



Analysing education and household income - how we share and use personal data

Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to describe how we share and use education, employment and benefit claim information for research and statistical purposes.

Expiry or review date

This guidance will be reviewed before August 2019.

How we share and use information about education, employment and benefit claims

We¹ have undertaken a feasibility study to find out if it were possible to link data relating to children currently in education with employment, income and benefit claims information on their parents/guardians. The purpose of this research was to understand how educational attainment varies with income and the challenges faced by those pupils in lower income families which are not currently identified as disadvantaged.

The feasibility study demonstrated that data could be matched in this way. The resulting analysis, reported on in the 'Analysing Family Circumstances and Education' technical consultation highlighted the value this cross Government work could add to research and policy making in the education sector.

The Department for Education are building upon this exercise to establish an ongoing data share process. This will improve upon the methodology used in the feasibility study to enable new analysis to gain insight and inform policymaking.

¹ Three government departments are working together to link this data. Personal data for pupils up to age 18 from the Department for Education (DfE) is shared with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This data is combined with benefit claim information collected by DWP and employment information collected by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, held by DWP. The matched dataset is anonymised before being provided back to DfE and pupils' personal data will be deleted from DWP systems when it is no longer needed for the matching process.

A link is made between pupils and their parent or guardian via child benefit or housing benefit claims.

The information we are linking includes (but is not limited to):

- personal characteristics of the pupils² including: age, gender, ethnicity, primary language, location (LSOA as most precise grouping), key stage, school level information, attainment and progress measures
- Tax credit information on pupils' parents/guardians
- Employee tax data on pupils' parents/guardians
- Housing benefit and other benefit data on pupils' parents/guardians

We are linking information relating to pupils who were in the state funded education system between early years and 16-18 study since the 2011/12 academic year.

The linking is carried out by DWP as they hold the necessary income and benefits data to match to pupil data received from DfE.

DfE will receive income and benefits information for the parents or guardians of pupils for which they hold data. However, no personal details for these adults will be provided to DfE and the matched datasets which DfE receive will contain only pseudo-identifiers for each pupil. This will allow the matched dataset to be linked to additional education data held by DfE, but will not be used to match personal data for any of the pupils contained in the dataset.

How we will use the information

There are specific legal powers which allow us to link information relating to education, employment, and benefit claims. These powers only allow this information to be used to make decisions about education and training policy from summary information, for example, the average attainment score of pupils from households with below median income. For more information [see section 78 of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015](#) and [sections 87 - 91 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#).

We only allow data to be published from the linked information in summary form, such as the proportion of pupils that fall into certain household income ranges. We take care to ensure that this summary information is anonymised so individuals cannot be identified from the published information.

Personal information is not used for marketing purposes or to make decisions that will affect individuals.

This dataset will currently not be shared with third party organisations outside of the three Government Departments who collectively created it. It is our intention to make the data available for research purposes in the future, with access in line with the highest modern standards of security and privacy protection. This guidance will be reviewed to reflect this at a later date.

² DfE will receive the tax and social security data matched to pseudo identifiers to link it back to education data. Such education data includes all data pertaining to learners that DfE hold, barring personal identifiers.

Reviewing the information

We will review the data annually and delete any information not needed.

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