

Annex: Examples of our work

Our 2020/21 business plan set out seven areas of focus for the year, within the context of our vision and 5-year strategy. Here we illustrate some of the ways that OSR has provided value within each of these areas of focus, sharing some examples of our work. The full range of our work is published through our website.

Challenge official statistics producers to answer society's questions, focusing on appropriate timeliness, granularity and data linkage

We recognised in our 2020/21 business plan that the most salient questions facing society concerned the pandemic. Data and analysis have been crucial in informing government decisions and supporting public understanding. We committed to continue to support the statistical system's dynamic response and to challenge it to continue to adapt to answer society's most pressing questions. We used a range of existing and new tools to support this.

In March 2020 we introduced a new tool to enable us to give an endorsement of new outputs produced at pace. During 2020/21 we completed **14 rapid reviews**. We found producers engaged well with this approach and often made improvements to the statistics during the review process, for example, including clearer explanations of weaknesses. We expect rapid reviews to be a valuable tool for us beyond the pandemic. We have also continued to develop our assessment, compliance check and systemic review programmes to support our ambitions, making our tools increasingly flexible to deliver the impact we want to see, for example from looking at data on sex and gender, to the HMRC quality review.

Rapid review of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey

In May 2020 we carried out a **rapid review of the first statistics from the ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey**. We endorsed the approach taken by ONS and partners to deliver timely statistics about a rapidly evolving national emergency. We also made a series of recommendations. Following the survey's expansion to cover the whole UK and over 150,000 people a fortnight we undertook a more in-depth review. In March 2021 we identified areas to support further development and concluded that ONS should be proud of the contribution the survey has made to understanding of the pandemic.

Assessment of business demography statistics

Our [assessment of ONS's UK business demography statistics](#) called for renewed investment in ONS's business register – the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). In response to our assessment, Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician said:

“ONS has an amazing, yet largely untapped, resource in the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) that with development could help business demography statistics achieve the status of leading economic indicators, as they have in the USA and France”

HMRC quality review

HMRC invited us to carry out a [review of the principles and processes underpinning the quality of HMRC's official statistics](#). We found much to admire in the way that HMRC managed the quality of its statistics but identified several areas where it could strengthen its approach.

In August 2020, we published a [follow up blog](#) which stressed this wider learning and also shared HMRC's experiences of the review. HMRC told us that the review had highlighted data quality issues and the importance of having robust data to produce high quality statistics and analysis.

Reproducible analytical pipelines: Overcoming barriers to adoption

In Autumn 2020 we launched a [review to explore the current use of RAP principles across the GSS](#). We found that justifications for implementing RAP have often focused on the cost benefits that result from more efficient processes. We were able to identify additional benefits including opening up work to collaboration and challenge, supporting statistics producers to be appropriately skilled and making best use of these skills, and reducing risk through robust quality management. We found huge potential to apply RAP principles both in and beyond official statistics.

Challenge official statistics producers to offer insight, clarity of communication and coherence

We believe that official statistics must offer insight. To do this they should have a clear narrative helping users of the statistics to understand the key issues and what the statistics mean. Statistics also need to be coherent, often drawing on a range of sources to provide a single narrative and supporting users to understand how statistics fit with other published

outputs. We said that in 2020/21 we would place emphasis on official statistics and other government analytical outputs offering, insight, clarity and coherence:

Defra user engagement

In June 2020 we published the [findings of our review of user engagement in the Defra Group](#). We identified many examples of good practice and we welcomed that the Defra Group is taking a joined-up, strategic approach to user engagement to gain insight into users and uses. We also identified several ways in which user engagement could be improved or enhanced. In November 2020 [the Head of Profession wrote to our Director General](#) welcoming the insights and the work with his team and setting out a programme of priorities for responding to the review. And we have used this case study as a basis for [guidance](#) for producers in support of the Code.

Rough sleeping

Our [Compliance Check](#) in July 2020 called for a series of improvements to rough sleeping statistics in England. We followed this up in October 2020 with a [blog](#) that looked more broadly at understanding rough sleeping across the UK. We highlighted recent innovations by statistics producers but stressed that the true public value of homelessness and rough sleeping statistics lies in bringing together the separate official measures of homelessness and rough sleeping, with other robust and insightful evidence, to develop a richer, better integrated and coherent statistical picture of homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK.

Poverty review

We launched our review of income-based poverty statistics in November 2020. Our review looks across the spectrum of income-based poverty statistics and explores whether the statistical system is providing coherent and comprehensive information required to support decision making on poverty. We previously published a blog setting out our thoughts on the trouble with measuring poverty. [The review reported in early 2021/22](#).

Increase voluntary application of the Code beyond official statistics, particularly for government analytical outputs

Since our creation we have established a clear philosophy based around the importance of trustworthiness, quality and value. The fact that

organisations have adopted these principles even though they do not have to is one of the strongest testaments to their power. Voluntary adoption 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 said our focus for 2020/21 would be on government analytical outputs, particularly management information, and equality of access – these have been some of the most used datasets during the pandemic – for example, in daily briefings.

[26 statements of voluntary compliance with the code](#) have been published in total so far by a range of organisations, from producers of official statistics to those outside the public sector. We have strong interest from other organisations to adopt the code voluntarily. We have published a range of guidance and case studies in support of the code and voluntary application. Our online code course is now available for the Government Statistical System on the Learning Hub.

Award for statistical excellence in trustworthiness, quality and value

In 2020, we launched [the award for statistical excellence in trustworthiness, quality and value](#). The award rewards excellence in the voluntary application of the Trustworthiness, Quality and Value pillars of the Code and is for any producer of data, statistics and analysis which are not official statistics, whether inside government or beyond. The award is given by OSR, in partnership with the Royal Statistical Society (RSS). Civil Service World is the media partner for the award.

Statement on why trust and transparency are vital in a pandemic

Our [statement on why trust and transparency are vital in a pandemic](#) in November 2020 reinforced why it important that when governments quote data in statements and briefings these data should be accessible to all and available in a timely manner. We supported this with examples of where we have intervened. For example, on 31 October 2020 the Chief Medical Officer for England and the Government Chief Scientific Advisor presented data in a series of slides prior to the Prime Minister’s announcement of new restrictions coming into force in England on 5 November. It is now standard practice to publish the sources for data quoted in No 10 coronavirus conferences and in future we hope to see the information consistently published at the same time as the slides.

Focus on addressing data gaps and stepping in when statistics are being misrepresented

Statistics lie at the heart of many political and public discussions. Daily we see the top news stories discussing the latest statistics on COVID-19 or the economy. Public confidence in statistics can be undermined if statistics are not used appropriately. We want to see statistics that inform public debate, allowing debate to be focused on the relevant issues and not on the quality or accuracy of the statistics.

Our casework

As per our usual practice we will publish a comprehensive Annual Review of Authority Casework 2020/21 in the autumn.

Our casework has delivered a significant impact during the pandemic. We have opened 323 cases in 2020/21, a threefold increase on previous years. The period from April to June 2020 was the busiest on record for casework. There were 110 items of casework opened during this period, including queries received and self-generated issues.

The median time taken to close cases during this period was 10 days (mean 14 days). This compares with the 2019/20 median time to close a case of just under 13 days (mean 20 days).

During 2020, we published an updated [Interventions Policy](#) to help the public understand how to engage with us and what they can expect. Supporting [FAQs](#) clarify the context for interventions that we have made and will make going forward.

To increase our impact, we also made statements responding to similar issues arising in a range of casework, such as our statements on [Production and use of management information by government and other official bodies](#) in May 2020, [Presenting estimates of R by government and allied bodies across the United Kingdom](#) in June 2020, and [Why trust and transparency are vital in a pandemic](#) in November 2020

Test and Trace statistics for England

Our most high-profile intervention was [correspondence](#) between Sir David Norgrove, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority and Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Some of the improvements resulting from our intervention are highlighted in the letter concluding our [Rapid Review of the Test and Trace statistics for England](#) which followed in July 2020.

Insight: Data gaps

In June 2020, we published a blog: [Closing data gaps: understanding the impact of COVID-19 on income](#). We focused on what producers are doing to help provide the necessary insight into the impact of COVID-19 on people's employment and working patterns. In October 2020, we published a [blog from our Director General](#) drawing further on our Insight programme, to start the process of demystifying data gaps more widely, building on our growing understanding of how different statistical producers have addressed them.

Adult social care systemic review

In 2020 we published [a series of reports outlining gaps in evidence in social care](#) across the countries of Great Britain. The pandemic has brought these gaps into sharper focus. [Our report about social care statistics in England](#) highlighted the work required to bring social care statistics to the levels of granularity and comprehensiveness of hospital care statistics. Additionally, the lack of joined-up data between health and social care has been a major data gap with serious consequences for many people during the pandemic. There is still a lot of work to do, requiring appropriate levels of investment.

Mental health systemic review

Our [report on adult mental health statistics in England](#) identified major data gaps and encouraged that the NHS White Paper in England afforded an opportunity to provide for mental health care data needs to the same standard as for primary health care.

Post-16 education and skills systemic review

Our [report on the public value of post-16 education and skills in England](#) noted "that better information about applicants to university would help shed light on social mobility. We also found that there are information gaps surrounding the further education workforce and workforce skills, which make planning to meet future demand difficult." Across the UK, we found that "Significant gaps exist in statistics and data on individual student circumstances, in particular, about whether students are care leavers or have care experience. This information is self-reported and the data quality can be poor." We continue to work with statistics producers to improve the information available.

Statistical leadership

We published our [review on Statistical leadership](#) in February 2020. The review highlights the importance of Governments across the UK showing leadership in the use of numbers and data. Through our engagement, we have found broad support for our position that statistical leadership is not just about having good leadership of the statistics profession. The most junior analysts producing statistics to the most senior Ministers quoting statistics in parliament and media must show leadership.

Our review can really be seen as a solid first milestone in our journey to advocate for statistical leadership. We will continue to build through engagement and advocacy with the analytical function and others in 2021, culminating in our OSR Conference.

Increase the profile of OSR to support impact of our interventions

We protect the role of statistics in public debate and provide an independent trusted voice for users of statistics and the individual citizen. It is important that we have a clear voice which is independent of statistical producers and government. We also seek to raise awareness that people can approach us with concerns about quality and misuse of statistics. During 2020/21 we sought to have a stronger voice demonstrably separate from that of the producers.

Regulatory statements

We want interested individuals to be able to see our position more readily on key issues, and to be able to access these statements at a time which will have greatest value to users and producers of statistics. We have made some good progress in 2020/21. We have published a number of position statements – for example: [the impact of COVID-19 on the Labour Force Survey](#); consumer and retail price indices; and [welcoming changes to pre-release access in Scotland](#).

Collecting and reporting data about sex in official statistics

In February 2021 we published [draft guidance about what producers should consider when collecting and reporting data about sex](#), to meet the expected standards of trustworthiness, quality and value. We have sought feedback on the guidance before we finalise it.

While we have communicated these statements well at the time of their publication, and have been engaged on them by users, we need to make these statements more easily and coherently accessible through our website in the coming year. We have established a Task and Finish Group, led by our communications team, to achieve this aim.

Contributions to Parliamentary inquiries and Select Committees

We have made a series of important contributions to informing UK and devolved parliamentary committees and reviews. Both in respect of the pandemic and our wider work programme.

PACAC review of data transparency and accountability: COVID-19

Our Director General for Regulation was invited to give oral evidence to the committee on 22 September 2020 and we provided [written evidence](#) in February 2021. The inquiry was focused on decision making and transparency in response to COVID-19. One of the resulting recommendations of the review was 'The Ministerial Code needs to be strengthened so it is clear that Ministers are required to abide by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) Code of Practice in their presentation of data. The UKSA Code includes the principle of trustworthiness that builds "confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data".'

Lords Public Services Committee's inquiry into 'Levelling up' and public services

On 17 March 2021, we provided [written evidence](#) in answer to questions around gaps in regional/local data) which may impact upon the Government's ability to target investment, and ensuring transparency and access to the data sets that the Government is using to ensure Parliamentary scrutiny. We were able to identify a range of gaps based on regulatory activity, together with examples of where producers have been filling gaps

Our website

We launched the [OSR website](#) in Summer 2020. As well as our formal outputs we have published a series of blogs on a wide range of subjects by guests and our own team. In September 2021, we delivered enhancements to comply with the new UK Government Accessibility Regulations. We have also enhanced our use of social media.

Clarify our role in regulation of data and AI

Our core focus is on official statistics – statistics produced by government which must comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. But the greater abundance of data and new approaches to analysis mean that increasingly government bodies and other organisations publish a wider range of data outputs that seek to serve the public good – thereby often playing the role of statistics.

Statement on our regulatory role in the data and Artificial Intelligence landscape

We published a [statement](#) in July 2020 which describes work we are looking to carry out into what we need to do as an organisation to regulate the growing use of Artificial Intelligence technologies within official statistics.

Exams review

Following closure of schools as part of the response to the coronavirus outbreak the four UK qualification regulators were directed by their respective governments to oversee the development of an approach to awarding grades in the absence of exams. While the approaches adopted differed, all approaches involved statistical algorithms. When grades were released in August 2020, there was widespread public dissatisfaction centred on how the grades had been calculated and the impact on students' lives.

[Our review](#) of the outcomes and underlying methods through the lens of the Code, published in March 2021, may well be the most comprehensive review of the 2020 exam story. It's comprehensive in two senses. It covers all four parts of the UK, unlike other reviews. And it goes beyond technical issues about algorithms to identify lessons for those producing statistical models, those commissioning statistical models, and those at the centre of government. We are using the outcomes of this review to develop guidance in support of the Code of Practice.

Build our evidence base on understanding of the public good

Serving the public good is at the heart of the UK's statistical system. We can't deliver on our vision of statistics that serve the public good without a well evidenced understanding of what this means. In 2020/21 we said we would:

Review the National Statistics designation

'National Statistics' are regarded as the most important official statistics that have been demonstrated to meet the very highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value, set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Only they carry the unique logo of the National Statistics tick mark, having been designated by OSR, as the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. [Our review](#) aims to clarify what the NS designation means and consider the case for making appropriate reforms. We have made strong progress this year, publishing a consultation document in January 2021 and speaking with official statistics producers and the

wider analytical community across the UK through webinars, workshops, and meetings, to hear their ideas and views about the designation. We published our findings from the consultation in June 2021 that outlines our next steps.

Misleadingness

We are often asked if we consider a particular use of statistics to be misleading. We always look carefully at these cases and seek to reach a judgement, but in investigating them, we find it is often not clear what is meant by something being “misleading”. Over the last year we have been thinking about the idea of misleadingness – what it is, and how we should approach it in the context of our work. We published a [think-piece](#) in May 2020, which we developed with input from Jenny Saul, a philosopher who has written extensively about misleadingness.

We published a [further paper](#) in May 2021 providing an update on our thinking based on conversations we’ve had and feedback we’ve received since we published the think-piece. Overall, people welcomed the think-piece; it was valued as much as a trigger for discussion as for its content.

Understanding the public good of statistics

To succeed in our aim to develop a better understanding of statistics serving the public good, it is critical to first understand what is already known, and what is not known, about this subject. In December 2020 our research programme published [‘The Public Good of Statistics: What we know so far’](#) which builds on a comprehensive literature review and a programme of early engagement to outline four approaches to measuring and understanding the public good of statistics: legislative; empirical research; economic value; and social value. Work commenced in 2020/21 towards a [report](#) published in May 2021 about how researchers see their research as serving the public good or providing public benefits.

Strengthening our alliances

We have established a Research Advisory Group to ensure our research programme is informed by a breadth of perspectives spanning different interests in statistics and their uses. Members include: ADRUK; University of Bath; Open Data Institute; DEFRA; ProBono Economics; Statistics User Forum; Full Fact; Ada Lovelace Institute Sense About Science; and the Geospatial Commission.

Annex: The OSR maturity model

In July 2020 we published our [strategic business plan for 2020 to 2025: Statistics for the public good – Regulating for trustworthiness, quality and value](#). We developed a performance framework for self-assessment against the ambitions in our strategic plan, and our overall capability as a regulator, around a maturity model.

Progressing our 5-year ambitions and the authority priorities

In April 2021, we updated the Regulation Committee on how our 2020/21 activities have helped us progress towards the ambitions set out in our 5-year strategic plan. We have framed four maturity-level indicators against the Authority's strategic priorities and set a baseline for each ambition in 2020, together with an interim target to work towards in the first year – that is, by March 2021.

Maturity levels:

- 0 – Basic
- 1 – Structured and Proactive
- 2 – Sustainable – Managed and focused
- 3 – Optimal – Focused on deliberate continuous improvement

Build public trust in evidence

Status: Met – To progress from structured and proactive model towards sustainable

We have published a rolling regulatory work programme update every four to six weeks. Adopting this approach has allowed us to provide a high level of assurance on the performance of producers in the pandemic. As well as responding to the specific demands of the pandemic, we have been able to maintain a solid breadth of planned regulatory activity and work in a responsive way with a continual focus on the needs of the public as users of statistics.

Areas for improvement:

- we will be working to standardise our management of domain programmes and cross-cutting projects across our Senior Leadership Team sponsors to ensure a balanced prioritised programme appropriately resourced across the piece

- there is scope to provide greater visibility to users of statistics of our position on important topic areas by making our position statements easier for the public to find on our website
- we will be seeking to extend our use of videos and introduce Podcasts as a new channel for communicating insights
- there remains scope for us to develop our automation of some of our internal evaluation and increase our self-identified casework interventions
- there is scope for us to build on the profile and the respect we have gained as an independent voice this year to make more regular contributions to Parliamentary inquiries and raise issues with relevant select committees
- we need to define and address our strategic aims in respect of statistical literacy and what work we will be undertaking in this space. We plan to embed our efforts within our programmes and engagement channels rather than develop a distinct workstream

Make greater data available in a secure way for research and evaluation

Status: – **Partially met:** To progress from basic to structured and proactive

We are at the early stages of much of the work in this space. We have made a lot of progress over the last couple of years, with the joining up data work supporting our work on data linkage and research data. We have also made progress on considering how we regulate AI and the exam grade adjustment review has helped move forward our thinking about the Code of Practice and how it applies in other contexts. There appears to be good support for us developing regulatory guidance that interprets the TQV pillars of the Code in respect of data sharing and AI, including assuring on compliance with ethical standards.

Areas for improvement:

- we need to build on our progress on considering how we regulate AI and the Exams Review and embed our thinking on our remit. We need to build the expertise more widely in the team and we are pursuing a series of workshops with the Data Science Campus in 2021
- we aim to publish guidance on models, automation, and AI within the context of the Code of Practice in Spring 2021. And we will be publishing and update on the impact of data linkage on the statistical system, engaging with statistics producers on our findings

- an independent review of all our supporting functions has now reported, and we are recruiting a Grade 6 strategic lead. These should both help us focus appropriate resourcing for our Data and Automation programme

Enhance understanding of social and economic matters

Status: Partially met: To progress from basic to structured and proactive

We have made good progress but we retain the basic status for now. We have an effective regulatory programme that identifies ways that statistical outputs can enhance understanding of social and economic matters. Our understanding of the public good of statistics is a growing area of focus through our research programme, which has made a good start, and informed the Value chapters of our assessments.

A virtual awayday for the whole team focused on the Authority principle of Inclusion – this was an important foundation in raising awareness with the team of identity issues and considering them in our engagement and regulatory work.

Our National Statistics Review is exploring the use of the National Statistics designation to convey for users when statistics are relevant and serve to enhance our understanding of the economy and society.

Areas for improvement:

- we need to be more systematic in how we use our programme to drive a better understanding of how to address granularity; build on our work on statistics and identity; and progress our local data work; and build links to decision makers who argue for and benefit from more granular data
- our research programme in its infancy and we will continue to do more work on how public good is understood – and share insights with statistical system
- we are in the early days of our thinking about ethnicity with a review ongoing. We've held workshops with external speakers to build awareness within the team and inform the review but we need to deliver and embed the outcomes from our review in how we work
- we are broadly speaking focused on the issues of the less well heard voices. We are good at listening to any user who approaches us. But we are less good at searching out user perspectives, and there is a gap in our current approach around how we identify issues of public concern. There is scope to do more to reach out beyond known users, and these will be areas of focus in 2021/22

Improve clarity and coherence of communication for maximum impact

Status: Met: To progress from basic to structured and proactive

Key findings from an ongoing diet of Assessments and Compliance Checks are being recycled into better guidance for regulators and for producers of statistics, and more-effective projects going forward. We continue to reinforce coherence and communications as key topics in our compliance work and it has been positive to see this normalised in 2020/21. Use of regulatory statements has also helped land our messages – though there is more to do to establish our strategy. We can cite more examples where we are demonstrating our maturity as a regulator by championing endeavours that provide clarity and insight for users of statistics – for example, endorsing ONS working with the Joint Biosecurity Centre and others to present a coherent narrative. We've also started to embed reviewing presentation of uncertainty, which is a key element of clarity of communication. This will form the basis for an Insight piece in 2021.22.

Areas for improvement:

- to move to a sustainable basis we will need to continue to embed and consistently apply the ways of working we've adopted during 2021/22
- through our Insight programme and with the support of our domains, we will focus on building an evidence base to understand our impact

Our capability

We identified five dimensions of our capability to develop:

- operate as independent regulator with transparent governance
- an energised team of leaders, skilled, resourced, and supported to deliver our ambitions
- embed strategic planning and management excellence within our culture
- improve our processes to drive efficiency and optimise value of our regulator's time
- gather and interrogate corporate intelligence efficiently and effectively to inform learning and improvement

We have made progress in 2020/21 in all areas of our capability, with varying pace. Our performance framework has allowed us to identify areas for further improvement in 2021/22.

Operate as independent regulator with transparent governance

Over the last year our profile and the understanding of our independent role has increased and repeated evidence of our Director General for Regulation and colleagues being asked to offer independent expert voice e.g. to Parliament. Best demonstrated during pandemic, we've launched OSR website and our Twitter following almost doubled. More public and parliamentary awareness of OSR: We have email, media and social media examples thanking us/recognising independent voice. We have responded fully to PACAC and IA reports on our independence.

Our Director General for Regulation is now Additional Accounting Officer for OSR and we made separately identified bid for first time as part of Authority SR20 submission. We first signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ONS Corporate Services in April 2020. We have conducted an annual review of the MoU in Spring 2021. The most significant changes are in respect to Cybersecurity, where we have invited HMRC's Government Security Centre for Cyber to review our arrangements and will receive their final report in June 2021. Provisionally they have advised us there were no major gaps against the Minimum Cyber Security Standard (MCSS) and they will make a series of recommendations focused on arrangements for managing OSR's dependency on ONS cyber infrastructure and expertise. We will follow these up in the coming months.

We have reviewed our approach to advertising posts for our latest rounds of recruitment, with a view to recruiting from a broad range of backgrounds. We want to be more inclusive and we also recognise that a diverse workforce helps us uphold our independence. We have made a video and improved our candidate packs to promote the benefits of joining us. We also have a new induction session for staff on ethical regulation.

Areas for improvement:

- we will continue to seek opportunities to strengthen our voice in devolved parliaments. We are also establishing with our Private Office a log of any challenges to our independence and how we have investigated and responded to them
- to move up a level in our maturity model to an optimal state we need to see the impact of a more conscious approach to recruiting from a wide range of inclusive backgrounds and we need to see evidence of respect for our voice outliving the pandemic and continue to broaden to other matters of public good

An energised team of leaders, skilled, resourced, and supported to deliver our ambitions

We have processes in place to recognise learning and resource gaps; and training identified is being delivered. There are processes to respond to learning needs identified by the team, or business planning process. For example, the annual OSR learning needs survey was circulated in summer 2020 and used to inform a learning needs plan, from which a schedule is compiled and training delivered. External expertise and services are secured once training needs are identified and all staff are reminded about how to obtain funding for individual training. In 2020/21 we spent only just over half of our budget for learning and conferences. This was in part due to the pandemic. While the team were able to identify virtual conferences and learning events to attend, we recognise that the time for formal learning in 2020 was pressured, something we want to overcome in 2021/22.

However, our team also play a massively important part in supporting each other's learning. We have fortnightly learning sessions, monthly induction sessions, and since the start of the pandemic we introduced 6-weekly virtual awaydays. These slots are always in high demand by colleagues offering learning opportunities and are well attended. Examples of learning we offered in 2021 for each other include:

Strategic: Baselining our maturity model, strategic and annual business planning, our remit as a regulator, Authority principles: Inclusion, what have we learned from how we responded to the pandemic.

Wellbeing: Line managers forum, buddy groups, information on how to access learning events offered across the Authority. To support our team through the pandemic we also provided a series of virtual opportunities to socialise – for example, virtual tea points, fortnightly Let's Do Lunch, Friday evening hangouts, and a social discussion platform.

Regulatory: Code conversations, case learning sessions, data science awareness, joint workshops with other regulators, ethical regulation, collecting and reporting data, user engagement, preparing evidence for Parliamentary committees.

Other skills: Digital communications, writing the web, using social media, making our work accessible, project and risk management, Microsoft 365 brown bag lunches.

The OSR structure and operations have adapted to cope with short term needs and our Senior Leadership Team is taking steps to assure itself of the future sustainability and succession planning for solo specialised functions e.g. Policy and Standards or Research.

There are established processes for analysing, engaging the wider team and effectively actioning the People Survey results. Monthly OSR Pulse Surveys are being run in the remote environment, and findings are analysed and actioned.

Ongoing process of understanding capacity and capability; and recruitment within the budget envelope is underway. We need to keep focusing on mixed recruitment, but OSR is a small team that needs specialist skills, so resource pool to draw from is fairly limited.

Review of our own response to the pandemic to learn lessons

To ensure that we build on the dynamism and innovation we have displayed during the early months of the pandemic, we carried out a review of our response to learn lessons. In August 2020 we held a team event where we used appreciative inquiry techniques focused around 6 themes: adapting and innovating; working with energy and dynamism; working with others; working together; focus, knowledge-building and productivity; and statistical leadership. We identified a range of behaviours and practices that we want to hold on to – for example, a supportive relationship with producers, ability to adapt quickly and flex our work programme, harnessing the benefits of technology. At the forefront was to maintain the confidence we have shown as a regulator during the pandemic and continue to be bold. We identified where we could make changes to further build on our growth as a regulator – for example – working on how to deliver earlier impacts from some of our longer-running projects, and drawing more effectively on the range of expertise available to us – within the organisation and through developing our networks. We will carry out a brief review this summer – one year on – to confirm how we are progressing in these areas.

Areas for improvement:

- OSR is able to utilise the whole team to deliver to best effect within our current resource profile, but we will communicate more in the remote environment, to ensure that all team members are aware of opportunities and encouraged to take on a wider range of work in OSR
- the senior leadership team work together to prioritise work but will emphasise Authority and OSR strategic ambitions in order to align projects to prioritise even more effectively

- the pulse survey identified that links with some specialist functions are working well and some links could be strengthened. Ensuring the links between domains and specialist functions are strengthened will be an explicit part of the role of the new strategic Grade 6 job we will recruit to in 2021/22
- risk is that we are reliant on the goodwill of W&D team members to compile, issue, analyse and deliver annual training plans and action plans on top of regulatory work. Our SLT lead will focus on how to optimise resource for people issues, such as recruitment, training, staff wellbeing and performance management

Embed strategic planning and management excellence within our culture

We have a much stronger framework in place as a result of work during 2020/21. We now have a published 5-year strategy supported by annual business plans and a rolling regulatory work programme. We have a performance framework against which to monitor our progress and we now produce: annual reports: annual state of the statistical system reports; regular updates for Regulation Committee on the maturity model and on our risk profile. We have developed a repository for project and risk management guidance and tools and updated and run our induction training. We have also produced the first of a series of newsletters for the team on project management and introduced new project and impact reports to help us learn lessons and understand our impact. We have started a review of our Big Projects from 2020 and we will be running workshops in April and May on lessons learned about what factors support success and how to identify and overcome challenges. We have used virtual team events to involve the whole team in the planning cycle and we will run an annual review in April 2021 to re-baseline the maturity model.

Areas for improvement:

- priorities for 2021/22 are to further develop our resource allocation, workflow and evaluation processes and normalise them
- we have also invited an internal audit of our maturity model framework so that we can learn lessons for the future

Improve our processes to drive efficiency and optimise value of our regulator's time

In 2020, we have carried out reviews of the casework process and the compliance check process and are in the process of implementing outcomes on both. Will need to assess impact of those reviews but there are promising signs – for example, the reduced median response time on casework. We've also introduced the new rapid review process and examined how to apply lessons from their success more broadly.

We've established the project roadmap for cataloguing, prioritising and reviewing all our processes, and we have met with all domains to gather a picture of what is in place. We are currently mapping these processes.

Areas for improvement:

- in 2021/22 we aim to focus on reviewing the processes that we identify as having the most scope for efficiency and increased value. We will be starting with the Quality Assurance and Sign Off process. We will also be seeking to evaluate and measure the impact of the process reviews carried out in 2020

Gather and interrogate corporate intelligence efficiently and effectively to inform learning and improvement

We are still at a basic level of maturity level 0 but groundwork this year puts us in strong position to mature quickly 2021/22. This is a critical piece of work. As we have grown as an organisation, our infrastructure for managing intelligence has not developed at the same pace. As a result information is held disparately, inefficiently, and there potentially a lot of duplication. Also, we have limitations on how we can interrogate the intelligence to inform our work. Regulation Support has developed a project roadmap and has met with all domains and functions to understand the user requirement and document the metadata already held. We have developed some short-term tools in the new 365 environment to gather intelligence – from our regulatory decisions, our daily updates and through project closure and impact reports. All of which we are now piloting. We have bid for resource from ONS to help us build a more robust system in 2021/22 and we have built an issues log to record our learning to inform that work.

Data and Automation

Our Data and Automation programme has provided our regulators with a cloud-based Twitter dashboard which runs automatically. This supports our topic domains with their horizon scanning to provide them with information about and references to statistics and data in social media discourse.

Insight Programme

The discovery phase of our Insight Programme has delivered a number of recommendations which are being developed into a plan for implementation. We have explored how other organisations approach delivering insights (gathering and sharing) – for example, National Audit Office, Institute for Government and Resolution Foundation.

We have made some quick-wins, such as making improvements to our project closure reports and developing new impact reports that will capture information in a way that better aligns with the pillars and principles of the Code and our priority themes – for example, granularity of data.

We need to focus in the coming year on turning this discovery into a working model and demonstrate the value through more Insight pieces on specific topics.

Areas for improvement:

- in 2021 we will focus the design and build of intelligence systems in the 365 environment and populating with existing metadata

