School Condition Allocations

Macpherson review of quality assurance of Government analytical models - How the model meets the guidelines

This document provides information on the quality assurance processes applied to the model used to calculate the School Condition Allocations and on how these processes meet the guidelines set out in the Macpherson review of quality assurance of Government analytical models.

Model name and description

School Condition Allocations - SQL and Spreadsheet calculations.

Description

The purpose of the model is to calculate annual allocations of Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) to schools and School Condition Allocations (SCA) to bodies responsible for school buildings ('responsible bodies').

The DFC budget has been set at approximately £200m a year. Every school gets a fixed lump sum and a variable amount based on pupil numbers, derived from the annual school census. The lump sum and per pupil rates will stay the same for the next 3 years.

The main allocations for local authorities, Voluntary Aided partnerships, multi-academy trusts and non-maintained special schools and specialist providers, together with funding allocated to academies and sixth-form colleges through the Condition Improvement Fund, are made via School Condition Allocations. The budget is set at £1.2bn a year for each of the next 3 years and responsible bodies will get a 3-year indicative allocation from the model, subject to changes in the schools they are responsible for.

The School Condition Allocation consists of three strands:

A core condition component based on pupil numbers from the January 2014 census [adjusted to reflect type and location of schools];

A high condition needs component reflecting that some responsible bodies have disproportionately high condition need (as identified by the Property Data Survey), given their size;

A floor protection so that no responsible body will get less than 80% of the funding it received in the 2014-15 maintenance allocations in 2015-16; and any reductions in 2016-17 and 2017-18 will be the result of changes to the schools which the body is responsible for e.g. closures, opening schools, academy conversions etc.

The models are Excel based and moderately complex. They incorporate data from a range of sources, including a number of unpublished administrative sources.

Why model is Business Critical

Distributes capital funding for school condition totalling £1.4bn a year in each of 2015-16,16-17 and 17-18.

Summary of Quality Assurance

The redevelopment was overseen by a project team and by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) who signed off the design, approach and assumptions. There were three strands to the Quality Assurance -

- Technical checks - e.g. Sense checks, unit testing, logic testing and code review.
- Parallel model build - The project SRO and steering board agreed a full technical specification for the model. Two analysts (the principal modeller and an independent modeller) independently built their own models based on the specification, and the results were checked to ensure that identical allocation amounts were obtained. Any differences which could not be immediately reconciled were put back to the project SRO and steering group to agree an approach.
- Sign off meetings - This included talking the Department's Chief Analyst through the model; walking through the process, from the raw data through to the final allocations, with the relevant policy lead; a meeting for the project SRO to scrutinise our approach and another meeting with the Permenant Secretary, Chief Analyst and relevant directors to scrutinise our approach.

The model has not been through internal or external audit. One of the principal aims of such an audit would be to verify that the methodology is accurately translated into the model outputs. The independent parallel build also performs this function.

Approach to Quality Assurance

Element of quality assurance	Undertaken
Developer Testing	Yes
Internal Peer Review	Yes
External Peer Review	Yes
Use of Version Control	Yes
Internal Audit	No
Quality Assurance guidelines	Yes
External Audit	No
Governance	Yes
Transparency(published results)	Yes
Periodic Review	Yes