



Office for
Statistics Regulation

OFFICE FOR STATISTICS REGULATION

Business Plan 2019/20

April 2019

Plan on a Page

Our Vision:

Statistics that serve the public. In a world of abundant data, people should have confidence in statistics produced by government.

Trustworthiness:	Quality:	Value:
Confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data	Data and methods that produce assured statistics	Statistics that support society's needs for information

Our Drivers for 2019/20

Enhance trustworthiness, quality and value of key official statistics	Advocate trustworthiness, quality and value inside and outside of government	Identify risks to the use of statistics in public debate and respond through casework	Develop understanding of the public good in collaboration with allies and develop a framework for judging misleadingness	Understand the changing world and impact for statistics production
<p>Activities and Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 assessments of key statistics e.g. UK Labour Market statistics • Programme of around 40 Compliance Checks • Initiate 3 – 5 Systemic Reviews e.g. Mental Health Statistics; Statistical Leadership • Insight programme: publish first report on Coherence <p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We make appropriate judgements about TQV • We are open about our conclusions and the evidence on which we have based our judgements 	<p>Activities and Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote voluntary application of the Code of Practice for Statistics • Provide advisory service, run workshops and establish community of practice among adopting organisations • Respond to findings of evaluation of online Code <p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We respond positively to organisations and analysts wishing to commit to applying the Code pillars • We have impact by seeking longer lasting transformative outcomes 	<p>Activities and Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene where we identify risk of misleading use or we receive complaints. • Start to develop automated monitoring to identify the statistics and data used most in public debate <p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We identify the issues that are important to users and stakeholders • We are proactive in identifying matters of public debate and concern • We are effective in challenging misuse and misleading presentation 	<p>Activities and Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify/share research on public impact of statistics • Convene organisations with a focus on public good of statistics, data and analysis • Develop a framework for judging misleadingness <p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders interested in understanding 'public good' in relation to statistics • We lead a discussion on the nature of statistics that serve the public good 	<p>Activities and Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update our understanding of the role of National Statistics designation • Talk to influencers and monitor media to understand external changes • Identify evidence on whether statistics reflect people's lived experience <p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We develop rounded insights on the state of domains that reflect the impact of societal changes on statistics and are informed by key stakeholders

Foreword

This business plan is presented as we develop our vision and mission for the coming years. Our ambition is that statistics serve the public good. People should have confidence in statistics produced by government: confidence that the statistics published are an accurate reflection of what they aim to measure and confidence that the statistical system will provide the statistics needed to support public discourse and inform decision makers.

Our business plan and associated work programme set out how we will work towards this ambition during 2019/20. We will focus on enhancing the trustworthiness, quality and value of key statistics, including through assessments of important outputs such as Labour Market Statistics and Hospital Activity Statistics. We will also continue to promote voluntary adoption of the Code of Practice for Statistics, an area where we have already seen significant benefits from organisations considering the Code of Practice as they produce statistical and other analytical outputs.

To achieve our ambition we cannot work in isolation. We will: continue to work with others to identify and share research on the public impact of statistics; be building key alliances to help us develop our understanding of the public good and the impact of the changing world for statistics use and production; and be working with producers of statistics to emphasise the importance of statistical leadership and statistics which support public use.

This is an exciting time in the development of statistics and data and we believe we have a central role in championing good practice and supporting improvement to ensure statistics serve the public good.



Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation



Professor Anne Trefethen

Chair, Regulation Committee

1. Introduction

The [Office for Statistics Regulation](#) is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. We provide independent regulation of all official statistics produced in the UK. We aim to enhance public confidence in the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics produced by government.

Statistics frame public debate. They inform public understanding of what's going on in the world. They help give a basis for people to make decisions – whether as policy makers, citizens, professionals or businesses. They should create a common ground for debate and allow people to focus on issues relating to what's working, what isn't working, and what needs to change.

It is essential that people can have confidence in the statistics produced by government. It's the role of the Office for Statistics Regulation to uphold this public confidence across all areas of public debate.

Our business plan is based on our developing vision and mission, this evolving vision and mission has formed the basis for our priorities for 2019/20 including our drivers and resulting work programme. We will publish our vision and mission along with additional context in June 2019 when we will be seeking further feedback before they are finalised.

This business plan provides details of our priorities for 2019/20, and our governance, organisational structure and resource. It also sets out the priorities for each of our domains (Annex).

In support of this plan, we also publish a [Regulatory Work Programme](#) which we update every 3-4 months on a rolling basis, and a [publications calendar](#) which sets out our upcoming publications, which we update monthly.

2. Our Vision

Our vision is that statistics serve the public. In a world of abundant data, people should have confidence in statistics produced by government.

3. Our Mission



4. Key features of our work

The features underlying each element of our mission set out how we will go about delivering on our developing mission and vision over the next four years.

Mission	Features
We uphold trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence	<p>Trustworthiness (T) is about having confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data.</p> <p>Quality (Q) is about using data and methods that produce assured statistics.</p> <p>Value (V) is about producing statistics that support society’s needs for information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and make judgements on official statistics published by government • Advocate trustworthiness, quality and value for statistics and data used as evidence, both inside and outside government • Review systemic issues affecting groups of statistics or entire statistical system, such as data linkage • Provide support and insight to the statistical system, including through our Insight programme
We protect the role of statistics in public debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the key areas in which public debate draws on statistics and data used as evidence • Step in to address risks of misleading or misinformed debate, guided by our monitoring or complaints
We lead and collaborate to develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review empirical evidence on how statistics and data used as evidence impact on public • Consider how world is changing and how this is reflected in statistics • Assess whether the statistics reflect the daily experience of citizens and organisations in the UK • Identify risks of system stagnation • Form alliances with key organisations with a role in supporting public good of statistics and data used as evidence

5. Our Drivers for 2019/20

We set out our criteria for success, against which we will closely monitor our performance in delivering against our drivers during 2019/20. We will draw on a range of evidence to continually assess our progress and learn lessons.



5.1. *We uphold trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence*

5.1.1. Enhance trustworthiness, quality and value of key official statistics

In our 2019/20 regulatory work programme have an emphasis on statistics that have the greatest public value. We will also be considering the key policy debates and where there may be a lack of coherence or insight in the statistics which support these areas. We will:

- Focus our assessment programme on key statistics, starting a further 15 assessments. For each domain we have reviewed the key statistics, how recently they have been assessed and whether there are material changes that require further assessment. This has led us to focus on: Labour market statistics, which are a crucial input into public debate on employment, the nature of work and living standards; the survey of personal incomes, which provides important information on income, including for tax forecasting in

devolved administrations; and hospital activity statistics in England, which highlight performance pressures on NHS England.

- Carry out 40 compliance checks, giving thought to how we group these checks to explore issues of coherence and broadening insight.
- We will initiate 3-5 systemic reviews with a focus on cross-cutting issues which support enhanced trustworthiness, quality and value – for example, Mental Health statistics and Statistical Leadership. We will also continue work on 7 ongoing systemic reviews.
- Publish our first Insight report focused on coherence, along with related activity to share and reinforce messages from the report. Our new Insight programme will build on broad lessons and examples of best practice drawn from the breadth of our regulatory activity to support statistics that serve the public good.
- Balance our regulatory tools and other influencing approaches to maximise impact.
- Advocate for wider use of linked data under appropriate conditions.
- Publish guidance on best practice when making important methods changes to support producers of statistics as they look to innovate and improve outputs.

5.1.2. Advocate trustworthiness, quality and value inside and outside of government

Voluntary adoption of the pillars of the Code of Practice for Statistics has potential to offer significant benefits. It can raise standards of analysis and dissemination among organisations that use it and demonstrate transparency to users of these statistics and data used as evidence. We will build on the launch of voluntary application of the Code of Practice for Statistics by promoting its benefits and encouraging wider adoption. Wider adoption of the Code is a core part of realising our vision of statistics that serve the public. In 2019/20 we will:

- Promote voluntary application of the Code beyond official statistics producers, both within government and to outside organisations.
- Run workshops for analysts and organisations seeking to apply the Code and establish a community of practice among adopting organisations.
- Respond to the findings of the evaluation of the [Online Code](#) a year after launch; and provide an advisory service, training and increasing numbers of practical case studies to aid interpretation of the pillars and principles of the Code.

Success Criteria

Our main stakeholders see us as authoritative, transparent and ambitious for improvement and we demonstrate an efficient use of our resources:

- We make appropriate judgements about trustworthiness, quality and value
- We are open about our conclusions and the evidence on which we have based our judgements
- We respond positively to organisations and analysts wishing to commit to applying the Code pillars
- We have impact by seeking longer lasting transformative outcomes

Evidenced by:

- Regulatory projects that meet the need for high quality analysis, active engagement, sound judgement and effective advocacy (stakeholder surveys and project closure reports)
- Positive reputation with stakeholders (qualitative and quantitative information from events and face-to-face engagement; social media interactions, media coverage)
- Use of appropriate regulatory tools and resources (project closure reports, quarterly review of work programme metadata e.g. closure rates)
- Engagement with the online Code (web analytics)
- Increased numbers of organisations voluntarily apply the Code (records of feedback and published register)
- Evidence of attributable improvements by statistics producers (producer NS statements, Insight programme, case study examples)

5.2. *We protect the role of statistics in public debate*

5.2.1. Identify risks to the use of statistics in public debate and respond through casework

During 2019/20 we will use our domain model and horizon scanning to proactively identify risks around the use of statistics in public debate and broaden our understanding of how debate is informed by statistics. We will:

- Intervene where we identify risk of misleading use or we receive complaints.
- Start to develop automated monitoring to identify the statistics and data used most in public debate.

- Deliver lessons and share insight, including through an Insight report.

Success Criteria:

We challenge misuse and misleading presentation of statistics:

- We identify the issues that are important to users and stakeholders
- We are proactive in identifying matters of public debate and concern
- We are effective in challenging misuse and misleading presentation

Evidenced by:

- Casework correspondents' and stakeholder satisfaction (feedback questionnaires)
- Positive reputation with stakeholders (events and face-to-face engagement; social media interactions, media coverage)
- 10 – 20 per cent of cases are self-identified (casework log)

5.3. We lead and collaborate to develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

5.3.1. Develop understanding of the public good in collaboration with allies and develop a framework for judging misleadingness

Leading a better understanding of the public good is the foundation of our vision. Without understanding public good we would be unable to deliver on our vision of statistics that serve the public. Our immediate focus will be on identifying and defining: Identifying existing research and interested partner organisations and defining public good and a framework for judging misleadingness. In 2019/20 we will:

- Identify and share details of research base on public impact of statistics
- Convene key organisations with a focus on public good of statistics, data and analysis
- Develop a framework for judging misleadingness
- Look at potential to supplement existing approaches of identification of misleading statements with automated identification.

5.3.2. Understand the changing world and impact for statistics production

Statistics can only provide value when they reflect the world we live in and the experience of those in it. This includes ensuring the way statistics are developed,

disseminated and designated adapt to the external environment. In 2019/20 we will:

- Update our understanding of the role of National Statistics designation.
- Talk to key influencers and monitor key media to understand external changes (e.g. society, economy, international context, use of data).
- Identify evidence on whether statistics reflect people's lived experience.

Success Measures

We support understanding of 'public good' and clarify the role of statistics and data used in evidence to serve the public good:

- We develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders interested in understanding 'public good' in relation to statistics
- We lead a discussion on the nature of statistics that serve the public good
- We develop rounded insights on the state of domains that reflect the impact of societal changes on statistics and are informed by key stakeholders

Evidenced by:

- Effective convening of interested and influential stakeholders (Round Table attendances, records of collaborations)
- Positive reputation with stakeholders (events evaluation surveys, post-systemic review surveys, social media interactions, media coverage)
- Acceptance of our insights and advice (stakeholder feedback, web and social media analytics)

6. Governance

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is led by the Director General for Regulation, who reports directly to the Chair of the Authority and the Chair of the Regulation Committee. OSR operates independently from the National Statistician and all statistical producers, and has full decision-making autonomy from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The Authority has [established arrangements](#) to safeguard the separation of the functions of statistics production and regulation. The Director General for Regulation is a Statistics Authority Board Member. Oversight of the Office for Statistics Regulation is through a sub-Committee of the Statistics Authority Board – the Regulation Committee.

7. Resources

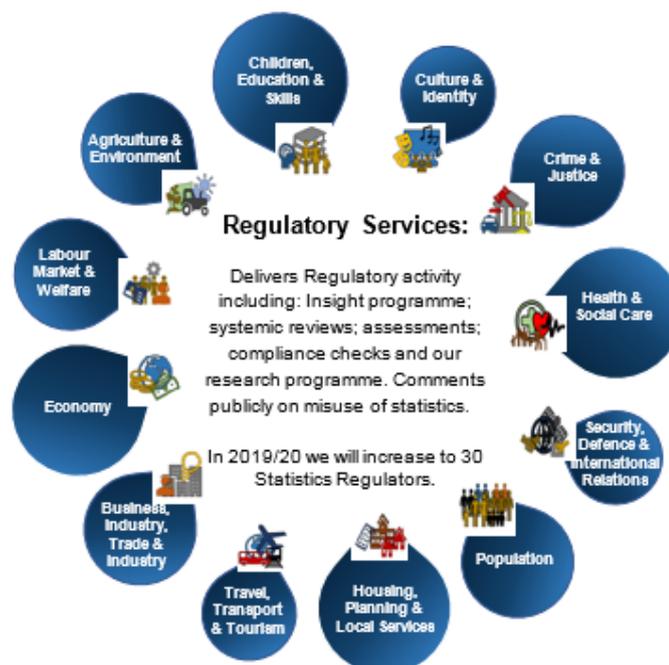
Our budget for 2019/20 is approximately £2.7 million, an increase from £2.2 million in 2018/19.

The increase reflects our ambitions (based on our developing vision and mission) and represents a planned expansion of the organisation from 31 to 42 people during 2019/20. This expansion should strengthen our domain teams and allow us to bring in additional expertise, particularly around research and data. This will allow us to continue to become more proactive. The increase in budget also reflects our ambition to deliver a small research programme to support our understanding of the public good of statistics.

Our team is based on sites in London, Newport and Edinburgh (moving to the new Edinburgh Hub in 2020).

8. Organisation

<p>Senior Leadership Team: Ed Humpherson - Director General for Regulation Mary Gregory - Deputy Director for Regulation & Head of London Office Vacant - Systemic Review Programme Lead & Head of Edinburgh Office Mark Pont - Assessment Programme Lead & Head of Newport Office</p>



<p>Business Support: Supports business planning, work programming and management of resources for the office, including support of learning & development. 4.0 FTE support this function</p>	<p>External Relations: Develops, coordinates and implements the strategy for the external voice and brand of the office. Gathers key intelligence to inform regulation activities. 2.0 FTE support this function supporting this function</p>	<p>Policy & Standards: Updates and maintains the Code; Develops standards and guidance; keeps up-to-date with cross-cutting and international statistical issues. 1.0 FTE support this function</p>
---	--	--

Annex: Our Domain Priorities

This Annex provides an overview of how our topic domains will help to deliver our mission and our priorities for 2019/20. For a list of projects which are programmed for each domain please refer to our [Regulatory Work Programme](#) which is published alongside this plan and will be updated on a rolling quarterly basis. You may also visit the domain pages on our website (links below) where you can find more information on live projects and contact details.



Agriculture and Environment

Our 2019/20 focus will be on **air quality** and **waste**, reflecting the prominence of these topics in public debate. We will also work to understand how producers are engaging with users to meet changing demands for agriculture and environment statistics and data used as evidence. Agriculture and environment is one of the domains potentially most affected by the **UK's exit from the EU**, we will consider the implications of this for statistics in this area during 2019/20.



Business, Industry, Trade and Energy (BITE)

The evolution of BITE statistics is expected to be driven by the **UK's exit from the EU**, future **trading relationships** with Europe and the rest of the world, and the consequent changes in the broader economic and commercial environment. Our priorities for 2019/20 focus on these anticipated changes and the need for statistics to capture new business practices and process innovation, not least in **digital infrastructure and content**.



Children, Education and Skills

Across the UK, Children, Education and Skills policies vary significantly. Our priorities for 2019/20 reflect areas of public interest, both in terms of the use of statistics, and where there have been recent policy changes. Our priorities for 2019/20 are to: **protect the role of education statistics used in public debate** (particularly in England); review the **attainment statistics** of primary and secondary education in the UK as key school outcome measures, and advocate for improvements in the availability and accessibility of information about **Further Education and Apprenticeships** in the UK.



Crime and Justice

Policing, crime and justice continue to be at the forefront of public debate. The focus on **traditional crime** remains, but the nature of crime is changing and **newer forms of crime**, especially those that are global and cyber-enabled, are harder to measure. Police and justice organisations face challenges to achieve the **technological change** needed to support evolving demand for data and statistics. In 2019/20 we want producers to deliver on the Code's aspirations for **public value** and use statistics and data to tell more coherent stories within and beyond crime and justice, and to better reflect people's experiences. We want the quality of data and statistics to be more transparent and for statistics producers to start to have a voice in decisions about data systems.



Culture and Identity

Culture and identity statistics and data should provide strong evidence that reflect peoples' experiences of how we are living and engaging within UK society. In 2019/20 we will focus on building our intelligence around this domain – understanding the statistics and data in scope and engaging with statistics producers and users, especially in Scotland and Wales. We will carry out compliance checks on statistics about the **gambling industry** and **internet use**, and we will look at how well statistics and data serve as evidence for understanding **loneliness**.



Economy

We want to see UK and devolved nations' and regions' economic statistics fully transformed to capture all the activities in the respective economies, accounting for: major changes under way in the structure of the **UK and devolved and regional economies**; the sustainability of economic growth; public interest in well-being; growing demand for better geographically disaggregated data; and statistics producers' capacity to adapt to the online world. Our priorities for 2019/20 are: the communication and effects of **changes to the UK National Accounts Blue Book** in 2019; **inflation** and the possibility of work arising from any change to the Authority's approach to the RPI and to Owner-Occupied Housing measurement within CPIH; continuing to examine statistics which help inform the **productivity puzzle**; and addressing one of the main causes of bias in forecasting **Scottish and Welsh income tax revenues** by conducting a special compliance check on HMRC's Survey of Personal Income.



Health and Social Care

We want to see producers in all parts of the UK improve the trustworthiness, quality and value of their statistics, focusing in 2019/20 on **mental health, social care, and peoples' experience** so that they achieve the status of existing statistics about physical health, NHS performance and outputs. We will assess NHS England's **hospital activity** statistics and support the Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee's forthcoming inquiry around **gaps in primary care statistics in Scotland**. Other priorities in 2019/20 will be to encourage **access to data**, seeking potential solutions to the problems that researchers experience when trying to access data from NHS Digital, and to support collaboration between statistics producers who are **linking and analysing data** about cost, outcomes and people's lived experiences. We will also **champion the joining-up of data** on health and social care with data on other aspects of people's lives, including crime, justice, education, employment and welfare.



Housing, Planning and Local Services

Our key priorities during 2017 and 2018 were driven by our Systemic Review on the public value of Statistics on Housing and Planning in the UK. For 2019 and beyond, our focus will be on the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics about key issues: **homelessness and rough sleeping; housing affordability; house building; and the private rental market**. We are also acutely aware that with the **public need for improved insight about housing and planning at increasingly local levels**, there could be more focus on **linking data**, and developing new statistics and analysis that aren't traditional National Statistics. We will be developing our networks outside the official statistics producer community, to promote voluntary application of the Code and provide guidance on linking data.



Labour Market and Welfare

In the Labour Market and Welfare domain we will focus on improved 'storytelling' to aid user understanding, for example, working with the Department for Work and Pensions to enhance coherence across its **benefit statistics**. In 2019/20 we will assess the trustworthiness, quality and value of the UK **Labour Market statistics**, and at the same time we will focus on the **coherence of the related statistics across the countries of the UK** through a series of compliance checks. We will encourage ONS and DWP improvements in innovation and dissemination of their statistics, building our understanding of how ONS's transformation programme and the **use of administrative data sources** will impact quality and value.



Population

We will monitor progress of the **planned integration of administrative data sources into the 2021 Census and key population statistics**, and determine the implications for the trustworthiness, quality and value of these developments. Our priorities for 2019/20 are the continuing assessment of the 2021 Census and our ongoing engagement with ONS and other government departments on progress to develop **migration** statistics.



Security, Defence and International Relations (SDIR)

Our priority for 2019/20 moves from defence statistics to **aid spending** statistics produced by the **Department for International Development**. We will also be working more broadly to understand the statistics and data landscape within this domain, and to building relationships with producers of statistics, including the senior figures responsible for statistics and data in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Travel, Transport, and Tourism

We want to enhance our links with users and producers of Transport, Travel and Tourism statistics and data, including in the Devolved Administrations. We will engage and convene producers and users involved in innovative work within this domain, for example: in the production of new statistics using large scale datasets and through data linkage. Our priorities for 2019/20 include assuring quality so decision making is accurately informed in times of methodological change – for example, through our compliance checks of **Overseas Travel and Tourism statistics** and **Road Accidents and Safety statistics**. Our assessment and compliance check of various government rail statistics will also reflect the increasing prominence of **rail travel** as a topic in recent public debates.