

Department of Health

**STATISTICS CHARTER**

**The Information and Analysis Directorate** **(IAD)** of the Department of Health (DoH) is responsible for compiling, processing, analysing, interpreting, and disseminating a wide range of statistics covering health and social care.

Our statistics are produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/).

The following policy statements set out the ways in which Official Statistics produced by IAD comply with the pillars and principles contained in the Code. In compendium form the statements form a charter between IAD and users of our statistics.

* **Statement of Trustworthiness**
* **Statement on Quality**
* **Statement on Value**
* **Statement on Revisions and Errors**
* **Statement on Confidentiality and Security**
* **Statement on Customer Service**
* **Addressing User Needs**
* **Complaints Procedures**
* **Head of Profession and Data Managers**

# Trustworthiness

**Introduction**

Our commitment is to produce, manage and disseminate statistics for the maximum benefit, in an impartial manner that is free of political or personal interests. This relates directly to Pillar 1 of the Code of Practice for statistics which seeks to promote confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data.

* **Independent decision making and leadership**

The Head of Profession has sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases. A statement on the role of the Head of Profession appears elsewhere in this Charter (page 16). Statistical outputs are always released separately from any political statement or comment.

* **Statistical releases**

National statistics releases are always preannounced on the [national statistical release calendar](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements). Pre-release access to National Statistics is limited to specified outputs and post-holders within the HSC. Details of the publications and the posts concerned are published on our website alongside the respective publications

* **Honesty and Integrity**

All staff working on the production of statistics must give notice of any potential conflict of interest and in order to demonstrate impartiality must not, without prior approval, engage in any activity in a private capacity which could be considered to be a conflict of interest with official business. All DoH statistics are produced by NISRA statisticians who are governed by the Code of Practice for statistics. This includes regular training on the necessary skills to produce the outputs, as well as understanding their obligations in producing statistics in an honest and impartial manner.

* **Audit**

National Statistics produced by the DoH are subject to periodic assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation, the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority (an independent body operating at arm’s length from government) to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice. Additionally, the work of the Branches undertaking statistical analysis within the DoH are subject to internal audit.

* Data Protection Act

All personal data processed for the production of statistics will be treated in full accordance with the Data Protection Act and additional [GDPR requirements.](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr)

# Quality

**Introduction**

Our commitment is to provide sufficient information on quality to allow users to decide whether data meets their needs in adherence to the quality Pillar of the Code of Practice for Statistics. This is achieved by:

* **Applying scientific methods**

Scientific principles are applied to the production of statistics, and reports are accompanied by statements providing information on methods and factors giving rise to bias where applicable.

* **Performing quality assurance checks**

Statistical products are regularly evaluated to ensure key indicators such as relevance, timeliness, coherence and accessibility meet user requirements.

* **Training and guiding staff**

DoH statistics are prepared by qualified staff trained in the production, management and dissemination of statistics. Key processes are documented in staff manuals that are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff training needs are reviewed regularly through corporate governance procedures.

* **Continuous improvement**

All statistics are subject to regular review, including consultation with users, to ensure outputs remain fit for purpose. When necessary, steps are taken to addresses weakness in design, production and dissemination and to fill information gaps in existing provision.

* **Promoting comparability**

Comparability within the UK is achieved whenever possible through the adoption of common standards, concepts, sampling methods, questions, definitions, statistical units and classifications. Where differences do exist these are identified and explained.

* **Ensuring continuity**

When changes are made to methodology or coverage, users are informed and, whenever possible, contextual information will be added to minimise the effect of a break in data series.

* **Transparency of quality**

Where appropriate, statistical outputs will be accompanied by data quality reports, allowing users to assess the strengths and limitations of the statistics to determine how well they meets their needs

# Value

**Introduction**

Our commitment is to make our Statistics valuable to the widest possible audience and to maximise the use of our statistical information (subject to resource constraints) and the need to comply with legal, ethical and confidentiality conditions. This ties in closely with the Value pillar of the Code of Practice for statistics which states that statistics should support society’s needs for information. This is achieved by:

* **Relevance to users**

The content of our outputs and products, and the supporting information we provide, are informed by an understanding of our customers’ needs - obtained through a combination of analysis of demand, networking and consultation.

* **Informing our users**

We will help users understand and make the best possible use of our outputs by publishing supporting and background material, and by encouraging the use of our customer enquiry arrangements. Where possible, we will incorporate useful context into the supporting commentary.

* **Web focus**

To promote the widest access, we use the Web as our main channel for the dissemination of statistics. This means all our outputs are made available at the DoH website or specific publications via links from the ONS Publication Hub.

* **Accessibility**

We make it easy for users to find and understand our published data by using adequate signposting and standard documentation procedures. Our website has been designed with user accessibility in mind. The website is designed to comply with the Guidelines for UK Government websites which supports the World Wide Web Consortium’s (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 1.0.

* **Number and types of releases**

The DoH expects to produce approximately 70 statistical titles annually, however, the precise volume of output varies year on year. The publications are all released in electronic format, published on the internet and can be downloaded free of charge.

* **Timing of releases**

Release dates for the DoH National Statistics outputs are pre-announced via the Office for National Statistics Publication Hub. This can be accessed directly or via a link from the DoH statistics website. Statistical Press Notices (containing preliminary and summary results) are normally issued through the DoH Press Office at 9.30 on the day of publication, when they are also posted on the DoH website.

* **Format of releases**

The DoH Head of Profession maintains responsibility for the content, format and timing of all statistical outputs.

Statistical releases are always issued separately from any policy statement or comment about the figures by a Minister. Typically, periodical publications retain core, standard tabulations, but content may vary to reflect needs of users and to allow proper presentation and analysis of new or particularly interesting results.

* **Pre-release access to statistics**

A [statement of compliance](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/doh-pre-release-compliance-statement) sets out the principles, criteria and conditions under which the DoH permits pre-release access to specific outputs. It includes a list of the DoH posts for which pre-release access is permitted and the outputs to which access is granted. See Statement of Compliance with the Pre-release to Official Statistics Order (NI) 2009.

* **FOIA considerations**

Statistics being compiled by the DoH prior to the published release date cannot be made available under the FOIA as they are still in the course of completion.

* **Clarity and insight**

IAD strive to utilise creative and modern methods when analysing and presenting the data to end users with the aim or providing a relevant and authoritative insight that serves the public good.

* **Efficiency and Proportionality**

Where possible, data will be released in a form allowing their reuse in the most efficient way possible.

# Revisions to Published Statistics and the treatment of Errors

**Introduction**

Our commitment is to make clear when outputs are subject to scheduled revision and to explain the nature and extent of revisions when they are made. Users should be confident that both planned and unplanned revisions will be introduced in a structured and transparent way in accordance to the Code of Practice for Statistics Q3.4

* **Planned revisions**

Where an IAD publication has a planned or periodic revision, the effected figures will be marked as *Provisional* and *Revised* as appropriate and, the revision recorded as a footnote. Where a substantial methodological change is planned, IAD will, where possible, consult with users and announce its intentions before the release of the statistics based on the new methods. This may take the form of a note in a prior publication or within a technical annex. For any key Official or National Statistics, IAD will provide background information and an explanation about the changes.

* **Unplanned revisions**

Many of the revisions IAD make are a normal, unremarkable and inevitable feature of statistical life and users are able to absorb and plan for those revisions accordingly. They reflect the receipt of fuller and more complete information.

However, some revisions are ‘avoidable’, in the sense that they are the consequence of errors or weaknesses in procedures or systems, or are the result of errors in source material. Regardless of whether the responsibility is IAD’s or others we will follow the procedures described below.

Each revision will be examined to see if the effects are significant in terms of the degree of change or whether the changes affect the message the data portrayed. If the revisions are found to be insignificant, they will be introduced in the next planned publication and marked accordingly.

Where the changes are significant and IAD has determined that a correction is necessary and warranted, the published data will be updated as soon as is practicable. In such instances only the most recent version will be available on the DoH website and its title will indicate that it is a revised version. Where there has been a revision to a table, this will be recorded as a footnote to that table. If methodological revisions mean that previously published data and data published after the revision are not comparable, whenever possible, contextual information will be added to minimise the effect of a break in data series.

* **Dissemination of Revisions**

Decisions relating to the dissemination of unplanned revisions will be made by the Head of Profession within DoH. In general terms:

* **Web versions of releases/publications/tables/articles/etc**

As soon as possible after IAD ascertain that a correction is necessary and warranted, we will amend all current electronic versions of any release, publication, table, article, etc which contains the affected statistics or text, and re-populate the website as soon as possible with those amended versions. If the correction is minor, or insignificant, in the sense of being inconsequential IAD will make the necessary changes without alerting anyone. Alternatively, we may accumulate minor corrections and make an update at the time of the next scheduled web publication to avoid making too many frequent but minor changes.

* **Paper versions of releases/publications/tables**

IAD does not as a matter of course issue hard copies of its publications. However, if the error is substantial or significant, IAD will, where practicable, notify the known recipients of the electronic versions, and point them to the revised version available on the web.

# Confidentiality and Security

**Introduction**

Our commitment is to protect the security of our data and to uphold a guarantee that no statistics will be produced that are likely to identify any individual. This is in line with the Trustworthiness pillar of the Code of Practice for statistics (T6 – data governance) which states that information about individuals is confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only.

* **Arrangements for maintaining the confidentiality of statistical data**

The DoH has its own information security management systems that are subject to regular internal audit – see links.

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/confidentiality-code-of-practice0109.pdf>

* **Physical security**

All staff working in this organisation and all visitors to its sites require a pass to access the premises. There is no public access to any part of the organisation where confidential statistical data may be held.

* **Staff training**

All statistical staff working in the DoH receive mandatory training on data protection.

* **Technical security**

Staff in DoH have access to the secure network facilities of the IT Assist network which is formally accredited to store and process data and information up to the “Restricted” Protective Marking. Business areas are able to store data on dedicated areas of the network; secure backups are taken on a daily basis, and access to the data is limited as required by the business area.

Staff gain access to the IT Assist network facilities using official desktop and laptop computers and individual network log-on accounts and passwords. Laptops are encrypted to UK Government security standards are deployed where necessary to provide additional protection to information and data. The use of any other unencrypted USB devices and the storage of official data on unapproved devices such as mobile phones, personal memory sticks, PDAs. digital cameras, memory cards, home computers is prohibited as per *Circular DHSSPS SEC 2/2010*.

* **Disclosure Security**

We use a combination of data manipulation and/or statistical disclosure control techniques to meet the confidentiality guarantee. A specific example is:

[*Disclosure Review for Health Statistics 1st Report - Guidance for Abortion Statistics*](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/433400/Disclosure_Control_Protocol.pdf)

* **Arrangements for providing controlled access to data**

Most of the data analysed within the Information and Analysis Directorate is secondary use.

* **Requests for information**

We deal with all requests for information in a timely manner. We treat all requests fairly and without prejudice taking into account the public interest and the need to maintain confidentiality by conforming to the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act. Guidance on the Freedom of Information Act can be found [here](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/freedom-of-information).

* **Freedom of Information Act (FOI)**

While we treat requests under FOI on a case-by-case basis, our presumption is that requests for individual statistical records will be rejected. Both pieces of legislation contain exemptions and processes that protect confidential information.

* **DPA / GDPR**

The information that we hold is fully compliant with the [Data Protection Act](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/pdfs/ukpga_20180012_en.pdf). Information held by IAD is processed primarily under Public Task of the GDPR. The authority by which we do this is set out on the [Departmental webpage](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-task-statement), with further details of our compliance set out in this [document](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/appendix-1-personal-information-processed-by-information-and-analysis-directorate-iad).

# Customer Service

**Introduction**

Our commitment is to provide a high level of service to all our customers. More specifically we aim to meet the following standards of customer service:

* **Service to data suppliers**

We endeavour to operate efficiently by placing the minimum burden necessary on data providers and by integrating our statistical work with administrative systems where possible. We take responsible care of all the information provided to us and we respect the confidentiality of all identifying information in accordance with the accompanying Statement on Confidentiality and Data Protection legislation.

* **Service to users**

We will maintain the relevance of all our statistical outputs so that they meet the needs of all our users ([Code of Practice for statistics](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/) V1 ) and, whenever possible, make sure that the information we provide is equally accessible to the whole community ([Code of Practice for statistics](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/) V2). We welcome constructive comments on everything we do because that helps us to improve our service.

* **Requests for bespoke tabulations and analyses**

The content of DoH statistical publications is based on our understanding of user needs and covers a wide range of information. As much detailed information is made available as is reliable or practicable, subject to legal and confidentially considerations. In addition, every effort is made to meet requests for special tabulations and analyses, subject to legal and confidentiality considerations and staff availability.

* **Service standards**

If you get in touch with us, you can expect us to be polite, approachable and helpful, and to readily identify ourselves. We will make every reasonable effort to ensure that you are provided with information that is timely, relevant and accurate, and we will endeavour to meet the following standards.

1. We will endeavour to respond to customer correspondence, whether in paper or electronic form, within 5 working days commencing from the date that we receive your correspondence (Code of Practice for statistics V1).
2. Our response will either be an answer to the issue you have raised, or a notification that the correspondence is being dealt with, but noting that the full reply may take longer than the initial 5 day period.
3. Our holding reply will either contain a date by which we intend to provide a full response or a date by when we will contact you with a progress update. Sometimes our service delivery standards will be affected by circumstances beyond our control.
4. If we make a mistake we will apologise and do everything we can to put things right. If you have a concern about the quality of our service, or the treatment you have received from us and you cannot resolve the problem with the person you have been dealing with, you can make a formal complaint.

If you do decide to make a formal complaint, then please follow our complaints procedure, details of which can be found under Complaints Procedures in this Charter.

# Complaints Procedures

**Introduction**

This section of the Charter tells you how to make a formal complaint about our administration or service and what you can do if you are unhappy with our response.

**Our commitment**

* We aim to deliver a high quality service but we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. When this happens, we will do our best to put matters right quickly.
  + We will listen to your complaint and
  + treat it seriously, and in confidence;
  + investigate it thoroughly and fairly;
  + resolve it promptly, and informally whenever possible ;
  + wherever possible find a remedy and ;
  + learn from complaints to improve our services.
* **What to do if you have a formal complaint**

You can complain in writing, by e-mail, by telephone or in person (by appointment please). Please provide as much relevant information as possible so that we can deal with your case promptly.

* If you know which part of IAD is relevant to your complaint or the name, or title of the appropriate member of staff, please make your complaint directly to them (referring to this complaints procedure would be helpful).

If you do not have this information, please telephone our public enquiry point on **02890 522800,** who will put you in touch with the most appropriate person.

If direct contact is not possible or if having done this you remain dissatisfied, you should write to:

DoH Statistical Complaints Officer

Information and Analysis Directorate

Room 9

Annex 2

Castle Buildings

Upper Newtownards Road

Belfast BT4 3SB

E-mail: fiona.browne@health-ni.gov.uk

* An acknowledgement of all complaints will be issued within 3 working days of receipt, giving the name of the member of staff dealing with it. We aim to issue a full response to your complaint within 10 working days of receiving it. If we cannot, we will tell you why and let you know when you can expect to get a full reply. It will help us deal with your complaint if you can provide as much background information as possible.
* **Not satisfied?**

If you are not satisfied with the initial response you receive, or the way in which your complaint has been handled by the DoH Statistical Complaints Officer, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to the Director of Information and Analysis. You should write to:

Director of Information and Analysis

Annex 2

Castle Buildings

Upper Newtownards Road

Belfast BT4 3SB

* As a final resort if you are still not satisfied, you can ask a Member of Parliament or MLA to request that the Independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the NI Ombudsman) investigate your complaint and how it has been handled. The Ombudsman will only investigate after any internal review has been completed. If the Ombudsman is satisfied that your complaint has been dealt with fairly, he will close your case.

# Role of the DoH Head of Profession and Details of Data Managers Involved in the Production of Official Statistics

**Head of Profession (HoP)**

Dr Eugene Mooney, Head of Directorate

Email: [Eugene.mooney@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Eugene.mooney@health-ni.gov.uk)

The HoP, in consultation with the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), has final responsibility for the content, format and timing of all Official Statistics releases. In particular, the HoP is responsible for:

a) Setting the policy framework for release of Official Statistics by Data Managers (see below);

b) Deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures;

c) Deciding on the content and timing of statistical releases;

d) Advising Ministers on statistical issues;

e) Monitoring compliance with the Code of Practice and the policies of this Charter.

**Data Managers**

Hospital Information Branch

Data Manager – Siobhán Morgan

Email: [Siobhan.morgan@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Siobhan.morgan@health-ni.gov.uk)

Community Information Branch

Data Manager – Malcolm Megaw

Email: [Malcolm.megaw@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Malcolm.megaw@health-ni.gov.uk)

Project Support and Analysis Branch

Data Manager – Erin Montgomery

Email:[Erin.montgomery@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Erin.montgomery@health-ni.gov.uk)

Public Health Information and Research Branch

Data Manager – Bill Stewart

Email: [Bill.stewart@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Bill.stewart@health-ni.gov.uk)