



Freedom of Information Statistics: Development Plan

September 2016-March 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.

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.

Operational context & administrative data collection

What we have done

- Identified and summarised some implications for accuracy and quality of data within the statistical release.

What we will do

Timescale

- 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. October 2016
- Work with suppliers to produce a fuller description of the operational context and administrative data collection arrangements i.e. identifying differences across areas in the collection and processing of the data, detailing quality assurance processes such as quality indicators and checks used by the data suppliers. February 2017
- Provide further detailed description of the implications for accuracy and quality of data, including the impact of any changes in the context or collection arrangements. February 2017
- Consider other sources of information, such as audit reports, to understand the implications of FOIA interpretations on the use of these statistics. February 2017

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.

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

- 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.

What we will do Timescale

- Continue updating guidance on how to use the Cabinet Office FOI statistics data collection template for suppliers, as appropriate. December 2016
- Establish an effective mode of regular communication with data collection and supplier bodies, to discuss the ongoing statistical needs in the data collection system and quality of supplied data. December 2016
- Hold a data supplier forum ahead of the production of the annual release to discuss data provision, definition and quality issues. January 2017

User Engagement

What we have done

- Updated the GOV.UK FOI statistics pages to draw attention to an ongoing request for user feedback.

What we will do Timescale

- Email our known users / suppliers to alert them to the most recent publication and ask for their views on future engagement methods. September 2016
- Publish a blog on the Cabinet Office Analysis and Insight blog, discussing the latest FOI statistics and the development plan (coanalysis.blog.gov.uk). September 2016
- Refresh our understanding of users, looking at request logs, google analytics, and experts in the same field. December 2016
- Update and publish further information on users and uses of Freedom of Information statistics. February 2017
- Establish and publish a communication strategy which meets user need, considering appropriate social media channels such as Twitter accounts, blogs, e-newsletters and email notifications. February 2017
- Use existing FOI forums to engage with users on statistical issues. Ongoing
- Review feedback on an ongoing basis and publish feedback and associated actions in an annual FOI statistical work programme in April, alongside the annual FOI statistics publication. April 2017

Narrative and public value

Section 4

What we have done

- Continued to improve the commentary and supporting analysis published in the quarterly release.
- Provided further clarity for users around scope and definitions, and how these impact the use of the statistics, in the quarterly statistical release. We will continue to build on these improvements in the next publication.

What we will do

- Review the scope and coverage of other international FOI statistical series and make publicly available any information on the comparability of data definitions. December 2016

- Work with the GSS Good Practice team to continue to improve the narrative in the FOI statistical release, looking at trends and context. Consider the use of peer review / a publication scrum, drawing on experience and expertise from within the GSS and across our statistical users, to evaluate whether the content of the release conveys to users the analysis and conclusions in a clear, focused, non-technical and impartial way. Review to be completed in time to inform the annual publication. February 2017
- Review 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. March 2017