

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

**Minutes**  
**Thursday 31 January 2019**  
**Boardroom, London**

## **Present**

### **UK Statistics Authority**

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)  
Ms Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Iain Bell  
Professor Sir Ian Diamond  
Professor David Hand  
Mr Ed Humpherson  
Ms Sian Jones  
Dr David Levy  
Ms Nora Nanayakkara  
Mr John Pullinger  
Professor Sir Adrian Smith  
Professor Anne Trefethen

## **Also in attendance**

Mr Jonathan Athow  
Mr Nick Bateson  
Mr Owen Brace  
Mr Robert Bumpstead  
Ms Vanessa Holden  
Ms Frankie Kay (for item 6)  
Ms Heather Savory

## **Apologies**

Professor Jonathan Haskel

## **1. Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from Professor Jonathan Haskel.

## **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 18 December 2018, were agreed. In the period since the last meeting, Dr Levy and Ms Nanayakkara had visited the Newport site, and members of the Board thanked them for their helpful reflections.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair**

4.1 The Chair reported on his activity since the last meeting, noting:

- i. his correspondence with the Shadow Health Secretary, regarding statements made about NHS funding;
- ii. his letter to James Cleverly MP, in which the Authority had recommended that improvements be made to the use of education funding data on the SchoolsCuts website; and
- iii. his upcoming lecture at University College London on fake-news and statistics.

## **5. Report from Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

5.1 Ms Nanayakkara reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which had met on 23 January 2019.

5.2 Members of the Committee had considered a note on the responsibilities delegated by the Authority Board to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, before discussing issues including the financial position of the organisation, its new approach to risk, and procurement.

5.3 The Committee welcomed progress reported on the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme, and had sought further assurance on the organisation's performance management systems.

## **6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(19)01]**

6.1 Mr Pullinger provided an overview of activity and issues for January.

6.2 The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee had launched an inquiry on the governance of statistics. The Authority were preparing a written submission for the Committee, ahead of an oral evidence session on 19 March.

6.3 Mr Pullinger reported that in its recent releases on crime and migration, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) had worked hard to communicate complex and nuanced trends. The Board thanked the responsible teams for their work in developing both releases.

6.4 The statistical system continued to prepare for the UK's departure from the European Union. In advance of 29 March, a Statutory Instrument had been laid before Parliament, which would address deficiencies in the legal framework on statistics, in the event of a no-deal exit.

6.5 Mr Pullinger also reported that ONS faced some delays in accessing administrative data from other government Departments. He was working with colleagues across government to understand and resolve barriers, and would keep the Board informed.

## **7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(19)02]**

7.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last Board meeting, highlighting work on trade and migration statistics, recent public interventions, and ongoing work on the Office for Statistics Regulation's strategic priorities.

## **8. 2021 Census [SA(19)03]**

- 8.1 Mr Bell and Ms Kay updated the Board on the delivery of the 2021 Census for England and Wales.
- 8.2 Mr Bell reported that the scope of the 2019 Census dress rehearsal had been confirmed, and that ONS had that morning announced the four local authority areas in which the rehearsal would be conducted. These were: Ceredigion; Carlisle; Tower Hamlets; and, Hackney.
- 8.3 Ms Kay spoke in further detail about progress made since the Board had received its last update, highlighting:
- iv. the successful end-to-end testing of the core user journey for Census respondents;
  - v. the strengthening of the programme management office; and
  - vi. the successful conclusion of a recent reprioritisation exercise, which had been undertaken to ensure that resources were being best directed to support the programme's objectives.
- 8.4 Board members welcomed the progress being made across the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme.

## **9. Brexit Update**

- 9.1 Mr Bumpstead provided an update on the Authority's preparations for the UK's statistical exit from the UK.
- 9.2 On 24 January, a draft statutory instrument (SI) was laid before Parliament, which prepares the UK statistical system for a possible no-deal scenario. It revokes a range of EU laws relating to statistics, which currently oblige the UK to undertake specific statistical activity, and to transmit data to Europe.
- 9.3 Mr Bumpstead explained that the SI is currently before Committees in each House for 'sifting'; a process by which Committees are asked to determine whether any SIs put forward for the negative procedure contain material that would be more appropriate to the affirmative procedure (which requires a debate in each House).
- 9.4 The organisation was also taking stock of other preparations which would need to be put in place in the event of a no-deal exit, to minimise any disruption to the production of official statistics, and to ensure decision-makers had access to timely data on the impact of the UK's exit.

## **10. Retail Prices Index (RPI) Report update**

- 10.1 Members discussed the recent Lords Economic Affairs Committee Report on the RPI, which had raised concerns with the Authority's treatment of the index. Members noted again declared interests with regard to the RPI, and were advised that conversations regarding the RPI should be considered market sensitive.
- 10.2 The present position of the RPI and the UK's broader suite of price statistics were discussed. The Board asked the National Statistician for his formal advice on the issue.

## **11. Any other business**

There was no other business. The Authority Board would meet next on Tuesday 26 February 2019 at 09:15 in London.

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Agenda

31 January 2019, 09:15 to 14:00

Boardroom, London

**Chair:** Sir David Norgrove  
**Apologies:** Professor Jonathan Haskel

**Attendees:** Ms Kay

### 09:15 – 09:45: Non-Executive Session

1 09:45-09:50 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Declarations of interest</li></ul>	Meeting of 18 December 2018
2 09:50-10:10 20 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 10:10-10:20 10 mins	Reports from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audit and Risk Assurance Committee</li></ul>	Oral report Ms Nora Nanayakkara
4 10:20-10:40 20 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(19)01 Mr John Pullinger
5 10:40-11:00 20 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(19)02 Mr Ed Humpherson
6 11:00-12:00 60 mins	2021 Census	SA(19)03 Mr Iain Bell Ms Frankie Kay

### 12:00-12:30: Lunch

7 12:30-12:50 20 mins	Brexit update	Oral report Mr Rob Bumpstead
8 12:50-13:25 35 mins	RPI Report update	Oral update Mr Jonathan Athow
9 13:25-13:30 5 mins	Any other business	

**Next meeting: 26 February 2019, London, 09:15 to 14:00**

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Chief Executive's Report, January 2019*

### **Purpose**

1. This report provides the Board with an overview of activity and issues for January.

### **Summary**

2. This month, work has begun on our written response to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee inquiry into the Governance of Statistics. The terms of reference contain wide ranging questions and will require thoughtful responses. We anticipate providing oral evidence towards the end of the Committee's inquiry. We have also been carefully considering our response to the recently published Lords Economic Affairs Committee report on Measuring Inflation.
3. Access to administrative data from across government remains challenging. Colleagues and I have held constructive discussions with officials across Departments about the best way forward. In the meantime, we have published our data principles and policies. This places in the public domain a clear set of statements on how and why we collect, use and publish data. Alongside this, I responded to the Office for Statistics Regulation report on Data Linkage. I hope these steps will lead to some positive progress on access to data soon.

### **Review of recent activities**

4. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
  - i. Our crime statistics release has taken a different approach to recording repeat victimisation. Repeat victimisation is defined as the same thing, done under the same circumstances, probably by the same people, against the same victim. Previously we limited the number of repeat incidents included in survey estimates to five. From today, this cap has been removed and replaced with a higher limit defined at the 98<sup>th</sup> percentile.
  - ii. Jonathan Athow gave oral evidence to the International Trade Select Committee, where questions focussed on foreign direct investment (FDI).
  - iii. We are currently in negotiations with the trades union over a pay deal for staff. We hope these negotiations, and any balloting of members, can be completed soon. In further developments for our workforce, we have launched a targeted voluntary early severance scheme, applications for this will close at the end of January.
5. Progress with the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme this month includes:
  - i. The Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP, held meetings with MPs who had made representations for a separate Cornish national identity tick box, and a Sikh ethnicity tick box. ONS officials attended to answer any technical questions which arose.
  - ii. Actions to deliver the Census rehearsal continue apace, and an update was provided to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 23 January.

6. Other activities and risks being managed during this period include:
  - i. We have been reviewing plans to be sure that we are ready for any future election or referendum.
  - ii. The Minister for the Constitution has laid the draft statutory instrument on retained EU statistical law for sifting on 23 January.
  - iii. Lord Willetts visited the office in Titchfield to hear about how we support the research community.
  - iv. I visited the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government with our Best Practice and Impact team to share good practice across the GSS and hear about work going on in those departments.

**Future look**

7. In February, we will have the quarterly meeting of the inter administration and UK Census committees, and I will be meeting colleagues in the Department for Education to learn about the work of statisticians and analysts in that department.

**John Pullinger, 23 January 2019**

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Report from the Director General for Regulation*

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on regulation activity since the last Board meeting.

### **Recommendation**

2. Members of the Board are invited to note the activities and proposed actions.

### **Discussion**

3. Key activities since the last Board meeting include:

- i. RPI

Following the House of Lords report, we are looking at our regulatory position on RPI. In a strict regulatory sense, our view is simple: ONS has recognised flaws in RPI and has said it will not address them. We therefore see no grounds to designate RPI as a National Statistic. Should ONS change its position, we would of course be willing to reconsider. However, we have not entered into the broader debate on the overall strategy for prices (which emphasises CPIH and the household cost index while not updating RPI);

- ii. Trade, construction and migration

These are three big areas of focus for the next Regulation Committee. On trade, we will be considering again the case for re-designation as a National Statistic; and we will be doing the same for construction. On migration, we will explore what the National Statistics designation means in the context of a statistical release with acknowledged flaws, and where there are evolving plans for improvement using administrative data;

- iii. Strategy

We have now refined our strategy and defined three areas of focus for OSR in the period 2019-23:

- upholding the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics and data (essentially our current remit and role, but more explicitly recognising the importance of applying our principles beyond official statistics);
- ensuring public debate is not misled (our current casework role, but with a greater focus on public debate as opposed to responding to complaints about misuse); and
- better understanding of the public good in collaboration with others – a new focus, recognising the need to define and advocate the public value of good statistics and data (and the dangers of bad).

We will discuss these proposals with the Regulation Committee in February before bringing them back to the Board for final approval in the spring;

- iv. Education statistics

This continues to be a very active area for us. The Chair criticised the School Cuts website (managed by the National Education Union) in an intervention earlier this month. This was important: it showed we do not focus solely on the Department for Education, but consider the risk of misleading statements from a wide range of participants in public debate;

v. Health statistics

As with education statistics, we have demonstrated that we do not focus just on Government. The Chair wrote to highlight incorrect statements made by the Shadow Health Secretary, Jon Ashworth. Also in the health and care domain, we have presented to the Department of Health strategy unit about our work to support transparency and public value of health statistics;

vi. Code of Practice

As the first anniversary of the Code's relaunch looms, we are undertaking an evaluation of how well we met our aims. The year has started with some further examples of voluntary adoption of the Code, including by UCAS, the private body that handles university admissions. We will use the anniversary to highlight the Code again to the ONS, where we sense awareness and take up may have been lower than in some Government departments. For example, there have been few, if any, examples of ONS applying the Code to outputs that are not official statistics, unlike in some departments;

vii. OSR development

Two things to highlight here. First, we launched the advert for a new head of our Edinburgh office. The role has a stronger emphasis on building our profile in Scotland. We plan to make an appointment in March. Secondly, we received very positive People Survey scores (**Annex B**). These scores show high levels of engagement, and very strong scores for organisational purpose, work, leadership and management of change; and

viii. External engagement

I recently met the chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and at the end of January will chair a joint ICAEW/RSS event on ageing. I will also present at an Electoral Commission round table on digital campaigning. Heather Savory and I are developing the proposal for a round table bringing together the various bodies involved in the data governance landscape. I also published a blog comparing the debate on life expectancy with the debate on productivity (**Annex C**).

4. As reported at the beginning of this month, the main challenges remain:

- i. Planning - We are developing a regulatory work plan for 2019/20 using the emerging strategy (see above) as a starting point. The challenge here will be to develop a work plan that is deliverable. Our experience over 2018/19 is that we have had to defer a number of projects, indicating that we were overly ambitious in 2018/19. A big test for our 2019/20 plan will be ensuring it is realistic; and
- ii. Casework – as previously mentioned, the OSR team is increasingly proactive. However, this means that planned work can sometimes get squeezed out and we have suspended some planned work (we have not yet initiated a range of projects in our business plan, as noted above). It also seems as though our casework activity has seen a sustained increase and, as with our planned work, we need to make sure we are realistic in what we aim to achieve.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 23 January 2018**

**List of Annexes**

<b>Annex A</b>	<b>Regulatory Activities</b>
<b>Annex B</b>	<b>People Survey summary</b>
<b>Annex C</b>	<b>Blog on life expectancy and productivity</b>



## Regulatory Activities January 2018

Economy	Business, industry, energy and trade	Health and social care	Labour Market and welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Met HMT on Country and Regional Analysis. UKSA/OSR met ONS to discuss assessment of Experimental Labour Productivity stats. Moving from assessment to CC.</li> <li>• <b>Public Finances Systemic Review:</b> Update Reg Comm on first stage review. Second stage starts after feedback. Speaking on findings with Devolved Administrations.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Complaint from Lord Lilley about the Govt's claims of post-Brexit usage for repayment Mechanism in tariffs.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance Check:</b> Met ONS on CC of FDI stats. Alerted ONS change from assessment to CC of experimental labour productivity stats. Met HMRC on CC Measuring Tax Gaps stats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Construction Output and Prices:</b> User feedback on ONS recommendations sought. Questions remain to ONS next steps for output/new order series. Case for re-designation being evaluated.</li> <li>• <b>UK Trade:</b> Outcomes discussed following last Reg Comm suggest concern over disaggregate asymmetric data. Case to be discussed further during Feb Reg Comm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Assessment Report on Avoidable mortality statistics (ONS and NRS) published this month.</li> <li>• <b>Systemic review:</b> Highlight findings from the stakeholder engagement phase of the systemic review of Adult Social Care discussed with stats producers and plans being arranged.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Published letter concerning the presentation of ISD mortality statistics. Published a report into a number of pieces of casework about A&amp;E statistics to share the learning more widely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Systemic reviews:</b> Attended meeting on 7/11 with the ONS harmonisation team to discuss them helping the I&amp;E team implement recommendations. Still awaiting letter from Jonathan Athow outlining plans.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Published CC letter on 9/11 on ONS's Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income release.</li> <li>• <b>Domain activities:</b> Attended meeting 5/11 to discuss the uncertainty in the Labour Market release. Investigated casework related to PMQ.</li> </ul>
Crime and Justice	Housing, planning and local services	Children, education and skills	Agriculture and Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Systemic Reviews:</b> Policing statistics review: <a href="#">The value of statistics on policing to the public debate</a> – completed stakeholder engagement, media analysis underway.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Investigated budget statement on increased counter-terrorism funding – no action required.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Carried out three compliance checks on civil, criminal and family court statistics in England and Wales. Following up with single letter to the HoP as similar issues in all three.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Welsh Housing Conditions Survey with Assessment Report published Oct.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Drafting CC of ONS's Household Projections for England; following talks with ONS on findings and plans for Stage 2. Projections published in Dec.</li> <li>• <b>Systemic reviews:</b> Spoke to ONS on GSS work to improve housing stats, and joint plans to develop User Engagement Strategy. Expecting update on progress late November.</li> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Letter sent to HM Land Registry, ONS, Registers of Scotland and LPS confirming designations of HPI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Recently published casework on the attainment gap in schools, and sent private letter to DfE on use of evaluation data of 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds.</li> <li>• <b>Skills Systemic Review:</b> Currently sharing findings with official producer bodies, senior officials and ministers. Ongoing engagement with users.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Recently completed CC of YR12/14 exam performance at post primary schools in Northern Ireland, on-going work on Phonics and KS1 assessments in England and HESA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Finalising CC of Scottish Sea Fisheries and meeting with producers for UK Sea Fisheries CC in Nov. Started CC of results of the June Agricultural Census, Final results of the June Agricultural Census and Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture. Expecting to publish letters in December.</li> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Meeting for double assessment of Defra's Air Quality Statistics in the UK and Emissions of Air Pollutants in the UK scheduled for December.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Looking at Defra statements about the effectiveness of badger culling on incidence of bovine TB.</li> </ul>
Security, defence and intl relations	Travel, transport and tourism	Population	Culture and Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Agreed Assessment of National Rail Passenger Survey with Transport Focus to start in Feb 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance Checks:</b> Finalising CC of DfT Port freight statistics. Beginning CC of GB Road Safety Statistics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Correspondence investigated with links to ONS's November Migration Report</li> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Ongoing communication with 3 census offices on phase 1 assessment submissions to OSR expected early 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Domain activities:</b> Attended Cabinet Office RDA Invite: Diversity statistics in the OECD event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> DCMS Economic Estimates Assessment Report was presented to Reg Comm in Nov. Further meeting with DCMS to finalise next steps later in the month.</li> </ul>

# Annex B – People Survey results for OSR



## Office for Statistics Regulation

Returns : 26

Response rate : 100%

Civil Service People Survey 2018

◇ Statistically significant difference from comparison

Employee engagement is shaped by experience at work, as measured by nine themes in the survey shown below.



## Annex C – Blog on productivity and life expectancy

# The puzzle of...

### **Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, writes about stagnant productivity and stalling life expectancy.**

An [excellent blog](#) on life expectancy by Veena Raleigh of the King's Fund, published by the Health Service Journal, makes for sobering reading.

The blog, called "UK's stalling life expectancy: where do we go from here?", sets out the evidence on life expectancy in the UK. It outlines how the latest data shows that life expectancy at birth is stalling – after decades of steady improvement. It also shows how the UK may be falling behind other countries.

The blog goes on to outline a range of factors that could be contributing to these phenomena.

All of them are important in their own right as factors to consider when looking at life expectancy.

But I was struck by another thought, an echo from a completely different domain.

There is another area where experts are concerned with a break in the long-term UK trend, and the UK falling behind other countries.

That is productivity.

Productivity is an economic concept that describes how much economic output is produced for a given set of inputs. The productivity puzzle deals with the concern that the UK's labour productivity has, since 2008, behaved in ways that economists haven't expected.

Here's the Bank of England's Andy Haldane [on the productivity puzzle](#) in 2017:

"Productivity growth has consistently underperformed relative to expectations, since at least the global financial crisis. This tale of productivity disappointment, in forecasting and in performance, has been extensively debated and analysed over recent years. Some have called it the 'productivity puzzle'.

[He followed this in 2018](#) by adding "...it is cold comfort that the UK shares this problem with much of the Western World...because the UK's productivity slowdown appears to have been larger than almost any other country.... Fact one is that UK productivity has flatlined for a decade. This means that UK productivity is running almost 20% below its level had it continued its pre-crisis trend... Fact two is that there is a second gap...between levels of productivity in the UK and in our main competitors, the US, Germany and France".

Or, more succinctly, the [FT's Neil Collins](#): "British productivity used to grow at a stolid 2 per cent a year but in the last decade it's hardly grown at all."

To be clear. I'm not arguing for a second that there is any causal link between the productivity slowdown and the apparent life expectancy slowdown. Economist talk of "secular stagnation" in productivity, and demographers talk tentatively of "stalling" life expectancy improvements. But I've seen no evidence of links between the two phenomena.

I'm more interested in it as an example of problems highlighted by statistics: the economic statistics on the one hand, and mortality statistics on the other. In both cases, official statistics have revealed a set of issues that have puzzled commentators. So, in a way I'm interested in whether there are any common patterns in the structure of the discourse around productivity that may help in the discourse around life expectancy.

And my tentative view is that there are things to learn from these parallel debates:

- The common structural feature of the discourse is that a problem is highlighted by very aggregated statistics. In both cases, people start from the presumption that trends established over a long-time series should be expected to continue – and if they don't, and it isn't entirely clear why, then there is a “puzzle”.
- A range of explanations is put forward to explain the aggregate phenomenon (in the 2017 Andy Haldane speech on productivity, he lists 5 candidate explanations of that puzzle, including credit scarring and slowing innovation). In the life expectancy debate, issues as varied as austerity and virulent flu have been put forward.
- Some hypotheses can become quite established as explanations, before the evidence is really available to support or challenge them. A good example is the issue of “zombie companies” in the case of productivity – poor performers that should be swept aside by more productive competitors, but which are kept afloat by low interest rates. This was for a time quite a common narrative about productivity. The debate seems to have moved on now. Commentators on the life expectancy puzzle should be wary about plumping for a single explanation too soon, and perhaps even more wary of suggestions that there is a single explanation at all.
- There's no substitute for detailed analytical engagement with the data. Diving down into the datasets can identify the drivers of puzzling results. It's great that Public Health England and other public health agencies are doing exactly this in the case of life expectancy. Their report is expected soon. Curiosity about the data is key.
- Even the microdata will not answer everything. Imagine a (made-up) scenario in which the micro data tell us –for example– that a factor in the productivity puzzle is the performance of small, family owned business. But this wouldn't answer the question as to why – why (in this example) do some kinds of firms behave differently to others? That might be hard to ascertain from the micro data alone. There may always a degree of kicking the analytical can down the road, and “More research needed” may well be the verdict of a lot of reports on these puzzles.

I think all this points to a set of lessons from the productivity case for the life expectancy “puzzle”. Keep a wide range of explanations in mind; don't get too fixed on one explanation to exclusion of others; remember that the best way of understanding the issue lies in the data themselves; but recognise that even a close analysis of the data at a micro level might not yield all the answers. And be ready to challenge presumptions that long-term trends automatically continue into the future. There is however one difference: in productivity, there has been some question as to whether the contemporary economy has become much harder to measure, and this may be effecting estimates of productivity. It's possible there are measurement issues in life expectancy but they have been less prominent in discussions to date.

But there is also a cause for optimism. After a period of bafflement, and pet theories, and false starts, there is an emerging consensus supported by data in the UK that the primary underlying driver of the productivity puzzle is the weakness in the diffusion of innovation from leading to laggard firms. Focus on improving that diffusion, economists argue, and the productivity problems may start to be addressed. Measuring diffusion may therefore become an important area for official statistics.

I only hope that the life expectancy questions prove easier to resolve than the productivity puzzle. It is a very important issue.

After all, what Paul Krugman said of productivity is even more true of life expectancy. In the long run, it's not everything. But it's nearly everything.

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Census – Update*

### **Purpose**

1. We set out an agreed set of actions in the December Board paper for discussion at Risk and Audit Committee and the Authority Board. This paper sets out:
  - i. the activities completed against that plan and the implications for the dress rehearsal as presented and discussed to risk and audit committee, and the steps to increase assurance;
  - ii. the implications of the office-wide prioritisation that has been undertaken, on Business and Social Survey Transformation; and
  - iii. additionally, there is an update on White Paper reaction.

### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Board are asked to note the progress that has been made since the update provided to the Board in December 2018.

### **Programme Progress and Implications**

#### Scope of Rehearsal

3. As promised, we have completed the field design validation work to support the household journeys and will continue the necessary work to validate this at a detailed level. At present, this means the dress rehearsal would cover all five household respondent journeys and all service/system integrations.
4. A review has also taken place of the user journeys for Communal Establishments (CE's) and subject to final confirmation it is expected that CE's will be included in the current scope of the rehearsal.
5. We are currently developing the first version of the functionality for the simplest Household journey and this will be complete on 29 January. When we have subsequently delivered all seven of the core user journeys we will have sufficient functionality to test all of the integration points between services.

#### Fieldwork Management Tool

6. When we met with Sian Jones in November, we were considering building an inhouse Fieldwork Management Tool in order to ensure that the fieldwork could be managed in patches (i.e. one interviewer has all addresses in an area). The field operations design validation sessions, together with technical end-to-end demonstrations, have confirmed our operational requirements and increased our confidence that the Field Work Management Tool (FWMT) largely meets our needs. There will be one, significantly smaller piece of build required which will support the use of the response chasing algorithm and provide a feed into the FWMT to allow dynamic allocation of field officer.

#### Project Management, planning, critical path and metrics for assessing progress

7. Further strengthening of the resources and capability across the programme has also been taking place with updates to key roles within the Programme Management Office (PMO), a new Head of Testing and a new Service Integration Manager starting on 7 January 2019. In addition, additional security resource to join the Census security team has been commissioned.
8. We have implemented an amended and more systematic approach to assessing how we prioritise service design and system delivery, with an outline plan that starts with the simplest user journey and builds up to ensure all critical elements for rehearsal are

captured, whilst at the same time allowing for further shrinkage if needed as time progresses.

9. Following the design sessions for field operations and CEs there will continue to be ongoing focused design reviews, the next planned review will be on 28 January and focus on the field design for the Census Coverage Survey. Additionally, we are continuing to run our well established integrated project design reviews and have recently completed exercises for field operations and response operations. The integrated design reviews for operations management are currently ongoing.
10. The next sprint will deliver the user stories required to complete the initial version of the first of the seven core respondent user journeys. Test results will be available by 6 February and there will be regular updates on key milestones and key delivery metrics, such as defect analysis. Delivering in sprints, based on respondent journeys, will reduce delivery risks by using established respondent journeys and provide further opportunities to improve design. In addition, we will be able to review our metrics for monitoring progress on build and test to ensure they are fit for purpose.

#### Office-wide prioritisation

11. To support the Census and Data Collection Transformation (CDCT) Programme and the efforts required across the organisation to deliver its capabilities, the Portfolio and Investment Committee (PIC) have reviewed priorities and concluded that “the key priorities for the office are the delivery of Blue Book 19 in Economic Statistics; and core Census deliverables in Population and Public Policy”. The CDCT Programme are exploring options to allow progress on the transformation of data collection to continue based on the functionality already available as well as the use of partnerships outside of ONS to further relieve the pressure on central ONS resources.

#### Next steps

12. In addition to the work already completed, by 31 January, the following will also be achieved and presented to the CDCT Programme Board in February 2019:
  - i. full update of the programme delivery plan, including critical path and milestone success criteria and clearly defined programme stages from which progress can be visibly tracked assessed;
  - ii. a draft overall delivery confidence dashboard which will monitor progress of all programme elements;
  - iii. confirmed scope for the Census Dress Rehearsal at a technical level, clearly identifying:
    - which systems, services and products will and will not be in scope, cross referenced with the user journeys;
    - what the dress rehearsal will prove against previously agreed success criteria; and
    - the plans for testing outside of rehearsal where required.
  - iv. the full design review of all user journeys (including CEs) to review and ratify all design decisions with simplicity and deliverability being a key focus;
  - v. feedback on the January awayday held with the core G6 delivery teams from Census, MDR and DST, which will focus on collaborative ways of working and the updated design and delivery approach; and
  - vi. metrics for how we assess progress of build and test against the respondent journeys and monitoring against these will be in place.
13. Further to this, by end of February we will:
  - i. agree a common view of data and processing user journeys and develop a delivery plan for the processing rehearsal, including a critical path and success factors;
  - ii. update the programme assurance strategy and plan, incorporating audit feedback.

White Paper Reaction

14. As reported verbally at the last Board meeting, the White Paper was published on 14 December 2018.
15. The reaction to the publication has been as expected with a positive response from the Armed Forces, Roma and LGBT communities. Also, as expected, there has been a more negative response from supporters of a Cornish tickbox within the National Identity question and a mixed response with regard to the inclusion of a Sikh tickbox in the ethnicity question, reflecting the different views within the Sikh community.

**Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy**

**Francesca Kay, Transformation Director**

**24 January 2018**