Seventh Meeting of the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee

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Agenda and Papers

Wednesday, 27th March 2024

2 – 5 pm

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National Statistician’s Advisory Committee for Inclusive Data

Agenda

Wednesday, 27th March 2024

London Marsham Street/Hybrid

Video Conference - Microsoft Teams

14:00 – 17:00

Chair: Dame Julia Cleverdon DVCO CBE

1 14:00 – 14:10	Welcome and Introductions	Dame Julia Cleverdon
2 14:10– 14:40	*For decision*: Reprioritisation of and Roadmap to monitoring and reporting Inclusive Data Taskforce recommendations	NSIDAC(24)01 Dr Amie Dede-Benefor
3 14:40 – 14:50	*For information*: Key priorities for 2024-25: Social charter, children and young people, disability, administrative data and future of population and migration statistics (FPMS)	NSIDAC(24)02 Dr Amie Dede-Benefor
4 14:50 -15:10	*For information*: Children and young people: An overview	Professor Lucinda Platt
5 15:10 – 15:20	*Break*	
6 15:20 – 15:40	*For information*: Children’s data landscape presentation	NSIDAC(24)03 Alex Buckley
7 15:40 – 16:10	Discussion on children’s data: • Proposed approach to filling the data gaps • Priority areas	
8 16:10 – 16:30	*For discussion/advice*: Inclusive by Design definition	NSIDAC(24)04 Alice Toms
9 16:30 – 16:45	*For discussion:* Forward Agenda Items including introduction to ONS Local and Coherence	Fiona Dawe
10 16:45 – 17:00	Any Other Business	

Date of Next Meeting: TBC

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee

NSIDAC(24)01

Revised roadmap for Inclusive Data Taskforce implementation plan

Purpose

1. This paper is for consideration. It presents a revised roadmap for the Inclusive Data Taskforce (IDTF) implementation plan. The purpose of this item is to provide NSIDAC members with a revised roadmap following the ONS reorganisation and formation of a smaller team to monitor and report the IDTF recommendations.

Timing

2. Urgent decision is needed at this meeting because it will inform our approach to monitoring and reporting against commitments for the 8 IDTF principles in 2024-25.

Recommendations

- i. The NSIDAC members review and approve the recommendations outlined in this paper.
- ii. Quarterly, the Secretariat monitors and reports on 21 key commitments to NSIDAC members.
- iii. The 3 priorities proposed for 2024-2025 are:
  - A. Social charter
  - B. Children and young people data
  - C. Disability

Background

3. In 2021, the UK Statistics Authority published the Inclusive Data Taskforce (IDTF) Recommendations report *Leaving no one behind. How can we be more inclusive in our data?* The National Statistician's response was published in 2022 within the *Inclusive data taskforce Implementation Plan*. A roadmap was presented to the NSIDAC in February 2023. Progress against the commitments were published in 2023 in the *Embedding Inclusivity in UK data: 2023 update on implementing Inclusive Data recommendations* report.

4. ONS underwent a reorganisation in Autumn 2023, which resulted in a new smaller team being formed in January 2024 to monitor and report progress towards the implementation of the IDTF recommendations and provide support to the NSIDAC. The team is now situated within the Health, Population and Methods business area, embedded within the Future of Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS) programme.

5. To facilitate the reduction in staff within the team and support the maintenance of the monitoring and reporting function against the IDTF recommendations, the new team have reviewed the prioritisation of the activities associated with each recommendation and produced a revised roadmap.

Discussion

6. To fulfil our goal of monitoring and reporting against the IDTF recommendations in 2024-25, we propose the following:

   i. Focus on three priorities which are:

      - Social charter;
      - Children and young people data and;

    - Disability

ii. Underpinning this will be to ensure the FPMS programme is as inclusive as it can be. It is the approach which links our three priorities for 2024-25 together. The focus above will support several programme achievements and enshrine inclusivity across the programme.

iii. From 42 “key” commitments presented in February 2023, we will monitor 21. Note that as of 19 March 2024, out of the key commitments, 16 were completed, 21 were in progress, 2 were paused, 2 were closed and 1 was awaiting confirmation of status (Annex B).

iv. We will report on the 21 key commitments which are in progress to the NSIDAC quarterly. To monitor the commitments, we will email a questionnaire to commitment holders collating information on progress update, key milestones, RAG (red, amber, green) status and likelihood of completing the work by March 2025 when the IDTF project is scheduled to complete. We will also continue stakeholder engagement through the cross-government Statistical Service sub-committee, which is a means to enable ONS to collate information and to move the IDTF recommendations forward. We will focus on commitments labelled as “key” and “in progress” noting that some commitments were marked as completed in our May 2023 update and a large proportion of the commitments are classed as “future” commitments, meaning they have not started (Annex A).

v. We will report on the remaining commitments annually in our annual report.

7. Our prioritisation will allow us to monitor a reduced number of commitments quarterly, and the remainder on an annual basis. Using this criterion, ONS will monitor a total of 21 commitments in 2024-25 (Annex C). We propose that commitments labelled as “future” are not monitored because they have not started.

8. During our data gathering and analysis conducted in February to March 2024, we found that some of the “future” commitments proposed in *Embedding Inclusivity in UK data* (2023) are a continuation of “original” commitments from the *IDTF Implementation Plan* (2022). Therefore, we propose that where this is the case, we close the “original” commitments and update the “future” ones to prevent duplication.

9. Our work on the IDTF will be situated within the FPMS Programme through five of the eight inclusive data principles: coverage, disaggregation, concepts, methods and harmonisation.

Conclusion

10. This paper has presented a proposal on how we intend to monitor and report on key commitments to the ONS quarterly. The NSIDAC members are asked to approve the recommendation.

Dr Amie Dede-Benefor, Population Transformation, ONS, 19 March 2024

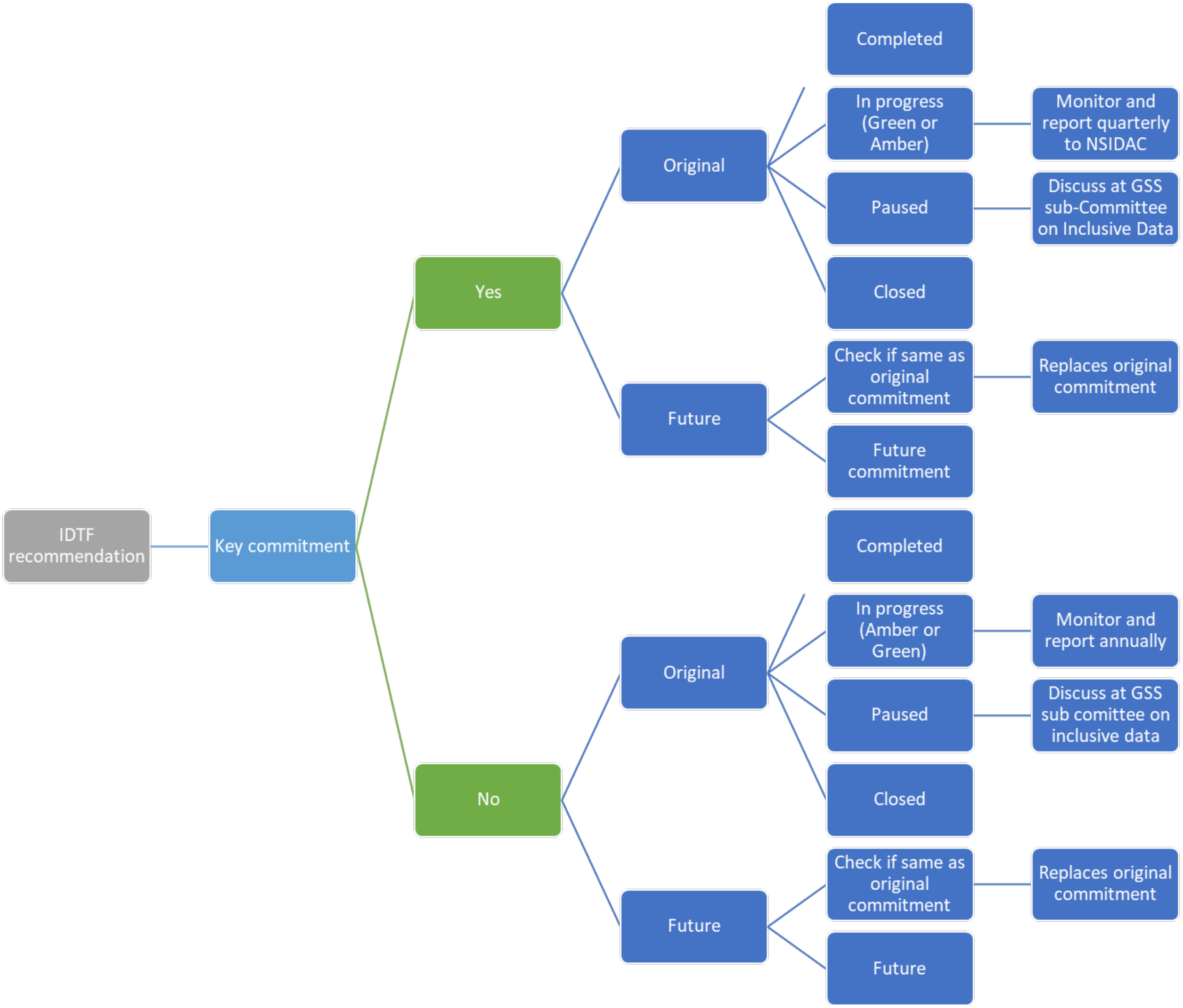
List of Annexes

Annex A Proposed framework for prioritising IDTF commitments to monitor and report on in 2024-25

Annex B Distribution of key commitments by inclusive data principle and status

Annex C Revised roadmap for NSIDAC and IDTF monitoring and reporting of key commitments (19 March 2024)

Annex A Proposed framework for prioritising IDTF commitments to monitor and report on in 2024-25

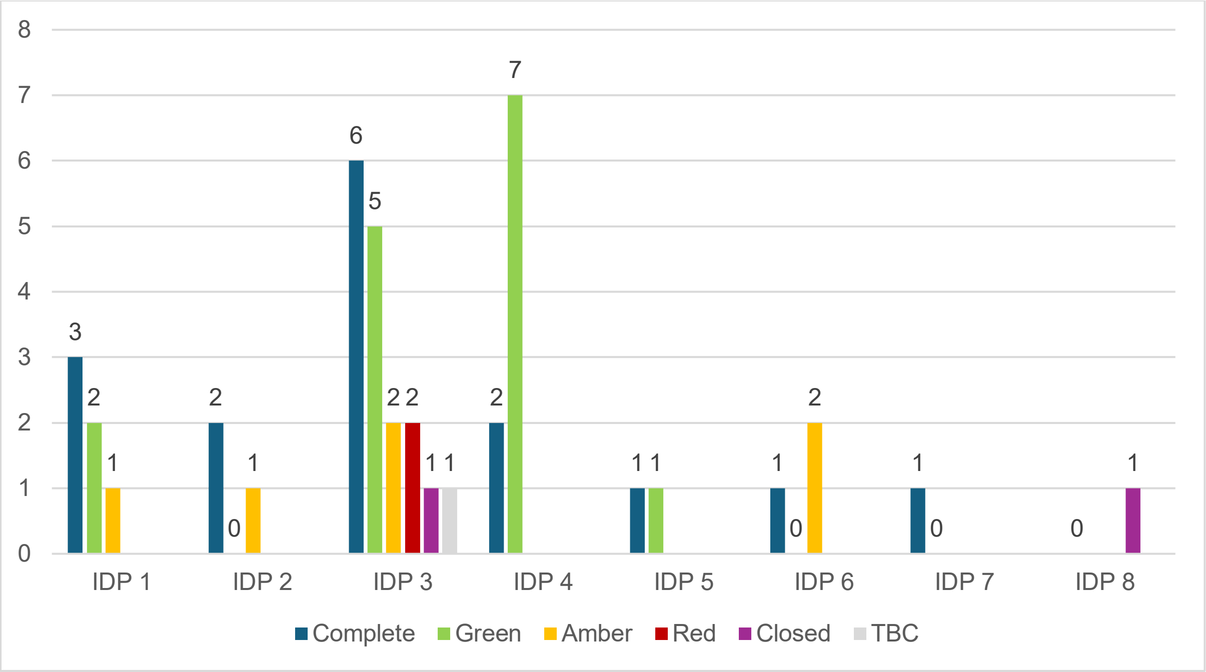


Annex B Distribution of key commitments by inclusive data principle and status

Table 1: Key commitments by inclusive data principle (IDP) and RAG status (Red, Amber Green)

	Complete	Green	Amber	Red	Closed	TBC	Total
IDP 1	3	2	1				6
IDP 2	2	0	1				3
IDP 3	6	5	2	2	1	1	17
IDP 4	2	7					9
IDP 5	1	1					2
IDP 6	1	0	2				3
IDP 7	1	0					1
IDP 8		0			1		1
Total	16	15	6	2	2	1	42

Figure 1: Key commitments by IDP and RAG status



ANNEX C Revised roadmap for NSIDAC and IDTF monitoring and reporting of key commitments (19 March 2024)

The key for the colour coding system used in the tables below are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Key to colour coding for key commitments

Colour	Status description of commitment
🟦	Commitment complete
🟩	Commitment in progress
🟧	Commitment in progress with some issues
🟥	Commitment currently paused
🟪	Commitment closed before completion
⬜	Commitment status to be confirmed

Table 3: Inclusive Data Principle (IDP) 1: Create an environment of trust and trustworthiness which allows and encourages everyone to count and be counted in UK data and evidence.

	2024								**2025**	
	Jan	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May Jun Jul Aug**	**Sep**	**OctNov**	**Dec**	**JanFeb**	**Mar**
Enhance Trust and trustworthiness										
ONS is developing a 'Social Contract'' with research participants on the information they choose to share. This will provide clear information on why data are being collected, confidentiality and security arrangements and details on how their information will be used and shared. We will work with stakeholders to develop this product and test with relevant groups and populations in advance of an expected launch in summer 2022 (1.1.1).	Monthly meeting									
	Project scoping ONS Assembly	Project scoping Roadmap	NSIDAC brief Literature Review	Scope and brief Forward work plan and timeline	Public Research / testing of hypothesis NSIDAC brief	Draft proposal NSIDAC brief		NSIDAC brief		NSIDAC brief
To *widen engagement and build trust with prospective respondent groups*										
As part of the User Engagement Strategy for Statistics, ONS will be establishing an Engagement Hub to ensure that we reach the widest possible set of users to reflect the entire population, making recommendations on how we collect, analyse and present analysis and statistics in ONS and across government. The hub is being established in 2022 (1.2.1).										
Building on the 2021 Census community outreach in England and Wales, ONS will continue to engage through 2022 and 2023 with under-represented groups, to ensure their needs are reflected both in the analysis and outputs of the Census and in the research and plans for the National Statistician's recommendation on the future of the census and population statistics, as well as a much broader set of statistics and analysis (1.2.2).										
To increase diversity amongst staff, facilitating trust among potential participants										
The Government Analysis Function will work in partnership with the analytical professions across										

	2024												2025		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
government to deliver its Diversity and Inclusion strategy, aiming to create a truly diverse and inclusive analysis community that is reflective of the UK society we serve. Priorities for 2022 include launching a mutual mentoring programme, further dissemination of our function's first inclusion tool kit and continued roll out of development events for underrepresented groups (1.3.1).															
In line with both the ONS People Strategy and its new Survey Strategy, ONS will aim to ensure that its workforce is fully representative of the people we serve. ONS Surveys Directorate is committed to exploring in 2022 the diversity and representativeness of its workforce, including social survey interviewer recruitment, to develop recommendations to address any potential barriers, so that it can create a more diverse workforce involved in collecting data from the public (1.3.2).															

Table 4: IDP 2: Take a whole system approach, working in partnership with others to improve the inclusiveness of UK data and evidence.

		2024												2025		
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
IDP 2: Take a whole system approach, working in partnership with others to improve the inclusiveness of UK data and evidence.	A new independent National Statistician's advisory committee on inclusive data will be launched in early 2022, to advise on priorities, ongoing improvements and evaluate progress, as UK society evolves (2.1.1).			Meeting	Future of Population Statistics and Migration recommendation report		Meeting			Meeting			Meeting			Meeting
	In collaboration with key stakeholders and data producers across the statistical system, in Spring 2022 ONS will set up a governance mechanism for delivering and publicly reporting on the IDTF Implementation Plan. This will include how to reach widely across the public and different population groups. (2.1.2).			Planning	Meeting			Meeting			Meeting			Meeting		
	ONS will explore the creation of a new United Nations City Group on inclusivity in 2022 (2.5.1).			Rescoping work												

Table 5: IDP 3: Ensure that all groups are robustly captured across key areas of life in UK data and review practices regularly.

	2024												2025		
	Jan	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**
To identify under-represented groups and develop strategies to address under-representation															
ONS will assess the representativeness of different administrative data sources and how best to ensure that more marginalised groups are included in statistics going forward. This work will contribute to the National Statistician's recommendation on the future of the census and population statistics (3.1.1).															
The Cabinet Office's Equality Hub will undertake an analysis using data from the 2021 Census for England and Wales Non-Response Link Study to understand levels of non-response and non-response bias for different groups. This could be used to develop recommendations on reducing non-response for different groups. Options for analysis (whether to be carried out in-house or commissioned) will be considered in early 2023, with publication of an analytical report in late 2023 (3.1.2).															
ONS is investigating the feasibility of introducing responsive data collection into its operational design during 2022. This approach would involve targeting data collection towards under-represented groups to increase the presence of such groups in the data (3.1.7).															
Implement Equality Evidence Strategy (3.1.14).															
To improve the inclusivity of administrative data collection															
Scottish Government has carried out an equality data audit to assess the collection and publication of data on the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 across the organisation, focusing on a range of datasets, including those used to produce official and national statistics, administrative data, and ad hoc research datasets used to inform Ministerial decision-making. Improvement plans will be put in place in 2022 (3.2.3).															
HMRC is exploring the feasibility of collecting information not currently routinely collected, on ethnicity and disability, for all new data collections. Feasibility work and recommendations will be complete in 2022 (3.2.6).															
To address issues with the data infrastructure that cannot be provided by existing surveys and improvements to administrative data															
In 2022/23 the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit will implement a survey of disabled people across the UK focused on lived experiences and barriers faced, to better understand the experiences of disabled people in society and inform targeted policy making and the evaluation of the National Disability Strategy (3.3.4).	Analysis Function paper														

	2024												2025		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
The Home Office will continue to work with ONS and other government departments to facilitate secure and appropriate access to the administrative data needed to understand migration, including enabling relevant and necessary linkage work (3.4.2).															
To evaluate and address issues with the coverage of populations not resident in private households															
In 2022, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, jointly with ONS, are scoping out work to estimate populations not resident in private households and understand their experiences in relation to the general population (3.5.1).															
During 2022, ONS will undertake a review of existing data sources on communal establishments across UK countries, with a particular focus on understanding how people with protected characteristics are captured within these sources. The review will identify relevant data gaps and priority areas for improvement. (3.5.2).															
ONS will carry out research into the value of, and how best to collect survey data from populations not resident in private households, including those living in Communal Establishments, when necessary. This work will take place during the first half of 2022 and will include integrating lessons learned from the 2021 Census for England and Wales (3.5.4).															
Welsh Government is exploring the introduction of individual-level homelessness data collection to enable a greater understanding of the situations of those who find themselves at risk of homelessness and enable improved evaluation of homelessness prevention measures. During 2022, the feasibility and success of collecting these data from pilot Local Authorities will be assessed to determine the viability of rolling it out across other Local Authorities in subsequent years (3.5.5).															
Following scoping work in relation to estimating populations not resident in private households, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published an evidence review of existing data on ‘hidden’ homelessness across the UK in March 2023, highlighting the complexities and data gaps in relation to this population. Subject to funding, the ONS will pilot the approach suggested by its research into capturing the scale of women experiencing “hidden” homelessness across the UK (3.5.6 - closed).															
The Welsh Government will continue work to establish an individual-level homelessness data collection. A pilot project for sharing samples of existing data is being carried out with local authorities, aiming for agreement to share initial															

	2024												2025		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
data by mid-2023. Following an initial round of engagement with local authorities a data specification will continue to be developed during 2023 (3.5.7 - TBC).															
Scottish Government is currently in the process of commissioning research into hidden homelessness to reach a better understanding of those people who are homeless, at imminent risk of homelessness or who face housing insecurity but do not appear in Scotland’s official figures. An improved understanding of the different routes into and out of homelessness will help to address gaps in provision and make Scotland’s homelessness system more responsive to people’s needs (3.5.8).															
To ensure the diverse needs of a range of users are taken into account in data collection and reporting activities															
Department for Communities (DfC) is leading on the development of the new social inclusion strategies for the Northern Ireland Executive, including a Disability Strategy, Gender Equality Strategy and Sexual Orientation/LGBTQI+ Strategy. While DfC is leading strategy development they are cross-Executive strategies which Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) will feed into. Any data development projects will form part of the action plans associated with these strategies (3.6.5).															
Scottish Government will engage with equality stakeholder organisations to develop a new Equality Evidence Strategy for 2023-25. Work will take place throughout 2022 with the publication of the strategy in 202 (3.6.7).															

Table 6: Inclusive Data Principle 4: Improve the UK data infrastructure to enable robust and reliable disaggregation and intersectional analysis across the full range of relevant groups and populations, and at differing levels of geography.

	2024												2025		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
To improve the granularity of data to enable meaningful disaggregation															
The Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Unit will work with other government departments and organisations to improve the granularity of ethnicity data, including reducing the amount of data published (only) for White and Other than White. The Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Unit will also encourage other public sector bodies to avoid use of the term 'BAME', as part of commitments set out in the RDU Quality Improvement Plan. By May 2022 a review of the granularity of existing datasets will have been completed which will lead to recommendations to departments about increasing granularity through 2022 and 2023 (4.1.3).															
Department for Education will begin voluntary collection of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan data at the level of the child instead of aggregate Local Authority level data, in January 2022. This will enable more in-depth analysis to be carried out and potential for data to be matched to other relevant datasets, to facilitate greater understanding of policy issues related to children with Special Educational Needs. First publication of data and mandatory collection will begin in 2023 (4.1.4).															
The Welsh Government's Equality Data Unit (WG EDU) will look to strengthen equality evidence (qualitative and quantitative) to address inequality in Wales. Intersectionality is at the heart of WG EDU evidence. The WG EDU will be looking to deliver evidence to support the areas identified with the Wales Strategic Equality Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, to give a more complete picture of evidence for various small populations and disadvantaged groups across Wales, including people with characteristics protected under the 2010 Equality Act such as LGBTQ+, gender and age. The Unit will be established in 2022, developing its programme and mapping existing evidence. In 2023, the initial high priority analysis will be delivered, and key research projects will begin (4.1.5).															
The Welsh Government's Race Disparity Unit (WG RDU) will look to strengthen ethnicity evidence (qualitative and quantitative) to address inequality in Wales. The WG RDU will work with the REAP Accountability Group to provide ad-hoc evidence on request to support the Race Equality Action Plan and to provide a more complete picture of evidence that represents various ethnic communities across Wales. The WG RDU will be established in 2022, developing its programme and mapping existing															

	2024												2025		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
evidence on ethnicity. In 2023, the initial high priority analysis will be delivered, and key research projects will begin (4.1.7).															
To promote an intersectional approach to exploring and presenting equalities data															
The second phase of the Equality Data Programme will be to develop a linked dataset (the Equality Data Asset) through the Integrated Data Service, bringing together a range of record level, longitudinal datasets held across government, enabling more in-depth intersectional analysis and exploration of how people’s lifepaths vary by different dimensions of equality. Over the course of 2022, processes to acquire initial datasets will be well-established, with an ongoing programme of work to develop the Asset and explore options to enhance the breadth and richness of data on equalities and outcomes over subsequent years (4.2.2).															
ONS will undertake intersectional analysis using the 2021 Census for England and Wales and will collaborate with National Records of Scotland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to consider the provision of UK-wide analysis from the censuses across the UK (4.2.4).															
To improve understanding by taking an intersectional approach to existing online tools															
ONS is developing a flexible table builder as part of the release of the results of the 2021 Census for England and Wales to enable users to select the characteristics of interest to build their own tables, subject to statistical disclosure controls, enabling the exploration of intersectionalities. These user tools will be published during 2022 and 2023 (4.3.1).															
Targeted oversampling is planned in a number of data collection activities to address specific gaps in knowledge															
The Department for Education Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel Survey will use targeted oversampling of under-represented groups, including those who are Free School Meals (FSM) eligible, those with Special Educational Needs and Disability status, and those with Children in need status, to fill existing gaps in understanding of these groups. Research has been commissioned across the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years and will likely be re-commissioned in future years (4.4.3).															
Department for Education Children of the 2020s cohort study and Pupils of the 2020s cohort study, part of the Education and Outcomes Panel Studies (EOPS), will follow children from 9 months to 5 years of age and from early in their primary education (Year 1 or 2) until the end of primary school (Year 6) respectively. Both studies will include targeted oversampling of disadvantaged groups, to better understand the relationship between attainment, disadvantage and a range of personal and household characteristics. Both studies will be set up and piloted during 2021/22 with fieldwork and															

	2024												2025		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
delivery of the data from the first wave in 2022/23, and subsequent waves in the following 3 years (4.4.4).															

Table 7: IDP 5: Ensure appropriateness and clarity over the concepts being measured across all data collected.

IDP 5: Ensure appropriateness and clarity over the concepts being measured across all data collected.		2024												2025		
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
	To ensure measures for different populations accurately reflect current standards and legislation															
	Welsh Government will investigate developing evidence that is in line with the social model of disability from 2022 (5.1.2).															
	To ensure that a clear conceptual understanding underpins accessible and appropriate data collections															
	A GSS Harmonisation Plan will be published by ONS in early 2022, setting out the plans and timescales for review and updating of the current GSS harmonised standards and guidance (5.2.1).															

Table 8: IDP 6: Broaden the range of methods that are routinely used and create new approaches to understanding experiences across the population of the UK.

		2024												2025		
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
IDP 6: Broaden the range of methods that are routinely used and create new approaches to understanding experiences across the population of the UK.	During 2022, ONS is undertaking qualitative research to examine the lived experiences of groups who are currently under-represented in UK data and evidence including: disabled adults’ experiences accessing and engaging with activities, goods and services across the UK; the school experiences of children with special educational needs and disabilities in England; and the lived experiences, priorities and needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities (6.1.4).															
	ONS will explore data linkage as a mechanism for researching the experiences of particular groups and populations, as part of the development of the Integrated Data Service, to provide new insights into different population groups. This will include: linking benefits data to the 2021 Census for England and Wales and other sources, to support analysis of 2021 outcomes and other events (health, mortality) for those in receipt of disability-related benefits; and linkage of historic targeted surveys to support analysis of longer-term outcomes for both individuals and households. The integrated statistics system will be designed and built in 2022 (6.2.1).															
	As part of the transformation of the population social statistics system, ONS will develop longitudinal assets. These will enable the flagging of disadvantaged groups and of transitory states of interest to support subsequent analysis. The integrated statistics system will be designed and built in 2022 (6.3.1).															

Table 9: IDP: 7 Harmonised standards for relevant groups and populations should be reviewed at least every five years and updated and expanded where necessary, in line with changing social norms and respondent and user needs.

		2024												**2025**		
		Jan	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**
	To improve the granularity of data to enable meaningful disaggregation															
IDP: 7 Harmonised standards for relevant groups and populations should be reviewed at least every five years and updated and expanded where necessary, in line with changing social norms and respondent and user needs.	ONS will review the June 2021 published GSS Coherence Work Programme in collaboration across the 4 nations of the UK to ensure that it has a strong focus on inclusivity. An updated coherence Work Programme will be published in 2022 (7.2.4).															

Table 10: IDP 8: Ensure UK data and evidence are equally accessible to all, while protecting the identity and confidentiality of those sharing their data.

		2024												**2025**		
		Jan	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**
	To improve the granularity of data to enable meaningful disaggregation															
IDP 8: Ensure UK data and evidence are equally accessible to all, while protecting the identity and confidentiality of those sharing their data.	The ONS Centre for Equalities and Inclusion will facilitate consideration of development of a centralised, explorable and accessible UK-wide equalities data and analysis resource in the context of the development of the Integrated Data Service (8.1.1 - closed).															

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee

NSIDAC(24)02

Update on social charter workstream

Purpose

1. This paper outlines our progress to date on the social charter workstream and a draft forward look.

Timing

2. Timing will depend on resource available and how the Social Charter Task and Finish group decide to progress.

Background

As part of Inclusive Data Principle 1 ONS is developing a 'Social Contract' with research participants on the information they choose to share. This will provide clear information on why data are being collected, confidentiality and security arrangements and details on how their information will be used and shared.

3. The broad idea behind the charter is to assess the current understanding and trust of documents used to provide the public with information prior to them taking part in research, to see how implementing one accessible document (e.g. a social charter) across the statistical system could help further the inclusivity of research.

The term 'Social Contract' has since been changed to a 'Social Charter'.

Discussion

Work to date

4. Qualitative, quantitative and desk research have been undertaken by ONS to explore public attitudes towards data, although not specifically on the social charter. Focus groups were held in February 2023 with 18-24 year olds to explore their views on data sharing, administrative data and data linkage, and perceived trustworthiness of ONS. The research does not indicate a ready public appetite for a social charter. People expect data standards to be easy to find and understand, but admit that they are unlikely to actively seek them out.
5. An internal literature review has recently been conducted. This looked at what is already available on the ONS website. Many documents published on the ONS website contain the content outlined for the social charter in the IDTF recommendations (Annex A).

Further work

6. The Task and Finish group on the social charter will be reinstated, providing we can obtain resource to take this group forward.
7. A literature review on what is available externally to ONS will be conducted. It will look at what other organisations have available to the public.
8. Investigations are underway as to whether further research with participants would be beneficial at this stage before continuing any further with a social charter. This could focus on what participants think of the idea of a social charter directly and whether they feel that information already available meets their needs. It will also help us ascertain whether it might improve the likelihood of people taking part.

11. We will work collaboratively with the devolved nations throughout the project.

Conclusion

12. Progress has been made on the social charter. The ONS are looking to obtain more resource to dedicate to this work stream. More information will be provided as part of the Task and Finish group.

Sarah Caul, Population Transformation, ONS, 19 March 2024

Annex A: Documents available on the ONS website

On the ONS website, you can find the survey homepage which links to a list of all the surveys in ONS.

Each survey has its own information page, the content for each survey was similar and most surveys covered:

- Who carries out the survey?
- Why is this survey important?
- Why should you take part?
- Why you have been asked to take part?
- What is involved?
- How will the information be used?
- Data confidentiality
- ONS responsibility to the public
- Further contact details

These are all areas raised as key for the social charter.

National Statistician’s Inclusive Data Advisory Committee

NSIDAC(24)03

Overview of the landscape of children’s data and analysis

Purpose

1. This paper and the accompanying annexes provide an overview of the data landscape for children within the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Recommendations

2. Members of NSIDAC are invited to:
    i. Note the initial Inclusive Data Taskforce (IDTF) recommendations relating to children’s data.
    ii. Give feedback on progress against children data and analysis since the publication of the ITDF recommendations.
    iii. Give feedback on the coverage of children and their characteristics from the proposed administrative data sources.
    iv. Consider the priorities for the children data landscape in the wider context of the future of population and migration statistics (FPMS) programme.
    v. Consider the proposed approach to identifying and filling gaps through the formation of use-cases for the FPMS programme.

Background

3. Children’s data has been identified by the NSIDAC as a priority for the focus of their work for the remainder of the programme up to March 2025.

4. A literature review has been carried out to summarise the recommendations and reflections of the (IDTF) regarding children and young people’s data, which are set out in **Annex A.** Stakeholder engagement has also been carried out, to identify the priorities of key stakeholders.

5. Further review and stakeholder engagement were then conducted to establish an overview of the available data and analysis work on children within ONS and across some of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) since 2021. Input from colleagues working on the FPMS programme was provided on the planned coverage of children and their characteristics within administrative data.

Discussion

Definitions

6. This paper refers throughout to ‘children’, by which we mean individuals up to the age of 18 (see **Annex B** for established definitions). However, we acknowledge that there is discrepancy between definitions used when referring to individuals below the age of 18. The terms ‘young people’ and ‘children and young people’ are used in some contexts to refer to individuals below the age of 24. This leads to difficulties in definition and comparison between data sources, as identified by Si Chun Lam and the Children’s Commissioner for England.

Reviews of children’s data and priority areas

7. Multiple reviews have been conducted on the state of data on children in the UK, including the Inclusive Data Taskforce report (2021), the Nuffield Foundation and London School of Economics: *Child poverty and multidimensional disadvantage: Tackling “data exclusion” and extending the evidence base on “missing” and “invisible” children* (2018) and the Office for Statistical Regulation’s *Systematic Review of Children and Young People Statistics* (2022). Themes identified amongst these reports included:

- that data on children is often collected by proxy rather than directly from the child;
- that statistics available on vulnerable children tend to be metrics of service use rather than about the experiences of children and;
- that data is lacking which enables understanding of multidimensional disadvantage faced by children, for example outcomes based on parental income and specific special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

8. These reports, alongside a review of previous NSIDAC meeting minutes, and conversations with key stakeholders including the Children’s Commissioner and NSIDAC members, have identified the following groups as being particularly at risk of missing or incomplete data:

   i. Looked-after children
   ii. Children who experience or are at risk of abuse or neglect (especially. in early childhood) (including lack of information on their outcomes)
   iii. Young carers
   iv. Migrant children
   v. Refugees and unaccompanied migrants
   vi. Gypsy and Traveller children
   vii. Roma children
   viii. Children with disabilities
   ix. Children in poverty/food poverty
   x. Children of prisoners
   xi. Temporary experiences in childhood/as young adults and impacts (such as pregnancy, school exclusions, hospital stays, homelessness, prison etc.)
   xii. Children who are not in mainstream education

ONS sources of data on children (October 2023)

9. The Equalities Data Audit tool provides an overview of ONS data sources on children (see **Annex C** for table last updated October 2023). The Equalities Data Audit 2023 located 100 sources of survey and administrative data (including census data) for children and young people in the UK. The tool does not provide information on whether or not definitions used within sources are harmonised.

10. Of these sources:

    i. 38 were administrative data sets
    ii. 59 were surveys (including census)
    iii. 18 were longitudinal
    iv. 67 collected data on disabilities
    v. 26 collected data on impairments
    vi. 17 collected data on carer status
    vii. 6 collected data on homelessness
    viii. 9 collected data on prison, youth custody or health and social care status
    ix. 0 collected data on immigration detention status
    x. 6 collected data on status as refugee, asylum seeker, or undocumented migrant
    xi. 23 collected data on ‘looked after’ status
    xii. 19 collected data on free school meals (FSM)

GSS work programmes on children

11. There are multiple programmes of work ongoing or completed across ONS and the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) which include the collection or analysis of data on children, including:

    - The publication of a series of analyses using linked datasets to enable more granular and intersectional analysis. These covered education, social mobility and outcomes for students receiving free school meals in England (2022).

    - The UKSA’s Centre for Applied Data Ethics has published guidance for analysts on ethical considerations in ensuring inclusivity of data for research and statistics. This emphasises the use of self-reporting of personal characteristics and includes specific guidance in relation to collecting data from children and young people.

    - Theme based engagement for the GSS User Engagement Strategy is being implemented, which includes piloting of the theme of children and education.

    - The ONS Centre for Crime and Justice are working on transforming the current face to face, interviewer led Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales to be a fully online, self-completion survey. A pilot survey (the Young People's Safety Survey) is running among children aged 10 to 15 to assess the feasibility of a fully online children's survey which will include evaluation of engagement among children and quality of data collected. The survey is being transformed to increase sample size which will enable production of more granular data, improve inclusivity of data and include non-household populations such as children in care.

12. Within the Department for Education (DfE), programmes have also been undertaken including:

    - Oversampling of disadvantaged groups in its Children of the 2020s and Five to Twelve, and Growing Up in the 2020s cohort studies, to better understand the relationship between development, attainment, disadvantage and a range of personal and household characteristics, with results due to be published during 2024.
    - DfE’s Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel Survey has published survey results that include targeted oversampling of groups with historically lower response rates, including those who are eligible for FSM eligible, those with Special Educational Needs and Disability status, and those with Children in Need status, to fill existing gaps in understanding of these groups.
    - DfE’s Education and Outcomes Panel Studies (EOPS) programme has designed three new cohort studies. The Children of the 2020s (EOPS-A) will follow children from 9 months to 5 years of age. This study has been piloted and wave one fieldwork conducted, with further waves to be carried out during 2023. Five to Twelve (EOPS-B) will follow children from early in their primary education (years one or two) to the end of primary school (year six), currently being piloted and will use Free School Meals eligibility criteria from the National Pupil Database to oversample disadvantaged pupils, and better understand the relationship between attainment, disadvantage and a range of personal and household characteristics.
    - The Cabinet Office’s Equality Hub and the Department for Education developed and published a strategy to improve the quality and availability of ethnicity data and evidence for looked-after children and their routes out of care in April 2023. This was part of the Inclusive Britain Update Report.
    - The Department for Education has begun mandatory collection of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan data at the level of the child instead of aggregate Local Authority level data.

<u>Children’s data within the Future of Population and Migration Statistics Programme (FPMS)</u>

13. The FPMS programme has demonstrated the ability to produce administrative based population statistics. Underpinning the work we will:

    - Use existing and new data sources for children and their characteristics
    - Understanding the quality of the data and its coverage,
    - And engage with stakeholders to understand their user needs

14. ONS has acquired or is due to acquire a variety of administrative data sources that provide good coverage of the population of children and young people and

their characteristics. This includes education (e.g. National Pupil Databases, Further and Higher Education datasets), health (NHS Personal Demographics Service, hospital episodes and emergency care data), HMRC and Home Office data. **Annex D** provides an overview of these data sources.

15. We will continue to work to identify new data sources and to understand the strengths and weaknesses of existing sources, working with data suppliers and through seeking advice from experts, such as NSIDAC. Particular areas of interest are children who may be missing from the state school system and not regularly interacting with health services.

16. ONS will need to understand missingness in administrative sources for quality purposes, as is the case for surveys. Also, ONS will need to know what the high-level needs are to influence the FPMS plan. We would therefore like the NSIDAC to develop use cases based on their assessment of the data landscape and potentially on existing user needs, developed from the recent FPMS consultation, in time. The use cases will enhance the inclusivity of groups of children under-represented in UK data which ONS will consider when undertaking work for the FPMS.

Conclusion

17. This paper has set out the key groups of children and areas requiring work to improve inclusivity as set out by several key reviews and stakeholders. It has provided an overview of the data collected by and for ONS, the initiatives currently being carried out by ONS and across GSS to improve the inclusivity of data relating to children, and the approach to coverage of children and their characteristics within the FPMS programme. NSIDAC members are invited to comment on the initiatives and FPMS programme, and to consider areas of priority to feed into the development of use-cases.

Alex Buckley, Strategic Enablement and Development Division, 27th March 2024

List of Annexes

Annex A List of Inclusive Data Taskforce recommendations relating to children

Annex B Definitions of children, young people, and children and young people

Annex C Equalities Data Audit filtered by ‘data on children and young people’ October 2023

Annex D Coverage of administrative data sources in the FPMS

Annex A List of Inclusive Data Taskforce recommendations relating to children (published in 2021)

This list originates from the IDTF report and recommendations published by ONS in 2021. The recommendations were organised into 8 Inclusive Data Principles, and the National Statistician's response included over 200 commitments falling within the 8 principles.

Inclusive Data Taskforce (IDTF) Report (2021)

Groups who are missing from the data:
Children are a group that many IDTF consultation respondents identified as missing from the data. Where we do have data for them, this is often collected from people other than children themselves and therefore children's own voices may not be heard.

The Nuffield Foundation has identified a number of critical gaps in the data on children. This includes a lack of information on all areas of life for looked-after children as well as under-representation of children who have experienced abuse or neglect in early childhood and a lack of information on their outcomes.

A report from the London School of Economics also noted the lack of data to understand child poverty and multidimensional disadvantage among children, specifically identifying young carers, migrant children, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, and children at risk of abuse or neglect as groups that are 'missing' from or 'invisible' in existing data. These groups were also highlighted by participants in our consultation activities.

Groups for whom data are of insufficient quality:
Even where relevant groups are included in survey or administrative data, there are risks that the quality of these data is poor. First, as noted in the section on groups or characteristics missing from the data, information on children's characteristics may not be collected directly from the children themselves but provided by their parents, carers, teachers or others responsible for children.

IDTF Recommendations

Inclusive Data Principle 1: Create an environment of trust and trustworthiness which allows and encourages everyone to count and be counted in UK data and evidence.

Priorities include:

- Ensuring that data collection instruments are accessible to all, recognising differences in language, literacy, and the relative accessibility of different modes and formats, including children with a range of disabilities.

- Ensuring that the default approach is for self-reporting of personal characteristics, including, where appropriate, collecting information directly from children.

Inclusive Data Principle 3: Ensure that all groups are robustly captured across key areas of life in UK data and review practices regularly.

Priorities include:

- Disabled children and parents
- Children in food poverty

Inclusive Data Principle 6: Broaden the range of methods that are routinely used and create new approaches to understanding experiences across the population of the UK.

Priorities include:

- Using innovative and flexible approaches to data collection for enhancing our understanding of the experiences or voices of groups including children.
- Considering a wider range of methods to capture temporary experiences, such as school exclusions and periods children spend looked after by the local authority.
- For surveys currently collecting information about children, data producers should consider what information can be collected directly from children themselves, using appropriate instruments and diverse forms of data collection.
- And data should also be collected to reflect more marginalised children (for example, disabled children, children of prisoners, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, looked after children, refugees and unaccompanied migrants).

Annex B Definitions of ‘children’ versus ‘children and young people’ and ‘young people’

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a “child” as a person below the age of 18, unless the relevant laws recognize an earlier age of majority, where the UN Secretariat uses the terms youth and young people interchangeable to mean age 15-24 with the understanding that member states and other entities use different definitions.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR 2022) also consider children and young people as those aged 18 and under.

ONS work such as the Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in England: February to May 2022 aged 11-16.

Annex C Equalities Data Audit filtered by 'data on children' October 2023

Annexe C Equalities Data Audit 2023.xlsx – spreadsheet downloaded from https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/inequalitiesdataaudit filtered by 'children's data dataset' (column AR).

Annex D Coverage of administrative data sources in the FPMS

Key:

Blue circles indicate datasets which ONS has access to

Red circles indicate datasets which ONS is interested in or working to acquire

1. Datasets for England (from Department for Education)

ONS has access to:

I. English School Census – *only captures state funded school pupils.*

II. National Pupil Database (NPD): Alternative Provision Census – *pupils not in mainstream schools, but who are receiving state funding (including home-schooled and some private schools, children in hospital, non-maintained special schools, further education colleges).*

III. NPD: Key stages 2, 4 and 5 - *may capture those taking the examinations, but who are not state funded so who may be missing from other sources.*

IV. NPD: Early Years Census – *covers children under private providers if one or more children receive state funding (2-4 year olds).*

V. National Client Case Load – *private schools, with some home-schooled, but only 16-18 years.*

VI. Young Person's Matched Administrative Dataset (YPMAD)

VII. Individualised Learner Record (further education)

VIII. School Level Annual School census aggregates - *private schools*.

ONS is interested in or working to acquire:

I. NPD: Exclusions/absences data

II. Looked after children

These sources provide excellent coverage of children, although some gaps do exist, including:

- Those outside state education (e.g. home-schooled and privately educated) who are not interacting with the health and benefits system.
- Those aged 1 to 5 who are not yet in the school system; although Child Benefit data has some coverage, more affluent households are not eligible and therefore children are not appearing on His Majesty's revenue and Customs (HMRC)/Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data anymore.

2. Datasets for Wales (Welsh Government)

ONS has access to:

I. Welsh School Census – *only captures state funded school pupils.*

II. Lifelong Learning Wales Record (further education)

III. Welsh Independent Schools aggregates – *private schools.*

ONS is interested in or working to acquire:

I. Welsh Examinations and Assessments – *may capture those taking the examinations, but who are not state funded, so may be missing from other sources.*

II. Welsh Educated other than at School – t*hose who are home-schooled outside state funding. Only provides aggregates, with some coverage issues. Ons is working to acquire by Spring 2024.*

3. Other data sources with coverage of children

ONS has access to:

I. NHS Personal Demographics Service

II. Hospital Episodes Statistics

III. Emergency Care Dataset

IV. Emergency Department Dataset (Wales)

V. Patient Episode Database for Wales (PEDW)

VI. Home Office data

VII. HMRC Child Benefit data

VIII. Birth registrations and NHS Birth Notifications

ONS is interested in or working to acquire:

I. General Practice Data for Pandemic Planning and Research

II. DWP Benefits data

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

National Statistician's Inclusive Data Advisory Committee

NSIDAC(24)04

Inclusivity and Accessibility in Survey Development - Guidance

Purpose

1. This paper provides an overview of draft guidance produced by the Data Quality Hub and ONS Survey Strategy Team, on Inclusivity and Accessibility in Survey Development.

Timing

2. This guidance is due to be published by the end of April 2024. Therefore, comments and feedback are requested during this meeting, or by correspondence by 10th April, so that any changes can be made before publication.

Recommendations

3. Members of NSIDAC are invited to:

   i. Discuss and agree the definitions proposed within the guidance (specifically on inclusivity);
   ii. Provide comments on the content and structure of the guidance

Background

4. In October 2021, the Data Quality Hub conducted a cross-government consultation exercise to determine what training and guidance resources were most sought after by those working in the data collection space. Of 187 responses to the consultation, guidance or training on Inclusivity and Accessibility was requested by 100 respondents.

5. Following this consultation and to meet this specific identified need, a working group made up of survey development experts from across ONS was formed, to determine what should be included in this guidance, and how it should be structured. The resulting guidance on "Inclusivity and Accessibility in Survey Development" has been a collaborative effort where members of the working group were invited to provide content for the guidance, based upon their areas of expertise.

Discussion

6. The guidance has now reached the final stages of development and is close to publication. The guidance in full can be seen in Annex A. It outlines the inclusivity and accessibility considerations that need to be made during survey development. It aims to increase the understanding of inclusivity and accessibility for those involved in survey design as well as highlighting the risks of not incorporating these considerations from the outset.

7. The scope of the guidance is the design of survey products, such as respondent materials and questionnaires. It does not cover sampling and analysis techniques. This decision was driven by user needs identified in the aforementioned consultation.

8. The intended audience for this guidance is anyone involved in designing social or business surveys, and survey materials. The guidance will be published on the Analysis Function Guidance Hub website[1], to allow for wider reach across government.

9. Though we acknowledge that guidance on inclusivity and accessibility requirements exists across government, respondents to the cross-government consultation exercise expressed a need for consistency across these pieces. This guidance addresses this need, by providing a high-level overview of the inclusivity and accessibility

considerations that need to be thought about when creating surveys and survey materials, whilst signposting readers to the other relevant existing resources for further information and advice.

10. We therefore invite NSIDAC members to review and comment on the guidance, focussing on the proposed definitions and providing comment on the content and structure. Following this feedback, the guidance will undergo final internal ONS review prior to publication.

Conclusion

11. This paper sets out Inclusivity and accessibility guidance, produced by the Data Quality Hub (Annex A). NSIDAC members are invited to advise on the definitions used within the guidance, and the content and structure, before it is sent for final review and publication on the Analysis Function website.

Alice Toms, Data Quality Hub, Quality and Improvement Division, ONS, 29 February 2024.

List of Annexes
Annex A Inclusivity and Accessibility in Survey Development Guidance

Inclusivity and Accessibility in Survey Development

Contents:

1. Introduction

This guidance outlines the inclusivity and accessibility considerations that need to be made during survey development. It aims to increase the understanding of inclusivity and accessibility in survey design, and the risks of not incorporating them. Inclusivity and accessibility are very much intertwined, so both should be considered from the very start of your survey design.

The guidance will focus on the design of survey products, such as respondent materials and questionnaires. It does not include information on sampling and analysis techniques.

The guidance has been created by The Data Quality Hub and Survey Strategy Hub, ONS, for anyone involved in designing social or business surveys and survey materials.

If you have any questions or comments about the guidance, please contact dqhub@ons.gov.uk.

1.1 What do we mean by Inclusivity and Accessibility?

Inclusive data, defined by The Inclusive Data Charter, means ensuring that data are collected for all people, regardless of their location, ethnicity, gender or age. It's about closing the data gaps that inadvertently facilitate discrimination and bias in monitoring, evaluation and decision-making for all of society.

Inclusive by design is a methodology that enables the full range of human diversity and includes considering and learning from people of all perspectives. This means better design for everyone. Applying inclusive design to our surveys and the products we produce ensures that our statistics reflect the experiences of everyone (in the survey population), and that everyone counts and is counted, and no one is left behind. Inclusivity must be considered from the very beginning and continue to be thought about throughout development.

This guidance will outline the considerations that need to be made to ensure you are developing survey products that are inclusive and accessible.

Accessibility is about making sure that any barriers that prevent those with a disability from using your product or service, are removed. It's about how easy something (for example, a questionnaire) is to access, use, see, enter etc – so you should design and develop products to optimise access. As stated on GOV.UK, 'Accessibility means that people with a disability can do what they need to do in a similar amount of time and effort as someone that does not have a disability. It means that people are empowered, can be independent, and will not be frustrated by something that is poorly designed or implemented.

1.2 Why are inclusivity and accessibility important for surveys and survey materials?

It's important that surveys and associated materials are fully inclusive, and accessible - to ensure representation in samples, increased response rates, reduced bias, and ultimately, better data quality.

By designing survey products that are easy to understand and follow, it enables everyone to take part and be counted by breaking down barriers to participation.

If your survey products are not inclusive, and accessible, you risk:

- Certain groups or individuals not taking part, and therefore not having their voices heard.
  - This then has a knock-on effect on the representativeness and quality of your data, as well as a negative impact on response rates.

    - If the data is not representative of your target population, then decisions made as a result of the findings from that data may be flawed or incorrect.
    - The quality of your survey will suffer in the long term as the effect of missing population groups becomes more entrenched in the design.
- The trust in your survey and your organisation being negatively affected.
        - If trust erodes, then this could affect response rates for your survey and for other surveys your organisation runs.
        - If your survey excludes population groups, then this could result in negative media or social media coverage.
        - Attrition rates for longitudinal surveys could increase as a result of trust decreasing.
- A negative impact on your reputation which could lead to difficulties when interacting with members of the public or businesses, and possibly problems when bidding for new surveys.

2. Inclusivity

In 2020, the National Statistician convened an independent taskforce to recommend how best to make a step-change in the inclusivity of UK data and evidence. The taskforce aimed to:

- improve inclusiveness in ONS' approach to the collection, analysis and reporting of data and evidence
- Understand how we can make most effective use of existing data, such as administrative, census and survey data to understand equalities and inclusion
- Determine what are the critical data gaps that hinder our understanding of equalities and inclusion and how can we address them
- Work to build on our own and others' experiences in improving our approach to equalities and inclusion going forward.

The taskforce set an ambitious programme of engagement activities to listen and learn. This included conversations with those who may be asked to participate in research and share their data with researchers and with those who collect or use data and evidence. Participants were drawn from a range of backgrounds and were selected because they were identified as being under-represented in data.

Groups or characteristics missing from the data

Across the consultation activities, a number of groups were repeatedly identified for whom even basic demographic information is missing. These included:

- **non-household populations** (for example, members of residential establishments such as care homes or prisons, and homeless people, particularly those who do not access any services for rough sleepers)
- **transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people**
- **groups that are "less often included"** (such as, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, ex-prisoners, asylum seekers, victims of domestic violence and undocumented migrants or victims of human trafficking)
- **children** (where we do have data for them, this is often collected from people other than children, for example parents or teachers, and therefore children's own voices may not be heard)

Some of these groups include the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the UK, rendering the absence of data reflecting their lives and experiences as especially critical.

It is important that you take an inclusive by design approach when developing your survey, to ensure that these groups, and others, can complete your survey. You should carefully identify your target population at the beginning of development, ensuring that you consider any hard-to-reach groups, or groups that are often missing from the data, and the potential benefits of including these groups in your survey.

The following sections highlight a number of considerations that you should think about when developing a survey and survey materials, to ensure that they are inclusive by design.

2.1 Official guidance to be aware of

1. GOV.UK Service Standard

Point 5 of the government Service Standard is to 'Make sure everyone can use the service' - including disabled people and people with other legally protected characteristics.

Government services must work for everyone who needs to use them, so there's a legal duty to consider everyone's needs when designing and delivering services.

By being fully inclusive by design, we make things better for everyone.

2. Government Design Principles

The government Design Principles help to establish and maintain good design practice. Principle 6, 'This is for everyone', is about developing inclusive and accessible products and services.

You should adhere to these principles to ensure you design survey products that follow good design and meet the needs of the users.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have also developed Survey Strategy Research and Development Principles (SSRDP), which are value statements that set the standards and ways of working for everyone to follow. The 'Everyone counts' principle focuses on inclusivity and accessibility.

2.2 Understanding needs and requirements

Understanding User Needs

To develop inclusive survey products, you first need to understand your users and their needs. There are two different types of user needs you must gather:

- Data user needs – the needs of the people using your data, for example, the customer of your end-products, or analysts.
- User needs - the needs of the people taking part in your survey, called "respondents"

Data user needs can be gathered through conversations with the customer (and analysts), to identify the purpose of the product or service (in this case, the target population of the survey). User needs can be understood through user research and engagement. The insights you gather from this will inform the design of your survey and associated products, in conjunction with your data user needs – although user needs should drive the overall design. This helps to ensure any design decisions you make are based on evidence, rather than assumptions.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an important step of survey design and can help ensure that your survey is more inclusive, as it will:

- help you to accumulate knowledge and expertise
- build shared understanding of different needs and requirements from a wide range of groups and individuals with different experiences and perspectives

Stakeholders can help you to better understand the purpose of your survey, set priorities, encourage participation from target respondent groups, and communicate findings. You should educate stakeholders on how different people use technology. Involve them in your research, share examples, and highlight user quotes.

Stakeholders might include:

- Policymakers
- Expert groups and charities

- Gatekeepers
- Data users
- Funders
- Survey developers
- Community members

Stakeholder engagement should be an iterative process, which is ongoing throughout the development of your survey. Engagement should start early, to ensure that you achieve maximum benefit.

How you engage with your stakeholders will depend on your goals, and the input expected from each group or individual. Engagement methods may range from workshops, focus groups or advisory boards, to briefings and newsletters, and this will depend on what you want to achieve from each relationship.

Experts by Experience

You may also benefit from involving Experts by Experience (EbE) in your survey development. Experts by experience are research advisors that share characteristics with research participants, for example homeless, a certain health condition etc. They help shape the research and the research process, providing input and on aspects of the research such as methods, materials, findings and outputs to maximise relevance, optimal approaches to recruitment and data collection, building trustworthiness, and ensuring the interview a meaningful experience for participants.

An example of working with EbE can be found in the qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of Gypsies and Travellers in England and Wales.

You should engage with EbE in the early stages and continue to work together throughout the survey development.

Involving EbE in your design can have many benefits, including:

- Ensuring your survey products are user-centred (that is, that they are fit for purpose and meeting users’ needs).
- Having a means of quality assurance, as EbE can be used to “sense check” findings to ensure researchers’ interpretations are seen to accurately represent experiences of the population of interest.
- Creating solutions to challenges that may be more difficult to overcome without involving EbE.
- Empowering EbE, allowing them to feel more supported, respected and listened to by acknowledging their lived experience as valuable professional expertise.

2.3 Respondent-Centred Design and Agile

Respondent-centred design (RCD) is defined as learning about the needs of those who will use your service and designing it to meet them.

In the context of survey design, RCD is an approach that brings together best practice from the Government Social Research Profession and user experience design. An important part of RCD is inclusive design. By being inclusive, you then reduce burden for all users – not just those with disabilities. RCD also involves understanding respondent experiences and needs, so that you can identify any friction points or barriers, and design to overcome these. You can use the Respondent-Centred Design framework (RCDF) to learn more about how to implement RCD in your survey design.

The three levels of Respondent-Centred Design

Sometimes, the ‘gold’ standard way of working may not be possible due to resources, budgets, or timelines, for example. For this reason, the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Harmonisation and Data Quality Hub teams have developed guidance on the three levels of respondent centred design. This guidance will help you make decisions about the amount of research and design needed for survey questions and materials. It will also tell you about the associated risks to the quality of your work if you were to reduce or stop certain activities.

Read more about the three levels of respondent centred design.

RCD also aligns with Agile Delivery principles, which includes focusing on user needs and delivering iteratively. Iteration is key when implementing RCD and links to point 5 in the Government Design Principles (‘Iterate. Then iterate again’) and the ‘Everyone counts’ principle of the ONS Survey Strategy Research and Development Principles.

Agile methodology is a way of managing work. It is a methodology used for project management and for producing a product or service. There are five main Agile phases, which you can read more about in the GOV.UK Service Manual. The main phase we want to highlight, is the first phase – Discovery. Be sure to invest in this phase to ensure you gather robust insights to inform the design of your survey products in subsequent phases.

Why are Respondent Centred Design and Agile important?

By conducting research to understand the needs of respondents, you can ensure the questionnaire and any associated survey materials meet the following goals:

- reduce respondent burden
- are highly accessible and usable
- use language that respondents understand as intended

- results in a positive experience for your respondent
- gathers data of high quality

2.4 Design Standards for inclusivity

1. **Language and Tone**

Principle 5 of the RCDF states that you should use language, readability and tone that is suitable for your reader. This is key to reduce respondent burden and increase the accessibility of your content.

By using complicated, unfamiliar language you risk burdening your respondent, which in turn could lead to lack of engagement with your product. Choosing the right tone for your survey products is important - this is established via research. For example, using very formal, authoritative tone can be off-putting, whereas an overly friendly tone may raise concerns about legitimacy. It's important to learn about users' expectation of tone from your organisation before creating products. Inappropriate language and tone can have adverse effects such as reduced response rates, lack of inclusivity and lack of compliance with GDS standards.

Reading Age

The average reading age of people in the UK is nine years old. Therefore, all content should be tested for reading age level – this includes both questionnaire and survey content. There are various free online tools available for this, such as the Hemingway App and 'The Writer' readability checkers.

There may be instances where achieving this will not be possible, for example, when discussing specialist topics or when the message could become compromised. In these cases, try to make your content as simple as possible.

In general, your content should use:

- plain English
- simple vocabulary - avoiding vague and complex terminology
- short sentences - 25 words maximum
- avoid colloquialisms (words or phrases used in a specific geographical regions) - for example, “apartment” (in America) vs “flat” (in UK)
- avoid abbreviations

English as a second language

Your survey should be representative of the group which you are studying, and often this will include groups with limited understanding of English. By using overcomplicated language, you risk alienating respondents and potentially excluding a key demographic of the population. This could result in poor quality data that is not representative of the population.

As well as following the guidelines to meet the reading age of the UK, you should also consider:

- using words that translate directly – consider the different meanings of the words being used in other languages and ensure the wording is read as intended
- avoiding contractions (a word that combines two or more other words in a shortened form) - for example, you should say “is not”, rather than “isn’t”.

To ensure you are including people who speak other languages, consider providing translation services. User testing is also particularly important to do when designing products and services for non-native speakers. Usability testing will help you to find out which content users have trouble understanding. This should not only include your survey questions, but also any other participant materials such as consent forms. This is particularly important, as if participants have difficulty responding to questions, they are more likely to select inaccurate responses, choose the “don’t know option”, or time out of the survey completely.

Where there is a legal obligation to provide the same service for those who speak another language – for example, in Welsh – any products created must also be available in that language as standard.

Many households may have a very competent English speaker who can assist the person in completing the survey. Whilst this may be the easiest way of gathering data, it is not ideal, as there is little control over how the questions are translated, and how responses are interpreted. This may be particularly problematic if the survey is sensitive in nature, as participants may not wish to respond via a friend or family member.

Why is this important?

Government products and services must work for everyone (as mentioned in the Service Standard). Inclusive, accessible services are better for everyone, whilst also improving the quality of the data collected. By using appropriate tone and language, we minimise the risk of excluding individuals or groups, and maximise understanding and participation.

2. Adaptive Survey Design (ASD)

An Adaptive Survey Design (ASD) allows previously known under-represented population groups to be targeted by treating the ‘sampled units’ differently by applying protocols to specific subsets of the sampled population as a means of increasing response or another targeted outcome (Peytchev, Pratt & Duprey, 2020).

Adaptive survey design (ASD), in contrast to nonadaptive or uniform survey design, allows for adaptation of survey design features before or during data collection to strata that are identified based on information that is auxiliary to the survey. It can be used as a means of increasing response, reducing bias or another targeted outcome.

Implementing ASD will allow for more efficient use of data collection resources, whilst increasing response rates from under-represented population groups.

Why is this important?

The benefits of Adaptive Design include:

- Improve representativity of historically under-represented groups.
- Reduce bias in the data.
- Improve efficiency in data collection methods.

The risks of not implementing adaptive design include:

- Increased chance of bias within the data.
- Waste of data collection resources and increased associated costs.
- Historically under-represented groups may remain under-represented in the data.

Find out more about Adaptive Survey Design.

An Adaptive Survey Design example:

The 2021 Census for England and Wales, unlike previous censuses, used online data collection as the primary response mode. Non-response was expected from certain population groups, for example people who are digitally excluded. ONS developed a ‘Hard-to-Count (htC) index, using data from previous censuses and administrative sources, to identify sub-populations or geographical areas at risk of census non-response. One aim of developing the index was to maximise response and minimise variability of response across areas in the 2021 Census. One of its uses was to support planning where paper questionnaires were to be sent as a first option as opposed to an online questionnaire. Only those addresses in areas identified as hard-to-count would be sent a paper questionnaire. This helped to maximise response from digitally excluded population groups.

3. Methods and Modes

Methods and modes of data collection are an important part of the questionnaire process. The two main methods in which surveys can be administered are interviewer and self-administered. Each method has modes, or specific techniques, used to collect the data.

Interviewer-administered methods include:

- Face-to-face

- Telephone
- Video

Self-administered methods include:

- Paper
- Web
- Email

You will need to provide a mixture of modes to ensure you are being inclusive. For example, if you're developing an online survey, consider also having paper versions available for those unable to complete the survey online.

When designing for multiple modes, we always design the online mode first and then move on to develop the other modes. We do this because if a design can be easily used and understood in a self-complete mode, then it stands a high chance of being easily used and understood in an interviewer-led mode. Additionally, this aligns with the government's' digital and data strategy.

It is also important to consider the device a respondent is using; a webpage or questionnaire will look different depending on the device. Therefore, it is important to use adaptive design when building webpages and questionnaires. Adaptive design involves designing for 'smartphone first' as this will have the least amount of space and ensures that your product is accessible on all device types.

You should then take an 'optimode' approach to design, where you optimise and adapt to the mode being used. This means the respondent materials and questionnaire should be tailored for the mode that the survey is being administered in. This can be achieved through "cogability" testing, which is a combination of usability testing and cognitive interviewing. This will improve respondent experience and data quality. We will talk more about cognitive interviewing next.

Why is this important?

By designing in this way, it can help respondents give us the data we need by reducing respondent burden. It also creates products that are more user friendly to our internal users, including interviewers and call centre staff.

By tailoring each product to the medium it uses and the specific needs of the users in that mode, it helps you get the data you need whilst improving data quality.

4. Cognitive interviewing

Inclusive design involves testing your product. This will also then make your product respondent centred. Testing designs through cognitive interviewing enables researchers to quickly learn what is and isn't working so that it can be altered and tested again. It can increase the understanding of question validity (the extent to which your questionnaire measures what it is supposed to measure) and response error (the return of false or subjectively modified information from survey respondents). It does this by tapping into participants' mental models, learning about their thought process, how they arrive at their answer, and so on.

For self-completion modes, you would conduct 'cogability testing', which is the combination of cognitive interviewing and usability testing in one session. It can be beneficial to research these two aspects together because of the interactions between question wording, instrument design, and the response process.

Why is this important?

By testing questionnaires and other survey materials with respondents, it ensures you are designing and building the right thing. By building the right thing (such as, the right survey), this leads to:

- reduction in respondent burden
- increased data quality
- reduction in costs

5. Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion covers being able to use digital services (such as computers), having access to the internet, and having services that are accessible and meet the needs of users. There are many barriers people may face when accessing digital services. These include:

- Access – not everyone is able to connect to the internet
- Skills – not everyone has the skills to go online and use online services
- Confidence – some people are fearful of online services, or lack trust

It's important to design survey products that address and overcome these barriers. Otherwise, there's a risk of excluding certain individuals or groups in your survey.

Here are some examples of how you can make your survey digitally inclusive:

- make the survey accessible to users with disabilities - you can find out more about accessibility further on in this guidance
- make the survey accessible for people who lack digital skills or internet access - for example, by providing digital support or ensuring it works with read-aloud assistive technologies
- use an adaptive design – think 'smartphone first', but ensure the display can adapt to different screen sizes

Why is this important?

It is important to be digitally inclusive to ensure you are recruiting a representative sample in your survey. If a survey is not digitally inclusive, it has a risk of collecting poor quality data which does not represent the entire target population.

6. Considerations for interviewers

These are the considerations that the survey designers need to be thinking about to make sure that the survey conducting experience is inclusive and accessible for interviewers.

The considerations that need to be made will depend on the particular survey and the interviewers conducting the survey, so research will need to be carried out to identify what the inclusivity considerations are. You will need to explore interviewers needs and then decide how to best meet them

Here are some ways in which you can identify interviewer needs:
Conduct focus groups with interviewers: identify any issues or concerns they may have with the day-to-day conducting of the survey. Based on your findings, make recommendations to overcome these challenges.
Keep open communication with interviewers: organise a regular working group with your survey designers and interviewers, where progress, ideas and challenges can be discussed.
Create a document summarising your recommendations and protocols for interviewers to refer to. For example, providing interviewers with clear protocols for how to handle situations that are common blockers, such as:
If the respondent doesn’t know the answer – then ask for their best guess
If the respondent asks for clarification on what a question means – then let the respondent know that it is their own interpretation of the question that is recorded
If there is a yes/ no question that the respondent isn’t sure on – then suggest they select no

Why is this important?

Interviewers can be considered users of a survey just as much as the respondents taking part in the survey are. As such, the needs of the interviewers conducting the survey are an essential part of inclusive survey design.

Failure to consider the needs of interviewers can result in:
decreased interviewer job satisfaction potentially leading to higher staff turnover
decrease in the quality of data collected
increase attrition (that is, dropout) of respondents

7. Guidance for questions

Guidance for questions is additional information that is provided with a survey question to help the respondent answer that question.

As per the Respondent-Centred Design Framework (see point 6 - Design without relying on help), survey questions should be as self-explanatory as possible. If a question needs guidance to make sense, this puts more burden on the respondent. Quite often, respondents do not read, understand, or adhere to guidance that is made available to them. Where there is a problem, in the first instance you should always consider whether the question can be simplified. For example, this may mean splitting out one question into two or three simpler concepts.

Where, as a last resort, guidance is included, it is important to think about where it is placed. For example, in the online modes, information about how to answer could be placed alongside the response option wording. Alternatively, information about why it is important to provide an answer could be placed under the question stem. Care should be taken to understand where a respondent needs and expects the guidance to be placed, and the need and placement should be informed by research.

To identify whether a survey question needs guidance, and what that guidance should be, you should:

- Hold cognitive or cogability interviews with a group of people who are representative of your survey's target audience.
- Hold focus groups with a sample of interviewers who will be conducting the survey.

Why is this important?

Guidance can be used to assist the respondent to interpret the question correctly and therefore respond with the desired data. Guidance can therefore be used to improve data quality. However, we should always try to design better questions first, only using guidance where all other options are exhausted.

While guidance should be avoided and only used when necessary to avoid modal bias, if respondents are not understanding the question and are providing undesired data,

8. **Harmonised Standards**

Harmonisation is improving comparability, consistency and coherence in data and statistics. Harmonised standards include definitions, survey questions, suggested presentations and information for data users. Producers of statistics can use these harmonised standards to align with others, which will increase the usefulness of their statistics. Being harmonised is about aligning with others, not necessarily being identical to them. As such, some of the harmonised standards can be tailored for specific situations.

In some circumstances, it is not appropriate to suggest harmonised questions and definitions. In these cases, harmonisation guidance explains the topic landscape to help users understand where they can and cannot compare data.

Further information on the importance of harmonisation can be found on the dedicated harmonisation webpage.

Why is this important?

Harmonised standards provide a convenient solution to help with data collection. They help users to directly compare data collected and produced by different parts of government. This can save time and money, whilst avoiding duplication.

9. Diverse images or case studies

If you're using images or case studies in your respondent materials, it's important that these are diverse – that is, that they include the representation in society. Otherwise, you run the risk of people with certain characteristics not feeling important or included in your survey. There more you represent diversity, the more engaged your respondents will be, making your survey more inclusive.

Why is this important?

Without diversity in your images or case studies, you risk alienating people from your survey. If people don't feel important, or included, they are less likely to take part. You then miss hearing from these individuals in your survey responses.

3. Accessibility

In the UK, 1 in 5 people have a disability, so it's important to think about accessibility from the start.

It's important to ensure survey products are accessible and easy to use for all respondents. If they're not, you risk excluding certain groups or individuals from taking part in your survey. This then means your survey is not fully inclusive by design.

Accessibility is not the job for one person – it is everyone on your team's responsibility to ensure that your product is accessible.

Take a look at the GOV.UK Service Manual for more information.

3.1 Laws and Official Guidance

Accessibility is a part of several laws and standards we must follow. Each of the standards feed into the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Other accessibility laws to be aware of when designing and developing your survey products include:

- If you are building something that runs in a browser, you will need to meet the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018.
- If you are procuring hardware or software you will need to meet the EN 301 549 Accessibility Requirements for ICT products and services.
- If you are working to the GOV.UK Service Standard you will also need to meet the Government Accessibility Requirements.
- The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are a list of criteria your website or mobile application need to meet in order to be legally compliant.
- Use the GOV.UK Design System Patterns to adopt best practice design solutions for specific user-focused tasks and page types.
- Use the GOV.UK Service Manual to help you meet the Service Standard.

3.2 Design Standards for Accessibility

It's important to understand what user groups to consider, and the barriers they face, to ensure you develop survey products which overcome these barriers. GOV.UK have do’s and don’ts on designing for accessibility, which are general guidelines and best design practices for making services accessible in government. Be sure to follow these when designing and developing your survey products. In addition to the general guidelines, some survey-specific considerations include:

- Designing for screen readers – use the phrase ‘select the button’, rather than ‘click the button’, for example.
- Designing for colour-blind respondents – consider the colours used in both your questionnaire and survey materials and make sure they’re suitable for colour-blind respondents.
- Designing for those with anxiety – ensure the steps the respondent needs to take are easy to understand and follow.

Other considerations relating to the layout and formatting of your survey products include:

- Use the pyramid structure - put the most important content first, followed by important details, and then add any other general and background information.
- Use descriptive headings to help users scan your content.
- Consider your sentence structure, for example in materials such as invitation letters – is there a logical flow to the content?
- In the questionnaire, have one question per page to avoid the need to scroll.
- Design the ‘white space’ - balance the design elements (including blank space) of your survey products to improve the visual experience.

There are different ways in which you can ensure your survey products are compliant with accessibility standards. These include:

- Working with the Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC) to ensure your products meet best practice in accessibility standards and legislation.
- Utilising accessibility applications, which are programs designed to perform specific functions to support the end user complete your survey. For example, an accessibility application may give users the option to use a text to speech function, which would allow users with vision impairment to hear the survey questions read out loud.
- Working with your department’s communications team to create and publish products that meet requirements.

Remember, accessibility and inclusivity should be considered from the very beginning of your survey development and be regularly reviewed throughout the project lifecycle.