

Field report 2010/11: feedback from interviewers

Ian Simpson and Joanne Maher

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Contents

1	SUMMARY	1
2	INTRODUCTION	3
	2.1 Aims of the report	3
3	METHODOLOGY	3
	3.1 Overview of Key Changes	4
4	FINDINGS	7
	4.1 Prescription charges	7
	4.2 Healthy Start Vouchers.....	10
	4.3 Sector and size of organisation	12
	4.4 Company vehicles	14
	4.5 Adult maintenance	16
	4.6 Saving Gateway Account.....	18
	4.7 Deprivation questions	18
	4.8 Harmonised questions	21
	4.9 Additional interviewer instruction	24
	4.10 Routing changes	27
	4.11 Additional checks	29
	4.12 Other questionnaire changes.....	31
	4.13 Doorstep materials.....	33
	4.14 Additional comments	33
	4.15 Data linkage	34
	4.16 Conclusions	37
	4.17 Recommendations.....	37

1 SUMMARY

During June 2010 a selection of NatCen, ONS and NISRA interviewers were asked to comment on the changes made to the 2010/11 FRS interview using a paper self-completion field report questionnaire. Below is a summary of the key findings of the 2010/11 field report.

Prescription charges

The introduction of prescription charge related questions worked well. Respondents had few problems answering these questions and were generally happy to do so. Those respondents who were receiving repeat prescriptions had little problem answering how many times they had paid for the repeat prescription in the previous 12 months. Interviewers noted uncertainty among some respondents about whether or not other members of the household had paid for a prescription in the last four weeks. Also, some respondents were unsure as to whether private medical prescriptions should be included.

Healthy Start Vouchers

Few interviewers had experience of respondents in receipt of Healthy Start Vouchers. Those interviewers who did have experience, found that respondents usually recognised immediately that this question was relevant to them. Interviewers found that respondents were also able to identify which member(s) of the household were in receipt of the vouchers. Those respondents who were not in receipt of Healthy Start Vouchers sometimes queried what these vouchers are. However, interviewers reported that it was easy to identify that these people were not in receipt of Healthy Start Vouchers.

Sector and size of organisation

Interviewers reported that respondents often had difficulty in identifying how many people worked in their organisation as a whole. Clarification is required on how agency workers should answer this question and whether employees working overseas should be included. Having banded amounts was seen as helpful. Respondents generally found it easy to identify the sector of their organisation.

Company vehicles

Few interviewers encountered respondents who had company vehicles. Interviewers who interviewed respondents with a company vehicle, found that respondents often had problems identifying how much they had contributed towards the cost of the vehicle. Some respondents had problems identifying the value of the vehicle when new.

Adult maintenance

Interviewers reported that respondents had few problems answering questions on whether they received maintenance from an ex-partner for themselves only. Interviewers also reported that respondents found it straightforward to separate this from maintenance paid for children. It was noted that questions relating to maintenance from an ex-partner can be sensitive for some respondents.

Deprivation questions

The new deprivation questions were well received by respondents and interviewers. The main issues identified were those of interpretation. Interviewers commented that a number of respondents reported that they offered their child(ren) fruit and vegetables

every day but they refused to eat them. Some respondents felt the available answer categories did not necessarily reflect this situation.

Additional interviewer instruction

Interviewer instructions in the CAPI instrument were reported to be useful. Several interviewers commented that the instructions relating to how to code which payslip had been consulted, had proved helpful.

Routing changes

No problems were identified with the routing changes. A few interviewers were pleased that questions relating to annual bill amounts were dropped if a respondent has a water meter.

Additional checks

Interviewers were generally pleased with the additional checks added to the FRS questionnaire program and found them useful. The check at 'ChkNop', which clarifies whether or not someone is contributing to a pension, was considered particularly helpful. A few interviewers felt that having too many checks slowed the FRS down and increased respondent burden.

Harmonised questions

Some older respondents had problems remembering if they had ever worked, according to the definition provided at 'EverWrk', and it was unclear to respondents whether this should include work outside of the U.K.

Other questionnaire changes

The change to collecting the overall state retirement pension value, rather than the different elements of it, was very well received by interviewers. Interviewers reported that this reduced respondent burden and saved time. Respondents could check the overall pension amount from bank statements, meaning respondents did not have to search for their pension letter, which contains the different elements of the state pension.

Doorstep materials

Overall, interviewers thought the doorstep materials were adequate.

Additional comments

Many of the interviewers who made additional comments were very positive about the FRS and reported that the changes made this year had improved the survey. A number of interviewers remain concerned at the length of the FRS interview and reported that some respondents found it burdensome.

Data linkage (Northern Ireland only)

Respondents appeared to understand the question well and interviewers felt that the question worked well in general. However, there was a mixed response on how well the question was received by respondents. There was also a mixed response from interviewers on the usefulness of the data linkage related interview materials.

2 INTRODUCTION

Each year a number of changes are made to the FRS questionnaire to reflect changes in policy, meet FRS user requirements or resolve particular problems or issues which interviewers raised in the previous year's field report.

In June 2010 a selection of FRS interviewers from the consortium, Office for National Statistics (ONS) and National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), as well as a small number of interviewers working in Northern Ireland for the Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA), were sent a questionnaire asking them to comment on how well the changes to the 2010/11 FRS had worked. Interviewers were also asked for suggestions for improving the survey.

2.1 Aims of the report

The key objective of this report is to provide survey sponsors and other FRS users with feedback of a qualitative nature, directly from the people who collect data from respondents. These findings will feed into the April 2011 questionnaire consultation process.

The comments, opinions and suggestions presented in the report are intended to raise issues for discussion. The report offers the Consortium's suggestions for DWP's consideration rather than definitive answers to problems.

3 METHODOLOGY

During June 2010 a selection of interviewers were asked to comment on the changes to the new FRS interview using a paper self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire focussed on the key changes made to the interview for the current survey year, 2010/11, and consisted of a mixture of both open and closed questions. A total of 62 questionnaires were received from the three organisations. The table below shows the number of returned questionnaires from each organisation.

Organisation	No. of questionnaires
ONS	29*
NatCen	28**
NISRA	5***

* Excludes 1 survey returned late.

** Excludes 2 surveys lost in post.

*** Excludes 1 survey not able to be completed because interviewer was ill.

Although interviewers were selected from a range of geographic regions across Britain, this was not a statistically random sample. The reader should bear in mind that some of the findings presented are based on feedback from a small number of interviewers. However, the Consortium recommendations for changes are made in the knowledge

that the experience of this small number of interviewers will be shared by many interviewers working on the FRS.

3.1 Overview of Key Changes

The changes to the FRS 2010/11 were many and varied but overall were expected to have a minimal impact on the survey. We asked interviewers to comment on these changes and also gave them the opportunity to comment on any other element of the survey.

The key changes to FRS 2010/11 included the following:

Household section

Household Grid

- ◆ Soft checks were added at 'TypeEd' to ensure respondents are recorded as attending the correct type of educational establishment for their age.
- ◆ Civil Partnership categories were added at the 'Relationship' and 'Marital Status' questions. Interviewer instruction on how to code grandparents who are the legal guardian of the grandchild was added.
- ◆ Answer categories were added at the questions asking which ethnic group a respondent belongs to and whether a respondent is enrolled on any government training schemes.

Accommodation

- ◆ A change of wording was made at 'AccJob' to include whether the accommodation goes with a **past** job of someone in the household.
- ◆ Questions regarding Housing Benefit being greater than rent or rent being greater than Housing Benefit were removed.
- ◆ Helpscreen information was added explaining why questions relating to various types of household insurance are asked.
- ◆ 'RoomShar', which asked whether any rooms are shared with someone who is not a member of the household was removed and replaced by two questions; 'RoomShr' and 'NmRmShar'. 'RoomShr' asks whether any rooms are shared with someone who is not a member of the household. Only if the answer to this question is yes is a follow up question 'NmRmShar', asking how many rooms are shared, asked.
- ◆ If a respondent has a current account mortgage they are no longer asked 'IncMP', 'Was this mortgage protection payment included in [the mortgage payment you mentioned earlier]?'

Council Tax

- ◆ If a respondent has a water meter and pays water rates and charges, they are no longer asked how much their annual water bill is.
- ◆ Additional answer categories were added at 'WhyNoCT', asking why no Council Tax is paid.
- ◆ Interviewer instruction was added on what to record at 'CTAmt' if a respondent in Scotland has a private water supply.

Welfare

- ◆ A new question was added asking whether anyone in the household has paid for a medical prescription in the last four weeks. If this is so, further questions are asked about how many prescriptions have been paid for in the last 4 weeks, whether the item is on repeat prescription and if the item is on repeat prescription, how many times it has been paid for in the last 12 months.

Childcare

- ◆ An interviewer instruction was changed at 'ChPd', to identify what to code if childcare costs are paid per term.

Benefit Unit section

Work

- ◆ Additional answer categories were added at 'WhyNoUsI' – 'Why was your last pay not usual?'
- ◆ Answer categories relating to employee benefits from their employer were changed at 'ExpBen'.
- ◆ An interviewer instruction was added relating to variable working hours.
- ◆ An interviewer instruction was added clarifying that time spent in National Service should be classed as full time work.
- ◆ New questions were added to record the overall size and sector of the organisation where a respondent is employed.
- ◆ If a respondent receives a company vehicle from their employer, further questions are asked regarding the value of the vehicle, any contribution the respondent has made to the cost of the vehicle and what type of fuel the vehicle uses.
- ◆ Extra interviewer instruction was added on what code to use when a payslip, older than the latest one, has been consulted.
- ◆ A soft check was added to ensure that any salary sacrifice pension is recorded at 'ExpBen' and not 'OthDed'.

Tax Credit

- ◆ A soft check was added to ensure respondents do not report a lump sum payment of both Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.
- ◆ References to receiving Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit through employers or wages were removed.

Benefits

- ◆ Work-related activity premium (WRAP) and work search premium (WSP) were removed at 'Ben5Q'. In Work Credit interviewer instruction was also amended at 'Ben5Q'.
- ◆ A soft check was added to ensure those who say they are in receipt of state retirement pension are of state retirement age.
- ◆ Routing changes were introduced to reflect the gradual rise in women's state pension age from 60 to 65 during the period 2010-2020.
- ◆ Questions collecting the different elements of the state retirement pension were removed, only the overall amount received now collected.

- ◆ New questions were added asking how long a respondent has been receiving Employment Support Allowance, in line with questions on period of receipt of Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance.

Other Income

- ◆ An interviewer instruction was added at 'TtBPrx', to inform that only an **estimate** of the weekly amount of benefits and tax credits received is required and that if a respondent cannot provide a quick estimate, it is permissible to record don't know.
- ◆ A change of wording was made to questions relating to payments to and from absent spouses, so that payments made in the last 12 months only are recorded.

Maintenance

- ◆ Questions were introduced relating to any maintenance a respondent receives from an ex-partner, solely for themselves. Questions about maintenance for children are asked separately.

Pensions

- ◆ A soft check was added for when inconsistent answers are given regarding pension contributions at 'OthDed' and 'ChkNoP'.

Children's Earnings

- ◆ A new category was added at 'ChEarns' asking whether the child receives an income from employment training.
- ◆ The routing to 'ChEma' changed so that it is now asked where there is one or more child in the household and is not dependent on the answer at 'KidInc'.

Affordability Questions

- ◆ The routing to material deprivation questions was changed where one adult in a Benefit Unit is aged over 65 and another is aged under 65. The material deprivation questions should only be answered by the adult aged over 65.

Savings

- ◆ A new category of 'Savings Gateway Account' was added at the question 'Accounts'. (NB: This has since become obsolete with the government scrapping the Savings Gateway Account).
- ◆ Information on ISAs was updated in interviewer helpscreen guidance.

Children's Savings

- ◆ A Child Trust Fund interviewer instruction was updated and a soft check regarding the maximum amount that should be held in a Child Trust Fund was removed.

Data Linkage

- ◆ If a respondent agrees to have their FRS data linked to their DWP records, they are now asked for their official first name and surname in subsequent questions.
- ◆ The data linkage request was added to the Northern Ireland questionnaire.

Variable Usage Review

- ◆ A number of questions were removed following a variable usage review carried out by DWP.

4 FINDINGS

Details of interviewers' comments and suggestions on the 2010/11 FRS are given below. The nature of the changes made in 2010/11 is described followed by interviewer comments and the consortium's recommendations for changes to the 2011/12 survey.

4.1 Prescription charges

Details of the change

Questions relating to paying for prescriptions were introduced in order to improve the FRS' ability to capture non-cash benefits. In Wales, no one pays prescription charges, so prescription questions are not asked of respondents living in Wales. Questions relating to the number of prescription items are asked of those who have paid for a prescription in the last four weeks.

{Ask these questions only of people who have to pay for prescriptions i.e. people of working age only}

MedPay

In the past 4 weeks, has anyone in this household paid for something on prescription, including anyone who has a pre-payment certificate?

INTERVIEWER: Only record prescriptions that were paid for. Include pre-payment certificates (PPC) where prescription charges are paid 3 months or 12 months in advance.

1. Yes
2. No

If MedPay=1 'Yes'

MedWho

Who paid for something on prescription?

INTERVIEWER: Include those who pay for pre-payment certificates (PPC) where prescription charges are paid 3 months or 12 months in advance.

NB: Code ALL that apply from the list below

1. Person 1
2. Person 2
3. Person 3

Respondents are asked whether the prescription(s) were paid for using a pre-payment certificate and if so, what period of time the pre-payment certificate covers

<p>MedPrPy Can I just check, did [NAME] have a pre-payment prescription certificate (PPC) covering the last 4 weeks?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Yes2. No <p>{If MedPrPy=1 'Yes'}</p> <p>MedPrPd What period did the pre-payment prescription certificate cover?</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: If more than one 3 month pre-payment certificate mentioned code as 1 '3 month'."</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 3 months2. 12 months
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Respondents are asked how many items they have paid for in the last four weeks and whether any of the items are on repeat prescription. If any items are on repeat prescription, the respondent is asked how many times they have paid for that item in the last 12 months.

<p>MedNum How many items on prescription did [NAME] pay for (including any pre-payment certificate) in the last 4 weeks?</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: Please record each item (e.g. medicine etc) on prescription not number of prescriptions. There could be more than one item per prescription.</p> <p>MedRep <i>Was the item on a repeat prescription?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Yes2. No <p>Med12M How many times have you paid for this item on repeat prescription in the last 12 months?</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: Establish the duration of the reported prescription item (e.g. prescription renewed and paid for every month) to help identify number of times the item has been paid for in the last 12 months.</p> <p>0..97</p>
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Findings

Almost all interviewers reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify whether anyone in the household had paid for a prescription in the previous four week period. However, where household members were unrelated it was more difficult to establish who in the household had paid for a prescription item. There was also concern about the reporting of prescription receipt by proxy respondents, (i.e. where the household reference person was reporting on behalf of all members of the household). Almost all interviewers also reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify whether any of their prescriptions were repeat prescriptions. The most common interviewer comments in relation to the prescription questions indicated few problems in their administration:

“These questions were understood fully and did not produce any negative response.”

“Felt this was straightforward to all my respondents none of them appeared to have any difficulty with these questions.”

“None of my respondents had any difficulties at all - nor any questions that were about queries that I could not address. All very straightforward. Interviewer notes/prompts very good.”

“Felt this was straightforward to all my respondents none of them appeared to have any difficulty with these questions. Those on repeat could work out easily as usually monthly.”

Around half of interviewers did not encounter any respondents with repeat prescriptions, but of those who did, most reported that it was quite easy for respondents to remember how many times they had paid for the prescription in the last 12 months. Most interviewers indicated that respondents did not show any frustration when answering the repeat prescription questions but a small minority indicated that they had witnessed some frustration amongst respondents.

A number of interviewers reported that not all respondents understood the term pre-payment certificate; however in all but one of these cases the interviewer indicated that the pre-payment helpscreen helped clarify the situation. It was also noted that in Scotland, the pre-payment certificate works differently, applying to a period of 4 months and 12 months, rather than 3 months and 12 months as in England.

Interviewers identified some potential areas of concern, one being that sometimes the person answering the prescription question was unsure as to whether anyone else in the household was paying for a prescription, particularly if they were not related.

“There was some confusion when household contained more than one person paying for prescriptions.”

“The only problems encountered related to private prescriptions, or where the person who had the prescription was not present when the household questionnaire was done - e.g. adult children. In that case, although parents know a prescription had been collected, they knew nothing about method of payment - and didn't always know there was such a thing as a pre-payment certificate, these parents were often over 60 and got their scripts free.”

“On only 2 occasions was respondent at all unsure about other non-related H/H members. Perhaps this could be in the Benefit Unit section near health and disability questions, so that each individual could answer?”

“When interviewing a couple - both thought about the question HoH (male) answered no - i.e. no one had anything on prescription - wife reminded him that she had one repeat item and they had also asked for a prescription for antibiotics for their adult daughter - which he had also forgotten. It did occur to me that sometimes family members might not "be in the know" i.e. aware about their young adult children. Because this thought had come to me I did recap the question when going back to interview a 20 year old. I got a yes instead of a no (which I had got from her mother). I do think asking about items on prescription is quite a private matter, it should only be asked of the adult concerned. There are quite a lot of young adults living in the family house these days, so the opportunity for genuine error is quite high.”

Some interviewers encountered respondents who were paying for private prescriptions and requested clarity over whether these should be recorded on the FRS.

“I only interviewed one respondent who had paid for a prescription in the previous four weeks. The gentleman was comfortably off and had private medical insurance which met the cost of his one-item prescription.”

“I did have one respondent who, having had an initial prescription for an inhaler, continued to get the repeat inhalers from abroad as they were cheaper, presumably without a prescription. Should we be asking about medication people receive via the internet or perhaps that is not relevant to the study?”

One interviewer encountered a case where a pre-payment certificate had lapsed and over a 12 month period the respondent had sometimes paid for the prescription with a pre-payment certificate and sometimes with cash. The interviewer would have liked some clarification on how to record this.

“One respondent was uncertain about number of items over 12 months because she had a 3 month pre-payment certificate, which lapsed, paid for some items, then resumed with a new pre-payment certificate - so, on question asking how many items paid for in last 12 months she was not sure whether to include everything, i.e. both those covered by the certificate and those paid for in cash - in the one answer. I chose to include all items - hope that was right (on the basis that she did pay for them in either event).”

An interviewer noted that it is important to be sensitive when asking questions about medical prescriptions.

“There was some sensitivity needed in asking these prescription questions to those who had mental health issues. One respondent suffered from Asperger's syndrome and a few from depression/anxiety and were uncomfortable about answering questions on repeat prescriptions.”

Recommendations

- ◆ Change period of Scottish pre-payment certificates.
- ◆ Add interviewer instruction on how to deal with private prescriptions.
- ◆ Add interviewer instruction on how to record details if prescriptions are sometimes paid using a pre-paid certificate and sometimes with cash.
- ◆ Consider whether prescription question should be asked of all adults to avoid the potential for proxy respondents mis-reporting prescription receipt.

4.2 Healthy Start Vouchers

Details of the change

The Welfare Foods Scheme, through which free welfare milk was administered, has been replaced by the Healthy Start scheme. In order to capture the receipt of Healthy Start Vouchers, the category at 'Freeltem' was amended to reflect this change. If a respondent is in receipt of Healthy Start Voucher(s), they are asked who in the

household is receiving the voucher(s). This information will enable the value of the voucher(s) to be calculated.

Freeltem

INTERVIEWER: Questions about free school meals free school milk and Healthy Start vouchers for free milk, fruit and vegetables.

In the last 7 days have ANY of you (including any of your children under 16) had ...

READ OUT: PROMPT EACH ITEM INDIVIDUALLY...

1. **...any Healthy Start vouchers for free milk, fruit or vegetables.?**
2. *...any free school milk?*
3. *...any free school meals?*
4. *...none of these*

HSvPer

Who received the Healthy Start voucher/s?

INTERVIEWER: [{NatCen prompt} Who else? {ONS prompt} Anyone else?] Code all that apply.

INTERVIEWER: Record the person on whose behalf the voucher was received. E.g. if the voucher was issued due to pregnancy, record the female household member who received the voucher. If the voucher was received on behalf of a young child record the child as the voucher recipient.

Findings

Almost half of interviewers considered questions relating to Healthy Start Vouchers as not applicable to the respondents they interviewed. Many interviewers stated that none or very few of the respondents they had interviewed had heard of Healthy Start Vouchers. Of those interviewers who had experience of respondents who might be eligible for Healthy Start Vouchers, most said it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify whether anyone in their household was receiving Healthy Start Vouchers.

“People eligible for vouchers had no real problems in dealing with (these) questions.”

“Those that received the vouchers had no problem answering the question. Those that did not were a bit bemused by it but could quickly respond that they did not receive the vouchers.”

“Those in receipt of vouchers were fine with this question. Those who did not receive these queried what they were.”

Similarly, almost all interviewers who had experience of respondents who received Healthy Start Vouchers, indicated that respondents found it very easy or quite easy to identify who within the household was receiving the Healthy Start Voucher(s). Interviewers commented that the explanation of Healthy Start Vouchers was good.

Recommendations

None.

4.3 Sector and size of organisation

Details of the change

New questions relating to the sector and overall size of the organisation for which a respondent works were added to the FRS. These questions will enable the government to accurately identify groups of people who are likely to be affected by pension reforms. Respondents were asked to identify how many people work in their organisation as a whole (not just their local unit of work – which is asked at a separate question).

OrgEmp

And including you, how many staff are there in total in the [organisation/company] where you work? That is, not just at the place where you work but in the [organisation/company] as a whole?

INTERVIEWER: We want to know the respondent's estimate of the total number of people who work in the organisation as a whole not just the number of employees at the place (i.e. local unit) where the respondent works.

The number of employees at the local unit and the organisation as a whole could be the same for people working for small businesses.

INTERVIEWER: Prompt with bands if necessary

1. One (respondent)
2. 2 - 9
3. 10 - 19
4. 20 - 49
5. 50 - 99
6. 100 - 249
7. 250 – 499
8. or 500 or more.

Following the question relating to what their firm or organisation does ('FirmDo'), respondents were also asked for which type of organisation they worked. If the respondent worked for an organisation that was not a private firm, business or limited company, they were asked to identify their organisation from a further list of types of non-private organisation.

FirmDo

What does/did the firm/organisation you work for mainly make or do (at the place where you work)?

Describe fully - probe manufacturing or processing or distributing etc. and main goods produced, materials used, wholesale or retail etc."

The answer that you need to record should be an activity, not a title, name or a vague heading (eg. leisure industry, health care, motor trade)."

Sector

And was that...

INTERVIEWER: Public Limited Company (PLC) = Code 1

Other Limited Company = Code 1

Self-employed = Code 1

1. A private firm or business, a limited company,
2. Or some other kind of organisation?

Ask if Sector=2 'some other kind of organisation'

SectrNP

INTERVIEWER: ASK OR RECORD

What kind of non-private organisation was it ...

INTERVIEWER: Individual prompt. Code first that applies.

1. A public limited company/plc?
2. A nationalised industry/state corporation?
3. Central government or civil service?
4. Local government or council (including police, fire services and local authority controlled schools/colleges)?
5. A university or other grant funded education establishment (include 'opted-out' schools)?
6. A health authority or NHS Trust?
7. A charity, voluntary organisation or trust?
8. The armed forces?
9. Or was it some other kind of organisation?

Findings

Interviewers were almost evenly split between those who felt it was quite easy for respondents to report how many people work for their organisation as a whole and those who thought it was not very easy. However, a majority of interviewers reported that the banded amounts were either very helpful or quite helpful in assisting respondents to answer this question. The following comments represent some of the issues identified by interviewers. One interviewer commented that the question 'OrgEmp' was too long, causing confusion for respondents.

"The size of the organisation as a whole is a difficult question. The size of the organisation where they actually work is bad enough unless it is so large to "go over the top" of the scale numerically. I find on many surveys people struggle with this question."

"Many respondents in larger organisations were unsure of the total number of employees in the organisation as a whole, so the banded amounts were helpful."

"Sometimes respondents query: "Does the number of employees include those working abroad. If it is an international company? They just need clarification. Are we speaking of in the UK only or worldwide?"

An issue identified by a number of interviewers was how to deal with agency workers:

"Respondents often do not have (a) clear idea of number of employees where they work especially Agency workers who are also unsure whether it is the employee at the Agency or where they are sent to work that we want to know about. Respondents frequently did not know if there were other workers elsewhere."

The majority of interviewers reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify whether their organisation is a private business or some other kind of organisation. A majority also responded that those working in some other kind of organisation found it very easy or quite easy to select the type of organisation they work for from the list at 'SectrNP'. An interviewer from Northern Ireland commented that they found that respondents in Northern Ireland found it particularly straightforward to answer the question asking which sector their company is in.

“This may be easier in Northern Ireland than elsewhere because of our size and the large number of people in the public sector and working for charities, including our community groups. Also, because of our size, interviewers probably have a better understanding of public/private sector etc; organisations here.”

Very few interviewers encountered respondents who worked for banks that have been taken over by the government. These respondents almost always defined themselves as working for a private firm. However, one interviewer made the following comment.

“I interviewed one young woman who was a manager in a High Street bank taken over by the Government. She identified her employer as a "mostly private firm", but was slightly hesitant about claiming this in light of recent developments.”

Recommendations

- ◆ Provide extra interviewer instruction clarifying how to deal with agency workers.
- ◆ Provide extra interviewer instruction clarifying whether employees in an overseas branch of the company should be included in the total number of employees at the organisation.

4.4 Company vehicles

Details of the change

The following questions were added to the FRS with the aim of capturing the benefit to households of having company cars or vans, where these are available for private use.

Ask if ExpBen=1 'company car' or ExpBen=2 'company van'

CarVal

Looking at this card, what is your estimate of the manufacturer's list price of this vehicle when new?

INTERVIEWER: The respondent's estimate of the vehicle list price is acceptable.

1. Up to £10,000
2. £10,001 to £13,000
3. £13,001 to £16,000
4. £16,001 to £ 19,000
5. £19,001 to £22,000
6. £22,001 to £25,000
7. £25,001 to £30,000
8. £30,001 to £40,000
9. £40,001 and over
10. Don't know

CarCon

Did (or do) you make a contribution to the cost of the company [car/van], including any amounts deducted from your salary?

INTERVIEWER: Include only costs incurred for the purchase of the company car. Exclude any running costs/repairs paid by the respondent.

1. Yes
2. No

Ask if CarCon=1 'Yes'

CarAmt

What is the total contribution you have made to the cost of the company [car/van]?

INTERVIEWER: If respondent makes a contribution from their salary record the total contribution that the respondent has made to date.

INTERVIEWER: Include only purchase cost of the company car. Exclude any running costs/repairs paid by the respondent.

FuelTyp

What fuel does your company car use?

1. Petrol
2. Diesel
3. Biofuel e.g. E85 fuel
4. Hybrid (use a combination of petrol and electricity)
5. Electric
6. Other
7. Don't know

Findings

A minority of interviewers encountered respondents who had company cars for personal use. Of these, most reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to provide an estimate of the vehicle's price when new. However, some interviewers reported that it was not very easy. A couple of interviewers asked whether it would be possible to have banded list prices to assist with this question.

The majority of interviewers who encountered respondents with company cars also reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify whether or not they contribute to the cost of their company car. Almost all interviewers reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify what type of fuel their company car uses.

Almost half of those interviewers who encountered respondents with company cars, reported that it was not very easy or not at all easy for respondents to identify the total contribution they have made to the cost of their company vehicle. Some interviewers reported that some respondents feel that they are making a contribution to the cost of the company car through the higher tax rate that company cars incur.

"Some difficulties for people self employed supplying own company vehicles whether to include all costs i.e. purchase, VAT etc."

"He was not sure if his monthly deductions went to running costs or not."

"Confusion as to what it costs them."

"Some respondents make a contribution from their income to pay for a company car, and may be unclear about how much they pay. (e.g. the tax element)."

"Company cars incur higher tax on wages and therefore they feel they pay for it."

However, the other half of interviewers who encountered respondents with company cars reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify the total contribution.

“Most people with company cars know what they have to contribute.”

Recommendations

- ◆ Review ‘CarCon’ question to try and provide more clarity for interviewers and respondents about which type of contributions should be recorded.

4.5 Adult maintenance

Details of the change

Questions on adult maintenance payments have been reintroduced to the FRS because the receipt of adult maintenance can affect benefit entitlement. Questions relating to child and adult maintenance are now asked in the same section but at separate questions.

AliMny

If MntRec=1 ‘Yes receives child maintenance’ [Thinking just of yourself now, are] {otherwise begin sentence with } [Are] you receiving any formal or informal money payments as alimony or allowance from a previous partner on your own behalf?

INTERVIEWER: Exclude payments received for any child/children. These should have been recorded earlier.

1. Yes
2. No

AliAMt

How much did you (on your own behalf) receive last time?

AliPd

How long did this cover?

1. One week
2. Two weeks
3. Three weeks
4. Four weeks
5. Calendar month
7. Two Calendar months
8. Eight times a year
9. Nine times a year
10. Ten times a year
13. Three months/13 weeks
26. Six months/26 weeks
52. One Year/12 months/52 weeks
90. Less than one week
95. One off/lump sum
97. None of these (Explain in a note)

AliUs

Is that the amount you usually receive?

1. Yes,
2. No,
3. No such thing as usual

Findings

Over half of interviewers did not encounter any respondents who received adult maintenance payments.

“Maintenance payments applied only to children in households interviewed.”

“I had very few informants to which this applied but they had no problems.”

Almost all interviewers reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to identify whether they are receiving maintenance payments on their own behalf.

“Those that were receiving maintenance were very clear as to how it broke down.”

“Respondents who received these payments had a grasp of details. They showed an interest in and knowledge of the mechanisms through which they are paid.”

Of those interviewers who encountered respondents in receipt of adult maintenance payments, almost all reported that respondents found it very easy or quite easy to provide an amount for the maintenance received and the period this covered, as well as indicating whether this was the usual amount received.

“Due to maintenance payments applying mainly to lone lower income families respondents who receive payments know exactly how much and who payments are for.”

“People found these questions easy and could separate amounts easily and time scales.”

“There were no problems with this question. Any queries were soon answered as there were ample options for the amount paid and timescale the payments were made in to suit all respondents that answered this question.”

Most interviewers also reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to separate maintenance paid to themselves from maintenance paid for a child. However a few interviewers reported that this task was not very easy for respondents.

One interviewer commented that in situations where long-standing maintenance settlements are in place, respondents can find it difficult to separate the amount that is paid for the adult from the amount that is paid for the child.

“Respondents usually have separated amounts in cases where the settlements have been recent. In cases of long-standing settlements, they have more problems identifying amounts. An option to include both amounts (as in the case of benefits when they are unable to separate amounts) would be useful with a window opening to record explanation.”

Some interviewers reported that questions relating to maintenance can be sensitive for respondents to answer:

“One respondent required assurance that these figures were not for C.S.A.”

“[Questions] were pretty straightforward, although this question can upset some respondents if they have had a bad break/split from partner.”

“No problems, just have to be aware that it can be a sensitive issue.”

Recommendations

None

4.6 Saving Gateway Account

Details of the change

Questions about Saving Gateway Account (a new account to encourage saving among low earners) were included in the field report questionnaire on the understanding that the account was due to operate from April 2010. The actual launch date for this account was to have been July 2010, so interviewers did not encounter any respondents with a Saving Gateway Account in the April-June period. The Saving Gateway account was abolished in the Government's budget of 22nd June 2010. Recording of this type of account has subsequently been prevented by a hard check in the August 2010 to March 2011 CAPI program, prior to its intended removal from the FRS from April 2011.

4.7 Deprivation questions

Details of the change

Four new questions were added to the FRS deprivation block of questions, in an attempt to improve the measurement of deprivation within the UK.

ADbtBI

For the next question please just answer yes or no.

Do you (and your partner) keep up with bills and any regular debt repayments?

INTERVIEWER: This is respondent's own interpretation.

1. Yes
2. No

CDpCoat

SHOWCARD M5

For each of the following please tell me the number from the showcard that best explains whether your [child has/ children have] it or not.

[Does your child/do your children] have ...

...a warm winter coat?

INTERVIEWER: This is respondent's own interpretation.

1. Child(ren) has / have this
2. Child(ren) would like to have this but we cannot afford this at the moment
3. Child(ren) do not want / need this at the moment
4. [Does not apply]

CDepVeg

SHOWCARD M5

[Does your child/do your children] ...

...eat fresh fruit and/or vegetables every day?

INTERVIEWER: This is respondent's own interpretation.

1. Child(ren) has / have this
2. Child(ren) would like to have this but we cannot afford this at the moment
3. Child(ren) do not want / need this at the moment
4. [Does not apply]

CDepAct
SHOWCARD M6

[Does your child/do your children] ...

...attend at least one regular organized activity a week outside school, such as sport or a youth group?

INTERVIEWER: This is respondent's own interpretation. Include swimming activity (even if recorded at previous question).

1. Child(ren) do this
2. Child(ren) would like to do this but we cannot afford this at the moment
3. Child(ren) do not want / need this at the moment
4. [Does not apply]

Findings

In general there were no problems with the new deprivation questions. For each of the questions almost all interviewers reported that it was very easy or quite easy for respondents to provide an answer. Interviewer responses about these additional questions were generally positive.

“I enjoy this section of the interview. I feel it looks closely at issues relevant to respondent and that it somehow makes the respondent feel the study is asking them how things are for them.”

“I encountered no difficulty in obtaining responses to these questions - Answers were readily forthcoming.”

“I did not encounter any problems with this module. I think respondents enjoy it because they see the point of it and how it relates to their own circumstances.”

“I find these questions quite straightforward and easy to administer.”

“During the material deprivation sections of the interview some respondents, without any prompting, took the opportunity to emphasise how difficult it was for them to cope in the present economic climate.”

Where respondents felt that these questions didn't apply to them, some interviewers regarded this as an opportunity to highlight the importance of FRS in measuring levels of deprivation in the U.K.

“Any respondents who expressed surprise at these questions, particularly as related to children, were those who were not in a difficult financial situation. But it was easy to explain that these points were used to measure child poverty and that there were families who could not afford these things. This gave an opportunity to highlight the importance of the survey as a whole.”

Some interviewers reported some respondent queries about specific questions. A number mentioned that some parents felt that children were offered fruit and vegetables but refused to eat them and there wasn't an answer category that reflected this situation. Similarly, an interviewer reported that a few respondents would say a child has a warm winter coat but would not wear it. Others said that they did not know what the child ate when not in the parent's company, for example at school, or when the child was spending time with grandparents, friends or other parent outside of the household.

“Comments pertinent to their individual child e.g. He/she doesn't want one (coat) won't wear one. He/she won't eat them (fresh fruit and/or veg) etc. But as code 3 is available not a problem.”

“The question about the amount of fruit and vegetables that children eat was the only one that some parents found difficult, because they were not sure what their children were being offered in school meals.”

“Fruit & veg are given in school & nursery, don't know whether they were eaten.”

“The question about eating fresh fruit/vegetables is sometimes difficult. The child does not eat fresh fruit/veg. They are presented to the child but they are not eaten!”

“The main problem with fruit and veg is the faddy eaters. Parents often stress that children are offered fresh fruit and veg but choose not to eat it - they don't feel any of the codes reflect this but opt for code 3 even though that suggests the child doesn't need it.”

A few interviewers also reported that some respondents requested clarification on definitions of 'organized activity outside school' and 'warm winter coat'.

“Does 'warm winter coat' include a thick anorak. This is the most usual form of coat owned but all seemed to class that as a warm winter coat although it is obviously not full length.”

“One respondent at least was not clear about what we mean by 'regular' or by 'organised'.”

“ 'Organised activity' is not easy for some respondents to understand.”

Most interviewers reported that respondents found it very easy or quite easy to answer the question asking whether they keep up with bills and any regular debt repayments. However, a few interviewers reported that some respondents found it difficult to answer this question.

“Does not cover the poorest people i.e. payment meters. Who often go cold in winter or don't use other appliances to make money last but not "behind". Monthly payment plans are often hard to decide as often "behind" in winter but in summer or falling behind in winter but are unaware at time of interview.”

“Could give examples of H/H bills "like gas, electricity or telephone." What if bills received not yet paid or arrived late? Respondents were a little unsure that this was about difficulty paying bills. Does mobile phone count? Several were behind with this.”

Recommendations

- ◆ Provide interviewer instruction to clarify what types of bill should be included at the question asking respondents whether they keep up with bills and any regular debt repayments.

- ◆ Clarify for interviewers and respondents how to answer the question on children eating fruit and vegetables where the child is provided with fruit and vegetables but does not eat them.
- ◆ Clarify that the definition of a warm winter coat is open to respondent interpretation.
- ◆ Review the use of the term 'organised activity' and consider providing examples or definition of these.

4.8 Harmonised questions

Details of the change

The FRS is an official 'National Statistics survey' and where possible questions are harmonised with other 'National Statistics surveys'. A number of FRS questions have been harmonised this year.

4.8.1 Introduction of civil partnership answer categories at relationship and marital status questions

R

Ask or record [Name's] relationship to [Name]

INTERVIEWER: Grandparents who are the **legal guardian** of their grandchild should be recorded as 7 'father/mother (or guardian)'. The grandchild should be recorded as 3 'son/daughter (incl. adopted/legal dependant'. This ensures that the adult and child are allocated to the correct Benefit Unit.

1. spouse
2. cohabite
3. son/ daughter (incl. adopted /legal dependent)
4. step-son/ daughter
5. foster child
6. son-in-law/daughter-in-law
7. father/mother/or guardian
8. step father/mother 18. other non-relative
9. foster parent
10. father/mother-in-law
11. brother/ sister (incl. adopted)
12. step-brother/sister
13. foster brother/sister
14. brother/ sister-in-law
15. grand-son/daughter
16. grand-father/mother
17. other relative
18. other non-relative

20. Civil Partner

MS

Help_F9

Is [NAME] ...Running prompt...READ OUT...

Code first to apply...

1. ...single, that is, never married
2. ...married and living with husband/wife
3. **...a civil partner in a legally-recognised Civil partnership**
4. ...married and separated from husband/wife
5. ...divorced
6. ...or widowed?
7. **Spontaneous only – In a legally-recognised Civil Partnership and separated from his/her partner**
8. **Spontaneous only – Formerly a civil partner, the Civil Partnership now dissolved**
9. **Spontaneous only – A surviving civil partner; his/her partner having since died**

Findings

Most interviewers did not encounter any households containing a civil partnership. Those interviewers that did encounter civil partnerships generally had no problems recording the correct code:

“No (problems), respondents seemed happy to have their correct status included.”

“The Civil Partner interviewed in April was fully conversant with its legal description so no hesitation experienced and no problem in the interview.”

Recommendations

None.

4.8.2 Changes to question asking whether the respondent has ever worked (changes in bold)

EverWrk

Have you ever **(in your life)** had **paid work**, apart from casual or holiday work **(or the job you are waiting to begin)? Please include self-employment or a government scheme.**

1. Yes
2. No

Findings

Most interviewers reported having no problems with the changes to this question. Of those interviewers that did comment, their responses centred on the difficulties some older people had in remembering the types of work they did many years ago.

“Elderly respondents who married young and brought up families sometimes hardly ever worked and, if they did, it was so long ago that they didn't volunteer the information without probing.”

“Some bemusement when asking older respondents.”

Interviewers reported that sometimes students answered that they had done paid work even though they had only ever done holiday work, which suggests that the respondent hasn't listened closely to this question. The respondent has answered the first part of the question without reference to the exclusions.

“Sometimes I have determined that work is casual with students who work to support their studies.”

“Some students had a problem. Sometimes they included casual/holiday work. Only after asking for nature/employer etc. did it become clear they had only had holiday/casual work.”

An interviewer also mentioned encountering queries about whether to include work abroad.

“Frequently respondents say 'you mean in this country?' Do we want to know about work not in U.K?”

Recommendations

- ◆ Add interviewer instruction to clarify whether work outside of the U.K should be included.
- ◆ Review how to prevent misreporting by students of paid work, where only casual or holiday work had been undertaken.

4.8.3 Changes to question asking whether the respondent is currently in full-time education (changes in bold)

AnyEd

Are you at **school or 6th form** or at present enrolled on any full-time or part-time education course **excluding** leisure classes? (Include correspondence courses and open learning as well as other forms of full-time or part-time education)

Findings

Almost all interviewers reported that they found this question straightforward and that they had no problems.

A few interviewers made comments about the question in relation to the position of the reference to school or sixth form within the question.

“Again some mature age people switch off when the question starts 'Are you at school or 6th form at present'. They do not think it refers to them. Could it be turned round to say 'Are you enrolled on any full or part time education courses, including school or 6th form.’”

“This should be refined to 2 questions: 1. Are you at school or 6th form or 2. Are you attending adult education classes/courses etc.”

Recommendations

- ◆ Consider reviewing the wording of ‘AnyEd’.

4.8.4 Additional categories included at question asking whether respondent is on a government training scheme (additions in bold)

Train

SHOWCARD F3

Were you on any of the government schemes for employment training shown on this card?

INTERVIEWER: Code one only.

1. Work based learning for young people / Youth Training
2. Work based learning for adults (WBLA) / Training for Work (TfW)
3. Work Trial
4. New Deal 25+ / Employment Zones / Project Work
5. Career Development Loans / Youth Credits
6. New Deal for Young People (18-24)
7. New Deal 50+
8. New Deal for Disabled People
9. **New Deal for Partners**
10. **New Deal for Lone Parents**
11. **Entry to Employment**
12. Any other training scheme
13. None of these

Findings

Almost all interviewers reported having no problem with this question and receiving no comments from respondents. A few interviewers indicated that respondents can have difficulty identifying which type of scheme they are on.

“If they are on New Deal most respondents are not able to identify which category it is.”

“It has always been the case that many do not know which scheme they are actually on.”

“I remember a proxy interview being done by a parent and she found it difficult to know what her son was on.”

“One respondent expressed gratitude at being given the chance to take advantage of the Entry to Employment scheme.”

A few interviewers reported some surprise expressed by respondents at the number of New Deal schemes available.

“Respondents have often never heard of many of these schemes and ask questions about them.”

Recommendations

None.

4.9 Additional interviewer instruction

Details of the change

Following interviewer queries in last year's field report questionnaire and at refresher briefings, a number of additional interviewer instructions and helpscreen notes were added to the FRS for 2010/11 (see highlighted text below).

Hours of Work

Totus1

How many hours per week do you usually work in this job/business - please exclude meal breaks?

INTERVIEWER: If the work pattern is not based on a week, or hours worked per week vary, get an average over the last 4 weeks.

See Helpscreen for instructions on recording number of hours worked per week if respondent was on-call, had a period of sickness absence, just started a new job or is an apprentice/ trainee.

HELPSCREEN

Accept respondent's view (but see 'ON CALL' below).
If last week not relevant, take most recent relevant period of 4 weeks.

Variable working hours

If the work pattern is not based on a week, or hours worked per week vary, get an average over the last 4 weeks.

ON CALL: average hours actually worked, i.e. called out, in last 4 weeks. This should include only those hours during which the respondent was actually working. E.g. if on call all night and called out to work two hours then actual working hours for this night would be two hours.

Sickness absence

If the respondent has been off sick for a long period, take the usual hours worked before going sick.

New job

If the respondent has started a new job in the reference week the usual hours should relate to what the person expects them to be in the future.

Apprentices and trainees

For apprentices, trainees and other people in vocational training exclude any time spent in school or other special training centres outside their workplace.

Payslip

PaySlip

INTERVIEWER: Code whether respondent is using payslip.
Payslip must be within past 3 months.

**INTERVIEWER: Use Code 1 if the payslip shows the latest pay received by the respondent.
Use Code 2 if the payslip shows pay received within the last 3 months but not the latest pay.
Use Code 3 if payslip is more than three months old.**

1. Latest payslip consulted
2. Old payslip consulted
3. Payslip not consulted
4. No payslip provided by employer

Amount of benefits and tax credits received per week

TtBPrx

Thinking about all the [benefits and tax credits] you receive, approximately how much would you say you receive from these sources per week?

INTERVIEWER: An approximate figure to the nearest pound is acceptable at this question. **Only an estimate is needed.**

Do not refer back to or change benefit amounts already provided. If the respondent cannot arrive at a figure immediately code as 'Don't know'.

If necessary, explain to the respondent that this question will give the DWP added confidence in the tax credits and benefit amounts already provided.

National Service classified as full-time work

FtWk

Looking back to the time when you finished continuous full-time education how many years since then have you spent in paid FULL-TIME work?

INTERVIEWER: Enter to the nearest whole year.

INTERVIEWER: Years spent in National Service count as full-time work.

INTERVIEWER: [NAME] finished full-time education at age [XX]. It has been around [XX] years since [NAME] left full-time education.

Childcare payment period

ChAmt1

How much was your most recent payment for the childcare with [CHILD'S NAME'S] [CHILDCARE PROVIDER]?

ChPd

And what period did that payment cover?

INTERVIEWER: If hourly rate code as 90 'Less than one week'.

INTERVIEWER: If payment period is per school term code as 13 'Three months/13 weeks'.

1. One week
2. Two weeks
3. Three weeks
4. Four weeks
5. Calendar month
7. Two Calendar months
8. Eight times a year
9. Nine times a year
10. Ten times a year
13. Three months/13 weeks
26. Six months/26 weeks
52. One Year/12 months/52 weeks
90. Less than one week
95. One off/lump sum
97. None of these (Explain in a note)

Findings

Most interviewers reported that the additional interviewer instructions included throughout the questionnaire were helpful.

“Yes, any instruction which assists the interviewer tends to make the interview more professional and flows easier.”

“Interviewer instructions were useful in focusing accurately on information required.”

“These can be very useful especially if respondent is difficult or raises these issues. It is useful to have something to refer to and reassures correspondents.”

More specifically, a number of interviewers commented that the instructions relating to payslip and the total hours worked question had proved helpful.

Payslip

“I found the additional instructions useful, particularly in relation to the payslip which I feel is the most difficult and sensitive part of the interview.”

TotUsl

“Yes, very useful! - Averaging work hours over 4 weeks for irregular shift patterns very helpful.”

However, some interviewers identified issues where they felt there was a continued lack of clarity. This was particularly the case in relation to question TtBprx – ‘Thinking about all the benefits and tax credits you receive, approximately how much would you say you receive from these sources per week?’

“Difficulty of adding amounts of different benefits paid on different time scales and never consider housing benefits.”

“I do not think TtBPrx is AT ALL CLEAR. It annoys a lot of respondents because 1) It seems like we are asking the question twice when we have just

been through it all and 2) It annoys me because I am not sure what I am asking. Is Housing Benefit included in this and Council Tax? - If so you should say so. But then of course a lot of people don't know what that amount is anyway. Also, I think all respondents do answer only about the benefit they actually receive as money. That is what we have just been asking them about. Rent, etc is in a much earlier section."

"Yes ok. But the question of TtbPrx still finds problems in that respondents start adding other income as well. i.e. private pensions etc."

"Total benefits received is not always understood. Pensions (state) are often not considered a "benefit"."

"TtBPrx: Am perplexed as to how an estimate off the top of a respondent's head, when compared with accurate figures copied already from bank statements can possibly give DWP added confidence in the figures collated. PLEASE EXPLAIN."

Few interviewers highlighted any questions where they thought further interview instructions would be helpful. Some of the suggestions and queries are reproduced below.

"Does mortgage protection policy covering critical illness count as sickness/accident in 'MpCover'?"

"I struggle with the bonds section particularly when the accounts have been prepared by an accountant and the assets are in a financial package."

"Advice about teachers' hours - they say they do loads of hours at home. Include or not? Help wording the question to teachers and self employed people."

"An increasing problem is pay going straight into the account (online basically) and no payslip provided. Quite often respondents don't want to spend the lengthy time in getting into program/account/finances on line because it is so slow and they don't want to prolong the interview or have me ring back."

Recommendations

- ◆ Review inclusion and usefulness of 'TtBPrx'. The Consortium's recommendation is to remove this question.
- ◆ Include interviewer instruction about overtime worked at home, at working hours questions.
- ◆ Review instruction on assets to see whether any further information can be provided on the recording of bonds, stocks and shares.
- ◆ Review instruction on critical illness cover.

4.10 Routing changes

Details of the change

There have been a number of changes to the routing of the FRS (see **highlighted** text below) in order to help the survey flow better.

Water meters

If respondent has a water meter and pays water rates or charges, do not ask how much their annual water bill is.

WaterMet

Are your water charges metered?

WaterPay

Do you pay water rates/charges?

WatAnul

How much is your annual bill?

Child income

KidInc

Do either of your children receive any income or earnings either from a spare time job, trust or other allowance?

INTERVIEWER: Include income received by 16-19 year olds from employment training as income from a spare time job

1. Yes
2. No

Ask ChEMA where there is any number of children in the household and whether or not the answer provided at 'KidInc' is yes.

ChEMA

Help_F9

Does [CHILD'S NAME] receive an 'Education Maintenance Allowance' (EMA) as part of the new Government scheme?

Current Account mortgage

MorAll

SHOWCARD B8 AND B9

Is your all-in-one account mortgage, a current account mortgage or an offset mortgage?

1. Current account mortgage
2. Offset mortgage

If answer at MorAll = 1 'Current Account Mortgage' then do not ask IncMP.

IncMP

Was this mortgage protection payment included in [the mortgage payment you mentioned earlier]?

1. Yes
2. No

Findings

Almost all interviewers reported no problems with the question routing changes and few made comments on the question routing. Some interviewers commented that the routing change in relation to water meters was an improvement.

“The water section is much improved by not having to ask meter users for an annual total - that was always a problem.”

“Good to see Annual Amount reduced from water rates, as, clearly, amount depends on consumption.”

“It has been a problem in the past for people with metered supplies to give an annual cost as the bills don't seem to cover any set periods. Much easier now we don't ask.”

Recommendations

None

4.11 Additional checks

Details of the change

A variety of checks were added to the FRS (see **highlighted** text below) in order to improve the accuracy of data recorded.

Pension age

Ben1Q

SHOWCARD I1

Looking at this card, are you at present receiving any of these state benefits in your own right: that is, where you are the named recipient?

1. Child Benefit
2. Guardian's Allowance
3. Invalid Care Allowance/Carer's Allowance
4. Retirement Pension (NI), or Old Person's Pension
5. Widow's Pension, Bereavement Allowance or Widowed Parent's (formally Widowed Mother's) Allowance
6. Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (formerly War Disablement Pension) or War Widow's / Widower's Pension (and any related allowances) or Guaranteed Income Payment
7. Severe Disablement Allowance
8. None of these

If a respondent is recorded as receiving a 'Retirement pension (NI), or Old Person's Pension' then the following check appears:

"You've recorded that this person receives Retirement Pension/Old Person's Pension but the respondent is not of retirement age. Are you sure that's right? Please amend as necessary."

Tax Credit lump sum

Ask if TaxCred = 1 (WTC)

WTCLum

Please look at this card and tell me in which of these ways you are currently receiving your Working Tax Credit?

1. Lump Sum under £105 covering payments for the whole year
2. Regular payments via your bank, post office account or Giro

Ask if TaxCred = 2 (CTC)

CTCLum

Please look at this card and tell me in which of these ways you receive your Child Tax Credit?

1. Lump Sum under £105 covering payments for the whole year
3. Regular payments via your bank, post office account or Giro

If Working Tax Credit AND Child Tax Credit are both recorded as being received in a lump sum then the following check appears:

"Are you sure? It isn't possible to receive a lump sum payment for Working Tax Credit AND Child Tax Credit. Please check with the respondent and amend the answer. Make a note of the circumstances if this check is suppressed and the answer not amended."

Educational establishment attended

TypeEd

What type of school or college does He/She attend?

Various soft checks have been added to check that the type of educational establishment attended is consistent with age.

E.G.

If a child outside of the 4-11 years age range is recorded as attending a state run primary school then the following check appears:

'This doesn't sound right in relation to [Name's] age: Please check your entry.'

Pension contribution

OthDed

Were there any deductions from your wage/salary such as ...

INTERVIEWER: Code all that apply.

INTERVIEWER: Exclude childcare vouchers and Smart Pension or Salary Sacrifice Pension schemes at this question. These should be recorded at following questions as a benefit in kind (something received from employer).

1. ... contribution by you to a pension or superannuation scheme?
2. ... AVCs (Additional Voluntary Contributions)?
3. ... Union Fees?
4. ... Friendly Societies?
5. ... sports clubs or specialised pastimes?
6. ... repayment of a loan from your employer?
7. ... Private Medical Insurance?
8. ...Charities
9. ...any other deductions which we have not mentioned so far?
10. ...none of these

ChkNoP

Help_F9

INTERVIEWER: The respondent seems NOT to have a pension which is being contributed to, is this correct?

Identify whether the respondent has no pension at all, or is making a contribution to a pension or has ONLY frozen pension(s).

If the respondent has no pension at all code as 1 'No pension'. If the respondent has any pension that is being contributed to code this as code 2 'Does have a pension'. If the respondent ONLY has a frozen pension record as code 3 'frozen pension only' at this question. This is the ONLY question where a frozen pension should be recorded. DO not record details of frozen pension anywhere else in the pension section.

If OthDed = 1 "Contribution by you to a pension or superannuation scheme" AND ChkNoP= 1 'No pension' or ChkNoP=3 'Frozen pension' then the following check appears:

"Earlier the respondent said they contribute to a pension or superannuation scheme through their wage/salary, but do not appear to currently have a pension. Check answers with respondent and amend the pay or pension details accordingly. Please make a note of the circumstances."

Findings

Almost all interviewers reported that the additional checks were useful, while a few felt that they had made no difference. The check at ChkNoP was particularly welcomed by a number of interviewers.

"Good to have the check on the pension position. I have found that quite a few people say they do not have a pension so an additional check is helpful."

“I found the pension checks very helpful. It is a muddling subject where a few pensions for two people are involved.”

There were very few negative comments about checks, however some respondents felt they encountered problems.

“I found the soft check on pension question phased me more than helped. When I checked with the respondents to whom it applied they thought I had not listened properly to their reply.”

“The working tax/child tax credit lump sum check was a new one - the check sounds abrupt. Are you sure? It isn't possible to receive a lump sum... etc. I think the checks wording should be softer.”

Some interviewers reported that it was important not to introduce too many checks to the FRS, as this could interrupt the flow of the survey. However, some interviewers also identified questions where additional checks could be introduced.

“As it now stands, the FRS interview, with all its 2010-2011 changes is very comprehensive - and quite complex. It already lasts longer than most respondents are prepared for, so I feel more checks are unnecessary.”

“Although useful on the benefit questions, I feel if too many checks are inserted this may prevent the flow of the questionnaire.”

Recommendations

- ◆ Review the wording of the Working Tax Credit lump sum check and add an ‘INTERVIEWER:’ statement to emphasise that the wording is for the interviewer’s benefit and should not be read to the respondent.

4.12 Other questionnaire changes

Details of the change

Interviewers were asked to comment on a number of smaller changes which included those set out below.

- **TypeEd/ChAtt:** A new check was added to ensure consistency between the questions asking what type of school or college a child attends and whether they have attended any particular type of educational establishment in the last seven days.
- **RoomShar/NmRmShar:** The question asking how many rooms are shared with anyone who is not a member of the household is only asked if the respondent has already confirmed that some rooms are shared with someone who is not a member of the household.
- **AccJob:** The question asking whether the accommodation a respondent lives in is related to jobs retired from as well as from current occupation.
- **MortProt:** Interviewer instruction has been added explaining why questions about household insurance are asked on FRS.
- **CTAmt:** For Scottish cases, instruction was added explaining what to do if a respondent has a private water supply and does not pay for water and sewerage with their Council Tax.

- **WhyNoCT:** New answer categories were added to the question asking respondents why they pay no Council Tax.
- **GrWage/UGross:** Reference to receiving Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit through salary/wages was removed.
- **WhyNoUsI:** New answer categories were added to the question asking respondents why their latest pay was not the amount they usually receive.
- **OthDed/ExpBen:** Instruction was added directing salary sacrifice pensions to be recorded at the question relating to benefits received from employer ('ExpBen'), not the question relating to deductions from wages/salary ('OthDed').
- **PenLtr:** The different components of the state pension are no longer collected. Only the overall pension amount is asked for.
- **ChEarns:** At the question on children's earnings, a separate answer category was introduced to record any income from employment training.
- **Accounts:** Changes have been made to interviewer instructions relating to Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs). These reflect the new annual allowances and the fact that the two types of ISA available are now classified as 'cash' and 'stocks and shares'.

Findings

Most interviewers had no problems with these changes and overall reported that they had improved the FRS. The change to PenLtr was particularly well received, though one interviewer expressed a preference for the old question.

"Thank you for removing itemised pension from DWP letter! A big help."

"They can usually get accurate amount from bank statement but hunting down the actual letter often a waste of time."

"The pension question is much simpler now as respondents did not know what the different components were."

"PenLtr - Good because few respondents were aware of state pension components, or wouldn't/couldn't find letter from DWP giving breakdown."

"PenLtr: This change has been very helpful in eliminating previous problems."

"I would prefer the pension break down was still collected. It provided a good reason for us asking them to produce a piece of paper. If they have spent 5 minutes searching for their letter, it is annoying to them that all we do is record the total - when they could have told us that easily without the letter."

An interviewer commented on an issue with asking parents about income their children have.

"KidInc better phrased with "money from trust or other allowance" coming before the spare time job (parents of small children seem annoyed when asked if their children work)."

Recommendations

None

4.13 Doorstep materials

Findings

Overall, interviewers considered that they had adequate doorstep materials. Interviewers commented on the quality and usefulness of the materials provided.

“All materials in briefing pack excellent as are the materials you receive with your monthly allocations.”

“I use all the materials, as they are helpful, in reassuring respondents. In this day and age people are wary/suspicious, and need to know the survey is genuine.”

Recommendations

None.

4.14 Additional comments

Details of the change

We asked interviewers whether they had any other points (either positive or negative) that they would like to make about FRS 2010/11.

Findings

Many of the interviewers who made additional comments were very positive about the FRS and reported that the changes made this year have improved the survey.

“The changes made to the questionnaire helped it run much more smoothly this year.”

“The FRS interview, in 2010/11 and in previous years, is the most skilfully constructed interview I have worked on...It leads the respondent along gently at first, before building up to more difficult and sensitive questions on income, payslip etc. If we maintain and develop this formula, I am sure the survey will go from strength to strength.”

“I think the FRS is a well developed questionnaire and runs very well.”

“I personally find that FRS has about the best 'flow' of any of the surveys and cannot recall any particular aspect that 'really wound me up'.”

A number of interviewers remain concerned at the length of the FRS and report that respondents can find it burdensome.

“My only comment is to encourage questionnaire not to exceed 60 minutes length as respondents become bored and restive. Much has been achieved over the years to make the study more interesting but it remains a tough task to sell it on the doorstep to busy working people especially the self employed for whom time is money.”

“The survey can be long. It is important to keep it as concise and short as possible. Good routing is key. For example, if it is clear that a respondent is not on any benefits - then whole section can be dealt with just one question.”

“As with other surveys it is difficult to maintain interest when interview lasts more than 60 mins.”

Some interviewers commented on specific FRS questions.

“Does seem over the top to ask people of advanced years their work history.”

“Bank Accounts: On the question of which of these bank accounts do you have and have you had in the last 12 months, it might be better to qualify why you are asking that question, such as we are looking at different types of account people hold with different types of organisations, it is a bit softer approach as the present question looks like you are going to start prying into their bank account details.”

“HelpRec/HelpGvn: It is good that it makes it clear where birthday and Christmas gifts are to be considered and accounted for.”

Recommendations

None.

4.15 Data linkage

4.15.1 Data linkage (Northern Ireland)

Details of the change

The data linkage question has been included in the Northern Ireland version of the FRS questionnaire from this year. We asked NISRA interviewers how well the question wording had worked and how well respondents had understood and received the question.

[ROUTING: If Pprox=1 'Personal]

PreDWP

<Help>

Thank you for your help, there is another way you can help us.

The Department for Work and Pensions would like to add the records they already hold on your benefits, tax and employment to your answers to this study. Adding everyone's records in this way will help us with further research to get a more accurate picture of people's living standards.

If you agree to help, we will need to pass your name and address to the Department for Work and Pensions. This is so they can find your records to add them to your answers. All information will be used for research and statistical purposes only. Your personal details will, of course, be kept strictly confidential.

INTERVIEWER: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) hold tax and employment records for everyone in the UK, and are the Great Britain equivalent of the Northern Ireland Department for Social Development (DSD). While the DSD collect the benefit information for the Northern Ireland population, the data is managed on their behalf by the DWP.

The FRS is a UK-wide survey and is commissioned by DWP in Great Britain and the DSD in Northern Ireland.

If required, give the respondent additional information to help them understand the request. Use the flow chart and written version of the request for this.

Always leave the information leaflet (which includes further confidentiality assurances) with the household where the respondent has agreed to data linkage.

Reason for needing personal details and confidentiality assurances are in the Helpscreen.
:(Continue)

[ROUTING: If Pprox=1 'Personal']

LnkDWP

Would it be okay to pass your name and address to the Department for Work and Pensions?

1. Yes
2. No

If LnkIDWP=2 'No'

LnkRef

INTERVIEWER: Record reason for refusal. Probe for reason if respondent has not freely given you one.

If reason given is not in the list below code 'other'.

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Concerns about security of their personal details
2. Concerns about privacy
1. Anti-government
2. Previous negative experiences with DWP
3. Too much information being requested
4. Didn't understand data linkage request
5. Can't be bothered
6. Will result in unwanted further contact
7. Influenced by other HH member
8. Temporary UK resident without National Insurance number
9. Other reason given (please specify)

[ROUTING: If LnkRef=11 'Other reason given']

LnkRefOth

INTERVIEWER: Please record other reason for refusal.

Open up a note if necessary to record a complete description.

Findings

Almost all of the NISRA interviewers who responded reported that the data linkage question wording worked quite well, while one interviewer reported that it had not worked very well. Again, almost all interviewers felt that in general respondents had understood this question quite well but one interviewer felt that respondents had understood the question not at all well. All interviewers reported that it was quite easy to collect the first name and surname of respondents after they have agreed to have their data linked.

There was a mixed response to the materials given to interviewers in order to assist with the data linkage question. All of the interviewers reported that the data linkage leaflet was either very useful or quite useful. However, most interviewers reported that the laminated flow chart and laminated question wording were not very useful or not at all useful. This conflicts with reports from interviewers working on FRS for NatCen and ONS where the laminated materials were well received.

There were mixed feelings among interviewers about how well, in general, respondents received the data linkage question. Some interviewers reported that respondents had received the question quite well, while others reported that respondents had received the question not very well.

Interviewers made the following comments regarding the data linkage question:

“In general the response is met with either an emphatic no or a response such as “I suppose there is no harm in it.” I have yet to meet real enthusiasm.”

“As far as we know (respondents received the question quite well) but we cannot assume what their inner thoughts are on this question.”

“I would like to make two comments. (i) I think it would be very helpful to add the short part from the leaflet at the end of the second paragraph of PreDWP. For example, “your DSP/DWP records do not hold many of the details etc”. I have found this very helpful in explaining the importance of data linkage. (ii) Replace with ‘we will then pass’ to DWP, rather than ‘need to’ which sounds like an apology and a bit negative.”

All of the interviewers reported that this question identifying reasons for respondents’ refusal to the data linkage request worked very well or quite well.

Recommendations

- ◆ Discuss with NISRA whether experience of the small number of interviewers who reported back on administering the data linkage question is shared by all NISRA interviewers working on FRS. The laminated documents were well received by interviewers in Great Britain.

4.15.1 Data linkage (United Kingdom)

Details of the change

Where a respondent agrees to have their FRS answers linked to the DWP’s administrative data, they are now asked to provide their official first name and official surname to enable DWP to carry out data matching with more accuracy.

If LnkDWP=1 ‘Yes’

LnkFNm

INTERVIEWER: please enter first name. Interviewer: Ensure that if respondent is known by their second/middle name that they give you their ‘official’ first name here. An ‘official’ name is needed so that an accurate match with DWP records can be made.

: STRING[100]

If LnkDWP=1 ‘Yes’

LnkLNm

INTERVIEWER: enter last name (surname) so an accurate match with DWP records can be made.

STRING[100]

Findings

No problems were reported with these two questions. An interviewer made the following positive comment:

“Good requesting official first name and surname for data linkage as might forget to ask different surname of partner where not married otherwise also

abbreviated or nickname may have been given at intro but would not be adequate for DWP so this is an improvement.”

Recommendations

None.

4.16 Conclusions

Overall, interviewers appear to be happy with FRS questionnaire content and found the improvements made for 2010/11 to be beneficial. There continue to be some questions to which respondents find it difficult to supply accurate answers. For example, the question asking roughly how much the respondent receives in benefits and tax credits per week. Interviewers have suggested ways in which further changes could improve FRS questionnaire content and these have been put forward in this report as recommendations for changes to FRS 2011/12. For ease of reference, these recommendations are summarised below in questionnaire order to highlight the overall impact of the suggested changes to the FRS questionnaire.

Recommendations

Mortgages

- ◆ Review instruction on critical illness cover at the question ‘MPCover’, to identify whether further instruction is required to inform interviewers about what should be recorded.

Prescriptions

- ◆ Change period of Scottish pre-payment certificates. (This issue has been raised for a September 2010 update).
- ◆ Add interviewer instruction on how to deal with private prescriptions.
- ◆ Add interviewer instruction on how to record details if prescriptions are sometimes paid using a pre-paid certificate and sometimes with cash.

Work

- ◆ Introduce extra interviewer instruction clarifying how to deal with agency workers at the question ‘OrgEmp’ and ‘Sector’.
- ◆ Introduce extra interviewer instruction clarifying whether employees in an overseas branch of the company should be included in the total number of employees at the organisation.
- ◆ Add interviewer instruction to clarify whether work outside of the U.K should be included at question ‘EverWrk’.
- ◆ Review how to prevent misreporting by students of paid work at question ‘EverWrk’, where only casual or holiday work applied.
- ◆ Include interviewer instruction about hours spent working overtime at home, at working hours questions.
- ◆ Add ‘INTERVIEWER:’ statement before Working Tax Credit lump sum check to emphasise that the wording is for the interviewer’s benefit and should not be read to the respondent (September update).

Company vehicles

- ◆ Review 'CarCon' question to try and provide more clarity for interviewers and respondents about which type of contributions towards a company car should be recorded.

Deprivation questions

- ◆ Provide interviewer instruction to clarify what types of bill should be included at the question asking respondents whether they keep up with bills and any regular debt repayments (ADbtBI).
- ◆ Clarify for interviewers and respondents how to answer the question on children eating fruit and vegetables where the child is provided with fruit and vegetables but does not eat them.
- ◆ Clarify that the definition of a warm winter coat is open to respondent interpretation.
- ◆ Review the use of the term 'organised activity' and consider providing examples or definition of these.

Benefits

- ◆ Remove the question 'TtBPrx'.

Assets

- ◆ Review instruction on assets to see whether any further information can be provided on the recording of bonds, stocks and shares.

Data Linkage

- ◆ Discuss with NISRA whether experience of the small number of interviewers who reported back on administering the data linkage question is shared by all NISRA interviewers working on FRS. The laminated documents were well received by interviewers in Great Britain.