

**OFFICIAL STATISTICS
CONSULTATION 2014
SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES**

In its Letter of Guidance, the [Scottish Government letter of guidance](#) asked Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to work toward becoming a provider of official statistics in terms of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007. Any final proposal will require approval by Scottish Ministers and by the Scottish Parliament through a parliamentary order.

As part of its preparation, SDS wished to consult with potential users about its approach to becoming a recognised provider of official statistics in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice. A consultation exercise seeking the views of stakeholders on how it should implement these official statistics arrangements was undertaken in Spring 2014. The responses received will be used to inform the development and implementation of this approach. SDS would like to thank those who took the time to complete this consultation.

This report summarises the responses received. SDS is now considering these and other issues arising and will set out its final approach in due course.

In total 3 responses were received by SDS. These were from the following organisations:

The Scottish Government (Central Government)

Falkirk Council (Local Government)

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) (Non Departmental Public Body)

None of these organisations wished their responses to be anonymised, and a summary of all responses is given below:

Consultation Questions

Q1. Do you have any suggested amendments to the proposal in Annex 1 on which statistics SDS plans to publish as official statistics and with what frequency?

- SG would like the opportunity to discuss any changes to the publication of school leavers information with SDS. If SDS plan on publishing national follow-up leavers information they would need to co-ordinate their publications. They currently publish this data and link it to the attainment data of the pupils. This is something which they would wish to continue doing.

SDS will need to inform users if they are planning on changing the release of the initial destinations data from December to February. This data is widely used by schools and local authorities. In addition, initial destinations information is an important source of management information for Insight (the new tool for senior phase benchmarking). It was expected that initial destinations data would feed into the release of the tool in the following February each year. If the publication of the data is delayed to February this could have implications for the availability of management information through Insight to schools and local authorities to inform strategic planning. The SG would therefore like the opportunity to discuss this further with SDS. Note that from w/c 28th April the SG are embarking on a series of regional events with Insight users (schools and local authorities) and as part of that they will be setting out for them our expectations of when significant data updates will be made to the tool – these being end August each year with updated attainment data, and February with destinations data. If there were any changes to the schedule for supply of data for this management information purpose, they would want to communicate this to their users as early as possible.

- No I am satisfied with the proposals

Q2. Are you content that lower profile statistics should be published but not as official statistics, or would you propose any changes to those which are suggested in Annex 1?

- The SG is content that these statistics are lower profile and should be published but not as official statistics at present. They are also reassured that if the profile of any of these statistics was to increase over time, there would be a mechanism in place to broaden the range of designated official statistics.

Q3. Which of the official statistics requirements in paragraph 6 do you consider will be of most benefit to you or others?

- The SG strongly believes that all the requirements outlined in paragraph 6 will be of great benefit to all. Improved accessibility to information, including time series, background data and methods in different file formats will be particularly welcomed. Information on data quality and changes to timings and methodology being most transparent will help improve the consistency of the data.
- Falkirk Council felt that the following would be of most benefit:
 - Meeting the needs for public sector decision making.
 - Information must be accessible including time series.

- Consultation with users
- Maximise opportunities for use of administrative data

Q4. Which requirements do you consider will be of least benefit?

- The SG strongly believes that all the requirements outlined in paragraph 6 will be of great benefit to all. Note, paragraph 6 sets out the series of practices which SDS will adopt and maintain compliance with including orderly release and pre-announcement, publication announcements and quality procedures.
- Falkirk Council felt that pre-release access information would be of least benefit.

Q5. Which requirements do you think will cause you or others most difficulty?

- Publication planning and timing may prove problematic. The Scottish Government already has a pre-announced publication schedule for Education Analytical Services, Official and National statistics products, and they would hope to be able to co-ordinate releases with you to minimise changes to our publication schedule as this has implications for our users.
- Falkirk Council felt that none would cause difficulty.

Q6. Are there other ways in which these difficulties could be overcome?

- The SG felt that we need to make sure that there is strong and effective communication between Scottish Government and SDS officials throughout. This is particularly important when it comes to agreeing statistical release dates prior to pre-announcement.

Q7. Do you have any other comments?

- The Scottish Government looks forward to working closely with SDS as they work towards becoming producers of Official Statistics.
- Falkirk Council fully supports the move for SDS statistics to become official statistics and hope that the opportunity will be taken by SDS to discuss with users the availability of their data.
- The SSSC has a legal responsibility to provide data to Scottish Ministers on the social service workforce and its training needs. They provide regular updates to their Council on Modern Apprenticeship (MA) uptake in the social services sector. They also publish MA data in a number of their publications. The SSSC previously managed its own statistics on MAs but

joined the MA online system in 2013. They welcome the proposals for Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to produce official statistics on MAs and other awards. The frequency at which these reports are published will have an impact on the SSSC's ability to undertake their role. For example, data published quarterly (and three months old at the time of publication) would be six months old by the time the next report is published. This would mean that SSSC publications and reports will contain MA data with a time gap of minimum 3-6 months when managing our own statistics would result in more up-to-date information. They would welcome the opportunity to hold further discussions with SDS about the plans for publishing this data and the frequency at which these reports are published.