

Statistical notice

Communities and Local Government Quality Guidelines

Introduction

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires all producers of Official Statistics to publish quality guidelines - Principle 4: Sound Methods and Assured Quality. This document describes the quality guidelines used within Communities and Local Government (CLG).

The Code of Practice was published in January 2009 and can be found at:

www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html

National Statistician's guidance

In August 2009, a set of guidelines were published by the National Statistician, with the aim of assisting in the interpretation and implementation of the 'Principles' and 'Practices' outlined in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The publication that addresses quality is entitled "National Statistician's Guidance: Quality, Methods and Harmonisation." Communities and Local Government (CLG) will follow the guidelines set out in this publication.

Statistical quality

The definitions of statistical quality used in CLG are in line with the European Statistical System's six dimensions and as listed in Principle 4 of the Code of Practice. These are relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility and clarity, comparability and coherence.

These are described further in the table below:

Definition	Key aspects Users can expect		
Relevance The degree to which the statistical output meets user needs for both coverage and content.	Any assessment of relevance needs to consider: • who are the users of the statistics • what are their needs; and • how well does the output meet these needs?	To be appropriately consulted about their needs and CLG will seek to review data collections and statistical outputs on an ongoing basis to ensure that they continue to meet user needs.	
For survey data: the closeness between an estimated result and the (unknown) true value.	Accuracy can be split into sampling error and non-sampling error, where non-sampling error includes: coverage error non-response error measurement error processing error; and model assumption error.	Survey data in CLG will be presented with full information on: - sampling variability - confidence intervals - response rates; and - other relevant criteria to allow users to make informed judgements on quality.	
For all data sources: how well the information is recorded and transmitted	 completeness timeliness of recording and transmission accuracy of recording of data items correct use of coding; and correct interpretation. 	 All statistical publications will: include details of how the underlying data are collected to allow users to understand the strengths and limitations contain a description of data quality issues; and any impact this may have on analysing changes over time 	

		•	comparisons between different groups will be transparent to both lay and expert audiences be compliant with the published CLG Revisions Policy or the specific policy for that output.
Timeliness and Punctuality			
Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.	An assessment of timeliness and punctuality should consider the following: • production time • frequency of release; and • punctuality of release.	•	publications will comply with the Code of Practice on pre-announcing dates or will state clearly at the time of pre-announcement any reasons why this has not been followed we will comply with the Protocol 2 in the Code of Practice we will publish Statistical releases as soon as possible after the relevant time-period.
Accessibility			
Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data. It also relates to the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata,	Specific areas where accessibility and clarity may be addressed include: • needs of expert and non expert users • consistency of standard in relation to revisions, rounding, data suppression and spreadsheet type • assistance to locate information	•	statistical publications will be published in line with the CLG website accessibility policy ¹ . all publications will use Plain English wherever possible

¹ http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/help/accessibility/accessibilitypolicy

illustrations and accompanying advice	clarity; anddissemination.	
Comparability		
The degree to which data can be compared over time and domain	Comparability should be addressed in terms of comparability over: • time • spatial domains e.g. sub-national, national, international; and • domain or sub-population e.g. crime/offence type, ethnicity.	We will use harmonised concepts and definitions in statistical publications wherever they are available Any statistical publication which does not use harmonised definitions will explain why this has not been used and any plans to move it onto a harmonised basis.
Coherence		
The degree to which data derived from different sources or methods but which refer to the same phenomenon are similar	Coherence should be addressed in terms of: data produced at different frequencies other statistics in the same domain sources and outputs coverage of different databases data published at different geographic levels; and definitions and coding used for different data sources.	As standard practice, we will release related statistical publications on the same day in order to aid user understanding unless: • this would mean significant delay to one set of figures in order to present the coherent set of releases • User Engagement suggests that separate releases on separate days would be preferable. Where related measures are published across several publications we will make it clear to users where the related information can be found.

Continuous improvement

CLG will also seek continuous improvement in statistical processes by releasing statistical work in progress, such as "Experimental Statistics". These will be published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

Janet Dougharty

Head of Profession for Statistics Communities and Local Government February 2010