James Benford on ONS recovery inviting user feedback. An updated version also quoted the Governor of the Bank of England praising ONS's recent concerted efforts to improve its data outputs.

9.3. Communications plans were being developed for the publication in October of the GSS harmonised standard for the collection of data on sex and for the arrival of the new National Statistician.

9.4. The Board noted the update and commended the work by the communications teams on the announcement of the new National Statistician and the Authority's response to the PACAC report on the Work of the Authority.

10. Update from the Regulation Committee Chair

10.1. Professor Dame Carol Propper reported on the work of the Regulation Committee, which had last met on 21 September.

10.2. The Committee had considered:

i. the approval of three accreditations: Scottish Government's Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels statistics; ONS regional gross disposable household income statistics; and Scottish Government's new fraud and computer misuse statistics;
ii. the regulatory approach to Census 2031 with support for the risk based accreditation strategy;
iii. the triage approach to accredited official statistics, welcoming the systematic, risk based view of the accreditation backlog;
iv. OSR's policy on responsible AI, which the Committee endorsed ahead of publication; and
v. the annual self-review of effectiveness.

10.3. The Committee had introduced a producer slot ahead of the formal meeting. Sean Whellams HMRC Head of Profession for Statistics updated the Committee on the completed internal review of HMRC statistics.

10.4. The Committee had a separate session with OSR colleagues, which highlighted themes around succession planning and capacity for unplanned work. Again, the Board noted how useful this was.

11. Update from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair

11.1. Dr Jacob Abboud reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which had last met on 17 September.

11.2. The Committee had considered:

i. an update on the strategic risk profile, focusing on risks outside of appetite, particularly the risk to strategic delivery;
ii. the financial position including management of the forecast year end surplus position and a proposed budget transfer to address cost pressures over the spending review period;
iii. delivery of the Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 and the approach to the external quality assessment of the audit function; and
iv. an update from the non-executive member of the Population Statistics System Committee on the risk framework underpinning the Census Strategic Risk.

11.3 The Committee had also considered its annual self-review of effectiveness.

12. Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Report: The Work of the UK Statistics Authority [SA(26)57]

12.1. Joe Moore introduced a paper which set out the approach to preparing an Authority response to PACAC's report on the work of the Authority. A full written response is expected by the Committee by 11 November.

12.2 The Board discussed the report and provided feedback on the recommendations. The response could include details of the changing culture within ONS referencing the People Plan and the recently launched SHIFT framework to continue building a stronger culture for ONS. It was agreed that the draft response would be cross checked with Penny Young's speech at the inaugural reception on 2 July.

13. Survey and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan [SA(26)58]

13.1. Megan Cooper introduced a paper which provided a high-level update on progress in strengthening economic statistics through the delivery of the Surveys and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan. The next quarterly update was scheduled for publication on 14 October, and would be circulated in advance for comment.

13.2. The Board heard that OSR had welcomed the clearer approach to managing the SES portfolio in its response to the July publication and had confirmed that it would move from quarterly to annual assessments. The October update would set out progress and challenges transparently and include a reference to ONS activity on subnational statistics, informed by discussions at ExCo. It would also provide updated data for some existing Key Performance Indicators. Work to develop survey sample size targets was continuing, but these would not be ready in time for the October publication.

13.3. The Board noted the update.

14. Transformed Labour Force Survey Update [SA(26)59]

14.1. Matt Hughes introduced a paper which provided a high-level update on the TLFS, following an extensive period of engagement including the readiness assessment considered by the Board in July.

14.2. The Board heard that the programme was focusing on key priorities to deliver a transition in 2027, ahead of the progress check in January 2027. This would assess whether sufficient progress had been made to support the next stage of the transition. The risks remained the same relating to data quality, the integration of Northern Ireland data and methods and processing delivery.

14.3. The Board discussed the progress made. It was agreed that a separate session would be scheduled for non-executive directors of the Board on the campaign to increase participation among hard to reach groups.

15. Digital Services – First Impressions

15.1. Luke Ashton provided his early thoughts of the digital and data landscape following his appointment as ONS Director General for Digital, Data and Technology.

15.2. The Board heard that ONS Digital provided the organisation's core technology capability. Its infrastructure comprised a complex mix of modern and legacy technology. Although ONS had built strong capability using modern technology it needed to improve phasing out of legacy systems built up over a number of years. Senior Civil Service colleagues were open, transparent and engaged in reviewing the infrastructure including the potential use of Artificial Intelligence. There was a need to work horizontally across the organisation with ONS Digital and business areas working collaboratively across organisational boundaries. While frameworks were in place for areas including data governance, digital delivery and business continuity, a stronger enterprise wide understanding was needed. Improving capability in major project delivery and risk management, would also be a key focus.

15.3. The Digital and Data Plan was in development and scheduled for Board discussion in November. The plan would set out ONS's target state architecture and technology platforms, the secure transition from legacy systems and the appropriate use of AI. It would also set out the capabilities required for delivery.

15.4. Members highlighted the importance of cross organisational working and the need to address cultural barriers associated with legacy transformation. The Welsh Government's earlier presentation highlighted how tackling such barriers enabled teams to work together successfully. Members also highlighted the need to understand ONS's current organisational capability including cyber security given the risks in this area.

15.5. The Board welcomed hearing from Luke Ashton and looked forward to considering the Digital and Data Plan in November.

16. Any other business

16.1. The next meeting was scheduled on 29 October in the Titchfield office.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Thursday 24 September, 09:15-13:20
Welsh Government, Cathays Park
Hybrid Meeting

Chair: Penny Young
Apologies: Ed Humpherson, Professor Mairi Spowage
Attendees: Luke Ashton, Megan Cooper (for item 10), Matt Hughes (for item 11), Rob Kent-Smith, Alex Lambert (for item 11), Liz McKeown (for item 11), Joe Moore (for item 9, 14)), Jennet Woolford (for item 11)
NED Session: 08.45-09.15 and 13.00-13.30

1 09.15-09.20 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 30.07.2026
2 09.20-10.05 45 mins	Presentation from Welsh Government	Stephanie Howarth Martin Parry Ryan Pike
3 10.05-10.15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(26)53 Penny Young
4 10.15-10.30 15 mins	Report from the Permanent Secretary	SA(26)54 Darren Tierney
5 10.30-10.40 10 mins	Report from the National Statistician's Office	SA(26)55 Jane Naylor
6 10.40-10.50 10 mins	Report from the Office for Statistics Regulation	SA(26)56 Rob Kent-Smith
7 10.50-10.55 5 mins	Communications Update	Oral update Peter Barron Sarah Moore
8 10.55-11.05 10 mins	Update from Committee Chair • Regulation Committee • Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	Oral update Prof. Dame Carol Propper Dr. Jacob Abboud
9 11.05-11.50 45 mins	Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Report: The work of the UK Statistics Authority	SA(26)57 Joe Moore
11.50-12.00 10 mins	Lunch	
10 12.00-12.10 10 mins	Economic Statistics Improvement Plan update	SA(26)58 Megan Cooper
11 12.10-12.20 10mins	Transformed Labour Force Survey update	SA(26)59 Alex Lambert Matt Hughes Liz McKeown

		Jennet Woolford
12 12.20-12.40 20 mins	Digital Services – first impressions	Oral Update Luke Ashton
13 12.40-12.50 10 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: Thursday 29 October, Titchfield Boardroom

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)53

Chair's Report, September 2026

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of the Interim Chair's activity in September. 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 September HM The King appointed André Loranger as National Statistician on the advice of the Prime Minister. This is a significant appointment for the UK Statistics Authority, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the wider statistical system. André brings substantial leadership experience and a strong understanding of official statistics, and his appointment will support renewed momentum in delivering high-quality, trusted statistics in the public interest.

3. On 11 September, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) published its report into the work of the UK Statistics Authority. The report's publication marks an important moment for the Authority, following a long period of parliamentary scrutiny and sustained interest in the performance of the ONS. I published an initial response on the day of publication, recognising the importance of the Committee's findings and setting out the Authority's commitment to consider the recommendations carefully ahead of a full response later in the year.

4. The Board has continued to pay close attention to the Labour Force Survey and the planned transition to the Transformed Labour Force Survey since the last Board meeting through dedicated Non-Executive Director sessions; recognising the progress made while emphasising the need for a data-led approach.

5. Work has continued on the development of the Government Statistical Service harmonised standard for collecting data on sex. We are now in the final stages, and work is preparing for the standard's publication and associated user engagement activity.

Correspondence

6. On 5 August I wrote to James Cartlidge MP about the presentation of defence spending figures in public statements. The concern was that references to an increase in £270 billion of spending in fact referred to total planned spending. Following engagement with the Wales Office and the Ministry of Defence, the wording was corrected and further steps were taken to improve assurance around future communications.

Looking Ahead

7. On 29 September I will join Darren Tierney for an all-staff engagement session to discuss the findings of the PACAC report and preparations for a response.

8. On 8 October I will travel to Edinburgh to attend the Inter-Administration Committee.

9. On 20 October I will attend the Government Statistical Service Conference in Bristol.

Penny Young, Interim Chair, 17 September 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)54

Permanent Secretary Report, September 2026

Purpose

1. This provides the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) with an overview of activity since the last Board meeting on 30 July 2026.

We are maintaining financial control, balancing our highest priorities with new areas of government focus

2. We are planning to generate a surplus in 2026/27. The feasibility of this plan is supported by the predicted under-expenditure of £3 million reported at the end of August (Period 5), the modest monthly increase in Full-Time Equivalents experienced in the year-to-date and the significant yet uncommitted forecasts for non-salaries expenditure. The planned surplus scenario was discussed by the Executive Committee (ExCo) as part of the Quarter 1 review in July, where the balance between using it for further in-year investment and the unique opportunity to hold the surplus for use in 2027/28 was considered.

3. While modest further investment decisions were made at Quarter 1 – calling off activity held within the delivery 'waiting room' – the balance tipped in favour of maintaining the surplus for use next year. This preference was influenced by the scale of activity already underway within the organisation and crucially the affordability challenges that we face in future periods. To avoid a 'boom/bust' delivery landscape we will use the levers available to us to smooth the financial profile to allow us to protect our core priorities.

4. To that end – and given we have an obligation to return to HM Treasury in November to present a long-term affordability plan – ExCo commissioned a task and finish group to further develop this plan and propose recommendations to be ratified at the Quarter 2 review in advance of submission to HM Treasury. We will take the opportunity presented by the HM Treasury submission to surface potential future budgetary pressure that we envisage driven by our additional work to support new government priorities.

5. Preparations are underway for the next round of quarterly Permanent Secretary stocktake meetings with group leads, to be held in mid-October. These will be used as 'holding to account' sessions focused on strategic delivery, financial performance and key people priorities.

6. We are also preparing for the Quarter 2 prioritisation process, which will conclude in early November. The Performance and Change Committee continues to mature, with increasingly productive discussions around systemic delivery challenges and a clear focus on what action is needed in response to the performance and risk picture. ExCo will need to navigate a set of crucial prioritisation discussions in the lead up to, and during, the Quarter 2 review, based on the latest evidence of performance in our highest priority areas, the latest resourcing position and emerging pressure (including the Prime Minister's focus on devolution).

7. We will be contributing to the Board's response to the inquiry report of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee into the work of the UK Statistics Authority.

As we deliver the People Plan, we are launching new programmes to strengthen culture, leadership and performance management

8. As part of the People Plan commitment to strengthen leadership capability, ONS has launched a new in-person leadership seminar series for all Grade 6 and Grade 7 colleagues (around 1,200 staff). The programme aims to improve consistency in how leaders support colleagues and deliver priorities.

9. Following feedback from colleagues and recommendations from the Devereux Review, People Committee approved a performance management improvement plan in August. Key changes include enhanced mid-year conversations, a light-touch 360 feedback process, and mandatory end-of-year discussions with a simplified performance outcome framework.
10. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) will launch SHIFT (Share Success, Hear and be heard, Impact, Focus, Together) its new organisation-wide culture framework, on 28 September. Developed through extensive colleague engagement and aligned to the People Plan, SHIFT sets out the behaviours and ways of working needed to support delivery of the organisation's strategic ambitions. A new Culture Steering Group, co-chaired by Henry Watson and Sarah Moore, has been established to oversee implementation and ensure culture activity remains coordinated, evidence-led and focused on measurable improvement.
11. Ministerial approval for the UK Statistics Authority's 2026/27 delegated pay remit has been received. Discussions with Departmental Trade Unions on implementation will begin shortly, with a staff update to follow.

Some recent statistical outputs were affected by issues, but we are proactivity reviewing and improving our operational processes

12. On 17 September the ONS published a methods article outlining a consultation on a set of improvements to the methods used to deliver productivity statistics. These methods utilise a wider range of data sources and ensure better conceptual alignment with international standards. The result is a material improvement in measures of output per hour. The result is the often discussed ‘UK productivity puzzle’ still exists, but in a more muted form, with the improved labour data closing around half the gap with the long-term trend shown in the old methodology. The data published in the article covers the period from 1997 to 2024. We will publish data to 2026 later this year once this year’s annual Gross Domestic Profit (GDP) dataset is published, at which point the results of the new method (subject to any improvements suggested through the consultation) will be incorporated into headline productivity data. This will complete a key action in the Economic Statistics Recovery Plan.
13. Though all September labour market statistics outputs were delivered to schedule, the production round was affected by two significant operational issues: a delay in claimant count data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and an issue affecting ONS production systems (Ingres). Both were resolved without impact on publication timetables, reflecting substantial efforts across affected teams. As both represented near misses, we will undertake reviews, including with DWP where relevant, to identify lessons and strengthen future resilience. These reviews will complement our monthly economic statistics retrospective, which brings together teams from across the end-to-end process to identify emerging risks, share lessons from the latest round and strengthen the resilience of future deliveries.
14. We have continued to strengthen operational performance and resilience through interviewer recruitment. The size of the face-to-face field community has now reached its target minimum level of 875 heads at the beginning of September with work continuing to reach 915 throughout the autumn.
15. In early September we held the first Outputs Strategic Forum, the formal governance forum to oversee ONS outputs. The group covered papers on our progress towards meeting a 10 per cent reduction in ONS outputs and agreed an annual process for updating the outputs Tiering Framework to inform business planning.
16. Work is progressing across Surveys and Economic Statistics (SES) to prioritise critical vacancies impacting production and external change commitments. This will inform decisions required at the SES Portfolio Board to protect delivery confidence of priorities and mitigate future affordability challenges.

17. We completed the Transformed Labour Force Survey readiness assessment in August, which provided a clear, evidence-led stocktake of progress. The key conclusion was that transition should remain data-led, with current focus on maintaining a credible path to a safe transition in 2027 while recent design and methods improvements continue to feed through.
18. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings sample has been moved fully to digital by default collection, reducing respondent burden and making it easier for businesses to complete. This has resulted in data being received earlier than in previous years and the highest ever response rate achieved for the survey.
19. Ed Humpherson wrote to Mary Gregory on Thursday 10 September regarding the accredited official statistics status of mid-year population estimates for England and Wales. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has reviewed ONS's actions and concluded that the statistics should continue to be labelled as accredited official statistics.
20. As part of relationship-building ahead of upcoming census-related activity, including the Census 2027 test, Mary Gregory has been meeting with international counterparts in the United States, Canada and the Netherlands, and is due to meet with colleagues in Estonia and Australia.
21. Across a very busy August, external coverage of our statistics was largely neutral or positive, supported by statistician broadcast appearances on inflation and crime and with other widely covered releases, including on Young People not in Education, Employment or Training and climate-related mortality.

Darren Tierney, Permanent Secretary, 17 September 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)55

National Statistician's Report, September 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 30 July 2026. The National Statistician's Report will continue over the coming months whilst the National Statistician post remains vacant.

National Statistician's Committee and Panels

2. The next meeting of the **Methodological Assurance Review Pane**l (MARP), scheduled for 29 September, will discuss papers on Disability Harmonisation and Nowcasting Deaths in England and Wales.

3. At the request of Penny Young (interim Chair of the Board), an ad hoc meeting of the **National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee** (NSIDAC) was convened on 2 September 2026 to consider the draft GSS harmonised standard for data collection on sex. The views of NSIDAC members were summarised in a letter sent from the Chair of the Committee, Professor Evelyn Collins, to Penny Young on 4 September. This letter was considered by the Ad Hoc Panel for Assurance of GSS Guidance in the Absence of a National Statistician as part of discussions on the draft standard and guidance. The next quarterly meeting of the Committee will be on 30 September.

4. The **National Statistician's Data Ethics Committee** (NSDEC) has received and considered two correspondence reviews over the last month. The first was the GSS Harmonised Sex Standard Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), which was well received and generated significant feedback and discussion from Committee members. The second was the GSS Harmonisation Disability and Impairment review.

5. Preparations are also underway for the upcoming NSDEC meeting on 30 September 2026, taking place in person in London, where the main item is 'Making sense of Census'. Discussions are also ongoing between the Census SMS Reminders team and the Committee regarding their work and proposed approach.

NSO Activity and Engagement

6. The NSO has spent a considerable amount of time over August and September 2026 working across the GSS on a **subnational data review**. Returns were received from 30 departments (including the Devolved Governments) highlighting data that are currently available at International Territory Level 2 and Mayoral Strategic Authority geographies. Returns also included the demand, barriers and opportunities associated with these data. This information was included in ExCo discussions in relation to the ONS and wider GSS response and support for Rewiring the State that will ultimately feed into the White Paper (led by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government).

7. On 17 September 2026, the **Young Voices** discovery research report was published by the Centre for Equalities and Inclusion. This research provides insights into young people's attitudes and behaviours towards government research and data collection and was conducted in response to declining engagement and response rates among young people. The report investigates the barriers and potential support to young people's participation in government research. The Centre will also release a publication of research into the **lived experiences of Roma people** in England and Wales on 22 September. This research was conducted in response to an All-Party Parliamentary Group request for increased understanding of the Roma community. This is the latest in a series of qualitative research projects to provide government with insights into population groups who are less visible and therefore underrepresented in data.

8. The **International Development Team** (IDT), who celebrated 10 years of the ONS conducting international development work in September 2026, have focussed efforts on capacity strengthening and programme legacy over the last couple of months. A key success was supporting the East African Statistical Training Centre (EASTC) to deliver leadership training to Southern African National Statistics Offices (NSOs) at the end of August. This was part of the legacy of an ONS-developed African NSO leadership programme, which IDT handed over to EASTC in April 2026 after seven years of successful delivery.
9. IDT have also engaged with the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) on a cross-government review on how HM Government is using Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding to support refugees hosted in developing countries. The role of the ONS in this cross-government review has been focussed on including refugees and displaced people in official statistics.
10. Over the past few weeks, ONS has hosted delegations from South Korea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, reinforcing the UK's **international influence** in official statistics while creating opportunities for mutual learning and collaboration. The South Korean visit focused on economic statistics, business profiling, data linkage and Artificial Intelligence (AI), building on a long-standing partnership that has already informed improvements to Korean consumer price statistics. The Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan visits centred on statistical quality and the modernisation of price statistics, supporting UK efforts to strengthen relationships in a priority Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office region while sharing UK best practice on trust and quality in statistics. The Turkmenistan delegation discussed the digital economy and implementation of System of National Accounts 2025, supporting the country's ongoing statistical modernisation programme and wider economic reforms. Collectively, these engagements strengthen bilateral relationships, promote UK statistical expertise internationally, and provide valuable insight into emerging international approaches and priorities.
11. The **National Statistician's Analysis Unit** continues to provide support for the Labour Force Survey (LFS)/Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) programme, including research on the feasibility of supplementing missing TLFS industry codes (Standard Industrial Classification) using admin data, data pipeline development, and experimental development of LFS/TLFS weighting methods using Pay As You Earn data. We are also supporting Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency with Northern Ireland data preparation. A research paper on 'Investigating non-response to the Labour Force Survey using administrative data' will be published on 28 September 2026.
12. Working with Population Statistics colleagues, the Analysis Unit have progressed development of a method to improve automation of occupation coding for births and deaths, with promising results. We continued exploration of options to automate coding of causes of death from the text of inquest findings. We completed a feasibility study of using machine learning models based on hospital episodes (HES) to estimate the self-reported health measures currently derived from surveys. We developed a new nowcasting method to produce regular mortality statistics by date of occurrence, which, as outlined above, will be presented to MARP on 30 September 2026.
13. The Analysis Unit has continued to demonstrate the value of linked administrative data in addressing important policy questions. Working with DWP, the Analysis Unit published two analyses on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), examining geographical inequalities in NEET status across England and the characteristics of NEET young people who were not receiving benefits. Together, these publications provided new evidence on NEET and showcased the potential of Census 2021 linked data to inform understanding of labour market disadvantage.
14. The Analysis Unit also published an analysis of the impact of waiting time for musculoskeletal elective treatment waiting times on labour market outcomes. Commissioned by NHS England, this work strengthened the evidence base on the economic costs of prolonged waiting time for elective treatments.

Broader UK Statistical System

15. On 8 September 2026, it was announced that **André Loranger** had been appointed as the UK's National Statistician. Preparations for his arrival are underway across the NSO, ONS and wider GSS, with GSS preparations being a key topic of conversation at the GSS Heads of Profession (HoPs) Quarterly meeting on 16 September 2026. The meeting took place in London with brilliant in-person attendance by GSS HoPs. Other topics of conversation included progress against the GSS Vision and the GSS Risk Register.
16. Following a competitive Expressions of Interest (EOI) process in July 2026, **Delphine Robineau**, Head of Profession (HoP) at National Records of Scotland (NRS), has been appointed as a Deputy Head of the GSS for a two-year term. Delphine succeeds Jane Naylor and joins Jason Bradbury and Steve Ellerd-Elliott in supporting professional leadership across the GSS and helping strengthen collaboration across the UK and with the Devolved Governments.
17. The **GSS Strategic Risk Register** has been strengthened following discussion with GSS HoPs and is ready to be used as part of the assurance arrangements supporting the UK Statistics Authority's strategic risk on Trust and Independence. The updated register provides a clearer assessment of current and tolerable risk levels, mitigation effectiveness, risk trends and escalation requirements. A particular focus has been on skills, capability and capacity pressures across the statistical system, which remain the most significant cross-system risks. The recent appointment of a new National Statistician has reduced uncertainty relating to system leadership and coherence, contributing to an improving position for leadership-related risks. The GSS is also maintaining engagement with the implications of devolution and Machinery of Government changes, recognising the need to preserve leadership, capability and coherence across an evolving statistical system.
18. Work has continued on delivery of the joint GSS and Royal Statistical Society **Future Statistician** programme. Since July, a dedicated Task and Finish Group has been established to translate the vision into practical activity across the GSS, with work focused on communications and engagement, learning and development, future capability requirements and embedding the vision within existing professional networks and governance structures. Recent activity has included engagement with Heads of Profession, development of communication and engagement plans, preparations for the GSS Conference, mapping of existing GSS networks, and work to identify and share examples of good practice across departments. Progress is also being made on a baseline capability survey, review of the current learning landscape, improvements to learning signposting and development support, and alignment of the GSS competency framework with Future Statistician principles and capabilities. This work will inform a progress report in early 2027.
19. In parallel, work is progressing on the new **GSS Leadership Development Programme**. Detailed proposals have been developed for a Grade 6/7 pilot, while interviews with senior members of the Government Statistician Group (GSG) are helping inform the design of a future Senior Civil Service (SCS) pilot. This work is intended to strengthen leadership capability, support succession planning and help prepare future leaders of the profession.
20. Following support from Deputy Heads of the GSS and GSS HoPs, the Department for Education will host a pilot of a new **cross-government statistical dissemination platform**. The pilot forms part of the ambition set out in the GSS Vision for a shared dissemination platform for official statistics and will provide an opportunity to test approaches that could improve accessibility, coherence, efficiency and the user experience across government. Bringing together investment and participation from multiple departments, the pilot will help inform future decisions on wider adoption across the GSS and build the evidence base for future investment in shared statistical infrastructure.

21. The **Department for Education** published its statistical work programme and quality management of official statistics policy, strengthening transparency around statistical priorities, quality assurance arrangements and the management of official statistics across the department. This provides a positive example of how departments are continuing to strengthen statistical governance and public confidence in official statistics.
22. The **Analysis in Government Awards** were launched on the 9 September 2026. The Analysis Function (AF) Central team are aiming for a record number of nominations from across the Analytical professions, and further support has been provided for analysts to create their nominations through the sharing AI prompts to write new nominations or to repurpose existing nominations from other awards.
23. Development is well underway for the **AF Data Sharing Hub** and Phase 2 of the AI hub, which will share further practical resources with the AF community, including high-level guidance on the appropriate use of AI within the AF. These hubs will be discussed with the relevant working groups, prior to release in October.

Jane Naylor, Interim Director, National Statistician's Office, 17 September 2026

STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)56

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

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC)

2. The publication of the PACAC report provides a useful moment for reflection. Many of the Committee's observations on OSR resonate with evidence we shared during the inquiry and with discussions we have been having within OSR about how we operate as an effective regulator. We have sought to respond to these challenges through our new strategy, particularly the emphasis on being a credible and rigorous regulator: clear about our expectations, transparent in our judgements, and proactive where intervention is needed. We will also monitor and report on this through our Key Performance Indicator's (KPI). Given PACAC's recommendation, we should also consider the approach to communicating areas of concern to the board, and to develop a more regular and constructive dialogue with PACAC, while remaining mindful of the distinct roles of Parliament, the Authority and OSR.

Credible and Rigorous Regulator

3. Highlights from our regulatory compliance work include:

   i. Compliance review of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) mid-year population estimates in England and Wales. I wrote to ONS confirming the continued accreditation of the statistics following significant improvements in the way ONS communicates quality information and uncertainty associated with the estimates. ONS is planning to engage with its users to test how these improvements meet user needs in the autumn, with a further public update expected by the end of 2026 on our outstanding recommendations;
   ii. Ed Humpherson to Liz McKeown and Jennet Woolford: Accreditation status of Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS) statistics. Having considered ONS's letter to us on its proposed approach to statistics derived from the LFS and APS, the recovery of the LFS and the development of the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), we concluded that it would be appropriate to change the affected LFS and APS-based official statistics from 'suspended' accreditation to 'cancelled' accreditation. This decision did not reflect concerns regarding the trustworthiness of the organisations producing the statistics or the quality of their statistical outputs. Rather, it recognised that the accreditation of these statistics has been suspended for some time and that ONS is not currently seeking reaccreditation while priority is given to preparing for future assessment of TLFS-based outputs. This approach is in line with OSR's guidance on the Suspension and cancellation of accreditation; and
   iii. I wrote to each census office and Welsh Government setting out OSR's planned approach to regulating 2031 census outputs across the UK. In response, census offices have now formally requested assessments of their 2031 censuses.

4. Accredited Official Statistics (AOS) tool: as previously discussed with the board, we have implemented a triage process to review all accredited official statistics, including those that have not been assessed for some time. In total we triaged 689 statistics over an eight-week period. The current indicative breakdown of triage outcomes, which are still to go through final quality assurance, are as follows:

   i. no further action - 19 per cent;
   ii. informal conversation with producer – 38 per cent;

iii. Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV) checklist - 20 per cent; and
iv. compliance review - six per cent.

5. Other (many of these are likely to move to informal conversation) - five per cent live action (already subject to current regulatory activity or have been reviewed since April 2025) - 12 per cent.
6. We will keep the Regulation Committee updated on the progress of this programme of review.

System Catalyst

7. At the 2026 Royal Statistical Society Conference, I chaired a session on "Building public confidence in official statistics: a proactive and reactive approach". The panel included the Chief Executive of Connected by Data, and a representative from the Office of the Chief Statistician in Scotland. I also chaired the Conference awards session, which saw awards for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for their work in the Family Resources Survey, and for Cardiff University for their voluntary adoption of the Code for their violence measurement statistics.

Public Use of Statistics

8. Casework: We opened a further 60 cases since our last paper to the Committee, which provided data up to 29 May, taking us to 103 cases in 2026/27 so far (as of 15 September 2026).
9. The Chair wrote to James Cartlidge MP, concerning statement regarding defence spending, while on 22 July OSR. I have also written privately to Zia Yusuf and Chris Philp MP regarding comments about the number of dependent visas issued to families of migrants, and to Katie Lam MP concerning claims about the Crime Survey for England and Wales.
10. NHS England's Federated Data Platform (FDP) casework: we have had several cases linked to the initial case, including one from the Health Foundation, which resulted in a public letter from Ed Humpherson to the Chief Executive of the Health Foundation. The analysis shared in this latter case was also the subject of an FOI to OSR, to which we responded in August. The FDP continues to be a topic of public interest, and OSR is still receiving queries about the presentation of statistics in relation to it. We maintain our position that, although not official statistics, analysis relating to the FDP produced by NHS England should be accessible to all, transparent and accompanied by appropriate supporting information.
11. We have made informal interventions on statements about the number of dependent visas issued to families of migrants, and criticisms of the Crime Survey for England and Wales and use of Police Recorded Crime data.
12. Over the summer, we published blogs on several high-profile areas of public debate, including the appropriate use of crime statistics, devolution and local economic growth and travel and tourism statistics. These blogs provided independent OSR perspectives on statistics in areas of strong public interest, including how they are used in public debate.

On My Mind

13. I have been discussing the environment in which we deliver casework with my senior team, Peter Barron, the Chair, and the Regulation Committee. We have clarified our policies and approaches in the light of these discussions.
14. I have welcomed the appointment of André Loranger as National Statistician and am keen to establish a constructive and transparent relationship focused on the long-term health of the statistical system. I see an opportunity for OSR and the National Statistician to work together, while respecting our distinct roles, to promote public confidence in statistics and support improvement across the system.

Ed Humpherson, Director General of Regulation, OSR, 16 September 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)57

PACAC Report: Next Steps

Purpose

1. Following the publication of Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee's (PACAC) report into the work of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority), this paper sets out next steps and the approach to preparing an Authority response to the report.

Timing

2. A written response is expected by the Committee by Wednesday 11 November.

Recommendations

3. Members of the Board are invited to:

   i. **agree** to preparing a single Authority response from the Authority Chair, based on advice from the proposed senior action owners;
   ii. **agree** to consulting with the Director of the National Statistician's Office (NSO) and incoming National Statistician on the response (Permanent Secretary and Director General Regulation will already be involved); and
   iii. **note** to the Policy and Parliamentary Unit (PPU) any wider points that should be addressed in the draft response, besides the ten recommendations and five additional conclusions.

Background

4. In April last year PACAC launched an Inquiry into the work of the UK Statistics Authority, including the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). It published its findings on 11 September.

5. In response, the Chair of the Board issued an initial public statement and sent an email to all colleagues across the Authority. There was limited media coverage of the publication.

6. The Board is now required to publish a full response to set out where further actions are required and how it intends to monitor progress and account to Parliament on them. Where recommendations are made jointly to the Authority and Cabinet Office, the PPU will liaise with them on the development of our response. Cabinet Office will respond to recommendations directed wholly to the government.

Discussion

7. The report makes ten recommendations, alongside proposed action owners responsible for providing the response and delivering associated actions. The PPU will commission action owners and prepare a draft Authority response for consideration.

8. It is usual practice for the Authority's response to take the form of a letter from the Authority Chair to the Chair of the Committee.

9. Since the Recommendations largely cover issues subject to significant prior discussion and ongoing work, a draft response could be brought to the Authority Board in October for approval.

10. As a response is due around the same time that the new National Statistician is likely to take up his post, it is proposed that the PPU work closely with the Director of the NSO as the response is prepared and that the Chair discuss the proposed response with the National Statistician ahead of the October Board.

11. In addition to the ten recommendations, the Authority's response may cover other points made in the report. The Board are invited to highlight any other aspects of the report they would like the response to address.

Action Owner Reflections

12. Initial advice from action owners generally indicates that the recommendations from PACAC are closely aligned with existing programmes of recovery and transformation across the Authority, including on Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) delivery, prioritisation and portfolio management, and implementation of OSR's new regulatory strategy. This should allow for a positive response within the proposed timetable, demonstrating progress against all areas.

13. Where recommendations involve further reporting to PACAC, the Board will need to consider the frequency and duration of any commitments. Quarterly updates could be provided readily where they align with existing reporting arrangements, including for TLFS and the Surveys and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan. These could also be adapted to the interests of the Committee and used to provide a fuller picture of progress on other topics. In other areas, such as data sharing (Recommendation 2), more frequent updates are likely to be less meaningful where progress is being delivered through longer-term work across ONS, OSR, and cross-Government Statistical Service initiatives from the UK Statistics Assembly.

14. The Authority's response to findings relating to Board governance, oversight and accountability will depend in part on the embedding of new executive leadership arrangements with the arrival of the National Statistician and future arrival of the Permanent Chair, as well as the published framework document between the Authority and Cabinet Office. The Authority may also choose to comment on recommendations directed principally to the Cabinet Office, for example on the recruitment and succession planning of the Chair and non-executives.

Conclusion

15. This paper proposes an approach to preparing the Authority response to the PACAC report into the work of the Authority ready for the October meeting of the Board.

Joe Moore, Policy and Parliamentary Unit, 21 September 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)58

Economic Statistics and Survey Improvement Plan Update, October 2026

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with a high-level update on progress in strengthening economic statistics and surveys through the developing Surveys and Economic Statistics (SES) improvement plan. It sets out the main areas the report will focus on.

Recommendations

2. Members of Authority the Board are invited to:

   i. note the proposed approach for the October 2026 SES Improvement Plan public update, including the intention to maintain continuity with the July publication while providing a clear forward look; and
   ii. note the main risks and dependencies that continue to shape delivery confidence across the plan.

Background

3. The Economic Statistics Plan and Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan were published in June 2025 in response to the Devereux Review. Since then, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published quarterly progress updates and continued to refine how this work is prioritised, governed and communicated. The July 2026 update moved further towards presenting the work as a single SES portfolio, with greater emphasis on coherence, transparency and delivery confidence.

4. The October update is intended to build on that approach. It will retain a structure similar to the July publication, supporting continuity for users and reinforcing the message that the portfolio is moving onto a firmer and more disciplined footing. It will provide a clear account of progress since July, alongside a proportionate forward look across the same core themes.

Discussion

5. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) response to our July SES Improvement plan welcomed the clearer and more disciplined approach to managing the SES portfolio. In light of the progress made by ONS, they will move from a quarterly to an annual assessment, whilst maintaining the requirement on ONS to continue reporting quarterly.

6. Therefore, the October update will continue to position the SES Improvement Plan as a single, prioritised portfolio of work across surveys and economic statistics. The central message will be that ONS is making progress in important areas, while continuing to take a realistic and disciplined approach to sequencing, capacity and delivery confidence.

7. As with previous updates, the publication will need to balance transparency with realism about delivery confidence. The main challenges remain the scale and complexity of the portfolio, dependence on constrained enabling capacity, ageing systems and specialist workforce pressures.

8. The content of the publication is currently being drafted. This will be shared with UK Statistics Authority board on 2 October. We are also progressing the costing work described in the July update, building a more disaggregated view of the costs associated with delivering surveys and economic statistics, utilising the current activity-based costing work underway, including indicative estimates for our most critical outputs and hope to include this in our October update. A decision will be required on the granularity of what is published.

9. As demand from central government for subnational statistics continues to increase, we intend to include reference to relevant improvement activity taking place across the SES portfolio. The scope and positioning of this content will be informed by decisions to be taken by the Executive Committee (ExCo) on 22 September.
10. Our Key Performance Indicators (KPI) were well received in the June publication, where we noted that these would be developed over time. For the October publication we expect to provide updated data for seven of the existing KPIs. The OSR have requested that we publish the targets we are using for our survey sample sizes. We have work in train here to prepare these targets for publication but, given the timings, this will need to wait until the next update on the improvement plan.
11. The publication will be supported by communications and engagement activity intended to explain the main messages clearly to users and stakeholders, while reinforcing the organisation's commitment to transparency about both progress and ongoing challenges. Building on the success last time, this will include a blog and a press briefing with a full published transcript of the exchanges.
12. Early opportunities for engagement include the Surveys and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan External Steering Group on 30 September.

Conclusion

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

Rob Doody, Surveys and Economic Statistics, ONS, 16 September 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(26)59

Transformed Labour Force Survey – September 2026

Purpose

1. Following extensive recent engagement with the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) on the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), this is only a brief update, with a fuller report to follow in November.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to:

    i. note the Programme's progress since the July 2026 readiness assessment and the immediate priorities and key activities ahead of the January 2027 progress check.

Discussion

3. Following the successful July 2026 readiness assessment, the programme is now focused on delivering the activities most critical to a safe transition in 2027 (see below) Within the new single page transition roadmap our collective focus of this period is 'reducing uncertainty'. The first Programme Board since the readiness assessment will occur at the end of September, at which point the delivery confidence assessment will be updated and full programme report completed.

4. The Board will be aware of the ongoing risks relating to data quality, integration of Northern Ireland data and methods and processing delivery. These risks continue to be closely managed and will be considered at the September TLFS Programme Board, with a substantive update on Northern Ireland data integration to be provided jointly with Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to the Board in November.

5. Noting recent programme activity since the last board report:

    i. significant planning and assurance activity is underway including, Phase 2 planning to define the programme of work required after transition, and a refresh of the TLFS Outline Business Case;
    ii. in August, we confirmed the outcomes of the July readiness assessment and set out the Programme's next steps to an external audience via a communications package which included an article, blog, webinar and media briefings. The update received largely factual and balanced media coverage. There was strong interest in the early findings from the TLFS and Labour Force Survey (LFS) crossover survey, reinforcing the need to ensure the publication of TLFS research outputs is carefully managed and agreed in collaboration with stakeholders;
    iii. we also wrote to the Office for Statistics Regulation to confirm that we will not be seeking reaccreditation of outputs derived from the LFS and Annual Population Survey (APS) and that instead, our priority is for outputs based on the TLFS to become accredited official statistics at the earliest opportunity;
    iv. earlier this month, the Board's Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) received a briefing on the latest TLFS data. Their continued interest, scrutiny and support are valued by the programme, and further briefing sessions are planned. During the discussion, NEDs requested an update on initiatives to increase participation among hard-to-reach groups; and
    v. the recent Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) report makes considerable reference to both the LFS and TLFS, highlighting historical challenges, frequent changes in Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) leadership, and concerns that in the past the Office for National Statistics (ONS) had lost sight of the need for a slimmed-down survey. It is encouraging that the report also recognises the progress made through the programme reset over the past eighteen months and notes that the programme is now back on track. It is anticipated

that the requested quarterly updates to PACAC can be aligned with existing external communications.

6. For the remainder of this year, our focus is on:

   i. working closely with NISRA to increase the confidence of UK data set delivery and ensure alignment between TLFS and NISRA plans;
   ii. safely launching the next set of survey design enhancements in October 2026. This will include an expansion of supported completion and an update to knock-to-nudge (KTN) to improve how interventions are targeted;
   iii. managing survey performance and analysis of TLFS derived estimates. In November 2026 we will have two full quarters of data collected with the improved survey design (including data rotation and increased incentives) and will be able to assess its impact more fully;
   iv. increasing the maturity of our priority datasets by continuing methods development and alongside this deepening our understanding of TLFS estimates across a wider range of datasets (e.g. emerging views of longitudinal and household datasets);
   v. improving industry classification data quality – a larger-scale test of the Search-As-You-Type question for Standard Industrial Classification is running from July to September 2026. Analysis, which will assess any respondent drop-off or bias, and a decision on implementation will follow later in the year. Work is also progressing well to explore whether linking TLFS to Pay As You Earn / Inter-Departmental Business Register via the demographic index can provide an option for industry classification for employees;
   vi. progressing analysis on Household, Socioeconomic and Local (HSL) data and expanding user engagement – an exercise has recently launched to gather additional insights on how local government use the LFS and APS. This will strengthen understanding of user needs, help identify any potential issues as we move towards the TLFS, and support the programme's response to the Government's English devolution agenda and the increased priority of local-area statistics; and
   vii. continued engagement with users, recognising the importance of this for a safe transition, supported by a coordinated communications approach that builds confidence and illustrates progress.

7. We expect strong progress in these areas to reduce uncertainty in preparation for the critical progress check in January 2027, which will inform a detailed transition plan that we will publish in the first quarter of the year.

Conclusion

8. The programme is focused on reducing uncertainty over the coming months as we head towards the January 2027 progress check which will be a key point for evaluating whether sufficient progress has been made to support the next stage of transition. Continued Board oversight and engagement will be important in maintaining confidence and supporting clear communication with stakeholders over this period.

Dr Alex Lambert, Senior Responsible Owner, Transformed Labour Force Survey Programme, ONS, 16 September 2026