

Code of conduct for running WDF reports for local authorities

When data is reported under WDF it undergoes various stages of validation. There are different access levels associated with these, which also depends on the type of user.

After local authority users and public users, there are 3 main levels of national user:

- WasteDataFlow (Jacobs)
- Environment Agency
- Defra.

A summary of the various validation levels for the WDF data and associated data access permissions is summarised in the table below.

Data progression within Local Authority	
Level 0	Data entry
Level 10	Data rolled up for checking <i>Only your local authority can run reports on the data at this level.</i>
Level 20	Data ready for review by administrator <i>Other local authorities can run reports on the data at this level.</i>
Level 30	Data has been confirmed by Administrator and is out of Local Authority Control
Data progression after Local Authority	
Level 35	Data validation by WasteDataFlow (Jacobs) is complete. <i>National users can run reports.</i>
Level 40	Data validation by Environment Agency is complete. <i>Both national and public users can run reports.</i>
Level 50	Data validation by Defra is complete.

Registered users within a local authority can run any of the reports available through the WDF portal when their data reaches level 10. Between level 10 and level 30 the data produced in these reports will not have gone through a validation process outside the local authority. It is not until the data is rolled up to level 35 where data has started to go through the external validation process.

Public users have to register with WDF to be able to run reports. The reports available are listed in GN4_Section 11_WDF_Public_Users_Guide_on the WDF guidance page. However public users can only run reports when the local authority data has reached level 40 (validated by the Environment Agency).

The WasteDataFlow system allows local authority users to run reports for their own local authority and all other local authorities in England once it has reached level 20 prior to level 40 when it is published officially by Defra through its regular schedule of statistical releases. At this point the data is still very much subject to change and so should be treated as such.

We realise that WasteDataFlow is used as a benchmarking tool for local authorities to see how their neighbouring or similar authorities are treating their waste management. We recognise the importance of this benchmarking facility but there is a potential tension with the publication of the official Defra statistics published on a quarterly and annual basis.

The Defra waste and recycling publications are National Statistics. 'National Statistics' is the national standard for official statistics. This means that the statistics have been produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice requires the statistics to be produced, managed and disseminated in accordance with a number of key principles such as integrity, impartiality, sound methods and assured quality. A key provision of the Code of Practice is that official statistics should be made equally available to all; subject to statutory provisions for pre-release access (pre-release access is limited to a number of named individuals with specific responsibilities up to a maximum of 24 hours in advance of actual publication). This is very strictly enforced. Any breaches involving disclosure of information before publications have to be reported to the Defra Head of Profession for Statistics and to the National Statistician. A breach statement would be published on both the Defra website and the National Statistics Publication Hub which would give details around the circumstance of the breach.

There is an obvious tension between providing timely access to local authorities for management and benchmarking processes and the publication of the official statistics which is not helped by the time delay between receipt of data and publication, allowing for data quality assurance.

We would therefore appreciate the co-operation of local authorities in respecting the Code of Practice for Statistics in relation to these national statistics and request that local authorities do not divulge their own data or those of other local authorities in advance of publication of the national statistics. This applies to the quarterly releases which are published typically the first week in February, May, August and November and the annual statistics which are published in the third week of November. Publication dates, which are finalised at least one month prior to

publication, are available through the ONS website available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics>. We also publish statistical release dates in the WDF Newsletter and other WDF circulars to local authorities to alert users of the data.

The table below shows the reporting deadlines for local authorities to report their relevant quarterly waste data to WDF.

Data collection	Data required by
Quarter 1 – April to June	End of September
Quarter 2 – July to September	End of December
Quarter 3 – October to December	End of March
Quarter 4 – January to March	End of June