

Welsh Government

Consultation Action Plan

Education and Lifelong Learning Statistics 2010

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Introduction

The Statistical Directorate within the Welsh Government carried out a User Consultation to assess if Education and Lifelong Learning Statistics are meeting the needs of Users and to identify any areas of unmet demand.

The Consultation, which ran between the 8 September and the 30 November 2010, received 40 completed consultation questionnaires. 21 of these were from Post-16 Education Statistics Users and 19 from Schools Statistics Users. There were 32 individual respondents, 8 of which filled in both Post-16 and Schools questionnaires. 4 of the questionnaires were completed in Welsh and all were received electronically.

We would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to this Consultation. In February 2011, we published a summary report of the responses received (available at <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/education/?lang=en&status=closed>). This report lists the planned changes to our outputs and actions that are based on this feedback.

Firstly the report discusses some of the general issues arising from the consultation, around the format of our outputs, and some proposed actions. Further to this the report considers the specific topic areas within schools and post-16 education statistics, and changes we plan to make in light of the consultation, and our wider planning discussions.

As well as giving us feedback on our existing outputs, the purpose of the consultation was to help us in prioritising our activity in a time of constrained resources. Not surprisingly, rather than identifying areas where we could cut back, the consultation provided us with a list of additional demands that individual users would find it helpful if we published regularly, which we have considered within the relevant topic area. Given the increasing demand for statistics from both external users and within the Welsh Government, coupled with more limited resources we will have to make difficult decisions to stop some work. The action plan identifies where we have made these decisions, and areas where we may need to cut back in the future. The consultation feedback has been valuable to us in making these decisions, along with the priorities identified by the Department for Education and Skills within Welsh Government.

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General issues

The consultation asked users about their preferences for types of output. The responses provided pointed to data tables and on-line tables as the most useful type of output. However, there was support for each individual type of output, which highlights to us how we have to support the needs of varied users, with different information requirements. A specific action in this area is that we will publish spreadsheets of the tables included within .pdf releases or bulletins so that users can have direct access to the data.

We also have to consider that those who have responded to the consultation are likely to be well informed, regular users of our data, and there is a need to support the occasional or casual user of our data. Recent assessments by the UK Statistics Authority, have highlighted the need to improve the commentary around our data, which assists those less familiar with the information in their understanding. Therefore, we will be reviewing the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the commentary within our outputs over the coming year. This is in line with the action plan agreed with the UK Statistics Authority.

We will also review the rounding principles used in the Further Education data, to consider if there is scope to relax the rules, at least in part, to assist users in their understanding and own analysis of the data. Similar principles are used with the Higher Education data, but as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) are the data owners we have less scope to influence this decision.

More widely we are looking to make best use of new technology to develop the way we disseminate information to increase the accessibility to all users. This includes the renewal of StatsWales; the development of a data catalogue; the better use of GIS technology and also the use of linked data techniques. The latter is intended to make best use of the emerging 'semantic web' environment to use data formats that will enable users to link directly, for instance from their own websites, to data items held by the Welsh Government.

Post-16 Education Statistics

A) Further education, work based learning and community learning statistical outputs:

- **Analysis of Participation in Post-16 Education and Training**
- **Further Education, Work-based Learning and Community Learning in Wales (releases)**
- **Further Education, Work-based Learning and Community Learning in Wales (volume)**
- **Learning Network Analysis**
- **National Comparators for Further Education and Work-based Learning**
- **Staff at Further Education Institutions**

We will be looking at the range and format of our Further education, work-based learning and community learning outputs, aiming to clarify what each output covers and how they relate to each other, improving consistency and removing overlaps where possible. This was an area identified by the UK Statistics Authority in their recent assessment of our statistics.

We will undertake a scoping exercise with regard to the Further Education Institution staff record. The consultation asked users for views on the individual staff collection, given that it was put on hold in 2009/10. Four organisations within the sector indicated their support for its continuation and indeed expansion into the wider post-16 learning field. Given this interest we will undertake a scoping exercise to understand the precise user requirement (to both external users and within the Welsh Government), but also the resource implication of reinstating and potentially expanding the collection. We will continue using a limited aggregate collection for the time being.

We will work with Sector Skills Councils to provide them with better information to support their work. There was a significant response to the consultation from Sector Skills organisations, with suggestions for more detailed data, for example on apprenticeships, to be routinely published.

We will review the data currently published on disability, including specifically visual impairment, and deaf students, to see if we can publish data in more detail, but will also work with the relevant respondents in regard to their specific information requirements.

We will aim to update the Analysis of Participation in Post-16 Education and Training bulletin at least every two years. One FE institution responded to state a preference for an annual update, whilst another was content with the proposal to update every two years. Whilst we cannot commit to updating this annually, we will do so if resources are available, and will aim to provide an update at least every 2 years.

B) Higher education statistical outputs:

- **Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) in Wales: Longitudinal Survey**
- **Destinations of Students Gaining Qualifications from Higher Education Institutions**
- **Destinations of Students Completing Initial Teacher Training Courses**
- **Higher Education Performance Indicators**
- **Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Institutions in the UK (Headline summary of HESA data)**
- **Initial Teacher Training**
- **Staff and Finance of Welsh Higher Education Institutions**
- **Students in Higher Education Institutions**
- **University and Colleges Admissions Service Statistics**
- **Welsh in Higher Education Institutions**

As the consultation document outlined, in the area of Higher Education our outputs are often a further, more detailed analysis for Wales, of data already published by other organisations for example HESA or UCAS. These are useful outputs for our users, drawing out the key trends for Wales and often providing more detailed analysis. However because there are already UK wide releases of the data, the value they add to the evidence base is less than within other areas of education statistics. Whilst we have not identified any proposals for change at this point, this may be an area where we have to cut back in the future.

We will consider if any further data can be published on the profile of learners within *Destinations of Students completing Initial Teacher Training Courses*, in response to a specific request.

We will also work with policy colleagues and HEFCW in providing data to support the evaluation of Higher Education policy such as higher education provision in FEIs, Coleg Ffederal, and regional strategies.

C) Student finance statistical outputs:

- **Applications for Student Finance, Tuition Fee Loans and Tuition Fee Grants Awarded in Wales (Headline summary of Student Loans Company (SLC) data)**
- **Assembly Learning Grants Awarded to Welsh Domiciled Further Education Students**
- **Education Maintenance Allowances Awarded in Wales**
- **Financial Contingency Funds**
- **Student Loans for Higher Education (Headline summary of SLC data)**
- **Student Support for Higher Education (Headline summary of SLC data)**

The consultation provided very little by way of feedback on the student finance statistical outputs. We are not planning any changes to these outputs. Following the recent assessment the monthly summary reports on Education Maintenance Allowances have now been designated as National Statistics and are published as Statistical First Releases.

D) Participation statistical outputs:

- **Participation of Young People in Education and the Labour Market**
- **Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales (Headline summary of Careers Wales data)**
- **Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)**

We will continue to produce annual and quarterly estimates of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) through the annual release *Participation of Young People in Education and the Labour Market* and quarterly bulletins. We will improve signposting between the two outputs, and will also develop the commentary and guidance around the purpose of the two sets of estimates and how and when they should be used. (This issue was raised by the UK Statistics Authority in their recent assessment). We will also take account of work being undertaken by the Office for National Statistics to produce UK level and regional estimates of young people who are NEET from the Labour Force Survey/ Annual Population Survey.

We will publish a Statistical article further exploring the Annual Population Survey data in respect of young people who are NEET. The consultation generated requests for additional analyses of young people who are NEET by disability, including visual impairment and hearing impairment specifically. This requirement was also backed up by the Enterprise and Learning Committee (2007-2011) report on young people not in education, employment or training (http://www.assemblywales.org/young_people_not_in_education_employment_or_training-e.pdf) who requested information by disability. We also receive regular requests for local area estimates. Therefore we intend to produce a statistical article utilising more of the Annual Population Survey data in this area, and explaining some of the limitations on its analysis.

However, given the survey nature of the data, and that we are looking at subsets of an already small group, there will be limitations in the analysis that is possible due to the sample sizes involved. We will need to produce analyses based on a wider age definition (16-24), or use an average of several years to be able to provide data of sufficient quality. Even by adopting these approaches we may not be able to provide data to the level of detail requested, but the article will discuss these issues.

The article will be published in Autumn 2011, following the availability of the Q4 2010 APS data in July 2011.

E) *Qualification and skills* statistical outputs:

- **Educational Attainment of Young People by Age 19**
- **Levels of Highest Qualification held by Working Age Adults**
- **Vocational Qualifications (Headline summary of DfE data)**

We will not publish a 2009/10 update to the *Educational Attainment of Young People by Age 19* release. The release was introduced to provide a complete picture of attainment by matching together datasets of school, further education and work-based learning awards. The latest release in December 2010 provided data up to the academic year 2008/09.

The matching process is resource intensive, from a time and money perspective, and we are aware that we are not exploiting the full potential of the data by simply producing an annual attainment release. Therefore, instead of procuring the 2009/10 data at this stage it is our intention to explore the wider potential of the matched data, which additionally includes the ability to link to Higher Education data.

There are several other strands of work ongoing in the area of data matching, such as value added, linking education and health records, analysing outcomes by linking post-16 learner data to benefit and tax records. We will also be considering how we can integrate these separate projects to provide a more strategic, and cost-effective approach to this area of work to maximise the use of our education data within the Welsh Government and across academia and other stakeholders.

We will aim to provide an update on our progress towards the end of the year through a statistical article.

We will publish a 2010 update to the *Levels of Highest Qualification held by Working Age adults* bulletin. The consultation document asked for views on whether this bulletin needed to be produced annually. There was no strong feedback against this change. Given that the next release will provide data for 2010, which is the year included in the Learning Country: Vision into Action targets related to qualification levels, we have decided to publish the bulletin as normal this year and will re-consider the future of the output for 2012-13. However, this is an area where we may need to cut back our analysis in the future, either by reducing the regularity or size of the output.

The headline on *Vocational Qualifications* will be discontinued. Our recent UK Statistics Authority Assessment found this output not up to standard, given the lack of supporting data published. In light of this feedback, and what we would consider the low relative importance of this output, we will be discontinuing the headline in its current format. We will consider in consultation with users if there is sufficient interest in developing a new output on this area, which would include data on awards through the Qualifications and Credit Framework. Any views on this are welcomed.

The consultation found support for participation in the **UKCES 2011 skills survey**, which is now going ahead with a boosted sample for Wales to support more detailed analysis. Results will be published next year.

A number of respondents articulated the need for the development of **consistent performance measures** for learners in school sixth forms and FE institutions. In support of this we are looking to widen the scope of the Welsh Examinations Database (WED), following the outcome of our previous research in this area

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/articles/performanceasures/?lang=en>.

Currently WED focuses on qualification bodies known to have entries from schools, around 15 in total. We are in the process of collecting retrospective data for 2010 from over 100 other bodies, with the aim of being more representative of the post-16 sector. Once received the next step will be to cross-validate this information with the existing qualifications data on LLWR.

If we are assured of the completeness of the data on WED for the post-16 sector, this would allow us to use this dataset as a consistent source for the schools and post-16 sector.

F) other post-16 statistical outputs:

- **Cross Border Flows in Education**
- **International Comparisons of Education Indicators**

We will aim to update the International Comparisons of Education Indicators article at least every two years. Several respondents highlighted the value of internationally comparable data and whilst we cannot commit to updating this annually, we will aim to provide an update at least every 2 years.

Schools Statistics

A) *school absenteeism and exclusions* statistical outputs:

- Absenteeism from Primary Schools
- Absenteeism from Secondary Schools
- Exclusions from Schools

B) *examination results and teacher assessments* statistical outputs:

- Academic Achievement and Entitlement to Free School Meals
- Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics
- Assessment and Examination Performance: Comparison with England and its Regions
- Examination Results
- National Curriculum Assessments of 7, 11 and 14 year olds
- Schools in Wales: Examination Performance
- Teacher Assessments of the Non-Core Subjects

We will publish more by way of Key Quality information to help users understand the **timing of our outputs**. The consultation raised some concerns with the timing of the absenteeism and exclusion, and examination results and teacher assessments outputs. Regular users will probably be aware that there have been significant improvements to publication timetables for these outputs in recent years, and as part of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics we strive to publish our outputs as soon as is practicable. However, we are constrained by the data collection timetable, and there is no further scope to bring forward the dates of publication for these outputs.

For example, whilst A-level and GCSE results are announced in August these cover only the main four general awarding organisations and do not cover the increasing number of vocational boards used by schools in Wales. Between this day and the end of September we collect data from a number of other awarding organisations, including BTEC and City & Guilds, before matching the data at an individual pupil level in order to build up a comprehensive picture of each pupil's attainment across all the different awarding organisations.

A further example is that there is a lag in the timetable for the collection of exclusions data due to a 3 month wait for the independent appeals process to be complete. This ensures that when the data are published they are robust, final and unlikely to change.

The *Absenteeism from Secondary Schools* release is able to be published earlier than the equivalent for primary schools due to the different time periods they relate to. Historically the secondary school absenteeism data has related to the period September to May, in order that complete and validated data by school are available for publication in the Autumn term. The primary school data relates to the full academic year, and cannot therefore be begun to be collected until the following September.

C) *pupils and schools* statistical outputs:

- **Class Sizes in Primary Schools**
- **Schools' Census (provisional)**
- **Schools' Census, Final Results**
- **School Statistics by Assembly Constituency and Region**

We will be review the content of the Schools' Census publications and will consider suggestions for additional analysis identified as part of this consultation. A number of areas for additional analysis were identified as part of the consultation, for example data on SEN secondary need, SEN by Welsh language.

We will collect class size information in the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census. The separate output on *Class Sizes in Primary Schools* will be discontinued as data will no longer be collected through a local authority return but will become part of the annual schools census. Therefore the information will therefore become part of the *Schools' Census* output, and there will be more opportunities for analysis by sub-group e.g., schools' language category (as suggested through the consultation).

D) *special education needs in schools* statistical output:

- **Pupils with Statements of Special Education Needs**

We will review whether there is sufficient value in continuing this data collection (Stats2 return), given the cross over with data collected on PLASC. Local Authorities complete the Stats2 return with regard to Pupils with Statements of Special Education Needs for which they are responsible. It records the number of children for whom the authority has a statement of special educational need as well as the provision made for them, whether within the authority's area or elsewhere (a difference from the PLASC data). The number of pupils assessed during the previous calendar year and the number of statements issued is also recorded, again this data is not collected via PLASC.

Whilst the Stats2 return provides a different aspect of information to the PLASC, we need to ascertain, given the limited resources we and local authorities face, if there is sufficient value added in continuing with this collection.

E) *pupils leaving education with no qualifications* statistical output:

- **Pupils Leaving Education with No Qualifications**

We will review whether this data collection is still needed, and if adequate data can be provided through data linking. This collection was introduced in 1999 for the specific purpose of measuring a target included within the strategy document "The Learning Country" and is collected directly from each secondary school in Wales. The data is still used as part of the national performance indicator suite, but is no longer used as a target. A significant amount of resources are used both here and in schools and local authorities to calculate this figure and it is unclear what use is made of the data beyond as part of the national performance indicator data set. We therefore need to consider i) if this data is still required and ii) if it is required then can similar enough information be provided through linking datasets, which would avoid the burden upon schools.

F) *teachers* statistical output:

- **Teachers in Service, Vacancies and Sickness Absence**

We will review whether there is sufficient value in continuing this data collection (Stats3 return), given the cross over with data collected on PLASC and by the General Teaching Council for Wales

Local Authorities complete the Stats3 return with regard to Teachers in Service, Vacancies and Sickness Absence. The return covers all teachers in service with the local authority so in addition to those in maintained establishments (covered by PLASC data), it also includes peripatetic teachers, advisory and miscellaneous teachers and teachers with service divided between schools and those on secondment. The information on vacancies and sickness absence is not collected elsewhere.

Whilst the Stats3 return provides a different aspect of information to the PLASC, we need to ascertain, given the limited resources we and local authorities face, if there is sufficient value added in continuing with this collection.

G) *school finance* statistical outputs:

- **Budgeted Expenditure on Special Education Needs (SEN) Provision**
- **Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools**
- **Local Authority Budgets for Education: Wales and England Comparisons**
- **Reserves held by Schools**

Feedback for these outputs was generally very positive. There are no specific plans for changes to these outputs.

Comparisons with England have become increasingly difficult to perform on a consistent basis. We were unable to compare local authority budgets for the latest year due to changes in the way that England fund education services although we were able to publish a statistical bulletin to update outturn expenditure. Since this bulletin was published, England have changed the way they intend to fund education even further making future comparisons more difficult. We will review the data and policy directions in both countries each year and decide on the most appropriate way to compare expenditure if at all possible.