

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Official Statistics / National Statistics

1. Information & Analysis Unit (IAU) produces the following Official Statistics. Such statistics are produced in line with the Principles and Protocols set out in the Code of Practice.
 - Legal Aid Statistics, produced annually
2. IAUs Official Statistics are not credited as National Statistics. National Statistics are the sub-set of Official Statistics that have been formally assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as being fully compliant with the Code of Practice. Nevertheless, the principles set out in the Code of Practice and Protocols are adhered to as far as possible by those who prepare statistics not designated as National Statistics.
3. Where contractors are involved in the production of Official Statistics, IAU will ensure that they understand and apply their responsibilities under the Code of Practice and Protocols and comply with the procedures set out in this statement.

ROLE OF HEAD OF PROFESSION AND LEAD STATISTICIANS

4. The Head of Profession (HoP), in consultation with the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, has final responsibility for the content, format and timing of all Official Statistics releases. It is the responsibility of IAU statisticians and all others involved in release of Official Statistics to follow the correct procedures and alert the HoP of any difficulties.

Statements and Policies

5. As well as complying with the Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols, our Official Statistics are also produced and published in accordance with the following statements and policies, each of which forms an integral part of this Compliance Statement:
 - Statement on Confidentiality and Access
 - Statement on Customer Service and Complaints
 - Data Management Policy
 - Statement on Releases Practices and Publication Strategy
 - Revisions and Corrections policy

STATEMENT ON CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS

Information & Analysis Unit's policy on openness

Information & Analysis Unit's Statement of General Objectives and Practices (SGOP) confirms our commitment to operating in an open and transparent way.

Disclosure of information will be the norm. We will aim to publish actively any information or advice we provide to others.

For practical and legal reasons, there will be a small number of well-defined circumstances in which we will not release advice or information. These are where:

- publication is imminent (within a matter of days) and premature release would be likely to lessen the effectiveness or completeness of a planned announcement.
- the information is incomplete or unsubstantiated and potentially misleading.
- we consider that the public interest in publication is outweighed by considerations of confidentiality, for example where disclosure of information would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.
- disclosure would be contrary to law, would breach the Agency's international or EU obligations, or would be in contempt of Court;

We will treat all requests for information on a fair and equal basis and without prejudice, taking into account the public interest and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Where we are unable to provide the information you request, we will explain why.

STATEMENT ON USER ENGAGEMENT, CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMPLAINTS

Service to Data Suppliers

We will endeavour to operate efficiently by placing the minimum load necessary on data providers and by integrating our statistical work across government. We will take good care of all the information provided to us and we will respect the confidentiality of all identifying information in accordance with the accompanying Statement on Confidentiality

Service to Users

We will maintain the relevance of all our statistical activities so that they meet, where practicable, the needs of all our users, and where possible, make sure that the information we provide is equally accessible to the whole community.

User engagement

We welcome any comments and feedback on everything we do because that will help us to improve our service.

Specific feedback - our statistics releases include a contact email address which can be used to provide feedback on specific products at any time.

General feedback - Please contact IAU@lsani.gov.uk if you want to provide views and suggestions on those statistics we provide and their presentation.

We will review all comments and suggestions as they arrive, although any substantial changes to our outputs or presentation will need to be prioritised as part of our broader planning process.

Occasionally, we will seek user views on specific issues, changes to particular statistical products or areas for development. When doing so, we will notify known user groups and allowing a minimum of four weeks for users to respond

Service Standards

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

Complaints

If you have a concern about the quality of our service, or the treatment you have received from us, you should first approach the person or unit with whom you have been dealing. If you still remain dissatisfied, we would encourage you to contact IAU at:

Information & Analysis Unit
Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland
Department of Justice
Third Floor
AIB Building
92 Ann Street
Belfast
BT1 3HH
E-mail: IAU@lsani.gov.uk

DATA MANAGEMENT POLICY

Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this Data Management policy is vested in identifiable and trained Analytics staff; they operate under the overall direction of the Head of the Statistics Profession.

Their responsibilities are to ensure that our organisation manages its data resources in accordance with the best practice principles and standards set out in the Official Statistics Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols; with the Statements and Policies which form part of this Compliance Statement; and in accordance with the organisation's statutory obligations.

PUBLICATION STRATEGY

The aim of our Publication Strategy is to make our Official Statistics accessible to the widest possible community and to maximise the use of our statistical information in all walks of life – subject to the need to comply with legal, ethical and confidentiality constraints. It comprises the following key principles:

Knowing our customers

The content of our resources and products, and the supporting information we provide will be informed by an understanding of our customers' needs - obtained through feedback, analysis of demand, and internal consultation.

Informing our users

We shall help customers and users to understand and make the best possible use of our products by publishing supporting information and background material where possible.

Web focus

In order to promote widespread access and informed public debate, we will use the Web as our main channel for the dissemination of statistics. This means that all our published statistics will appear on the Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland website: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/legal-aid/>

The content and format of our statistical output is kept under review, taking account of changing means of delivery and changing user expectations.

Charging

All the information we publish on-line will be free at the point of use.

Accessibility

We shall make it easy for users to find and understand our published data by using adequate signposting and standard documentation procedures.

Format of Releases

The presentation and layout of a statistical release is decided by the lead statistician in consultation with statistical colleagues. In general, the format will retain a core of standard tabulations in each edition. However, content may vary to reflect the needs of users and allow proper presentation and analysis of any new or particularly interesting results. Where practical, users will be informed in advance of any significant changes in format.

STATEMENT ON RELEASE PRACTICES

It is the responsibility of all those involved in the release of Official Statistics to follow the correct procedures and alert the HoP of any difficulties.

Pre- announcement and timing of Release

Release dates for IAU's Official Statistics releases are pre-announced on www.gov.uk. The exact date of release will be provided as soon as possible but no less than 4 weeks before release. All statistics will be issued at 9:30am on the day of release.

Access to data related to official statistical outputs prior to publication Certain people will have access to the official statistics in draft form and/or the data used to produce them. This includes:

- Staff engaged in the process of producing and disseminating the official statistics in question (including those responsible for overseeing the process and some members of the Department of Justice Northern Ireland.)
- Any persons requested to quality assure the statistics before their public release.

Pre-release access to official statistical outputs

The phrase 'pre-release access' covers privileged access to statistical releases in their final form prior to being placed in the public domain. In line with legislation, pre-release access to the agency's official statistics is restricted to a maximum of 24 hours before their public release on the following day, which will be at 09.30.

Pre-release access to official statistics is limited to those needing to respond completely when questions arise at the time of release. This may include senior Department of Justice and Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland officials. A record of people receiving pre-release access is available on the Department's website.

Conditions of access

Those persons who are given access to IAU's official statistics ahead of their release must keep the statistics secure and under embargo. They will be informed of the following conditions of access which they must abide by.

- They must not release the figures to anyone else or to report upon them until they have been officially released.
- They must not provide any indication of the content, including descriptions such as "favourable" or "unfavourable". (They may indicate that a release is forthcoming).
- The information must be treated as Restricted, and not made available under the Freedom of Information Act.
- Any accidental or wrongful release should be reported immediately to the Head of Profession for Statistics.

In the event of a breach of the principles and rules set out in legislation and described in this Statement, the HoP will notify the UK Statistics Authority of any breach and provide a written explanation. Statistics which are made available under Privileged Pre-Access Release will be published at the date and time of the official release.

STATEMENT ON REVISIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Corrections to statistics will be made if errors are found or if figures are amended as a result of changes to methodology or definitions. The revised report will be issued alongside the next version of the statistics output, or sooner if this is more appropriate.

The front page of the revised report will summarise what revisions were made and at what time. This information will be repeated on the webpage hosting the report as well. However, some corrections will not directly affect the figures in the statistical report. This includes correcting misspellings and formatting issues, updating contact details and re-wording confusing sentences. When such corrections are made, they will not be individually listed.

Errors in time series that appear in more than one edition will be corrected in the most recent edition only. Older editions will not need to be corrected.

After changes to the methodology or definitions, corrections to historical time series may be corrected to bring them in to line with the new approach. This may not be possible and depends on the data availability and the amount of work involved. The requirements of the users will be considered when making such decisions.

The Head of Profession for Statistics will advise the team responsible for the publication of any required corrective actions. We reserve the right not to publish corrections if the corrected figures are not yet available or if the resources required to issue them outweigh the benefits to stakeholders. In these situations, stakeholders will still be informed of the errors and their potential impact.

CODE OF PRACTICE BREACH REPORT

A breach of the Code of Practice for Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment.

It is for the relevant senior statistician of the organisation producing the set of statistics to determine whether a breach has occurred, and to document it appropriately. Any breaches in relation to equality of access, integrity, confidentiality and release practices must be reported.