

Code of Practice for Official Statistics: HMRC policy on Confidentiality and Access

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires all producers of Official Statistics to publish a clear statement on confidentiality and access of data holdings used in producing statistical outputs. The Code of Practice was published in January 2009 and can be found at:

www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html

Confidentiality and Access – general policy statement

We aim to protect the security of our data holdings in order to fulfil relevant legal obligations and uphold our guarantee that no statistics will be produced that are likely to identify an individual unless specifically agreed with them, while at the same time taking account of our obligation to obtain maximum value from the data we hold for statistical purposes. All staff are given training on data security.

Physical security

All staff working in this organisation and all visitors to its sites require a pass to access the premises. Confidential statistical data is held in a secure environment that includes secure storage such as locked security cabinets. Access is strictly controlled in line with departmental policy.

Technical security

HMRC maintains a secure technical environment, including appropriate access to the Government Secure Intranet (GSI) network. No confidential statistical data are held on standalone laptops or any other portable devices or kept on unprotected portable storage media. All transmission of restricted micro-data takes place in a strictly controlled encrypted environment, monitored by our Security Directorate

Organisational security

We use a combination of survey project managers, data guardians, and data management teams to protect and maintain our data.

Disclosure Security

We use a combination of data manipulation and/or statistical disclosure techniques to meet the confidentiality guarantee. This is reviewed regularly to

maintain awareness of current and best practice. Documentation for this is kept with the appropriate datasets and published where the data is publicly available.

Arrangements for providing controlled access to micro-data

We provide potentially disclosive micro-data to users within HMRC and other government departments. No administrative data can be released without the necessary statutory legal gateway. Such access is then limited to supporting confidential research. Data may be released under arrangements described in a Service Level Agreement, a Concordat, contracts, and confidentiality declarations. Non-disclosive data may be released in anonymised form, for instance, a version of the Survey of Personal Income is accessible at the Data Archive at Essex University.

Recording the details of access authorisations

Full details of all authorised access to the organisation's micro-data are recorded for internal and external auditing purposes. General information about every statistical release is available on the HMRC website, www.uktradeinfo.com or the ONS Publication Hub www.statistics.gov.uk

Auditing of beneficiaries of access

All beneficiaries of access are required to agree to audits of organisational, technical and physical security. The standards must be those to which the beneficiary agreed in the data access agreement.

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