

Statistical notice: Ofsted policy statement on confidentiality and data access

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Introduction

Principle 5 of the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) requires producers of official statistics to publish transparent guidance on their arrangements for protecting confidential data.

Ofsted's Chief Statistician is responsible for all of the Official Statistics Ofsted produce and for assuring that these are governed by Ofsted's own data protection policy. This policy reflects the wide use of data within the organisation, including for the production of official statistics.

Ofsted publishes a general policy on the handling and retention of inspection evidence: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handling-and-retention-of-inspection-evidence

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

Version control

Version	Date	Details	Revision due
1.0	June 2014	First release	January 2015
2.0	January 2017	Second release. Amendments to technical security (transmission of microdata) and to name of Chief Statistician.	January 2018

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

Confidentiality

Ofsted holds and processes data that is confidential because it is personal or commercially sensitive. Most of such data is produced from administrative sources and management information systems that Ofsted uses to effectively carry out business functions.

Principle 5 of [The Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) states: 'Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.'

Ofsted is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the data it receives, stores, processes and disseminates. Staff who work with data receive appropriate security checks and training in protecting and managing information.

Physical security

All staff working at Ofsted and visitors to its sites are required to wear a pass to access premises. Further internal security levels prevent unauthorised access. Access is strictly controlled in line with Ofsted policy and there is no public access to any part of the organisation where confidential statistical data may be held.

Technical security

A secure technical environment is achieved by the use of multilayered authentication, using a combination of physical token, PIN and password. All transmission of microdata is conducted through encrypted email or secure file transfer.

Access to specific datasets is granted only where the job role requires the use of the data.

Organisational security

Ofsted has an Information Management Team that is responsible for policy, guidance and advice on data protection, information access, assurance and management.

Data managers are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the policy. They ensure that Ofsted manages its data resources in accordance with the best practice principles and standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols, with the statements and policies which form part of this compliance statement, and in accordance with the organisation's statutory obligations. Data managers are also responsible for:

- compiling and maintaining metadata to cover the whole life-cycle of each of the statistical resources they manage;
- guarding the integrity and security of their data holdings in accordance with the organisation's overall policies on security and business continuity;
- archiving their resources in line with the organisation's overall policy on data retention, preservation, and destruction.

Data managers' duties will evolve to match the development of each of the systems and policies described above.

Statistical disclosure control

Ofsted uses statistical disclosure control (SDC) to ensure that individuals or groups of individuals cannot be identified from statistical data. This means that:

- confidential information about a person or unit (such as a household or business) is not made available

- different outputs from the same source, or outputs from different sources, cannot be combined to reveal information about a person or a group of persons.

Ofsted uses suppression and rounding of data for disclosure control, for example:

- suppression of data so that the cell value in a table, which may be disclosive (e.g., where the value is small) is not given. Secondary suppression of cells, where at least one other value in the row or column is also not given to ensure that suppressed values cannot be deduced through subtraction. Values of 0 and 100% may also be suppressed, for example, where all pupils in a school are eligible for free school meals
- rounding of cells to a multiple of a set base, such as 5, where, for example, a true value of 3, 4 or 6 would be shown as 5. This adds uncertainty to the true values of small cells and helps avoid disclosure.

Access to data

Data access or data sharing agreements must be established before named third parties are given access to confidential information. These agreements are written documents and must specify the precise data and variables that are being provided and the nature of the analysis where they will be used.

Ofsted operates service level agreements when sharing data with internal users and other government groups.

Respondents receive privacy notices detailing the purpose of the data collected and Ofsted's responsibilities with regards to confidentiality.

Helen Barugh
Chief Statistician
Ofsted
January 2017



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