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Statistical notice

DWP Statement of Administrative Sources

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

DWP Statement of Administrative Sources

Contents

Introduction

In accordance with Protocol 3 of the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the Department of Work and Pensions is required to produce a Statement of Administrative Sources which identifies:

a. The administrative systems currently used in the production of official statistics.

b. Procedures to be followed within the organisation to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative systems are being contemplated.

c. Information on other administrative sources that are not currently used in the production of official statistics but have the potential to be so used.

d. Arrangements for providing statistical staff, whether inside the producer body or elsewhere, with access to administrative data for statistical purposes.

e. Arrangements for auditing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes.

f. Arrangements for ensuring the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data.

Background

Within the Department for Work and Pensions, considerable use is made of data held within our administrative systems for the production of official statistics.
Administrative data has particular strengths for statistical purposes compared to the alternatives of mounting specific data collection exercises or setting up data collection systems aimed primarily at producing official statistics, although administrative sources are not problem-free and cannot answer all the questions a survey can.

Administrative data is often more timely than survey data and may be able to deliver data with a greater precision and at a finer level of detail than for example sample-based surveys could achieve. In addition, by sourcing data from administrative systems we avoid much of the costs of mounting dedicated data collection exercises, and reduce or eliminate the burden on data providers.

The main shortcoming of administrative data from a statistical viewpoint is that the data may not cover the breadth of information required because it only covers what the administrative system requires to operate. For example, administrative data tells us a good deal about the circumstances of claimants that are relevant to their claims to benefits, but no more, and it does not tell us about people who have not claimed.

DWP Statement of Administrative Sources

The following paragraphs describe the range of administrative data that is used within DWP for the production of statistics, the processes and requirement to ensure the accuracy of the underlying data (for administrative purposes) and the arrangements for access to such data by statistical staff.

Together these documents constitute the DWP's Statement of Administrative Sources which the UK Statistics Authority requires all statistical producers to publish.

Administrative system assurances

The Confidentiality, Integrity and Availability of all government IT systems are subject to the mandatory requirements of the Cabinet Office Security Policy Framework.

Within the Department for Work and Pensions, the DWP IT Customer Service Delivery Directorate provide a range of proactive functions to manage IT suppliers and ensure the integrity of the IT live estate. The use of IT Infrastructure Framework (ITIL) is mandated for use by all IT suppliers across DWP to provide a consistent and rigorous approach to IT Service Transition including Change Control, Incident and Problem Management and Continual Service Improvement. Examples include pre-implementation functional, user and field acceptance tests, post-implementation support periods and on-going functional maintenance reports.

All IT systems are subject to scheduled service management reviews of key performance metrics where the Department meets with IT suppliers to discuss incidents, problems, availability planned changes and warranty of the delivered services.

Additionally, the DWP Standard Operating Model (SOM) assists staff and managers by providing detailed process maps for Benefit Centres, Contact Centres, Jobcentres, Pensions Centres and Disability & Carers delivery linked to procedural guidance.

Each Working Age (Jobcentre Plus) Standard Operating Model (SOM) is a collection of, Job Roles, process maps and "Must Do" activities which link to supporting guidance. For Pensions, Delivery & Carers Service Delivery the SOM is represented by a number of components advising of Business Services and Components with some links to process maps regarding the process.

To ensure compliance with operational procedures, in addition to local checking the Independent Accuracy and Assurance Team within DWP Operational Excellence Directorate undertake checks across a range of benefits. Claims are randomly sampled and will be checked for payment accuracy and compliance with operational procedures. The accuracy of information held on Departmental systems is a central part of the checking methodology.

The above processes, tests and requirements aim to ensure the accuracy of data input, data processing and data output for administrative purposes.

Administrative sources used for statistics production within DWP

The vast majority of administrative data used within DWP is derived from the Department's own administrative systems – in particular the various benefit processing and payment systems such as the Income Support Computer System (ISCS), the Jobseekers' Allowance Payment System (JSAPS) and the Pension Service Computer System (PSCS) together with the Labour Market System which is used by Jobcentre Plus. In addition some key information is imported from third party sources, for example Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (data on tax and national insurance for example the quarterly Migrant Workers Scan (MWS) used to produce DWP statistics on NINOs allocated to non-UK nationals); local authorities provide information on Housing Benefit; and Ministry of Justice provide data on appeals.

Much of this data is drawn together for statistical purposes into a series of databases, under the banner of the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS). The Work & Pensions Longitudinal Study is a relational database which contains longitudinal (spell based) information on individual's work, benefit, and pension histories, and its data is sourced from administrative data shared by DWP and Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC). This is a key information source for many of the Department's statistical outputs, but other sources are also used.

The full range of administrative data that DWP use to produce official statistics is given in the supporting spreadsheet. Many statistics are made available through Stat-Xplore which allows users to specify the structure and content of the tables they wish to see; these cover a wide range of Departmental official statistics, but not all.

Extensive use is also made of many of the administrative sources listed here to produce internal Management Information within the Department, and the data is also used to support performance against key operational targets which are published on the DWP website. Where the Department has Management Information that covers the same ground as its official statistics, the latter will always be used in any form of public statement prepared for Ministers or officials.

Change control arrangements

Changes to administrative systems may sometimes impinge on statistical uses. For the main DWP data sources, Information, Governance and Security Directorate staff have strong links to officials Customer Service Delivery Directorate and are formally involved in the change control process that relates to these systems to ensure that as far as possible statistical needs are taken into account in any decision-making around changes in the data collected or its format, and at very least statistical staff are aware of forthcoming changes and in a position to understand the consequences for the statistics based upon them. Similarly, statistical officials are consulted about the data content of new systems when they are produced. Some administrative sources listed here relate to extracts from third-party data systems. In some cases, the fields and content of the extract are specified by statistical staff in consultation with the data providers, and again there is a change control process in place. In other cases, there are long-standing but less formal arrangements for data provision, which ensures that we continue to receive the data we require.

Additionally Information, Governance and Security Directorate has its own Change Control Process where any changes to either the information or the IT systems are impacted and signed off by statistical staff ahead of any changed being implemented. For example, any change to the derivation of a variable would need to be signed off by statistical staff as having no impact on the statistics before the change is implemented in the live environment.

Administrative systems not currently used to produce official statistics

DWP administrative systems which are either not used or which are used in a limited way in the production of official statistics are not currently included in the tables in the attached spreadsheet.

Access to administrative data by statistical staff

Access control arrangements are the same for all individual-level administrative data. Access is primarily controlled by database privileges (i.e. password-based access), with the data being stored centrally in secure areas. Access to particular datasets is granted for specified periods to named staff, and this access is regularly reviewed; DWP officials need to have undertaken suitable Data Protection awareness training before access is granted. All requests for access need to be accompanied by a business case which is scrutinised to ensure that the request access is in line data protection, confidentiality and security guidelines.

A significant element of the processing of administrative data for statistical purposes is undertaken by external bodies. Arrangements are in place to ensure the security of data transmitted in this manner and to ensure the contractors have in place appropriate arrangements for ensuring the security of DWP data whilst it is on their premises.

Quality checking

In addition to the system assurances outlined above all statistical sources need to be subjected to quality checks when producing official statistics from them. For DWP statistics based on administrative sources, there are several aspects to quality checking. At the point of data loading, the extracts we receive are checked for format and coverage. A series of data cleansing rules are then applied to control for known quality issues. Where appropriate, statistical users will run their own basic quality checks (such as an assessment of the extent of missing values) and take appropriate action. Code for producing official statistics may at times be peer-reviewed, for example when it is especially complex. Some statistical processes also subject to formal independent peer review, internal audit assessment, UKSA assessment and/or peer review by other Departments.

Finally in all cases we conduct reasonableness checks when new statistics are produced (are they in line with previous figures, are they what we would expect given what has happened since, are there plausible explanations for changes).

More details about the Department's quality assurance processes and practices can be found in its Quality Guidelines statement, which is published on the statistics pages of

the DWP. Information relevant to individual statistical series will be provided in associated documentation for those products.

Security arrangements

The Department has comprehensive arrangements in place for ensuring the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data. More details can be found in the Department's Confidentiality and Access statement, which is published on the statistics pages of the DWP website.