

# Joining up Data for Better Statistics

## Are we moving on from the ludicrous and Kafkaesque?

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Secure Data Access Professionals meeting 13 March 2019

# Who are we?

- We are the independent regulator of all official statistics produced in the UK
- We aim to enhance public confidence in the **trustworthiness, quality** and **value** of statistics produced by government
- The Code of Practice for Statistics sets the standards for producers of official statistics

## Code of Practice for Statistics

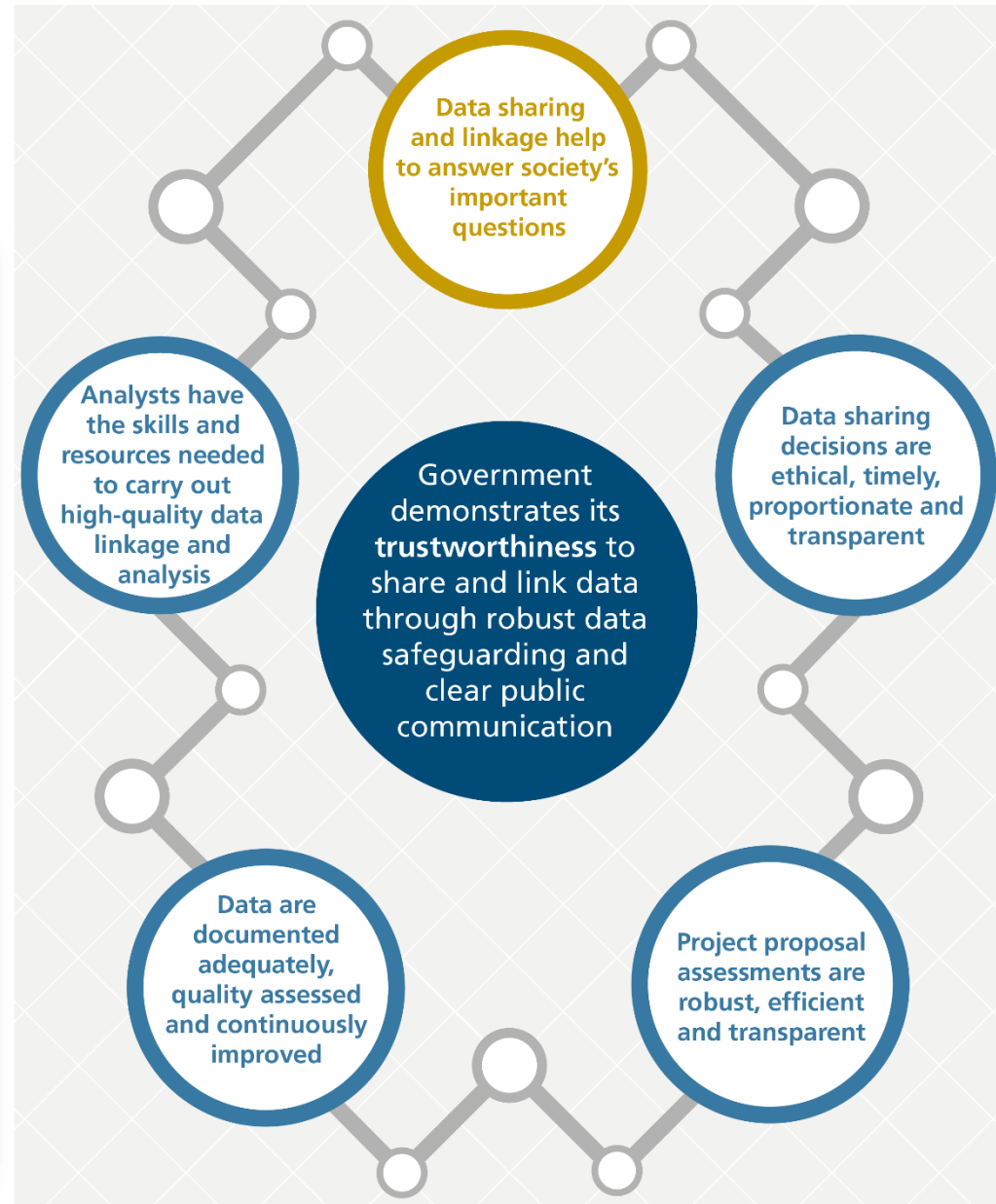
Ensuring official statistics  
serve the public

Edition 2.0  
February 2018

# Why are we interested in data linkage?

- Statistics add **value** when they answer society's questions. Many questions cannot be answered without sharing and linking data.
- Without a focus on the **quality** of the data, the results could be misleading.
- Custodians of public data must demonstrate their **trustworthiness** by safeguarding data robustly during and after the sharing and linkage process and by being open to public scrutiny.

# September 2018



“To speak to people involved in linking Government datasets is to enter a world that at times seems so **ludicrous** as to be **Kafkaesque.**”

Ed Humpherson, blog post: [Joining Up Data for Better Statistics](#), 11/9/18

# Demonstrating trustworthiness

Government demonstrates its **trustworthiness** to share and link data through robust data safeguarding and clear public communication

We want to see:

Consistent, coherent and accessible information explaining how data are safeguarded

More advocacy for the safe use of data

An overarching framework for safe data use applicable across government

# Answering important questions



**Data sharing  
and linkage help  
to answer society's  
important  
questions**

We want to see:

Better connections between...

...departments

...different analytical groups

...government and the outside world

Greater use of synthetic for exploratory analysis

# Data sharing decisions



Data sharing  
decisions are  
ethical, timely,  
proportionate and  
transparent

We want to see:

Common information governance processes  
across government

Risk assessment tools to help guide decisions

Greater transparency about decisions and data  
shares



# Assessing people and projects



**Project proposal  
assessments are  
robust, efficient  
and transparent**

We want to see:

Access processes designed around users' needs

More straightforward access to NHS data in  
England

Clearer signposting of available data sources

# Data documentation and quality



Data are  
documented  
adequately,  
quality assessed  
and continuously  
improved

We want to see:

More documentation and metadata to support  
admin data sources

A registry of admin data

Common approach to documenting the data  
linkage process

# Skills and resources



Analysts have  
the skills and  
resources needed  
to carry out  
high-quality data  
linkage and  
analysis

We want to see:

Resourcing challenges recognised and addressed

More comprehensive training and development –  
data access professionals' needs highlighted  
specifically

Ongoing innovation and greater coordination of safe  
settings

# January 2019

## The National Statistician's response

- Website:  
<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/methodology/data-linking/>
- Action plan
- Case studies
- Conference later in 2019

## Our next steps

- Ongoing engagement activities – including with data access providers
- NHS Digital data access review – publish update on scoping work and terms of reference (March 2019)
- Complete data access review (June 2019)
- Joining up Data one year on report (September 2019)
- Contribute to cross-government data linkage conference