

Statistical Notice

Statistical Policy Statement on Meeting User Needs through Engagement with Users

This Statistical Policy Statement is available in electronic format through the Department's Gov.uk website, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-official-statistics-published-by-the-department-for-education>

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires all producers of Official Statistics to publish transparent guidance on their policy for meeting user needs through engagement with users. The Code is at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

Document version history and review details

Version number	Date	Details
1	March 2010	First edition
1.1	November 2010	Amended references to Department for Children, Schools and Families, to Department for Education
1.2	June 2011	Reviewed and updated. Reflects changes to the advisory panel (now convened only if determined as necessary by the Head of Profession); the move to web-based forums for the sharing and collection of user opinion; and the removal of the requirement to publish twice yearly reports on the handling of complaints.
1.3	March 2014	Reviewed and updated. Amended references to Research & Statistics Gateway.

This statistical policy will be reviewed annually in March each year. Interim revisions will be made for substantive changes.

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Our commitment to users

The Department will publish timely, relevant, high quality statistics in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Our commitment to the users of our statistics is:

- To publish our statistics on the pre-announced time and date;
- To publish our statistics in line with the Code and the Department's Statistical Policies and Procedures;
- To give open and easy-to-use routes to allow users to supply us with their views and opinions;
- To respond quickly and accurately to questions and enquiries from our users;
- To consult with users on developments and changes to our statistical methodologies, publications or publication processes;
- To consult with both internal and external users on our statistical work plan;
- To ensure independent scrutiny of the work plan when necessary;
- To respond in a timely manner to any complaints from users;
- To be transparent when we are unable to meet any of the above commitments.

User Engagement Policy

Identification of users

1. Our users are mainly from the following groups:
 - Ministers and policy makers within the Department;
 - Policy makers within Government including Non-Departmental Public Bodies;
 - Parliament including Members of Parliament;
 - Local Authorities and Schools, which are also data providers;
 - Academics;
 - Expert external special interest and pressure groups;
 - Media and commentators;
 - Members of the public.
2. Our engagement policy recognises that different users have different needs, for example, some users require or want:
 - quick and easy access to the latest statistics;
 - to challenge the statistics;
 - to be informed of the publication of the latest statistics or developments made to them;
 - to be consulted on developments to our statistics, either in terms of methodology, publication or use;
 - to be able to influence the statistical work plan.
3. We will approach the identification of users in a number of ways, including some or all of:
 - By creating registers of users, starting with the ones that we know about already;
 - By logging feedback from users as and when we receive it and noting who provided the feedback;
 - By inviting comments through our Statistics pages on gov.uk both on the home page and in the publications themselves;
 - By encouraging users to register as users and engage with us on developments in official statistics;
 - By using questionnaires to identify users and collect information on their views and preferences;

- By exploring options to engage with users via community discussion groups on various topics;
- By inviting users to attend workshops or events, for example, the joint DfE/BIS User Engagement event which took place in January 2014.

Access to statistics

4. Statistics which are produced and released on a regular basis are available free of charge on the Department's Statistics pages on gov.uk, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>

5. In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, we will announce the month of release of these statistics at least 12 months in advance of release and the exact date at least 4 weeks in advance. All statistical releases are published at 9.30am.

6. Statistical releases will be made available in Adobe Acrobat format and tables from these releases will also be made available in Microsoft Excel format. Underlying data will be provided in an open standardised format. Statistical releases and other information posted on gov.uk will comply with the Department's Accessibility policies.

7. Where users require statistics that are not available from the regular statistical releases, enquiries should be addressed by email to the responsible statistician named within the release itself. Users can expect to receive a substantive reply within fifteen working days.

Routes of communication with users of our statistics

8. The primary route for the provision of information to users will continue to be through the Department's statistics pages on gov.uk.

9. We also notify users using an email distribution list when our statistics are released on gov.uk and the UK National Statistics Publication Hub. Users can request that their names are added to the notification list by sending an email request to users.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk.

10. The names of the responsible statisticians and their email addresses are shown on the front page of the relevant statistical release and specific enquiries about the statistics should be directed to the responsible statistician by email.

11. Users will be encouraged to join discussion groups, either existing focus groups or new groups as they are developed.

12. For any major reviews or issues which require a full and interactive debate with users beyond that which can be achieved in existing groups or a virtual environment, the Head of Profession for Statistics will consider whether to hold a public meeting for users. Where there are conflicting priorities and needs, the Head of Profession for Statistics will consider whether to commission an independent panel to support his or her professional decisions on the resolution of conflicting priorities and needs.

Consultation on statistical developments

13. The primary route to information on developments in statistics will be the statistical pages of the Department's gov.uk website. User engagement activities will usually be advertised in the Announcements and information section.

14. The Department will engage users on all major planned developments to its statistics. The Department will gather user opinion when we wish to make significant changes to: (i) the content of our releases, (ii) the method of dissemination of our releases, and (iii) the methodology used in the derivation and production of our statistics. Contained consultations about the format and content of specific releases will be announced through the gov.uk website.

15. The Department consults Local Authorities and software suppliers about data requirements through various groups. The Department's Star Chamber Scrutiny Board scrutinises specific proposals for new data requirements and changes to existing data requirements and their impact on data collection exercises and burdens on local authorities and schools. This ensures that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative systems are contemplated.

16. The Department will respond to every consultation by publishing an analysis of the responses, the way forward and the rationale for the decisions on the way forward.

Consultation on the statistical work plan

17. The Code requires the Head of Profession for Statistics to ensure the statistical work plan reflects the needs of all users both internal and external to the Department and balance the needs of users with the cost and burden on suppliers.

18. The Department publishes a schedule of official statistics on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics#forthcoming-publications>

19. The Department undertook a root and branch review of all its data collections from schools and local authorities a couple of years ago, as well as reviewing the data collections of linked arm's length bodies. Although this did not involve a full external consultation, there was consultation with schools, local authority staff, and other key stakeholders. Work will continue, including the constant examination of the need for the data collected within individual survey areas. Users wishing to comment on the data collection activities of the Department can contact starchamber.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk.

20. To provide assurance on how decisions are made, the Head of Profession for Statistics will consider each year whether to convene an independent advisory panel comprising internal and external users, suppliers and representatives from the UK Statistics Authority to support his decisions on the statistical work plan. The decision to proceed with an advisory panel will factor in the cost of convening the panel, the known level of agreement/disagreement amongst stakeholders, and the constraints on the scope of what can be presented for panel decisions.

Complaints

21. If, for any reason, you feel that the service you receive from the Department has fallen below the standards you expect; or has not lived up to the statements made in our policies and procedures, then please contact us so we can investigate. Complaints should be addressed initially to the Department's Head of Profession for Statistics, at the address below. Please provide as much relevant information as possible to ensure that your complaint is dealt with promptly and accurately. On receipt of a complaint, we will treat it seriously; treat it in confidence; deal with it independently and without favour; and, aim to resolve it promptly.

22. Where the nature of the complaint relates to information provided under the Freedom of Information Act, the Department will review and respond in line with the internal review process set out under the Freedom of Information Act. If however, your complaint relates to any other aspect of service, then the Head of Profession for Statistics will send confirmation of receipt of your complaint within five working days and provide a full response within 20 working days. If it is not possible to provide a full response within these time periods, you will be advised accordingly. If you are not satisfied with the response, and the issue relates to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, you can then refer your complaint to the UK Statistics Authority.

23. Complaints can be made in writing or by email to:

Jude Hillary
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
London

jude.hillary@education.gsi.gov.uk

24. The address for the UK Statistics Authority is:

UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Tredegar Park
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8XG

Jude Hillary
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Education