

Q&A about the review process

Q. What other reviews are planned?

A. An indicative schedule of reviews planned across National Statistics is available on the National Statistics web site.

Q. What reviews are planned within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)?

A. Most DWP statistical outputs will be reviewed between now and 2005.

Q. Who was involved in the review, who was consulted, why was it carried out by internal staff?

A. The review team comprised six members of the DWP Information Centre and an external reviewer from Oxford University. Questionnaires were sent to almost 200 DWP and external users of the statistics and 49 were returned completed; six were interviewed.

Q. Have reviews been carried out in the past?

A. The Department's statistical output is constantly examined for its relevance, accuracy, presentation, timeliness and the resources it uses but this is the first time that the scrutiny of these criteria has been as detailed.

Q. Do you think that the review has looked at the most important issues?

A. This review is one of just three projects that comprise the first tranche of DWP reviews. Future tranches will each include higher numbers of projects. This first tranche was therefore able to be comprehensive in its scope and therefore all relevant aspects should have been covered.

Q. What is the role of the Statistics Commission in this review? What role will the Commission have when it receives this report?

A. The Statistics Commission did not have a direct role in this review. They are, of course, being sent a copy of the report and the Commission will be free to comment on this review if they choose to do so.

Q&A about contents of the Jobseekers Allowance Statistics report

Q. What are the Jobseekers Allowance Statistics?

A. The Jobseekers Allowance Statistics are published quarterly and comprise figures drawn from a 5% sample of JSA claimants in Great Britain. The statistics describe the characteristics of those claiming JSA, such as their gender, age, where they live, duration on benefit, and how many dependants they have.

Within DWP the statistics are used to inform policy-making decisions and expenditure forecasting as well as to answer parliamentary questions and other

queries. Beyond the Department they are used by local government, academics and other organisations as well as by the general public.

Q. Has the review identified any problems?

A. Although the overall assessment is that the JSA statistics are good quality and meet most user needs, the review has identified a range of areas for possible improvement. However, none of these areas is such as to cause major concerns about quality; nor do they suggest that the statistics are not fit for purpose. We believe that the recommendations in the report are sensible and appropriate, and are to be welcomed.

Q. How far does the review address the needs of non-DWP users?

A. Both DWP and non-DWP users were consulted during the review and both sets of views received due consideration.