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NHS Business Services Authority

Publication Strategy

2019/20

Document Release Note

Document Name: NHSBSA Publication Strategy

Document Details Name	Version Number	Description
Publication Strategy	0.1	Supporting Strategy Document

Revision Details Revision Number	Revision Date	Revision Description	Page Number	Previous Page Number	Action Taken	Addenda/ New Page

About this document

This publication strategy has been created to support the delivery of the [NHSBSA Strategy 2019/22](#). It will be refreshed in line with any adjustments to that strategy document. We are releasing this document to support transparency and as part of our commitment to say what we intend to do.

Information in this document has been organised as follows:

Chapter:

- Executive Summary
- Chapter 1 - Purpose
- Chapter 2 - Implementation
- Chapter 3 - Conclusion

Executive Summary, NHSBSA Publication Strategy 2019/20

Building on our strategic vision, as outlined in our strategy for 2019/22 this document sets out our aspiration to transform how we publish data. It is one of the underpinning strategies that will help us to achieve our strategic goals and ambitions. Publishing effectively is a crucial part of our vision of being a Catalyst for Better Health. By utilising our expertise we can better tell the story of our data and inform debate. We already have a strong reputation as a data driven organisation and we will expand on this. We are committed to raising our profile in Health and Social Care system by moving from a provider of data for Official Statistics to a producer of Official Statistics.

We have set out within this strategy a set of principles that will define our publication approach and enable us to realise our ambitions. Excellent progress has already been made, with a great deal of our data being open, fulfilling our commitment to be transparent. We will expand on this by releasing more where appropriate, and supplementing data with narrative, recognising that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to how we release information as different users have different requirements.

This strategy is the start of our journey to change how we approach external reporting. We are realistic about the scope of this challenge and recognise we need the support of our external partners to achieve our vision. We believe that we can release not just data, but statistics that add value and inform understanding of key areas of the Health and Social Care system of which we are a part of.

Through delivery of this strategy we aim to:

- Simplify and standardise prescribing, dental and other relevant data, with the NHSBSA recognised as the source and lead on data and publication releases.
- Increase trust in our products by having our releases recognised as Official Statistics where appropriate.
- Reduce the number of Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs) and Parliamentary Questions (PQs) received, as more information will be available and within our control, allowing us to respond to external interest sooner and adapt to user needs.
- Increase public understanding of our data, and inform public debate and policy through publishing clear narratives to complement our data.
- Support innovation and research through the controlled release of aggregate data.

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Chapter 1: Purpose

Strategy Context

Historically, the NHSBSA has been a silent partner in publishing, often meaning people do not realise that we are the originators of the majority of prescribing, dental and workforce data published. We aim to continue to be collaborative and open, as well as responsive to new technological and digital solutions to publish. We will seize the opportunity to publish our own outputs, and produce many more efficiently, allowing us to focus on unlocking the high value potential of our products and adding additional value for our customers. The NHSBSA creates a wealth of valuable data from the £36 billion of NHS activity that it administers, most notably the primary care prescriptions data and workforce data, but navigating that data can be difficult. It is not always clear where the public should look for data and published sources; we aim to make it easier for the public to search for our data and publications based on it, and this strategy will outline how we will achieve this.

We have an obligation to reduce duplication in the publishing of our data, to deliver efficiencies across the Health and Social Care System. Coherence is key; we need to help all our users whether an expert analyst, or an enquiring citizen, to understand our data through publishing with transparency, ease of availability, and robustness ([Figure1](#)). This will mean going beyond publishing numbers, to explaining how they relate each other, what they mean, and how they combine with other statistics to better explain the part of the world they describe. We are the experts in prescribing, dental and workforce data, which helps NHS stakeholders track trends and to inform decisions. We will kick start a leaner and more efficient business process with NHSBSA taking ownership of the statistics (from data receipt to public release), enabling us to respond to changing user needs faster.

We will work closely with NHS Digital, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Office for National Statistics and Government Digital Service to build on work already underway. Embedding the principles of Open Data and Digital into Official Statistics, we will strive to make more of our data available in open formats for re-use, while protecting the confidentiality of patients by keeping their data secure.

Opportunity Statement

Through better statistics, better decisions are made; we will continue to improve the quality of the data that we make available to the wider system and to accelerate outcomes through our data analytics and information services. Through this strategy we will deliver and publish high quality statistics utilising new and innovative technology, taking opportunities to meet our stakeholder needs, informing public debate and policy in our area of expertise.

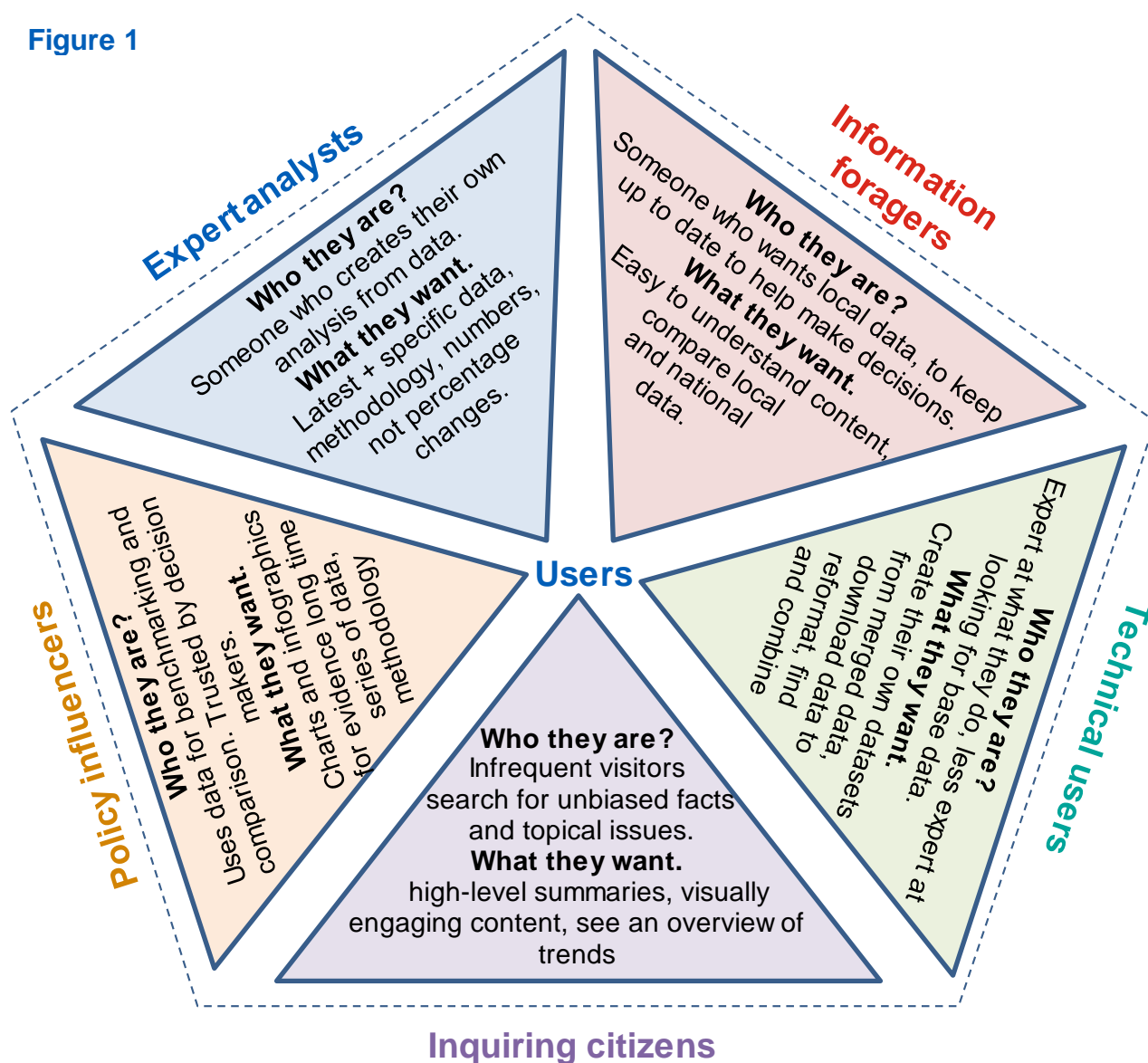
Through the Official Statistics Order 2018 the NHSBSA can be a producer of Official Statistics. We will work closely with NHS Digital to establish what data and publications are best transitioned to be produced by NHSBSA and how we can introduce new publications and datasets. Building on our strong relationship with NHS Digital the transition will be done in tandem with a review of all of our reporting products currently published via our website. We have a chance to fundamentally change our reporting, standardise it, and elevate the products we produce. We will seize this opportunity to deliver savings across the Health and Social Care system and to better inform decision making.

Our Users

The Office for National Statistics identifies distinct and robust user types, each with unique set of goals, behaviours and motivators; we will build our existing and future products to ensure they are more responsive to different user needs. This is aligned to the first point in the revised the UK Statistics Authority’s (UKSA) Code of Practice for Statistics: that producers of statistics should put the user at the centre of their statistical productions. With different types of users accessing our products, our product offer will move to reflect this. We will move to a layered approach when disseminating our statistics.

The content of our products and the supporting information we provide, will be informed by an understanding of our customers’ needs. We will help our users understand our products better by publishing and referring to supporting, background or educational information and material. We are also committed to releasing the data that is behind our reports and publications, to enable and encourage re-use.

Figure 1



Principles

As we move forward with our strategy there are four principles that we will use to guide us. These are inspired from best practice across Government and the UK Statistics Authority's (UKSA) Code of Practice for Statistics Edition 2.0. What is outlined here is not meant to be restrictive or the authority on how we will publish. Instead these are the principles we will look to when we make decisions about our data and statistics going forward.

- **Principle 1: Quality and Consistency**

We will work to consolidate our and NHS Digital products, so there is a single definitive source across the areas of our expertise, thereby reducing the risk of confusion to users. This will ensure a consistent quality standard from data processing through to the production of Official Statistics publications that were previously produced by NHS Digital. Across our portfolio this will extend to implementing a single reporting standard that promotes our brand and raises the profile of the NHSBSA. We will ensure that what we release contains a description of the data quality; clearly explaining the impact that these have on time series or comparisons. We will work with our partners to ensure harmonised concepts and definitions are used wherever possible across our releases. Where a harmonised definition is available but not used, the rationale will be explained. Where appropriate, our releases will be independently assured by external experts, or by internal specialists, separate from our production processes.

- **Principle 2: Transparency and Openness**

We will generate trust in what we release through a commitment of transparency and pledge to increase the scope of what we release. What we produce will be truthful, impartial and independent, and meet consistent standards of behaviour that reflect the wider public good. We recognise that, through greater transparency and making more of our data open, we can inspire choice and increase accountability. We will work to make more of our data accessible, while protecting confidentiality. The underlying data that our statistics will be based on will be available to users at the lowest level of granularity possible, whilst protecting the confidentiality of patients. In providing more information as Official Statistics we will improve standards by informing decision making and allowing the public to hold us and our partners to account. The more data that we make available, the further help citizens to compare, contrast and challenge to benefit the wider Health Service and increase efficiency. Through our work we will publish details of how the underlying data it is collected to allow users to understand its strengths and limitations. Methodological changes we

make to our products will be preannounced, either in a prior release or on the statistics section of our website.

- **Principle 3: Usability and Value**

We will work to create Official Statistics that support society's needs for information, ensuring what we produce adds value, is useful, easy to access, and relevant to aid understanding of important issues today. We will be committed to maintain and refresh our understanding of the use and potential use of our statistics and data. In everything we do, we will work to consider the ways in which our products can be used and the nature of the decisions that are made from them. We will listen and have an open dialogue with users: taking views and being proactive in making changes to suit their needs. We will provide headline messages for all our statistical releases: while we acknowledge the ever increasing demand for further data granularity to allow users to drill down into our data there still remains a clear need for high level summaries that communicate the headline messages.

- **Principle 4: Innovative and responsive**

We will be sensitive to emerging trends, and recognise the potential of harnessing technological advances for the development of our publication production process and open data dissemination. We will embrace new technology and innovative approaches in producing and publishing our products. We will always look to improve how we engage with our users; always curious about how we can do things better. We will learn from best practice and follow the success of the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Media Culture and Sport (DCMS), and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), developing Reproducible Analytical Pipeline(s) (RAP) as standard when creating our releases. Adopting a RAP production approach will reduce the time required to create our releases, while maintaining the quality of our products. Through being efficient, we can free analyst time to explore the data, and focus on producing narrative and insight.

Defining Success

This strategy is the beginning of a three year journey. While it is right that we are ambitious and challenge ourselves, we must also have a plan to check our progress and a measure for what success looks like. The milestones set out later in this document are what we want to achieve and by when. We will hold ourselves to account and honestly report on what we have achieved and the barriers to continued success. We will use these milestones to assess our accomplishments and maintain momentum during this journey.

Risks we Face

In order to succeed we need to be open to taking risk. Official Statistics must keep pace with user needs to keep them relevant and useful. We will take advantage of new data sources and analytical capability to ensure decisions based on our data are based on the best information available. Our products should reflect the most important issues of the day and give relevant insight. If we do not respond and adapt to the changing environment there is a risk we fail to provide the information needed to make better decisions. We will seek to anticipate trends and prioritise improvements to our publications to suit, even if it means stopping some existing work. We will also be open to new methods of dissemination and new ways we can help the users of our products. Where we face criticism, we will explain our approach and our rationale openly. We cannot deliver and make this strategy a success through our products alone, but through our relationships.

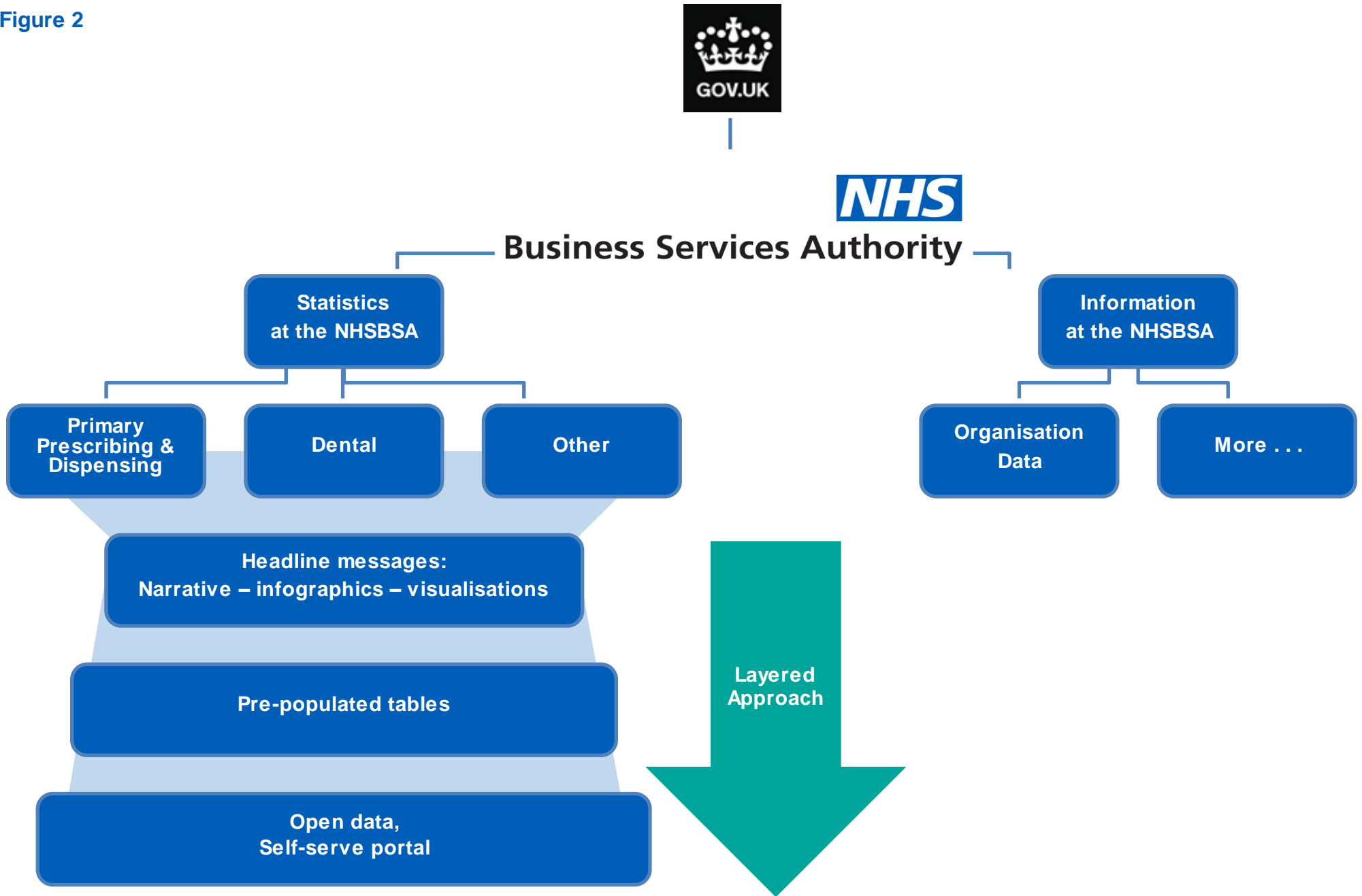
Chapter 2: Implementation

Moving from the Existing to a New Landscape

Navigating NHS data can be difficult; we have an obligation to make finding our data easy. Anyone looking for publications and data in our domain should have confidence: that they are in the right place; that we are the official source; and trust in our expertise to improve publications based on our knowledge of the data.

- We will take a layered approach to dissemination ([Figure2](#)), recognising that for any set of statistics there are a range of user types accessing our data. This means providing simple headline summaries, written for everyone, not just the experts, supported by aggregated tables of data, and the tools to allow expert users to explore the data in more detail at their own request in an open space.
- NHSBSA statistics will be structured in such a way that makes it easy for users to navigate. We will explore if our users can be directed to us through Gov.uk. Once on our site we will continue to group our outputs into collections by type of activity, but under each adopt a uniform layered approach in how we disseminate.
- We will consider multiple dissemination routes and always choose the most appropriate for our users. We recognise that not all business information needs to be published as formal Official Statistics, although we need to be clear about the standards all of products are created to. While some regular information will come under the class of Official Statistics, where there is merit such as for simple counts of information from our operational systems, we will publish in a clear format without the fuller commentary and methodology documentation a formal Official Statistics publication would require.

Figure 2



Phasing

We cannot make extensive changes on day one of implementing this strategy nor would it be appropriate to do so. Implementation needs to be gradual and phased in consultation with our partners. There are logistical and procedural hurdles we need to overcome which will take time. We are open and honest about these, and clear on what we want to achieve and by when.

- **Phase 1**

The beginning of our journey starts with the implementation of this strategy in Q2 of 2019/20.

- We will engage with the Department for Health and Social Care, NHS Digital, the UK Statistical Authority, and Government Statistical Service outlining our plans and seeking their support.
- We will review our external products, identifying opportunities where we can consolidate or change how we present data to maximise impact.
- Engage with NHSBSA Digital colleagues on our approach, and seek guidance on the future structure of our external data and statistics gateway.
- Begin consolidating our and NHS Digital reporting, with the selection of the first NHS Digital Official Statistic publication that we will bring to the NHSBSA.

This phase of the project will close with the creation of a new “Statistics and Data at the NHSBSA” landing page, directed from Gov.uk if possible. We will have selected the first NHS Digital publication in our area of expertise that we take forward to produce.

- **Phase 2**

This will see us moving from scoping, reviewing and stakeholder discussion to execution.

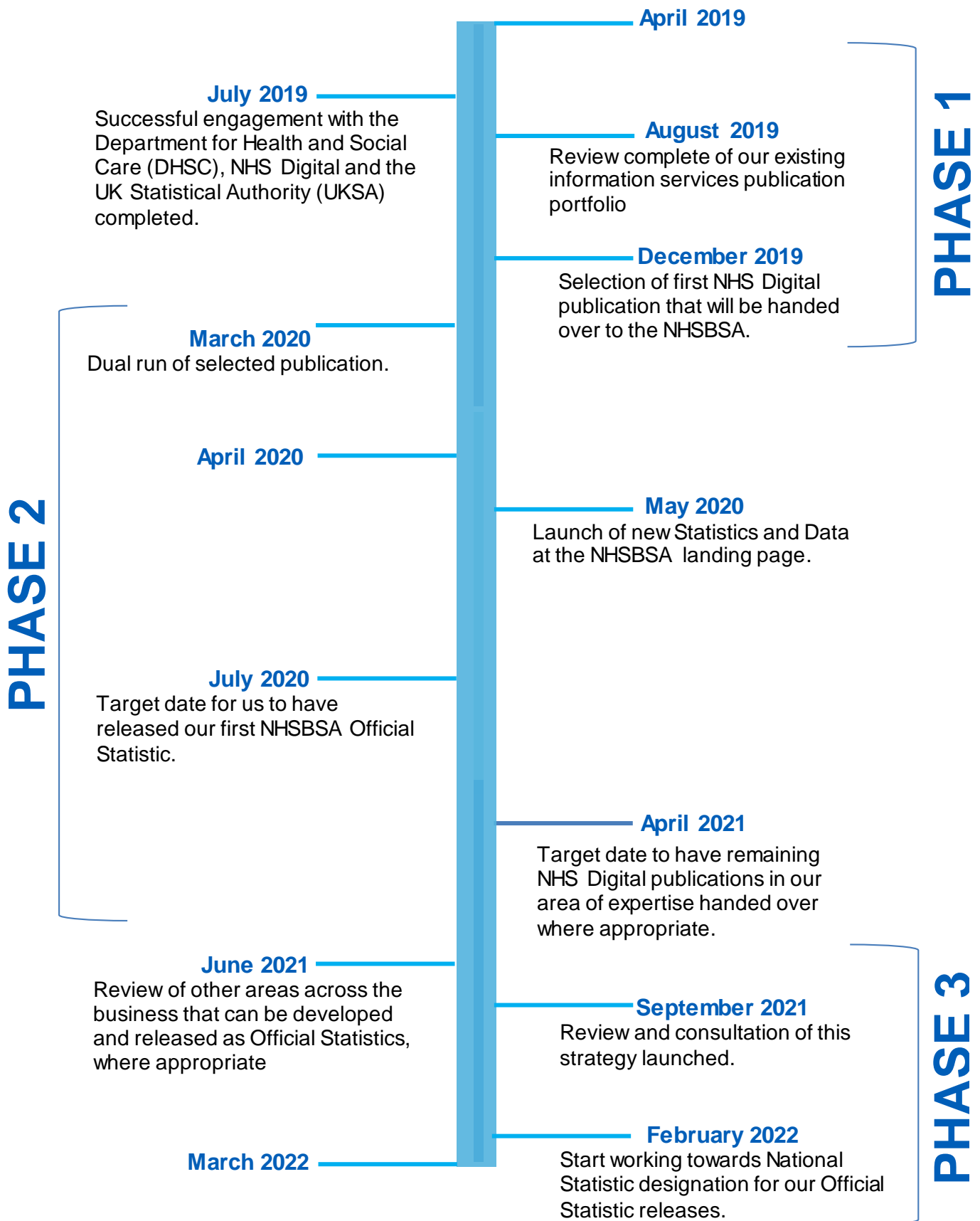
- Launch of new “Statistics and Data at the NHSBSA” landing page.
- We will release our first Official Statistic publication, following a successful dual run of an existing NHS Digital publication.
- Remaining publications across our area of expertise currently produced by NHS Digital, will be transferred to NHSBSA where appropriate.

- **Phase 3**

We will build on our success, with our Official Statistics team considering new information areas that can be developed and released as Official Statistics, or released as simple operational counts. In tandem we will review what we have achieved and consult on further improvements.

- Start process towards achieving National Statistic badging for our publications, where appropriate.
- Thorough content review of our statistical publications and data releases, consulting users on what changes they would like to see.
- Consider new information areas across the business that can be developed and released as Official Statistics, where appropriate.

Indicative Timeline



Chapter 3: Conclusion

We aspire to be a leader in the dissemination and presentation of NHS data that we collect and process, producing Official Statistics where appropriate across our areas of expertise. We will publish to add value and enable effective decision making from our data.

Through this strategy we will:

- 1) Consolidate and standardise our existing reporting while removing duplication of effort across the Health Care System, to enable efficiencies.
- 2) Build trust in what we do, by being a producer of Official Statistics.
- 3) Ensure the NHSBSA are custodians of the process from receipt of data to publication, enabling us to be far more responsive to changing user needs.
- 4) Increase the visibility, usability and reputation of the NHSBSA data.

Contact us

Feedback is important to us; we welcome any questions and comments relating to our publication strategy.

Please quote 'NHSBSA Publication Strategy' in the subject title of any correspondence via the contact methods listed below.

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