

IFD Data Sharing Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

Aim

The IFD Data Sharing Ethics Committee will provide ethical advice to the Department for Work and Pensions on issues relating to any use of data held on IFD's systems where the projects include use of non DWP data to ensure that the rights, dignity and welfare of the individual are protected and balanced against the common good.

Terms of Reference

To provide ethical advice on the uses of non-DWP data held on IFD's systems taking account of relevant professional standards, legal, methodological and other relevant advice given.

To review the decision-making of the Head of Database and Matching Service on access given to the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study and other Non-DWP data to ensure that full ethical consideration has been made throughout the decision-making process.

To provide ethical advice on the development of non-DWP data held on IFD's system taking account of relevant professional standards, legal, methodological and other relevant advice given.

To ensure that a record is kept of the decisions taken by the Committee.

Advice provided by the Committee is made available to the Secretary of State through the Chair and Secretariat.

Membership

The Committee comprises 6 Government members and 6 publicly appointed members.

The current membership is:

Publicly appointed members

Simon Sapper

Gabrielle Cox

David Leibling

Stuart Burgess

Christopher Hughes

David Fraser

Government members

Anna Richardson, HM Treasury

Paul Jackson, Office for National Statistics

Tony Martin, Social Research Division, DWP

Sean Whellams, Inland Revenue

Mike Daly, Disability and Work Division, Welfare, Work and Equality Group, DWP

Liz Kettle, Deputy Head of Marketing, Department for Work and Pensions

Chair and Secretariat

David Frazer, Head of DWP's Information Directorate chairs the committee with secretariat provided by Douglas Edwards and Caroline Caterer from DWP's Database and Matching Service.

DWP Solicitors Office provides legal advice, representatives of which will attend each Ethics Committee meeting.

Ways of working

When deciding the ethical framework, the Committee agree that the following themes should act as a starting point for any ethical debate:

- Consideration of the public interest of proposals
- Ensuring that the ethics as well as the legality of confidentiality are considered
- Considering the likelihood of any proposals to cause distress or harm to an individual against the common good of the citizens.

The Committee is committed to equality of opportunity and inclusion and all proposals will be asked to show that they promote equality and inclusion.

Where any member has concerns about how the Committee is working, they should raise these with the Chair in the first instance.

Behaviour of Members

Members of the Committee have a duty to provide advice to the best of their ability to the Secretary of State. In order to retain the confidence of the public and the Secretary of State:

- Unless they have the prior approval, Individual Members will not speak for the Committee at public conferences or seminars, or in articles or broadcasts. While they may identify their role on the Committee, they equally should take care to identify that they do not speak for the Committee unless approved. Approval should be sought from the Committee in session where this is possible or from the Chair or Secretariat where this is not possible.

- Members of the committee owe a duty of confidence. Information shared in confidence with the member either within or out of committee meetings should not be disclosed without approval.

Meetings and Decision-making

The Committee will meet quarterly.

It is the aim of the Committee to reach conclusions by Consensus wherever possible and to fully debate issues in order to achieve this. However, there may be occasions where a Consensus cannot be reached. In these circumstances, the Committee will revert to a modified majority voting system. The Committee is quorate when at least 7 members, or their named representatives, are present of which at least 4 are publicly appointed. A majority is achieved when at least 7 members of the Committee or their named representatives agree that a proposal is ethical of which at least 4 votes are from the publicly appointed members. (NB only named Government members can supply representatives not publicly appointed members).

The Chair and Secretariat are present to facilitate the workings of the Committee and as such have no voting rights.

Role of the Chair

The Chair is to provide a non-voting lead to the work of the Committee. The key roles of the Chair are:

- To facilitate the work of the Ethics Committee to ensure that debate at meetings is conducted openly, honestly and taking account of all views held around the table
- To summarise and record the decisions of the Ethics Committee and to ensure these are fully incorporated into the work of DWP in the development of DWP's work in this area.
- To ensure that any public announcements on developments of the WPLS or new uses of non-DWP databases contain the advice of the Ethics Committee and that the Secretary of State is aware of the advice of the Ethics Committee when taking decisions.
- Where DWP has chosen not to follow the advice of the Ethics Committee to ensure that the reasons why are communicated to the Committee and made publicly available.

Role of Secretariat

The Secretariat is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Ethics Committee are kept fully informed of all work relating to the use of non DWP data including the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study
- Providing high quality papers which allow the Committee to function properly

- Publishing all papers according to the processes of the Ethics Committee
- Providing all reports on access given and access denied and the reasons for this
- Responding to enquiries on behalf of the Ethics Committee
- Providing minutes of the meetings and ensure that all papers are prepared and circulated on time
- Facilitating the efficient running of the Committee
- Suggesting a forward work programme for the Ethics Committee
- Preparing and publishing the Committee's annual report

Transparency of the meetings of the Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee aims to be as transparent as possible in the conclusions it has reached. Where a proposal from DWP is already in the public domain then the conclusions of the Committee will be made available as soon as possible after the meeting.

However, there will be occasions when the Committee are considering proposals, which have yet to be publicly announced. In these circumstances, the ethical advice will be released at the time of announcement of the idea.

All members of the Ethics Committee have agreed that their details, alongside these Terms of Reference should be placed on the DWP WPLS website. Individual members of the Committee will not respond to enquiries relating to their work as members of the Ethics Committee. All enquiries about the work of the Committee should be handled through the Secretariat.

The Ethics Committee will produce an annual report of its work.