

Adding clarity and impact to Statistical First Releases

At the Department for Education we have recently re-styled our Statistical First Releases (SFR). We set about doing this because we wanted to:

- Improve the way we present our data
- Review their structure
- Improve presentation of charts and tables
- Ensure text adds value
- Simplify key points and remove jargon

Our new SFR templates were based on tips we learnt from a “clarity and impact” course. This document details some of the techniques we used.

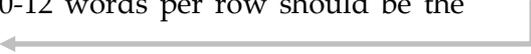
We have received very positive feedback from users, including the previous National Statistician, our Permanent Secretary and special advisors.

Examples of our re-styled SFRs can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Presentation

Fonts Serif fonts, such as Times New Roman, are more readable and good for continuous text. San-serif fonts, such as Arial, are useful for headings and key statements. Avoid *italics*, underlining and **bold**. Consider using **Arial Black** instead of bold.

Layout Putting text in columns, for example, as used in newspapers, makes it easier to read continuous text than across the whole page. Justify continuous text to trap white space. And avoid trailing words.

Ideally 10-12 words per row should be the limit. 

Words In Tables (WITs)

WITs are a great way to break up dense text and a smart alternative to bullet points. Look how much more impact our WIT slide on the following page has than the bullet point version...

Readers can pick the level of detail they require, choosing between the key messages in the left-hand column and the more detailed right-hand column.

Note that we have used **Arial Black** to draw out the key messages on the right and a serif font for the continuous text. The text is justified and using two columns has reduced the number of words per row.

You could also use NITs – Numbers In Tables.

Children's Social Workforce 2013-14

- 24,890 children social workers at 30 September 2013.
- This is equivalent to 22,910 full-time equivalents (FTEs).
- There were 17 children in need per FTE children's social worker.
- 3,610 FTE vacancies. Local authorities estimate they need 3,850 so
- 14% FTE vacancy rate. Some of these vacancies are being covered
- 3,460 children's social workers commenced employment at their lo 2013. This is equivalent to 3,280 FTEs.
- 3,630 children's social workers left their local authority during the ye 3,360 FTEs.
- This is a turnover rate of 15% based on FTEs
- Or 1 in 7 social workers leaving their LA during the year.
- 4% of days missed due to absence.
- This equates to a total of around 240,000 days lost.
- Or just under one day per children's social worker.
- 3,390 agency social workers employed by local authorities in additio workforce.
- This is equivalent to 3,250 FTEs.



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Children's Social Workforce 2013-14

**24,890 children's
social workers**

This is equivalent to 22,910 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

17

The number of children in need per FTE children's social worker.

3,610 FTE vacancies

Local authorities estimate they need 3,850 social workers to fill these posts.

14%

The vacancy rate based on the proportion of vacancies amongst all FTE social worker posts. Some of these vacancies are currently being filled by agency social workers.

**1 in 7 social workers
left their LA**

This is a turnover rate of 15% based on FTEs

3,460 children's social workers commenced employment at their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2013. This is equivalent to 3,280 FTEs.

3,630 children's social workers left their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2013. This is equivalent to 3,360 FTEs.

**4% days missed due
to absence**

This equates to a total of around 240,000 days lost through sickness absence; just less than one day a month per social worker.

**3,390 agency social
workers**

Agency social workers employed by local authorities in addition to their permanent children's social worker workforce. This is equivalent to 3,250 FTEs.



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Tables and Charts

Here are some ways of improving your day-to-day tables:

Title Within the title, comment on a particular trend. This has a similar advantage to the key messages column in a WIT: readers with less time on their hands can take the headlines away without having to study the whole table.

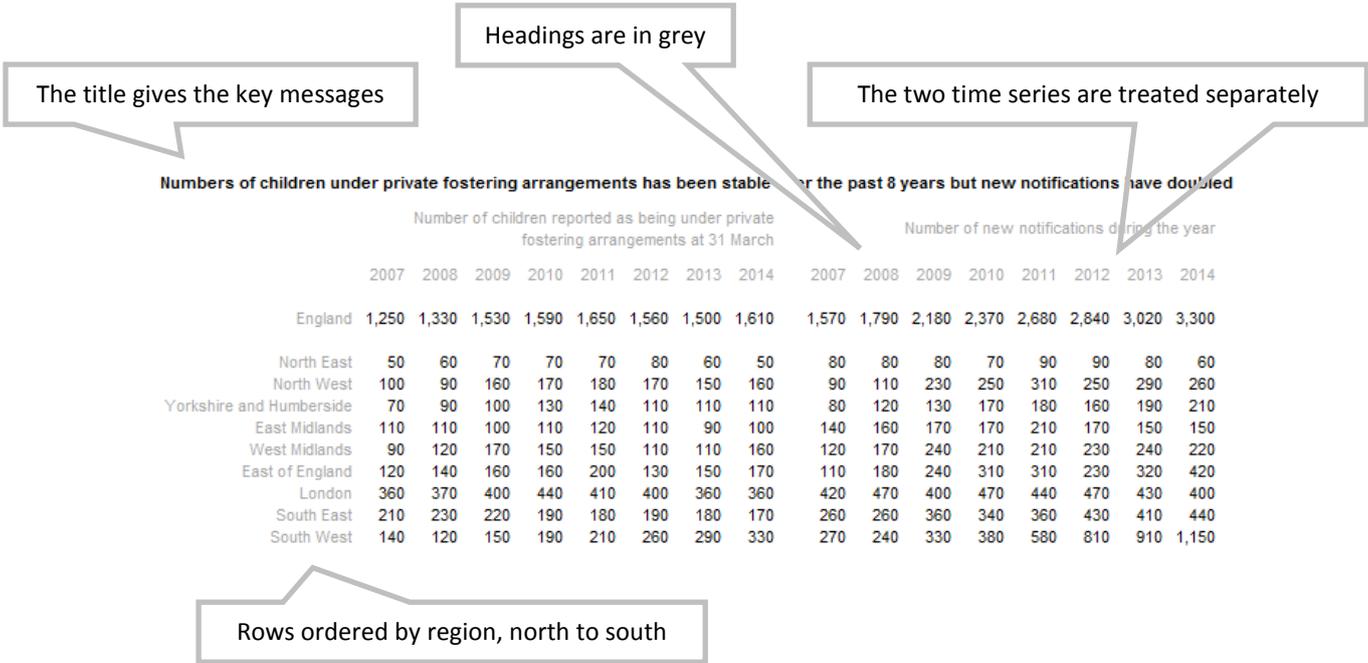
Avoid unnecessary typography The numbers in your table should be star of the show. Avoid getting carried away formatting your headings. For example, avoid **white-on-black**, underlines and UPPER CASE lettering.

Avoid gridlines Similarly, avoid using gridlines: they distract from the numbers.

Row order Consider what may be the best way to order rows for your users' needs. For example, ascending order of value might be more useful than alphabetical.

Column order Put the most important column first, e.g. put an annual total before the individual Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 columns. Put comparable columns next to each other and in a sensible order.

An example is given on the following page.



Similar rules apply for charts. Question what your chart is telling you and whether you really need it.

Further information and examples

A lot of this information was shared with us by Jon Moon. His [website](#) has lots of examples and free downloads.