

## USER INFORMATION GUIDE

### ABI 2008: Guide to use of potentially confidential data

**Important: there are legal penalties for the improper use of confidential data. This guide tells you how to use the data without breaching the confidentiality rules. If you have any doubts about how to apply the guidance please contact:**

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The ABI is conducted under the Statistics of Trade Act (STA) 1947. This Act imposes restrictions on the way that data collected during the survey may be used. The provisions of the STA are importantly further regulated by the Employment and Training Act 1973 (ETA) as amended by the Employment Act 1989, which states that local planning authorities may only use confidential data for purposes that relate to development plans.

The main aim of these restrictions is to protect the identity of individual enterprises, who have made statistical returns, from being disclosed or otherwise deduced.

#### Aggregated data which is potentially disclosive (and, therefore, potentially confidential)

In theory, a 'disclosive' cell of data is one which either directly, or by deduction, would make known the identity of an enterprise who made a statistical return. In practice, the ONS operates simple rules which are used to test each data-cell: those cells which pass these 'suppression' tests are deemed non-disclosive; those which fail are disclosive.

The rules are given at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/who-we-are/our-services/unpublished-data/access-to-ons-data-service/access-arrangements/index.html>

Some of the ABI outputs have already been subjected to the suppression tests and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality does not arise (see the Aggregated data section below).

However, the following ABI output has not been suppressed and contains potentially disclosive cells:

(i) Employment information extracted by users of the Nomis database. Access to Nomis is restricted, by the provisions of the ETA 4(3)(f), to holders of a Notice.

Users of the output (i) above are personally responsible for ensuring that any information which they publish or pass on to other users, does not contain disclosive data.

Users of Nomis must suppress (i.e. blank out), for publication purposes, any data-cell which is marked with '!' (exclamation mark). Nomis does not apply soft suppression. Users who derive customised tables, which include cells marked '!' (exclamation mark) must ensure that the general rules for hard and soft suppression are not breached.

Where 'hard suppression' is applied to a single cell in a row or column, it will follow that the value of the blank cell could easily be derived by simple subtraction from the total employment given in that row or column, or from sub-totals within the table. In such cases, hard suppression must be supplemented by what is called 'soft suppression'. 'Soft suppression' is where another cell in the row or column is blanked out to avoid this deduction by subtraction. Candidates for soft suppression may include cells with zero employment.

Users of Nomis in any publication derived from the ABI outputs must also apply the general rule that any employment value in a data-cell must be rounded to the nearest 100. Therefore figures of less than 50 should not appear.

Any publication derived from ABI outputs should thus be subject to hard suppression, followed by soft suppression followed by rounding to the nearest hundred.

#### Percentage figures

The rule of suppression that applies to absolute employee figures also apply to percentage values. This means that both hard and soft suppression should be applied to percentages marked with '!' (exclamation mark).

#### Workplace Analysis

The rules of suppression that apply to absolute employee figures also apply to the number of data units (workplace analysis). This means that both hard and soft suppression should be applied to data units marked with '!' (exclamation mark). However, the rounding rule does not apply in this instance.