

Building confidence in statistics:

Voluntarily committing to
Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

Edition 1.0
May 2018

A Commitment to *Trustworthiness, Quality and Value*

Society benefits from data and analysis produced by a range of different types of organisations, including the public sector, charities, academia, and commercial organisations.

Government departments (and other public bodies) publish a wide range of data and analysis to design and evaluate policy that are not part of their official statistics. And data are collected, reused, and analysed by many other groups and organisations outside government. This mix provides a rich range of data sources.

This guide is for any producer of data, statistics and analysis which are *not* official statistics, whether inside government or beyond, to help them produce analytical outputs that are high quality, useful for supporting decisions, and well respected.

Building public confidence in statistics

The pillars of *Trustworthiness, Quality and Value* (or TQV) describe the essence of what is required to ensure that the public can have confidence in data and statistics. They form the fundamental framework of the [Code of Practice](#), the statutory code for official statistics produced by government bodies in the UK.

Why adopt and apply *Trustworthiness, Quality and Value*?

Trustworthiness, Quality and Value are helpful to anyone producing data, statistics and analysis, whether they are inside or outside government. They are relevant to all kinds of data, such as those published in statistical research, economic analysis and management information.

A commitment to *Trustworthiness, Quality and Value* offers the opportunity for an organisation to:

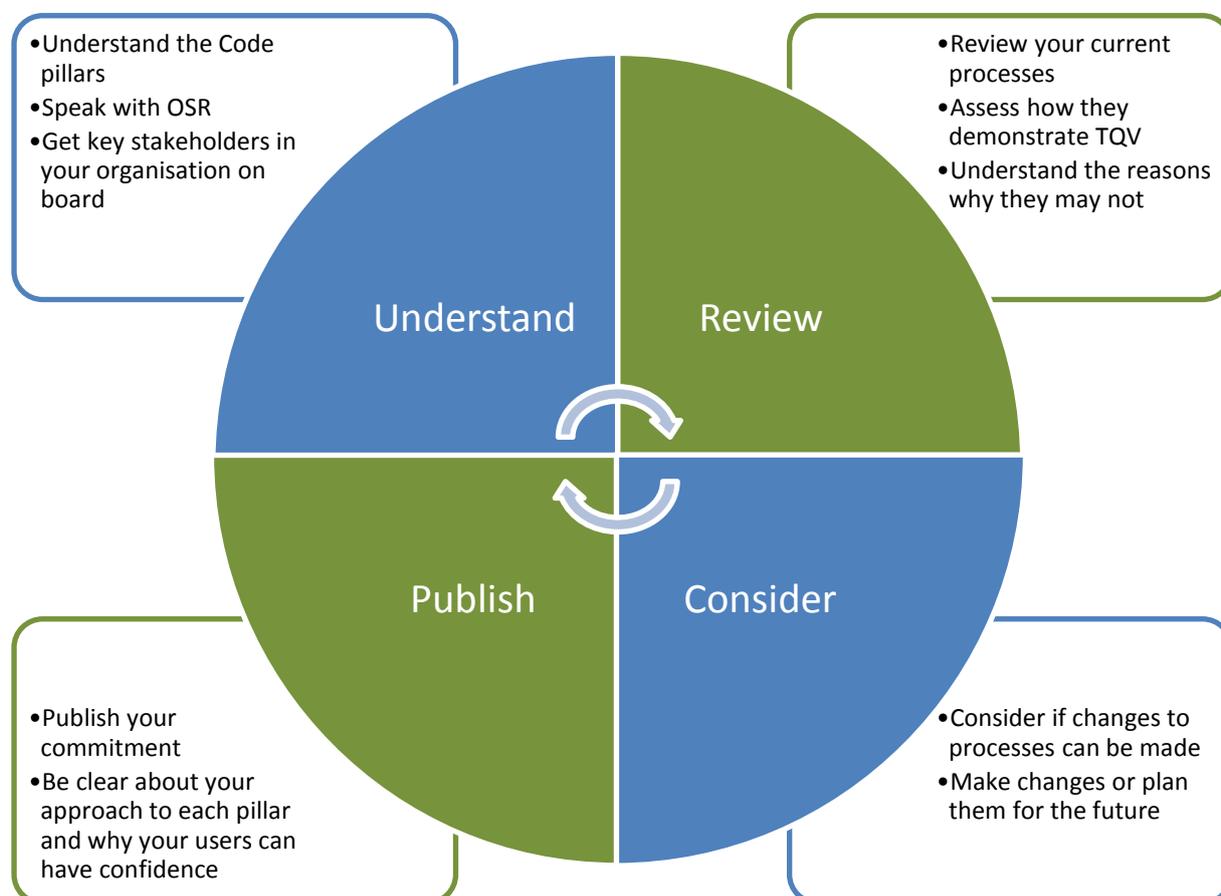
- Compare its processes, methods and outputs against the recognised standards that the Code requires of official statistics
- Demonstrate to the public its commitment to trustworthiness, quality and public value.

For example, a government department can use the pillars to help provide clear advice to ministers about evidence. A charity can use the pillars to provide reassurance to its donors about its fundraising and public services.

Making your commitment

The approach is flexible and entirely optional. Where an organisation chooses to adopt and apply the three pillars for all or some of its statistics or functions, we ask that it **publish a statement** about why it thinks users can be **reassured** that it achieves *Trustworthiness, Quality and Value* in its published statistics.

In leading up to that decision, it is helpful to **understand** the three pillars, **review** the approach to producing and publishing statistics in relation to the pillars, and **consider** if there are ways of improving practice.



The key is to think through each of the pillars:

- How are we trustworthy in the way that we are organised, and manage and use data?
- What is the quality of the data and how robust are our methods?
- How do we provide value in our information?

Use the underlying principles in the Code as a guide to support this thinking, but it is not necessary to consider the detailed practices in the Code, which apply to official statistics.

The **publish** phase means being transparent. Transparency requires organisations to make information available. It is helpful to your users to be clear if there are aspects of the pillars that are not applied, and to describe your approach to **Trustworthiness, Quality and Value**. The very process of opening up working practices to external scrutiny and responding to feedback is at the heart of building confidence.

This is an ongoing commitment – not a one-off exercise. Continue to move through the process, reflecting on any changes that may affect your approach to the production and publication of statistics.

How does OSR regulate the voluntary application of the Code pillars?

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is the Authority's regulatory arm. Our remit focuses on official statistics produced by government, but we also encourage all producers of data and analysis that are available to the public to think about how to ensure that their potential benefit to society is realised.

We manage and apply the *Code of Practice*. We do not have a formal role in regulating the voluntary application of the pillars. Our role as regulator is to oversee the production and release of official and National Statistics. However, if someone raises a concern with us, we will contact the organisation and review its statement and procedures. We are prepared to comment publicly on the voluntary application of the Code's pillars.

Further guidance

The next section of the Guide explains more about the Code's pillars and a glossary of the main terms used. We have provided some [case studies](#) to illustrate how organisations have produced their own statements of commitment and provided [answers](#) to some key questions about the process.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness:
*confidence in the
people and
organisations that
produce statistics and
data*

***How this pillar can be
adopted:***

*An organisation publishing
data or analysis wants to
demonstrate that its outputs
are free from organisational
vested interest.*

*It can adopt this pillar by
describing how it protects its
analysis through governance,
oversight and appropriate
resourcing.*

Trustworthiness is a product of the people, systems and processes within organisations that enable and support the production of statistics and analysis.

It comes from the organisation that produces statistics and data being well led, well managed and open, and the people who work there being impartial and skilled in what they do.

People in organisations that release statistics are **truthful, impartial and independent** and meet consistent standards of behaviour that reflect the wider public good.

Organisations have **clear accountabilities** for high quality statistics and analysis, with clarity over who makes decisions and provides **leadership** on data and analytical issues.

Organisations commit to releasing their statistics and analysis in an **open and transparent** manner that promotes confidence.

Organisations have **effective business processes** and **appropriate resources** to support their analytical functions and are open about their plans, priorities and progress.

People producing statistics and analysis are **appropriately skilled**, trained and **supported** in their roles and professional development.

Organisations look after people's information **securely** and **manage data** in ways that are consistent with relevant legislation and serve the public good.

Quality

Quality:
data and methods
that produce assured
statistics

How this pillar can be adopted:

An organisation publishing data or analysis wants to communicate the quality of its data and methods to its audiences.

It can adopt this pillar by considering and describing how it sources and selects data, how it chooses and tests methodology, how it assures itself about the quality of the data and methods and by informing users as to the quality and/or limitations of its statistics and analysis.

Quality means that statistics meet their intended uses, are based on appropriate data and methods, and are not materially misleading.

Quality requires skilled professional judgement about collecting, preparing, analysing and publishing statistics and data in ways that meet the needs of people who want to use the statistics.

Statistics are based on the **most appropriate data** to meet intended uses. The impact of any **data limitations** for use are **assessed, minimised** and **explained**.

Producers of statistics and analysis use the **best available methods** and recognised standards, and are open about their decisions.

Producers of statistics and analysis explain clearly how they **assure** themselves that statistics and analysis are **accurate, reliable, coherent** and **timely**.

Value

Value: statistics that support society's needs for information

How this pillar can be adopted:

An organisation publishing data or analysis wants to communicate the value of its output – the questions it is aiming to address.

It can adopt this pillar by describing the questions, insights and purpose of the publication.

Value means that the statistics and data are useful, easy to access, remain relevant, and support understanding of important issues.

Value includes improving existing statistics and creating new ones through discussion and collaboration with stakeholders, and being responsible and efficient in the collection, sharing and use of statistical information.

Users of statistics and analysis are at the centre of statistical production; their needs are understood; their views sought and acted on, and their use of statistics supported.

Published statistics and analysis are **equally available to all**, not given to some people before others. They are published at a sufficient level of detail and remain publicly available.

Statistics and analysis are **presented clearly, explained meaningfully** and provide authoritative insights that serve the public good.

Producers are creative and motivated to **improve** statistics and analysis, recognising the potential to harness technological advances for the development of all parts of the production and dissemination process

Statistics and analysis are published in forms that **enable their reuse**. Producers use existing data wherever possible and only ask for more where justified.

Glossary

Data: Characteristics of facts or information, usually numerical, such as, observations, opinions, events or transactions, from which conclusions may be drawn. They are the product of a collection of information (source data). They can also be the subject of statistical processing (processed data).

Management information: The aggregation and summary of operational data as statistics, to inform business decisions.

Official statistics: are produced by crown bodies, those acting on behalf of crown bodies, or those bodies specified in statutory orders, as defined in section 6 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

Statistics: A collection of measures about an attribute compiled from a set of data. Statistics are used for making generalisations or inferring conclusions about particular attributes, at an aggregate level, for examples, about a subset of the population.

Contact details for more information

Please contact **Penny Babb** in the Policy and Standards team at the Office for Statistics Regulation for more information by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk.

Interactive website

Take a look at our interactive voluntary guide on our Code of Practice [website](#).