

**UK Statistics Authority
National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee**

Terms of reference

Introduction

1. At the UK Statistics Authority Board meeting on 6 November 2014, the Authority Board agreed to establish the National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee (NSDEC), which would be advisory to the National Statistician.

Role and responsibilities

2. The role of the National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee (NSDEC) is to advise the National Statistician on the ethical considerations concerning the accessing, sharing and use of data.
3. Specific responsibilities of the NSDEC include to:
 - i. provide ethical consideration of proposals to access, share and use data;
 - ii. advise on individual policies and research projects against NSDEC's ethical principles;
 - iii. develop a consistent ethical framework for relevant projects related to official statistics;
 - iv. promote transparency around data shares;
 - v. provide ethical approval for some government, and third sector researchers who wish to use ONS data for research and statistics that serves the public good;
 - vi. provide ethical approval for proposals to access ONS data from the commercial sector via the Approved Researcher Scheme. These requests are referred to NSDEC for ethical consideration by the Microdata Release Panel (MRP) which governs access to the Secure Research Service (SRS); and
 - vii. provide ethical advice on other data issues within the National Statistician's remit, which includes his role as head of the Government Statistical Service.
4. At the invitation of the Chair of the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) and its successors, provide ethical consideration for government and third sector researchers wishing to access data via the ADRN. These requests are referred to NSDEC by the ADRN Approvals Panel.
5. In reviewing proposals NSDEC will provide advice by consensus.
6. To facilitate timely access to data NSDEC will:
 - i. consider proposals referred to it by the ONS Microdata Release Panel or the ADRN Approvals Panel via correspondence; or
 - ii. retain oversight of projects referred to it by the MRP and approved via precedent.

Meetings

7. NSDEC will meet at least four times a year. The Chair of NSDEC may convene additional meetings as deemed necessary.
8. The Chair may invite other relevant experts as appropriate to advise the committee.

Reporting

9. NSDEC will provide reports following each of its meetings to the National Statistician.
10. At least seven days prior to its meetings, NSDEC will receive reports on:
 - i. proposed new data shares;
 - ii. relevant projects and programmes and other information as it requires; and
 - iii. reports from any sub-committees.
11. NSDEC will operate transparently. Meeting agendas, papers and minutes will be made publicly available on the UK Statistics Authority website.
12. Where expedited review is sought and NSDEC approve the proposal by correspondence, the application and summary of members' comments will be presented at NSDEC's next meeting and published as part of the meeting papers.
13. Where projects are approved via precedent, the precedent tables will be presented at NSDEC's next meeting and published as part of the meeting papers.
14. NSDEC will provide an annual report on its activities in the National Statistician's annual report on data access and sharing.

Membership and role of members

15. The members of NSDEC will include:
 - i. representative of the National Statistician (Chair);
 - ii. at least five independent external members, including lay members; and
 - iii. no more than four members from government.

Quorum

16. NSDEC meetings will be considered quorate when four or more members are present including at least two independent external members as well as the Chair or the Chair's delegated nominee.
17. Substitutes will not be permitted to attend meetings, unless with the invitation of the Chair.
18. In order for any expedited proposal to be formally approved by correspondence a sufficient number of members would need to respond in accordance with a quorate meeting.

Secretariat

19. Secretariat for the NSDEC will be provided by the staff from the Central Policy Secretariat within the UK Statistics Authority.

Review

20. NSDEC will review the effectiveness of its meetings and its terms of reference annually.