



Office for  
National Statistics

# QAAD - the Pop Stats Perspective

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# QAAD – the Pop Stats Perspective

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- what QAAD is
  - how it should be interpreted
  - the purpose behind it
- what QAAD means for you
  - how QAAD fits in with the new Code of Practice
- the Pop Stats approach
- alternatives to the Pop Stats approach
- pitfalls you can avoid
- what's next for Pop Stats and QAAD

# What is QAAD?

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- QAAD stands for the Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (records, tables, a number off a website)
- QAAD is billed as a thinking tool (it is, but your first use will be as a checklist)
- It's a tool to reassure the people who use our statistics that our inputs are of good quality and don't adversely impact the statistics they use
- It makes us evaluate whether we really know our data as intimately as we would like to believe
- How much do we trust the processes our data goes through? How much should we?

# What is QAAD?

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- It outlines four key areas that we should know about our data:
  - Operational context and data collection
  - Communication with suppliers
  - QA by suppliers
  - QA we've carried out
- The level of reassurance we should provide is determined by a combination of the profile of the outputs we produce and the risk of data quality concerns of the source data

# What is QAAD?

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Providing reassurance that this



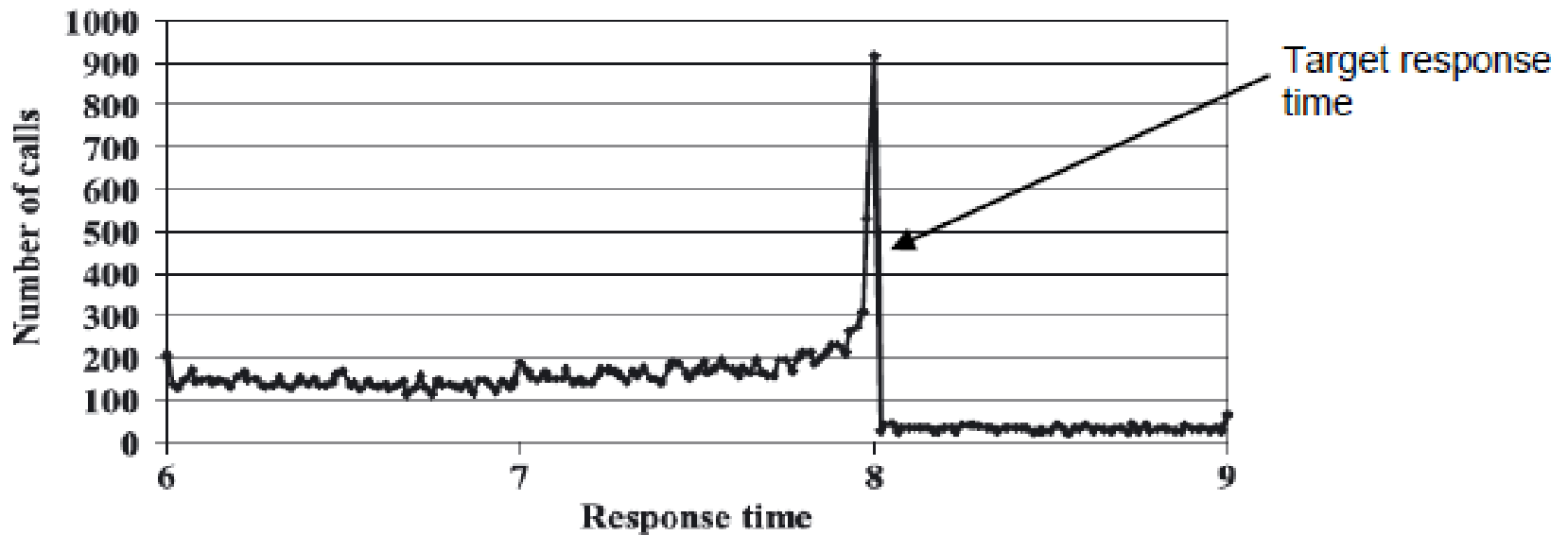
Is not this



# What is QAAD?

Ambulance response times were subject to gaming from staff who could manipulate the system to say they were meeting targets, rather than reporting the true picture, this is the result:

**Figure 2.2: Number of calls by the response time in minutes**



Source: Bevan and Hamblin (2009)<sup>23</sup>

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Would you have been happy with this as your input data?  
Recording has now greatly improved and more bell shaped

# What QAAD means for you

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- UK Statistics Authority requirement
- Forms part of National Statistics accreditation assessments
- Alluded to in the new [Code of Practice](#) (Quality section Q3: Assured Data Quality)
- It requires you to **publish** statements about the quality of your data sources and address quality issues to reassure users (2ii of Q3)
- There is a [toolkit](#) for guidance
- If you don't already do this then your team will have plenty of work heading their way

# The Pop Stats approach

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- Early adopter
- Re-use within division of multiple sources
- How can we best inform users in a transparent way - source by source approach
- Occasional groupings where natural
- Output managers made decisions
- Highest assurance level from output managers, not highest risk and highest profile combination
- Templates and further guidance issued



# The Pop Stats approach

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- Central management of reports
- Support from across Pop Stats and beyond
- Engaged corporate QAAD lead so that we conformed with corporate guidelines
- Engaged Devolved Admins and suppliers (who were able to comment prior to publication)
- To see our reports and those of other ONS teams (done differently) search QAAD on [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)

# Feedback on the Pop Stats reports

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- UK Statistics Authority:  
“some terrific examples that other people can learn from, they were very helpful, clear and straightforward”  
“An interesting and sensible approach and rationale as to why you’ve done it on a data source basis”
- They noted that different authors were readily apparent and found that reassuring.
- Some parts of the reports need to come earlier in the documentation

# Alternatives to the Pop Stats approach

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- Put all sources in one report or include as a section in a larger report

Advantages	Disadvantages
Only one report to produce/update	Focus tends to be on outputs not the source. Implementation is rarely user focussed and can lack reassurance as a result (purpose)
Users have all info in one place	You or your organisation may end up publishing the same information several times (efficiency)
It can work well for a team with few sources who are unique users of those sources	If your comms are good you may need to update the large report several times a year. There is a publication overhead! (efficiency)
	You may be publically disagreeing with colleagues and not know it because info is buried in a wide ranging report (reputation)

# Pitfalls you can avoid

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- Failure to launch: engage with QAAD early, don't wait until accreditation time
- One person making the decisions: assurance levels to be determined by output managers, production of reports managed elsewhere
- Resourcing and stress: don't put it all on one or two people, it's too much, allow plenty of time – how complex could sections be?
- Thinking it's about you: put yourself in the shoes of your users, how can you reassure them?

# Pitfalls you can avoid

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- Thinking you have all the answers: you need to engage across the stages of data processing from collection to outputs
- Stopping with QAAD after one pass: there're lessons to learn keep questioning your data and the processes it goes through – each source, each supply is different; you need to ask users how they feel about the reassurance provided

# What next for Pop Stats and QAAD

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- Adding some new reports (our use of data is changing)
- Looking at the second iteration of QAAD reports
- Implementing some lessons we learnt along the way
- Looking to learn from the first iteration
  - Incorporate feedback from users
  - Incorporate feedback from UK Statistics Authority
  - Corporate approach
- Our data is used everywhere – someone here must use it: What do you think of our reports? Are you reassured? If not, why not? Where could we be better? (I did say you need to ask users about how reassured they feel)



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