

Code of Practice for Statistics Customer Service and User Engagement Policy



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Last updated: July 2021

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Introduction

Human Resource Consultancy Services (HRCS) is a branch of the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency within the Department of Finance (DoF) in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

(NICS). We are responsible for producing and disseminating a range of Official and National Statistics relating to the HR functions of the NICS, including recruitment, promotion and equality; sickness absence; as well as pay forecasting and Equal Pay Audits. The full series of statistics published by HRCS is available on the [HRCS web page](#) on the NISRA web site.

Background

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) requires all producers of official statistics to ensure that the statistics serve the public. The framework for this Code is based on three pillars (each containing a number of principles and detailed practices):

- Trustworthiness;
- Quality; and
- Value.

‘Trustworthiness’ is confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data. One of the associated principles relates to ‘Orderly release’ in which organisations should commit to releasing their statistics in an open and transparent manner that promotes public confidence.

‘Value’ means that the statistics and data are useful, accessible, relevant, and support understanding of important issues. This incorporates the principle of ‘Relevance to users’ – users of statistics and data should be at the centre of statistical production; their needs should be understood, their views sought and acted upon, and their use of statistics supported’.

Through this ‘Customer Service and User Engagement Policy’, HRCS will seek to ensure we meet the requirements of the Code so that our statistics support society’s need for information.

Commitment to Data Suppliers

HRCS will minimise the burden on data providers by efficient use of the administrative systems and efficient processes for the production of our statistics. We will ensure confidentiality and compliance with [HRCS Data Governance and Confidentiality Statement](#). We will utilise administrative data where possible to minimise additional data provision for statistical purposes.

Commitment to Customers

HRCS will publish timely, relevant, high quality statistics in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Our commitment to the customers of our statistics is:

- To publish our statistics on the time and date pre-announced (as per [GOV.UK Release Calendar](#));
- To publish our statistics in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics and HRCS Statistical Policies and Procedures;
- To publish statistics which are fit for purpose alongside supporting quality information;
- To regularly invite users to supply us with their views and opinions and to act on feedback received;
- To give open and easy-to-use routes to allow customers to supply us with their views and opinions;
- To respond quickly and accurately to questions and enquiries from our customers;
- To consult with users on our annual statistical work plan so that it may reflect their needs;
- To investigate and document the needs of users, the use made of our statistics and the decisions they inform;
- To take into account the needs of users in planning, producing and publishing our statistics and ensure our outputs meets those needs as far as possible;
- To consult with customers/users on developments and changes to our statistics' methodologies, publications or publication processes;
- To comply with the [DoF Pre-Release Compliance Statement](#) and [HRCS Revisions and Corrections Policy](#);
- To respond in a timely manner to any complaints from customers as per [HRCS Complaints Procedure](#);
- To be transparent when we are unable to meet any of these commitments above.

Knowing our users

Our customers can be categorised as being from the following groups:

- Senior managers and HR specialists working across the various government Departments within the NI Civil Service;
- Ministers and policy makers within the NICS;
- Colleagues within the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland;
- Board members and senior managers of NDPBs who use HRCS services to evaluate policy initiatives;
- Expert external special interest and pressure groups;
- Media and commentators; and
- the public.

Customer Engagement Policy

Our engagement policy recognises the differing needs of these users:

- some users simply require quick and easy **access** to the latest statistics;
- for some users, their requirement is to be **informed** of the publication of the latest statistics and **developments** to them;
- other users wish to be fully **consulted** on developments in our statistics either in terms of **methodology, publication or use; and**
- some users wish to be **fully involved** in steering the statistical work programme and ensuring their needs are met by the programme of work.

However, our engagement policy is set out to ensure that on key developments to our statistics, there are transparent and clear processes encouraging views from both internal and external customers.

Engaging with our users

We engage with our users in a number of ways:

- Easy and equal access to statistics through publication on the statistics page of the [HRCS section](#) of the NISRA website;
- Regular meetings with internal customers (e.g. policy makers, operational colleagues within NICSHR);
- Users can be kept up-to-date by joining our email distribution lists for specific statistical reports (email hrcs@nisra.gov.uk);
- Users can stay informed by following the NISRA social media channels;
- Users can provide feedback through our ongoing HRCS Customer Survey available on the NISRA website and included on all staff email signatures and all statistical publication pages of the HRCS section of the NISRA website;
- Conducting a customer satisfaction survey every two years to obtain feedback from users at individual output level;
- More detailed readership surveys are also carried out as and when required or appropriate;
- Inviting User feedback on all publications to hrcs@nisra.gov.uk
- A customer satisfaction survey is also carried out by NISRA periodically;
- Users can directly contact the relevant statistician. The name and telephone number of the responsible statistician are provided on each statistical release;
- Customers can respond to user consultations which are carried out as and when required. Such consultations are promoted through online channels including social media, emails to user distributions lists and team briefs;

- Investigating and documenting the needs of users of official statistics, the use made of existing statistics and the types of decision they inform;
- Media enquiries regarding the contents of a specific release should be directed to the Department of Finance's Press Office dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk.

The overall findings for all HRCS customer surveys and consultations carried out are published on the [HRCS section](#) of the NISRA website. User satisfaction with statistical outputs and service is routinely reviewed and addressed where practicable.

Access to statistics – routine publications

In accordance with the Code of Practice (T3 – Orderly Release) we publish an annual [HRCS Publication Schedule](#) to announce the month of release of statistics at least twelve months in advance and the exact date at least 4 weeks in advance. All published statistics are published at 9.30am on the scheduled weekday unless otherwise announced.

Once published, users can access our statistical reports in PDF format free of charge on the [HRCS section](#) of the NISRA website. Data tables are also made available in MS Excel or open format (Open Document Spreadsheet) to make better use of the data. Users can also view quality reports and infographics where available. Requests for the information to be made available in different formats may be made to hrcs@nisra.gov.uk. A charge may apply for formats not routinely used; individuals will be made aware of any charges and asked to confirm their willingness to pay prior to commencement of the work.

Access to information not in scheduled publications

When users require statistics not contained in existing HRCS statistical publications, such requests will be acknowledged within three working days and we will then consider each such request on a case by case basis. Where the information is available we will attempt to provide a response as soon as possible dependent on other work commitments and on the availability of suitable resources. Where the information requested is not available or does not exist, then HRCS will inform the requestor of this as soon as possible.

Fol requests

Requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act can also be made. Such enquires should be made to the following email address foi@finance-ni.gov.uk

Responding to consultations

Human Resource Consultancy Services will respond to every consultation providing a summary of all responses, the way forward which will be taken and the rationale for the decisions on the way forward. The HRCS response to all consultations on statistics will be published on the relevant section of the NISRA website. Users who have subscribed to the email notification service will receive updates through regular information mails.

HRCS Email Distribution Lists

Any user can join by sending your name and email address to hrcs@nisra.gov.uk. Your details will remain confidential, available only to the compiler of the regular updates and will be used to let you know when publications are released or to invite you to take part in consultations or surveys seeking your views about our statistics. Your details will not be used by HRCS for any other purpose, nor passed on to any other authority without your explicit and informed consent.

Feedback

We welcome feedback from users on our Customer Service and User Engagement Policy. Please send any comments to hrcs@nisra.gov.uk.