# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Data Landscape Workshop - Developing a new strategy for the UK's statistical system – 3 February 2020*

**Attendees –** ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ (HMRC), ▮▮▮▮▮▮ (ADR UK), ▮▮▮▮▮▮ (UKRI), ▮▮▮▮▮▮ (RSS), ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ (CDEI), ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ (ODI), Will Marks (UKSA), Douglas Cameron (UKSA), Frankie Kay (ONS), Ed Humpherson (OSR).

1. The session began with an update from Frankie Kay and Ed Humpherson on the future data landscape from both a production and regulation perspective. Will Marks then gave an update on consultation activities for the UKSA strategy, noting emerging themes from the responses so far and setting out the context for an inclusive, ambitious, radical and sustainable new strategy for the UK's statistical system.

2. Attendees then took part in an activity to individually note a) one thing the UK statistical system currently does well, and b) one thing the UK statistical system could do better, over the next five years. These suggestions were then discussed in groups. For what the system currently does well, the Authority's core purpose as a trusted, independent and impartial provider of statistics, data and analysis frequently emerged from attendees:

    i. 'Trusted and recognised source of evidence, both in the UK and globally';
    ii. 'Providing trustworthy and neutral narrative analysis';
    iii. 'Regular, reliable provision of standard statistics (GDP, inflation, health, crime)';
    iv. 'Provide a core set of statistics on key issues and supporting research';
    v. 'Produces reliable and trusted statistics free from political interference';
    vi. 'High quality data collections across key areas of social life'; and
    vii. 'Breadth and coverage of topics with accuracy and reliability of information'.

3. The Authority's role in the UK's statistical system was also raised as a discussion point, with an acknowledgement that we can't do everything in the data and statistics universe and instead need to decide what ambitious opportunities to take but also be clear on what we're *not* going to do over the next five years. For example, real-time data was something seen to be beyond the natural remit of the ONS at this stage by attendees.

4. Attendees moved on to discuss what the statistical system could do better over the next five years. There was an overarching desire for clearer communication and insight into what the statistics and data we produce *mean* for our various users. This related to our legislative requirements to inform the public on both social and economic matters and assist in the development and evaluation of public policy. Secondly, a need for the flexible provision of new insight using alternative data sources at multiple geographies.

    i. 'Much clearer communication of what the stats actually mean';
    ii. 'Deliver statistics and analysis in a manner that reflects new user needs';
    iii. 'Develop a data stewardship role which supports other parts of the public sector to share data for valuable purposes';
    iv. 'Accelerate the development of contemporary concepts that cut across silos, and which rapidly gain common currency';
    v. 'Leading, organising and coordinating across the GSS'; and
    vi. 'Flexible provision of new insight using alternate data sources'.

5. There was a recognition that while the Authority had a clear role in maintaining and building trust, as the legislation sets out, it could take on a greater role in leadership and influence across the system. This must be in true partnership across the system, and beyond alongside better communication. Finally, there were strong calls for a focus on user needs, relevance, and geographically specific data, statistics and analysis.

6. Having explored the Authority's core purpose through existing legislation, attendees then undertook a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the UK's data landscape over the next five years. These are summarised in the table below:

| Strengths |
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| • Intellectual leadership of the system and proven track record<br>• High level of trust could withstand pressures over the next five years<br>• Significant access to a range of data sources and data capability/skills<br>• Strong institutional base with several organisations set up to manage data |
| Weaknesses |
| • Too many players in the data landscape and lack of collaboration/sharing<br>• Too much emphasis on statistics and not enough on data<br>• Data as product – general public not understanding data and misunderstanding facts |
| Opportunities |
| • Leaving the European Union and international focus – commitment to research<br>• New Government with cross-cutting agenda across multiple social issues and a focus on data driven decisions – lever for relevance e.g. Net Zero<br>• Data at local level and multiple flexible geographies<br>• Private sector data and increased access to commercial data for public good |
| Threats |
| • Public trust and independence could be undermined – legitimacy of the data landscape given trust level in statistics could be high but impacted by low confidence in government<br>• Privacy lobby and concerns around data ethics – anonymisation and safeguarding risks |