

# Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our values, policies, procedures and  
practices

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# Introduction

Skills for Care is an independent organisation with the aim of developing the adult social care workforce to be well-led, highly skilled and valued. We work as a delivery partner for the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), as well as closely with related services within the sector, and have been collecting information about social care providers and their staff since 2006.

Our expertise comes from the workforce intelligence that we collect in the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) and from our experience of analysing and interpreting social care data. It is at the centre of everything we do at Skills for Care.

We provide the sector with neutral and evidence-based information about workforce characteristics, issues, and trends in areas such as demographics, pay, vacancy rates and staff turnover. We also respond to information gaps and changing government policy; for example, information about changes to the National Living Wage (NLW) and the impact of international recruitment on the adult social care workforce.

Skills for Care is committed to producing official statistics in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and following the three pillars of **trustworthiness, quality** and **value**. Details of the policies in place and procedures we follow, under each of these pillars, is provided in this document.

Skills for Care is also committed to voluntarily following the three pillars of **trustworthiness, quality** and **value** for all of our numeric outputs that are not official statistics. As part of our commitment to these, we run training sessions with relevant internal colleagues to spread awareness of the Code of Practice and its implications on all data workstreams and outputs.

All numerical work created by Skills for Care will be subject to sign off from the Lead Official prior to publication. This includes for example,

- Written publications, such as those created by the Workforce Intelligence team.
- Research reports.
- Press releases.

# Background

In 2023 Skills for Care became an official statistics producer, having been added to the [Official Statistics Order 2023](#). This means that all official statistics produced by Skills for Care will include oversight from the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#) (OSR), ensuring it follows the Code of Practice for Statistics.

In February 2025 the '[The workforce employed by adult social services departments in England](#)' report was badged as an [Accredited official statistic](#) following an assessment from OSR.

Skills for Care also publishes various other reports and statistical outputs and our [publication calendar](#) is available on our Workforce Intelligence website. Skills for Care follows the three pillars of trustworthiness, quality and value for all these outputs and plans to designate further reports as official statistics in the future and publish details of [our future plans](#) on our website.

# Policies and procedures

The following sections detail Skills for Care's policies and procedures relating to the Code of Practice for statistics.

## 1. Release practice policy

### 1.1. Pre-announcement and timing

The release date of Official Statistics will be agreed between Skills for Care and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) each year. Annual publications will be pre-announced at least 6 months prior to publication. Any delay in the availability of Official Statistics publications will be announced via our Workforce Intelligence site on the [home page](#).

Official Statistics publications classed as Official or Accredited Official Statistics are issued at 09:30 hours on the pre-announced date.

### 1.2. Pre-release access

The Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders permit limited advanced sight of statistical releases in specific circumstances. Skills for Care limit this to the minimum number of people necessary to allow officials to:

- Respond to questions or make statements at the time of publication.
- Take action before or at the time of publication.

Pre-release access is not the default. Access is allowed only in circumstances where the public benefit is likely to outweigh the possible detriment to public trust in official statistics and individuals satisfy the requirements laid out in the [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008](#). Access is given for no longer than 24 hours before publication.

Skills for Care will publish the organisation name and job titles of everyone who has been granted pre-release access alongside each official statistics report.

## 2. Revisions and corrections policy

Scheduled revisions will be managed systematically, pre-announced and reflected in dissemination plans. Large changes to the scope or content of official statistics will include a period of consultation.

Unscheduled revisions are those that do not fit into the managed pattern of revisions, for example errors or unforeseen changes in methodology. For unscheduled revisions we will:

- Where results are affected by methodological changes, a description of the change will be given.
- Explain corrections to statistics at the earliest opportunity and in a way that provides the most benefit to stakeholders.
- Issue corrections in an orderly way, in a new version with the amended statistic.
- Summarise the key impact, nature and extent of corrections.
- Reserve the right not to publish some minor revisions if the resources required to issue them outweigh the benefits to stakeholders.

## 3. Data management policy

### 3.1. Data storage and security

Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) data is stored securely within Amazon Web Services (AWS). The dataset includes limited personal data such as date of birth, National Insurance number, and local identifiers (which may occasionally include a person's name).

### 3.2. Data de-identification and processing

Before any personal data becomes available to Skills for Care's analysis team, it undergoes a formal de-identification process in line with the principles of data minimisation, purpose limitation and security under the UK GDPR. This process includes:

- Transforming dates of birth into an age variable, ensuring that the original date of birth is not retained.
- Removing national Insurance numbers and replacing them with a unique pseudonymised identifier generated algorithmically.
- Removing all direct identifiers, such as names and other local identifiers in their entirety.

Following these processing steps, the data made available to our Workforce Intelligence Analysts are anonymised for analytical purposes, meaning that individuals cannot be directly identified from the datasets accessible to the team.

In accordance with our confidentiality policy, we also apply statistical disclosure control measures during analysis and reporting. These additional safeguards further reduce the residual risk of re-identification from aggregated outputs, supporting GDPR-compliant handling of personal data throughout the process.

### 3.3. Access Controls

Skills for Care's analysis team stores and processes data within a private, access-restricted area of Skills for Care's secure IT environment. Access to this area is limited strictly to authorised members of the analysis team and is controlled through role-based permissions, in line with the UK GDPR's requirements for data security and access minimisation. These controls ensure that only staff with a legitimate business need can access the data.

### 3.4. Data Sharing

Analytical datasets are not shared outside the Analysis team unless a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) is in place. The DSA verifies that:

- The receiving organisation is a legal entity.
- Data will only be used for a legitimate and approved purpose.
- The receiving organisation agrees not to attempt to re-identify individuals.
- Appropriate technical and organisational safeguards are in place to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the anonymised dataset.

## 4. Confidentiality protection

This section describes the procedures used by Skills for Care to protect the confidentiality of individual workers and locations in all published ASC-WDS outputs. It focuses specifically on statistical disclosure control (SDC) methods applied during analysis and publication. Security of the underlying data is covered separately in the [Data management policy](#) (Section 3 of this document).

### 4.1. Aggregation and row-level suppression

Skills for Care never publishes row-level ASC-WDS data. No individual worker or location records are released publicly under any circumstances. All published statistics are aggregated and represent groups of workers, employers, or care settings. Direct identifiers or pseudonymised identifiers are never included in outputs or reports, ensuring that no individual or specific workplace can be identified from any published material.

### 4.2. Rounding rules

To reduce the risk of re-identification through small numbers or unusual patterns, all counts in published tables and charts are rounded to the nearest standard unit. Rounding applies to:

- Worker counts.
- Workplace counts.
- Any totals or subtotals.

This prevents users from reverse-engineering small groups or identifying individuals indirectly. A table of the rounding rules used by Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team can be found on the [Methodology page](#) of the Workforce Intelligence website.

## 4.3. Suppression of Small Bases

### Percentage breakdown suppression

Percentages are not published where the underlying base contains fewer than 5 workers.

This threshold prevents disclosure through unusually small denominators and avoids the risk that individual characteristics could be inferred in small groups.

### Average (mean/median) suppression

Averages (for example of age and pay rates) are suppressed when calculated from fewer than 25 workers. This rule ensures:

- Averages are based on sufficiently large and stable samples.
- Outliers cannot disproportionately influence results.
- Disclosure risk is minimised.
- Published statistics remain robust and reliable.

These thresholds are applied consistently across all reports, dashboards, and external data releases.

## 5. Public involvement and engagement strategy

Official statistics serve the public good as public assets that provide insight, which allows them to be used widely for informing understanding and shaping action. Skills for Care has several processes in place to ensure it gathers information from users in order to iterate and improve its datasets, reports and statistics.

Extensive user research is carried out during the continued development of the ASC-WDS. User research sessions take place during every new development and every change. This ensures that the service is user-friendly, adapting to changes in the sector and is a useful tool for employers.

Skills for Care invites feedback about all of its publications by providing contact details on each report page on the Workforce Intelligence website. Contact information for the Analysis team is also given at the beginning and end of each written publication. By providing contact details in this way users are encouraged to comment and feedback about the reports and statistics they have used. These comments are regularly reviewed and taken into consideration for future editions.

The [Workforce Intelligence website](#), which houses all of Skills for Care's reports and data outputs, was re-developed in 2025. This re-development included user research sessions to

ensure users could find and understand the information they need on our website. The website also includes a pop-up user feedback survey, asking users of the site if they were able to find everything they were looking for, how they rated the experience of using the website and offers the opportunity for users to provide additional feedback. This feedback is used to continually iterate the website and the data outputs housed there to ensure they continue to meet user needs

## 6. Charges for additional services

Skills for Care publishes data on the [reports and visualisations](#) pages of its Workforce Intelligence website which are free at the point of use. Data is published in various formats (written reports, data visualisations and data download MS Excel files) and at various geographical levels to try maximise the user needs met by the public offer.

If a user has a need for bespoke analysis, or outputs that are not covered by our public offer, then a quote is provided based on the time it will take an analyst to produce this output. Skills for Care monitors these requests and if common themes occur, looks where possible, to add outputs to our public offer to meet these data needs.

The sharing of raw data files also carries an administrative charge to cover the time it takes a Workforce Intelligence Analyst to set up data sharing agreements, prepare the requested files and provide support on appropriate use of the files.

As well as bespoke analysis, Skills for Care can share raw data files for further analysis by external parties. The charge for sharing of these files includes an administrative fee to cover the time it takes a Workforce Intelligence Analyst to set up data sharing agreements, a fee to prepare the requested files and (where requested) a fee to provide support on appropriate use of the files and subsequent analysis.

For examples and further information on the types of bespoke analysis Skills for Care can provide, visit the [Commission our Services](#) page of our website.

# Our approach to Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

## Trustworthiness

**Trustworthiness:** confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data

Skills for Care offers practical, impartial support that is non-partisan. One of Skills for Care's core values is to use our data and insight to provide a solid evidence base about the adult social care workforce. We provide intelligence and robust data to empower the sector to make plans for change based on facts.

The ASC-WDS is an online data collection service and the leading source of workforce information for the adult social care sector in England. Prior to 2019 it was known as the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC). As at February 2026, the ASC-WDS held information on over 21,000 care providing locations and 700,000 workers.

All of our Workforce Intelligence Analysts are Accredited Researchers, certified with the [ONS safe researcher service](#). This means we work to the standard of the 'five safes framework' making it a priority to keep these at the forefront of our minds when conducting research or analysis and storing or sharing any research or data.

We always make sure that our research and outputs are appropriate, trustworthy and there is no risk of misuse or a confidentially breach. When creating outputs, we always adhere to statistical disclosure controls, for example:

- We do not create data or publish, based on low bases.
- We do not disclose data about individuals.
- Our outputs are clearly labelled.
- Outputs have suitable interpretation.
- Where applicable we provide a description of the analysis and contextual information.
- We provide an appropriate level of detail for the user.

The ASC-WDS has passed the Government Digital Standards assessments. This is evidence that the system has proper governance, has a user centric design, the data is secure, managed and meets legislation. Information about data security, regulation of data, user rights etc. can be found on the ASC-WDS [privacy notice for workers](#). Information about storing data, data protection legislation, and our obligations under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 can be found in the [terms and conditions](#).

# Quality

## Quality: data and methods that produce assured statistics

Almost all of Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence publications, including statistics for 'The workforce employed by adult social services departments in England' report, are based on workforce estimates created using data from the ASC-WDS.

The ASC-WDS was designed for the collection and reporting of adult social care information. All definitions were created with, users and subject matter experts to ensure they are an accurate reflection of the sector and are clear and unambiguous. These definitions are reviewed regularly and updated where required.

The Workforce Intelligence team uses the information collected in the ASC-WDS to create estimates for the size of the whole adult social care sector and characteristics of the workforce. Our [methodology](#) allows the analysis to represent all adult social care workers, even if the ASC-WDS has uneven levels of data coverage.

Several methods are used to quality assure the data. Applicable data is validated at the point of entry into the ASC-WDS; data from large organisations and local authority employers is checked and approved. We use rigorous data quality checks which mean uncertainty and data limitations are minimised. Our methodologies are published for transparency and have been peer reviewed by universities and an independent statistician. If the methodology is improved from the previous year, then historical trend data is retrospectively updated to ensure any trends we show are 'real' and not the result of methodological changes.

The [Workforce Intelligence website](#) has information about what we collect, our coverage, methodology, the integrity and data quality of ASC-WDS data and subsequent workforce estimates. Limitations of methods, data quality issues and inconsistencies with external datasets are explained to users at the point of data interpretation across all our reports regardless of format (written report, MS Excel, or data visualisations). We use plain English and have the users' interest at the heart of all our published work.

Throughout the year the team maintain and refresh our understanding of the use and potential use of the statistics and data, therefore keeping up with best practice and principles. We have lessons learnt after every publication to see where improvements to process or methodology can be made.

## Value

### **Value:** statistics that support society's needs for information

We publish information in several formats, aiming to cater for as wide of an audience as possible. Workforce Intelligence reports are free to download from the [reports and visualisations](#) pages of our website. All publications contain key findings and are presented in a clear and unambiguous way.

Written reports provide insight and interpretation of the charts, maps or tables presented and most workforce topics areas are covered on our website. Where possible we add value via linking data and outcomes to projects and initiatives across Skills for Care. Interactive data visualisations are published to support all written reports to show the data in an easy to understand format, with the ability to download into a PDF or MS PowerPoint presentation. We also publish anonymised and aggregated analysis files in MS Excel, giving the user the ability to perform some statistical analysis themselves.

Users are at the centre of all the Workforce Intelligence publications. To make sure they are fit-for-purpose and provide a necessary level of detail, we undertake user research with stakeholders, users of the data and internal subject matter experts to;

- Talk to the audience of written reports about what they liked and didn't like about previous versions.
- Collect ideas and hypothesis for testing, to ensure we are up to date with the sector.
- User-test our website and data visualisations, to confirm they have clear navigation, plain English text, clear messages and are easy to understand.

We regularly iterate and improve all the publications based on this user research, ready for the next publication. We review download information and press coverage to check our reach and talk to users of publications to ask for feedback and how our information has made an impact.

We aim to increase awareness of our workforce intelligence via the extensive Skills for Care channels, including social media, websites, from our network of locality managers based throughout England, and from employers.

We are constantly looking to innovate and improve. We are currently building data engineering techniques to increase the timeliness of our statistics and developing data science models to increase precision and trend analysis. For more information, see our statement on [our future plans and statistical governance](#).

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