

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Benefits, Employment Programmes, Sanctions and Vacancies

*(produced by the Department for Work and
Pensions)*

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

Contact us

Tel: 0845 604 1857

Email: authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Myddelton Street
London EC1R 1UW

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(produced by the Department for Work and Pensions)

ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.

Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment Reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, Reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment Reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment Reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment Report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act requires all statistics currently designated as National Statistics to be assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics³. The report covers the following National Statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP):

- *DWP Statistical Summary*⁴
- *DWP Quarterly Statistical Summary*

1.1.2 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics detailed in paragraph 1.1.1 are designated as National Statistics, subject to DWP implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by June 2011.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

1.3.1 The statistical summaries are a focus for a wide range of DWP's benefit and employment scheme statistics. They provide summary statistics on a selection of benefits and links to online tools for accessing more detailed data. The summaries also provide the user with some metadata about the various benefit types and links to other related DWP publications.

1.3.2 DWP enables users to access its benefit statistics via a web based tabulation tool⁵. Some users found the tabulation tool inflexible and lacking appropriate metadata. The statistics are also available via NOMIS⁶ which provides more flexibility in terms of downloading data.

1.3.3 DWP engages effectively with users within DWP and across other government departments. The Assessment team found less evidence of engagement with users and potential users more widely. DWP has taken steps to identify the

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁴ http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=statistical_summaries

⁵ <http://83.244.183.180/100pc/tabtool.html>

⁶ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp>

range of uses and users for these statistics and needs to develop more systematic methods of communication.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that DWP could strengthen its compliance with the Code. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

Requirement 1	Take further steps to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of the statistics, publish relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the beneficial use of the statistics (para 3.5).
Requirement 2	Provide users with information about the accuracy of the statistics presented in the statistical summaries (para 3.12).
Requirement 3	Provide users with information about the methods used to produce the statistics within the statistical summaries (para 3.13).
Requirement 4	Provide information to users about the comparability of these statistics with related statistics produced in Northern Ireland (para 3.16).
Requirement 5	Label the <i>early estimates</i> clearly as 'official statistics' and explain the difference between these and the National Statistics (para 3.28).
Requirement 6	Take steps to ensure that the statistics are released at the standard time of 9.30am (para 3.35).

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 The statistical summaries present statistics on benefits and employment programmes administered by DWP for Great Britain. The *Statistical Summary* is published monthly. Each quarter (in May, August, November and February), a more comprehensive publication is produced (*DWP Quarterly Statistical Summary*) in place of that month's *DWP Statistical Summary*. The *DWP Statistical Summary* contains statistics on housing benefit and council tax benefit together with *early estimates* of working age inactive benefit caseloads. In addition to this, the *DWP Quarterly Statistical Summary* contains statistics on individual benefits received by client groups⁷ - the working age client group, pensioner client group and disabled and carers - as well as statistics on Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions, employment programmes, vacancies handled by Jobcentre Plus, and child support agency statistics.
- 2.2 In 2005, DWP announced major changes to the published benefit statistics⁸. One of these changes included the move to using a 100% data source called the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS). Previously all the benefit statistics were produced using a 5% sample of claimants drawn from administrative systems. The WPLS combines DWP's administrative data with data from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Ministry of Justice and local authorities. The WPLS includes all claimants, and covers information such as the age and gender of the claimant, the duration of the benefit claims, and the geographic location of the claimant. The move to using the WPLS resulted in improved small area information and the ability to link claims over time between working age benefits, employment schemes and employment, to provide information on flows of individuals. Statistics produced using the 100% data were first released in October 2005. DWP continues to publish the 5% sample data because it provides a wider range of variables for some benefit types.
- 2.3 The *early estimates* (see 2.1) were introduced in June 2009 as Official Statistics in response to demands for more timely information to monitor individuals receiving Incapacity Benefit, Employment Support Allowance and Income Support during the recession. DWP adopted a phased approach to the production of these figures. The *early estimates* are published monthly, within the statistical summary, six weeks after the date to which they refer and incorporate an estimate of late claims based on historical levels. They are an indication of how numbers on key inactive benefits have changed since the last *DWP Statistical Summary*. The final quarterly figures published in the *DWP Quarterly Statistical Summary* are more accurate than the *early estimates*. The *early estimates* for the non-quarter months are not revised.
- 2.4 Alongside the monthly and quarterly summaries, DWP produces a large number of tables which are available in a variety of ways:

⁷ Client groups were developed by DWP as method of classifying claimants receiving combinations of benefits on the basis of the main reasons that they are in contact with the Department. Claimants are classified once, enabling the estimation of the total number of people claiming one or more benefits

⁸ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/stats_consultation/modstats.pdf

- The DWP tabulation tool - an interactive tool comprising tens of thousands of pre-defined tables which users access by selecting from a range of options.
- Tables using the WPLS are published via NOMIS. NOMIS includes statistics on vacancies which are not available via the tabulation tool.
- Separate detailed tables on DWP's website, relating to housing benefit and council tax benefit⁹; employment and support allowance (ESA)¹⁰; benefit on and off flows, and claimants of out of work benefits¹¹.
- Tables for Lower Super Output Areas - available via the Neighbourhood Statistics website¹².
- Table 25 in ONS's Labour Market Statistical Bulletin¹³, which covers key out of work benefits.

2.5 These statistics are used within DWP for:

- assessing the effect of policy options;
- monitoring current policy;
- forecasting benefit expenditure;
- monitoring the effect of the economy on the benefit system; and
- answering Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests.

2.6 These statistics are also used outside DWP for:

- reporting progress towards local authority performance indicators;
- producing indices of deprivation for England, Wales and Scotland;
- improving small area population estimates; and
- policy development and evaluation by local authorities.

⁹ <http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbctb>

¹⁰ <http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=esa>

¹¹ http://83.244.183.180/100pc/wa/tabtool_wa.html

¹² <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

¹³ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=1944>

3 Assessment findings

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

- 3.1 DWP has published a *Customer Service and Engagement Strategy*¹⁴. This document includes a description of DWP's users and details of how DWP engages with them. The statistical team maintains good links with its users within DWP and meets them regularly to discuss their needs. DWP runs a statistics advisory group which oversees the development and reporting of DWP National Statistics from administrative sources. The group meets every six months and membership includes DWP staff, and representatives from the Office for National Statistics, the House of Commons Library, Oxford University and the devolved administrations. This group has recently discussed proposals for how to take into account the equalisation of the state pension age across DWP's outputs. The group assists DWP in understanding the needs of some key benefit statistics users and in consulting users on changes to the statistics.
- 3.2 The *Customer Service and Engagement Strategy* states that 'engagement with customers outside DWP is mainly through the statistical pages of the DWP website'. DWP has used this method of communication for a range of specific consultations, most recently for requesting user feedback to changes in relation to flexible new deal sanctions on the landing page for the tabulation tool. DWP told the Assessment team that many users access benefits data through NOMIS. The Assessment team suggests that future user consultations be included on the NOMIS website and the 'News and Announcements'¹⁵ section of DWP's website.
- 3.3 DWP maintains a database of ad hoc data requests although there is no process in place for systematically reviewing these requests. The Assessment team suggests that DWP develop a systematic process for reviewing user requests, for example via discussion at statistics advisory group meetings.
- 3.4 The statistics team is aware of the uses of these statistics within DWP. It is also aware of some uses in other government departments, for example in relation to their use as a component of the indices of multiple deprivation. DWP has published a note¹⁶ covering the users and uses of these statistics on its website. The Assessment team suggests that a link to this note be included in the *Statistical Summary* publications.
- 3.5 DWP informed us that an analysis of the numbers of people accessing these statistics via NOMIS indicated that local authorities are by far the largest group of users. However, DWP has no direct contact with users in local authorities at present. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DWP should take steps to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of the

¹⁴ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/policy/Customer_Service_and_Engagement_Strategy_final.pdf

¹⁵ <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=news>

¹⁶ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/uses_and_users.pdf

statistics, publish relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the beneficial use of the statistics¹⁷ (Requirement 1).

¹⁷ In relation to Principle 1, Practice 2 of the Code of Practice

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

- 3.6 The monthly and quarterly statistical summaries are available on DWP's website and contain descriptions of the statistics included in each publication. Detailed tables are made available via the tabulation tool at the same time as the publications.
- 3.7 The notes section of both publications includes a section on known issues, changes and revisions to the statistics and notifies users of future changes to the statistics and the statistical summaries. The known issues section includes details of how the new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries since May 2010 will be reflected in the statistics, for example. DWP announces larger changes and consultations via the 'News and Announcements' section of its website.
- 3.8 The benefit on and off flows statistics¹⁸ are released via the tabulation tool and are included in the quarterly summary. These statistics were suspended in May 2008 due to lack of resources and there is a note on DWP's website informing users of the suspension. Latest figures are included in the statistical summaries although the detailed data are not available. We understand that DWP intend to start the production of these statistics again on a regular basis in February 2011 and we suggest that, as part of this process, they publish a note which explains how the period between suspension and relaunch will be covered.
- 3.9 DWP has a published revisions policy¹⁹. DWP produces internal revision notes to inform colleagues of errors in National Statistics tables and how the statistics will be revised. Although these notes are only disseminated within DWP, the revisions are pre-announced publicly shortly afterwards.
- 3.10 DWP has a published pricing policy²⁰ for these statistics.

¹⁸ <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tabtool>

¹⁹ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/policy/DWP_Revisions_Policy_final.pdf

²⁰ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/ad%20hocs_and_pricing.pdf

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

3.11 In DWP, analysts are embedded within policy areas and are responsible for providing comments and advice in relation to these statistics. No incidents of political pressures, abuse of trust or complaints relating to professional integrity, quality or standards were reported to or identified by the Assessment team.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

- 3.12 DWP has published a quality statement²¹ for the statistical summaries which provides quality information on the six dimensions of the ESS Quality Framework. The section on coherence and comparability includes a link to the 'Guide to Sources' document²² which provides guidance for when to use the 5% and 100% data sets and details of the data sources used in these data sets. The statement provides some information about sources of sampling and non-sampling error but does not provide sufficient information about the quality of the statistics presented in the statistical summaries. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DWP should provide users with information about the accuracy of the statistics presented in the statistical summaries²³ (Requirement 2).
- 3.13 The section on coherence and comparability of the quality statement also includes a link to a document explaining the differences between the DWP published Jobseeker's Allowance statistics and ONS Claimant Count statistics²⁴. The document gives a useful insight into the methods used to produce these benefit statistics by providing information on the time of data extraction, how DWP takes account of backdated claims and late terminations, and data coverage. Some information about methods used to produce the statistics presented in the statistical summaries is included in Annex A of the quality statement. However, this only provides an overview and does not provide information about procedures for dealing with retrospection, late terminations, and data extraction. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DWP should provide users with information about the methods used to produce the statistics within the statistical summaries²⁵ (Requirement 3).
- 3.14 The quality statement outlines the quality assurance strategy used which includes carrying out quality checks at each stage from receiving the raw data to producing tables, and ensuring check logs contain no errors. DWP reviewed its quality assurance processes for the statistical summaries and associated products in 2009. This identified some areas which required further work, including the current methods of quality assurance. DWP told the Assessment team that a process is in place for recording work towards the recommended improvements and that the majority of the actions have been completed. One particular improvement has been the introduction of automatic methods of quality assurance which allows effort to be focused on areas of the database or particular tables which do not fit with pre-determined rules.

²¹ http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=statistical_summaries

²² <http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tabtool>

²³ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 2 and Principle 8 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

²⁴ <http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tabtool>

²⁵ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 1 and Principle 8 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

- 3.15 *Early estimates* are more timely than the estimates published in *DWP Quarterly Statistical Summary* but are of lower quality. DWP has published a technical note²⁶ which explains the methodology behind the *early estimates*.
- 3.16 The statistics released as part of the summaries cover benefits administered by DWP along with housing benefit and council benefit which are administered by local authorities. It is not possible to produce data for the UK as benefit statistics for Northern Ireland are not included. Tax credit and child benefit statistics are administered by HMRC and are also not included. DWP do not currently promote comparability of the statistics with related statistics produced in Northern Ireland. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DWP should provide information to users about the comparability of these statistics with related statistics produced in Northern Ireland²⁷ (Requirement 4).

²⁶ http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=early_ests

²⁷ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 6 of the Code of Practice

Principle 5: Confidentiality

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.

- 3.17 Data extracted from local authority owned housing benefit and council tax benefit systems are transferred to DWP using secure electronic transfer.
- 3.18 DWP has published a confidentiality statement²⁸ on its website. DWP told the Assessment team that claimants are informed of the use made of their data at the point of claim.

²⁸ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/policy/Confidentiality_Statement_final.pdf

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

- 3.19 Since most of the data used to produce the statistics presented in the statistical summaries are already collected for administrative purposes, there is little cost to data suppliers in supplying data for use in producing these statistics.
- 3.20 Statisticians responsible for the production of the statistics maintain strong links with technical colleagues responsible for updates to computer systems used for collecting administrative data. Statisticians are consulted about proposed changes and they encourage consideration of the statistical use of the data when the systems are re-designed. This ensures that statisticians are able to obtain the administrative data they require for the statistics they publish, maximise the statistical potential of the data collected, and receive advance warning of any changes that impact on the statistics they produce.

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

- 3.21 DWP's business planning covering statistical work is currently at team level but DWP has informed the Assessment team that it is in the process of developing an overarching business plan that pulls together all individual level business plans.
- 3.22 DWP has a competency framework for statistical posts. This assists DWP in ensuring that appropriately skilled people are employed in the production of the statistics.
- 3.23 There is a work programme in place for the development of these statistics. DWP creates a work plan for the programme which indicates the resources required for each piece of work. The Information Directorate Release Management Board agrees the prioritisation of large items of work.
- 3.24 If a change needs to be made to data systems, for example due to a change in classification, statisticians within DWP must submit a change request. This sets out what the proposed change is, why it is necessary and the costs involved in making the change. This ensures that DWP has a mechanism for assessing the impact of undertaking additional pieces of work and for monitoring expenditure against work programmes.
- 3.25 DWP told us that they would not be able to provide a figure for how much is spent on producing these statistics alone. This is because work on them is linked with other related work, such as the production and publication of DWP's benefit statistics and statistical development projects. DWP has stated that the cost of data collection for these statistics should be considered negligible but that there are 12 full-time equivalent members of staff who contribute towards the production of these outputs.
- 3.26 The Assessment team considers that DWP has demonstrated careful management of resources for development work, recruitment and changes to current data systems in relation to benefit statistics, though we suggest DWP review its continuing support and development of the tabulation tool in the context of the service provided via NOMIS – see Requirement 6 (para 3.29).

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.

- 3.27 Both the monthly and quarterly summaries contain commentary providing some context to the statistics and highlighting the latest trends. The quarterly statistical summary also includes a 'Focus On' section which looks at a different selected benefit in greater detail. The quarterly summary is presented on a client group basis which enables users to look at the numbers of people claiming one or more of a range of benefits available for a particular group, such as pensioners. The monthly summary contains less context for the statistics and would benefit from further description of the content of the quarterly summary and the difference between the two publications. The Assessment team suggests that DWP include more contextual information in the monthly summary along the lines of the commentary provided in the quarterly summary.
- 3.28 The landing page²⁹ for the statistical summaries on DWP's website provides key points from the latest release and links to more detailed data tables, including tables for small areas. The *early estimates* have a separate landing page³⁰ which includes links to a detailed technical document explaining the methods used to produce the data and the differences between the monthly *early estimates* and the statistics published in the quarterly summary. Key points from these statistics are included in the monthly summary. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DWP should ensure that the *early estimates* are clearly labelled as 'official statistics' and explain the difference between these and the National Statistics³¹ (Requirement 5).
- 3.29 DWP uses a web-based tabulation tool as the main method of disseminating detailed tables of statistics presented in the statistical summaries. The tool has limitations as users are unable to define their own breakdowns or variables. The majority of users who responded to the consultation carried out as part of this assessment commented on the poor functionality of the tabulation tool or the need for statistics for smaller geographies and different age breakdowns. In 2008 DWP carried out a consultation regarding the replacement of the tabulation tool with an improved version. DWP informed the Assessment team that the procurement process for the development of the new tool was initiated but resource pressures forced DWP to stop the process. The Assessment team suggests that DWP investigate the options for improving the functionality of the tabulation tool.
- 3.30 DWP told the Assessment team of its plans to set up a system to allow users from outside DWP to register for an email notification service about new DWP statistical releases. The Assessment team suggests that DWP publish details of this service on its website.

²⁹ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=statistical_summaries

³⁰ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=early_ests

³¹ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 1 and Practice 4 of the Code of Practice

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

3.31 The requirements for this Protocol are covered elsewhere in this report.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

- 3.32 DWP has published on its website³² a schedule for statistical releases for twelve months ahead; this includes the name of the lead statistician. Releases can be accessed from the National Statistics Publication Hub.
- 3.33 For the quarterly release in May 2009 the tabulation tool breakdowns for the Employment Programmes were not available in time for the release. The headline statistics were available and were presented within the statistical summary but the tabulation tool tables were delayed by a few weeks. DWP announced this on its website.
- 3.34 DWP publishes separate pre-release access lists for the statistical summaries³³, the *early estimates*³⁴ and the *Housing benefit and Council Tax benefit*³⁵ statistics. Over 50 named officials receive pre-release access to the quarterly *Statistical Summary*. DWP statisticians told the Assessment team that they have carried out a recent review of the list and changes as a result of this review have been implemented.
- 3.35 DWP told the Assessment team that due to the number of tables and documents released alongside the statistical summaries, it can sometimes take several hours after the 9.30am release time before all the data and documents are available on DWP's website. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DWP should ensure that the statistics are released at the standard time of 9.30am³⁶ (Requirement 6).

³² <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=schedule>

³³ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/prs_listx.php?benefit=qss&file=qss_list.txt&footnote_file=qss_footnote.txt

³⁴ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/prs_listx.php?benefit=early&file=early_list.txt

³⁵ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/prs_listx.php?benefit=hbctb&file=hbctb_list.txt

³⁶ In relation to Protocol 2 Practice 4 of the Code of Practice

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

- 3.36 DWP makes extensive use of the data it holds within administrative systems for the production of official statistics. These data are supplemented by data supplied to DWP by HMRC, local authorities and the Ministry of Justice, which are used as part of the WPLS. DWP promotes the use of this system for statistical purposes and it is used extensively by analysts within DWP for supporting policy and operational activity.
- 3.37 DWP has a published Statement of Administrative Sources³⁷ which covers all administrative sources used for statistical purposes.

³⁷ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/policy/DWP_Statement_of_Administrative_Sources_final.pdf

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to the *DWP Statistical Summary* and *Quarterly Statistical Summary*, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Suggestion 1 | Include user consultations on the NOMIS website and provide links for users to the News and Announcements section of DWP's website (para 3.2). |
| Suggestion 2 | Develop a systematic process for reviewing user requests, for example via discussion at statistics advisory group meetings (para 3.3). |
| Suggestion 3 | Create a link to the uses and users note from the <i>Statistical Summary</i> publication (para 3.4). |
| Suggestion 4 | Publish a note which explains, for the benefit on and off flows statistics, how the period between suspension and launch will be covered (para 3.8). |
| Suggestion 5 | Provide more contextual information in the monthly summary along the lines of the commentary provided in the quarterly summary (para 3.27). |
| Suggestion 6 | Investigate the options for improving the functionality of the tabulation tool (para 3.29). |
| Suggestion 7 | Make details of the email notification service publicly available to users via DWP's website (para 3.30). |

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from May to October 2010.

A2.2 The Assessment team – Catherine Barham, Emma Bowditch and Alex Croker – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of DWP in May 2010. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 28 July. The Assessment team subsequently met DWP during October 2010 to review compliance with the Code of Practice, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A2.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare assessment reports.

A2.4 The Assessment team received 17 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

DWP	9
Other Government departments	5
Local Government	2
Academia	1

A2.5 Generally users were very satisfied with their contact with DWP when in the form of data requests. However, some users voiced concern about the lack of formal consultation, including feeling 'out of the loop' and experiencing a 'reluctance to discuss things'. Some users also highlighted concerns about the tabulation tool, in particular its poor functionality, 'unintuitive' navigation, and revisions policy. Some users requested for data to be made available for lower level geographies, with further classification variables (e.g. age and ethnicity). The continuing existence of the tabulation tool, given the development of NOMIS, was questioned. However, others felt that the Tabulation Tool was sufficiently flexible and provided sufficiently detailed data.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

