
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation

James Benford
Director General for the Surveys and Economic Statistics Group
Office for National Statistics
(by email)

14 September 2026

Dear James,

ONS update report on progress with economic statistics, July 2026: OSR response

We have today published our response to the Office for National Statistics (ONS)'s [third quarterly progress update](#) on its [Plan for Economic Statistics](#) and [Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan](#). Our response assesses the progress ONS has made to date in addressing the findings of OSR's systemic review of economic statistics and the recommendations arising from responses to your first and second progress updates.

We welcome the important progress reflected in the July update. We acknowledge the stronger leadership, greater transparency and renewed focus on engagement with users. The clearer management of the Surveys and Economic Statistics portfolio, sharper focus on a smaller set of priorities and indicators, and greater transparency about the sequencing, deferral and evidence dependencies of work give users a clearer view of delivery progress and associated risks.

We also judge that the four immediate requirements set out in [our April 2025 interim report](#) are met, with delivery and implementation continuing and further evidence still needed on resource allocation.

Against our January 2026 recommendations, we judge that ONS has largely met the recommendation to make its reporting more succinct, accessible and user focused. The introduction of clearer topic-based reporting, a developing set of KPIs and Annex B are positive steps. Further improvements should include statistically driven targets or thresholds for survey indicators, more KPIs linked directly to statistical outputs, and clearer explanations where delivery confidence is lower.

ONS has also committed to developing a more disaggregated view of the costs of delivering surveys and economic statistics, including indicative estimates for its most critical outputs. This is a welcome commitment, but the recommendation remains only partially met until this information is available and enables users to understand resource trade-offs and their implications for prioritisation, delivery and value for money. We consider that the recommendation on quality reviews, recruitment and retention, and legacy systems remains met, with further evidence now provided on quality reviews, portfolio risks, legacy-system work and operational resilience.

Significant risks remain because of the scale and complexity of the challenges ONS faces and we have set out some cross-cutting expectations. Future reporting should continue to demonstrate that the reset delivery baseline is credible and stable, improve transparency on survey response and sample performance, report clearly on quality-review findings and residual risks, and demonstrate more clearly how improvements benefit users. Our recently initiated review of ONS user engagement will also provide further evidence on whether user input is shaping priorities, delivery choices and improvements to the quality and value of economic statistics.

In light of the progress made, OSR intends to move from quarterly to annual published assessments of progress. ONS should continue to publish quarterly progress updates, and we will maintain oversight through our wider regulatory work programme, ongoing engagement with ONS and users, and continued monitoring of quality, delivery and risk across priority economic statistics.

Yours sincerely,

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

Ed Humpherson
Director General for OSR