# Standard 4: manage data responsibly

Standard 4 of the [Standards for Official Statistics](#) in the Code of Practice for Statistics focuses on data governance and how to ensure appropriate and responsible data use when producing statistics. It emphasises the importance of data ethics in guiding statistical practice and aligns with the [Five Safes](#).

Conducting 'safe projects' ensures that data collection is done in acceptable ways and will serve the public good.

Safe handling of data requires a good understanding of legal obligations, as well as technical skills and resources to ensure a sufficient degree of protection to support further use.

Openness about the approaches used are essential for maintaining public confidence in the producer organisation, as well as the data and statistics.

## The Standard:

**4. Producers must manage data and statistics safely and securely and be open about how data will be used and protected**
*so that the public can be confident about providing their own information for official statistics*

4.1.  Be ethical in how you collect, access, use and share data to serve the public good and be transparent about your approach in a published data management policy

4.2.  Consider evidence on the degree to which the collection and use of data for sensitive topics are viewed as acceptable by society, particularly when planning new data collections or exploring new statistical methodologies or in periods of substantial change that impacts an official statistic. Explain your decisions

4.3.  Always consider the rights of data subjects and manage in ways that are consistent with data protection legislation. Clearly explain their rights and how their information will be used and protected when collected for statistical purposes

4.4.  Keep and handle data safely and securely. Follow all relevant statutory obligations governing the collection, storage, sharing, access, linking and analysis of data. Be transparent about breaches of privacy and act publicly in addressing weaknesses

4.5.  Protect the confidentiality of individual and business information when producing statistics. Be transparent about the choices made in line with the producer's published confidentiality policy and apply appropriate disclosure control methods before release

4.6. Hold regular reviews of the data management arrangements used and share best practice across the organisation to ensure data protection procedures remain effective. Keep pace with changing circumstances such as technological advances

## Questions to consider:

1. **Safe people:** Have you applied a data ethics framework such as the UKSA ethical principles? Have you tested your practice, for example, by using the UKSA Ethics Self-Assessment toolkit? Have you fully considered your legal duties?
2. **Safe projects:** What evidence is there that reveals how people view data collection and sharing for sensitive topics? How do you ensure your statistics support achieving better outcomes for citizens and serve the public good? How are you ensuring data are inclusive and all relevant groups are robustly captured?
3. **Safe data:** How well has the data collection approach considered respondent needs in the design? Do you explain to your data subjects how you will use and keep safe their data, in line with data protection legislation such as GDPR?
4. **Safe outputs:** How do you ensure that you handle data and disseminate statistics using robust disclosure control and data privacy methods and how do you show this?
5. **Safe settings:** When did you last review your data management approaches? Are they up to date and in line with best practice? In what ways can they be improved? Have you considered transparency, accountability, and fairness in your actions?

## Related guidance:

Office for Statistics Regulation:

- Public Involvement and Engagement Toolkit (coming soon)
- Guidance for Models: Trustworthiness, Quality and Value
- Building confidence in the handling and use of data
- Unlocking the value of data through onward sharing

UK Statistics Authority:

- UKSA Ethical Principles
- Ethics Self-Assessment Tool
- UKSA ethics guidance and support
- Inclusivity of Data: Key points to consider

Government Statistical Service:

- [General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and statistics](#)
- [Privacy and data confidentiality methods: a Data and Analysis Method Review (DAMR)](#)
- [Anonymisation and data confidentiality](#)
- [Data sharing for national crisis response](#)
- [Data linkage](#)
- [Guidance for the release of an open data file (or public use dataset) (ONS guidance adopted by GSS)](#)
- [Guidance on intruder testing (ONS guidance adopted by GSS)](#)

Government Digital Service:

- [Data ethics framework](#)
- [How to use the data ethics framework](#)

Central Digital and Data Office:

- [Meet the requirements of data privacy regulations](#)
- [Data Ethics Framework: legislation and codes of practice for use of data](#)
- [Choose tools and infrastructure to make better use of your data](#)
- [Make things secure](#)
- [Manage your data for access and reuse](#)

Ministry of Justice/Alan Turing Institute:

- [Ministry of Justice AI and Data Science Ethics Framework](#) – collection of tools and guidance

National Audit Office:

- [Improving government data: A guide for senior leaders](#)

Survey Futures:

- [Response Rates Position Statement - Survey Futures](#)

UK Data Service:

- [Five safes](#)


# Good practice examples:

Public trust and data collection:

- ADRUK: [Public engagement support for researchers](#)
- Smart Data Research UK: [Public dialogue report](#)
- Office for National Statistics: What we know from engaging with the public on data: January 2025 – [public trust in sharing their data](#)

- Blog – Office for National Statistics: [New study launched to better understand Roma communities](#)
- Blog – Office for National Statistics: [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse](#)
- Blog – Office for National Statistics: [Providing a better understanding of domestic abuse](#)
- Case study – Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID): [Turning knowledge into action](#)
- Central Statistics Office, Ireland's 'trust centre': [Trust & Transparency](#)

Data sharing and linking:

- OSR Blog – [Data sharing and linkage for the public good: breaking down barriers](#)
- Blog – Ministry of Justice: [Improving Data in the Criminal Justice System](#)
- Case study – Department for Education, Scottish Government: [Demonstrating transparency when linking and publishing data](#)

Protecting data:

- Case study – Northern Ireland Housing Executive: [Protecting the confidentiality and security of data](#)

# Code of Practice for Statistics:

- [Understanding TQV](#)
- [The Code Principles](#)
- [Standards for Official Statistics](#)
- [Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis](#)
- [Code Guidance](#) – other short guides supporting use of the Code
- [Required policies and statements relating to official statistics production](#)