Review of actions taken in response to Assessment Report 349: Assessment of UK Employment and Jobs Statistics, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Requirement	Actions taken by ONS to meet the requirement	OSR's evaluation of evidence
1. To ensure that the statistics keep pace with the changing labour market, and meet user needs for data and insight, ONS should: a) work closely with a range of users to understand their data needs and to identify potential solutions to filling data gaps, including the use of alternative data sources b) prioritise work on exploring alternative data sources to generate more granular estimates of vacancies c) work closely with funders and partners to continue the APS d) explore opportunities for including analysis on a range of topics highlighted by users	• The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increased interest in the labour market statistics. The statistics team met regularly with key stakeholders to update them on issues and to discuss priorities. This was particularly important when carrying out the Labour Force Survey (LFS) reweighting, to mitigate the issues arising from the absence of face-to-face interviews. • In May 2020, ONS introduced experimental weekly estimates from the LFS for employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and hours in the UK. The statistics helped users to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market on a week-by-week basis, which allowed ONS to see when large movements in the data occurred such as the fall in actual hours worked at the start of the first lockdown. • ONS has started publishing more-timely vacancies estimates using online job advert data from Adzuna, which have only a 6-day lag. ONS introduced this administrative data source to its bulletins to aid interpretation of its vacancies data from June 2020.	We commend the team for taking a more proactive approach to user engagement since our assessment report was published. This was particularly clear during the reweighting of LFS, where the statistics team ensured it spoke with a range of users to inform its thinking. It has also used this feedback to continually review how it tells the story of labour market statistics, which led to the introduction of a dashboard of key indicators in the labour market overview.

	• Making more use of ad-hoc releases to get the right information out where resource has been under pressure. Working closely with other analytical teams to answer the immediate questions by drawing on their support. • The future of the Annual Population Survey (APS) is being explored as part of the LFS/Labour Market Statistics (LMS) transformation, to ensure that any solution enables users of APS (particularly in the devolved administrations (DAs)) to still be met. ONS is engaging regularly with the DAs.	
2. To maximise the value of these new data, ONS needs to develop and publish a plan for how it intends to integrate the RTI data with existing survey data.	• The COVID-19 pandemic helped bring forward the development work of the real-time information (RTI) data. ONS continues to work closely with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and other government departments to understand the data and agree priorities. A quarterly RTI Steering Group has been set up to facilitate these discussions and to share updates on the development work. • More breakdowns are being developed – industry and age by region along with more detail at NUTS3 and LAU1 levels, along with more work on revisions and how to present the data. • Following the publication of RTI PAYE data by nationality, ONS has used the data in producing new weights for the LFS and APS. Using these data ONS introduced an additional control in the weighting in relation to the structure of the population by country of	While this work is ongoing, we are impressed with the developments that have already taken place since the assessment was carried out and we are pleased to see the continued collaboration between ONS and HMRC. OSR plans to review RTI-based statistics as part of its 2022/23 work programme.

	birth. The weights were introduced for the headline LFS series in the release in July 2021. • ONS and HMRC jointly published an update of the data by NUTS1 region and nationality in March 2022, and are working on providing annual updates.	
3. To maximise insight and help users better understand trends in employment and jobs, the labour market statistics team should: a) integrate information on uncertainty and explain reasons for changes to put them into context b) draw together analysis to tell a joined-up story of employment and jobs and consider integrating the economic commentary analysis into the labour market bulletins	• With the introduction of word count restrictions, the labour market team is working with ONS publishing teams to improve messaging around uncertainty. For example, it has made changes to be more up front about revisions on RTI and the flash estimates. • ONS did some work with the Winton Centre on presenting uncertainty in the Quality and Methods Information (QMI) document and the bulletin. • As part of the word count changes, the team has been working on improving its bulletins, increasing the level of storytelling to make them more engaging and working closely with the editorial team to improve content. The statistics team has also made greater use of blogs and articles to discuss unusual changes to the data. • Plans to produce articles that compare different sources to draw out the differences – for example, workforce jobs and comparisons of data sets. ONS is aiming to better align the datasets and update the comparisons of data sources to show where best to use which source.	The QMI and comparisons of data sources article are clear and inform users about the strengths and limitations of the statistics, to support appropriate use. See also response to requirement 1.

4. To enhance the accessibility and use of the employment and jobs statistics and data, the labour market statistics team should improve signposting of related statistics across the website and consider developing practical guidance for users.	• The labour market team has been working with ONS publishing and the Government Statistical Service (GSS) coherence teams to improve signposting of labour market data, and published a guide to labour market data in December 2021. The team has added links to relevant information in multiple places to maximise views. • ONS has used Google Analytics to understand how users are accessing the statistics and how much time they spend on each section. • ONS is making more use of dashboards on the LM overview bulletin and the summary table of the key indicators, with lots of positive feedback. The dashboards have been developed based on feedback from users.	The team has significantly enhanced the coherence and accessibility of the statistics by explaining clearly the differences between employment and jobs statistics, and signposting relevant and related information across the related outputs.
5. To enhance the coherence of the employment and jobs statistics, the labour market statistics team should: a) lead collaborative work to understand and mitigate divergences and explain to users the nature, scale and drivers of discrepancies b) be more curious in seeking out opportunities to use alternative data sources to quality assure the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) data	• ONS produced a 'Comparisons of labour market data sources' article in December 2020 covering strength and limitations of the different datasets, offering some explanations for differences in trends and advising when it's best to use which data source. Work on this comparison is evolving as ONS learns more about the data sources. It is working closely with other government departments to understand the differences. • Focus on BRES has been on methodology and sample design (see requirement 7 for more detail). Concluded it was not a proportionate response to use alternative data sources to quality assure BRES.	While ONS has concluded that it is not possible to change its quality assurance process for BRES with the current available data for local units, it will be important for ONS to be open to exploring alternative data sources that may arise in the future, to address the concerns highlighted in our report.

6. ONS should prioritise and invest in the development of a centrally supported platform for producing the key labour market statistics.	• Work is ongoing to move away from legacy systems within individual surveys. A focus of the Ambitious Radical Inclusive Economic Statistics (ARIES) programme in 2021/22 has been to progress development in labour market statistics. • The ARIES programme work should also lead to improvements – in understanding what works well and what doesn't to address them as they roll out. • LMS may also highlight opportunities to improve the systems they are working with.	While a centrally supported platform for these statistics has not been created, the principles underlying the requirement have been addressed through the ARIES programme.
7. To enhance the quality of the BRES statistics and support user understanding of methods, ONS should: a) review and update the BRES sample allocation b) implement the new size-band calibration weights as soon as possible and communicate all changes in methods to users	• Focus on BRES has been on methodology and sample design – for example investigating a move away from stratification by full-time equivalent. ONS plans to implement this in 2023. • ONS looked at the Cambridge data which didn't justify doing an overhaul of the whole BRES methods as ONS considered it was not possible to adopt more widely.	The end-product of this work is yet to be published but we are assured that the work has been done to address this requirement. We will continue to monitor the development of BRES as part of ongoing engagement.
8. To reassure itself and users of the quality of all the administrative data sources, the labour market statistics team should apply our Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) framework.	• The team completed a quality improvement plan which identified some improvements for quality to take forward. • In March 2022, the statistics team met with OSR to discuss its understanding of the administrative data it works with, and to provide appropriate assurances. ONS committed to update its published documentation as soon as possible.	ONS's existing quality initiatives provide reassurance about the quality of the sources it uses. ONS's plans to expand its published Comparisons of Sources document will provide further reassurances to users. ONS still plans to complete a self-assessment against the QAAD framework

9. To enhance the clarity and accessibility of the quality and methods information, the labour market statistics team should: a) explain which statistics and data are available, the level of detail available, and which statistics should be used to answer specific questions b) signpost clearly relevant quality and methods information across all outputs c) regularly update all quality and methods information	• ONS produced a ['Comparisons of labour market data sources'](#) article in December 2020 covering strength and limitations of the different datasets, offering some explanations for differences in trends and advising when it's best to use which data source. • The labour market team has been working with ONS publishing and the GSS coherence teams to improve signposting of labour market data and published a guide to labour market data in December 2021. The team has added links to relevant information in multiple places to maximise views.	See response to requirement 4.
10. To ensure that the statistics continue to add value and meet needs of users, ONS should: a) dedicate enough resources to, and sufficiently prioritise, the development of the employment and jobs statistics b) ensure the labour market statistics team is adequately resourced to publish all outputs	• ONS has allocated more resource for the transformation of labour market statistics, working across Social Survey Transformation (SST) and Economic, Social and Environment Statistics Group (ESEG) to meet the requirements. • Spending Review identified resource for labour market transformation. • ONS is taking a more strategic approach within the directorate, as there are lots of analytical teams, to be able to pool resource to address priorities. Applies to improvement as well – earnings methodology is being supported. • ONS carried out some work to revisit priorities and skill set of the team – trying to align these and being proactive in flagging risks early to fill vacancies where they crop up. However,	We consider that these arrangements will help ensure the statistics continue to be produced in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

	demand has been increasing and still a high turnover of staff to contend with.	
11. To inform users of upcoming changes to the statistics, and to demonstrate and encourage further user engagement, ONS should: a) publish regular updates, including a timetable, about the LFS transformation programme and other statistical developments b) publish a summary of its current and planned user engagement activities	• The Covid-19 pandemic brought forward the introduction of the online LMS, due to the absence of face-to-face interviewing. In February 2020, ONS published a [Labour Market Survey Technical Report](#), which compared the LMS prototype and the LFS including looking at response rates. • In October 2021, ONS published its [analysis plans for the labour market using Census 2021](#). • ONS has invited OSR to assess the LMS development – aiming to start in April 2022. ONS has started its engagement with key stakeholders for LMS, including the DAs.	We are pleased that ONS is engaging with OSR throughout the development of the LMS. We encourage ONS to continue to share its plans and progress on LMS with users more widely.
12. To ensure that administrative data are transferred securely, and used and managed appropriately, the labour market statistics team should review the administrative data sharing arrangements and documentation.	• The team has clear and formal procedures about access levels and transfers of data in place. • The labour market team is working on making all datasets accessible.	We consider that the evidence demonstrates ONS' commitment to trustworthiness.