

Simon Hoare MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
(via email)

30 June 2025

Dear Simon,

Recruitment of a new National Statistician

Thank you for your letter regarding the recruitment of a new National Statistician, and for your Committee's continued support for the integrity and independence of the UK's statistical system.

As you know, Sir Robert Devereux last week published his review of the performance and culture of the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In this, he recommended that the Authority appoint both a National Statistician and an ONS Permanent Secretary, and that these two roles should be separated, at least temporarily. The National Statistician would be focused on statistical leadership in ONS, the GSS and the broader system. The senior leader would be focused on managing ONS as an operational department and would, subject to formal approval by the Prime Minister, be the ONS Permanent Secretary.

The Authority Board and the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office accept this recommendation and aim to begin the appointment processes as soon as possible with the appointment of the senior leader expedited to move as quickly as we can. Recruitment of the National Statistician would necessarily take longer, as a public appointments process involving Crown approval.

As you note, the role of the National Statistician as Chief Executive of the Authority is defined through the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*. Within this statutory framework the practical arrangements have varied over time: sometimes with day-to-day operational decision-making vested in a Director General for ONS, sometimes shared with a Second Permanent Secretary. With the existing National Statistician role being split, at least temporarily, a collaborative ethos between the next National Statistician and the ONS leader and clear lines of accountability will be imperative.

As regards the longer-term governance of the system, in the joint response to Sir Robert's review,¹ we committed to considering legal advice, as well as the views of users and the broader statistical community, in Ministers' expectation that the Act will

¹ <https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/uk-statistics-authority-and-cabinet-office-response-to-the-devereux-review/>

be amended. I would welcome the Committee's views on how the system might be best governed. Any amendments to the Act would of course be a matter for Parliament, and your Committee will be important in that process.

I am copying this letter to the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Chote', with a horizontal line underneath.

Sir Robert Chote
Chair