

Agenda item 7: UKSA Assessment update

Population Estimates and Projections for Northern Ireland

Assessment Report 312



1. Background

On 30 July 2015, the UK Statistics Authority published a report on the *Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics for Population Estimates and Projections for Northern Ireland* ([Assessment report 312](#)). This report forms part of a broader assessment of population statistics across the UK that are produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS); the Welsh Government; National Records of Scotland (NRS) and NISRA. The previous assessment of these sets of statistics was included in [Assessment report 124](#).

The UK Statistics Authority confirms that the population statistics for Northern Ireland are designated as National Statistics, subject to NISRA implementing six specific requirements. The UK Statistics Authority also made six suggestions for NISRA to consider.

Following the Assessment, NISRA produced an [Action Plan](#) and an [Action Plan Checklist](#) to address each of the requirements and suggestions.

2. Requirements

Annex A outlines the details of the requirements but in summary these relate to:

- (i) Improving user engagement, particularly around small area estimates
- (ii) Improving published documents around statistical planning
- (iii) Publishing an appropriate level of detail on data assurance and audit arrangements
- (iv) Publishing information about the quality of the data used in the report *Estimates of the Population Aged 85 and Over, Northern Ireland*
- (v) Working with ONS, NRS & WG on publishing information on methodological and comparability differences across the UK
- (vi) Improving signposting and navigating from the NISRA website

The deadline for addressing the majority of these requirements was the end of January 2016.

3. Current Position

Since the assessment report was published in July 2015, the NISRA Population Statistics team has been working to meet each of these requirements. At the end of January 2016 a summary paper was produced for the assessment team to highlight the evidence submitted to address each requirement. At meetings with the assessment team in March 2016, the team verbally confirmed that they are content with the evidence provided for five out of the

six requirements. Work is ongoing on Requirement 3 around the quality of administrative data sources used in the production of the population estimates. A draft *Quality of Administrative Data* report has been produced and sent to the assessment team but further work is required to incorporate the Authority's [Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit](#). The assessment team is content with the progress which is being made on this report and has indicated that ONS and NRS are also still working on their equivalent reports. It is likely that the redesignation of NI population statistics as National Statistics will be tabled at the UKSA Regulation Committee meeting in July or September 2016.

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Annex A: Requirements for designation as National Statistics

Finding	Requirement
<p>NISRA did not consult users about the decision to stop producing <i>Small Area Population Estimates</i>. NISRA should:</p>	<p>1</p> <p>a) Consult users from a broad spectrum of sectors about the future of Small Area Population Estimates and the decision to subsume this report into Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland and publish the results of this consultation, the actions to be taken and a timetable for implementation</p> <p>b) Produce and publish documentation about how it will consult users about future changes to methodology or dissemination that are likely to significantly affect the use of the statistics (para 3.4).</p>
<p>NISRA has not published documentation about the consultation on the statistics work programme, or on how users' views are being taken forward through its statistical planning, and the priorities for individual sets of statistics or how these are set. NISRA should:</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Improve published documentation about statistical planning ensuring it:</p> <p>a) Is up-to-date</p> <p>b) Takes full account of user needs</p> <p>c) Is transparent about priority setting and the reasons that particular choices are made</p> <p>d) Reflects the obligation to serve the public good.</p> <p>(para 3.6).</p>
<p>NISRA has not sufficiently identified or explained the assurance arrangements undertaken for source data, its own assurance procedures for migration data, or the role of external bodies in inspecting or auditing the data collecting organisations; accordingly it has not communicated this information in an accessible way to users. NISRA has not fully updated its <i>Statement of Administrative Sources</i> (SoAS) which lists the administrative</p>	<p>3</p> <p>a) Update its SoAS to ensure that all the data sources are included and the information about them, including the statistical products to which they contribute, is accurate</p> <p>b) Ensure that data sources are named consistently across publications, or refer to the different names and explain in the publications the reasons for those differences</p> <p>c) Publish an appropriate level of detail to inform users about the data assurance and audit arrangements for all the administrative data sources used in the production of the</p>

Finding		Requirement
data sources used to produce the population estimates and projections statistics and other documentation is inconsistent with the SoAS. NISRA should:		population estimates and projections publications, taking into consideration the Authority's <i>Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit</i> (para 3.16).
<i>Estimates of the Population Aged 85 and Over, Northern Ireland</i> does not contain any information about the quality of the statistics or what quality assurance processes have been taken. NISRA should:	4	Publish information about the quality of the data in <i>Estimates of the Population Aged 85 and Over, Northern Ireland</i> , and the quality assurance measures that are taken (para 3.19).
Documents that compare the population estimates produced in all countries in the UK have not been updated since their publication. NISRA should:	5	a) Ensure that the remaining comparison documents on the population estimates and projections produced in all countries in the UK are updated and published as planned b) Carry out, and publish, a review of the methodological and comparability differences and, based on knowledge of the uses of the statistics and expert input, evaluate whether the differences are justifiable As part of meeting this Requirement, NISRA should work together with the Welsh Government, NRS and ONS (para 3.22).
Linkage is insufficient to documentation about users, the previous censuses, and to ongoing development work. NISRA should:	6	Review and improve, where relevant, the signposting and navigation from the population section of NISRA's website by referencing, and linking to, relevant documentation from previous censuses and the 2021 Census Planning section of NISRA's website (para 3.28).