



Department  
for Education

# **Longitudinal education outcomes study: how we share and use personal data**

**May 2016**

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## Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to describe how we share and use education, employment and benefit claims information for research and statistical purposes.

## Expiry or review date

This guidance will be reviewed before May 2017.

## How we use information about education, employment and any benefit claims

We<sup>1</sup> link personal information relating to education, employment, and benefit claims in order to research education outcomes over time. We do this in order to:

- let you compare school, college, and university performance
- provide statistical information to support your education and career decisions
- evaluate and monitor the impact of education or training on outcomes
- support government decision making so we can improve services

We link information about students, such as:

- personal characteristics including gender, ethnic group and if the young person had special education needs during their education
- household income and if the young person qualified for free school meals
- education such as schools they attended, courses taken and qualifications achieved
- benefits claimed
- any careers advice and training offered by the government
- employment and income

We only link the information relating to students who completed their education in 1995 or after, which is the earliest available education information.

## How we will use the information

There are specific legal powers which allow us to link information relating to education, employment, and benefit claims. These powers only allow this information to be used to make decisions about education and training policy from summary information, for example, the average income students have achieved after taking a course. For more information [see section 78 of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015](#) and [sections 87 - 91 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#).

The above linked information is only made available to government employees or organisations working on our behalf under strict contractual conditions for research and analysis purposes. Before providing access to the above linked information for research,

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<sup>1</sup> Four government departments are working together to link this data. Education information up to age 18 is obtained from [Department for Education](#). Education information for older students is obtained from [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#). This information is combined with benefit claim information collected by [Department for Work and Pensions](#) and employment information collected by [Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs](#).

we remove names, date of births and addresses. Access to names, date of births and addresses is restricted to government employees and contractors who need access in order to link together the information. Identifying individuals from the linked information is against our terms and conditions. All government employees and contractors must agree to our terms and conditions before accessing the linked information for research purposes. We will monitor use of the linked information and if users fail to meet these conditions, access will be removed and we may consider further action.

We only allow data to be published from the linked information in summary form, such as the proportion of students in employment. We take care to ensure that this summary information is anonymised so people cannot be identified from the published information.

Personal information is not used for marketing purposes or to make decisions that will affect individuals, but we may be in touch to ask you to take part in further research such as surveys.

## Sharing personal information with organisations

Where we provide third parties such as universities with access to the linked information for specific research purposes, we will make sure there are secure arrangements in place for handling the linked information. Decisions on whether this linked information will be accessible to third parties will be subject to a robust approval process and based on a detailed assessment of who requests the data, the purpose for which it is required, and the level and sensitivity of data requested. We will publish a list of approved organisations with access to the information and summarise the approved research proposals on Gov.uk.

We will set up an independent panel to assess research proposals from third parties that stand out as new uses. The panel will consider privacy, the benefits of the proposal and compliance with the [Data Protection Act \(1998\)](#). The panel will include representatives from across government and independent members. The outcomes of their considerations will be published on Gov.uk.

## Requesting access to your information

We will consider requests from you for copies of your information, but the release of information may be exempt under [section 33 of the Data Protection Act \(1998\)](#) as the above linked information is used exclusively for research and statistical purposes.<sup>2</sup> If you

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<sup>2</sup> The Data Protection Act (DPA) enables individuals to request access to personal data held by organisations. However, [section 33 of the Data Protection Act 1998](#) exempts organisations from providing this data in cases where this information is being used exclusively for research, historical or statistical purposes.

wish to request particular elements of your data, please contact the government department responsible for the relevant data collection.<sup>1</sup>

## **Reviewing the information**

We will review the data annually and delete any information not needed.



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