**ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY RESPONSE TO UKSA INCLUSIVE DATA TASKFORCE CONSULTATION**

The UK Statistics Authority’s strategy, *Statistics for the Public Good*, is underpinned by four principles: Ambitious, Radical, Sustainable and Inclusive. The inclusive principle states that “*our statistics and our workforce reflect the experiences of everyone in our society so that everyone counts, and is counted, and no one is forgotten.”*

We welcome the UK Statistics Authority’s establishment of the Inclusive Data Taskforce, which should inform the forthcoming 5-year programme of work to ensure that the “Inclusive” principle is implemented. The Taskforce seeks to understand the needs of a wide range of existing and potential users of statistics relating to inclusion. This paper makes proposals to the Taskforce which we believe will improve the range and quality of Official Statistics to identify and monitor inequalities, and support development of policies to reduce such inequalities.

We propose that the Taskforce should consider the following actions when formulating recommendations:

1. **Statistical gaps exercise:** A comprehensive "Gaps" exercise is needed, to assess the statistical requirements to support all strands of the government's equalities policies and the Equalities Act 2010, covering all the protected characteristics. As noted by the Taskforce, these are Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation. However, there are also other minority groups about which there is a need for official statistics, such as the homeless and those living in deprived areas.

As an example, the Race Disparity Unit has gathered a lot of available data on ethnicity. There is now a need to go beyond making use of what happens to be available, establish a framework of what is required and prioritise the filling of gaps. Such an exercise could draw on work of other organisations such as the Full Facts “Need to Know” project in the short term, while conducting a more comprehensive exercise in parallel to identify needs.

We note that the Office for Statistics Regulation has recently published draft guidance on collecting and reporting data about sex in official statistics, asking for views by 6th April 2021, and we suggest that this should also be considered by the Taskforce.
2. **Inclusion Statistics User Group:** Users and potential users of statistics on inclusion need to be supported. ONS should help to establish a User Group for Statistics on Inclusion and Equalities. The RSS, supported by the Statistics User Forum, could also support the establishment of such a group and help it to become self-sustaining over time.
3. **Ethnicity classification review:** The Census classification of ethnicity has been largely unchanged since the 1980's, and needs to be completely reviewed. It is based partly on colour (Black, White, Mixed), partly on geography (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, African, Caribbean). Many significantly different ethnic communities are hidden within these categories and are "invisible", for example Jews and Sikhs. In particular, the Indian and Black African categories are so broad that they include many communities which should be, but are not counted separately. We propose that a “blank sheet” approach should be taken to look at how ethnicity should be classified now, looking ahead rather than to the past. In order to identify some significant communities, it may be necessary to use a combination of ethnicity and religion in such a classification.
4. **Making more use of existing data:** Many surveys collect data on religion, but it is rarely analysed or tabulated. More can be done with the data held in surveys, possibly by combining more than one year's data if the sample size is too small. We propose that ONS should review the range of data collected by religion, and identify those sources which can be utilised to produce outputs for faith groups. Due to small sample sizes, this may require aggregating time periods or reducing frequency, such as annual rather than quarterly or monthly outputs for faith groups.
5. **Collecting data by religion:** Religion has been a protected characteristic since the Equalities Act 2010, and public sector organisations should be mandated to collect data on religion, in the same way as they do for other characteristics such as age, sex, disability, ethnicity, etc. Many organisations currently do not ask respondents for their religion. In some cases, where religion is collected for operational reasons, it is then not retained in digital systems for further analysis.
6. **Prices:** We support the development of the Household Costs Index (HCI) and its sub-indices. The single monthly HCI, which represents inflation as experienced across all UK households, will provide the context against which the experience of how different segments of society are affected by inflation can be judged. For example, the sub-indices will show how price impacts vary by region, income deciles, retired vs non-retired households, households with or without children or disabled persons, etc. The RPI CPI User Group and Jill Leyland have provided more detailed submissions to the Taskforce on this issue, and we fully support their suggestions.
7. **Disability**: Statistics on disability need to be improved in terms of detail and timeliness:
	1. Disaggregation by other protected characteristics is important, especially by ethnicity and religion.
	2. The Family Resources Survey provides timely and robust data on disability, impairment and receipt of benefits, but does not cover wider aspects of disabled persons’ lives.
	3. On the other hand, the Life Opportunities Survey provided comprehensive statistics on work, education, social participation, transport, and use of public services, and was one of very few sources of longitudinal data on disabled persons, but data collection ceased in 2014.
	4. A framework for identifying and reporting on different types of disability needs to be developed, for example breaking down to Physical, Sensory (deaf, blind), Mental (mental and learning impairments) and Emotional (eg autism) disabilities.
	5. Monitoring frameworks are not comparable across the four nations of the UK, with each devolved nation potentially using different definitions of disability and reporting methods.

The Royal Statistical Society would be pleased to host an event for the Taskforce to present emerging findings before they finalise their report and conclusions, possibly supported by the Official Statistics and Social Statistics Sections and the Statistics User Forum. This would provide an opportunity to engage with a wider set of existing and potential users from the various different communities affected by exclusion and inequalities, all together so that experiences can be shared. This could also provide an opportunity to discuss and inform the prioritisation of filling newly identified gaps against existing and already planned statistics.