Statistics for the public good

Regulating for trustworthiness, quality and value

Statistics for the public good

Office for Statistics Regulation

We provide independent regulation of official statistics produced in the UK. Statistics are an essential public asset. 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 Statistics. We ensure that producers of official 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.

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Foreword by
Ed Humpherson

Foreword

This strategic plan was developed during the coronavirus pandemic. The experience of the pandemic has influenced our business plan in two ways.

Firstly, it has shown more clearly than ever the importance to the public of trustworthy, high quality, high value information. It's not enough for good information to be available to decision-makers: for it to serve the public good, it must also be accessible, clearly explained and fairly presented to the public. Our work in the pandemic has involved stepping in to uphold these principles, and we have evolved our approach to support a fast changing statistical enviroment.

Second, the pandemic has shown us what the UK's statistical system at its best can do: produce new statistics at great speed, using new and existing methods and data sources. We have highlighted the positive way the statistical system has stepped up, included in our July 2020 report on the state of the statistical system.

Embedding these developments, so that they become the norm, is the core ambition of this strategic plan.

We do not know all of the issues that are going to be at the centre of public debate over the next five years. But we do know that we will stand up for the public's right to access statistics and data that exhibit trustworthiness, quality and value.

This plan accordingly does not map out a detailed set of deliverables for each of the next five years. Instead, it takes the four areas in the UK Statistics Authority's strategy, and sets out what we are trying to achieve, including near term commitments, and medium term aspirations. And it sets out too what kind of regulator we want to be, using the maturity model set out on pages 12 to 27.

In summary, OSR needs to be agile, to focus on the interests of the public as users of statistics, and to continually develop our role as an independent regulator. This plan sets out how we aim to achieve these ambitions.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
9 July 2020

Introduction

What we do

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority, a body established by the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007).

We are independent from government Ministers. We are separate from producers of statistics, including the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

In line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) our principal roles are to:

- Set the statutory [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)
- Assess compliance with the Code of Practice
- Award the National Statistics designation to official statistics that comply fully with the Code of Practice
- Report any concerns on the quality, good practice and comprehensiveness of official statistics

This document

This document sets out our vision and priorities for 2020-2025 and how we will contribute to fostering the Authority's ambitions for the statistics system, as set out in the Authority Strategy.

The different parts of the statistical system will contribute to the delivery of the Authority's ambitions in different ways – our role as the regulator will be independent and distinct from that of the producers, including the Office for National Statistics. We explain how our activities relate to the overall strategy.

This strategic business plan builds on the [OSR annual business plan](#) which focuses on what we aim to achieve in 2020/21.

More information about our vision and the history, purpose and governance of the Office for Statistics Regulation be found [here](#).

Our Vision

Our vision is simple. Statistics should serve the public good.

What do we mean by serving the public good? Statistics published by public sector bodies should be produced in a trustworthy way, be of high quality, and provide value by answering people's questions: providing accountability, helping people make choices and informing policy. And statistics are part of the lifeblood of democratic debate.

Statistics therefore should serve a very wide range of users. When they meet the needs of these users, they serve the public good.

But they do not always fulfil these ambitions. Their value can be harmed – through poor production, lack of relevance and coherence, and through misuse.

It is our role as regulator to minimise these problems. By championing high standards, we uphold public confidence in statistics that serve the public good.

Authority priorities for 2020-25

The Authority Strategy sets out four priorities for the statistical system over the next five years:

Build public trust in evidence.

We must demonstrate both competence and impartiality in all that we do. All our activities must build trust in our unique position in the UK and international data landscape.

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

The Authority will aim to increase the public value of information already collected through combining it with other information and analysis and presenting the results in a comprehensible way.

Enhance understanding of social and economic matters.

All that the statistical system does should improve the knowledge base, and the ability of others, to use evidence. This must involve a better and richer understanding of user needs, and a strategic shift towards more impactful cross-cutting analysis.

Improve clarity and coherence of communication for maximum impact.

Communicating relevant evidence effectively is as important as the quantity and quality of evidence itself. All our communications will be clear, insightful and support public understanding.

How we will deliver through this strategic business plan – aligning OSR priorities for 2020-25

As a regulator, we work through three delivery channels:

- We uphold trustworthiness quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence
- We protect the role of statistics in public debate
- We develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

We want to be radical and our strategic business plan is high level. It will be crystallised into annual priorities and deliverables. This allows us to take a flexible approach to emerging challenges facing the statistics system. Each year, our annual business plan will set out our annual priorities – for example, in 2020/21 we will have a focus on: how official statistics offer insight, clarity of communication and coherence; and whether official statistics answer society's questions, focusing on greater granularity and data linkage. We publish a work programme which sets out our planned deliverables and is regularly updated.

This approach demands agility and a continual focus on the needs of the public as users of statistics. These qualities – agility and the public good – have underpinned our work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In developing this strategic business plan, we have been guided by the Authority's core principles:

Radical: we are radical in signalling a decisive shift from traditional static, collect-and-count approaches to statistics.

Inclusive: we have sought to emphasise the central importance of disaggregated data. This will enable statistics to reflect the experience of all in society.

Ambitious: we set out a greater role in data linkage, data ethics, and in providing assurance to the public on other forms of published evidence, beyond official statistics

Sustainable: we have sought to avoid committing to work that we cannot deliver. We focus on priorities that we can deliver for the public good.

Build public trust in evidence

OSR ambition

In 2025, the statistical system will support people's ability to distinguish reliable from unreliable statistics and data.

How we will deliver

Uphold trustworthiness quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence

- use the process of assessment and review to give assurance to users on statistics and evidence they use
- argue for the relevance of trustworthiness, quality and value as underpinning concepts for public confidence in other forms of published evidence
- support widespread voluntary adoption of the Code of Practice beyond official statistics

Protect the role of statistics and evidence in public debate

- continue to challenge the misrepresentation of statistics and other forms of data/evidence
- support broader efforts by the statistical system to improve statistical literacy, including by providing guides on how to spot misuse of statistics

Develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

- develop an evidence base on the nature of public confidence in statistics

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

OSR ambition

In 2025, the statistical system will be based around linked data sets. Sharing and linked datasets, and using them for research and evaluation, will no longer be the exception. It will be the norm.

How we will deliver

Uphold trustworthiness quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence

- incorporate data sharing as a core requirement in our assessments of official statistics, and be willing to remove the National Statistics designation where there is an insufficient focus on sharing

- expand our regulatory function beyond statistics to the broader base of data and evidence that serve the public good, and our role in respect of data and Artificial Intelligence will be well established

- provide assurance on analysis and evaluation published by Government, as well as official statistics, because it is cross-cutting analysis which has the greatest potential for tracking changes in society

- ensure the statistical system links data in an ethical and appropriate way, playing a much greater role in providing assuring on compliance with ethical standards, including through the National Statistician's Data Ethics Committee

- automate the gathering of evidence by OSR to improve our efficiency and effectiveness in reviewing the statistical system

Protect the role of statistics in public debate

- make statements on how research and evaluation outputs are used in public debate, intervening where this type of evidence is misrepresented

Develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

- build the evidence base that shows how linked datasets serve the public good much more effectively than individual, silo-ed data collections

Enhance understanding of social and economic matters

OSR ambition

In 2025, the statistical system will provide much a richer picture of the UK's changing economy and society. The system will move beyond the tyranny of the average, providing disaggregated and granular insight into how different communities, places and people are doing.

How we will deliver

Uphold trustworthiness quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence

- our annual regulatory work programme to uphold the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence will focus on ensuring statistics provide regional/local and disaggregated pictures of society
- our assessments and compliance checks will challenge producers to produce more granular statistics and to respond to changing aspects of social identity and economic activity
- the statistical response to the COVID-19 pandemic shows the agility and insight that is possible at high speed, and we will and encourage support this agility as much as possible
- our systemic reviews will uncover areas where the needs of a wide range of users are not being met, and challenge producers to address these needs and gaps
- where producers do not address these issues, we will highlight our concerns and criticism publicly
- we will refresh the National Statistics designation, ensuring it conveys to users the value and relevance of statistics and endures as an indicator of quality
- our insight programme will identify issues that are relevant to all producers from our work and ensure that we share lessons effectively

Develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

- foster a widely shared understanding of what the public good of statistics means across the statistical system, based on a programme or research, analysis and wide engagement
- we will highlight the full range of users – for example, businesses, charities, community groups, and the individual citizen – and ensure that producers develop a much better understanding of these uses, so they focus on what really matters

Improve clarity and coherence of communication for maximum impact

OSR ambition

In 2025, the statistical system will deliver clear, authoritative messages. It will be a core capability of statisticians to interpret, illuminate and caveat what the statistics say – recognising that statistics are numbers with a social life.

How we will deliver

Uphold trustworthiness quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence

- highlight weaknesses in coherence and comprehensiveness through our systemic reviews and assessments/compliance checks
- challenge producers where they allow statistics to be presented in a way that leads others to put undue weight on them
- recognise where producers have innovated to provide clear insight
- help a greater clarity of message shine through by clarifying the role of National Statistics and reviewing the National Statistics estate, while ensuring more underlying datasets are published to maintain and enhance public access
- use our Insight programme to identify ways in which producers can enhance communication, and use our automation programme to track the impact of statistical publications in social media

Protect the role of statistics in public debate

- promote coherent evidence-based messaging and challenge the misrepresentation of statistics and other forms of data/evidence, mitigating the risk that the clarity of message is polluted by misleading use

Develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

- emphasise and build an evidence base on the role of communication with users in serving the public good
- focus on understanding the impact of our interventions on the public good of statistics

Measuring performance towards our vision

To provide the evidence base that we have been successful, we will adopt a self-assessment model to measure our performance towards our vision for 2025 against a set of incremental standards. We have framed four maturity-level indicators against the Authority's strategic priorities, and for our overall capability as a regulator. Our baseline in 2020 will not be at the same level across each priority – for some we will have progressed beyond level 0. Also, it should not be assumed it will take until 2025 to be operating optimally – we will move to this state as quickly as we can.

Maturity levels:

0 – Basic

1 – Structured and Proactive

2 – Sustainable – Managed and focused

3 – Optimal – Focused on deliberate continuous improvement

Regular self-assessment against the performance standards will inform a dashboard that will provide our leadership team with a clear picture of where we are making the desired progress through the levels, and where we need to re-evaluate our approach. We will monitor the dashboard every 3 months through our Programme Review Board and report to the Regulation Committee and Authority Board in line with the reporting arrangements for the Authority Strategy.

OSR Performance Framework

1. Build public trust in evidence

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

3. Enhance understanding of social and economic matters

4. Improve clarity and coherence of communication for maximum impact

5. Capability as a regulator

OSR Performance Framework

1. Build public trust in evidence

Characteristics of our regulatory model

0 – Basic:

Focused on processes of assessment of individual statistics:

- Delivers programme of assessments, compliance checks, rapid reviews and systemic reviews of statistics against the pillars of the Code: Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV)
- Responds to concerns raised by the public and users and producers of official statistics, if they relate to official statistics

1 – Structured and Proactive:

Willing to identify emerging issues and focus on issues beyond "official statistics"

In addition to 0:

- Advocates for the relevance of TQV as underpinning concepts for public confidence in other forms of evidence than official statistics – broaden our reach
- Expands regulatory tools and channels for advocating TQV to adapt to different scenarios and audiences
- Develops automated approaches to identifying misrepresentation of statistics and evidence
- Develops an understanding of where statistical literacy is lacking and who is working to address the gaps
- Responds to requests to deliver coaching, seminars etc around the Code and statistical literacy
- Builds alliances with partners where we can support their efforts to improve statistical literacy in different settings
- Understands the landscape of data, analysis and research that inform key decisions and debate

2 – Sustainable:

Establishing frameworks and concepts as a thought leader

In addition to 1:

- Adaptable regulatory model that draws on our regulatory tools; voluntary adoption; and our networks, alliances and communication channels to advocate for TQV
- Self-identifies potential cases of misrepresentation of statistics and evidence and intervenes appropriately
- Develops an evidence base on the nature of public confidence in statistics
- Adopts the learning from voluntary adoption to our broader regulatory model, with more emphasis on producers to publish statements of their assurance about TQV
- Publishes regulatory statements on key issues and ensure those with influence to advocate for change are well sighted e.g. select committees

3 – Optimal:

Focused on the outcome of public confidence in statistics and data published by Government

In addition to 2:

- Uses our voice at the optimum time, and in the best way, to have greatest value to users and producers of statistics
- Exploits opportunities to advocate for improved statistical literacy - with the analytical community, Parliament, schools, media etc.
- Develops e-learning modules, webinars, blogs etc around the Code and statistical literacy - including a guide to misuse
- Reduced core set of National Statistics
- Regulatory model, priorities and Code informed by what we learn about the nature of public confidence

Evidence base

- Publication of assessments; systemic reviews; compliance checks; casework outcomes; regulatory statements
- Requirements and recommendations implemented by producers
- Evaluation of outcomes against original project aims as part of project closure reports
- Organisations and sets of statistics, data and analysis signed up for voluntary application of the Code
- Evaluation of voluntary application good practice case studies and demonstration of excellence evidenced in Voluntary Application award entries
- Self-identified casework interventions and responses to casework evaluation survey
- Range of evidence for which we have made interventions and evaluation of the outcomes
- Deployment of dashboards or other visual aids to collect, analyse and present text data that highlight potential misrepresentation – evaluation of materiality of interventions that have resulted.
- Annual reports for Regulation Committee evaluating the trustworthiness, quality and value of our interventions
- Evaluation of responses to our interventions – for example, through social and mainstream media, Parliamentary debate, and engagement with users and producers of statistics and data
- Evaluation of responses to our regulatory statements and contributions to Parliamentary inquiries and select committees, focused on evidencing whether we used our voice at the optimum time, and in the best way, to have greatest value to users and producers of statistics
- Evidence of nature of public confidence and evaluation of how we reflected what we have learned in the Code and our regulatory model

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

Characteristics of our regulatory model

0 – Basic:

Focused on processes of assessment of individual statistics:

- Develop understanding of statistical system's ability to provide greater insights to users via linked data.
- Establish role as supporters and regulators the use of linked data and AI

1 – Structured and Proactive:

Willing to identify emerging issues and focus on issues beyond "official statistics"

In addition to 0:

- Build an expert function in respect of data and Artificial Intelligence
- Make statements on how research and evaluation outputs are used in public debate, intervening where this type of evidence is misrepresented

2 – Sustainable:

Establishing frameworks and concepts as a thought leader

In addition to 1:

- Assessment of data sharing and AI embedded within our regulation of statistics and related evidence
- Develop regulatory guidance that interprets the TQV pillars of the Code in respect of data sharing and AI, including assuring on compliance with ethical standards
- Build the evidence base that shows how linked datasets serve the public good

3 – Optimal:

Focused on the outcome of public confidence in statistics and data published by Government

In addition to 2:

- Well established role in the regulation of data and Artificial Intelligence – users and producers seek our advice
- Strong advocates for data sharing and challenging Government where opportunities to share link data are not pursued

Evidence base

- Published statements on our regulatory role in the data and Artificial Intelligence landscape.
- Evidenced support for regulatory role in the data and Artificial Intelligence landscape from the range of organisations working in the data landscape
- Publication of assessments; systemic reviews; compliance checks; casework outcomes; regulatory statements
- Requirements and recommendations implemented by producers
- Evaluation of outcomes against original project aims as part of project closure reports
- Self-identified casework interventions and responses to casework evaluation survey
- Records of advocacy and engagement and evaluation of impact

3. Enhance understanding of social and economic matters

Characteristics of our regulatory model

0 – Basic:

Focused on processes of assessment of individual statistics:

- Highlights opportunities to improve the granularity and understanding provided by statistics where those issues arise in routine assessments

1 – Structured and Proactive:

Willing to identify emerging issues and focus on issues beyond "official statistics"

In addition to 0:

- Delivers a regulatory work programme that upholds the importance of: providing disaggregated pictures of society; and responding to changing aspects of social identity and economic activity
- Establishes a new series of 'local data' reviews that will examine how well needs for social and economic insights are being met at a local level
- Is conscious and deliberate in seeking the experiences, views and needs of groups and communities whose voices are not well represented through our usual engagement, including the most vulnerable in society

2 – Sustainable:

Establishing frameworks and concepts as a thought leader

In addition to 1:

- Fosters a widely shared understanding of what the public good of statistics means across the statistical system
- Identifies issues that are relevant to all producers from our work and ensure that we share the lessons effectively

- Uses the National Statistics designation to convey for users when statistics are relevant and serve to enhance our understanding of the economy and society
- Establishes a programme of research and builds alliances to better understand the public good of statistics

3 – Optimal:

Focused on the outcome of public confidence in statistics and data published by Government

In addition to 2:

- Maintains focus on the things that matter to people now and will matter into the future
- Challenges producers to identify where they are not best serving the public good and to be agile and creative to address needs, fill evidence gaps and provide insight
- Uses our voice to speak for those whose needs are not being met, and affects change

Evidence base

- Publication of assessments; systemic reviews; compliance checks; casework outcomes; regulatory statements
- Requirements and recommendations implemented by producers
- Evaluation of outcomes against original project aims as part of project closure reports
- Self-identified casework interventions and responses to casework evaluation survey
- Records of advocacy and engagement and evaluation of the breadth and quality of reach we have achieved across different groups

4. Improve clarity and coherence of communication for maximum impact

Characteristics of our regulatory model

0 – Basic:

Focused on processes of assessment of individual statistics:

- Uses our regulatory programme to challenge producers to collaborate and address weaknesses in coherence
- Challenges the misrepresentation of statistics and other forms of data/evidence, mitigating the risk that the clarity of message is polluted by misleading use

1 – Structured and Proactive:

Willing to identify emerging issues and focus on issues beyond "official statistics"

In addition to 0:

- Uses our automation programme to track the impact of statistical publications on public debate: beginning with social media and building to other interrogate channels
- Builds an evidence base on the role of communication with users in serving the public good
- Works with producers to drive a reduction in the number of National and official statistics and to establish clarity around the relationships between related statistics, data and other forms of evidence

2 – Sustainable:

Establishing frameworks and concepts as a thought leader

In addition to 1:

- Uses insights from our regulatory work to identify ways in which producers can enhance clarity of communication that will optimise impact
- Fosters an environment where producers assume the lead in maintaining and communicating a streamlined portfolio with a balance towards fewer National Statistics and more accessible datasets

3 – Optimal:

Focused on the outcome of public confidence in statistics and data published by Government

In addition to 2:

- Champions endeavours that provide clarity and insight for users of statistics

Evidence base

- Publication of assessments; systemic reviews; compliance checks; casework outcomes; regulatory statements
- Requirements and recommendations implemented by producers
- Evaluation of outcomes against original project aims as part of project closure reports
- Self-identified casework interventions and responses to casework evaluation survey
- Records of advocacy and engagement and evaluation of impact
- Regulator evidenced evaluation of value of automated intelligence-gathering tools
- National Statistics list
- Producer and regulators evaluation of how our Insight programme has informed their thinking

5. Capability as a regulator

Characteristics of our regulatory model

0 – Basic:

Focused on processes of assessment of individual statistics:

Objective

5.1 Operate as independent regulator with transparent governance

- Take action to respond appropriately to any perception of lack of independence or recommendations of reviews. e.g. PACAC, Internal Audit
- Complete annual Corporate Governance Assurance Statement and learn lessons

Objective

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

- Recognise learning and resource gaps
- Respond to learning needs identified by the team
- Utilise team to best effect within current resource profile
- Adapt structure and operations to cope with short term needs
- Senior leadership team work together to prioritise effectively
- Secure external expertise and services as needs are identified
- Respond to annual people survey

Objective

5.3 Embed strategic planning and management excellence within our culture

- Reprioritise work programme and resources to respond to emerging needs as they arise
- Localised planning and prioritisation within domains
- Learn from project closure reports and case learning

Objective

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

- Conduct process reviews where potential shortcomings recognised

Objective

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

- Bring together information and interrogate using existing systems – siloed
- Recognise scope for efficiencies and to make better use of our organisational intelligence
- Implement 'quick-wins'

1 – Structured and Proactive:

Willing to identify emerging issues and focus on issues beyond "official statistics"

Objective

5.1 Operate as independent regulator with transparent governance

In addition to 0:

- Publish clear governance arrangements and terms of reference
- Establish and review every six months Memorandum of Understanding with Authority Corporate Services
- Publish Conflict of Interest Policy
- Induct all staff on value of our independence and their responsibilities

Objective

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

- Shape resource profile to support delivery of vision - gain support - and bid for appropriate funding
- Deliver learning strategy informed by skills gaps exercise
- Strong domain structure supported by specialist functions
- Recruitment of diverse team with mixed skills sets to deliver the business
- Develop strategic approach to procuring services
- Run regular OSR Pulse Surveys and respond to findings

Objective

5.3 Embed strategic planning and management excellence within our culture

- 5-year strategy and annual business planning round, supported by domain planning informed by stakeholder engagement
- Programme Review Board oversee delivery of work programme; Corporate Risk Log and performance measures

Objective

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

- Prioritised programme of process review and improvement
- Document all processes and their interactions

Objective

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

- Draw up specification for integrated automated intelligence-management systems
- Secure developer and build (use agile approach)

2 – Sustainable:

Establishing frameworks and concepts as a thought leader

Objective

5.1 Operate as independent regulator with transparent governance

In addition to 1:

- Director General for Regulation secondary accounting officer for OSR and reports openly and transparently on performance and use of resources
- OSR website, social media accounts, and clear branding provides independent channel to transparently communicate our judgements

Objective

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

- Effective model of succession planning
- Learning and Wellbeing programme developed and led by the team
- Team of champions – mental health, diversity, wellbeing – driving forward improvement
- Wellbeing activities and volunteering supported and encouraged

Objective

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

- Processes operating efficiently and robustly
- Built-in version control management

Objective

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

- Operational integrated automated intelligence- management system - informing management decisions, Insight programme, domain work, stakeholder engagement

3 – Optimal:

Focused on the outcome of public confidence in statistics and data published by Government

Objective

5.1 Operate as independent regulator with transparent governance

In addition to 2:

- Organisation drawn from a wide range of backgrounds that continually challenges the status quo
- Confident organisation able to voice our position and judgements with good sense of protecting our independence without being overly cautious in tempering our views – driven by the public good

Objective

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

- A team of individuals who understand themselves, their role, their motivations, their capacities as leaders, and inhabit their roles in ways which enhance their own well-being, those of their colleagues, and of course the wider community we serve.
- Flexible resource model drawing on internal and external expertise – agile delivery mechanism
- Agile organisational structure – effective balance of topic expertise and operating fluidly to deliver programme
- Team driving improvement

Objective

5.3 Embed strategic planning and management excellence within our culture

- Integrated and transparent rolling work programming optimising our resource, and agile to the environment
- Proportional and agile project management and risk management embedded within our culture
- Strong ethos of performance and outcomes measurement and transferrable learning

Objective

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

- Team drive process improvement

Objective

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

- Continue to improve based on listening to the information needs of our team and responding effectively
- Team is able to focus on delivering our business rather than processing

Evidence base

- CGAS and delivery of action plans – monthly corporate governance reports to Programme Review Board
- Reviews and records of issues raised on our independence – and responses
- Our published judgements and statements and public responses
- OSR Annual Report and Accounts
- Monthly Programme Review reports and dashboards (programme delivery; performance measures; capacity etc)
- Corporate Risk Log
- Internal Audit reports
- Process Reviews
- Evaluation of project closure reports (evaluate efficiency; impact and outcomes; and lessons learned)
- People and pulse survey results
- Learning survey results
- Recruitment profiles; skills audits; exit interviews
- Review of procurement practices (evaluation of delivery; timeliness; value for money)
- Evaluation of impact of our website, social media presence and branding on our reputation for independence

Resources

Finance

Delivering our strategic business plan will require new expertise, the formation of new functions and investment in tools to allow us to optimise the value of our regulatory activity. **Figure 1** below presents our current estimate of resource requirements across the next five years. At present we have certainty through the Spending Round 2019 for our budget for 2020/21. All further financial plans are indicative and subject to iterative review and approval through central HM Treasury fiscal events in the coming months.

Figure 1 - Forecast spend £million
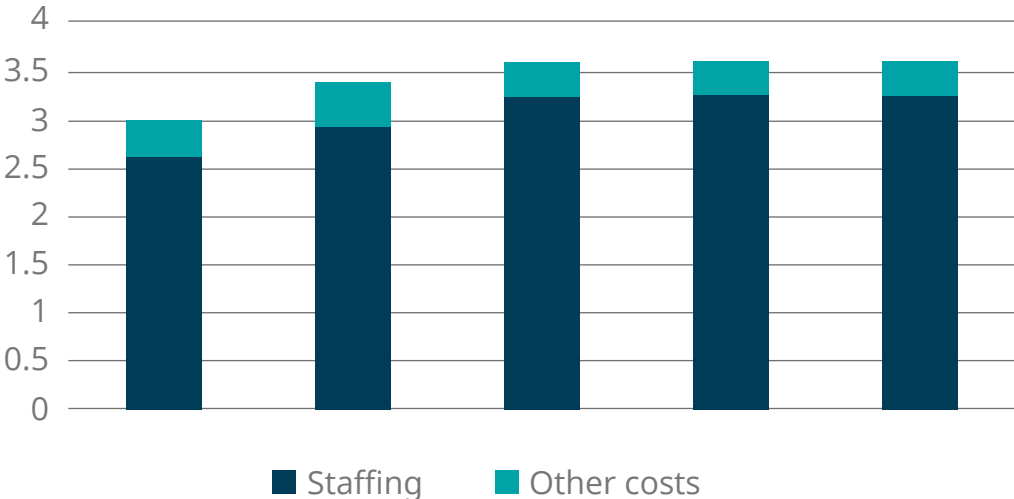
The Director General for Regulation (DGR) was appointed as Additional Accounting Officer, by the National Statistician (as Principle Accounting Officer for the UK Statistics Authority), with effect from 1 June 2020, for the Office for Statistics Regulation budget. The DGR will be personally responsible and accountable to the UK Statistics Authority Board and Parliament for the use of public money and stewardship of public assets, in line with the Delegation Letter that the National Statistician will agree with them on an annual basis.

People

To review data standards and ethics and a wider range of Government analytical outputs would require us to expand our team by 10 people, taking OSR to 52 staff:

- Recruitment of 2 Grade 6s to strengthen our Senior Leadership Team to reflect our increased size and broadened ambitions. A Strategy and Communications Lead will provide for a focused and flexibly managed work programme and communications strategy that delivers on our ambitions and imbues the culture and skills we need to operate a mature and sustainable high-performing regulator. A Data, Policy and Research Lead will draw together our development programmes to deliver the coordinated radical thinking that will inform our role as a regulator and the development of the statistics system well into the future.

- Expansion of our Automation and Technology function to include an SEO data scientist and an SEO data linkage and ethics expert. The data scientist will bolster our automation and technology capacity and the data linkage and ethics expert will provide strategic leadership - developing policy and standards, building strategic alliances; and working closely with our regulators to inform the development of our regulatory activity in this space, and the promotion of standards within the analytical community.

- SEO Casework Lead – as we have grown as an independent and visible regulator, our casework programme has grown, and we have increasingly taken over responsibilities for coordinating casework from the Authority Chair's team. Our Private Office has responded conscientiously to absorb the additional work and to improve the way we operate, but the volume of interest means our model is not sustainable without additional dedicated resource.

- 6 additional regulators to serve the wider range of Government analytical outputs, the growing voluntary application of the Code, and increased casework. We have balanced our need for additional regulators with the efficiencies that developments in automation, an investment in tools that will allow us to more readily exploit our intelligence, and a streamlining of processes will bring. We aim to balance recruitment of experienced professionals with supporting an increased number of placement students. We have found our students in recent years have performed excellently and made a major contribution to keeping our perspective fresh. We hope our investment in them will reap future benefits for the analytical community.

Efficiencies and sustainability

Our people are our core investment. There has been widespread support for our growth as an independent regulator and we will continue to grow and up-skill our team into 2021/22, to consolidate our regulatory capacity with a broadened remit.

Other costs will make up around 12-13 per cent of our expenditure in 2020/21 and 2021/22. We expect to reduce that proportion to around 9 per cent by 2022/23 (around £120k).

The largest contributors to annual costs are:

- Research and Consultancy £150k
- Travel and hosting events £115k
- Building rent £50k
- Learning and conferences £25k (£35k in 2021/22 for reskilling to meet the demands of regulating an increasingly data-driven world)

Efficiency Themes:

Process improvement and automation:

We recognise that as we have invested in our people in the last two years, we have not invested similarly in the infrastructure and processes to support them. This has two impacts: i) we lose time to processing that could be reinvested in regulatory activity and ii) we are not able to optimise the intelligence we hold as an organisation - from our regulatory activity, engagement and the innovative automated data techniques we are now deploying - to best inform our work, and the work of the statistical system. We plan to review and streamline all our processes and invest an additional £100k in 2021/22 in tools that will allow us to record and exploit the intelligence we gather more efficiently to gain and share insights.

Travel and events

Face-to-face engagement in all its forms will continue to be an important part of our regulatory approach, and our advocacy of the Code. However, we have been learning lessons through the COVID-19 pandemic that will forever impact our ways of working. While we will be expanding as an organisation, and in our remit, we will work to reduce this budget by around 15 per cent by utilising the broad range of communication tools available to us where it makes sense. For example, hosting a webinar allows us to extend our reach in a way that an event held in Central London might limit us.

Building rent

We will be moving our Edinburgh location to the new Edinburgh Hub in Autumn 2020 and will be taking the opportunity to significantly reduce our footprint through smart working. We are also starting to explore how we will operate in our London and Newport locations, based on what we have learned from operating during the COVID-19 pandemic.