
Darren Tierney | Permanent Secretary

Penny Young
Interim Chair
UK Statistics Authority
Cardiff Road
Newport
NP10 8XG

Sent via email only

CC: Simon Hoare MP; Catherine Little; Ed Humpherson

19 February 2026

Dear Penny,

In November I wrote to you about our announcement of measures we are taking to narrow the focus of the ONS's portfolio and reduce the number of our publications. This is part of our commitment to put quality before quantity and devote resources to our essential improvement work. While these are difficult decisions, they are necessary given available resource to enable us to deliver our mission of trustworthy, independent, high-quality statistics that underpin the UK's most critical economic and societal decisions and inform the public.

Last autumn we took the decision to pull back on analysis not required to improve the quality of our statistics, including the closure of the Integrated Data Service Programme and repurposing of analytical resource, to redirect around 150 skilled roles in support of our economic statistics and survey improvement and enhancement plans.

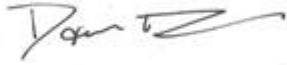
Since then, we have worked with a range of organisations across health, subnational and areas of economic statistics relevant to government departments to ensure ONS statistics are focused where they deliver most value, and where we are uniquely placed to deliver. In doing this we engaged with users so that reductions in the near term have as little impact as possible in the context of other available data sources.

Today, we announce the next steps in these efforts, detailed in Annex A, including a **reduction in our statistical outputs over the immediate period** while we focus on the ONS's recovery and invest in the quality of our core economic statistics. In response to user feedback, we will continue to run the **Annual Population Survey (APS)**, which reflects ONS outputs at the local and regional level. However, in the short term and given practical limits on our field interview resources, we will have a reduction in the survey boost in England which supports APS data. We will work closely with users on what that means for their data needs.

We continue to build our approach of working in the open, providing regular updates on the delivery of our improvements and building trust, supporting our people and places. Looking further ahead, we will publish our 2026/27 Strategic Business Plan in the spring, setting out key activities and learning from the past to ensure plans are realistic and carefully sequenced, aligned to resources. Our priority focus continues to be producing and improving our national statistics, including GDP, prices, labour market and population statistics, alongside transition to the Transformed Labour Force Survey and preparatory work for Census 2031.

Thank you for your ongoing support as we prioritise our resources on our mission to deliver high quality core statistics.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darren Tierney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Darren Tierney

Annex A: Impacts of the prioritisation exercise

- Reducing the ONS's involvement in health surveys – the Health Survey for England and the Mental Health of Children and Young People Survey will no longer be run by the ONS as previously planned.
- Pausing our quarterly greenhouse gas emission (residence basis) statistics – annual greenhouse gas emissions statistics continue to be published by the ONS, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Stopping development of subnational estimates of tourism spending and Tourism Direct Gross Value Added.
- Scaling back activity related to wellbeing statistics, including moving to publishing our main dashboard on an annual basis, supported by a shorter quarterly set of measures embedded within an existing bulletin to meet new international requirements.
- Resequencing our work to disaggregate Household Final Consumption Expenditure to local authority level.
- Pausing further developments to our subnational clustering (grouping geographical areas based on similarity) until 2029.
- Stopping further developments of Health, Wellbeing and Place research, instead making data available to researchers through the Secure Research Service.
- Refocusing our Beyond GDP statistics development work to focus on understanding the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including household use of free digital goods, prior to potential integration into National Accounts / System of National Accounts requirements.
- Reviewing our approach to work previously funded by external organisations including ending our analysis on the Night Time Economy and Lifestyles and Risk Factors.
- Narrowing the focus of the ONS contribution to international work so it is more strategic and directly supports ONS core statistics and improvement work.
- As part of the development of our new website, improving and consolidating our publications focusing on what audiences need most and delivering streamlined, clearer information, we will:
 - Merge Environmental Taxes into the Environmental Accounts publication.
 - Move Environmental Protection Expenditure (EPE) to a data-only publication.
 - Consolidate our annual mortality publications to include deaths of homeless people within the annual mortality bulletin and publish unexplained deaths in infancy as a data-only release.
 - Combine publications on marriages, divorces and civil partnerships.
 - Consolidate our affordability publications into fewer outputs, reducing the frequency of some housing publications, and converting others to data only.
 - For our Labour Market statistics, consolidate 4 releases into a single labour market overview, along with all of the associated datasets.
 - Develop a dashboard for Real Time Indicators (RTI) data to show at-a-glance trends and patterns in the data, alongside a monthly commentary in a statistical article.

- We are continuing to engage users on a number of areas. Further detail will be reflected in our 2026/27 Strategic Business Plan in April, which will include:
 - Measures to reduce the numbers of business surveys, and with it the burden on businesses
 - Housing statistics
 - Tourism statistics
 - Conception, homeless deaths and smoking habits statistics
 - Sequencing of crime

On the Annual Population Survey (APS)

- In response to user feedback, we will continue to run the **Annual Population Survey (APS)**, which reflects ONS outputs at the local and regional level. However, in the short term and given practical limits on our field interview resources, we will have a reduction in the survey boost in England which supports APS data. This will enable us to bolster the Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF) given its importance for GDP, prices and household disposable income statistics.
- We will work closely with users on the changes to the APS and what that will mean for their data needs at the local and regional level, as there will be gradual impacts from September 2026. Meanwhile we will continue to increase survey quality where we can. Longer term we will seek to address user needs currently met via the APS through our Transformed Labour Force Survey.