



Office for
Statistics Regulation

Office for Statistics Regulation

Business Plan

2017/18

Foreword from the Director General for Regulation



This plan sets out our aims for 2017/18, and what we will do to achieve them. We are placing the public interest in statistics at the heart of our work.

It is an important time, both for us as the Office for Statistics Regulation and for statistics. Data are increasingly abundant, and this brings huge opportunities to statistics. At the same time, it is essential to maintain public confidence in statistics, which can be undermined by poor quality, lack of relevance and misuse.

This year, we will publish a refreshed Code of Practice which will emphasise the need to maximise the public value of Government statistics; we'll publish our first Annual Review looking at the state of the statistical system; and we'll undertake a range of projects to support better statistics in crucial areas, including economic statistics, migration, housing, data linkage, and health and care.

The way we've developed this business plan reflects, I hope, our openness – it's the first time we've consulted publicly on our plans and we're very grateful to the people who provided comments. As we work through this year **I would welcome at any time any further thoughts you may have** on other topics you think are important.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation

Our Purpose

Statistics are an essential public asset. 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.

We do this by setting the standards they must meet in the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. We ensure that producers of government statistics uphold these standards by conducting assessments against the Code. Those which meet the standards are given National Statistics status, indicating that they meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value. We also report publicly on system-wide issues and on the way statistics are being used, celebrating when the standards are upheld and challenging publicly when they are not.

Our Values

Our purpose is underpinned by our values:

1. Outward and forward focused

- externally engaged and connected
- thinking ahead and responsive
- vocalising our commitment to statistics

2. Trustworthy

- independent and rigorous
- enquiring and open-minded
- transparent and fair in our judgements

3. Empathetic and respectful

- inclusive and listening to others' views
- sensitive to competing priorities
- building partnerships for collaboration
- communicating thoughtfully

4. Ambitious about improvement

- encouraging innovation in ourselves and others
- unwavering in our focus
- celebrating success

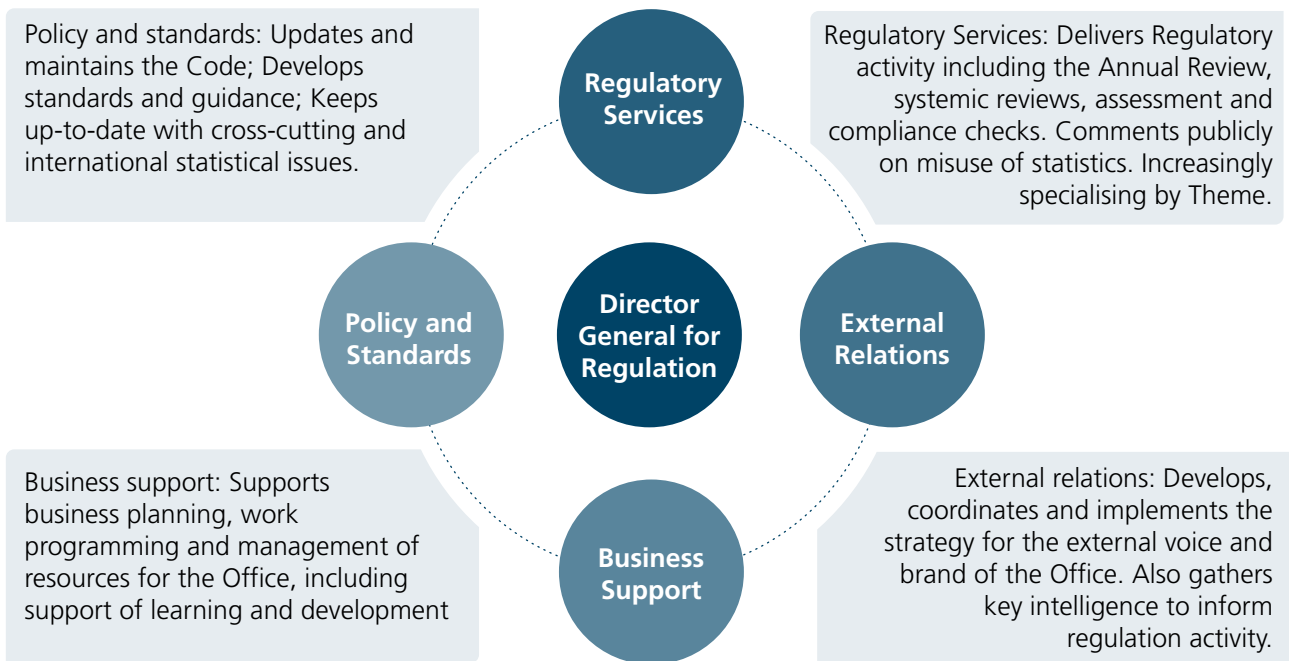
Our Governance

The Office for Statistics Regulation is led by the Director General for Regulation, who reports directly to the Chair of the Authority and operates independently from the National Statistician and all statistical producers, and has full decision making autonomy from ONS. The Authority has established **arrangements** to ensure the separation of the functions of statistics production and regulation. The Director General for Regulation is a Statistics Authority Board Member. The Board prioritises regulatory activities as part of its governance. Oversight of the Office for Statistics Regulation is through a sub-Committee of the Statistics Authority Board – the Regulation Committee.

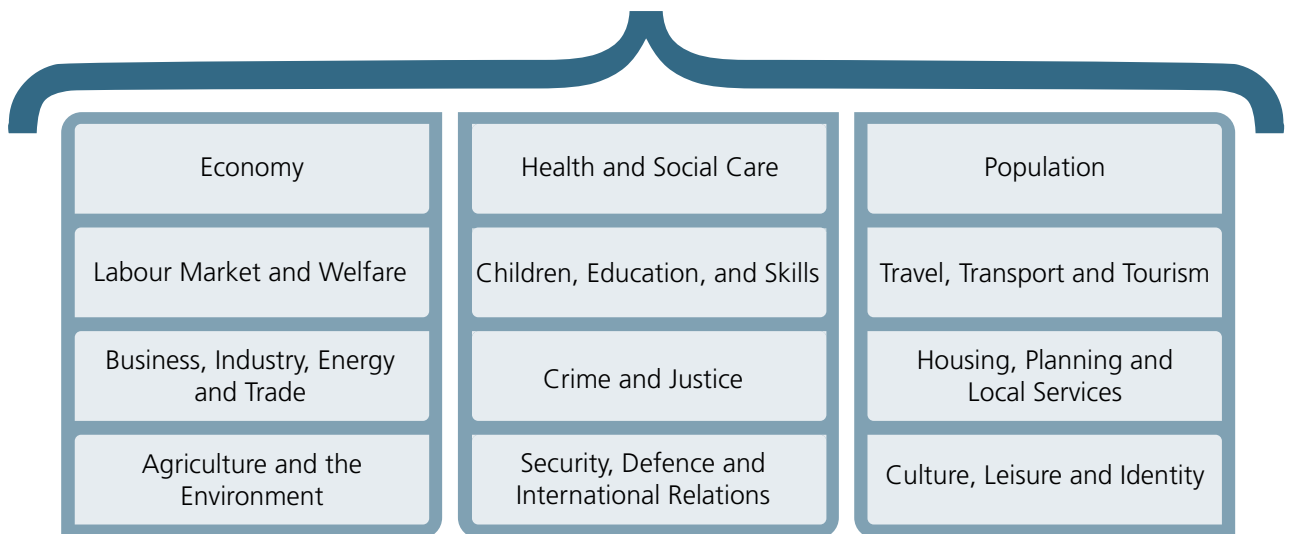
Our Resources

Our budget for 2017/18 is £2.1 million. This represents additional funding over that available for 2016/17 and reflects the Authority's ambition to continue to strengthen its independent regulatory function. The Office for Statistics Regulation will build from a team of 21 to a team of around 30 by the end of the financial year.

Our Organisation



Themes



Our Strategic Drivers

Our strategic drivers are the link between our overarching purpose and the individual components of our work programme. They help us translate our purpose into specific priorities for the year; to choose between different activities; and to relate each individual project to a broader ambition and, ultimately, our purpose. While the purpose does not change from year to year, the strategic drivers will. Overall, this year will be one of consolidating our progress and extending our reach. More specifically we will:

- Consolidate our approach to compliance, based on trustworthiness, quality and value
- Embed our systemic focus
- Use our voice to stand up for statistics
- Extend our reach
- Innovate in our regulatory model

Our Key Activities 2017/18

Following a **consultation** in March 2017, we have published alongside the business plan our **work programme** for 2017/18. Highlights are:

The Code

The **Code of Practice for Official Statistics** is a guide to the behaviour of statistical professionals, helping them to manage the complex interfaces they encounter with their organisations, with data and with the public. As a behavioural tool, it is constantly in flux as external drivers change. We therefore cannot allow the Code to stand still. Following an important period of engagement during 2016/17, we will publicly consult on a refreshed Code in summer 2017 and support the rollout and implementation of the new version later in the year, including the provision of supporting standards and guidance. As we launch the new version of the Code, we will deliver a further programme of engagement with the range of important audiences that can strengthen statistics as a public asset through their awareness and application of the refreshed Code, including : statisticians; parliaments; and the user communities.

Systemic Reviews

Systemic Reviews examine issues and opportunities at a system-wide level. These may be specific to a theme or cut across themes. Within themes these reviews often involve examining the landscape of statistics to look at the extent to which they collectively maximise public value. A systemic review may lead to direct engagement activity to try and help address issues identified. Aims in 2017/18 are to:

- Publish baseline perspective on the public value of statistics at Theme level for at least 4 key Themes
- Continue progress with existing systemic reviews: Health and Social Care; Housing; Crime and Justice; Migration
- Initiate new interventions where we judge we can improve the public value of statistics – for example: Exploring issues of data access and linkage to address policy questions and enable person centred statistics; and Data Portals: innovations and lessons. Also, we recognise that leaving the European Union represents an opportunity and a challenge across the statistics system and we will adopt a watching brief to see how the system responds

Assessments and compliance activities

The **Regulatory work Programme** sets out a schedule of assessments and compliance checks for 2017/18. These are the tools we use for assessing compliance of sets of statistics with the Code of Practice – compliance in full with the Code means we can designate the statistics as National Statistics.

Key aims for the year will be to:

- Focus on delivering impact through assessments and compliance checks on the value, quality and trustworthiness of statistics as a public asset
- Be flexible in our use of assessments and compliance checks and to continue to adapt our reporting to reflect the focus of our findings and the influence we want to have – being responsive and moving further away from a ‘one size fits all’ model
- Strengthen our focused engagement around our regulatory activity: building on our recent approach to the assessments of the CPIH and Homelessness statistics, and utilising the different tools for engagement
- Ensure the work programme cuts fairly across the portfolio of official statistics

In addition to new assessments, a proportion of the work programme will be dedicated to working with producers seeking to have high profile statistics redesignated as National Statistics. For example, UK Trade statistics and the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers’ housing costs (CPIH).

Public Interventions

We will continue to monitor closely and report publicly about any concerns about the dissemination and use of public statistics. We will reserve capacity to respond to issues as either we identify them, or they are brought to us by users of statistics.

Annual Review

Before the end of 2017, for the first time, we will bring together what we have learned from our different types of regulatory activity into a top level annual report, which will represent a health check across the whole statistical system. We see this as an important new lever to achieve the ambitious goals we have set for the independent regulator.

Building our capabilities and being increasing outward facing

On 24 November 2016, when the Director General for Regulation **announced** the newly strengthened and more visible regulatory function of the UK Statistics Authority, the Office for Statistics Regulation, he said that there would be a number of changes to the way the Office works, including becoming more outward-facing and forward looking. To support these ambitions, we need to build our capabilities. We will do this in a number of ways in 2017/18 including:

People and processes

- We will continue to increase the capacity of the team, growing from the base in mid-2016 of 18 people to a team of 31 the end of 2017 – including the recruitment of external relations and policy specialists, as well as increasing the number of statistics regulators delivering the regulatory activity
- Our learning plans will focus on; the induction of new team members; equipping the team for their more specialised Theme roles; supporting the implementation of our values; and strengthening our engagement skills. We will also dedicate this as ‘the Year of the Career’
- We are strengthening our overall approach to planning and work programming including outward-facing consultation; building a risk-based approach to prioritisation; building our programme and project management infrastructure; and monitoring and measuring success

Outward-facing activities

- All statistics regulators have been assigned to Themes – for example, Economy; Population; and Health and Social Care. Theme leads will invest in 2017/18 in further cultivating relationships with users and producers of statistics with an interest in their Theme, getting out and meeting people, building their intelligence about the Theme, and understanding the issues that will influence our work programme, today and looking forwards
- As well as our focus on Themes, our ambition will also be to have a perspective on Trustworthiness, Quality and Value at the Devolved Administration as well as UK level. Members of our senior leadership team lead in proactively engaging with the countries of the UK
- Our new External Relations function has started to take shape and successfully impact the way we are able to engage with a wider audience and to communicate our messages in an impactful way. We will continue to build on this early success in 2017/18 and will continue to invest in activities such as external panels, round tables, workshops and summits
- We are reviewing the way we communicate through our website and during 2017/18 we will engage with producer bodies and users about how we can improve their experience, making changes as we learn

Key Performance Indicators

During 2017/18 we will keep under close scrutiny how successfully we are delivering against our strategic drivers employing these goals:

Drivers	Goal
Consolidate our approach to compliance, based on trustworthiness, quality and value	Goal # 1: Improve the impact of our compliance work by identifying more serious concerns with greater potential impacts if not addressed
Embed our systemic focus	Goal # 2: Improve the impact of our systemic review work by identifying more serious concerns with greater potential impacts if not addressed
Use our voice to stand up for statistics	Goal # 3: Make every public intervention count based on our view of the scope of the intervention and harm mitigated at closure of the intervention Goal # 4: Strive to live up the Code and our values by checking the satisfaction of those who have engaged with us over issues and concerns Goal # 5: Visibility The work of the OSR is respected by the media and by its key stakeholders
Extend our reach	Goal #6: Both Our vision for a Refreshed Code is largely accepted by stakeholders and by the Authority Board: and the proposal to grant the Authority the power to decide that certain official statistics be assessed, are given effect Goal # 7: Coverage – a proportion of between 20% and 30% of our work programme (as measured by numbers of activities) will be horizon-scanning and other regulatory work in cross-cutting and domains not in the high relevance to statistics in a changing world or challenging / celebrating standards categories
Innovate in our regulatory model	Goal # 8: The refreshed Code emphasises a clearer responsibility for the role of the Head of Profession for Statistics (HoP); and all abuses of the HoPs role that we become aware of we will highlight

