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1. How Ofsted uses administrative data in official statistics

Protocol 3 of the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) states that administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to appropriate safeguards.

In accordance with this protocol, Ofsted is required to produce a statement of administrative sources that identifies:

- the administrative systems currently used to produce official statistics
- processes, which ensure that we take full account of the implications for official statistics when considering changes to administrative systems
- information on other administrative sources that aren't currently used when producing official statistics but have the potential to be
- arrangements for providing statistical staff – whether inside Ofsted or elsewhere – with access to

administrative data for statistical purposes

- arrangements for auditing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes
- arrangements for ensuring the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data

1.1 Ofsted's official statistics

The official statistics published by Ofsted are mainly based on the aggregation of inspection outcome grades. Our data on inspection outcomes is drawn from our administrative systems to help Ofsted to carry out its duties.

2. Administrative sources used to produce statistics in Ofsted

2.1 Cygnum system

Cygnum is the name of the database used as a source of official statistics.

The statistical releases that include data from Cygnum are:

- further education and skills inspections and outcomes
- non-association independent schools inspection outcomes
- initial teacher education inspections and outcomes
- maintained schools and academies inspections and outcomes
- children's social care data in England
- local authority and children's homes in England inspection outcomes

Processes arrangements for dealing with actual or planned changes to Cygnum

Discussions between policy and information systems (IS) teams may sometimes result in a need for change to Cygnum. The change process involves agreeing specifications, and developing and testing changes to the system, followed by a final sign-off.

Data changes are tested by the IS and policy teams, ensuring that those using the systems are involved in any important changes. Statistical staff are involved in testing the impact of changes on reporting, which usually allows some advance notice of any discontinuities that may arise. These can be explained in the official statistics releases.

Processes to give staff access to Cygnum

Staff involved in producing official statistics have access to data via Ofsted's SQL-based data warehouse and a range of internal management information reporting products. Staff use the data warehouse for statistical purposes by requesting access from the information asset owner. User permissions are reviewed regularly.

Processes to quality assure the data taken from Cygnum

A number of automated exception reports are in place, to alert staff to data that may be inaccurate.

Processes are then followed to ensure that this data is corrected at source. Additional manual quality assurance is carried out by statistical staff. This includes validation against external sources where available, for example, by checking data against published inspection reports. The quality assurance is recorded in a checklist that statistical staff complete each time they compile official statistics.

Arrangements to ensure the security of the statistical processes that draw on Cygnum

Data on inspection outcomes is used for operational purposes. Therefore, a wide range of staff within Ofsted has access to the underlying data held within the system.

Access to the final version of a data set used in the production of a statistical release, before publication, is restricted to those involved in the quality assurance and production processes. The exception is the 24-hour access granted to those listed on the published pre-release access list.

Once extracted from Ofsted's data warehouse, data is held in Excel format. Access to this data is controlled by the use of appropriate shared storage locations, with controlled access.

2.2 Regulatory support application (RSA)

The administrative data system used as a source of official statistics is the regulatory support application (RSA). The statistical release that includes data from RSA is 'Childcare providers and inspections'.

Processes for dealing with any actual or planned changes to RSA

Discussions between policy and IS teams may sometimes result in a need for change to RSA. The change process involves agreeing specifications, and developing and testing changes to the system, followed by a final sign-off.

Data changes are tested by the IS team, policy teams and providers, ensuring that those using the systems are involved in any important changes. Statistical staff are involved in testing the data entered on RSA, which allows advance notice of any discontinuities that may arise. These can be explained in the official statistics releases.

Arrangements in which staff are given access RSA

Access to the system for statistical purposes is by request to the information asset owner. Levels of access depend on role responsibilities. Staff involved in the production of official statistics are given 'read access' to data. This allows them to view the data, but not to edit it.

Procedures employed to quality assure the data taken from RSA

Automated quality-assurance processes, such as validation rules, are built into the RSA system. Additional manual quality assurance is carried out by statistical staff. This includes validation against external sources where available, for example, by checking data against published inspection reports.

The quality assurance is recorded in a checklist that statistical staff complete each time they compile official statistics.

Arrangements to ensure the security of statistical processes that draw on RSA

Data on inspection outcomes is used for operational purposes, therefore a wide range of staff within Ofsted have access to it. Access to the final version of a data set used in the production of a statistical release, before publication, is restricted to those involved in the quality assurance and production processes. The exception is the 24-hour access granted to those on the published pre-release access list.

Once extracted from RSA, data is held in SQL or Excel format. Access to data held in SQL is controlled by permissions. Access to Excel is controlled by password protection and the storage of workbooks in restricted locations.

3. External data used in official statistics

Ofsted uses some external data for reporting. This data is either fed into the Cygnum and RSA systems or is held in separate SQL databases.

The following are examples of sources of external data used by Ofsted:

- Department for Education – details of maintained and independent schools, multi-academy trusts, and social care data that includes information on characteristics and placements of looked-after children and data from the National Pupil Database
- Education and Skills Funding Agency – details of academies, learners aged 14 to 16 and 16 to 19 details of post-16 further education and skills providers and learner numbers
- Office for National Statistics – geographical data

4. Quality assurance of Ofsted inspection data

Data collected during Ofsted inspections is recorded promptly into Ofsted systems. Regular quality checks are undertaken on inspection data. Inspected providers are asked to comment on the factual accuracy of an inspection report before publication.

Inspection outcomes are entered onto our systems by the lead inspector. As inspection reports undergo a quality assurance process, any errors are likely to be identified at this stage. In addition, a selection of the entries onto our administrative system are checked to ensure that these match the inspection report.

There is a focus on checking entries where the risk of error is highest. An example of this is where the inspection judgement changes during the quality assurance process. Despite the various quality assurance practices, there remains a small chance that some outcomes are entered incorrectly onto our systems.

Ofsted staff involved in the production of official statistics are required to have completed training on information security and on identifying and managing the risk of disclosure of sensitive data.

5. Quality assurance of data from external sources

All external data is supported through service level agreements and data-sharing protocols. These agreements and protocols put in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure that data is:

- stored, used and disposed of in a safe manner
- accessed only by those with a completed data access agreement

- not released ahead of official statistics, where applicable
- robust and accurate and has agreed processes for raising any issues and concerns

Where data is provided to Ofsted from external agencies, the team leader completes a declaration stating how Ofsted will use the data and how we will comply with any requirements specified by the owner of the data. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are in place between Ofsted and the relevant external agency. Each SLA contains the specific data sets, dates for destruction and an agreed list of permitted users.

Where data is provided by NPD, an application is made detailing the Ofsted needs. This is then approved as appropriate by the Department for Education under a schedule of use. All Ofsted staff, who need access to the NPD data set, have to complete an individual declaration form and sign it to confirm that they agree to the terms of use. The DfE have specific dates for destruction for different NPD datasets. We keep a tracker internally to monitor this. The DfE also alerts Ofsted to when data needs to be destroyed. If Ofsted requires the data for longer than the initial agreed date, an extension of use has to be justified and submitted to the DfE. The relevant team leader within Ofsted is responsible for confirming data destruction or justifying any extension.

Ofsted has worked with a range of data suppliers to improve the quality before delivery into Ofsted systems. A series of validation checks are carried out at source to minimise errors. Ofsted carries out additional quality assurance checks on data received.

Communication with data suppliers ensures that Ofsted is informed of any issues as they arise. This allows Ofsted to manage the use of data where there are known issues.

Ofsted has comprehensive arrangements in place for ensuring the security of statistical processes that draw on administrative data.

Further information on data quality can be found in the quality reports released alongside Ofsted official statistics.

Helen Barugh
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Ofsted
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