ONS Special Licence Review

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9th December 2016
Overview

• Background

• Updated “Approved Researcher” scheme

• Decision on “Special Licences”

• What happens next?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spectrum of Data Access</th>
<th>None (Internal)</th>
<th>Controlled conditions</th>
<th>Safeguarded measures</th>
<th>Full (Public)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ONS</td>
<td>i.e. Virtual Microdata Laboratory</td>
<td>i.e. End User Licence</td>
<td>OGL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Detail</strong></td>
<td>Source data</td>
<td>Most data, detailed geographies</td>
<td>Variables collapsed, limited geographies</td>
<td>Variables and geography ensure no disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Statistical</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anonymisation</strong></td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restrictions on users</strong></td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output Checking</strong></td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Information**

lawful gateway required
(Approved Researcher)
Approved Researcher Scheme

- Personal information held by the Board can be disclosed to...an Approved Researcher

- To grant Approved Researcher status, Board must consider:
  - Whether Person is “Fit and Proper”
  - Purpose for which they request access to data

- Criteria used to judge this must be published
Approved Researcher Scheme

• Main legal gateway used to grant research access to unpublished data

• Review of scheme recently concluded
  • Supported by public consultation exercise
  • Updated scheme announced in July

• Significant increase in potential users and uses
Original Scheme – established in 2008

- Person and Project assessed together

- Current criteria judged “too narrow, too vague”
  - Must have “appropriate” knowledge/experience
  - Must be committed to protecting confidentiality
  - Must deliver public benefit in one of four ways

- National Statistician commissioned review to:
  - Maximise appropriate re-use of data
  - Clarify criteria to ensure consistent decisions
  - Ensure confidentiality never compromised
Updated Scheme – July 2016

• Reduced administration
  • Split approval of people and projects
    • Individual approval lasts five years

• Clear criteria for researcher
  • Relevant degree or 3 years quantitative experience
  • Training course and assessment
    • Harmonised with ADRN, UKDS and HMRC

• Access for junior researchers and others
  • “Provisional” status introduced
    • Must be working under supervision of full AR
    • Approval lasts one year
Updated Scheme – July 2016

- Explicit equality of access
  - Researchers from any employment sector

- International researchers allowed
  - Must work in, and deliver public benefits to, the UK

- Potential for “transferable accreditation”
  - Principle approved by Authority Board
  - Arrangements to be made when partners ready
    - Can be “one way” transferability if needed
Updated Scheme – July 2016

• Broadened definition of “Public Good”
  • To provide an evidence base for public policy decision making
  • To provide an evidence base for public service delivery;
  • To provide an evidence base for decisions which are likely to significantly benefit the UK economy, society or quality of life of people in the UK;
  • To replicate, validate or challenge Official Statistics;
  • To replicate, validate or challenge existing research;
  • To significantly extend understanding of social or economic trends or events by improving knowledge or challenging widely accepted analyses; or
  • To improve the quality, coverage or presentation of existing statistical information.
Updated Scheme – July 2016

• Improved transparency
  • Register of researchers and projects on website
  • All results must be published in reasonable time
    • Agreed as part of project proposal

• Clear security safeguards
  • All data de-identified
  • **Access through a safe-setting**
  • All outputs checked before released to researcher
  • Sanctions and legal penalties for misuse of data
    • Can be extended to researcher’s employer
    • Details shared with other organisations (e.g. ADRC-E)
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- These data are ALSO Personal Information
  - Only accessible by Approved Researchers

- Allowing downloads contrary to safeguards of updated scheme
  - Already inconsistent with “Spectrum” of access

- Decision to stop distribution of these data
  - Announced in October
  - Distribution stopped on 4th November
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• Current users can continue with projects
  • Project dates can be extended if required

• End User Licence versions still available
  • No legal gateway required for access

• All users of Special Licence data can use VML or Secure Lab in future
  • Most detailed data (significantly more than SL)
ONS Special Licence - Review

- All previous SL sources being reviewed
  - Can more detail go into EUL datasets?

- “Intruder Testing” to inform decisions
  - Best way to quantify risk of disclosure

- Likely that “some” more detail can go into EUL
  - Won’t be all previously in SL versions
  - Priority will be geography

- Feedback on priorities very welcome
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