

Department for Work and Pensions

Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Ethics Committee

Report

To 31 December 2005

Contents

	Page
Forward	3
Introduction to the Work & Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS)	4
Introduction to the Ethics Committee	4
Membership of the Ethics Committee	5
Role of the Committee	5
Aims and objectives of the Committee	5
Voting rights	6
Payment of members	6
Meetings	6
Accesses to the WPLS	6
Introduction	6
Developments instigated on request of the Ethics Committee	7
Key ethical considerations	7
Advice on key issues	7
Other work in support of maintaining fair access	8
Audit and risk assessment of DWP	8
Staffing to control and monitor the systems	9
Key achievements of the Ethics Committee on access control	9
Substantive papers put to the Committee	9
Pensions agenda	10
Summary of proposal	10
Considerations of the Committee	11
Merging surveys to the WPLS	11
Summary of the proposal	11
Considerations of the Committee	12
Other papers	13
Impact of the Ethics Committee	13
Conclusion	13
Contacting the Ethics Committee	13
Annex 1 Members of the Ethics Committee (Pen Pictures)	14
Annex 2 Terms of Reference	18

Forward

I am pleased to present the first Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) Ethics Committee Annual Report.

The purpose of this report is to look at the work of the Committee since its inauguration in August 2004 and its forward plan for the coming year.

The setting up of this Committee is innovative within the Department and it is an example of best practice in the area of data handling and statistics. DWP is the first government department to set up such a committee and it is one of the safeguards that we have put in place to ensure that we are seen as behaving responsibly with data from the WPLS.

This first period has been one of “settling in”, familiarising Committee members with the WPLS and establishing ways of working. Terms of Reference have been agreed and the Committee has made recommendations to the Secretariat about ways to present business cases for its consideration. Lively debates have been held around ethical and other issues connected with using data for research purposes.

I should like to thank all members of the Ethics Committee for their commitment and work during this first eighteen months.

David Frazer

Chair

Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study Ethics Committee

1. Introduction to the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS)

- 1.1.** The WPLS is a series of linked databases that allows detailed, cross cutting analysis of DWP customers. From January 2004, DWP has been able to link benefit and programme information held on its customers with employment records from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- 1.2.** New data-sharing provisions introduced in the Employment Act 2002 have opened the way for DWP to receive more data on employment from HMRC and use the information for more purposes. DWP and HMRC have been working together to enable this data sharing to take place and to develop safeguards for the initiative.
- 1.3.** The WPLS has been used to perform a range of statistical and research analyses, as well as being used for some limited operational purposes, to give the Department further opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of its businesses. This has included:
 - providing statistics, management information and research on the success of Jobcentre Plus in helping people into work and keeping them in work;
 - helping to evaluate individual policies and their impact in the short, medium and long-term;
 - determining the family unit for pensioners to establish overall pensioner income from benefits;
 - helping in the investigation of fraud; and
 - helping DWP to improve the way it targets clients through marketing initiatives.

2. Introduction to the Ethics Committee

- 2.1.** An Ethics Committee was considered necessary to ensure that new proposals for utilising the WPLS were consistent with the legal advice available to the Department and that they also took account of concerns amongst citizens about how such a potentially rich data source might be used.
- 2.2.** The Committee is an ad-hoc advisory group and was set up in spring 2004.

Membership of the Ethics Committee

- 2.3.** The Committee comprises twelve members. Six of the members are experts from government departments including DWP Social Research, Office for National Statistics, Health and Safety Executive, DWP Communications, HMRC and the Cabinet Office. The other six members are individuals who were appointed following a national advertisement for suitable candidates. The Committee members are:

Publicly appointed members:

Stuart Burgess
Gabrielle Cox
Christopher Hughes
David Leibling
Jim McManus
Simon Sapper

Government members:

George Clark
Paul Jackson
Liz Kettle
Roger Rawbone
Ricky Taylor
Sean Whellams

- 2.4.** The Committee is chaired by David Frazer, Head of DWP's Information Directorate. Iain Bell, the Head of Data Services Unit is the secretary. Legal advice is provided by DWP Solicitors Office, representatives of which are invited to attend each Ethics Committee meeting.

- 2.5.** You can read a short biography of each member at Annex 1.

Role of the Committee

- 2.6.** The Ethics Committee has been appointed to consider proposals for utilising the WPLS database which have a significant ethical dimension.
- 2.7.** The goal of the Committee is to foster, through debate and accountability, a proper culture of respect in using and developing the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study. Consideration is given to human dignity within a framework of active research to support the development of policies for a free, inclusive and prosperous society.

Aims and Objectives of the Committee

- 2.8.** The committee considers any significant new uses of the WPLS and for each:
- considers the legal advice given by DWP's lawyers
 - considers the ethical issues surrounding the proposal
 - recommends whether the proposal is accepted or not
 - suggests any modifications to the proposal which would make it acceptable.
- 2.9.** The Head of Data Services Unit is responsible for the day-to-day access to the database and for approving new uses which are not considered to have a significant ethical dimension. The Ethics

Committee is responsible for monitoring these decisions and advising on those decisions which the Head of Data Services has referred to it.

2.10. The full Terms of Reference for the Committee are at Annex 2.

Voting rights

2.11. The Ethics Committee reaches conclusions by consensus wherever possible and fully debates issues in order to achieve this. However, on occasions where a consensus cannot be reached, the Committee revert to a modified majority voting system.

2.12. The Committee is quorate when at least 7 members or their named representatives are present, of which at least 4 are publicly appointed. A majority is achieved when at least 7 members of the Committee or their named representatives, of whom at least 4 are publicly appointed members, agree that a proposal is ethical. (Named representatives can only be supplied by Government members).

2.13. The Chair and Secretariat are present to facilitate the workings of the Committee and as such have no voting rights.

Payment of members

2.14. Independent members are reimbursed at a fixed rate for time spent on Committee work.

Meetings

2.15. The Committee meets up to four times a year. The inaugural meeting was held in August 2004 and subsequent meetings have been held quarterly.

3. Accesses to the WPLS

Introduction

3.1. In order to gain access to the WPLS, a business case is completed by each user/group of users for access to the data via an electronic register.

3.2. Details of each application for access to the WPLS are taken from the register each month and presented to Committee members. Where appropriate, the committee will:

- discuss individual cases and reach an agreement as to whether there are any ethical considerations; and
- request further information about individual cases in order to reach a decision.

3.3. Up to the period ending 31 December 2005, the Ethics Committee considered a total of 89 applications to access the WPLS for linking data. There have been no cases to date where the Committee has disagreed with the decision taken by the Head of DSU.

3.4. **Table 1** - accesses given to the WPLS since the inauguration of the WPLS

Status of application	Number of applications to access the WPLS at August 2004	Number of applications to access the WPLS at 31 December 2005
Current	11	20
Renewed	0	15
Expired	4	39
Refused	2	12
Dev of WPLS	1	3
Total	18	89

Developments instigated on request of the Ethics Committee

3.5. There have been a number of developments requested by the Ethics Committee in order to improve their ability to monitor accesses given by the Head of Data Services Unit.

3.6. The key aspects of this have been

- separating use of the WPLS from developments to the databases
- improving the quality of the descriptions of why access is requested
- seeking a better link between outputs from previous accesses requested and new business cases
- ensuring rigour that all business cases relevant to the WPLS have been actively considered by the Committee

Key ethical considerations

3.7. The key ethical issues encountered and discussed by the Ethics Committee when reviewing the business cases are:

- whether the use of data would lead to unequal outcomes;
- the nature of access for analysts;
- considering whether the potential intrusion represented by a proposal was proportionate in the light of the benefits envisaged to be obtained from the work and the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Advice on key issues

The key areas that the Committee provided advice on are:

3.8. Analysts are often undertaking complex research questions utilising data. In developing access requests analysts need to understand the

nature and quality of the data which is available and its suitability for the type of research being undertaken. In order to do so analysts often were asking for access to explore quality of data. The Committee considered the nature of these business cases and a balance between the need for focus in research and the need to understand quality. On balance the Committee decided that access levels were about right in their balance but needed to be kept under review to ensure that business cases became more focused. Business cases have been monitored and they are now more focussed.

- 3.9.** There has been much debate about how far the business cases support equality. In some cases the wording of the case raised some concern that people were being categorised according to characteristics as opposed to their circumstances. Proper exploration of the issues has satisfied the committee that this is not the case and business cases have been reworded as necessary
- 3.10.** The link between the value of the outputs of previous research and renewals of business cases and an understanding of the reason why business cases are refused or not renewed.

Other work in support of maintaining fair access

- 3.11.** At the time of inception of the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study, Information Directorate instigated new data protection policies to ensure that the security and integrity of data was maintained following the access being given to the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study. The Ethics Committee has had oversight over many of these key developments.

Audit and Risk Assessment of DWP

- 3.12.** The Ethics Committee is asked on an ongoing basis to consider the security measures that DWP has in place to protect the data held on WPLS; and DWP regularly updates the Committee about its security and data protection measures.
- 3.13.** As part of its responsibility to ensure the protection of data, DWP has consulted with the Information Commissioner about the safeguards surrounding the WPLS, including the appointment of the Ethics Committee. Data Services Unit (DSU) commissioned an independent consulting firm, the Enterprise Privacy Group (EPG), to conduct an audit and risk assessment of its data protection systems against the audit principles on the Data Protection Act.
- 3.14.** The audit examined whether DSU processes were adequately documented and adhered to. It included site visits and interviews with senior management.

- 3.15.** The Enterprise Privacy Group (EPG) completed the audit and published its report in spring 2005. The report concludes that DSU processes are adequately documented, but there are some issues to be addressed to achieve full compliance and there is no provision for self audit.
- 3.16.** DSU is addressing these issues and has also retained EPG to develop an electronic system to monitor awareness of the Data Protection Act on an ongoing basis. The system was launched during 2005 and it may be rolled out to other government departments.

Staffing to control and monitor the systems

- 3.17.** The Ethics Committee are concerned that staffing levels could arbitrarily be reduced in the areas of controlling access, system monitoring and data protection education and training. The Committee have asked to monitor the staffing resources in this area and for reports to be presented regularly on this.

Key achievements of the Ethics Committee on access control

- 3.18.** The Ethics Committee has played a key role to DWP in the development of the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study and the new processes. Its existence and scrutiny of our processes has:
- ensured that the process of changing culture towards system access control procedures has been embedded into the day-to-day thinking of the analytical community within DWP;
 - helped embed a consideration of ethics into the use of the WPLS;
 - developed the scrutiny of the Head of Data Services to ensure that decisions are taken at an appropriate level and that due process has been carried;
 - ensured that the public commitments made by DWP regarding the WPLS have been adhered to as far as is possible within the status of the committee.
- 3.19.** Thus, by the end of the year the systems are embedded into the way of working of Information Directorate and the users of its system and there has been no evidence uncovered of lack of compliance with the system.

4. Substantive papers put to the Committee

Summary

- 4.1.** Overall, the Committee has considered 8 substantive papers from DWP on the development and use of the WPLS. These papers have tended to focus on the addition of data for new purposes as these tend to have the greatest ethical dimension.

- 4.2.** The papers discussed in detail here highlight the issues which have been put to the Committee. They are representative of the issues discussed but do not represent the totality of the work of the Committee in this area. Other papers considered are restricted as they are still proposals under development.

Pensions Agenda

- 4.3.** Proposals were put to the Ethics Committee regarding the development of the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study in support of the Department's responsibility on pensions. Two papers were considered by the Committee approximately a year apart. The first paper represented a set of initial early thinking proposals and the second proposal, summarised below, representing the final thoughts.

Summary of proposal

- 4.4.** Section 234 of the Pensions Act 2004 provides for the Secretary of State's new functions to promote and facilitate retirement planning. To aid these functions sections 235 and 236 of and Schedule 10 to the Act provide for information to be supplied to the Secretary of State for such purposes. To enable the Secretary of State to carry out his function of promoting and facilitating retirement planning we are now planning to further develop the database through the linking of the following financial data into the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study.
- PEPs, ISAs, TESSAs, private pension pots and savings accounts with more than £50 interest a year for all aged 59 and over;
 - and earnings and Housing Benefit information for all people who have been a DWP client
- 4.5.** The Department needs to do this to:
- Improve data matching to support Pension Credit take-up campaigns a key Government priority
 - ensure that we contact only those people approaching retirement who are likely to be entitled to Pension Credit
 - better understand and conduct research into people who work beyond State Pension Age
 - understand the links between savings held and the social security benefits system in retirement and how people are using or accumulating savings in retirement.
- 4.6.** The Department proposes additional safeguards on these data in order to protect the interests of the public:
- that financial details will be held but not details of the bank accounts
 - the retention periods put in place will be maintained at shorter periods of time
 - 1 year for use in Pension credit take-up campaigns
 - 5 years for research and statistical purposes

Considerations of the Committee

- 4.7.** Key areas that the Committee were asked to consider included:
- are there sufficient safeguards in place for protecting the data;
 - is this a legitimate use of data; and
 - should the pilots go ahead.
- 4.8.** The Committee considered that use of data for pension credit take-up purposes was ethical because the use of data was in prevention of unwanted contact. It was also an area of much complaint from the public who feel that DWP should know they are not eligible. The research and statistics proposals were also agreed. Both were subject to:
- additional safeguards proposed by the Department being put in place
 - the existing set of safeguards being maintained alongside these.

Merging surveys to the WPLS

- 4.9.** The paper detailed below represents detailed consideration of a specific circumstance for linking surveys and administrative data which was placed in front of the Committee for consideration

Summary of the proposal

- 4.10.** The Family Resources Survey (FRS) was launched in 1992 to meet the key information needs of the Department for Work and Pensions for policy analysis and monitoring. Since its introduction, the survey fieldwork has been conducted for DWP by a Consortium of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The contract has been competitively tendered twice during this period and was again due for renewal in 2005, with data-gathering under the new contract due to start in April 2006.
- 4.11.** The FRS is an annual survey of around 29,000 private households, designed to be representative of the UK population; it gathers information on incomes, benefit receipt and related household characteristics. Further questions address other areas relevant to DWP policy such as barriers to moving off benefits and into work, pension provision and maintenance payment and receipt.
- 4.12.** Since the FRS was launched there have been major developments in the availability of other data on benefits, taxes and incomes. DWP have developed databases containing 100% benefits data and new legal gateways have provided access to data on employment and tax credits from HMRC.
- 4.13.** The model proposed brings the FRS data into the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study in order to link records. This approach offers the potential to link FRS records with all data held by DWP, including:

- 100% benefit data, including working age and pensioner benefits data,
 - New Deal and other employment programme information,
 - Employment spell and income information from HMRC
 - Tax Credit data from HMRC
 - Savings data from HMRC.
- 4.14.** The matching will be purely for statistical and analytical purposes. Matching FRS data with administrative data will improve the quality of FRS-based statistics and analysis, and allow new analyses. Respondents will be given assurances that linked FRS and administrative data will not be used for detection of fraud or in any other way that might advantage/disadvantage those that agree/disagree to have their responses linked.
- 4.15.** The greatest early gain from linking data will be in the DWP estimates of take-up of income related benefits, which are particularly sensitive to imperfections due to respondents' misreporting of benefit receipt. This area of work has recently received much attention due to the requirement for accurate estimates for the take-up of Pension Credit.

Considerations of the Ethics Committee

- 4.16.** The Ethics Committee were asked to consider the overall proposal for linking data described in this submission and in particular:
- our plans for obtaining consent
 - our plans to link to prospective and new data sources
 - whether consent should be sought from respondents who are incapable of participating in the survey and a proxy interview is conducted
 - the measures proposed for ensuring confidentiality and security of personal data.
- 4.17.** A discussion was held on the issues surrounding consent and the concerns of the Committee. The following points were made:
- there is no legal issue with linking data provided we have informed consent
 - in order to meet ethical requirements, the consent given by FRS respondents must be truly informed; ie they must fully understand what they are giving consent to
 - it was agreed that a pilot study would be important to test ethical issues such as the understanding of informed consent and to test the consent rates of respondents
 - the Committee requested that they be kept informed of developments in how the linking project progressed

Other papers

4.18. The Committee has examined a range of other papers and considered the ethical impacts of these including:

- Linking information on Early Service Leavers from the Armed Forces in order to assist in monitoring the status of Service Leavers in benefit and employment

Impact of the Ethics Committee

4.19. The Ethics Committee discussions on substantive papers have focused on the expansion of the amount of data within the WPLS. There have been several emerging themes to the work so far:

- a trend of bringing early proposals to the Committee before bringing a substantive proposals has tended to reap greatest reward as this means that the proposals are developed with the thoughts of the Ethics Committee in mind;
- this has focused people's minds on the purpose for the extra data the added value and ensuring that there is full understanding of just what this means for individual's outside of Government;
- a better articulation of our data needs.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The Ethics Committee has had a successful first 18 months in which it has established itself as a key part of the process for using the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study and made impacts to help DWP improve its consideration of ethical issues relating to the expansion and use of the WPLS. Both the Department and Committee members agreed that the Committee should be continued.

6. Contacting the Ethics Committee

WPLS Ethics Committee Secretariat
Department for Work and Pensions
Level 2, Kings Court
Sheffield
S3 7UF

Telephone : 0114 209 8125

Fax : 0114 209 8189

Web site :

http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/longitudinal_study/ic_longitudinal_study.asp

email : wpls@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Ethics Committee

Stuart Burgess : Independent Member

Stuart is a Church Leader (Methodist Church) on an international, national and regional basis. His interests include: education - especially in higher education; ethics - especially medical ethics and holding the balance between theory and practice; debt cancellation for poor countries and related issues, ie HIV/Aids; working with the police on creating safer neighbourhoods. Stuart chairs the Patient Liaison Group of the British Medical Association. He is also Chairman of the Countryside Agency and Rural Advocate.

He is interested in travel, music and playing tennis.

George Clark : DWP

Head of Social Research Division

George Clark is the Head of Strategic Research and Modelling Division at DWP. He is also the Head of Profession for the 90 Social Researchers across DWP who provide research-based evidence through designing and commissioning programmes of research and evaluation. He has a particular interest in the ethical issues involved both in undertaking social research and in linking research and administrative data.

George started work as a government researcher in the Department of the Environment on regional planning issues. He moved to the Manpower Services Commission to work on local labour market issues, then to the former Employment Department commissioning research on labour markets, working patterns and small businesses. From 1991-2000 he was Deputy Head of Housing Research at DoE/DETR covering homelessness, private renting, HB, owner occupation and the Housing Green Paper.

Gabrielle Cox : Independent Member

Gabrielle Cox was Head of Social Inclusion Policy at the Northwest Development Agency prior to retirement in 2004. She was responsible for mainstreaming economic inclusion perspectives across the whole of Agency's work. Before this she had worked for thirteen years as Director of the Greater Manchester Low Pay unit, overseeing the Unit's extensive research and advice work. During this time she was also a member of the Churches Enquiry on Unemployment and the Future of Work, which published a major report in 1997.

Gabrielle was for five years a member of the Greater Manchester County Council and was Chair of the Greater Manchester Police Authority. She has also worked for the North West Community Health Councils, as a teacher in

inner city schools in Manchester, and as a community worker. She began work with Unilever before studying at the London School of Economics.

She has extensive experience of the voluntary and community sector, and has been active in community in issues in Moss Side, where she lives, for over thirty years. She is currently a Non-Executive Director of the Central Manchester Primary Care Trust, a member of the Board of United Utilities Trust, and does occasional consultancy on economic and social inclusion issues.

Christopher Hughes : Independent Member

For many years, Christopher has taken an interest in the governance of the public domain and ensuring effective leadership and decision-making by public bodies. He has served as a member of various health authorities and has worked for and been a member of local authorities. His current roles include chairing a Regulatory Body, Mental Health Tribunals, tribunals hearing cases of alleged misconduct by members of local authorities and the Chemical Stakeholder Forum. Christopher is a solicitor and a member of the Institute of Biology.

Paul Jackson : Office of National Statistics

Paul joined ONS as a Senior Research Officer to manage the 1999 Census Quality Survey and to develop the 2001 Census validation methodology. He joined ONS Methodology Group as a Principle Methodologist in 2001 to set up a Confidentiality and Data Sharing centre of expertise in ONS. As this work became so closely tied to the development of the National Statistics Code of Practice, the centre moved into National Statistics and Planning Group where he now runs the Legal and Data Sharing branch. This branch is the home of ONS case-work and case-law in legal matters, including Data Protection, Human Rights, Freedom of Information. It is also the home of data sharing and micro-data release policy for ONS, and 'owns' the Protocol for Data Access and Confidentiality. The branch maintains ONS' links with the Office for the Information Commissioner and the Information Rights division of the Department for Constitutional Affairs. Like all functions of the NSPG, there is a GSS support function.

**Liz Kettle: DWP
Deputy Head of Marketing**

Liz Kettle was born in Washington DC. Her family returned to the UK when she was five and she grew up in Cambridge and Sussex. After graduating in philosophy and economics from LSE, Liz spent some years working in publishing publicity and promotion in London and Edinburgh. She gained further experience as a BBC press officer in Glasgow, followed by a period in academic bookselling, subsequently moving over to the editorial side of academic and educational publishing. Liz has also had considerable freelance experience as a writer, editor, journalist, PR practitioner, advertising copywriter, book reviewer (press and broadcasting) and reader for a literary agency.

Liz joined the civil service in 1994 as a Benefits Agency national press officer and is now responsible for DWP marketing teams in Leeds and Newcastle delivering campaigns such as Targeting Benefit Fraud and Direct Payment.

David Leibling : Independent Member

Freelance transport and motoring consultant

Formerly Director of Corporate Communications for Lex Service PLC

David is a Member of Advisory Board for Driving Standards Agency and attends its Audit and Risk Management Committee. He is also a Member of Public Policy Committee for RAC Foundation for Motoring. He is Trustee of Roadsafe (Prince Michael Road Safety Awards), the motor industry's road safety initiative and Trustee of a number of community charities.

J G McManus : Independent Member

Jim McManus is Head of Themes & Policies at Groundwork UK and a public health specialist. He manages a team of staff working on policy development and co-ordination, and Groundwork's new research and evaluation strategy. Before that he worked for Nacro as Assistant Head of Crime & Social Policy, where he managed technical assistance, consultancy and crime audit projects for local authorities, police, NHS, probation and the Home Office. During this time he oversaw large scale survey exercises and analysis of secondary and routine data programmes. Before that he was a consultant, a research fellow in Epidemiology and Public Health, spent six years in Local Government and five in the voluntary sector.

His first degree is in theology. He is currently working towards Chartering as a Health Psychologist and Occupational Psychologist. He served on the Quality Improvement Committee of the Royal Statistical Society and sits on the Council of the British Psychological Society. He is currently undertaking Doctoral Studies at the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol.

Roger Rawbone : Health and Safety Executive

After qualifying in medicine in the late 1960's Roger spent some 10 years in clinical academic medicine specialising in diseases of the chest. This has been followed by 10 years in industrial R&D and 10 years with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) currently as Head of the Corporate Medical Unit. In this role Roger has management responsibility, which includes all doctors in HSE including the Employment Medical Advisory Service. The primary role of the Corporate Medical Unit is to ensure that there is competent and effective medical input to HSE strategy and policy development. On a personal level Roger has extensive research experience both as an investigator and in the commissioning and management of new projects with over fifty peer reviewed publications. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine. Since 1993 he has been Medical Secretary to the HSE Research Ethics Committee and he holds a Masters Degree in 'Health Care Ethics and Law' from Manchester University where he is also a member of the central university ethics committee. Roger is a Director and Trustee of the Association of Research Ethics Committees and editor of the journal *Research Ethics Review*.

Simon Sapper : Independent Member

Simon has been an Assistant Secretary (National Officer) at the Communications Workers' Union since 1989. Before that, he worked for the Institution of Professional Civil Servants (now Prospect) and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. He serves on a number of other bodies including the Secretary of State's Legal Services Consultative Panel, advising on legal services and those who provide them, and is Vice-Chairperson of the London Borough of Merton's Standards Committee.

In addition to this specialism in the areas of Ethics and Governance, Simon has practical experience in research work from his principal areas of employment.

Ricky Taylor : Cabinet Office

Ricky Taylor joined the civil service in 1996 as a researcher with the Home Office. He became head of research for the Home Office Mental Health Unit in 2000. He is currently Deputy Director of Studies for the Cabinet Office, and is responsible for taking forward a framework document for promoting ethical standards in government social research.

Sean Whellams : HMRC

Sean Whellams joined the civil service in 1986 as an assistant statistician in the Ministry of Defence. He has had a number of different statistical posts and is currently the Chief Statistician in HMRC's information centre.

Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

Aim

The WPLS Ethics Committee will provide ethical advice to the Department for Work and Pensions on issues relating to the use of the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study to ensure that the rights, dignity and welfare of the individual are protected and balanced against the common good.

Terms of Reference

To provide ethical advice on the uses to which DWP put the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study taking account of relevant professional standards, legal, methodological and other relevant advice given.

To review the decision-making of the Head of Data Services on access given to the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study and ensure that full ethical consideration has been made throughout the decision-making process.

To provide ethical advice on the development of the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study taking account of relevant professional standards, legal, methodological and other relevant advice given.

To ensure that a record is kept of the decisions taken by the Committee and the reasons for them.

Advice provided by the Committee is made available to the Secretary of State through the Chair and Secretariat.

Membership

The Committee comprises 6 Government members and 6 publicly appointed members.

The current membership is:

Publicly appointed members

Simon Sapper

Gabrielle Cox

David Leibling

Stuart Burgess

Christopher Hughes

Jim McManus

Government members

Ricky Taylor, Deputy Director of Studies, Cabinet Office

Paul Jackson, Office for National Statistics

George Clark, Head of Social Research Division, DWP

Sean Whellams, Inland Revenue

Roger Rawbone, Head of Corporate Medical Unit, Health and Safety Executive

Liz Kettle, Deputy Head of Marketing, Department for Work and Pensions

The Committee is chaired by David Frazer, Head of DWP's Information Directorate with secretariat provided by Iain Bell and Chris Goddard from DWP's Data Services Unit.

Legal advice is provided by DWP Solicitors Office, representatives of which will attend each Ethics Committee meeting.

Ways of working

When deciding the ethical framework, the Committee agree that the following themes should act as a starting point for any ethical debate:

- Consideration of the public interest of proposals
- Ensuring that the ethics as well as the legality of confidentiality are considered
- Considering the likelihood of any proposals to cause distress or harm to an individual against the common good of the citizens.

The Committee is committed to equality of opportunity and inclusion and all proposals will be asked to show that they promote equality and inclusion.

Where any member has concerns about how the Committee is working, they should raise these with the Chair in the first instance.

Behaviour of Members

Members of the Committee have a duty to provide advice to the best of their ability to the Secretary of State. In order to retain the confidence of the public and the Secretary of State:

- Unless they have the prior approval, Individual Members will not speak for the Committee at public conferences or seminars, or in articles or broadcasts. While they may identify their role on the Committee, they equally should take care to identify that they do not speak for the Committee unless approved. Approval should be sought from the Committee in session where this is possible or from the Chair or Secretariat where this is not possible.

- Members of the committee owe a duty of confidence. Information shared in confidence with the member either within or out of committee meetings should not be disclosed without approval.

Meetings and Decision-making

The Committee will meet quarterly.

It is the aim of the Committee to reach conclusions by Consensus wherever possible and to fully debate issues in order to achieve this. However, there may be occasions where a Consensus cannot be reached. In these circumstances, the Committee will revert to a modified majority voting system. The Committee is quorate when at least 7 members, or their named representatives, are present of which at least 4 are publicly appointed. A majority is achieved when at least 7 members of the Committee or their named representatives agree that a proposal is ethical of which at least 4 votes are from the publicly appointed members. (NB named representatives can only be supplied by Government members).

The Chair and Secretariat are present to facilitate the workings of the Committee and as such have no voting rights.

Role of the Chair

The Chair is to provide a non-voting lead to the work of the Committee. The key roles of the Chair are:

- to facilitate the work of the Ethics Committee to ensure that debate at meetings is conducted openly, honestly and taking account of all views held around the table
- to summarise and record the decisions of the Ethics Committee and to ensure these are fully incorporated into the work of DWP in the development of DWP's work in this area.
- to ensure that any public announcements on developments of the WPLS or new uses of the databases contain the advice of the Ethics Committee and that the Secretary of State is aware of the advice of the Ethics Committee when taking decisions.
- where DWP has chosen not to follow the advice of the Ethics Committee to ensure that the reasons why are communicated to the Committee and made publicly available.

Role of Secretariat

The Secretariat is responsible for:

- ensuring that the Ethics Committee are kept fully informed of all work relating to the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study
- providing high quality papers which allow the Committee to function properly

- publishing all papers according to the processes of the Ethics Committee
- providing all reports on access given and access denied and the reasons for this
- responding to enquiries on behalf of the Ethics Committee
- providing minutes of the meetings and ensure that all papers are prepared and circulated on time
- facilitating the efficient running of the Committee
- suggesting a forward work programme for the Ethics Committee
- preparing and publishing the Committee's annual report

Transparency of the meetings of the Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee aims to be as transparent as possible in the conclusions it has reached. Where a proposal from DWP is already in the public domain then the conclusions of the Committee will be made available as soon as possible after the meeting.

However, there will be occasions when the Committee are considering proposals which have yet to be publicly announced. In these circumstances, the ethical advice will be released at the time of announcement of the idea.

All members of the Ethics Committee have agreed that their details, alongside these Terms of Reference should be placed on the WPLS website. Individual members of the Committee will not respond to enquiries relating to their work as members of the Ethics Committee. All enquiries about the work of the Committee should be handled through the Secretariat.

The Ethics Committee will produce an annual report of its work.