

# **Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Official Statistics Protocol**

## **Social Services Workforce Data**

### **A) Introduction**

Statistics are fundamental to good Government, to the delivery of public services and decision making in all sectors of society. However, the public need to have confidence in the quality impartially and comprehensiveness of these statistics. To this aim the Scottish Government have introduced a legislative framework setting out how statistics are produced and managed. Statistics governed by this framework are given the status of being 'Official Statistics'.

Under S58 of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, the SSSC has delegated responsibility to ascertain the numbers of workers in the social service sector, producing an Annual Workforce Report is the chief output associated with this duty. The SSSC has responsibility for conducting the annual census of local authority social work services staff as part of its work in producing the annual workforce report. The report is an official statistic publication and the SSSC was approved by the Scottish Parliament to be an official statistics producer in 2012. In addition, the annual Mental Health Officer (MHO) report has been approved by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) as a National Statistics report.

There are both benefits and responsibilities associated with official statistic status. It clarifies the importance of the figures, their authority and also gives assurance of their quality and integrity.

Please read this paper carefully. All staff share corporate responsibility for ensuring that the council complies with the Code of Practice for Statistics and other legislative provisions in order to retain its status as an Official Statistics provider. In addition, as can be seen below certain designated staff have enhanced and specialised responsibilities to safeguard the handling of the Data and ensure compliance. The relevant staff and their contact details are contained in annex A.

### **B) Official Statistics Regulations and Guidance**

The relevant legislative provisions and requirements are contained in Annex B. Staff should ensure that they are familiar with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and the Pre-release Access Order.

### **C) 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 statutory 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 ensure good practice in relation to official statistics.

The UK Statistics Authority has two main functions:

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

National Statistics are those official statistics which are assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as meeting the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They can comment on any statistics that the public might consider official and can recommend that particular statistics are brought into scope. In practice they are only likely to do so if there is an issue about misuse which is drawn to their attention. Producers must agree to provide information as requested by the Authority.

In order for statistics to gain National Statistics status the SSSC must be confident that production and publication of the statistics meet the requirements of the Code to the satisfaction of the UK Statistics Authority. The UK Statistics Authority can award National Statistics producer status but can equally take it away if the producer does not comply with the Legislative Framework and Code of Practice.

#### **D) Code of Practice for Statistics**

The UK Statistics Authority publishes a Code of Practice for Statistics. Observance of a common Code, by all the public bodies that produce official statistics, is central to maintaining a unified statistical service that meets the needs of government and society and is both trustworthy and trusted.

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* requires the UK Statistics Authority (the 'Statistics Board' in the Act) to prepare and publish a Code of Practice and to assess compliance against it. Official statistics assessed as compliant are to be designated as National Statistics. Bodies that produce National Statistics are required to ensure that the Code continues to be observed. For other official statistics, compliance with the Code is not a formal requirement.

The UKSA developed and published a revised Code of Practice which came into effect in 2018.

### **E) Pre-release Access to Official Statistics**

Access to Official Statistics prior to their publication is governed in Scotland by the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008.

These arrangements are designed to ensure that such access is justified, limited, controlled and publicised and complies with statutory requirements. Their purpose is to maintain public confidence in the integrity of official statistics while allowing Ministers and others (e.g. the SSSC Chief Executive) to account immediately for the implications of statistics covering policy areas for which they are responsible. The details of the reasons for giving access, the length of access possible and the conditions applied to such access are all set out in the PRA Order.

### **F) Confidentiality, Data protection and Freedom of Information**

Maintaining confidentiality and adherence to Data Protection (DP) and Freedom of Information (FOI) Legislation is an integral part of all SSSC work, not the least in publication of statistics. Staff should also be aware of the corporate duties to adhere to SSSC guidance on complying with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **G) Security and Data Storage**

Data that the Workforce Intelligence (WI) team work with which could disclose personal or sensitive information about an identifiable individual should be stored in the Restricted data section of the SSSC's S-drive. The only people allowed access to that area of the network are the members of the WI team and members of the Information Governance team. The only people who should process the data held in the restricted data section of the S-drive are members of the WI team. All members of the WI team should sign the confidentiality declaration a copy of which will be placed in their HR file.

Any breaches of the Code of Practice or arrangements surrounding pre-release access should be reported in the form in Annex C.

## **Annex A**

### **Specialised staff**

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## **Annex B**

### **Legislation**

- **2007 – Statistics and Registration Services Act**
  - Defined 'Official Statistics' and stated who produces them
  - Created UK Statistics Authority
  - Created 'Code of Practice for Official Statistics'
  
- **2008 – Pre-release access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order**
  
- **2008 – Official Statistics (Scotland) Order**
  
- **2010 – Official Statistics (Scotland) Amendment Order**
  
- **2012 – Official Statistics (Scotland) Amendment Order**

## ANNEX C

### TEMPLATE FOR REPORTING **BREACHES** OF THE PRINCIPLES IN THE CODE OF PRACTICE OR PROTOCOLS:

**Definition:** A Breach of one or more provisions within the Code or Protocols occurs in situations where a non-observance of the Code was not approved by the Head of Profession or Chief Statisticians in advance of its happening. An example would be either a deliberate or an inadvertent 'leak' to the press.

**Report submitted**

**by**.....

**Date of initial report**.....

**Reporting**

**Organisation**.....

**Producer**

**Organisation**.....

RELEVANT DOCUMENT....**(Code, Protocol)....Protocol on Release Practices..**

Relevant Principle/Paragraph	
Circumstances of Breach e.g. Date of occurrence, nature of breach, reasons (where known) for breach	
Public/Commission reaction/Impact on reputation (if any)	
Corrective action taken	

Immediate outcome	
Final outcome (e.g. any resulting change in procedure)  N.B. This section may need to be completed later in the cycle	