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Department
for Work &
Pensions

Access to Work Official Statistics: Uses and Users

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1 Uses and Users

1.1 Engagement

To make sure interested users can tell us what they think about our statistical product throughout the continuing development, we invite user views via email (gary.gifford@dpw.gsi.gov.uk).

As part of their assessment of the Access to Work Official Statistics, a gathering of feedback on the content and presentation of Access to Work Official Statistics from known and potential users, was conducted by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA).

Internal user engagement has been important too. We continue to work closely with DWP colleagues on matters of methodology, classifications, definitions, coverage, timing and so on. These detailed issues can be very important, an apparently small change in a definition underpinning a statistic may be important in the context of certain uses.

DWP statisticians engage routinely with those responsible for answering Parliamentary Questions, Freedom of Information requests and request for wider briefing as well as press office colleagues to explain the statistics and guide their use and interpretation. We also monitor the media releases once the statistics have been released.

1.2 Known uses and users

Through the engagement detailed above, we have identified users:

Within DWP

- Access to Work policy, strategy, management information, operational support and associated analytical teams
- DWP Private Office and Press Office
- Parliamentary Question, Freedom of Information and Briefing teams

Who use the Access to Work statistics summary to:

- Evaluate, develop and support policy, strategy and operational decisions,
- initiatives / options and business plans
- Answer Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests
- Inform Departmental responses to Commons Select Committees
- Inform press office statements
- Provide briefing lines including for devolved administrations

External Users

Outside DWP, the internet based publication mechanism means that understanding all the varied uses of the statistics and data is challenging.

We continue to seek external users to provide feedback on how and why they use our statistics.

Since the first release of Access to Work Official Statistics in January 2010 DWP have heard from, or are aware of, a variety of users from:

- Parliament: House of Commons Library, Parliamentary Committees
- Other government: Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, Scottish and Welsh Government, local authorities / groups of local authorities.
- Charities and not-for-profit organisations
- Academics
- External commentators: leading news media and blogs
- United Kingdom Statistics Authority
- National Audit Office

As a result we know that the statistical products and data are used to:

- Provide general information on Access to Work in Great Britain
- Develop and evaluate policy
- Provide briefing

- Inform academic research
- Feed into analysis papers
- Evidence National Audit Office and Parliamentary Committee reports

1.3 User experiences

The publication outlines the use of the statistics, i.e. to monitor the type and volume of individuals who are helped into or to remain in employment with the support of Access to Work.

Feedback via the engagement outlined above, has provided further information about how the statistics and data are used and to what extent user needs are met.

In summary, users would like to see a greater breadth of information published such as:

- Equality information (age and gender)
- Type of Support Worker support received
- DWP benefits claimed prior to receiving Access to Work support
- Cross tabulation of primary medical condition and type of support received
- Programme spend and average spend per award / person
- Regional and sub-regional breakdowns of the data (to allow greater use of the statistics for those in Local Government)

Information relating to employers / employment and applications was also requested. However we cannot release this information, as in terms of data quality and accuracy it is not of a publishable standard. We are looking to improve this in future updates to DiSC¹.

¹ Disability Service Client (DiSC) is the system used to record information relating to an Access to Work award

Requested Management Information on areas such as complaints and unsuccessful applications will not be included in the Official Statistics as the data is not sourced from DiSC. It may however be published separately at a later date.

Users also asked for the annex tables to be released in Excel, and to include charts to aid visualisation of the data. This issue was addressed with the release of the October 2014 statistics.

1.4 Development of the statistics

We will look to implement the areas for improvement identified in the bullet points in section 1.3 above in future publications.