



Freedom of Information Statistics: Development Plan

April 2017 – May 2017

Quarterly and annual statistics on the Implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) in central government have been published since the FOIA came into force. Responsibility for the production of these National Statistics transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Cabinet Office in October 2015.

Cabinet Office are committed to the ongoing review and improvement of Freedom of Information statistics, to ensure that they are of the highest quality and public value. As part of this commitment, Cabinet Office will publish an annual development plan, setting out intended areas for improvement. In order to align more closely with the production cycle and allow an opportunity for user feedback, going forward these development plans will be published in June with the first quarterly bulletin.

Freedom of Information statistics were assessed during 2016 by the UKSA. An assessment report¹ was published in July 2016. The Authority judged that FOI Statistics may continue to be designated as National Statistics, subject to implementation of the requirements listed in the assessment report by March 2017. The final decision will be published in April 2017.

Operational context & administrative data collection

What we have done

- Provided users with an outline of the administrative data collection process, illustrating the main stages of the data collection process and the broad operational context.
- Published a comprehensive Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) document with the 2016 Annual bulletin. This provides a fuller description of the operational context and administrative data collection arrangements, and further detailed description of the implications for accuracy and quality of data. This document is based on discussions with data suppliers, including discussion of other sources of information, such as audit reports, that could be available.
- Summarised the key implications for accuracy and quality of data within the statistical releases.

What we will do

- Maintain the FOI statistics QMI document and update it as appropriate.

Timescale

Ongoing

¹ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/assessment-report-328-statistics-on-freedom-of-information-implementation-in-central-government/>

Communication with data supply partners

What we have done

- Ensured that suppliers are aware of the data provision arrangements, including timing and format of data supply and coordination of data sign-off from data suppliers.
- Continued to follow quality assurance processes which incorporate data review and sign off with data suppliers.
- Updated guidance included in the FOI statistics data collection template provided to suppliers to address common queries.
- Met with a sample of suppliers for in-depth discussions on the data supply methods, their preferences for future communication methods, and the need for a data supplier forum.

What we will do

Timescale

- Continue updating guidance on how to use the Cabinet Office FOI statistics data collection template for suppliers, as appropriate. Ongoing
- Set up an email list for notifications of the publication of the FOI statistics, as requested in supplier feedback. April 2017
- Circulate terms of reference for a data supplier forum in order to come to consensus on the topics to be addressed and areas of interest. As per supplier feedback, the forum has been rescheduled from the date listed in the previous development plan in order to fall outside the data collection cycle. April 2017

User Engagement

What we have done

- Developed a user feedback form which is linked on the GOV.UK FOI statistics pages to draw attention to our ongoing request for user feedback.
- Published a blog on the Cabinet Office Analysis and Insight blog, discussing the latest FOI statistics and the development plan (coanalysis.blog.gov.uk).
- Refreshed our understanding of users and uses with a summary of the overall findings published in the QMI.
- Established and published a communication strategy which meets user need, published in the QMI.

What we will do

Timescale

- Survey known users for feedback on the changes made to the annual bulletin incorporating previous feedback in order to identify future areas for development. May 2017
- Review feedback on an ongoing basis and publish feedback and associated actions in an annual FOI statistical work programme in June, alongside the quarter 1 FOI statistics publication. This schedule has been revised in order to allow time for users to respond to changes made in the previous development cycle. June 2017
- Present at the Information Rights Forum to engage with a broad array of users on statistical issues. July 2017

Narrative and public value

What we have done

- Worked with the GSS Good Practice team to continue to improve the narrative in the FOI statistical release, looking at trends and context, by way of a peer review / publication scrum. Feedback was incorporated into the redevelopment of the annual bulletin.
- Split the combined quarterly and annual publication into separate quarterly and annual publications to improve clarity and consistency as per user feedback.
- Provided further clarity for users around scope and definitions, and how these impact the use of the statistics in the statistical releases, with an in-depth assessment of quality and methodology concerns in the QMI published with the annual bulletin.
- Reviewed the scope and coverage of other FOI statistical series and published our findings in the QMI.
- Reviewed the coverage of the FOI statistics and the scope of bodies included in monitoring, considering ongoing user need, implications for data suppliers, and the broader policy context for FOIA.

What we will do

- Review feedback on the updates to the format of the annual and quarterly bulletin in order to identify areas for improvement. June 2017
- Explore options for interactive presentation of data using formats such as Tableau and D3 in order to enhance the usability of the data. Ongoing