

# Statistical policy on user engagement

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Principle 1 of the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) concerns meeting user needs and states that 'the production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public'.

Protocol 1 of the code draws together the relevant practices associated with Principle 1. These practices include, but are not limited to, identifying users, documenting user needs and consulting users.

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics is available at:  
[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html)

## Version control

Version	Date	Details	Revision due
1.0	TBC	First release	August 2015

The policy will be reviewed every January with any changes implemented in April.

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## **Introduction**

This strategy focuses on users of Ofsted official statistics and sets out how we will approach user engagement and drive forward service improvement.

This strategy will help to identify the level of engagement we will seek to achieve with users of our official statistics while ensuring the best possible fit between the interests of our users and other work priorities. It will also identify how to effectively manage user expectations.

## **Background**

Ofsted's Data and Insight group includes four remit teams (schools, further education and skills, early years and social care), which publish a number of regular official statistics (listed below) as well as other outputs including data tools, management information and Freedom of Information datasets. The teams also provide ad-hoc support for internal and external users (including for parliamentary questions, Freedom of Information requests and briefings).

Regular official statistics we produce are:

- Children's centres: inspections and outcomes
- Children's homes: inspection outcomes
- Childcare providers and inspections
- Children looked after placements
- Children's social care data
- Fostering dataset
- Further education and skills: inspections and outcomes
- Initial Teacher Education: inspections and outcomes
- Maintained schools and academies: inspections and outcomes
- Independent education: inspections and outcomes
- Serious Incident Notifications (SIN)

## Aims, objectives and outcomes

This strategy focuses on users of Ofsted official statistics and sets out how we will encourage and promote user engagement as a driver for improvement. The strategy is intended to be a high-level document from which Ofsted Data and Insight teams will develop more detailed user engagement plans specific to their users.

Users are defined in this strategy as 'individuals or groups who use, or could use, our statistics.' Through this strategy, we aim to present an approach for when, what, how, where and with whom key messages should be conveyed. We will do this by:

- identifying our users (target audiences)
- identifying appropriate methods of communication for engaging with these users
- documenting how feedback is used to improve publications

Through effective engagement with our users, we aim to:

- better understand users' needs and supply data better suited to stakeholder requirements
- help statistics to be used in a more informed and informative manner by helping users understand the quality of our statistics
- become more innovative with the data we publish
- create a more positive public image by being transparent and resolve negative feedback promptly
- value diversity and difference among our stakeholders.

## Identifying our users

Our users are mainly from the following areas:

- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, directors, inspectors and policy makers within Ofsted
- Department for Education (DfE) data analysts and policy makers
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) data analysts and policy makers
- local authorities, multi-academy trusts and regional schools commissioners
- schools, which are also data providers
- social care providers, which are also data providers
- further education and skills providers
- academics

- think tanks and special interest groups
- media and commentators
- members of the public

## User needs

Our strategy recognises that different users may have different needs. These needs include:

- quick and easy access to the latest statistics
- a mechanism to comment on and challenge the statistics
- to be informed of the latest statistics published or developments made to them
- to be consulted on developments to our statistics, in terms of methodology, publication or use
- to be able to influence the statistical work plan
- access to commentary, which provides clear and succinct key messages arising from the data.

To meet user needs, we will provide high quality releases that:

- are trusted and thus authoritative
- reflect the views of users and are, therefore, relevant to how they want to use them
- strike the right balance between users' diverse and sometimes competing needs
- are published in an open and standardised format
- are presented and disseminated in ways that suit the wider community
- are accompanied by suitable explanation and documentation (e.g. on their quality)
- anticipate, and respond to, changes in users' needs.

## Communication principles and guidelines

A set of guiding principles has been developed to ensure effective user engagement.

- Open, transparent and focused – we will be clear how users' views will be used and what they may influence.
- Timely – we will engage with users to allow sufficient time for useful dialogue, consultation and modifications.
- Accessible – the team will provide clear, accessible and comprehensive information to its users in order to facilitate their involvement.

- Cost effective – we need to ensure that we make good use of existing communication channels
- Appropriate – appropriate levels and methods of engagement will be used to ensure that we meet the needs of our users.
- Accountable - make clear how we reach decisions following user engagement.

## **Communicating with our users**

The key elements of communicating with our users are:

- inform – the first stage of engagement consists mainly of one-way communication and is relevant to all users. Users will be provided with accurate, timely, balanced and objective information, which will assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
- consult – this stage consists of two-way communication and is suitable to be undertaken with all key users. Users will have opportunities to give information, voice their opinions and articulate issues in response to specific project initiatives. The information received from the consultation process will be analysed and may impact on the design of outputs and identify future activities/developments.
- involve – this stage is a two-way engagement where representatives from key user groups help us to deliver our objectives. Users are engaged, participate in decision making, and identify preferred solutions and development alternatives. Their concerns are fully understood and their feedback impacts upon the outcome of key decisions.
- partner – representatives from key user groups help us to deliver our objectives

This communication will happen via, but is not limited to, the following channels:

- news items in external publications
- social media, including announcement of releases via Twitter
- consultations, including questionnaires/surveys and focus groups
- meetings with key stakeholders
- emails to known users
- communication with users via other bodies, such as the Royal Statistical Society (RSS boards)

Where possible and appropriate, we will either participate in, or make representations to, any recognised user groups or user-focused events sponsored by relevant bodies such as the UK Statistics Authority. In addition, if we enter into a significant partnership with another Government department we will work to a formal Service Level Agreement.

The names of the responsible statisticians and their contact details are shown on the front page of the relevant statistical release and enquiries about the statistics can be directed to the responsible statistician.

## Publication and dissemination

Our primary means of communicating and engaging with our customers will continue to be through our portfolio of statistical products, which we will make available, in the main, only in electronic format. Our User Engagement Strategy is underpinned by the following principles designed to make our products and services equally available to all:

- Scope – where practicable and appropriate, we will aim to expand the range of our statistics
- Transparency - we will maintain a corporate 'Statistics' area on the Gov.uk website, which will direct users to a range of supporting statistical policy and documentation:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics>
- Pricing - we will publish all of our statistical products free of charge on the internet.
- Granularity - subject to confidentiality constraints, and quality considerations, we will publish our statistics down to the lowest possible level of disaggregation.
- Commentary and Documentation - our statistical releases will be accompanied by commentary designed to help users understand and make effective use of our statistics. We will also provide users with information about the way the underlying data are collected; the methodology which underpins the statistics; and their quality.
- Revisions – we will handle revisions to our published statistics - whether they be scheduled revisions, or unscheduled corrections (i.e. resulting from errors) – in accordance with the arrangements described in our Revisions Policy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics>
- Accessibility – we will pre-announce all of our statistical releases via the Statistics Release Calendar, which is published on the 'Gov.uk' website.

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Ofsted

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