



Government  
Social Research

Publishing research and analysis in  
government

GSR Publication Protocol

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### Version Information

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4	Clarity of 'GSR products' definition (annex B)	May 2022

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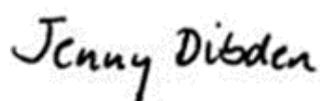
## Foreword

This is a concise and comprehensive publication protocol that applies to government departments covering England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, when conducting or commissioning social research<sup>2,3</sup>.

The protocol presents principles for the publication of all government social research that is not defined as official or national statistics<sup>4</sup>.

Evidence produced by and on behalf of government analysts needs to be robust and of consistently high standards, to enable people to make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects. Across all scientific disciplines, one tried and tested way of ensuring that best practice methods in research are employed is for results to be open to scrutiny and challenge. As well as driving up standards, publishing the evidence on which policies are based also delivers greater transparency across government, enabling the public to hold government and public bodies to account. Carrying out high quality analysis inevitably uses public funds. By being open and transparent about the outcomes of this research, the impact of government research can be increased, thereby delivering greater value for money.

The protocol details the five principles that should be adhered to in the publication and release of all government social research products and are consistent with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) (CoPS) which is statutory. It clearly sets out how social research conducted by or for government should be released; who should be responsible for the release; the timing of the release and the independence of the research. The principles within this protocol are aligned to the responsibilities of public servants as specified in Freedom of Information (FoI) legislation and GSR will work with the Analysis Function and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in the delivery of the protocol.



Jenny Dibden, Head of Government Social Research (GSR)



Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician and Head of the Analysis Function



Sir Patrick Vallance, UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of the Government Science and Engineering Profession (GSE)

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<sup>1</sup> At time of update GSR are confirming with NI on their position

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government procedures for publishing social research are compliant with this protocol

<sup>3</sup> See section 'Scope of the protocol' for further details of what is in and out of scope of this protocol

<sup>4</sup> Official and National Statistics are regulated by the UK Statistic Authority

## Introduction

It is essential that research and analysis conducted by and for government is of the highest possible standards to ensure that the government of the day can make well informed decisions, leading to better outcomes for society. Analysts across government demonstrate their commitment to providing high quality research through adherence to professional codes of practice. This GSR publication protocol complements these. Members of all analytical professions are expected to adhere this protocol when collaborating on the production of social research, as they do to the principles under their professional codes. Should publication issues arise, GSR will work with the Analysis Function and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

Compliance with this protocol will help ensure that evidence produced by government is released into the public domain in a manner that promotes public confidence and scientific rigour<sup>5</sup>. The protocol applies to government departments in England and Wales that conduct or commission social research<sup>6</sup>. Non-departmental public bodies and agencies are not obliged to follow the protocol<sup>7</sup>, although as it is a statement of good practice for the publication of social research and analysis, compliance is encouraged. It is good practice to ensure best use of research through sharing with relevant stakeholders, including bodies such as SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies).

Accessibility of publications also needs to be considered – see [Annex A](#) for more information on this.

Analysts and contractors involved in publishing policy-related evidence should include a factual statement of policy context, to help users understand the context of the research<sup>8</sup>. Commentary should exclude statements that could be interpreted as political comment though<sup>9</sup>. If in doubt, the appropriate GSR Head of Profession should be consulted.

As with other sections of the Civil Service, analysts from across the professions have fostered a culture of continuous improvement, to help drive more effective and responsive working practices<sup>10</sup>. With this in mind, this protocol will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and useful.

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<sup>5</sup> Following the GSR publication protocol is consistent with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Statistics – for example [T3: Orderly Release](#)

<sup>6</sup> The Scottish Government procedures for publishing social research are compliant with this protocol

<sup>7</sup> Some non-departmental public bodies / agencies are members of GSR in their own right; these bodies are expected to comply with the protocol in full.

<sup>8</sup> Code of Practice for Statistics [V3: Clarity & Insight](#)

<sup>9</sup> Code of Practice for Statistics: [T1: Honesty & Integrity](#)

<sup>10</sup> Code of Practice for Statistics: [V4: Innovation & Improvement](#) & [V5: Efficiency & Proportionality](#)

## Scope of the protocol

Heads of the Analytical Professions in collaboration with the Head of the Analysis Function and GSR Heads of Profession (including those in devolved administrations<sup>11</sup>) assisted in the development of the original protocol, helping determine which outputs should be treated as statistics, social research or other; specifically what is in and out of scope.

### In scope

For the purposes of this protocol, 'research and analysis' is defined as systematic data collection exercises using scientific methods, whether qualitative or quantitative, designed to generate robust information on an issue, policy or group of the population. The definition includes research and analysis to clarify or quantify a policy problem or to evaluate a policy and/or its delivery at pilot or full roll out stage.

This will include, but is not restricted to:

- Social research and analysis using quantitative data for the express purpose of answering a specific policy question (e.g. strategy development, policy development, policy delivery). This will include the analysis and interpretation of administrative data, analysis of specifically designed ad-hoc surveys, omnibus surveys and secondary analysis of continuous surveys and censuses.
- Secondary quantitative data analysis involving the interpretation of data following the statistical release of the main findings.
- Outputs from the analysis of qualitative data. These are data generated by any recognised qualitative method to generate robust data on the population(s) under study.
- Outputs from the evaluation of policy/delivery initiatives/pilots and trials.
- Outputs from literature reviews, rapid evidence assessments and systematic reviews.

### Out of scope

This protocol does not cover research or analysis that falls under the definition of official or national statistics, nor will it cover informal evidence gathering exercises which are not designed to generate robust data and reports based on analysis. Advice should be sought from the relevant heads of the Analytical Professions in cases of uncertainty.

Specifically, outside the scope of this publication protocol are:

- Official and national statistics.
- Management information.
- Briefing for Ministers that draws on research and analysis but addresses a specific information requirement.

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<sup>11</sup> At time of update this includes Welsh Government; NI is to be confirmed; and Scottish Government procedures are compliant with this protocol

- Briefing for policy/delivery colleagues that draws on research and analysis but addresses a specific information requirement.
- Analysis that supports policy advice.
- Dipstick/informal information gathering. Ad-hoc and informal evidence gathering which does not constitute a robust picture.
- Informal stakeholder consultation. Consulting or discussing policy ideas or issues with stakeholders, for example trade unions, employer's groups, or pressure or interest groups whose views may contribute to a policy decision.
- Formal consultations of the general public.
- Analysis of unpublished/confidential papers and documents.
- Updates from user research and how it is informing practice<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Publication of User Research is recommended

## Summary of the five principles

A summary of the five publication principles can be found below. Further details on each can be found [here](#) or via the individual links below.

### [Principle 1. The products of government social research and analysis will be made publicly available.](#)

The primary purpose of social research commissioned and conducted by government is to inform decisions about policy and delivery, but it also plays a role in wider policy debate. The presumption is that products from government social research will be made publicly available.

### [Principle 2: There will be prompt release of all government social research and analysis, including advance publication of research protocols and analysis plans](#)

Government social research and analysis should be published promptly, i.e. as early as possible following agreement of the final output. Publishing must not take longer than 12 weeks from agreeing the final output. Within this period, the timing of the release can coincide with policy announcements/decisions/events. Findings should not be released in such a way as to create a presumed, or actual, advantage to any group or individual. Protocols and analysis plans should usually be developed and published in advance of any study being started.

### [Principle 3. Government social research and analysis must be released in a way that promotes public trust.](#)

Research products should be clearly based on the data collected. They should reflect the policies they have been designed to investigate, but findings should not be influenced by political concerns relating to those policies. Research products should be kept clearly distinct from Ministerial views, although their release can be timed to coincide with Ministerial announcements.

### [Principle 4. Clear communication plans should be developed and maintained for all social research and analysis produced by government](#)

Departments should publicly announce what research projects have been commissioned and publish high-level information regarding those projects. Analysts should be clear with Ministers about the intention to publish in-house analytical outputs and protocols from the outset. Communication plans should be drawn up for all research and analysis produced by government, as part of project management principles.

### [Principle 5. Responsibility for the release of social research and analysis produced by government must be clear.](#)

The Permanent Secretary should appoint a named person(s) who has both the authority and expertise to make judgements about whether an output falls within the scope of the protocol and who is responsible for ensuring the protocol is adhered to. This would normally be the GSR Head of Profession with support from Directors of Analysis.

## The Five Publication Principles

### **Principle 1: The products from government social research and analysis will be made publicly available**

The primary purpose of research commissioned and conducted by government is to inform decisions about policy and delivery, but it also plays a role in wider policy debate. The presumption is that products from government social research and analysis will be made publicly available. Ministers need to be kept informed of the intention to publish (see also Principle 4).

- The primary purpose of research commissioned and conducted by government is to inform decisions about policy and delivery, but it also plays a role in wider policy debate and the wider generation of knowledge. Research will be made publicly available in accordance with the government's commitment to openness as underpinned by Freedom of Information (Fol) legislation<sup>13</sup>.
- Fol legislation gives a general right of access to information held by public authorities. In support of the principles of Fol and the commitment for openness and transparency in government, departments should publish the results of research and analysis as soon as possible but no more than 12 weeks following agreement of final outputs.
- The format and content of the published research output remains at the discretion of the commissioning department; release may be paper or IT- based or both. Publication is by the department that commissioned or conducted the work.
- Departments are not expected to publish research on those rare occasions when publication would threaten national security, destabilise the economy, or would otherwise not be in the public interest. For more information, see the [Fol guidance](#)<sup>14</sup>.
- Products that do not meet the required quality criteria should not be published, and where earlier announcements were made about the research being undertaken leading to expectations about release, an update on the decision not to release should be made. However, such data remains publicly accessible through Fol requests. If released under Fol, there should be a covering note detailing the potential limitations of the data being released.
- Even without a Fol request, it is good practice to indicate via a statement why decisions not to publish have been taken as part of the communication arrangements set out under Principle 4.

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<sup>13</sup> Noting possible exemptions in the context of research reports (e.g. s22: Information intended for future publication; s35 Formulation of government policy etc)

<sup>14</sup> For more specific, tailored advice on an FOI request you may be answering, you will need to get in touch with the FOI colleagues in your own department for advice on handling and response to the request. Contact them early to ensure your response complies with the Fol Act. Your Fol colleagues will also be able to provide you with advice on Fol exemptions

## **Principle 2: There will be prompt release of all government social research and analysis, including advance publication of research protocols and analysis plans**

Government social research and analysis should be published promptly, i.e. as early as possible following agreement of the final output. Publishing must not take longer than 12 weeks from agreeing the final output. Within this period, the timing of the release can coincide with policy announcements, decisions or events. However, findings should not be released in such a way as to create a presumed advantage to any group or individual. Protocols and analysis plans should usually be developed and published in advance of any study being started.

- Government research products should be released promptly, i.e. as early as possible from agreeing a quality assured final output. This must not take any longer than 12 weeks. This leaves flexibility on the timing of publication, while ensuring the data are published and released into the public domain promptly. Publishing promptly is required; the 12-week period is the maximum allowable and should be used as a last resort. Government analysts should be encouraged to share learning about how prompt publication is achieved.
- Publication should be in accordance with Principle 3 (releasing outputs in a way that promotes public trust), and can be:
  - as soon as possible once the output is judged to be of acceptable quality
  - timed to coincide with a policy statement on the same/a related subject
  - as part of a ‘bundle’ of research findings, for example at a specific time each month.
- For research where departments have vested the intellectual property right in the external contractor, the contractor is required to publish promptly and agree internally how to adhere to the principle of prompt release<sup>15</sup>. This should be discussed and agreed at the outset.
- Where publication is not within 12 weeks, the relevant GSR Head of Profession should be notified and the reason for delay recorded. Reason for delay could be practical or legal<sup>16</sup>, for example during an election period or prior to the budget announcement. The extent to which departments publish within 12 weeks will be monitored by GSR Heads of Profession and regularly reported to the GSR Board. Where systematic issues and/or delays on individual reports are identified, these will be escalated via Department Directors of Analysis and the Analysis Function Board for further scrutiny. GSR will also work with the Office for Statistics Regulation.
- Research that is due to be published can, if it is considered reasonable and in the public interest, be exempt from release under FoI until the planned publication date, provided that there is evidence of an intention to publish. The exemption can apply even if the publication date has not been set. The FoI (Scotland) Act and the UK FoI

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<sup>15</sup> An exception is where it is planned that research will be published in academic journals (for example, by academic contractors). In these cases, timing will be dependent on the journal.

<sup>16</sup> For example FOI s35

Act differ slightly on this point (in Scotland publication must be within 12 weeks of the request) and so local advice should be taken on this exemption.

- It is a basic scientific principle that protocols and analysis plans are usually developed and published in advance of any study being started. This process will allow independent scientists to have confidence in the study and evaluate the results independently.

### **Principle 3: Government social research and analysis must be released in a way that promotes public trust**

Research products should be clearly based on the data collected. They should reflect the policies they have been designed to investigate, but findings should not be influenced by political concerns related to those policies. Research products should be kept clearly distinct from Ministerial views, although their release can be timed to coincide with Ministerial announcements.

- Research products should be clearly based on the data collected, be neutral and robust. A good way to ensure quality and demonstrate impartiality of research findings is to subject research products to independent scrutiny in the form of peer review<sup>17</sup>.
- If a summary report is published, associated and complete data tables should also be published to ensure transparency and promote public trust. Consideration should also be given to publishing more detailed results in full at a later date.
- There must be no opportunity – or perception of opportunity – for the release of research information (unfavourable or not) to be altered, withheld or delayed for political reasons.
- Ministers and policy/delivery colleagues, including in other government departments or delivery partners, may be briefed on findings at any point during a study to enable them to draw maximum benefit in making policy and delivery decisions. They must always be cautioned when provided with interim findings about the risks of results changing as more research is completed. There should be no public comment on unpublished findings; where this occurs an immediate release of the findings would be required to ensure equality of access. This doesn't necessarily mean all of the research but should be sufficient to provide understanding. Once finalised immediate release of the report should occur. An early understanding of Ministerial views and policy direction must not lead to a compromising of the impartiality of research products.
- Where executive decisions are made on the basis of research and analysis not yet published, and in cases where public comment is necessary, the GSR Head of Profession will assess whether the relevant research material, or an extract from it, should be published immediately.
- If an analytical press release is deemed appropriate, reporting of the findings should be neutral and analytical (though they may comment on policy implications or contain recommendations where this is an integral part of the research) and be signed off by the research lead before being released.

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<sup>17</sup> A further way could be to issue a statement of [voluntary application](#) of the CoPS pillars (Trustworthiness, Quality & Value) which sets out the ways the pillars are demonstrated and why users can have confidence in the independence and soundness of the research.

- A press release of a policy announcement that includes a reference to an analytical output published alongside the announcement should also be cleared by the analytical lead before being published.
- The timing of publication can be made to coincide with a policy statement, decision or event, as long as this remains within Principle 2 (prompt release).

#### **Principle 4: Clear communication arrangements will be developed for all social research and analysis produced by government**

To demonstrate commitment to transparency and to encourage public trust in the research and analysis produced by and for government, departments should publicly announce what research has been commissioned and publish high-level information regarding these projects<sup>18</sup>. Researchers must be clear with Ministers about any intention to publish outputs and protocols, considering the out of scope list, prior to commencing work.

- Ministers should be informed early on in the process about all externally commissioned research/analysis and any internal research/analysis where there is an intention to publish. Researchers should be clear with ministers whenever research plans and protocols are to be published ahead of the research starting.
- Departments should make high level information publicly available on all research and analysis commissioned externally, and internal research where there is an intention to publish. Announcements should be made as early as is practicable, for example by publishing details of contracts awarded for externally commissioned work, or once an internal project has been cleared to commence. Exemptions as specified under Principle 1 apply here.
- Communication and dissemination plans need to be designed to facilitate access to information, taking account of user needs and equality of access. Discussions with, stakeholders, contractors, policy/delivery colleagues, and departmental press office and communication staff can help develop the plans.
- More detailed dissemination plans should include preliminary proposals for all forms of communication such as reports, conferences, press launches and should ensure that research is released in formats and at times of the day which are convenient to the widest range of users to facilitate widespread access and informed debate.
- Publication dates should be preannounced. If this is not feasible, for example due to short notice requirements, departments need alternative approaches, where possible, to promote public trust in the transparency and objectivity of release arrangements.

Once findings are published, information on departments websites should reflect this, clearly signposting where research findings can be found. The information published on websites should be drawn up in consultation with key stakeholders in the project who have the authority to ensure correct signposting is adhered to.

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<sup>18</sup> For example the public can search for contracts via [Contracts Finder](#)

## **Principle 5: Responsibility for the release of social research and analysis produced by government must be clear**

The Permanent Secretary, or equivalent, should appoint a named person(s), who has both the authority and expertise to make judgements about whether an output falls within the scope of this protocol and who is responsible for ensuring that the protocol is adhered to.

- There should be accountability and commitment for the publication/release of government social research products. Departments should identify a named individual(s) who has responsibility for this. They must have the authority and expertise to be able to make sound judgements on release. The named individual(s) must also ensure that clear processes are in place for implementing the publication protocol together with means of ensuring the protocol is followed.
- The named person will normally be the GSR Head of Profession, who may seek advice from the Director of Analysis or the Chief Scientific Adviser in cases of uncertainty<sup>19</sup>. They may also need to seek advice from the Head of Profession for Statistics, and the National Statistician may also be consulted where there is uncertainty about whether the publication protocol applies.
- It is essential that the press office and communication staff in departments are consulted on the release of research and analysis produced by government as early as possible.

### **Early release to reviewers**

- Peer review is an important means of quality assuring government research and analysis. If peer review is to be used, this should be built into the timing for the work, with the date of the agreed final output including time required for peer review and revisions on the basis of this review. This will mean that the 12-week publication window should commence from the end of the peer review process.
- Where external peer review is used, early access to unreleased outputs must be given to the reviewer with appropriate measure in place to ensure findings remain confidential until publication date
- Where peer review is used, the team producing the research should keep an accurate audit trail of distribution, including what is sent, to whom, when and where. Transparency of when analysis has been peer reviewed is encouraged and can provide greater reassurance of the rigour and independence of the analysis. Those receiving unreleased material will be obliged to guarantee the confidentiality of that material until it is formally released.

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<sup>19</sup> If escalation within the department does not resolve the issue, then it should be escalated to the GSR Board and then the Analysis Function Board. GSR may also work with OSR.

## **Translation**

- Some research outputs are published in two or more languages. If translations are required, they should be built into the timing for the work. The final draft is not agreed until the translated version is finalised. It is good practice to give an indication at the beginning of the project of how long translation will take.

## **Embargoes**

- Embargoed access to research products may be given to accredited journalists and others where it is deemed necessary to provide them with a period of time to assimilate and comprehend research in order to provide for informed comment at the time of release.
- Embargoed access will usually be given for complex reports where informed and considered comment at the time of release will facilitate public understanding. In consultation with the Press Office, departments Head of Profession or nominee shall determine when embargoed access is appropriate. As a general rule of thumb this should be no more than 48 hours before release.
- The embargo period will span usual office hours, so that those with access can reach the relevant researchers or press office for clarification or briefing. The period will not usually include a weekend.

## **Accidental and wrongful release**

- Accidental or wrongful release is defined as release to any party not involved in the research commissioning process, data collection and analysis or the production of the final output (e.g. quality assurance or peer review).
- Any accidental or wrongful release of research information must be reported to departments GSR Head of Profession (or nominee) and the Press Office immediately it is discovered, so that appropriate action to limit loss of confidence can be quickly taken.
- Accidental or wrongful release includes providing any indication of the content of the release, including suggestions as to whether the research findings are 'favourable' or 'unfavourable' with regard to a particular government policy.
- Where there is clear proof of wrongful or accidental early release of a research product, departments GSR Head of Profession (or nominee), in consultation with the Press Office, may judge it necessary to arrange for its release at the earliest possible time. The reason for the early release should be clear, with transparency around what went awry and how problems will be addressed to mitigate concerns.

## **Research support to Press Office**

- Support from the relevant government analyst or researcher should be made available to the Press Office to provide advice on the research and to comment on interpretation and relevance. Special conditions apply in the run-up to elections; separate election guidance is issued by the Cabinet Office.

## Applying the principles in practice

Individual practice will vary by department, but the following stages can be used as a model of good practice for the publication of social research and analysis work.

Stage	Action	Timing
1	Decide whether the exercise falls within or outside the scope of this protocol. If outside the scope, identify which other guidelines apply.	At the project initiation stage, before commencing any work (if in-house) or tendering (if commissioned).
2	If in scope, high-level information on the research project should be made publicly available (e.g. aim, timescales and proposed dissemination plans) wherever possible, after Ministers have been informed of the intention to publish.	As early as is practicable, or once the contract has been awarded for externally contracted work, or when work commences for in-house research projects.
3	Publication of <b>externally commissioned work</b> should be in accordance with a departmental strategy (e.g. this may specify externally commissioned research should be published in an academic journal, which will then determine the timescale).	Subject to satisfying quality criteria, the work should be published no more than 12 weeks after the final agreed draft has been received (unless publication is in an academic journal).
4	Publication of <b>in-house research and analysis</b> should be in accordance with a departmental strategy (e.g. this may specify research will be published with the publication of the related policy material).	Subject to satisfying quality criteria, the work should be published no more than 12 weeks after agreeing the final draft of the output.
5	Communication of findings to <b>Ministers</b> . Ministers should have clear sight of the forward-release schedule for all research and have access to emerging findings as appropriate (i.e. early & regularly).	Ongoing.

## Annex A: Accessibility Requirements

The digital by default [Government Service Standard](#) includes standards for data and document formats, to improve accessibility and open up the potential for others to analyse and re-use the results of studies<sup>20</sup>. Where this service standard is applicable<sup>21</sup> and publications include data tables, these should now be published in reusable formats, accessible to the widest range of audiences taking account of user needs, including those with disabilities, and ensuring equality of access. Improving accessibility also means there is a greater emphasis on the importance of making information clear to all users, not just expert users.

Further guidance on the accessibility, usability and design of digital publications is available in the [Government Service Standard](#). Further information on [accessibility requirements for public sector bodies](#) can be found at the link.

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<sup>20</sup> CoPS [V2: Accessibility](#)

<sup>21</sup> Researchers in devolved administrations should check if there are other standards that apply

## **Annex B: Glossary**

There is a potential for some confusion or different interpretations of terms used in this guidance. This glossary has been prepared to ensure all are working to the same definitions.

### **Government social research products**

Final research outputs from government social research activity, in a written format, as live or recorded presentations, or any other release activity.

### **In-house**

Research conducted by in-house analysts (or a synthesis of this) that has been agreed with policy colleagues and/or Ministers.

### **Launch**

This can differ from the publication of a research report and is the formal announcement and presentation of the outputs from government research and analysis activity.

### **Agreed final draft**

The agreed final draft is the end point of a project at which a final draft/version of the output has been received and accepted. This will be after any internal review/peer review and revisions as a result of these peer review comments. Peer reviewers would normally be given up to a month to review a research report and the authors no more than a month to revise their findings.

### **Publication**

Publication is the date on which a research or analysis product is released to the general public. This can be online only or in the form of a printed research report or other medium. There does not need to be an official launch of the product, or a different launch date could be set. Whatever the medium used, publication should be transparent and clearly evident to the external community.

## Annex C: Sources

### Freedom of Information Act

The issue of publication is closely linked to that of Freedom of Information (Fol) and this guidance has drawn on the principles behind the Fol Act. The [Fol Act](#) gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities and sets out exemptions from that right. It also places a number of obligations on public authorities, for example requiring that a publication scheme is adopted containing information about products that are routinely made available, and that information is published in accordance with the scheme. The Act is intended to encourage organisations to publish more information pro-actively and to develop a greater culture of openness. The Act differs between England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

### The Code of Practice for Statistics

Two other sources for guidance are, firstly, the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) published by the UK Statistics Authority (in particular the [Trustworthiness](#) and [Value](#) Pillars covering orderly release, honesty & integrity, independent decision making & leadership, & accessibility & equality of access) . Secondly, the [four Pre-Release Access Orders](#) published by the four UK Administrations which are treated as an integral part of that Code. This publication protocol aligns, where appropriate, the publication of evidence by government with that of GSS while recognising the ongoing role of social research in informing decisions on policy and delivery.

### Election Guidance

Special rules apply in the run-up to elections. The Cabinet Office issues [General Election Guidance](#) which contains a specific section on statistical and research activity (including publication) during a general election.

## **Annex D: FAQ**

### **What's the purpose of this guide?**

- The GSR Publication Protocol details the five principles that should be adhered to in the publication and release of all government social research products. It clearly sets out how social research conducted by or for government should be released; who should be responsible for the release; the timing of the release and the independence of the research.
- The principles within this protocol are aligned with the responsibilities of public servants as specified in Freedom of Information (FoI) legislation.

### **Is it new guidance on the publication of Government research reports?**

- No, it isn't new guidance.
- The GSR Publication protocol is an update of the guidance that was first published in 2010 and republished in 2015.
- The 2015 protocol built on and superseded the GSR Publication Guidance published in 2010 and presented revised principles for the publication of all government social research that is not defined as official or national statistics, where procedures for publication are regulated by the independent UK Statistics Authority.
- The 2021 version includes updates to the 2015 version to include more detail on alignment to the Code of Practice for Statistics and routes of escalation if the 12 week publication window is not achieved.
- The protocol applies to government departments in England and Wales, when conducting or commissioning social research. The Scottish Government procedures for publishing social research are compliant with this protocol.

### **Why is it important?**

- Carrying out high quality analysis inevitably uses public funds. By being open and transparent about the outcomes of this research, the impact of government research can be increased, thereby delivering greater value for money.

### **Does it include economic analysis?**

- No.
- The principles covered here relate to the publication of all government social research that is not defined as official or national statistics.

### **What happens if Departments don't publish research findings within a reasonable time frame?**

- Government research products should be released promptly, with the maximum being 12 weeks from agreeing a quality assured final output.
- Where publication is not within 12 weeks, the relevant analytical Head of Profession should be notified and the reason for delay recorded.
- Under the revised protocol, the extent to which departments publish within 12 weeks will be monitored by GSR Heads of Profession and reported to the GSR Board. Further escalation is available to the Analysis Function Board. HoPs will

work closely with the relevant Departmental Director of Analysis and GSR with the Office for Statistics Regulation.

**Where can I get a copy of the updated guidance?**

- Copies of the guidance are available on the [GSR Gov.uk site](#).

**Who do I contact if I have any further questions?**

- Please contact the GESR team based in the Treasury:  
[GESR.Enquiries@hmtreasury.gov.uk](mailto:GESR.Enquiries@hmtreasury.gov.uk)
- If your query is about the FOI Act please contact your FOI team within your department