

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25
For the year ended 31 March 2025

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For the year ended 31 March 2025**

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PERFORMANCE REPORT

PERFORMANCE REPORT

Performance Overview

Our Organisation

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which incorporates the General Register Office (GRO), is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (Northern Ireland) (DoF) and was established on 1 April 1996. The administration of the marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland (NI) is the responsibility of the GRO, along with the registration of births, deaths, adoptions and gender recognition. GRO is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and the production of certificates in relation to these events on request.

As the primary provider of official statistics and social research in Northern Ireland, NISRA plays a key role in shaping public policy, supporting academic and private sector research, and contributing to broader societal discussions. The insights we deliver help guide important decisions across various sectors. A notable example is the Census of Population and Housing, conducted every ten years. Census data informs planning and service provision by central and local government, health and education authorities, and other organisations. Beyond public reporting, we support numerous Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies in developing policies and achieving their objectives.

Our Vision

Our vision is to deliver the key statistical, analytical, research and registration services which are needed to improve the lives of the people of Northern Ireland. We want to collect, analyse and publish the key information which users need to make important decisions, to the benefit of the shared economic and social objectives of government in Northern Ireland and the broader public good. Implementing this vision will involve:

- Working to modernise our data collection and linkage services to produce the highest quality information possible on the economy, population and society of Northern Ireland: embedding modern, low-cost and high quality data collection processes which promote interoperability between datasets to maximise the potential for analytical insights from linked data.
- Being innovative and proactive in our engagement: identifying and meeting user needs for new data and analyses, while continuing to produce trusted, valued statistical outputs, and working to deliver outputs in increasingly accessible, impactful ways.
- Working across government and with academics to deliver high quality research outputs which address important questions in support of the Programme for Government.
- Continuing to deliver first class registration and genealogical services to our customers, using modern, efficient and secure technologies, consistent with legislation and in line with best practice.
- Developing and supporting our people so we can continue to foster an engaged, innovative, diverse workforce who are valued, supported and empowered to develop their careers in NISRA. Through the delivery of excellent services and outputs, our vision will help NISRA continue to be a proud, confident, modern agency which is recognised for

trusted and independent statistics, analysis, research and registration services.

Our Purpose

Provide trusted and independent insight on life in Northern Ireland.

Our Mission

To deliver trustworthy, high-quality statistics, analysis, research and registration services which provide evidence to inform policy discussions and public debate in Northern Ireland.

Risks and Uncertainties

Risk management is embedded within NISRA's business planning and decision-making processes. The Agency maintains a Corporate Risk Register, which establishes the control framework and outlines the process for identifying and managing risks.

NISRA's Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) plays a key role in supporting the Accounting Officer (AO) by overseeing risk management, internal controls, and governance systems. The ARC also provides advice on the adequacy of internal and external audit arrangements to ensure the necessary assurances are in place.

The Committee includes two Non-Executive Independent Members, currently Olwen Laird and Joan McEwan (who also serves as Chair). Throughout this reporting period, the Committee operated in line with best practice guidance as set out in the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) 2018.

During 2024-25, the Committee convened four times, reviewing the Corporate Risk Register at each meeting. The following key risks were examined in detail:

- Workforce Planning / HR Issues (Recruitment and Retention)
- GRO Supply Chain Issues
- Lack of Appropriate Governance
- Failure in Transforming Statistical Data Collection and Survey Infrastructure
- Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistical Releases
- Data Security Risks and Cyber Threats
- Resource constraints impacting transformation of the Census and Population Statistics

The Committee remains committed to ensuring robust risk management and governance across the Agency.

Chief Executive Overview

As Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and Registrar General for Northern Ireland, I am pleased to present our Annual Report and Accounts for 2024-25.

The return of the Executive, the development of a new Programme for Government (PfG) and the continuation of the financial pressures which we faced in 2023-24 were all important aspects of the NISRA landscape in 2024-25. These developments brought with them considerable challenges. Our financial position in particular demanded that we continue to press down on our costs and to prioritise income generating work.

However, they also brought opportunities. The renewed PfG was accompanied by new statistical and analytical needs. We rolled out a programme of automation and analytical best practice across our teams in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). And we have renewed our focus on user needs: maximising both the value and the reach of our outputs.

Navigating this landscape, and balancing the many pressures which it brought, has been difficult. My teams across the Agency have responded with their characteristic commitment, professionalism and resilience. Their focus on delivering for our customers and driving forward innovation while maintaining public trust has been an inspiration to me, and is NISRA's defining achievement for the 2024-25 financial year.

Vision

The innovations and progress documented in this report reflect our renewed sense of mission and purpose. The development of the new NISRA Corporate Plan – *Statistics, Analysis, Research & Registration Services to drive decision making for the public good* – during the 2024-25 financial year provides an important compass for our future work.

As well as articulating our vision for how our statistics and registration services should develop over the next five years, the new Corporate Plan sets out the changes which we need to make to our operating model to fulfil our potential. It highlights the importance of investing in our people, our data and our digital infrastructure. It recognises the importance of our legislative mandate, our partnership working inside and outside of government, and of having a modern, user-focused approach to dissemination. It is an ambitious and strategic vision which sets out how we will meet the imperative for high quality analysis to inform public debate in our constantly evolving context.

Delivering impactful insights

Against this backdrop, my teams across the Agency have delivered rich and detailed analyses of the population, economy and society of Northern Ireland.

A central part of our work this year was the successful completion of the Census 2021 programme. The publication of the Census General Report in December 2024 marked the culmination of a decade-long effort, providing a comprehensive account of the planning, execution, and delivery of this vital exercise. The insights from Census 2021 continue to inform policy and planning inside and outside of government. The closure of the Census 2021 programme sets the stage for NISRA's recommendation for the future of population and census statistics, due in 2025-26.

Our Central Survey Unit (CSU) continued to deliver a high-quality service during 2024-25, conducting over 40,000 household interviews to support a wide range of policy areas including health, crime, and well-being. Notably, we partnered with the Department of Education to deliver

the first official Northern Ireland Childcare Survey, in collaboration with the Departments for Economy and Communities, that yielded vital insights into childcare use, affordability, and its impact on work and education.

As part of our new survey transformation strategy, we continued to develop the new online Labour Market Survey (LMS). This new survey is a transformative step which will help to modernise our labour market statistics. The LMS has already shown that well-designed, digitally-delivered household surveys can reduce costs and strengthen data quality. More than 64% of LMS responses are submitted online and 96% of returns fully completed. This innovation not only enhances the robustness of our labour market estimates but also marks the first time NISRA has processed labour market data in-house, reducing reliance on external partners and building internal capability.

Supporting Government and society

Alongside these innovations, teams embedded across the Northern Ireland Civil Service and Arms Length Bodies, have provided vital analytical support. This year, our staff contributed to a wide range of areas, including:

- The development of a new [PfG Wellbeing Framework](#). This new digital tool offers a user-friendly way of accessing key metrics about life and wellbeing in Northern Ireland, and sits alongside the specific ambitions of government as recorded in the PfG itself.
- Developing a prison population dashboard and supporting the implementation of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act;
- Work to quantify the impact of policy in support of the Climate Action Plan
- Enhancing the use of data from the new Encompass system to better understand hospital activity and waiting time statistics, while developing new statistical publications;
- Bringing forward new estimates of the value and volume of tourist day trips to Northern Ireland, providing a new and more accurate picture of the contribution that tourism makes;
- Supporting the development of Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan and analysing the impact of changes to agricultural property relief;
- Collaborating on planning system improvements and road safety strategy monitoring.
- Making a substantial contribution in support of the Covid Inquiry – documenting how NISRA responded to the pandemic to ensure future preparedness.

Our work through the Administrative Data Research Northern Ireland (ADR NI) partnership has also advanced significantly. We launched the NI Education Outcomes Linkage and the NI Longitudinal Study 2021, enabling new research into education, income, and important population sub-groups. These initiatives – delivered through a refreshed ADR NI Strategy – are helping to unlock the potential of administrative data for public good.

Registration services to meet user needs

The General Register Office (GRO) continued to deliver high-quality civil registration services. In 2024-25, GRO processed over 116,000 certificates, with 99.96% of priority applications and 100% of standard applications fulfilled within target timescales. Registrars conducted over 3,800 marriages and 56 civil partnerships, and GRO handled nearly 3,000 complex casework cases all within target timelines.

Our family history services also saw strong engagement during 2024-25, with over 850,000 searches conducted across our platforms. These services not only support individual needs but also contribute to our collective understanding of demographic trends and heritage.

Fulfilling our ambitions

This annual report also documents how we have started to deliver on the ambitions of our Corporate Plan to change our operating model to strengthen the services we provide.

In 2024-25, we have made significant progress in modernising our digital infrastructure and analytical capability. The development of a new proof of concept common analytical platform, alongside a draft common analytical toolkit for all our staff is a particularly exciting development. In time, this work will enable more consistent, efficient, and reproducible statistical processes. Our Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP) strategy, supported by a dedicated working group, is already delivering tangible benefits in terms of quality, transparency, and efficiency.

The NISRA Tech Lab has played a pivotal role in this transformation, supporting automation, dashboard development, and data visualisation across the Agency.

We have started enhancing our website and social media presence. We have launched the new Local Statistics Explorer – an interactive tool that allows users to explore NISRA data at local levels. And we have continued to prioritise user engagement, reflecting our commitment to a stronger, more user-focused approach to dissemination. Our outputs are now more accessible, engaging, and aligned with the needs of a diverse range of users as a result.

Our people are our greatest asset. This year, we delivered 19 wellbeing events, conducted new managed moves exercises to support career development, and held regular all-staff updates to maintain engagement and visibility. We also began a comprehensive review of our recruitment and HR policies to ensure they are fit for purpose and aligned with best practice.

We remain committed to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and skilled workforce. Our learning and development initiatives, including our RAP training pathways and digital skills programmes, are equipping staff with the tools they need to thrive in a modern analytical environment.

Looking Ahead

NISRA's performance during 2024-25 provides a strong foundation for 2025-26. Guided by our new Corporate Plan, our focus for the coming year will remain on delivering excellence through innovation and collaboration, reflecting our deep commitment to public service. Our work will be driven by our belief that the challenges which the Programme for Government lays bare can only be met by public policy which is based on detailed, high-quality and insightful analysis.

In this context, we will continue to work to modernise our data collection infrastructure, to expand our use of administrative data, and to enhance the accessibility and impact of our outputs. We will invest in our people to help them to fulfil their potential; we will progress new legislation to sustain our registration services and to meet the wider needs of our customers, and we will renew our engagement with our users as we set out an ambitious vision for the future of census and population statistics.

Above all, my outstanding team and I will continue to proactively respond to the challenges and opportunities of our operating context to help improve outcomes for people living here.



Dr Philip Wales

Accounting Officer

19 June 2025

Highlights of the Year

The return of the Executive, the publication of a new Programme for Government (PfG) and the continuation of the financial pressures which NISRA faced in 2023-24 all formed important elements of NISRA's performance landscape during the 2024-25 financial year. While these brought challenges – requiring us to prioritise carefully, to focus where possible on income generating work, and to keep our costs low – they also brought new opportunities: to innovate, to spread automation and best practice, and to meet new and emerging user needs, particularly in relation to the new PfG.

Navigating this landscape, and balancing the many and varied pressures which it brought, has been a challenge. But the way that our teams met these challenges has been a real highlight of the year. Our staff remained committed to delivering timely, high-quality insights to meet the needs of our customers and the public at large. Their adaptability, professionalism, and resilience have been central to maintaining public value and trust in our work and stand out as a defining achievement of the year.

The considerable capability of NISRA's staff was critical in the successful delivery of the new [NISRA Corporate Plan 2025-29](#) during this performance year. *Statistics, Analysis, Research & Registration Services to drive decision making for the public good* sets out an ambitious vision for NISRA for the next five years, recording both how we expect our services to evolve, and the changes we need to make to deliver on our potential.

Census

During 2024-25, Census Office released the remaining priority planned products from Census 2021 and published the general report on Census 2021 in December 2024.

The Census 2021 general report provides a comprehensive overview of the ten-year census cycle, covering all phases from initial consultation, legislative and planning efforts, to field operations, data processing activities, and the subsequent production and distribution of results. It also highlights important lessons learned throughout the process.

Work continues on the development of the planned Ireland / Northern Ireland Census report in conjunction with Central Statistics Office Ireland. It is envisaged that this will be released in the summer of 2025.

NISRA also received additional funding during 2024-25 to inform our understanding of how existing administrative data in Northern Ireland could be used in the production of our population and migration statistics. This funding enabled a research paper comparing the NI Statistical Population Dataset with Census 2021 to be published in December 2024, which demonstrated both the potential of and challenges involved in using administrative data in this context.

We are currently developing an administrative data acquisition plan in conjunction with the ONS and National Records of Scotland (NRS) across the UK to research alternative data sources for population estimates, migration statistics, and the Census. These workstreams will all help to inform NISRA's recommendation about the future of Census statistics, which will be published during 2025-26.

Survey operations and transformation

Demand for key insights into the population, society and economy of Northern Ireland remained

very strong during 2024-25.

NISRA Central Survey Unit (CSU) continued to provide its social survey research service to NI government and the wider public sector, conducting interviews with over 40,000 households. Our team of experienced and committed survey interviewers conducted interviews face-to-face and by telephone, to ensure surveys continued to provide key information on a wide range of topics including the labour market, health, crime and well-being. CSU recruited over 100 new interviewers during the year which has helped ensure that participation rates are meeting targets and are significantly above those being achieved by GB delivery partners.

In parallel, CSU also continued to provide the infrastructure underpinning social survey data collection in Great Britain for the Office for National Statistics (ONS). CSU hosted the Transformed Labour Force Survey and Opinions survey on its infrastructure, as well as undertaking the operational delivery of the UK wide Public Sector Management Practices Survey.

Following the return of the NI Executive, Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) policy in Northern Ireland was identified as a key priority. As no official data on childcare was available, NISRA worked at pace with the Department of Education (DE) and their cross-departmental ELC task and finish group to develop a new questionnaire and conduct the first official NI childcare survey. CSU put the survey into the field in Autumn 2024 and 5,315 households with children aged 0-11 responded. A small analysis team was created to validate and analyse the database. The results were published beyond the end of the financial year and provide a strong evidence base for future policy.

Work also continued during 2024-25 on developing the successor survey for the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in Northern Ireland. Building on the launch of NISRA's new online Labour Market Survey (LMS) in October 2023, the new LMS survey has been running in parallel with the LFS during 2024 and, as of October-December 2024, has now collected data from each of the five waves of the survey.

The new online questionnaire has been working well. Some 64% of responses have been provided online, and response rates to the new survey continue to be encouraging. It is expected that the new LMS survey will yield some 70% more returns per quarter than current LFS levels. NISRA has also for the first time begun processing the NI labour market data in-house – a role currently performed in respect of the LFS by the ONS. NISRA very much appreciates the considerable support that those households who have participated in this new survey (and indeed our social surveys more generally) have provided. The information provided has been pivotal to the ongoing development of the project and the integrity and quality of the resulting NI Labour Market statistics.

NISRA also continued to administer its eleven statutory business surveys which are integral to the functioning of the UK Economic Statistical System and the associated monitoring of the UK and, more specifically, Northern Ireland economies. We are very grateful to businesses for their continued cooperation and support in completing these surveys. The information provided has been central to informing, amongst other things, NI's position on key aspects of trade associated with the NI Protocol and facilitated economic policy development and support to local businesses. More than ever, the information secured through these statutory surveys is informing major decisions that affect people's lives and livelihoods.

Economic statistics

Our suite of economic statistics also continued to develop to meet users' needs during 2024-25. Our Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) branch produced, quality assured and released over 120 economic, business, labour market and tourism related outputs during the year via a mixture of monthly, quarterly and annual publications. These outputs were based on information

garnered from some 138,000 statutory forms issued as part of our suite of business surveys. Importantly, 2024 saw the release of new statistics detailing the value and volume of tourism daytrips for Northern Ireland, helping to provide an enriched picture of the important economic contribution that tourism makes.

These core business achievements are particularly significant given the major transformation projects that our Economic Statistics teams undertook to modernise and enhance their processes during 2024-25, involving four major transformation projects.

These projects comprised the development, testing and launch of the replacement Integrated Business Survey System (IBSS), which the Agency uses to administer its statutory business surveys. The project was highly collaborative in nature, involving delivery partners from Central Procurement Directorate, Department of Finance (DOF) Corporate Governance, ITAssist, Independent Security Advisors, the supplier and of course local businesses – whose feedback over the years helped shape the operational and functional requirements of the system. The delivery of the replacement system represents an important milestone for the Agency.

Allied to this development, significant time and effort has been invested throughout the year to develop more efficient and streamlined statistical processes. This has involved our Economic and Labour Market Statistics branch investing time and resources to develop a number of Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP) for the statistical processing of business survey data. As part of this we made very productive use of open-source software, facilitating a move away from costly proprietary software packages. This has been integral to the advancement of NISRA's RAP Strategy and Strategic Enablers detailed in NISRA's recently published 5 year [Corporate Plan](#).

The Economic Statistics team have also continued to work collaboratively with ONS colleagues on the development and testing of both the new online Labour Market Survey, and the new Statistical Business Register. The new register will include some 58,000 currently unregistered businesses added to the new register along with an enhanced range of variables (including data from HMRC's self-assessment records) that will be beneficial for survey stratification and quality assurance purposes when the new system is live in 2026.

Population statistics and research

2024-25 also saw the development of considerable new population statistics and research. The learning which the Agency did during the Covid 19 pandemic has continued to be applied, particularly through the development of an improved UK-wide excess deaths methodology during 2024-25. This remains an Official Statistic in development with several options being assessed to further refine the current method before new disaggregations are made available. To support public understanding of this work, NISRA published a detailed explainer document in January 2025.

In its role as a partner within the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded Administrative Data Research NI (ADR NI), the Agency continued to make progress against the 2022-2026 work programme to develop linked de-identified datasets which could be accessed safely by accredited researchers to enable research for policy driven needs. A number of existing data linkages have been further enhanced to support research in the areas of education and the economy with new datasets focusing on research on benefits and income. Although more work remains to be done to deliver on the potential of data to drive policy-relevant research, NISRA are grateful for all the support we have received from a wide range of departments in this area during 2024-25.

The continuing development of the NI Education Outcomes Linkage dataset was a particular highlight of the year. A launch event for these data was held in October 2024, bringing together

participants from academia, policy, voluntary and community sectors to present findings from the enhanced linkage and to help shape its future development. In addition, the NI Longitudinal Study 2021 was formally launched in April 2024 at the UK Longitudinal Studies Conference, making it the first of the UK Longitudinal Studies incorporating Census 2021 to be made accessible.

Over and above the extensive programme of 'Business as Usual' work highlighted above, the Agency also responded positively to calls for evidence in support of the important work being advanced through the Covid Inquiry, providing detailed witness statements as and when required.

Highlights for the NISRA network

Beyond our DoF branches, NISRA staff across the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) continued to support their host departments or organisations throughout 2024-25 by providing the vital evidence base needed to inform policy development and evaluation. Some examples of this work include:

Our teams in **The Executive Office** (TEO) and the NISRA Tech Lab developed and launched a new [PfG Wellbeing Framework](#). This new digital tool offers a user friendly way of accessing key metrics about life and well being in Northern Ireland, and has been widely welcomed by users during a considerable programme of stakeholder engagement. Its success was also recognised by the Analysis in Government Awards, where the project won both the 'Communications' and 'People's Choice' awards – fending off stern opposition.

The development of new analyses and visualisations for pharmaceutical data within the **Business Services Organisation** (BSO) Information Unit for both internal and external use was another important area of development. Enhancements were made to the main dashboard tool used for the internal Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness project, with development of additional analytical tools. A new HTML report and new PowerBI dashboard was created to accompany the Prescription Cost Analysis publication to provide additional intelligence including trend information. Other interactive tools were created to monitor the carbon footprint of inhalers, to provide accurate historical pricing of products and to monitor patients on specific drugs with patient safety issues.

Statisticians in the **Department of Justice** (DoJ) developed a prison population dashboard to help policy colleagues understand the increase in prison population numbers. They also produced a new official statistics publication as part of the reporting requirements of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021, undertook a review of the Advocacy Support Safety Information Services Together (ASSIST) initiative to provide an evidence base to support the work of policy colleagues, and provided extensive analysis and briefing to inform the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into Reducing Adult Reoffending in Northern Ireland.

An analysis conducted by Statisticians in the **Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs** (DAERA), in conjunction with the DAERA Economists, has established a solid evidence base to support the examination of the effects of changes to agricultural property relief on farms in Northern Ireland. Statisticians in DAERA have also been key to the quantification of policies that are integral to Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan that will go to the Executive and out for consultation in 2025.

The planning system in Northern Ireland has an important role to play in unlocking development potential and supporting economic growth. The **Department for Infrastructure** (DfI) is progressing a Planning Improvement Programme, working closely with local government and partners, to improve processes and the performance of the system. Statisticians in the Department conducted analysis of data for major and local planning applications with a focus on the statutory consultation

process. This informed discussions between the Department and local government with a view to establishing a new planning performance and improvement framework.

The Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 was agreed by The Northern Ireland Executive and published in September 2024. Statisticians in the **Department of Infrastructure** also published analysis of Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) Road traffic Collision data that help to monitor performance against the four targets within the strategy, alongside a suite of key performance indicators, developed in consultation with key stakeholders and delivery partners, to further support the achievement of the targets.

Statisticians in the **Department of Health** have been working closely with the IT developers of the new regional electronic patient record system 'Encompass' and the Health and Social Care Trusts in taking forward an ambitious program to modernise the way information is collated and extracted from the Trust administrative systems. As a testament to this collaborative working, statisticians have already been able to include validated data sourced from encompass in a wide range of hospital publications. Ongoing work will widen this to other areas of the Health and Social Care system.

They have also been involved in the development of a revised weighted capitation formula for the allocation of annual prescribing resources (Indicative Prescribing Amounts - IPAs) for General Practices in Northern Ireland.

In the **Department for Communities** (DfC), our teams developed a new Official Statistics publication – "Energy rating of housing in Northern Ireland". The report uses data collected in the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) process to present energy rating, the main fuel type used in heating, and the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of dwellings with an EPC in Northern Ireland. The analysis in the publication will be used, among other things, to inform the development of policy on minimum energy efficiency standards for residential properties.

The Universal Credit (UC) Programme team commissioned DfC Analytics Division (AD), to conduct research to help understand the key drivers of non-migration to UC for Tax Credit customers. This research was carried out between August and October 2024 and consisted of three key elements – Data Analysis, Qualitative Evidence from Customers and Qualitative Analysis from Stakeholders. The research proved extremely useful to help the Dept understand the factors which influenced the decision of these customers not to migrate.

The launch of the Education Outcomes Linkage (EOL) and progress on the development of the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) database resulting from collaboration between **Department of Education, Department for the Economy and NISRA DOF** represents a significant development in 2024-25. These data linkage initiatives will enable researchers to chart the career paths of individuals from school, through vocational education and training, further and higher education and into work. This ability to identify when people are at key transition phases provides powerful evidence about the impact of policy and the direction of social and economic change.

In the **General Register Office** (GRO), demand for our activities continued at the high level of recent years. Between April 2024 and March 2025, GRO processed 116,217 certificates, with 99.96% of priority certificate applications and 100% of standard certificate applications, fulfilled within target timescales (one and five working days respectively).

Between April 2024 and March 2025, Registrars carried out 2,631 civil marriages. There were 3,476 religious marriages and 1,116 belief marriages carried out in the same period. Registrars carried out 56 civil partnership registrations, involving 10 same sex and 46 opposite sex couples.

Additionally, GRO processed 2,984 casework cases including re-registrations, adoptions, name changes, corrections, and approval of religious and belief officiants. All were completed within the target timescale of fifteen working days.

During this period 715 members of the public visited the GRO public search room, with 63,946 recorded searches conducted from the GRO terminals. In addition to this, in the period between April 2024 and March 2025, there were 28,944 searches of GRO records from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) terminals. GRO registered 13,048 new accounts on the Family History website. There were 853,991 (including the Public Search Room (PSR) and PRONI) searches carried out, the most popular being the free index search which accounted for 733,260 searches.

Changing the way we deliver

As well as delivering new statistical services and outputs, 2024-25 was a year when NISRA started to make progress towards the ambitions set out in our new Corporate Plan.

In line with the Corporate Plan's commitment to **user-focused dissemination**, NISRA made significant progress in enhancing how we share and present data. To strengthen strategic oversight in this area, we established a Dissemination Board. We expanded the range of datasets available through the new NISRA Data Portal, which offers streamlined access to official statistics and allows users to easily explore and download data. And a light-touch refresh of the NISRA website was also completed, improving navigation and usability – further reflecting our commitment to making information easier to find and use. NISRA's approach to social media has also been modernised, with more relevant and engaging content tailored to a wider audience. This has helped improve public understanding and interaction with official statistics.

Under the **Digital Infrastructure** enabler of the Corporate Plan, NISRA has made strong progress in plans to modernise our data systems. The NISRA Agency Board approved a new Reproducible Analytical Pipeline (RAP) strategy to improve the efficiency and consistency of our outputs. Supported by a dedicated working group, this initiative is helping us deliver more streamlined, reproducible, and user-focused statistical products. A new data analytical platform and a common toolkit to support consistent analytical practices has also been piloted, while work to identify and specify our need for specialist ICT skills to support future delivery was also carried out.

In relation to our **strategic data assets**, NISRA has developed a new survey transformation strategy. The new vision embodied in this document is for a new suite of surveys which are increasingly conducted online, in a respondent-led fashion, to make the most of digital developments and to keep costs as low as possible. It sets out how we need to focus our specialist field force on key households groups whose response rates can be lower, but which are often of keen interest to policy makers.

During 2024-25, NISRA has also progressed important aspects of our '**Legislative Approval and Authority**' enabler. Notably, GRO made important progress towards advancing legislation which supports our registration service, introduces an enabling power to create Baby Loss certificates and which widens the birth and still birth registration processes for some same sex couples. Work to document the data sharing landscape has also been scoped, as a first step towards the consideration of how data sharing powers might need to evolve in the future.

Our **partnership working** also took an important step forward during 2024-25. Our ESRC-funded Administrative Data Research NI partnership refreshed its strategic vision for the remainder of the current investment period to 2026. And we have continued to strengthen the internal partnership working between different NISRA teams across the NICS by improving our internal communications

and progressing key cross-departmental projects.

Finally, work on our **Engaged, Ambitious and Skilled People** enabler has also started in earnest. As well as conducting managed moves processes for our Deputy Principal Statisticians and Assistant Statisticians, we have conducted a number of high-profile recruitment campaigns to meet demand for analytical staff. We have commenced a review of our recruitment and retention policies, and have identified new learning and development opportunities by working with colleagues across the Department of Finance.

Overall, we are actively positioning our organisation for the future—strengthening our capabilities to ensure we are well-equipped to achieve our aspirations and realise our ambitions.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Audit and Risk Committee Non-Executive Directors' Report 2024-25

During the financial year the Audit and Risk Committee met on four occasions on 30 May 2024, 20 June 2024, 15 November 2024, and 5 February 2025 with attendance at each one by the two non-executive members Joan McEwan (chair) and Olwen Laird. The Committee also held deep dives into two areas of high risk at the May and November meetings on workforce and HR and the Census respectively.

The Committee's year ahead workplan was updated during the year with the inclusion of bi-annual NIAO Audit Progress reports and deep dives, to ensure all relevant issues were reviewed which included:

- Reports detailing the financial position of NISRA on both Revenue and Capital budgets;
- Official Statistics update;
- Mid-year and Annual Governance Statements;
- NISRA Corporate Risk Register issues and mitigating actions;
- Internal Audit Reports;
- Direct Award Contracts;
- External Audit Reports
- Annual Report & Accounts;
- Agreeing the internal and external audit strategies for the year;
- Internal Audit Progress Reports;
- Deep dives on significant areas of risk; and
- Monitoring of NISRA progress in clearing both Internal and External audit recommendations.

The Committee is satisfied that any issues of concern were reported to the Departmental Audit & Risk Committee (DARC) and all minutes are also noted at both DARC and Board. Members also conducted Independence Reviews with both Internal and External Auditors to discuss privately any concerns which they may have had. Members were also pleased to attend the launch of the NISRA 2025-29 Corporate Plan in February 2025 and learn more about the organisation's research functions across the spread of departments.

The Committee also completed an Audit Committee Self-Assessment Exercise which was presented to the Committee at its May 2025 meeting. One of the recommendations stemming from this is to increase ARC membership to three members, in line with HMT guidelines, and this is currently under consideration.



Joan McEwan
NISRA Chair Audit and Risk Committee

Performance Analysis

A NISRA Business Plan set out our objectives for 2024-25, using an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) methodology to develop the Outcomes, Indicators and Performance Measures. Performance against the NISRA Balanced Scorecard is summarised in pages 15 to 24. NISRA is also represented in the DoF Business Plan 2024-25, shown in the NISRA DoF Performance Measures section below.

NISRA DoF Performance Measures: Priority 4: Excellent Public Services

Four of the Agency departmental performance measures for 2024-25 were Achieved; one of the measures to 'Amend Deaths and Still-births legislation' will be Achieved outside the timeframe. These are subject to review by Internal Audit as part of its work plan 2024-25.

| Target | Measurement | Timescale | Status | Annual Performance Review |
|---|---|------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Amend deaths and still-births legislation to make the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 permanent. | Advance preparatory work on legislation to continue the remote registration of deaths and still-births and electronic exchange of related documentation on a permanent basis. | March 2025 | To be Achieved outside timeframe | Secondary legislation has been laid to extend the Coronavirus Act 2020 provisions until 24 September 2025. The Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 25 March 2025. |
| Provide high quality statistical information to support public policy. | Maintain the percentage of the general public who state they trust statistics produced by NISRA. | March 2025 | Achieved | Provisional figures from the Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics 2024 survey (September to November 2024) suggest 84% of respondents trust NISRA statistics. Compared to 2023, there has been no statistically significant change. Final figures will be published in Autumn 2025. |
| Provide high quality statistical information to support public policy. | Release remaining planned Census 2021 outputs and publish a general report. | March 2025 | Achieved | Final planned outputs from Census 2021 released on 9 July and 8 August 2024. This included the Origin-Destination public tables (also referred to as migration and workplace flow data) and Alternative Population tables. The Census 2021 General Report was published on 19 December 2024. |
| Provide high quality statistical information to support public policy. | Develop and pilot new online Labour Market Survey. | March 2025 | Achieved | New online Labour Market Survey has been developed and piloted. Response rates are encouraging and development of NISRA's key statistical processes completed. Data analytics work is ongoing to inform the decision and timing for switching production of labour market statistics to the new survey. |
| Deliver key civil registration services - births, deaths, | 98% of priority certificate applications and 98% of standard certificate applications, fulfilled within target timescales (1 working day - priority | March 2025 | Achieved | The targets of 98% for priority and standard certificate applications have been exceeded up until the end of March 2025. |

| Target | Measurement | Timescale | Status | Annual Performance Review |
|--|---|-----------|--------|---------------------------|
| marriages, civil partnerships and adoptions. | certificate applications / 5 working days for standard certificate applications). | | | |

NISRA Examples of Innovative Work 2024-25

Business Service Organisation (BSO)

BSO have developed a range of new html reports and dashboarding solutions to improve user interactivity and experience – examples include their new Prescription Cost Analysis and Honest Broker Service reports along with monitoring dashboards for Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness programme, inhaler carbon footprint tracking, patients on potentially harmful drugs and dental patient registrations/movements. Other innovative work undertaken over the year include development of a new prescription pricing tool to assist with probity work, construction of a pseudonymisation pipeline using hashing and salting which processed over 1 billion records for the regional patient level costing project, novel application of synthetic data to reduce disclosure risk within HSC secure data environment and implementation of optical character recognition on prescription images, allowing linkage of missing patient data for research and statistics - a major data quality improvement initiative.

Childcare Survey Analysis Branch

First publication of data on Childcare experiences in NI and first publication of a Quick Read resource supporting a full report: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/childcare-survey>. This publication presents information gathered from the Northern Ireland Childcare Survey 2024 on childcare use; type and amount of childcare used; childcare cost; Summer holiday childcare; financial support claimed; the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme; direct payments; factors when choosing childcare; affordability and quality of childcare; and the impact of childcare needs on work, education or training.

Department for Infrastructure (DFI)

Dfi collaborated with NISRA Dissemination Branch to develop a Road Network and Condition Statistics Dashboard. This was a new and innovative way to display the Road Network data which are published within an Official Statistics report and on the NISRA Data Portal. The [dashboard](#) was launched in October 2024. Dfi provided analytical support to the Dfi Public Transport Strategy team by working with NISRA Central Survey Unit on a survey to evaluate a pilot project 'Local Links'. The survey was hosted on Blaise and this was the first time this platform had been used by NISRA for a live survey developed in English and translated into 10 other languages. The survey ran from May to July 2024.

Department of Health (DoH) Hospital Activity Information Branch (HAIB)

HAIB progressed a couple of areas of innovative work in 2024/25. The first was the development of a new publication on 'Termination of Pregnancy' following the introduction of a new legal framework for abortion services in Northern Ireland. The second was the inclusion of encompass sourced data in our statistical publications following its roll out across the Health and Social Care Trusts. This has required the development of encompass reports to extract the data, detailed validations, and significant definitional and presentational changes.

Department of Health (DoH) Hospital Waits Information Branch (HWIB)

Inclusion of encompass sourced data in our statistical publications following its roll out across the Health and Social Care Trusts. This has required the development of encompass reports to extract the data, detailed validations, and significant definitional and presentational changes.

Department of Health (DoH) Public Health Information and Research Branch (PHIRB)

Interactive dashboards created to accompany health inequality publications which allows enhanced navigation and additional functionality to create outputs by end-users.

Department of Justice (DoJ)

Development of a prison population dashboard.

Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS)

Social Survey Transformation – Work to transform the NI Labour Force Survey and move it online has been well advanced throughout 2024/25. The innovation and development around the design of the online questionnaire, field operation, and (for the first time), in-house processing system has resulted in an overall Wave 1 response rate of just under 60% - with the vast majority of those responses being complete end-to-end responses. Online responses account for some 64% of all responses and initial high-level results are encouraging.

Business Survey Transformation – Substantial time and effort has been invested throughout the year to develop more efficient and streamlined Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP) for the statistical processes for our key business areas. RAPs have been developed for our Index of Services, Index of Production, Quarterly Construction Enquiry, Quarterly Employment Survey, NI Composite Economic Index, Annual Business Survey, and R&D survey. This represents a significant milestone for the branch and has allowed us to make more use of open-source software, moving away from costly proprietary software packages and contributing to the advancement of the NISRA RAP Strategy and Corporate Plan Strategic Enablers.

The Executive Office (TEO)

Publication of the award winning [PfG Wellbeing Framework](#).

NISRA Business Plan 2024-25 Update

| Strategic Objectives & Enablers | INDICATOR | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | STATUS | ANNUAL UPDATE |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|---|
| Business Delivery | Deliver key civil registration services – births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships and adoptions. | 98% of priority certificate applications, and 98% of standard certificate applications fulfilled within target timescales. (DoF Measure). | Achieved | The targets of 98% for priority and standard certificate applications have been exceeded up until the end of March 2025. |
| | Provide high quality statistical information to support public policy | Publish the statutory annual report of the Registrar General for 2023. | Achieved | Published in November 2024 as planned. |
| | | Develop an excess deaths methodology in conjunction with the rest of UK National Statistics Institutes. | Achieved | Development work ongoing in conjunction with ONS and NRS. The first iteration was published in February 2024 as a statistic under development. NISRA has worked closely with key users during 2024 and published an 'explainer blog' in January 2025. A further set of refinements were put to the UK Statistics Authority Methodological Assurance Review Panel (MARF) in November 2024 for discussion. User views are also being sought. |
| | | Produce six new data linkages for research use by accredited researchers. | Partially Achieved | Substantial cross departmental and academic collaboration ensured the delivery of new linkages in 2024/25 including the NILS21 and NIMS21 and the release of the Cross Government Income Admin Dataset (CGIAD) and Census 2021 Comprehensive Microdata (C21CM); and extending the Educational Outcomes Linkage (EOL) to be longitudinal. While significant progress has been made in respect of the Agricultural Research Collection 2011 (AD ARC), it has still to be finalised. |
| | | Release remaining planned Census 2021 outputs and publish a general report. (DoF Measure). | Achieved | Final planned outputs from Census 2021 were released on 9 July and 8 August 2024. This included the Origin-Destination public tables (also referred to as migration and workplace flow data) and Alternative Population tables. The Census 2021 General Report was published on 19 December 2024. |
| | | Progress data acquisition and research activities related to assessing the availability and suitability of utilising administrative data in the production of future census-type and population statistics in Northern Ireland. | Achieved | Work has progressed on data acquisition throughout 2024-25. A significant step was when NISRA secured agreement in principle to receiving an onward share of HMRC data from ONS and are working through the associated details. Further data acquisition is being planned for 2025-26. |
| | | Develop and pilot new online Labour Market Survey (LMS). (DoF Measure). | Achieved | New online LMS has been developed and piloted. Response rates are encouraging and development of |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------------|--|
| | | | | NISRA's key statistical processes completed. Data analytics work is ongoing to inform the decision and timing for switching production of labour market statistics to the new survey. |
| | NISRA outputs are quality assured. | % of official statistical outputs with process documentation. | Achieved | 85% of recurring NISRA outputs published in 2024-25 have complete process documentation, with a further 13% having partial process documentation. |
| | | % of official statistical outputs with a documented quality assurance process. | Achieved | 99% of recurring NISRA outputs published in 2024-25 had either fully or partially documented quality assurance processes. |
| | | Number of breaches of the Code of Practice for Statistics. | Partially Achieved | There were three breaches of the Code of Practice related to NISRA statistics reported to the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in 2024-25. |
| | Planning and Resource Management | Identify our affordable approved ¹ vacancies and fill 90% of these within six months of approval under normal recruitment and promotion conditions. | Not Achieved | Target not met: 71% maximum within 6 months and 60% minimum within 6 months. Final number cannot be determined yet as there are still some vacancies unfilled that were created less than 6 months ago. |
| | | Finalise the NISRA Corporate Plan, consulting with Senior Management Team (SMT), Agency Board and NISRA as a whole. | Achieved | The Corporate Plan was produced through consultation with NISRA as a whole and stakeholders. This was published on the 20 December 2024 and formally launched at an event on 25 February 2025. |
| | | Begin the consultation process for refreshing the NISRA Framework document. | Achieved | The consultation process for the NISRA Framework document commenced in Autumn 2025. |
| | The Agency will remain within allocated budget. | Underspend to be as close to budget as possible. | Achieved | The performance measure was achieved with the management reports to 31 March 2025 reporting an underspend of £457K or 4.0% of total budget allocated. |
| | | Review and monitor our resource allocation within NISRA in the context of the wider financial challenges in NICS. | Achieved | NISRA's overall resource allocation must be continuously monitored and carefully managed to ensure the Agency meets both its overarching business objectives and the specific priorities of individual branches. Effective resource management is essential to fulfilling the needs of the Agency as well as those of our stakeholders, including government and other key partners. |

¹ Refers to vacancies approved within NISRA and DoF FMB, includes temporary as well as permanent placements.

| Strategic Objectives & Enablers | INDICATOR | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | STATUS | ANNUAL UPDATE |
|--|--|---|----------|--|
| Engaged Ambitious Skilled People | Learning and Development supports delivery of business objectives. | Investigate partnerships with other DOF business areas to identify common training resources which can be made available to people working in NISRA. | Achieved | Mini Scoping Study commenced the end of the calendar year 2024 with ICT profession & LPS. Two different online learning platforms are currently procured. |
| | Staff are engaged. | Number of Wellbeing events organised. | Achieved | 19 Wellbeing events were available to NISRA staff throughout the financial year. |
| | | Conduct one (career development or professional development) managed moves exercise at DP Statistician and Assistant Statistician, per year and at other analytical grades prior to allocation from a merit list. | Achieved | DP Statistician Managed Moves commenced in June 2024, and Assistant Statistician Managed Moves in July 2024 and November 2024. |
| | | Hold quarterly All Staff Updates including a mix of content from different branches and maintain visibility of senior management for NISRA staff. | Achieved | All staff updates were held on 9 and 11 April, 24 and 26 September, and 11 and 12 December 2025. At each session presentations were included from other NISRA areas such as the Tech Lab and Census. |
| | HR Element | Carry out recruitment exercises for Assistant Statisticians, DP Statisticians and other grades as required. | Achieved | NISRA initiates recruitment exercises for specialist / technical staff as soon as vacancies are recorded which cannot be filled internally and thereby meet NICS HR requirements for competition initiation. |
| | | Begin a review of NISRA's recruitment practices in concert with NICS HR, to ensure that processes are as effective as possible, to report in 2025-26. | Achieved | A review has commenced to conduct a thorough review of NISRA's recruitment practices, involving all stakeholders, to design a more streamlined and efficient recruitment process for future competitions. |
| | | Begin a review of NISRA's internal human resources policies, to report in 2025-26. | Achieved | The process has commenced to review and revise NISRA's Human Resource policies, ensuring they are written from NISRA's perspective while fully aligning with the requirements of the NICS more widely and in accordance with HRConnect procedures. |

| Strategic Objectives & Enablers | INDICATOR | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | STATUS | ANNUAL UPDATE |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|---|
| Legislative approval and authority | NISRA activities are legislatively compliant. | Confirmed number of reported Breaches of DPA / GDPR. | Achieved | No reported data breaches of DPA / GDPR in NISRA. |
| | | Subject Access Requests (SAR) processed on time (number / %). | Achieved | DoF 3 /100%. None reported within non-DoF |
| | | NISRA DoF FOI requests processed on time (number / %). | Achieved | 18 NISRA DoF FOI requests were processed on time (100%). |
| | | Confirmed number of Breaches of DEA. | Achieved | None reported. |
| | The public is aware of and trusts NISRA. | Maintain the percentage of the general public who state they trust statistics produced by NISRA. (DoF Measure) | Achieved | Provisional figures from the Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics 2024 survey (September to November 2024) suggest that 84% of respondents trusted NISRA statistics a great deal or tended to trust them. Compared to 2023, there has been no statistically significant change. Trust levels were higher among those respondents who had heard of NISRA: 93% trusted NISRA statistics a great deal or tended to trust them in 2024. Finalised figures will be published as official statistics in Autumn 2025: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/public-awareness-and-confidence-trust-official-statistics-pcos |
| | | % of awareness of NISRA amongst the general public. | Partially Achieved | Provisional figures from the Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics 2024 survey (September to November 2024) suggest that 42% of respondents had heard of NISRA prior to being contacted about the survey. This is lower than in 2023 (48%). Finalised figures will be published as official statistics in Autumn 2025: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/public-awareness-and-confidence-trust-official-statistics-pcos |
| | Amend death and still-birth legislation to make the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 permanent | Advance work on the legislation required to make permanent provision for the temporary Coronavirus Act 2020 powers related to the remote registration of deaths and still-births and the electronic exchange of related documentation. (DoF Measure). | Partially Achieved | Secondary legislation has been laid to extend the Coronavirus Act 2020 provisions until 24th September 2025. |
| | | Advance work required to deliver a Baby Loss Certificate Scheme. | Achieved | The Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 25th March 2025. |

| Strategic Objectives & Enablers | INDICATOR | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | STATUS | ANNUAL UPDATE |
|---------------------------------|--|---|----------|---|
| Enabling digital Infrastructure | Standardisation of Data Analysis and analytical toolset. | Agree on a Digital Infrastructure Vision for NISRA, setting out a new central IT function and our future digital infrastructure model. | Achieved | A Digital Infrastructure Plan was presented to the Agency Board, outlining proposals for the creation of a new IT team, the implementation of Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP), the development of a common toolkit, and the establishment of a new data and analytical environment. |
| | | Work areas within NISRA will start to devise and deliver implementation plans which roll out NISRA's Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP) Strategy for all key statistical processes and outputs (with the right systems, tools, and support). | Achieved | NISRA Branches developed individual RAP implementation plans for the latter part of 2024-25. These plans included staff development initiatives, identification of suitable processes for RAP, and steps for its implementation. |
| | | Convene a NISRA RAP Working Group, made up of volunteers from those who have implemented RAP. This group will take the RAP strategy forward and support branches in the development of their RAP implementation plans. | Achieved | A RAP Working Group was established with representatives from across all departments. The group has met twice and developed support materials to assist NISRA Branches with RAP adoption. |
| | | Deliver a structured Training and Development Pathway / Communication and Engagement Plan to ensure Managers and staff understand RAP, covering what it is and the benefits. | Achieved | A structured RAP training pathway was created for managers, as well as beginner, intermediate, and advanced users. This pathway was shared across the Agency and includes a mix of formal courses and informal coding sessions. |
| | | A 'proof of concept' NISRA toolkit will be developed to improve collaboration, strengthen contingency and reduce reliance on costly licensed software. To include a recommended suite of data collection, management, analysis and dissemination software tools that can be deployed throughout the Agency. | Achieved | A toolkit has been drafted and presented to the Agency Board. Additional work is planned to finalise and implement it during 2025-26. |

| Strategic Objectives & Enablers | INDICATOR | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | STATUS | ANNUAL UPDATE |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|---|
| User-focused Dissemination | NISRA releases and publications are of high quality. | Number of official statistics releases with corrections (including major corrections and minor errors). | Partially Achieved | In 2024-25, 2 publications were revised due to major corrections and there were 9 minor errors impacting 15 publications, some of which were historic publications. |
| | | Number of official statistics publications. | Achieved | In 2024-25, NISRA published 249 Official Statistics outputs (or repeated outputs), 110 of which were Accredited Official Statistics. |
| | | Number of Accredited Official Statistics publications. | | |
| | Promote best practice in dissemination and maximise the positive impact of NISRA's outputs | Develop a Dissemination Strategy and establish a Dissemination Board to promote dissemination best practice. | Achieved | A User-Focused Dissemination Plan was presented to the Agency Board, and a new NISRA Dissemination Board was established (with representatives from across NISRA) to identify opportunities for promoting best practices in the dissemination of outputs. |
| | | Conduct a light touch refresh of the NISRA website. | Achieved | The NISRA website was upgraded and refreshed in March 2025. Updates included new statistical themes, a redesigned homepage, and the addition of a release calendar. |
| | | Develop a Social media policy. | Achieved | A new social media policy was developed, trialled, and implemented. This included refreshed social media post designs to promote the NISRA brand, the creation of a LinkedIn account, and plans to enhance the visibility of statistical outputs. |
| | | Develop pathways to upskill staff and build Agency wide capacity to deliver user-focused dissemination and data visualisation skills. | Achieved | The Dissemination Team completed training in web design and user experience (UX). Plans are in place to explore further opportunities and develop a comprehensive training pathway for dissemination. |
| Purposeful Partnerships | Engagement Models | Prepare an engagement model for NISRA in concert with our stakeholders to include how we will engage with our wider NISRA family in departments/ ALBS and senior officials in NICS departments. | Achieved | An internal engagement paper has been drafted and is being considered. |
| | ADR NI Strategy | Prepare a Refreshed ADR NI Strategy to improve the operation of our partnership and to lay the groundwork for a future bid for continued UKRI funding. | Achieved | A revised ADR NI Strategy for the 2022-26 funding period was agreed with partners. The ADR Strategy will be replaced with an 'academic engagement strategy' going forward. |

| Strategic Objectives & Enablers | INDICATOR | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | STATUS | ANNUAL UPDATE |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|----------|---|
| Strategic Data Assets | Data Strategy | Prepare a refreshed vision for the management of our strategic data assets to maximise the potential to leverage survey and administrative data for analysis. | Achieved | A NISRA wide data strategy has been prepared and shared to Agency Board. |
| | Survey Transformation Strategy | Agree and start to deliver a plan to modernise our data collection services to produce the highest quality information possible on the economy, population and society of Northern Ireland. | Achieved | NISRA has developed and agreed a Survey Transformation Strategy as part of the NISRA Corporate Plan 2025-29. The first piece of work in that Strategy is to transform the production of Labour Market Statistics in Northern Ireland. Work to progress this has continued during 2024-25, and a new Labour Market Survey has been developed and is currently being piloted. |
| | Research Strategy | Develop a new Research Strategy and five year action plan, to bring together resources for researchers and start to develop a coordinated approach to inter-department research. | Achieved | Completed. The Research Board incorporates representation from a number of departments as well as Core NISRA including G5s. |
| | | Establish a NISRA Research Board to guide NISRA's research activities, and take forward the work of the Research Strategy. | Achieved | |

Information Assurance

NISRA is fully committed to complying with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Under this legislation, the Department of Finance (DoF) acts as the organisational Data Controller for NISRA.

To ensure compliance, NISRA has established processes that require all employees, contractors, agents, consultants, and other relevant parties with access to personal information to understand and uphold their responsibilities under the Act. In line with Departmental guidance, NISRA has implemented an Action Plan to maintain compliance, which includes:

- Appointing an Information Asset Owner (IAO) / Support Information Manager (SIM) in each branch, along with a Business Area Information Manager (BAIM) for DoF NISRA.
- Embedding accountability and privacy by design into all aspects of business planning.
- Raising awareness of DPA / UK GDPR among staff through emails, aide-memoirs, Data Protection Guidance Notes (DPGNs), intranet updates, and team briefings.
- Requiring IAOs and relevant staff to attend Data Protection / UK GDPR awareness sessions led by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and the Departmental Data Protection Officer (DPO).
- Mandating annual online training on Data Protection Essentials and Cyber Security for all staff, including agency staff.
- Delivering annual training on Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) for designated staff.
- Implementing robust policies that support UK GDPR compliance, in line with Departmental guidance.
- Providing staff with key guidance on Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), Data Breach Management, Data Sharing Agreements (DSA), Contracts, and Records Management.
- Enforcing mandatory Content Manager (CM) training for all new staff, with refresher training available.
- Ensuring all personal data holdings comply with UK GDPR, including the identification of a lawful basis for processing.
- Conducting regular reviews of the Departmental online Information Asset Register, approved by respective IAOs.
- Continuously reviewing procedures for handling personal information within NISRA branches.
- Publishing Privacy Notices for NISRA and Civil Registration Services online, supported by annually reviewed Privacy Information Statements.

- Maintaining procedures for detecting, reporting, and investigating data breaches.
- Reviewing and updating the NISRA Retention and Disposal Schedule to comply with the Public Records Act (NI) 1923 and the Disposal of Documents Order (S.R. & O. 1925 No.167).
- Reviewing Fileplan classifications within the NICS Records Management system.
- Ensuring appropriate safeguards are in place for personal data stored on IT systems.
- Establishing secure data-sharing processes, including the completion of DSAs where applicable.
- Logging all DPIAs and DSAs in the Department's register.
- Providing Data Protection induction documentation to all new staff, including agency staff, with records of completion retained.

There were no reportable data breaches between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

NISRA's IAOs provide bi-annual updates on the security and use of their information assets as part of the DoF Assurance Statement.

Fraud

The Government recently updated its financial reporting guidance requiring government bodies to make an evidence-based estimate of the extent of fraud and error in the material support and distribution schemes they administer. While NISRA is not directly involved in major spend initiatives, or high risk and politically sensitive schemes, it is nevertheless committed to upholding the Department's anti-fraud policy which requires that all staff at all times act honestly and with integrity, to safeguard the public resources for which they are responsible.

NISRA, like its parent Department takes a zero-tolerance approach and will not tolerate any level of fraud or corruption. It adopts key fraud prevention measures which are cultural, organisational and operational, led by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Agency Board (AB) who clearly endorse the ethical values of the Agency. As an operational example, the General Register Office (GRO) processes recoupment claims from the District Council Registration Offices for the provision of the civil registration service. GRO painstakingly scrutinises these claims and probes areas which require further evidence to support costs. The claims are not submitted for payment until all costs are verified and the required evidence provided.

Clear lines of accountability are in place with regard to the management of staff and finances and internal and external audit certify appropriate governance arrangements. Annual fraud risk assessments are carried out which examine the likelihood of fraud risks, their potential impact and the actions taken to mitigate them. In addition to this staff receive bi-annual messages reminding them of the Department's anti-fraud policy and the operational arrangements for raising concerns. As a matter of routine all staff are also asked to complete Declarations of Conflict of Interest statements. The outworkings of the safeguards NISRA employs has meant that there have been no instances of fraud recorded in the Agency during 2024-25.

Financial Review

NISRA's net expenditure for the three most recent financial years is outlined below:

| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2022-23 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| Revenue from contracts with customers | (22,662) | (22,135) | (19,825) |
| Total operating income | (22,662) | (22,135) | (19,825) |
| Staff costs | 28,153 | 28,141 | 26,783 |
| Purchase of goods and services | 3,535 | 3,568 | 2,989 |
| Depreciation and impairment charges | 1,950 | 1,777 | 1,895 |
| Provision expense / (credit) | (50) | - | 50 |
| Other operating expenditure | 5,391 | 5,113 | 5,457 |
| Total operating expenditure | 38,979 | 38,599 | 37,174 |
| Net expenditure for the year | 16,317 | 16,464 | 17,349 |

The net resource cash allocation for NISRA varied during the financial year. The opening allocation was £11,001k (2023-24: £11,146k). This increased to a final position of £11,385k (2023-24: £11,629k) due to monitoring round transfers during the year. The Agency received additional budget funding during the year for the Future of Census (£600k), the provision of Windsor Framework related research (£154k) and a transfer of funding from the Department for Education to fund the NI Childcare Survey (£405k). Net budget transfers to other Departments and DoF business areas amounted to £775K. The net resource expenditure for the year excluding non-cash expenditure was £10,982k against the closing excluding non-cash budget position of £11,385k. The Agency recorded a net resource underspend (excluding non-cash expenditure, depreciation and impairment charges) of £403k which was mainly due delays in filling vacant posts, an increase in income generated by the General Register Office (GRO) over forecast and an over-estimate of General Administration Expenditure.

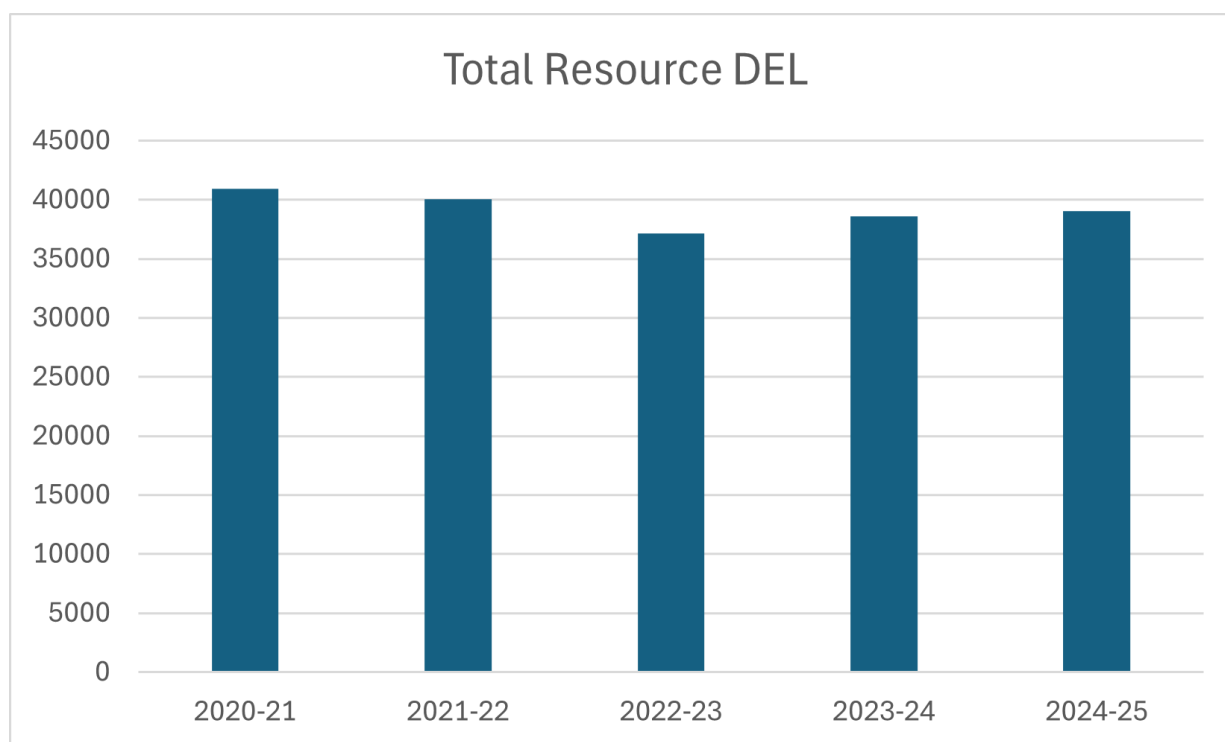
Other operating expenditure (excluding non-cash items, see note 3 in the Financial Statements section) has increased to £2,006k (2023-24: £1,656k) mainly due to increases in IT support costs for the Replacement Integrated Business Survey System and NIROS/GeNI contracts.

The Agency employed an average of 550 staff during the financial year and total staff costs were £28,153k (2023-24: £28,141k).

The Agency has been allocated an indicative opening budget of £20,500k for 2025-26. The Agency has received additional funding to take forward various projects including initial preparation for Census 2031 and replacement operating system for GRO.

Long Term Expenditure Trend

| | 2020-21 Outturn £000 | 2021-22 Outturn £000 | 2022-23 Outturn £000 | 2023-24 Outturn £000 | 2024-25 Outturn £000 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Total Resource DEL | 40,912 | 40,045 | 37,124 | 38,599 | 39,029 |
| Of which: | | | | | |
| Staff costs | 26,518 | 28,628 | 26,783 | 28,141 | 28,153 |
| Purchase of goods and services | 3,378 | 3,231 | 2,989 | 3,568 | 3,535 |
| Other operating expenditure | 9,451 | 6,681 | 5,457 | 5,113 | 5,391 |
| Depreciation and impairment charges | 1,565 | 1,505 | 1,895 | 1,777 | 1,950 |
| | 40,912 | 40,045 | 37,124 | 38,599 | 39,029 |
| Total Resource AME | 80 | (47) | 50 | - | (50) |
| Of which: | | | | | |
| Provision expense | 80 | (47) | 50 | - | (50) |



Figures in £000

The increases in Resource DEL from 2023-24 to 2024-25 is mainly due to inflationary pressures and accrued salary settlements. Resource DEL for 2020-21 and 2021-22 was higher due to costs of Census 2021.

Auditors

The financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Ms Dorinnia Carville, in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

Ms Carville is Head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), which is wholly independent of the Agency and report to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The audit of the financial statements for 2024-25 resulted in a notional audit fee of £20,000 (2023-24: £19,000) and is included in the operating expenditure in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

During 2024-25 the Agency did not purchase any non-audit services from its auditor (2023-24: none).

In relation to the National Fraud Initiative, there was no cost incurred in 2024-25 (2023-24: NIL).

Events after the Reporting Period

There are no events after the reporting period requiring adjustment in the Agency Accounts. The increase in the rate of employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) from 13.8% to 15% on 6 April 2025 is a relevant non-adjusting event after the reporting period. It is estimated that the financial effect of this increase in the 2025-26 financial year for NISRA will be £632K.

Payments to Suppliers

The Agency's policy is to pay bills from all suppliers within 10 working days of receipt of the goods or performance of the services following receipt of a properly rendered invoice or in accordance with contractual conditions, whichever is the earlier. During the financial year, the Agency achieved an average of 92% (2023-24: 89%) of invoices paid to suppliers within 10 working days. The Agency achieved an average of 95% (2023-24: 95%) of invoices paid within 30 calendar days.

During this period NISRA did not make any interest payments under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest Act 1988).

Sustainability and Environmental Matters

NISRA fully embraces the sustainability direction set by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and remains committed to supporting and complementing the ongoing work of its parent Department, the Department of Finance (DoF), across all pillars of sustainability—social, economic, and environmental.

DoF has undertaken a comprehensive review of its entire office estate and is actively delivering on its five-year plan (2023–2027). This plan aims to help the NICS reduce both its office footprint and carbon emissions, creating a modern, efficient, and appropriately sized office estate that meets the evolving needs of our people and business areas. Key actions under this plan include:

- Promoting the development and quality of agile office layouts and shared facilities across the NICS;
- Supporting the embedding of new ways of working;
- Helping departments make more effective use of office space and technology;
- Aligning with Programme for Government (PfG) objectives, NICS People and Digital strategies, and the Net Zero Carbon commitment; and

- Exploring opportunities for delivery through collaboration with the wider public sector.

At an agency level, NISRA has taken clear steps to align with this direction, notably by reducing its occupancy of Colby House in response to the implementation of hybrid and agile working practices, which support resource efficiency. NISRA also aims to minimise waste, particularly through the reduction of single-use plastics. Recycling receptacles are available for paper, cans, plastic containers, paper towels, envelopes, magazines, and used printer cartridges. Dry recyclable materials are segregated from general waste for collection and recycling by the Department's appointed service provider.

Several initiatives have also been introduced to reduce paper waste within Colby House, including discouraging the routine printing of emails, encouraging the use of the NICS record management system, promoting double-sided and monochrome printing and photocopying where necessary, and utilising recycled paper.

NISRA is also committed to enhancing its digital capabilities, particularly in data collection. By increasing the use of online surveys and electronic devices, the agency is reducing reliance on paper and postage. Furthermore, all GRO records are now fully digital and accessible online or via a public search facility. More than 90% of certificate orders are submitted either online or by telephone, significantly reducing the need for paper-based applications.

Growth of data linkage initiatives are making the most of existing data sources by bringing together standalone information assets to develop new statistical and research insights without the need for additional data collection.

The rollout of Microsoft 365 has further supported NISRA's sustainability efforts. By shifting services from core data centres to shared public platforms and expanding the use of collaborative tools, the agency has reduced the need for business travel and enhanced remote working capabilities.

DoF, as NISRA's parent department, is fully aware of its responsibilities under the Climate Change Act 2022. It is actively represented on the cross-departmental Senior Officials Group, chaired by DAERA, and has established an internal working group to review current policies and develop proposals for inclusion in the draft Climate Action Plan (2023–2027 and beyond). The Department is also involved with the Climate Change Technical Advisory Group, which focuses on developing methodologies for carbon baseline measurement and emissions quantification. Additionally, DoF is working closely with DAERA in the development of the 'Green Test'.

This Performance Report is approved and signed



Dr Philip Wales
Accounting Officer
19 June 2025

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

The Accountability Report comprises the following:

Corporate Governance Report

The purpose of the corporate governance report is to provide an explanation of the composition and organisation of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's (NISRA's) governance structures and how they support the achievement of NISRA's objectives.

Remuneration and Staff Report

The remuneration and staff report sets out NISRA's remuneration policy for directors, reports on how that policy has been implemented and sets out the amounts awarded to directors. In addition, the report provides detail on pension arrangements, staff costs, staff numbers and staff policies.

Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

The Assembly Accountability and Audit report brings together the key Assembly accountability documents within the annual report and accounts. It includes sections on the Regularity of Expenditure (losses and special payments), the Assembly Accountability Disclosure (fees and charges), Remote Contingent Liabilities and the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Corporate Governance Report

Directors' Report

Introduction

NISRA presents its Annual Report and Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2025.

Management

The Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of NISRA, Philip Wales, having duly consulted with and satisfied NISRA's parent Department (DoF) on matters of significance, is directly responsible to the DoF Minister for the management of the Agency's performance, operations and finances.

NISRA's Corporate Governance Framework sets out the system of direction and control within the agency. The key organisational structures which support the delivery of Corporate Governance within NISRA include the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Agency Board (AB).

Senior Management Team

The NISRA SMT is the primary formal management unit for the Agency and consists of:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Dr P Wales | Chief Executive and Registrar General |
| Mr B Green | Director of Economic Statistics |
| Mr P McKillen | Director of Statistical Coordination and Analysis (acting) |
| Mrs N Fisher | Director of Analysis and Research (acting) |
| Mr A Fitzpatrick | Director of Census and Social Statistics (acting) |
| Miss A Rooney | Deputy Registrar General (from June 2024) |
| Mr C McKiernan | Business Development Manager (acting) |

SMT meetings are also attended by NISRA's DoF Finance Business Partner and NICSHR Business Partner to provide resource management information and advice that will aid routine decision making, though they are not formal members.

Excepting those issues identified as being specifically within the role of the Chief Executive, the SMT's function is to advise and support the Chief Executive on a variety of strategic management issues, including:

- setting and agreeing policy and strategic objectives through assessment of needs, risks and opportunities;
- determining organisational strategy and appropriate delivery mechanisms;
- directing implementation of strategy;
- evaluating corporate performance against objectives;

- prioritising allocation of available resource; and
- promoting the organisation to key stakeholders and key customer groups.

Agency Board

The Board is the second tier of formal management and reflects the breadth of wider Agency activity. It consists of the NISRA members of the SMT and all Grade 6 statisticians representing the various NISRA business areas.

Excepting those issues identified as being specifically within the role of the SMT, the Board's function is to:

- advise the Chief Executive on the development of central NISRA policy and support its implementation;
- set business objectives to support delivery of Agency functions;
- lead on the implementation of activities designed to deliver the strategic outcomes described in the Corporate Plan;
- manage the implementation of change strategy;
- evaluate business area performance against objectives;
- utilise allocated resources effectively to meet business objectives and customer needs; and
- engage with key customer contacts and stakeholders to promote Agency policy and objectives.

The Agency Board members during the year were as follows:

| Role | Name |
|--|---|
| Chief Executive and Registrar General | Dr P Wales |
| Director of Economic Statistics | Mr B Green |
| Director of Statistical Coordination and Analysis | Mr P McKillen (acting) |
| Director of Analysis and Research | Mrs N Fisher (acting) |
| Director of Census and Social Statistics | Mr A Fitzpatrick (acting) |
| Deputy Registrar General | Miss A Rooney (from June 2024) |
| Head of Central Survey Unit | Mr A McCormick |
| Head of Survey Modernisation and Population Statistics | Mrs G McCrory |
| Head of EU Exit and Statistics of Trade | Mr C Ganley |
| Head of Information and Analysis Directorate (DoH) | Dr E Mooney |
| Head of Technology Laboratory | Mrs M Brolly |
| Head of Census Office | Mr R Elliott |
| Head of Information and Registration Unit (BSO) | Mr M Mayock |
| Head of Analytical Services Unit (DfE) | Mrs C Blair |
| Head of Economic and Labour Market Statistics | Mr G Colgan |
| Head of Statistics and Research Unit (TEO) | Mrs O Bateson |
| Head of Demographic Statistics | Ms D Lyness |
| Head of Statistics and Research Unit (DE) | Mrs P Donnan |
| Head of Statistics and Analytical Services (DAERA) | Ms L Keys |
| Head of Business Development | Mr C McKiernan (acting) |
| Head of Professional Services Unit (DfC) | Mrs A McCauley (acting) (From Dec 2024) |

A Senior Management Forum (SMF), comprising the AB and Grade 7 Statistical and Administrative Heads of Branches support the SMT and AB in the delivery of the Corporate Plan, strategic outcomes and Balanced Scorecard objectives. The SMF provides the membership of specific review groups reporting to the Agency Board.

Arrangements for external challenge

The composition, role and remit of the NISRA Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) are documented in detail throughout this report and the two Non-Executive Directors judiciously review Agency Corporate Governance decision making. In addition to this, NISRA is committed to complying with the principles of the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics. The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) is an independent body at arm's length from government and has the statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that 'serve the public good'. NISRA's statistical outputs are monitored and assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), which is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. Together the ARC and the UKSA (incorporating OSR) provide external and independent challenge roles with regard to NISRA's corporate governance / strategic management, operational activities and statistically trustworthy products.

Register of Interests

A Register of Interests is maintained by the Agency and no significant interests are currently held by board members which may conflict with their management responsibilities.

Pension Liabilities

The treatment of pension costs and liabilities is disclosed in the Remuneration and Staff Report and in the Accounting Policies note in the financial statements (Note 1.9).

Personal Data

The Agency remains fully committed to complying with the Data Protection Act 2018 / UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). The Agency acts in accordance with a number of Departmental policies to ensure the safe handling of personal information. All of these policies can be found in the DoF Data Protection and [Information Management Hub](#). There were no reportable data breaches between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 within DoF or NISRA.

Reporting of Complaints

NISRA is committed to providing a high-quality service and, as such, welcomes all feedback, both positive and negative, which is used to assist in the improvement of our services.

The Agency keeps a register of complaints received and ensures that these are investigated in line with the Agency's Complaints Procedure and that appropriate responses are issued to the complainant. The Agency also evaluates 'lessons learned' from individual cases to see if improvements can be embedded into existing operating procedures.

The NISRA Complaints Procedure is available on the [NISRA website](#). Initially, complaints should be directed to the Head of the relevant Branch. If the issue remains unresolved, complaints can be escalated to the Chief Executive. Should dissatisfaction persist, the matter can be referred to the [Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman](#), who provides a free and independent service for unresolved complaints about public bodies in Northern Ireland.

In 2024-25 NISRA dealt with 1 complaint (2023-24: 2 complaints)

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

Under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (NI) 2001, the Department of Finance has directed NISRA to prepare, for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Agency and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Agency and of the Income and Expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and Cashflow of NISRA for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Finance, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements;
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable, and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Department of Finance has appointed the Chief Executive of NISRA as Accounting Officer of the Agency.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding NISRA's assets, are set out in the Accounting Officers' Memorandum issued by the Department of Finance and published in [Managing Public Money Northern Ireland](#).

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that NISRA's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

Governance Statement

Scope of Responsibility

NISRA is an Executive Agency within the Department. It was established on 1 April 1996 under the Government's Next Steps Initiative. The Agency incorporates the General Register Office (GRO) for NI.

The Agency governance model contains a number of responsibilities:

- The Accounting Officer is responsible to the Minister of Finance for the Agency's performance and operates in accordance with the NISRA Framework Document and NISRA Business Plan.
- The Accounting Officer has responsibilities for the overall day-to-day leadership and management of the Agency, making regular reports to the Permanent Secretary on performance and progress.
- The Agency Board (AB) is responsible for reviewing the strategic direction of the Agency, monitoring performance at corporate level and ensuring that adequate governance controls are in place. The AB comprises the Chief Executive (Grade 3), four Grade 5 Statisticians, fourteen Senior Principal Statisticians and two Administrative Senior Principals.

| | Apr 2024 | May 2024 | Jun 2024 | July 2024 | Sept 2024 | Oct 2024 | Nov 2024 | Dec 2024 | Jan 2025 | Mar 2025 |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Dr P Wales | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • |
| Mr B Green | | | | • | • | | • | • | • | |
| Mr P McKillen | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • |
| Mr A Fitzpatrick | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Mrs N Fisher | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| Miss A Rooney | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| Mr A McCormick | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Mrs G McCrory | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| Mr C Ganley | • | | | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| Dr E Mooney | | | | | • | | • | • | | • |
| Mrs M Brolly | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • |
| Mr R Elliott | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Mr M Mayock | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Mrs C Blair | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • |
| Mr G Colgan | | | | | • | • | | | • | |
| Mrs O Bateson | • | • | • | • | • | | | | • | • |
| Ms D Lyness | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Mrs P Donnan | • | • | | | • | • | • | | • | • |
| Mrs L Keys | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | | |
| Mr C McKiernan (acting) | | • | | • | • | • | | | • | • |
| Mrs A McCauley (acting) | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |

• attended the Board meeting during the month

The Governance Statement, which has been agreed by the AB, sets out how these responsibilities have been discharged throughout the year to 31 March 2025.

Context

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) aims to assist the Executive in securing the most appropriate and effective use of resources and services for the benefit of the community, aligning with the Programme for Government's focus on societal well-being.

NISRA significantly contributes to the daily lives of Northern Ireland's citizens by supporting public services through:

- providing government departments and agencies with statistics and research services that inform policy development, processes, and the achievement of their objectives;
- addressing the needs of a diverse range of users by producing high-quality statistics and research, ensuring their accuracy, and disseminating information efficiently and effectively;
- offering official information on Northern Ireland's population and socio-economic conditions, which informs government policy, academic research, and broader community discussions; and
- Managing the General Register Office (GRO) function, providing civil registration services to the public, and producing summary statistics related to life events.

Financial Management

NISRA regularly reviews actual income and expenditure against budget to form the basis of collective Agency Board decisions regarding the allocation and use of resource to ensure that the NISRA financial management target of avoiding overspend is met.

Budget Position and Authority

The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2025, which received Royal Assent on 6 March 2025, together with the Northern Ireland Spring Supplementary Estimates 2024-25 which were agreed by the Assembly on 17 February 2025, provide the statutory authority for the Executive's final 2024-25 expenditure plans. The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2025 also provides a Vote on Account to authorise expenditure by departments and other bodies into the early months of the 2025-26 financial year.

Risk and Control Framework

Risk management within NISRA continues to be an integral part of the Agency's governance and control framework. The Corporate Risk Register is used to identify, evaluate, assign ownership of and review, planned mitigations of relevant high-level risks present in the Agency's operating environment. The Risk Register is regularly reviewed and monitored by the Agency senior team and NISRA's Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). The ARC is chaired by one of its two independent members and functions in accordance with best practice contained in the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) 2018 issued under DAO (DoF) 03/18 in March 2018.

The Agency ensures that the risk management and internal controls are regularly reviewed and

reported in the following manner:

- all business areas use pre-determined weightings and a standardised approach to risk assessment;
- key risks identified at Agency level are documented on a Risk Register and are reviewed on a formal monthly basis by the Agency senior team during the course of a year;
- NISRA ARC formally reviews risks and controls on a regular basis and assesses the continued proximity of the respective risks and the mitigating actions being taken to manage them. The need to treat, tolerate, transfer or terminate risks is also determined in order to reflect the current business environment;
- Heads of Branches complete stewardship statements at the end of each financial year;
- the Chief Executive provides the NISRA and Departmental ARCs with a mid-year and year end Stewardship Statement; and
- the Agency adheres to and promotes the Department's 'Raising Concerns Policy'.

The Agency had 5 Business Area departmental performance measures for the year 2024-25, 4 of which NISRA has achieved, the fifth one (Target 14: Amend Deaths and Still-Births legislation) will be achieved outside the timeframe. The 2024-25 measures were validated on 12 May 2025.

Agency Performance

The NISRA Business Plan 2025-26 sets out the Agency's objectives for the year against which performance is reported and monitored. Progress against the plan is regularly reported to Agency Board providing details of actual results against targets (DoF and NISRA Chief Executive) and a narrative on the actions taken to deliver the expected outcomes.

In line with NICS recommended best practice, a NISRA Business Plan for 2025-26 is being developed based on an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach, which sets out our outcomes for the next twelve months, and the indicators and performance measures that we will take towards achieving those outcomes. The plan incorporates the Strategic Enablers which are the drivers in the new NISRA Corporate Plan 2025-29. An evaluation of NISRA's achievements at the end of 2025-26 will be set in the context of the continued budget reductions and how these influenced our ability to meet our prescribed outcomes.

Accounting Officer

The NISRA Chief Executive is responsible to the Minister of Finance who determines the policy framework within which the Agency operates. Having been designated by the DoF Permanent Secretary as Agency Accounting Officer (AO), the responsibilities of NISRA's AO includes being accountable to the Minister and the NI Assembly for the Agency's use of resources, ensuring propriety and regularity of the public finances for which an AO is answerable as set out in the 'Accounting Officer's Memorandum' issued by DoF and published in 'Managing Public Money in Northern Ireland' (MPMNI). During 2024-25 NISRA has taken cognisance of the guidance on the component streams of functional standards, recognising these as the primary reference documents for improved and consistent ways of working to help the Agency achieve its objectives more effectively and efficiently within the overall fundamental principles of MPMNI. In addition to this, the

Chief Executive ensures that the Agency observes any general guidance issued by DoF and puts into effect any recommendations by the Public Accounts Committee, other Assembly Select Committees or other relevant authority, which the Executive has accepted.

At the beginning of the financial year, the AO delegated responsibility to each of the Heads of Branches for management of budgets within their respective business areas. The AO receives assurance from each Director on risk management, governance, financial management and delegation within their respective areas of responsibility in the format of Stewardship Statements. Key issues emanating from these statements are reflected in this Governance Statement.

The AO chairs the NISRA Agency Board which met on 10 occasions in 2024-25. The Agency Board operates in compliance with ‘Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI) 2013’ and directs the strategic management of NISRA by reviewing its strategic options and setting its corporate direction. The Agency Board considered the information received to be fit for purpose.

The Agency maintains a Register of Significant Interests held by Board members which may conflict with their management responsibilities. Board members are requested annually to make a declaration and no such significant interests were declared by members for the Agency Board for the year ended 31 March 2025.

The Agency Board also considered and reviewed NISRA risks as detailed in the NISRA Corporate Risk Register. The Agency ARC, which is chaired by an independent Non- Executive Member of the DoF Board, supports the AO and the Agency Board on issues of risk, control and governance. In addition, the ARC provides assurance and advice to the AO on the adequacy of both internal and external audit coverage. The ARC met on 4 occasions in 2024-25, attended by its Non-Executive Members as follows:

| | May 2024 | Jun 2024 | Nov 2024 | Feb 2025 |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Joan McEwan | • | • | • | • |
| Olwen Laird | • | • | • | • |

• attended the ARC meeting during the month

Level of Assurance

The AO has responsibility for ensuring that a robust risk management system is in place so that risks faced by NISRA are identified and managed accordingly. The AO is also responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review is informed by the work of DoF’s Internal Audit Team and Departmental Board members who have responsibility for ensuring that the controls and actions recommended are implemented.

The Department’s Internal Audit Team reported on the work of the Agency during 2024-25. These reports provide an objective and widespread assessment of the systems of internal control in operation across the Agency, together with prioritised recommendations to strengthen controls and implement further improvements.

In her Annual Report the Head of Internal Audit, Ms Lacey Walker, provided NISRA with a satisfactory audit opinion. Further details on the Internal Audit output for the year are included in the section ‘Significant Internal Control Problems’.

The Agency maintains Information Risk Registers in each Business Area which are linked to the Departmental Risk Register and provide the Departmental Board and the Senior Information Risk

Owner (SIRO) with an oversight of corporate and operational information risks.

NISRA is committed to complying with the principles of the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics and its statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), which is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. Official statistics which have been independently reviewed by the OSR and determined to comply with these standards are labelled 'Accredited Official Statistics'. During the year, one of NISRA's statistical products underwent an Independent Review for Accreditation, and two Accredited Official Statistics outputs were checked for compliance with the Code. All of these statistics, where an outcome was declared within the year, had their Accredited Official Statistics status confirmed. No official statistics products failed to achieve Accredited Official Statistics status.

Fraud Prevention and Assurance

NISRA takes a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and will report all instances of fraud to DoF and the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) as well as to the PSNI. The Agency complies with the DoF Raising Concerns Policy that sets out staff responsibilities with regard to the prevention of fraud.

Whistleblowing arrangements are in place and can be used to raise concerns about alleged impropriety, wrongdoing, corruption, fraud or malpractice. The Agency has not recorded any instances of suspected or actual fraud, nor any cases of whistleblowing during the year.

Significant Internal Control Problems

DoF Internal Audit undertook the following audits during 2024-25:

| System | Opinion | Timing |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| NISRA Interviewer Payroll | Satisfactory | Dec 24 (report issued in Feb 25) |
| NISRA Capitalisation of Expenditure to develop assets | Satisfactory | Jan – Mar 25 (report issued in May 25) |
| Validation of NISRA Ministerial Targets 2023-24 | 7/7 measures achieved | Completed 11 June 2024 |

There were no significant internal control problems identified by Internal Audit.

Review of Effectiveness

As AO, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the Governance procedures within the Agency. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of internal auditors and the executive managers within the Agency who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework and comments made by the external auditors in their 'Report to those charged with Governance' and other reports. I have been advised on the implications of the result of this review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Senior Management Team and the ARC and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

I consider the information presented to the Agency Board in the Corporate Performance report to

be of a high quality, accurate and relevant to the internal control systems within the Agency and that the Agency has complied with the Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI) 2013 in all respects.

Conclusion

Taking into account all of the arrangements set out in this Governance Statement, NISRA has an effective governance structure in place and has satisfactory systems of internal control which have operated effectively throughout 2024-25.

Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration Report

Remuneration Policy

The pay remit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, including senior civil servants (SCS), is normally approved by the Minister of Finance. Following approval of the 2024-25 Budget in the Assembly, on 28 May 2024, in which the Finance Minister outlined the overarching approach to public sector pay, the NI public sector pay policy guidance was published on 31 May 2024 in FD (DoF) 07/24.

Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The award effective from 1 August 2024, for NICS non-industrial and industrial staff, including SCS, was made in the May 2025 payroll.

The pay of NICS staff is based on a system of pay scales for each grade, including SCS, containing a number of pay points from minimum to maximum, allowing progression towards the maximum based on performance and other eligibility criteria.

Service Contracts

The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Code published by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland specifies the circumstances when appointments may be made by exception to merit.

Unless otherwise stated, the officials covered by this report hold appointments that are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in consideration of the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme [Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland \(nicscommissioners.org\)](https://www.nicscommissioners.org).

Remuneration (including salary) and Pension Entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior management of the Agency (Grade 6 and above).

Remuneration and pension entitlements

(the following section is subject to audit)

| Officials | Salary £000 | | Pension Benefits** (to nearest £1,000) | | Total £000 | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|---|---------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
| Dr P Wales | 110-115 | 100-105 | 45 | 40 | 155-160 | 140-145 |
| Mr B Green | 50-55 (85-90 FYE) | 45-50 (80-85 FYE) | 12 | (24) | 65-70 (95-100 FYE) | 25-30 (55-60 FYE) |
| Mrs O Bateson | 70-75 | 60-65 | 49 | 21 | 120-125 | 80-85 |
| Mrs C Blair | 65-70 | 60-65 | 44 | 13 | 110-115 | 75-80 |
| Mrs M Brolly | 70-75 | 60-65 | 55 | 27 | 125-130 | 85-90 |
| Mr G Colgan | 75-80 | 65-70 | 44 | 16 | 115-120 | 80-85 |
| Mrs P Donnan | 40-45 (65-70 FYE) | 40-45 (60-65 FYE) | 33 | 29 | 75-80 (95-100 FYE) | 65-70 (90-95 FYE) |
| Mr R Elliott | 70-75 | 60-65 | 54 | 28 | 125-130 | 90-95 |
| Mrs N Fisher | 85-90 | 75-80 | 61 | 20 | 145-150 | 95-100 |
| Mr A Fitzpatrick | 85-90 | 75-80 | 67 | 17 | 150-155 | 90-95 |
| Mr C Ganley | 70-75 | 60-65 | 41 | 33 | 110-115 | 95-100 |
| Ms D Lyness | 75-80 | 65-70 | 45 | – | 120-125 | 65-70 |
| Dr D Marshall | – | 40-45 (80-85 FYE) | – | (121) | – | (80)–(85) ((35)–(40) FYE) |
| Mr M Mayock | 75-80 | 65-70 | 50 | (14) | 125-130 | 50-55 |
| Mr A McCormick | 70-75 | 60-65 | 61 | 15 | 130-135 | 75-80 |
| Mrs G McCrory | 70-75 | 60-65 | 53 | 9 | 125-130 | 70-75 |
| Mr C McKiernan | 65-70 | 60-65 | 41 | 34 | 105-110 | 95-100 |
| Mr P McKillen | 80-85 | 70-75 | 60 | (1) | 140-145 | 65-70 |
| Dr E Mooney | 75-80 | 65-70 | 33 | (51) | 105-110 | 15-20 |
| Ms L Keys | 65-70 | 50-55 (60-65 FYE) | 33 | 9 | 95-100 | 60-65 (70-75 FYE) |
| Mrs A McAuley (acting Grade 6) (From Dec 2024) | 55-60 (65-70 FYE) | – | 8 | – | 60-65 (70-75 FYE) | – |
| Mrs A Rooney (From June 2024) | 45-50 (65-70 FYE) | – | 22 | – | 70-75 (85-90 FYE) | – |

* The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation and any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.
(FYE – Full Year Equivalent)

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any severance or ex gratia payments. This report is based on accrued payments made by the Agency and thus recorded in these accounts.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. None of the Agency Board members received any benefits in kind in 2024-25 or 2023-24.

Fair Pay Disclosures

Pay Ratios

(the following section is subject to audit)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in NISRA in the financial year 2024-25 was £105,000 - £110,000 (2023-24: £100,000 - £105,000). The relationship between the mid-point of this band and the remuneration of the organisation's workforce is disclosed below.

| 2024-25 | 25th percentile | Median | 75th percentile |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|
| Total remuneration (£) | 36,617 | 38,932 | 46,851 |
| Pay ratio | 2.9:1 | 2.8:1 | 2.3:1 |

| 2023-24 | 25th percentile | Median | 75th percentile |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|
| Total remuneration (£) | 32,880 | 34,011 | 43,191 |
| Pay ratio | 3.1:1 | 3.0:1 | 2.4:1 |

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

The values for the salary component of remuneration for the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile were £36,617, £38,932 and £46,851 respectively.

In 2024-25 and 2023-24: no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid director.

Remuneration ranged from £23,000 to £110,000 (2023-24: £21,000 to £105,000).

Percentage Change in Remuneration

Reporting bodies are also required to disclose the percentage change from the previous financial year in the:

- a) salary and allowances, and
- b) performance pay and bonuses

of the highest paid director and of their employees as a whole.

The percentage changes in respect of NISRA are shown in the following table. It should be noted that the calculation for the highest paid director is based on the mid-point of the band within which their remuneration fell in each year.

| Percentage change for: | 2024-25 v 2023-24 | 2023-24 v 2022-23 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Average employee salary and allowances | 5.27% | 3.54% |
| Highest paid director’s salary and allowances | 4.88% | (4.65)% |

1 No performance pay or bonuses were payable in these years.

Pension Benefits - Officials

(the following section is subject to audit)

| Officials | Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/25 (or date of leaving if earlier) and related lump sum £000 | Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £000 | CETV at 31/03/25 £000 | CETV at 31/03/24 £000 | Real increase in CETV £000 | Employer contribution to partnership pension account (nearest £100) |
|------------------|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Dr P Wales | 5-10 | 2.5-5 | 61 | 29 | 22 | n/a |
| Mr B Green | 40-45 plus a lump sum of 100-105 | 0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5 | 907 | 895 | 9 | n/a |
| Mrs O Bateson | 20-25 plus a lump sum of 45-50 | 2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5 | 399 | 344 | 37 | n/a |
| Mrs C Blair | 20-25 | 0-2.5 | 320 | 278 | 27 | n/a |
| Mrs M Brolly | 25-30 plus a lump sum of 60-65 | 2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5 | 523 | 457 | 44 | n/a |
| Mr G Colgan | 25-30 plus a lump sum of 60-65 | 0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5 | 531 | 474 | 33 | n/a |
| Mrs P Donnan | 25-30 plus a lump sum of 65-70 | 0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5 | 571 | 522 | 29 | n/a |
| Mr R Elliott | 25-30 | 2.5-5 | 440 | 383 | 38 | n/a |
| Mrs N Fisher | 25-30 plus a lump sum of 70-75 | 2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5 | 601 | 529 | 47 | n/a |
| Mr A Fitzpatrick | 35-40 plus a lump sum of 85-90 | 2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5 | 812 | 718 | 61 | n/a |
| Mr C Ganley | 15-20 | 0-2.5 | 216 | 181 | 22 | n/a |
| Ms D Lyness | 25-30 plus a lump sum of 60-65 | 0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5 | 513 | 458 | 32 | n/a |
| Mr M Mayock | 30-35 plus a lump sum of 85-90 | 2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5 | 781 | 706 | 43 | n/a |
| Mrs A McAuley | 10-15 | 0-2.5 | 169 | 158 | 5 | n/a |
| Mr A McCormick | 25-30 plus a lump sum of 65-70 | 2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5 | 583 | 510 | 49 | n/a |
| Mrs G McCrory | 20-25 plus a lump sum of 50-55 | 2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5 | 413 | 357 | 36 | n/a |
| Mr C McKiernan | 15-20 | 0-2.5 | 236 | 201 | 22 | n/a |
| Mr P McKillen | 25-30 | 2.5-5 | 462 | 400 | 42 | n/a |
| Dr E Mooney | 30-35 plus a lump sum of 80-85 | 0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5 | 716 | 686 | 27 | n/a |
| Ms L Keys | 20-25 | 0-2.5 | 263 | 231 | 18 | n/a |
| Mrs A Rooney | 30-35 | 0-2.5 | 636 | 595 | 10 | n/a |

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Schemes

Pension benefits are provided through the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP).

The Alpha pension scheme was initially introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The Alpha scheme and all previous scheme arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted each year. The majority of members of the Classic, Premium, Classic Plus and Nuvos pension arrangements, (collectively known as the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) [PCSPS(NI)]) also moved to Alpha from that date. Transitional protection measures introduced alongside these reforms meant any members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age remained in their previous scheme arrangement (full protection) and those who were between 13.5 years and 10 years of their normal pension age were given a choice between moving to alpha on 1 April 2015 or at a later date determined by their age (tapered protection).

McCloud Judgment

In 2018, the Court of Appeal found that the transitional protections put in place back in 2015 that allowed older workers to remain in their original scheme, were discriminatory on the basis of age. As a result, steps have been taken by the Department of Finance to remedy this discrimination.

The Department has now made regulations which remedy the discrimination by:

- ensuring all active members are treated equally for future service as members of the reformed alpha scheme only from 1 April 2022, and
- providing each eligible member with options to have their pension entitlements for the period when the discrimination existed between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the remedy period) retrospectively calculated under either the current (reformed) scheme rules, or the old (pre-reform) legacy rules which existed before 2015.

This means that all active NICS Pension Scheme members are in the same pension scheme, alpha, from 1 April 2022 onwards, regardless of age. This removes the discrimination going forwards in providing equal pension provision for all scheme members.

The Department is now implementing the second part of the remedy, which addresses the discrimination which was incurred by affected members between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022.

Eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the Remedy Period) will now be entitled to a choice of alternative pension benefits in relation to that period. i.e. calculated under the pre-reformed PCSPS(NI) 'Classic', 'Premium' or 'Nuvos' rules or alternatively calculated under the reformed alpha rules. As part of this 'retrospective' remedy most active members will now receive a choice about their remedy period benefits at the point of retirement. This is known as the Deferred Choice Underpin (DCU). For those members who already have pension benefits in payment in relation to the Remedy Period, they will receive an Immediate Choice which will be issued by 31 March 2025.

At this stage, allowance has not yet been made within CETVs for this remedy. Further information on the remedy will be included in the NICS pension scheme accounts which, once published, are available at <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/dof-resource-accounts>.

As part of the remedy involves rolling back all remediable service into the relevant legacy PCSPS(NI) arrangement for the 7-Year Remedy Period, the value of pension benefits for the 2024-25 for affected members continue to be based on the rolled back position.

Alpha

Alpha is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current accrual rate is 2.32%.

From 1 April 2015, all new entrants joining the NICS can choose between membership of Alpha or joining a 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (Partnership Pension Account).

Information on the PCSPS(NI) – Closed Scheme

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 were eligible to be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' legacy defined benefit arrangements (Classic, Premium and Classic Plus). From April 2011, pensions payable under these arrangements have been reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. New entrants who joined on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 will have chosen between membership of Premium or joining the Partnership Pension Account.

New entrants who joined on or after 30 July 2007 were eligible for membership of the legacy PCSPS(NI) Nuvos arrangement or they could have opted for a Partnership Pension Account. Nuvos was also a CARE arrangement in which members accrued pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The rate of accrual was 2.3%.

Benefits in Classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For Premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike Classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic Plus is essentially a variation of Premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per Classic.

Partnership Pension Account

The Partnership Pension Account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

Annual Benefit Statements

Active members of the pension scheme will receive an Annual Benefit Statement. The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach their scheme pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. The normal scheme pension age in alpha is linked to the member's State Pension Age but cannot be before age 65. The Scheme Pension age is 60 for any pension accrued in the

legacy Classic, Premium, and Classic Plus arrangements and 65 for any benefits accrued in Nuvos. Further details about the NICS pension schemes can be found at the website <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni>.

Pension Increases

All pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. Any applicable increases are applied from April and are determined by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure for the preceding September. The CPI in September 2024 was 1.7% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2025.

Employee Contribution Rates

Employee contribution rates for all members for the period covering 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 and 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025 are as follows:

| Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 | | Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 | | Contribution rates – All members |
|--|-------------|---|-------------|----------------------------------|
| From | To | From | To | |
| £0 | £26,302.49 | £0 | £27,091.99 | 4.6% |
| £26,302.50 | £59,849.99 | £27,092.00 | £61,645.99 | 5.45% |
| £59,850.00 | £160,964.99 | £61,646.00 | £165,793.99 | 7.35% |
| £160,965.00 and above | | £165,794.00 and above | | 8.05% |

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost.

CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) Regulations 1996 (as amended).

HM Treasury provides the assumptions for discount rates for calculating CETVs payable from the public service pension schemes. On 27 April 2023, HM Treasury published guidance on the basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes. In their guidance of 27 April 2023, HM Treasury advised that, with immediate effect, the discount rate adopted for calculating CETVs should be in line with the new SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation, superseding the previous SCAPE discount rate

of 2.4% above CPI inflation. All else being the same, a lower SCAPE discount rate leads to higher CETVs. The HM Treasury Guidance of 27 April 2023 can be found at [Basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes - GOV.UK](#). As at the year-end there have been no further changes to the SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation since the HM Treasury guidance was published.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period (which therefore disregards the effect of any changes in factors).

Compensation for Loss of Office

(the following section is subject to audit)

The Agency did not make any payments for loss of office during 2024-25.

Payments to Past Directors

(the following section is subject to audit)

The Agency made one payment to a past director during 2024-25. This amounted to £1K for travel expenses incurred to collect an award which was received while in office.

Staff Report

Number of senior civil service staff (or equivalent) by band

The number of staff serving as senior civil servants (or equivalent) based on a full year equivalent as at 31 March 2025 is as follows:

| Pay Band* | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|
| £70,000 - £74,999 | - | - |
| £75,000 - £79,999 | 1 | 3 |
| £80,000 - £85,000 | 2 | 1 |
| £85,000 - £90,000 | 1 | - |
| £100,000-£104,999 | - | 1 |
| £105,000-£109,999 | 1 | - |

* Based on full year equivalent.

Staff costs

(the following section is subject to audit)

Staff costs comprise:

| | 2024-25 | | | 2023-24 |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Permanently employed staff £000 | Others £000 | Total £000 | Total £000 |
| Wages and salaries | 17,152 | 2,837 | 19,989 | 21,038 |
| Social security costs | 1,966 | - | 1,966 | 1,866 |
| Other pension costs | 6,198 | - | 6,198 | 5,237 |
| Sub total | 25,316 | 2,837 | 28,153 | 28,141 |
| Capitalised salaries | 2,015 | - | 2,015 | 1,487 |
| Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments | (14,194) | - | (14,194) | (13,505) |
| Total net costs | 13,137 | 2,837 | 15,974 | 16,123 |
| Of which: | Charged to Programme £000 | Charged to Capital £000 | Total £000 | Total £000 |
| Total net costs | 13,959 | 2,015 | 15,974 | 16,123 |

The total includes £2,015k (2023-24: £1,487k) of salary costs which have been charged to capital.

Pension arrangements

The Northern Ireland Civil Service main pension schemes are unfunded multi- employer defined benefit schemes but the Agency is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

The Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014 provides the legal framework for regular actuarial valuations of the public service pension schemes to measure the costs of the benefits being provided. These valuations inform the future contribution rates to be paid into the schemes by employers every four years following the scheme valuation. The Act also provides for the establishment of an employer cost cap mechanism to ensure that the costs of the pension schemes remain sustainable in future.

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2020 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in October 2023. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the level of contributions for employers from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027.

The Cost Cap Mechanism (CCM) is a measure of scheme costs and determines whether member costs or scheme benefits require adjustment to maintain costs within a set corridor. Reforms were made to the CCM which was applied to the 2020 scheme valuations and included the introduction of a reformed-scheme-only cost control mechanism which assesses just the costs relating to reformed schemes (alpha for the NICS) and introduced an economic check. Prior to the cost control mechanism reforms, legacy scheme (PCSPS(NI)) costs associated with active members were also captured in the mechanism. The reformed-scheme-only design and the economic check were applied to the 2020 scheme valuations for the devolved public sector pension schemes, including the NICS pension scheme. The 2020 scheme valuation outcome was that the core cost cap cost of the scheme lies within the 3% cost cap corridor. As there is no breach of the cost control mechanism, there is no requirement for the Department of Finance to consult on changes to the scheme. Further information can be found on the Department of Finance website <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-civil-service-pension-scheme-valuations>.

For 2024-25, employers' contributions of £6,179,402 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements at a flat rate of 34.25% of pensionable pay, for all salary bands. (2023-24: £5,220,998 at one of three rates in the range of 28.7% to 34.2%)

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employers' contributions of £17,959 (2023-24: £15,444) were paid to one or more of the panel of two appointed stakeholder pension providers. Employer contributions are age-related and range from 8% to 14.75% (2023-24: 8% to 14.75%) of pensionable pay.

The partnership pension account offers the member the opportunity of having a 'free' pension. The employer will pay the age-related contribution and if the member does contribute, the employer will pay an additional amount to match member contributions up to 3% of pensionable earnings.

Employer contributions of £638, 0.5% (2023-24: £557, 0.5%) of pensionable pay, were payable to the NICS Pension schemes to cover the cost of the future provision of lump sum benefits on death in service and ill health retirement of these employees. Contributions due to the partnership pension providers at the reporting period date were £NIL. Contributions prepaid at that date were £NIL.

Ill-health retirement

There was one (2023-24: NIL) early retirements on ill-health grounds; the total additional accrued pension liabilities in the year amounted to £NIL (2023-24: NIL).

Average number of persons employed

(the following section is subject to audit)

The average number of whole-time equivalent (WTE) persons employed during the year was as follows.

| | 2024-25 | | | 2023-24 |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| | Permanently employed staff | Others | Total | Total |
| NISRA Agency Board & SCS | 21 | - | 21 | 20 |
| NISRA Employees | 430 | - | 430 | 430 |
| Other** | - | 27 | 27 | 24 |
| CSU Interviewers | - | 72 | 72 | 70 |
| Staff engaged on capital projects* | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 451 | 99 | 550 | 544 |

* The Agency does not employ any staff exclusively on capital projects

** Other – includes staff who are fixed term and temporary

Staff composition by gender

The gender analysis of permanent NISRA staff as at 31 March 2025 was as follows.

| | 2024-25 | | | 2023-24 | | |
|----------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| | Female staff | Male Staff | Total Staff | Female staff | Male Staff | Total Staff |
| Agency Board | 8 | 8 | 16 | 7 | 7 | 14 |
| Senior Civil Service | 1 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| NISRA Employees | 235 | 213 | 448 | 224 | 196 | 420 |
| Total | 244 | 225 | 469 | 232 | 207 | 439 |

The tables shown above include NISRA staff in DoF and staff outposted to other government departments and seconded to other organisations. The first table shows the average position across the year, the second is an end of year snapshot and reflects the replacement of some temporary staff with newly recruited permanent staff.

Sickness absence

The Agency had an overall sickness absence rate of 8.3 days lost per employee in 2023-2024 (6.5 days 2022-23). Annual sickness absence figures can be found at [Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2023/24 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#). The 2024-25 sickness absence data is not currently available and will be published later this year.

Staff Policies

Employment, training and advancement of disabled persons

The NICS is a lead partner of Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) and is an accredited [Disability Positive](#) employer.

The NICS delivers an annual programme of communications and training on disability awareness and has policies in place to support inclusive workplaces. A review of the NICS reasonable adjustment process for in-work support, and for its recruitment selection and onboarding processes, progressed in 2024, which will deliver improvements to the process with implementation anticipated

in 2025-26, subject to Ministerial approval and Trade Union consultation. Colleagues with lived experience and external independent advocates have been stakeholders in the reasonable adjustment review.

The NICS is committed to the employment of disabled people and offers work experience for disabled people through the [NICS Work Experience Scheme for Disabled People](#) and participation in International Job Shadow Day (IJSB).

To encourage job applications from disabled people, positive action advertising and targeted advertising alongside a programme of outreach are used. The NICS operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) which ensures a guaranteed number of disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. Further information can be found on the “Information for disabled applicants” section of the [NICS recruit website](#).

All selection panel members complete mandatory recruitment and selection training, and appointments to the NICS are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, adhering to the [Recruitment Code](#).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The NICS values and welcomes diversity and is committed to creating a truly inclusive workplace for all.

The NICS Diversity Champions Network includes senior colleagues as designated Diversity Champions for each of the nine NICS departments, as well as four thematic leads for gender, race and ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+. The network alongside the NICS corporate HR function, People and Organisational Development, developed and delivered a [NICS Diversity Action Plan 2024-25](#), which set out priorities for action by diversity and inclusion theme and cross-cutting priorities.

Equality is a cornerstone consideration in the development and review of all HR policies which determine how staff are recruited and appointed, their terms and conditions, how they are managed and developed, assessed, recognised and rewarded. Further information is available in the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

As part of the NICS’ efforts to ensure equality of opportunity, the NICS continually conducts comprehensive reviews into the composition of its workforce and recruitment activity, publishing a wide range of data. The statistics are available on the [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)’s website](#).

The NICS continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which includes submission of an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return and a tri-annual Article 55 Review to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), both of which assess the composition of the NICS workforce and the composition of applicants and appointees. Although not a statutory requirement, the NICS also conducts a similar formal review of the gender profile of its workforce. The findings from both tri-annual reviews are published in the NICS [Workforce Review](#). The next review will be published late 2025.

The NICS uses the findings of all the equality monitoring and analysis to inform its programme of targeted outreach activity to address any areas of under-representation.

As a public authority, the NICS has due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in carrying out its functions. Further information on the department's equality scheme is available on its website <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk>.

Other Employee Matters

Health & Safety

The Department of Finance has a Health & Safety Policy which complies with the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulation (NI) 2000, and all other relevant legislation. The Agency, acting in accordance with the departmental policy, regards it as an integral part of its duties and objectives to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and of all other persons who may be affected by the Agency's undertakings.

Employee Consultation and Trade Union Relationships

The Department of Finance is responsible for the NICS Trade Union Arrangements Policy. People & Organisational Development consults and/or negotiates with the NICS recognised trade unions on matters such as pay, promotion, and annual leave which are relevant across the NICS. Local issues relevant only to NISRA are handled by local managers, and branch trade union representatives, through agreed Local Whitley procedures/constitutions.

Human Capital Management

NISRA is committed to career development, acknowledging that skilled and engaged staff are an essential resource in meeting current and future business needs.

This NICS Career Development Policy emphasises that career development is a collaborative process between individual staff members, line managers, and the Agency/Department, and takes account of the NICS Competency Framework and Performance Management System. As well as the individual's role in managing their career development, the NICS and NISRA provide opportunities to enhance the skills, capabilities and performance of staff so that they, in turn, can contribute to achieving corporate objectives.

Learning & Development

Staff training and development within NISRA operates within the central framework provided by NICS HR, which delivers generic training through a variety of channels including classroom-based learning, online platforms, and virtual classrooms. This approach enables flexible access to development opportunities aligned with corporate objectives and the NICS Competency Framework.

Talent management continues to be a key focus, reinforcing the value of ongoing development conversations between managers and staff. A range of resources to support these discussions is available via the NICS Talent Management Toolkit.

NISRA supports a broad range of career development opportunities, including mentoring, secondment and interchange placements, elective transfers, temporary promotion, job rotation, and job shadowing.

In 2024-25, NISRA provided staff with access to learning through diverse methods such as classroom sessions, online learning, and short, coding-focused training modules. Outside of mandatory professional training, most learning follows a self-directed, self-paced model. The NISRA Team site hosts a dedicated Staff Training Channel that signposts staff to specialist learning in statistical, analytical, and technical fields.

Looking ahead, NISRA continues to enhance its training provision. A skills audit is currently underway to help shape future learning and development priorities for staff.

Application of Business Appointment Rules

The NICS Standards of Conduct Policy, (Section 8 and Annexes 4) sets out the rules on the acceptance of outside business appointments, employment or self-employment for staff after they leave the NI Civil Service, including procedures to make staff aware of these rules and provides that the Permanent Secretary of the Department is responsible for the effective operation of the Business Appointment Rules within their Department. Further detail is available in the [NICS Standards of Conduct Policy](#).

In compliance with Business Appointment rules, the Agency is transparent in the advice given to individual applications for senior staff. Advice regarding specific business appointments has been published on the Department of Finance website <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk>.

Employee Engagement

When launching the 2023 NICS People Survey in April 2023, the Head of the Civil Service issued a message that the frequency of the Survey was changing from yearly to every other year to allow for proper targeting of actions, and so a People Survey did not take place in 2024.

For NISRA there were 310 (2021: 337) permanent staff (within DoF and non-NICS branches, NISRA staff outposted to other departments were included amongst the results of those departments) invited to complete the survey, of which 223 (2021: 226) participated, a response rate of 72% (2021: 67%). The Employee Engagement Index (EEI) is the weighted average of the responses to the five employee engagement questions, and it ranges from 0% to 100%. NISRA responses indicated an EEI of 52% (2021: 58%) compared to the NICS average of 54% (2021: 57%).

The 2025 NICS People Survey was launched on 29 April 2025 and the results will be available in Autumn 2025.

Expenditure on consultancy and temporary staffing

There was £NIL NISRA expenditure on external consultancy in the financial year 2024-25 (2023-24: £NIL).

NISRA spent £834k during the year on temporary staffing (2023-24: £701k).

Staff Turnover

| | NISRA Turnover Rate | | General Turnover Rate | |
|-------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | Turnover Rate | Turnover Percentage | Turnover Rate | Turnover Percentage |
| NISRA | 0.042 | 4.2% | 0.020 | 2.0% |

The NISRA Staff Turnover percentage (the total number of people that have left the Agency including those who have moved within the NICS) for 2024-25 is 4.2% (2023- 24, 7.8%) and the general turnover percentage (the people who have left the Agency and have not gone elsewhere in the NICS) is 2.0% (2023-24: 5.1%). This has been calculated by NICSHR based on the Cabinet Office Guidance on calculations for Turnover in the Civil Service.

Staff Redeployment

NISRA had no staff redeployed in 2024-25 (2023-24: NIL).

Off-payroll Engagements

The Agency did not have any off-payroll engagements at an annual cost of over £245 per day lasting longer than six months during 2024-25 (2023-24: NIL).

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages

(the following section is subject to audit)

There were no early retirements or compulsory redundancies in 2024-25 (2023-24: NIL).

Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in this section.

Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

Other Assembly Accountability Disclosures

Regularity of Expenditure

i. Losses and special payments

(the following section is subject to audit)

Losses statement

The Agency did not make any individual losses in excess of £300,000 (2023-24: £NIL).

Special Payments

The Agency did not make any special payments during the year. (2023-24: £NIL).

ii. Fees and Charges

(the following section is subject to audit)

This note is provided for fees and charges purposes and not for IFRS 8 purposes. Information is provided to services where the full cost of the service is in excess of £1m:

| | Income £000 | Full cost £000 | 2024-25 Total Surplus/ (deficit) £000 | 2023-24 Total Surplus/ (deficit) £000 |
|---|----------------|-------------------|---|---|
| Registration Services (GRO) | 3,489 | (3,672) | (183) | 27 |
| Statistic and Research (CSU) | 2,388 | (2,270) | 118 | 54 |
| Recovery of staff costs for staff outside DoF | 14,194 | (14,187) | 7 | (20) |
| Other services | 2,589 | (2,023) | 566 | 328 |
| Total | 22,660 | (22,152) | 508 | 389 |

General Register Office (GRO)

In setting fees, the GRO aims to recover 100% of costs directly attributable to estimated volumes of certificates produced and marriage and civil partnership notices and ceremonies. GRO is legislatively required to provide a birth, death, marriage and civil partnership registration service and no costs are charged for this service. The Statutory Provision is as noted in Article 7 to the Births and Deaths Registration (NI) Order 1976. In 2024-25 the actual cost recovery for the year was £3,489k (2023-24: £3,552k) from the supply of certificates and services.

Central Survey Unit (CSU)

In 2024-25, CSU actual cost recovery for the year was £2,388k (2023-24: £2,311k) from carrying out surveys on behalf of government departments and non-departmental public bodies.

Other services

NISRA was successful in receiving additional funding for various projects which included £600K for Census Transformation Project and £154K for Windsor Framework related outputs. In 2024-25, the actual cost recovery was surplus of £566k. This was due to additional forecasts for staff costs not materialising due to delays in recruitment process.

These objectives were met.

Remote Contingent Liabilities

(the following section is subject to audit)

There were no contingent liabilities requiring disclosure under assembly reporting requirements.

This Accountability Report is approved and signed



Dr Philip Wales

Accounting Officer

19 June 2025

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for the year ended 31 March 2025 under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. The financial statements comprise:

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025
- Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Cash Flows and Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended; and
- the related notes including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency financial statements is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its net operating expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and Department of Finance directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs)(UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance directions made under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not

identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- ensuring the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, is prepared in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: posting of unusual journals and significant transactions;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
 - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
 - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
 - investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

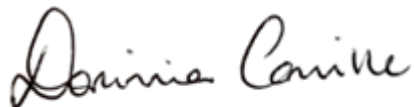
A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to

the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

25 June 2025

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2025

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which include changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

| | Note | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|---|------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Revenue from contracts with customers | 4 | (22,662) | (22,135) |
| Total operating income | | (22,662) | (22,135) |
| Staff costs | 3 | 28,153 | 28,141 |
| Purchase of goods and services | 3 | 3,535 | 3,568 |
| Depreciation and impairment charges | 3 | 1,950 | 1,777 |
| Provision expense | 3 | (50) | - |
| Other operating expenditure | 3 | 5,391 | 5,113 |
| Total operating expenditure | | 38,979 | 38,599 |
| Net operating expenditure | | 16,317 | 16,464 |
| Other comprehensive net expenditure | | | |
| Items that will not be reclassified to net operating costs: | | | |
| Net (gain) / loss on revaluation of property, plant and equipment | 5 | (8) | (7) |
| Net (gain) / loss on revaluation of intangible assets | 6 | (148) | (263) |
| Comprehensive net expenditure for the year | | 16,161 | 16,194 |

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025

This statement presents the financial position of the Agency. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

| | Note | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|--|------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Non-current assets | | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | 5 | 225 | 379 |
| Intangible assets | 6 | 7,185 | 6,167 |
| Trade and other receivables | 9 | 2 | 3 |
| Total non-current assets | | 7,412 | 6,549 |
| Current assets | | | |
| Trade and other receivables | 9 | 5,911 | 5,389 |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 8 | 127 | 197 |
| Total current assets | | 6,038 | 5,586 |
| Total assets | | 13,450 | 12,135 |
| Current liabilities | | | |
| Trade and other payables | 10 | (4,004) | (5,335) |
| Provisions | 11 | – | (50) |
| Total current liabilities | | (4,004) | (5,385) |
| Total assets less current liabilities | | 9,446 | 6,750 |
| Non-current liabilities | | | |
| Provisions | | – | – |
| Total non-current liabilities | | – | – |
| Total assets less total liabilities | | 9,446 | 6,750 |
| Taxpayers' equity and other reserves | | | |
| General fund | | 8,915 | 6,118 |
| Revaluation reserve | | 531 | 632 |
| Total equity | | 9,446 | 6,750 |

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

PDWales

Dr Philip Wales

Accounting Officer

19 June 2025

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2025

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Agency during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Agency generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the Agency. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Agency's future public service delivery.

| | Note | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|--|--------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cash flows from operating activities | | | |
| Net operating expenditure | SoCNE | (16,317) | (16,466) |
| Adjustments for non-cash transactions: | | | |
| Loss on disposal of non-current assets | 3 | – | – |
| Notional charges | 3 | 3,385 | 3,457 |
| Depreciation and impairment charges | 3 | 1,950 | 1,777 |
| Provision expense | 3 | (50) | – |
| (Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables | 9 | (521) | (1,062) |
| Increase/(Decrease) in trade and other payables | 10 | (1,331) | 1,569 |
| <i>less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure</i> | 10 | 404 | (398) |
| Use of Provisions | 11 | – | – |
| Net cash outflow from operating activities | | (12,480) | (11,123) |
| Cash flows from investing activities | | | |
| Purchase of property, plant and equipment | 5 | (1) | (410) |
| Purchase of intangible assets | 6 | (3,061) | (2,879) |
| Net cash outflow from investing activities | | (3,062) | (3,289) |
| Cash flows from financing activities | | | |
| Net Assembly Funding - drawn down | | 15,475 | 14,397 |
| Net cash flow from financing activities | SoCiTE | 15,475 | 14,397 |
| Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period before adjustments for payments to the Consolidated Fund | | (67) | (15) |
| Payments of amounts due to the Consolidated Fund | | (3) | (5) |
| Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period after adjustments for payments to the Consolidated Fund | | (70) | (20) |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period | 8 | 197 | 217 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period | 8 | 127 | 197 |

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2025

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Agency, analysed into 'general fund reserves' (i.e. those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Consolidated Fund). The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The General Fund represents the total assets less liabilities, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

| | Note | General Fund £000 | Revaluation Reserve £000 | Taxpayers' Equity £000 |
|--|------|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Balance at 31 March 2023 | | 4,457 | 638 | 5,095 |
| Net Assembly Funding | | 14,397 | — | 14,397 |
| Comprehensive net expenditure for the year | | (16,464) | 270 | (16,194) |
| Amounts repayable to the Consolidated Fund | | (5) | — | (5) |
| Auditor's remuneration | 3 | 19 | — | 19 |
| Non-cash notional charges | 3 | 3,438 | — | 3,438 |
| Transfer between reserves | | 276 | (276) | — |
| Balance at 31 March 2024 | | 6,118 | 632 | 6,750 |
| Net Assembly Funding | | 15,475 | — | 15,475 |
| Comprehensive net expenditure for the year | | (16,317) | 156 | (16,161) |
| Amounts repayable to the Consolidated Fund | | (3) | — | (3) |
| Auditor's remuneration | 3 | 20 | — | 20 |
| Non-cash notional charges | 3 | 3,365 | — | 3,365 |
| Transfer between reserves | | 257 | (257) | — |
| Balance at 31 March 2025 | | 8,915 | 531 | 9,446 |

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

Notes to the Accounts

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2024-25 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy that has been judged to be the most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Agency for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Agency for 2024-25 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the Accounts.

1.1 Accounting Convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets.

1.2 Property, plant and equipment

The Agency's property, plant and equipment includes IT equipment, plant and machinery and furniture and fittings which are capitalised at their cost of acquisition and installation and are revalued annually using appropriate indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics. The threshold for capitalisation, as an individual or grouped fixed asset, remains at £500 for the Agency for computer equipment, with all other equipment at £1,000.

Where appropriate, surpluses and deficits on revaluation are taken to the revaluation reserve and reductions in the value of non-current assets arising from a clear consumption of economic benefit should be charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

The Agency does not own the property it occupies, Colby House, but incurs a notional accommodation charge which is included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

NISRA uses Producer Price Indices published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in order to apply indexation to the value of non-property assets at year-end. In line with previous years, the December indices have been applied in 2024-25. Ordinarily, an assessment is carried out after the year-end, following the publication of the March indices by ONS, to ascertain that the impact of the movement in the indices between December and March is immaterial. However, in March 2025, ONS issued a statement indicating that they had identified a problem with the chain-linking methods used to calculate these indices, affecting the years from 2008 onwards, and that they would consequently be pausing publication of Producer Price Index data while the issue is rectified. At the time these accounts are being prepared, it has not been possible to ascertain the potential impact of this issue. However, given the value of the non-property assets potentially affected, NISRA does not expect an adjustment to indexation to have a material impact on the 2024-25 accounts. It is anticipated that ONS will recommence publication of the Producer Price Indices at some point during the 2025-26 financial year and the indexation of non-property assets will be brought up to date in the 2025-26 accounts.

1.3 Intangible assets

The Agency's intangible assets include software licences, internally and externally developed software, bespoke systems, databases and a website, which are capitalised at their cost of

acquisition and installation. Intangible assets are revalued annually using appropriate indices compiled by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

The threshold for capitalisation, as an individual or grouped fixed asset, remains at £500 for the Agency.

1.4 Depreciation and Amortisation

Depreciation/amortisation is provided on a straight-line basis in order to write-off the valuation, less estimated residual value, of non-current assets over their estimated useful lives. The estimated useful lives, which are reviewed regularly, are:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Information technology | 3-12 years; |
| Plant and machinery | 3-30 years; |
| Furniture and fittings | up to 10 years; and |
| Intangible assets | 3-12 years. |

1.5 Operating Income

Operating income is income which relates directly to the operating activities of the Agency. It principally comprises fees and charges for services provided on a full cost basis to other public bodies and citizens. The Agency's income relates directly to three main activities:

- Statistical Research Activities;
- Central Survey Unit (CSU) - charges for statistics and research work carried out for all of the NICS and other public bodies; and
- Registration Services (GRO).

1.6 Financial Instruments

A financial instrument is defined as any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

A financial instrument is recognised when, and only when, the entity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument. A previously recognised financial asset is derecognised when, and only when, either the contractual rights to the cash flows from that asset expire, or the entity transfers the asset such that the transfer qualified for derecognition. A financial liability is derecognised when, and only when, it is extinguished.

The Agency has financial instruments in the form of trade receivables and payables and cash and cash equivalents. In accordance with IFRS 9 *Financial Instruments – Classification and Measurement*, financial assets in the form of trade receivables, cash and cash equivalents and other receivables are measured at amortised cost.

The Agency impairs its trade receivables by making loss allowances equal to the lifetime expected credit losses if the credit risk on the trade receivables has increased significantly since its initial recognition.

Impairment losses are assessed individually for financial assets that are individually significant and individually or collectively for assets that are not individually significant. In making collective assessment of impairment, financial assets are grouped into portfolios based on similar risk

characteristics. Future cash flows from these portfolios are estimated based on the contractual cash flows and historical loss experience for assets with similar risk characteristics.

Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and the carrying amount of the financial asset or group of financial assets reduced by establishing an allowance for impairment losses. If in a subsequent period the amount of the impairment loss reduces and the reduction can be ascribed to an event after the impairment was recognised, the previously recognised loss is reversed by adjusting the allowance.

When a financial asset is deemed unrecoverable the amount of the asset is reduced directly and the impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure to the extent that a provision was not previously recognised. Financial liabilities are measured at amortised cost.

1.7 Value Added Tax (VAT)

All income and expenditure are stated exclusive of VAT which is recoverable on a departmental basis.

1.8 Programme Expenditure

All NISRA expenditure is classified as Programme expenditure.

1.9 Pensions

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the NICS Pension Schemes. The defined benefit scheme is unfunded and is non-contributory except in respect of dependants' benefits. The Agency recognises the expected cost of these elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it benefits from employees' services by payment to the NICS Pension Schemes of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the NICS Pension Schemes. In respect of the defined contribution scheme, the Agency recognises the contributions payable for the year.

1.10 Contingent Liabilities

In addition to contingent liabilities disclosed in accordance with IAS 37, the Agency discloses for Assembly reporting and accountability purposes certain statutory and non-statutory contingent liabilities where the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit is remote, but which have been reported to the Assembly in accordance with the requirements of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Where the time value of money is material, contingent liabilities which are required to be disclosed under IAS 37 are stated at discounted amounts and the amount reported to the Assembly separately noted. Contingent liabilities that are not required to be disclosed by IAS 37 are stated at the amounts reported to the Assembly.

1.11 Employee Benefits

Under IAS19 Employee Benefits legislation, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave as at the year end. The cost of untaken leave has been determined using the data from leave records.

1.12 Provisions

The Agency provides for legal or constructive obligations, which are of uncertain timing or amount at the reporting date on the basis of the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation. These relate to the settlement of equal pay claims, other potential legal actions and provision for future liabilities in respect of contracts. Where the effect of the time value of money is significant the estimated risk-adjusted cash flows are discounted using the real rate set by HM Treasury.

1.13 Critical accounting estimates and key judgements

As a result of the uncertainties inherent in all business activities, many items in financial statements cannot be measured with precision but can only be estimated. Where estimates have been required in order to prepare these financial statements in conformity with FReM, management have used judgements based on the latest available, reliable information. Management continually review estimates to take account of any changes in the circumstances on which the estimate was based or as a result of new information or more experience.

1.14 IFRS 16 Leases

IFRS 16 Leases has been implemented from 1 April 2022. It largely removes the distinction between operating and finance leases and introduces a single lease accounting model. A lessee is required to recognise ('right of use') assets and liabilities for all leases (apart from the exemptions listed below). This replaces the previous standard, IAS 17 Leases, representing a change in accounting policy applied in accordance with IAS 1 and IAS 8 as adapted by the FreM.

The Agency has elected not to recognise right of use assets and lease liabilities for the following leases:

- Low value assets, with an assessment performed on the underlying asset when new (these are determined to be in line with capitalisation thresholds); and
- Leases with a lease term of 12 months or less.

1.15 Notional Charges

Notional charges are non-cash transactions. Notional charges, in respect of services received from other Government departments, Agencies and audit costs, are included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditures to reflect the full economic cost, including accommodation charges.

1.16 Impending application of newly issued accounting standards not yet effective

The Agency has reviewed new standards, interpretations and amendments to existing standards which have been issued but are either not yet effective, nor adopted early for these accounts. The standards are mandatory for the Agency's accounting periods beginning on or after 1 April 2025 or later periods.

Other than as outlined below, the Agency considers that these standards are not relevant or material to its operations.

IFRS 17: Insurance Contracts

IFRS 17 replaces IFRS 4: Insurance Contracts and is to be included in the FreM for mandatory implementation from 2025-26. It establishes the principles for the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of insurance contracts within the scope of this Standard.

IFRS 17 requires insurance contracts, including reinsurance contracts, to be recognised on the Statement of Financial Position as the total of the fulfilment cash flows and the contractual service margin (CSM).

The fulfilment cash flows consist of the present value of future cash flows calculated using best estimate assumptions with an explicit risk adjustment for non-financial risk.

The risk adjustment is released to the SoCNE as risk expires. The CSM is the unearned profit on insurance contracts and is released to the SoCNE over the insurance contract period as insurance services are provided. Where an insurance contract is onerous, it will have no CSM and the onerous element of the insurance contract will be recognised immediately in the SoCNE.

Non-investment Asset Valuations

In December 2023 Treasury released an exposure draft on potential changes to make to valuing and accounting for non-investment assets (e.g. PPE, intangible assets). The following changes to the valuation and accounting of non-investment assets is to be included in the 2025-26 FReM for mandatory implementation:

References to assets being held for their 'service potential' and the terms 'specialised/ non-specialised' assets are being removed from the FReM. Non-investment assets are instead described as assets held for their 'operational capacity'. This change has no impact on the valuation basis of non-investment assets, which remains Existing Use Value (EUV).

An adaptation to IAS 16 will be introduced to withdraw the requirement to revalue an asset where its fair value materially differs from its carrying value. Assets are now valued using the one of the following processes:

- A quinquennial revaluation supplemented by annual indexation.
- A rolling programme of valuations over a 5-year cycle, with annual indexation applied to assets during the 4 intervening years.
- For non-property assets only, appropriate indices.
- In rare circumstances where an index is not available, a quinquennial revaluation supplemented by a desktop revaluation in year 3.

The option to measure intangible assets using the revaluation model is withdrawn. The carrying values of intangible assets at 31 March 2025 will be considered the historical cost at 1 April 2025.

Social Benefits

The 2025-26 FReM will include new guidance on accounting for social benefits. The 2025-26 FReM will define social benefits as 'current transfers received by households (including individuals) intended to provide for the needs that arise from certain events or circumstances, for example, sickness, unemployment, retirement, housing, education, or family circumstances. It is not anticipated that this will have any impact on the Department's financial statements.

IFRS 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements

IFRS 18 will replace IAS 1 Presentation of Financial Statements and is effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after the 1 January 2027 in the private sector. The Public Sector implementation date is not yet confirmed. The impact of IFRS 18 on the Public Sector is still being assessed.

2. Statement of Operating Costs by Operating Segments

| 2024-25 | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Note | General Register Office £000 | Central Survey Unit £000 | Other £000 | Total £000 |
| Gross expenditure | 3 | 4,489 | 5,557 | 28,933 | 38,979 |
| Income | 4 | (3,489) | (2,388) | (16,785) | (22,662) |
| Net expenditure | | 1,000 | 3,169 | 12,148 | 16,317 |
| | | | | | |
| Total assets | | 1,134 | 3,090 | 9,226 | 13,450 |
| Total liabilities | | (773) | (127) | (3,104) | (4,004) |
| Net assets | | 361 | 2,963 | 6,122 | 9,446 |
| | | | | | |
| 2023-24 | | | | | |
| | Note | General Register Office £000 | Central Survey Unit £000 | Other £000 | Total £000 |
| Gross expenditure | 3 | 4,986 | 4,979 | 28,634 | 38,599 |
| Income | 4 | (3,552) | (2,311) | (16,272) | (22,135) |
| Net expenditure | | 1,434 | 2,668 | 12,362 | 16,464 |
| | | | | | |
| Total assets | | 1,372 | 2,684 | 8,079 | 12,135 |
| Total liabilities | | (968) | (314) | (4,103) | (5,385) |
| Net assets | | 404 | 2,370 | 3,976 | 6,750 |

General Register Office (GRO)

Consists of the unit that centrally manages all public births, deaths, marriage and civil partnership records and the District Councils that manage the registrations locally.

Central Survey Unit (CSU)

Consists of the survey unit that would be the largest income generating unit in NISRA that carries out work for all of the NICS and other public bodies.

Other

Covers all the other statistical research activities and the out-posted and seconded staff.

3. Programme Costs

| | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Staff costs | | |
| Wages and salaries | 19,989 | 21,038 |
| Social security costs | 1,966 | 1,866 |
| Other pension costs | 6,198 | 5,237 |
| Total staff costs | 28,153 | 28,141 |
| Purchase of goods and services | | |
| Registrar charges | 2,948 | 3,179 |
| Survey costs | 564 | 370 |
| Finance costs | 21 | 18 |
| Bad debts written off | – | – |
| Exchange losses/(gains) | 2 | 1 |
| Total purchase of goods and services | 3,535 | 3,568 |
| Other operating expenditure | | |
| Accounting and information technology | 1,006 | 768 |
| Accommodation, maintenance and utilities | 759 | 764 |
| Personnel and training | 83 | 30 |
| Travel, subsistence and hospitality | 27 | 18 |
| Printing, stationery and advertising | 43 | 63 |
| Legal costs | 3 | 16 |
| Intra-departmental hard charges | (10) | (9) |
| Other costs | 95 | 6 |
| | 2,006 | 1,656 |
| Non-cash items: | | |
| (Profit)/loss on disposal of non-current assets | – | – |
| Auditors' remuneration and expenses | 20 | 19 |
| | 20 | 19 |
| Intra-departmental notional charges: | | |
| Accommodation – Colby House | 712 | 748 |
| IT Assist | 1,263 | 1,225 |
| Finance | 461 | 423 |
| HR | 769 | 747 |
| Corporate Services | 160 | 295 |
| | 3,365 | 3,438 |
| Total other operating expenditure | 5,391 | 5,113 |
| Depreciation and impairment charges | | |
| Depreciation | 180 | 170 |
| Amortisation | 1,835 | 1,596 |
| Impairment of non-current assets | (65) | 11 |
| | 1,950 | 1,777 |
| Provision expense | | |
| Provided in year | – | – |
| Written back in year | (50) | – |
| | (50) | – |
| Total | 38,979 | 38,599 |

4. Income

Revenue from Contracts with Customers

The Agency charges for a variety of services provided to customers. The largest component is the recovery of salary costs for statistical staff on loan to departments and agencies outside DoF.

| | | | | | 2024-25 | (Restated) 2023-24 |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| | Income from NI Departments £000 | Income from other NI Public Bodies £000 | Income from UK Departments & Public Bodies £000 | Income from External Customers £000 | Total £000 | Total £000 |
| General Registration Services | 8 | 1,283 | 138 | 2,060 | 3,489 | 3,552 |
| Central Survey Unit | 1,369 | - | 1,019 | - | 2,388 | 2,311 |
| Statistical Research Unit | 838 | 114 | 1,636 | - | 2,588 | 2,767 |
| Recovery of Salary Costs | 12,750 | 1,406 | 655 | (614) | 14,197 | 13,505 |
| | 14,965 | 2,803 | 3,448 | 1,446 | 22,662 | 22,135 |

The income is reported based on the operating segments.

5. Property, plant and equipment

2024-25

| | Information technology £000 | Plant and machinery £000 | Furniture and fittings £000 | Payments on account and assets under construction £000 | Total £000 |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Cost or valuation | | | | | |
| At 1 April 2024 | 626 | 35 | 515 | 1 | 1,177 |
| Additions | 1 | — | — | — | 1 |
| Disposals | — | — | — | — | — |
| Revaluation released to SoCNE | 9 | — | — | — | 9 |
| Reclassification | — | — | — | — | — |
| Indexation | 5 | — | 12 | — | 17 |
| At 31 March 2025 | 641 | 35 | 527 | 1 | 1,204 |
| Depreciation | | | | | |
| At 1 April 2024 | 414 | 28 | 356 | — | 798 |
| Charged in year | 70 | 2 | 108 | — | 180 |
| Disposals | — | — | — | — | — |
| Revaluation released to SoCNE | (8) | — | — | — | (8) |
| Indexation | 2 | — | 7 | — | 9 |
| At 31 March 2025 | 478 | 30 | 471 | — | 979 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2025 | 163 | 5 | 56 | 1 | 225 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2024 | 212 | 7 | 159 | 1 | 379 |
| Asset financing: | | | | | |
| Owned | 163 | 5 | 56 | 1 | 225 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2025 | 163 | 5 | 56 | 1 | 225 |

5. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

| | 2023-24 | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|
| | Information technology £000 | Plant and machinery £000 | Furniture and fittings £000 | Payments on account and assets under construction £000 | Total £000 |
| Cost or valuation | | | | | |
| At 1 April 2023 | 964 | 36 | 489 | 62 | 1,551 |
| Additions | 61 | (1) | 1 | 349 | 410 |
| Disposals | (388) | – | – | – | (388) |
| Revaluation released to SoCNE | (9) | – | – | – | (9) |
| Reclassification | – | – | – | (410) | (410) |
| Indexation | (2) | – | 25 | – | 23 |
| At 31 March 2024 | 626 | 35 | 515 | 1 | 1,177 |
| Depreciation | | | | | |
| At 1 April 2023 | 742 | 25 | 233 | – | 1,000 |
| Charged in year | 61 | 3 | 106 | – | 170 |
| Disposals | (388) | – | – | – | (388) |
| Revaluation released to SoCNE | – | – | – | – | – |
| Indexation | (1) | – | 17 | – | 16 |
| At 31 March 2024 | 414 | 28 | 356 | – | 798 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2024 | 212 | 7 | 159 | 1 | 379 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2023 | 222 | 11 | 256 | 62 | 551 |
| Asset financing: | | | | | |
| Owned | 212 | 7 | 159 | 1 | 379 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2024 | 212 | 7 | 159 | 1 | 379 |

6. Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise bespoke systems and software licences (see note 1.3).

| | 2024-25 | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|---------------|
| | Software Licences £000 | Internally Developed Software and Website £000 | Externally Developed Software £000 | Total £000 |
| Cost or valuation | | | | |
| At 31 March 2024 | 250 | 11,328 | 8,905 | 20,483 |
| Additions | (44) | 2,351 | 350 | 2,657 |
| Disposals | — | — | — | - |
| Revaluation released to SoCNE | — | (1) | — | (1) |
| Reclassification | 44 | (44) | — | - |
| Indexation | 6 | 206 | 102 | 314 |
| Revaluation | — | — | (53) | (53) |
| At 31 March 2025 | 256 | 13,840 | 9,304 | 23,400 |
| Amortisation | | | | |
| At 31 March 2024 | 104 | 7,694 | 6,518 | 14,316 |
| Charged in year | 22 | 1,245 | 568 | 1,835 |
| Revaluation released to SoCNE | — | — | (49) | (49) |
| Reclassification | 9 | (9) | — | - |
| Indexation | 2 | 81 | 33 | 116 |
| Revaluation | — | — | (3) | (3) |
| At 31 March 2025 | 137 | 9,011 | 7,067 | 16,215 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2025 | 119 | 4,829 | 2,237 | 7,185 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2024 | 146 | 3,634 | 2,387 | 6,167 |
| Asset financing: | | | | |
| Owned | 119 | 4,829 | 2,237 | 7,185 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2025 | 119 | 4,829 | 2,237 | 7,185 |

6. Intangible assets (continued)

| | 2023-24 | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|---------------|
| | Software Licences £000 | Internally Developed Software and Website £000 | Externally Developed Software £000 | Total £000 |
| Cost or valuation | | | | |
| At 31 March 2023 | 349 | 9,132 | 7,224 | 16,705 |
| Additions | 44 | 2,128 | 1,105 | 3,277 |
| Disposals | (152) | (185) | (22) | (359) |
| Revaluation released to SoCNE | – | (2) | – | (2) |
| Reclassification | – | – | 410 | 410 |
| Indexation | 9 | 255 | 188 | 452 |
| At 31 March 2024 | 250 | 11,328 | 8,905 | 20,483 |
| Amortisation | | | | |
| At 31 March 2023 | 214 | 6,653 | 6,023 | 12,890 |
| Charged in year | 38 | 1,100 | 458 | 1,596 |
| Disposals | (152) | (185) | (22) | (359) |
| Indexation | 4 | 126 | 59 | 189 |
| At 31 March 2024 | 104 | 7,694 | 6,518 | 14,316 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2024 | 146 | 3,634 | 2,387 | 6,167 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2023 | 135 | 2,479 | 1,201 | 3,815 |
| Asset financing: | | | | |
| Owned | 146 | 3,634 | 2,387 | 6,167 |
| Carrying amount at 31 March 2024 | 146 | 3,634 | 2,387 | 6,167 |

7. Impairments

| | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Charged directly to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure: | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | (17) | 9 |
| Intangible assets | (48) | 2 |
| | (65) | 11 |
| Taken through the Revaluation Reserve: | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | (8) | (7) |
| Intangible assets | (148) | (263) |
| | (156) | (270) |
| Total impairment charge for the year | (221) | (259) |

8. Cash and Cash Equivalents

| | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Balance at 1 April | 197 | 217 |
| Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances | (70) | (20) |
| Balance at 31 March | 127 | 197 |
| The following balances at 31 March were held at: | | |
| Commercial banks and cash in hand | 127 | 197 |

9. Trade receivables and other current assets

| | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Amounts falling due within one year: | | |
| Trade receivables | 329 | 638 |
| Other receivables | 18 | 15 |
| Prepayments and accrued income | 5,564 | 4,698 |
| VAT recoverable | – | 38 |
| | 5,911 | 5,389 |
| Amounts falling due after more than one year: | | |
| Trade Receivables | 2 | 3 |
| | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 5,913 | 5,392 |

10. Trade payables and other current liabilities

| | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Amounts falling due within one year: | | |
| VAT payable | 1 | — |
| Trade payables | 6 | 7 |
| Other payables | 3 | 5 |
| Accruals | 3,994 | 5,323 |
| | 4,004 | 5,335 |

Accruals above include amounts relating to purchase of property, plant and equipment of £NIL (2023-24: £NIL) and intangible assets of £60,204 (2023-24: £464,166).

There are no amounts falling due after more than one year.

11. Provisions for liabilities and charges

| | £000 Legal Claims | 2024-25 £000 Total | £000 Legal Claims | 2023-24 £000 Total |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Balance at 1 April | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Provided in year | — | — | — | — |
| Provisions written back | (50) | (50) | — | — |
| Provided utilised in | — | — | — | — |
| Balance at 31 March | — | — | 50 | 50 |

Analysis of expected timing of discounted flows:

| | £000 Legal Claims | 2024-25 £000 Total | £000 Legal Claims | 2023-24 £000 Total |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Not later than one | — | — | 50 | 50 |
| Later than one year and not later than five years | — | — | — | — |
| Later than five years | — | — | — | — |
| Balance at 31 March | — | — | 50 | 50 |

Legal claims:

This represents public liability, employer liability, contract and compensation claims and dilapidations as advised by the business areas within the Agency.

Public liability claims include personal injury claims. Employer liability claims include legal costs that will have to be borne by the Department and relate to accidents or injury caused due to faults in the fabric of a departmental building and other damages including fair employment and industrial tribunal cases.

Contract claims are associated with claims made by contractors for unforeseen delays in the completion of projects or cost over-runs, which are outside of their control. The provisions details are based on evaluations made by qualified professional and technical personnel employed by the Department of Finance.

Other legal issues:

The Court of Appeal (CoA) judgment from 17 June 2019 (PSNI v Agnew) determined that claims for Holiday Pay shortfall can extend as far back as 1998. However, the PSNI appealed the CoA judgment to the Supreme Court. The hearing was held in December 2022 and the judgment was delivered on 4 October 2023. The 2024-25 Holiday Pay provision has been estimated by HR and covers the period from November 1998 to 31 March 2020. There are still some significant elements of uncertainty around this estimate for a number of reasons:

- Lack of accessible data for years previous to 2011; and
- Ongoing negotiations with Trade Union and their legal representatives.

12. Capital commitments

| | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Property, plant and equipment | – | – |
| Intangible assets | – | 332 |
| Total | – | 332 |

13. Commitment under leases

Operating leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods:

| | 2024-25 £000 | 2023-24 £000 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Not later than one year | 2 | 2 |
| Later than one year and not later than five years | 1 | 6 |
| Later than five years | – | – |
| Total | 3 | 8 |

14. Other Financial Commitments

The Agency has entered into non-cancellable contracts (which are not leases or Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) and other service concession arrangement contracts), for the NIROS and GeNI support contracts (GRO) and Integrated Business Survey IT Systems (IBSS) support (ELMS branch). The Agency is statutorily required to pay all costs in relation to the civil registration services provided by the District Register Offices (DRO). The payments to which the Agency is committed are as follows:

| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| | £000 | £000 |
| Not later than one year | 4,175 | 4,185 |
| Later than one year and not later than five years | 15,758 | 14,447 |
| Later than five years | 3,176 | 3,973 |
| Total | 23,109 | 22,605 |

15. Financial Instruments

IFRS 7 Financial Instruments: Disclosures requires disclosure that enables evaluation of the significance of financial instruments for the Agency's financial position and performance, the nature and extent of risks arising from financial instruments to which the Agency is exposed during the period and at the reporting date, and how the Agency manages those risks.

As a result of the nature of its activities and the way in which NISRA is financed, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non- public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Agency's expected purchase and usage requirements and the Agency is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Details of the significant accounting policies and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset and financial liability are disclosed in Note 1 "Accounting Policies".

Categories of financial instruments

The Agency's financial assets are classified as loans and receivables and comprise trade receivables and other current assets (Note 9) and cash and cash equivalents (Note 8). The Agency's financial liabilities comprise trade payables and other current liabilities (Note 10). These financial assets and liabilities are held at cost which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

Cash and cash equivalents comprises cash and demand deposits with banks. As at 31 March 2025, the carrying value of cash at bank approximates its fair value due to its short-term nature.

16. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37

Public Sector Pensions – Injury to Feelings Claim

The parent department of NISRA, the Department of Finance (DoF), is a named Respondent in a class action affecting employers across the public sector and is managing claims on behalf of all Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments. This is an extremely complex case with potential implications for the NICS and wider public sector, however, the cases are at a very early stage of proceedings and until there is further clarity on potential scope and impact, a reliable estimate of liability cannot be provided.

17. Related party transactions

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Finance.

The Department of Finance is regarded as a related party with which the Agency has had various material transactions during the year.

The Agency has also had various material transactions with all the other Northern Ireland government departments and other central government bodies. Other central government bodies have included:

| | |
|--|--|
| Cabinet Office | Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland |
| Department for Communities | NI Courts and Tribunals Service |
| Department for Infrastructure | NI Prison Service |
| Department for the Economy | Office for National Statistics |
| Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs | Office of the Police Ombudsman for NI |
| Department of Education | Police Service of Northern Ireland |
| Department of Health | Probation Board for Northern Ireland |
| Department of Justice | Public Health Agency NI |
| Electoral Office for Northern Ireland | Public Prosecution Service |
| HM Revenue & Customs | Special EU Programmes Body |
| Home Office | Valuation Office Agency |

During the year none of the board members, members of the key management staff or other related parties have undertaken any material transactions with the Agency.

18. Events after the Reporting Date

There are no events after the reporting period requiring adjustment in the Agency Accounts.

The increase in the rate of employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) from 13.8% to 15% on 6 April 2025 is a relevant non-adjusting event after the reporting period. It is estimated that the financial effect of this increase in the 2025-26 financial year for NISRA will be £632K.

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised the issue of these financial statements on 25 June 2025.

Appendix 1 Acronyms

| Acronym | Details |
|---------|--|
| AB | Agency Board |
| AD ARC | Agricultural Research Collection 2011 |
| ADR NI | Administrative Data Research Northern Ireland |
| ALB | Arm's Length Body |
| AME | Annually Managed Expenditure |
| AO | Accounting Officer |
| ARC | Audit and Risk Committee |
| ASSIST | Advocacy Support Safety Information Services Together |
| BAIM | Business Area Information Manager |
| BSO | Business Services Organisation |
| C&AG | Comptroller and Auditor General |
| CARE | Career Average Revalued Earnings |
| CCM | Cost Cap Mechanism |
| CETV | Cash Equivalent Transfer Value |
| CGIAD | Cross Government Income Admin Dataset |
| CM | Content Manager |
| CoA | Court of Appeal |
| CPI | Consumer Prices Index |
| CSM | Contractual Service Margin |
| CSP | Civil Service Pensions |
| CSU | Central Survey Unit |
| C21CM | Census 2021 Comprehensive Microdata |
| DAERA | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs |
| DAO | Dear Accounting Officer Letter |
| DARC | Departmental Audit & Risk Committee |
| DE | Department of Education |
| DEA | Digital Economy Act |
| DEL | Departmental Expenditure Limit (in accounts) |
| DfC | Department for Communities |
| DfE | Department for the Economy |
| DfI | Department for Infrastructure |
| DoF | Department of Finance |
| DoH | Department of Health |
| DoJ | Department of Justice |
| DP | Deputy Principal |
| DPA | Data Protection Act |
| DPGN | Data Protection Guidance Notes |
| DPIA | Data Protection Impact Assessment |
| DSA | Data Sharing Agreement |
| DPO | Data Protection Officer |

| | |
|--------|--|
| ECNI | Equality Commission for Northern Ireland |
| EEI | Employee Engagement Index |
| EFDNI | Employers for Disability Northern Ireland |
| EIR | Environmental Information Regulations |
| ELC | Early Learning and Childcare |
| ELMS | Economic and Labour Market Statistics |
| EOL | Education Outcomes Linkage |
| ESRC | Economic and Social Research Council |
| EU | European Union |
| EUV | Existing Use Value |
| FOI | Freedom of Information |
| FRm | Financial Reporting Manual |
| FMB | Financial Management Branch |
| GAD | Government Actuary's Department |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation |
| GIS | Guaranteed Interview Scheme |
| GRO | General Register Office |
| HAIB | Hospital Activity Information Branch |
| HMRC | His Majesty's Revenue and Customs |
| HR | Human Resources |
| HTML | Hypertext Markup Language |
| HSC | Health and Social Care |
| HWIB | Hospital Waits Information Branch |
| IA | Information Assurance |
| IAO | Information Asset Owner |
| IAS | International Accounting Standard |
| IBSS | Integrated Business Survey IT Systems |
| ICO | Information Commissioner's Office |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IFRS | International Financial Reporting Standards |
| IJSD | International Job Shadow Day |
| IT | Information Technology |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| LGBTQ+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (or Questioning) |
| LFS | Labour Force Survey |
| LMS | Labour Market Survey |
| MARP | Methodological Assurance Review Panel |
| MPMNI | Managing Public Money in Northern Ireland |
| NI | Northern Ireland |
| NIAO | Northern Ireland Audit Office |
| NICS | Northern Ireland Civil Service |
| NICSHR | Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources |
| NIROS | Northern Ireland Registration Office System |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| NISRA | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency |
| NISRA DoF | NISRA branches located within DoF |
| NRS | National Records Scotland |
| OBA | Outcomes Based Accountability |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics |
| OSR | Office for Statistics Regulation |
| PCSPS(NI) | Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) |
| PfG | Programme for Government |
| PFI | Private Finance Initiative |
| PHIRB | Public Health Information and Research Branch |
| PPE | Property, Plant and Equipment |
| PRONI | Public Record Office of Northern Ireland |
| PSNI | Police Service of Northern Ireland |
| PSR | Public Search Room |
| R | R programming language |
| RAP | Reproducible Analytical Pipelines |
| SAR | Subject Access Request |
| SCS | Senior Civil Service |
| SIM | Support Information Manager |
| SIRO | Senior Information Risk Owner |
| SMF | Senior Management Forum |
| SMT | Senior Management Team |
| SoCF | Statement of Cash Flows |
| SoCiTE | Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity |
| SoCNE | Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure |
| SoFP | Statement of Financial Position |
| TECH LAB | Technology and Support Lab |
| TEO | The Executive Office |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UKSA | United Kingdom Statistics Authority |
| UX | User Experience |
| VARs | Vital Statistics and Administrative Research and Support |
| VAT | Value Added Tax |