NTP Official Statistics

Consultation Report

Published 21st July 2017

Any comments on this report are welcome and can be emailed to:

User_feedback@sds.co.uk

Background

SDS reports on our Modern Apprenticeship (MA) and Employability Fund (EF) programmes as well as a summary report on Other Skills Initiatives (e.g. Adopt an Apprentice, Low Carbon Skills Fund and Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive - SERI) on a quarterly basis. We value user feedback on our statistical publications and launched a user survey of our National Training Programme (NTP) reports with our quarter 2 release on 8th November 2016. The survey aimed to gather information on:

- how often respondents used the reports
- how satisfied they were with various aspects of the reports (including content, style and policy commentary)
- and to gather suggestions on how the reports could be improved.

Method

The survey was available on our corporate website from 8th November 2016 until 14th of February 2017, and could be completed by clicking a link on the main statistics page. Hyperlinks to the survey were also included in each of the reports. Respondents were first invited to provide a bit of background about themselves, including where they worked and for what purposes they used the report(s). This would help enable us to contextualise survey findings. The survey also asked which reports individuals used and this allowed for subsequent questions to be focused on report use specific to the user[1]. We received 18 responses to the survey in total.

Key results

- MA Reports were used by 78% (14) of respondents, 67%[2] indicated using the reports "more than once a month". The average satisfaction score for the MA report was 7.8 (out of 10). Satisfaction scores with the MA reports were highest for content at year end and content at Q1, 2 and 3. Scores suggested that the policy context around the statistics and ease of access to information were potential areas for improvement.
- EF reports were used by 56% (10) of respondents, 50%[3] of respondents said that the reports were used once a month or more and a further 37.5%[4] stated that they used the reports "every 2 to 3 months". The average satisfaction score for the EF report was again relatively high at 6.9 (out of 10). Satisfaction scores with the EF reports were highest for timeliness and frequency. The slightly lower satisfaction scores for commentary to help interpreting statistics (6.4) and containing the right level of statistical data to meet user needs (6.6) suggested that these were potential areas for improvement.
- Other Skills Initiatives were used by 44% (8) of respondents, 50%[5] of responses indicated that they used the report "every 2-3" months. When asked if they agreed with the proposal to publish annually instead of quarterly, objections included that the information was needed for tendering and important for reviewing performance of service delivery on a quarterly basis.

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[1] Not all respondents completed the survey in full - 9 respondents completed the survey in full (50% of 18). Partial responses were included in the results.
[2] 6 of 9 responses to this question
[3] 4 out of 8 who responded to this question
[4] 3 out of 8 who responded to this question
[5] 3 of 6 who responded to this question

- In summary, changes to future NTP Official Statistics Publications based on user feedback include the streamlining of reports and supplementary tables, a review of policy context, and exploring how we can make the reports more accessible on our website. We plan to implement these changes, where appropriate throughout the 2017/18 reporting cycle.

Findings

Modern Apprenticeship Reports

The MA reports were used by 78% (14) of respondents. When asked how often they used these reports, 67%[6] of respondents stated that they used them "more than once a month". Respondents were also asked why they used the MA reports. 88%[7] of respondents indicated that the reports were accessed for "work purposes".

We asked respondents to rate the extent to which they agreed with a number of statements about the MA reports on a scale of 1 -10 (where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree). Full statements are available in Annex 1. Across all questions, the average score for the MA report was 7.8 out of 10. Figure 1 shows the highest scores were for the content of the end year reports as well as the content of the quarterly reports (both scoring an average of 8.3 out of 10). The commentary on the policy context for MA statistics was identified as an area for improvement, as was the format of the reports to support "easy access to information needed", which both received an average score of 7.2 (relatively high but lower compared to 8.3).

MA Report

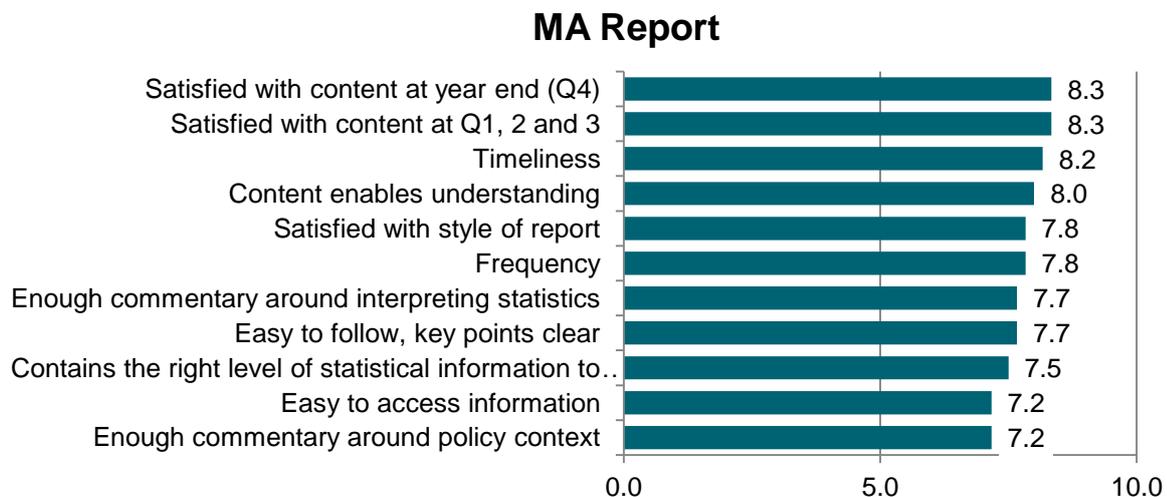| Statement	Score
Satisfied with content at year end (Q4)	8.3
Satisfied with content at Q1, 2 and 3	8.3
Timeliness	8.2
Content enables understanding	8.0
Satisfied with style of report	7.8
Frequency	7.8
Enough commentary around interpreting statistics	7.7
Easy to follow, key points clear	7.7
Contains the right level of statistical information to…	7.5
Easy to access information	7.2
Enough commentary around policy context	7.2

Figure 1: MA report average scores

The survey also asked respondents for their opinion on how the MA reports could be improved. One written response was provided which suggested that it would be beneficial to have a time series of headline MA trend data available.

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[6] 6 of 9 who responded to this question
[7] 7 out of 8 who responded to this question

MA Supplementary Tables

The MA Supplementary Tables were used by 44% of respondents (8). When asked how often they used these tables 83%[8] of responses indicated that they used them once a month or more. Every response indicated that the tables were accessed for work purposes.

The survey also explicitly laid out our intention to reduce the number of tables in the quarterly MA supplementary tables at the Quarter 1, 2 and 3 points, whilst continuing to provide this information at the end of year point (i.e. continue to publish tables on MA starts, leavers, in training and achievements broken down by framework, age, level and local authority in our annual publication at the end of the financial year). Our reasons for suggesting this were as follows:

- At this level of detail, many of the figures at the quarter 1 – quarter 3 point are disclosure controlled. To illustrate this point, in the overall MA starts by gender and framework supplementary table in quarter 1 2016/17, 62% of rows either contain a disclosure controlled number or are blank. Effectively this means that around 38% of the table contains usable data at the quarter 1 point. This limits usability, but is unavoidable as breaking the data down to this level of detail could lead to disclosure.
- The mix of frameworks can change within each year as some frameworks may align with college start dates, whereas others may start at different times of the year depending on the needs of the employer. This can result in inaccurate interpretation of the statistics and misleading comparisons over time.

Respondents were asked to highlight any issues with this proposal. There was no overwhelming objection to the proposal but based on a few comments we are mindful to give the following consideration:

- Unable to conduct detailed quarterly analysis on MAs
- Quarterly Local Authority breakdowns are used quite frequently
- Removing framework by gender breakdown could result in political challenge and may be perceived as a lack of transparency.

The main reason for this proposal is to ensure that the statistics are not only valuable but also relevant. As figures are cumulative, the tables contain many figures that may be considered disclosive (less than 5) at quarters 1, 2, 3 and therefore are omitted and show as asterisks in the tables. This therefore limits the value of these tables to conduct some of the analysis indicated. The fuller picture of the detailed statistics around

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[8] 5 out of 6 responses to this question

starts, leavers, in training and achievements available in the end of year tables are more appropriate for this kind of analysis.

> **MA Report – changes based on feedback**
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> Based on the feedback received we will make the following changes to the MA supplementary tables:
>
> - We intend to reduce the detailed supplementary tables related to age and level by framework at quarter 1, 2 and 3 on a trial basis, but retain those related to Local Authority breakdowns. The reasons for this are that the information is highly disclosure controlled at the Q1, 2 and 3 points and quarterly analysis of framework level data is potentially misleading
> - The MA report at quarter 1, 2 and 3 contains tables with starts by gender broken down by age, level and occupational grouping. Based on the point above we will include a table showing starts broken down by gender and Local Authority to ensure that although some tables will be removed, there remains detailed information related to gender on a quarterly basis and transparency in reporting.
> - We will continue to produce the Local Authority (LA) by age tables that include start, leaver, achievement and in training figures given the clear indication of the need for this information on a quarterly basis.

Employability Fund Report

The Employability Fund reports were used by 56% (10) of respondents. When asked how often they used these reports, 50%[9] of respondents said that the reports were used once a month or more and a further 37.5%[10] stated that they used the reports "every 2 to 3 months". Every response indicated that the reports were used for "work purposes".

As with the MA report, we asked respondents to rate the extent to which they agreed with a number of statements about the EF reports on a scale of 1 -10 (where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree). Full statements available in Annex 1. Across all questions, the average score for the EF reports was 6.9 out of 10.

Satisfaction was highest for the timeliness of the reports (average score of 7.4). Scores were also high for reports being published with the appropriate level of frequency and the overall style and presentation of the reports (both with average scores of 7.2 respectively). However, scores suggested that the level of commentary that was provided to help with interpreting the statistics could be improved (average score of 6.4) as could the level of statistical information to meet user needs (average score of 6.6).

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[9] 4 out of 8 who responded to this question
[10] 3 out of 8 who responded to this question

EF Report

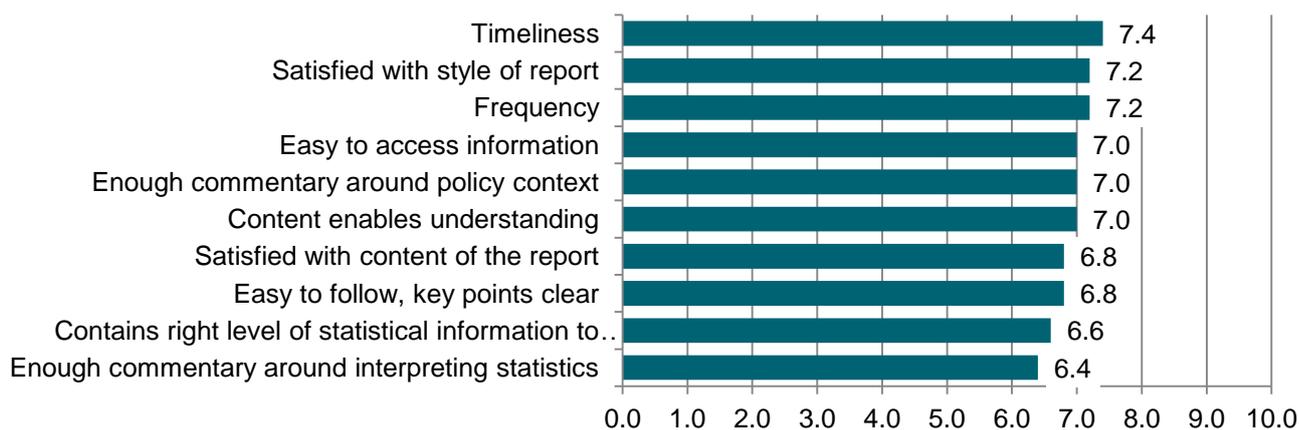|	
Timeliness	7.4
Satisfied with style of report	7.2
Frequency	7.2
Easy to access information	7.0
Enough commentary around policy context	7.0
Content enables understanding	7.0
Satisfied with content of the report	6.8
Easy to follow, key points clear	6.8
Contains right level of statistical information to…	6.6
Enough commentary around interpreting statistics	6.4

Figure 2: EF report average scores

As with the MA report, users were given the opportunity to suggest improvements to the EF report. Points raised were as follows:

- Report is good overall but contracting process seems disconnected from performance, findings in this report are not reflected in the tendering process
- Important to keep formatting consistent for comparison over time
- Q1, 2, 3 EF reports too long with too much detail. This level of detail is adequate for a year end report (Q4). Consider condensing the Q1 to Q3 reports.

EF Report - changes based on feedback

Based on the feedback received we will make the following changes to the EF report:

- We intend to review the content of EF reports at quarters 1 to 3 with a view to streamlining the section on outcome, outputs and achievements (the longest section) in the quarter 1-3 reports. This should hopefully also assist in providing the right level of statistical information
- We will review the commentary around interpreting EF statistics with the aim of improving clarity
- We will pass relevant comments on to colleagues within SDS and continue to keep the formatting of EF report consistent to allow for comparison over time.
- In relation to providing information on the tendering process – starts and performance information at provider level is very detailed and not appropriate for a statistical report, however we will pass on relevant comments to colleagues within SDS.[11]

Other Skills Initiatives

The Other Skills Initiative report was used by 44% (8) of respondents. When asked how often they used these reports 50%[12] of responses indicated that they used the report "every 2-3" months. All respondents indicated that this report was accessed for work purposes.

The survey aimed to gather feedback on the proposal to reduce the publication of the Other Skills Initiatives report from quarterly to annual. Objections to the proposal included:

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[11] Annual performance information can be found on our website: **MA Provider Performance** and **EF Annual Performance**

[12] 3 of 6 respondents who answered this question

- This information is needed for tendering.
- Important to provide an accurate and up to date account of how services are delivered particularly when this information has been available on a quarterly basis in the past.

Other Skills Initiatives - changes based on feedback

No change. We intend to continue publishing the Other Skills Initiatives document on a quarterly basis

General Comments

Respondents also provided some additional comments on the suite of reports (MA, EF, and Other Skills Initiatives), including:

- The search functionality on the website is clunky; a more user friendly interface of search results would be helpful
- Once the report timeframe has been selected the results are presented in an illogical order

General Comments - changes based on feedback

Based on the feedback received we will make the following changes:

We will continue to work on improving the search functionality in conjunction with the Web Team. We have recently introduced a "Featured Publications & Statistics" section on the front page of the **corporate website** that shows the most recent published MA and EF report alongside the publications schedule for ease of reference, but will continue to work to improve this further.

Summary of changes

Following the results of the consultation, we intend to make the following changes to our suite of publications from Quarter 1 where relevant and throughout 2017/18.

1. We will reduce the detailed age and level by framework tables at quarter 1, 2 and 3 on a trial basis to avoid potential disclosure and misinterpretation of the statistics. We will continue to produce the Local Authority (LA) by age tables given the indicated need for this information on a quarterly basis.
2. In 2017/18, we will explore publishing MA trend data in a more accessible format (such as a table in a spreadsheet).
3. We will review the level of commentary around the policy context within the quarter 4 MA report in 2017/18.
4. We will review the content of EF reports at quarters 1 to 3 with the intention of condensing the report to ensure the level of detail is suitable for a quarterly report.
5. We will review the commentary around interpreting EF statistics with the aim of improving clarity.
6. We will also work improve the content of the report by assessing the level of statistical information and amending to suit user needs.
7. In relation to providing information on the tendering process – starts and performance information at provider level is very detailed and not appropriate for our statistical reports, however we will pass on relevant comments to colleagues within SDS.
8. We will continue to work on improving the search functionality in conjunction with the Web Team.

Annex 1: Statements - users were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed disagreed with each

Q1   The content of the report enables me to understand the statistics in context.

Q2   The main reports are published in a timely manner.

Q3   The frequency of the reports meets my needs

Q4   I find the report easy to follow and understand key points.

Q5   The format of the main report allows me to easily access the information I need

Q6   The main report contains the right level of statistical data to meet my needs.

Q7   The main report contains enough commentary for interpreting the statistics.

Q8   The main report contains enough commentary on the policy context for the statistics.

Q9   I am satisfied with the style of the main report (i.e. tables, infographics, and use of colour)

          Overall, I am satisfied with the content of the main report in quarters 1, 2 and 3 (click here

Q10   for an example). **(MA Report only)**

          Overall, I am satisfied with the content of the main report at year end (click here for an

Q11   example). **(MA Report only)**

Q12   Overall, I am satisfied with the content of the main report **(EF Report only)**