
Director General for Regulation

Paul Offord
Deputy Editor
FE Week

17 July 2017

Dear Paul,

I am writing to you following the FE Week article on the 16th June 'Investigation into DfE handling of apprenticeship figures demanded by expert'.

The article outlined the reporting of National Achievement Rates Tables (NARTs) by the Department for Education (DfE), which were produced this year using a revised methodology. While DfE published updated *national* figures for previous years using the new method, updated figures for *individual providers* in previous years were not published.

We commend DfE for adjusting its method to calculate National Achievement Rates Tables, and its provision of comparable data at a National level. But we consider that not providing comparable data for individual providers means that users cannot make comparisons to previous years. And without prominent advice on the change of methods, inappropriate comparisons across time periods could be made.

We have contacted DfE and discussed the provision of this data. DfE recognised the need to provide historic individual provider level data using the new methods. Since that discussion DfE has published advice on its website on the appropriate use of historic data when making comparisons over time. It has also made a commitment to publish the back series under the new method on 27 July, as you reported on 12 July.

We do however agree with DfE that historic data should not be removed from the website entirely. NARTs are used each year to assess the performance of individual providers, against that year's published methodology. It is important that data used for this purpose in past years are still available.

I consider that while the original publication of the data may have been confusing for users, DfE have acted to address the issue and have committed to produce the data required to support user needs.

I am copying this letter to Mike Jones, Head of Profession for Statistics at DfE.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation