

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Court Activity in Northern Ireland

*(produced by the Northern Ireland Courts and
Tribunals Service)*

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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(produced by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service)

ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.

Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment Reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, Reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment Reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment Reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment Report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act requires all statistics currently designated as National Statistics to be assessed against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*³. The report covers the statistics on court activity in Northern Ireland, reported in the compendium publication *Judicial Statistics*⁴ and the quarterly *Mortgage Press Release: Actions for Possession*⁵, produced by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS).

1.1.2 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* are designated as National Statistics, subject to NICTS implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by July 2011.

1.2.2 Assessments of compendium publications against the *Code of Practice* relate to the processes involved in preparing the publication, rather than in producing the statistics that are included. Those sets of statistics will normally be subject to separate assessment. Designation of a compendium publication as National Statistics therefore means that the producer body has, for example: identified and met user needs in terms of the content of the publication; considered the appropriateness of each series for inclusion; and written appropriate commentary.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

1.3.1 NICTS engages with users in Northern Ireland government departments formally and informally and these users told us that they are satisfied with the level of engagement. NICTS responds to enquiries from other users but does not engage systematically with these users. NICTS has not published any documentation on the use made of the statistics or on users' experiences of the statistics.

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁴ [http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Targets_and_Performance/p_tp_Judicial_Statistics_2009.htm)

[GB/Publications/Targets_and_Performance/p_tp_Judicial_Statistics_2009.htm](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Targets_and_Performance/p_tp_Judicial_Statistics_2009.htm)

⁵ <http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics+and+Research>

- 1.3.2 Both *Judicial Statistics* and *Mortgage Press Release* are published free of charge on NICTS's website although they are not accessible from the National Statistics Publication Hub. NICTS provides little information about the methods used to produce the statistics, or about the quality and reliability of the statistics; neither does NICTS provide much commentary about the statistics.
- 1.3.3 The statistics are based on data from the court administrative system. NICTS's statisticians have influenced the development of this system so that it is suited to statistical purposes; NICTS has also published a Statement of Administrative Sources.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that NICTS could strengthen its compliance with the *Code*. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

Requirement 1	Take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of the statistics, the needs of current and potential users, and user views on the service provided. Publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics (para 3.3).
Requirement 2	Confirm that any future changes to the statistics will be announced in advance of their release (para 3.6).
Requirement 3	Publish details of the methods adopted in producing the statistics, and why those particular methods were chosen (para 3.10).
Requirement 4	Inform users about the quality, including the strengths and limitations, of the statistics presented in <i>Judicial Statistics</i> and the <i>Mortgage Press Release</i> (para 3.12).
Requirement 5	Improve the commentary in <i>Judicial Statistics</i> and the <i>Mortgage Press Release</i> , providing some main findings, analysis of trends over time and contextual information to aid interpretation of the statistics (para 3.20).
Requirement 6	Make some key tables available in forms that enable and encourage analysis and re-use (para 3.23).

Requirement 7

Make *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* accessible from the Publication Hub (para 3.26).

Requirement 8

Provide contact details of the responsible statistician in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* (para 3.27).

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release: Actions for Possession* are published by NICTS, which is an agency of the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland⁶ (DoJ).
- 2.2 *Judicial Statistics* is an annual compendium publication, presenting statistics on the number of cases going through the different court tiers in Northern Ireland, such as the Court of Appeal, High Court, Crown Court, County Courts and Magistrates' Courts. The statistics are broken down into different types of case, such as bankruptcy, matrimonial and child-related. The publication also presents statistics on some associated topics, such as pension appeal tribunals and the Coroners' Service caseload. *Judicial Statistics* has been published annually since 1983.
- 2.3 The publication is used by DoJ, NICTS and the courts to monitor the business volumes and processing times for each court tier. NICTS also uses the statistics to plan resources and manage the courts. The statistics are used to monitor progress against several NICTS targets relating to reducing processing times, as outlined in its business plan⁷. It is also used by academics researching court cases and related topics, and also allows the general public to follow court business in specific topic areas.
- 2.4 The *Mortgage Press Release* presents quarterly statistics on writs and originating summonses relating to evictions and possessions for domestic and commercial properties issued by the Chancery Division of the Northern Ireland High Court. The release provides statistics on the number of cases disposed of and the types of legal action taken.
- 2.5 The *Mortgage Press Release* is used by DoJ and NICTS to monitor the business volume and processing times for mortgage cases, the Department of Social Development for their quarterly and annual housing bulletins, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for publishing data on mortgage cases received and disposed by area, and academics for research on writs and originating summonses. Also, the media often cite the statistics as a general indicator of the financial situation of both households and businesses.
- 2.6 The data used to compile the statistics for *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* are taken from the Integrated Courts Operation System (ICOS), an operational administrative system run by NICTS. NICTS also publishes quarterly official statistics using these data. These are not included in this assessment.
- 2.7 The estimated staff cost is £50,000 to produce the annual *Judicial Statistics* and £2,000 for each quarterly *Mortgage Press Release*.

⁶ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/>

⁷ http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/75AECC56-8ADB-4A02-9A86-CFB5406ED3FA/0/p_tp_BusinessPlan_1011.pdf

3 Assessment findings

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

- 3.1 The statisticians at NICTS engage on a regular basis with the main users of the statistics, primarily within NICTS and other Northern Ireland government departments. Bilateral meetings take place with, for example, the Lord Chief Justice's Office, the Public Prosecution Service and DoJ. NICTS also takes part in the Research and Statistics Sub Group⁸, run by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which consists of statisticians from the various criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland.
- 3.2 NICTS responds regularly to email requests from other users although these requests are not monitored in a systematic way. NICTS has published a *Customer Service and Engagement Statement*⁹ which lists some categories of user but does not say how NICTS plans to engage with them, or how the different groups use the statistics. Some users of these statistics within NICTS are included in the annual NISRA Customer Survey¹⁰ although it is not clear how the feedback received via this survey is considered or followed up. NICTS has little other proactive engagement with users outside NICTS and has no documentation about use or users' experiences of the statistics.
- 3.3 As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of the statistics, the needs of current and potential users, and user views on the service provided. NICTS should publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics¹¹ (Requirement 1). As part of documenting the use of these statistics, we suggest that NICTS refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority Monitoring Brief *The Use Made of Official Statistics*¹².
- 3.4 NICTS publishes a release timetable for the coming year¹³ and the statistics appear to meet users' need for up-to-date statistics – *Judicial Statistics* is published 6 months after the end of the reference year and the *Mortgage Press Release* is published seven weeks after the end of the reference quarter.

⁸ http://www.nio.gov.uk/researchstrategy_final_version.pdf

⁹ http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Policy_and_Policy_Development/p_pd_stats_CustomerServiceandEngagementStatement.htm

¹⁰ <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/default.asp18.htm>

¹¹ In relation to Principle 1 Practices 1, 2 and 5 of the *Code of Practice*

¹² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

¹³ http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics+and+Research/publication_Dates_2010-11.htm

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

- 3.5 Both *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* are published free of charge on NICTS's website. The statistics are presented impartially and objectively.
- 3.6 NICTS made some changes to the statistics as a result of the introduction of the Integrated Courts Operation System (ICOS) in 2005. These changes are documented in the publications, along with advice about comparing statistics across years, but NICTS did not announce these changes in advance. As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should confirm that it will announce any future changes to the statistics in advance of their release¹⁴ (Requirement 2).
- 3.7 NICTS has published a policy statement on revisions¹⁵ on its website. The statement notes that NICTS will inform users if there is a need for revisions but does not explain how users will be informed. The Assessment team suggests that NICTS supplement its revisions policy with details of how NICTS will inform users about revisions.
- 3.8 NICTS does not charge for supplementary statistical services. The statisticians told us that they respond to requests for further analysis free of charge up to a limit of 3.5 full-time equivalent staff days. If information is requested that requires more work, the statisticians try to provide users with an alternative solution to obtaining the information.

¹⁴ In relation to Principle 2 Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁵ http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Policy_and_Policy_Development/p_pd_stats_PolicyStatementRevisions.htm

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

- 3.9 No incidents of political pressures, abuses of trust or complaints relating to professional integrity, quality or standards were reported to or identified by the Assessment team. NICTS has circulated internally NISRA's guidance on the use and misuse of statistics. NICTS statisticians work with the communications team with a view to ensuring that the correct figures are quoted in the media.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

- 3.10 NICTS uses data taken from ICOS to produce the statistics in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release*. The system is updated daily and the statisticians download the data weekly. NICTS publishes little information about this system in the statistical publications and does not provide details of the methods used in producing the statistics, for example the processes of data collection, validation and aggregation. As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should publish details of the methods used in producing the statistics, and why those particular methods were chosen¹⁶ (Requirement 3).
- 3.11 The *Judicial Statistics* compendium presents statistics that are originally published as official statistics in quarterly bulletins for the different court tiers. The statisticians at NICTS told us that they carry out further validation of the quarterly statistics when preparing the annual compendium. NICTS told us that the statistics in *Judicial Statistics* are not simply an aggregate of the four quarterly publications due to this further validation and updating. The Assessment team suggests that NICTS clearly inform users about the difference between the National Statistics published in *Judicial Statistics* and the underlying official statistics.
- 3.12 Quality assurance of the data consists primarily of automated validation processes, logic checks, and checking of court identifications and locations. NICTS does not inform users of the quality of the statistics, such as any bias or errors that might occur, for example when court clerks fill in the data. As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should inform users about the quality, including the strengths and limitations, of the statistics presented in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release*¹⁷ (Requirement 4).
- 3.13 The statistics presented in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* feed into other Northern Ireland statistics, such as the compendium *Digest of Information on the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice System*¹⁸ published by DoJ. Comparability with statistics on court activity in England, Wales and Scotland is limited due to differences in the structure of the court systems in the different countries. For the information in the *Mortgage Press Release*, the Council of Mortgage Lenders¹⁹ and the Financial Services Authority²⁰ publish quarterly statistics on possessions for the UK as a whole. The Assessment team suggests that NICTS provide links to, and explain the differences between, similar statistics in the other countries and published by other organisations to aid users.

¹⁶ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁷ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁸ http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/department_of_justice_digest_of_information_on_the_northern_ireland_criminal_justice_system-autumn_2010.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.cml.org.uk/>

²⁰ <http://www.homemove.co.uk/news/14-09-2010/fsa-reports-fall-in-home-repossessions.html>

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.

- 3.14 NICTS has assured us that it takes all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data it collects. Court records are public records so NICTS does not need to carry out any disclosure control. However all statistics are provided to users in aggregate form only.
- 3.15 Data are kept on secure databases with access limited to statistical staff. Confidentiality arrangements are covered in NICTS's staff employment agreements and NISRA carries out regular training on confidentiality issues for all statisticians.

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

- 3.16 The statistics in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* are based on data from ICOS. Court clerks input the data into the system for the purposes of creating the court records.
- 3.17 NICTS statisticians told us that they were involved in the development of ICOS to ensure that the variables, definitions and concepts were appropriate for statistical purposes.

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

- 3.18 NICTS has a team of approximately three full-time equivalent staff to produce these statistics.
- 3.19 NICTS adheres to NISRA's principles, policies and procedures for staffing. There is an agreement with NISRA for loaning staff and for personal development plans.

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.

- 3.20 *Judicial Statistics* has a useful introduction, explaining the court structure and different court tiers. Each section provides key statistics for each tier and on each topic but contains very little overall commentary explaining the statistics. Several users mentioned that the commentary could be improved by adding key figures, year-on-year comparisons and more information about trends. Similarly, the *Mortgage Press Release* has little commentary or contextual information. As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should improve the commentary in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release*, providing some main findings, analysis of trends over time and contextual information to aid interpretation of the statistics²¹ (Requirement 5). We suggest that NICTS include a glossary of terms in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* and refer to the Statistics Authority's *Standards for Statistical Releases*²² for more guidance on writing statistical releases.
- 3.21 NICTS presents the statistics with breakdowns by court type, locations and business type for some courts. NICTS told us that it can provide further breakdowns on request. The Assessment team suggests that NICTS review the requests for additional analyses and consider whether it is feasible and useful to publish details of these requests.
- 3.22 NICTS publishes the statistics on its website. It also sends email alerts to internal and some external users. The statistical releases are also linked from DoJ's and NISRA's websites. The Assessment team suggests that NICTS change the name of the *Mortgage Press Release* to clarify that it is a statistical release.
- 3.23 NICTS only publishes *Judicial Statistics* in PDF or HTML form on its website. It publishes the *Mortgage Press Release* as a Word document as well. As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should make some key tables available in forms that enable and encourage analysis and re-use²³ (Requirement 6).

²¹ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

²² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-releases.html>

²³ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

3.24 The requirements for this Protocol are covered elsewhere in this report.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

- 3.25 NICTS publishes a 12-month timetable²⁴ for these statistical releases on its website.
- 3.26 NICTS's statistics are not accessible from the National Statistics Publication Hub; NICTS told us they were awaiting training on how to use the Publication Hub. As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should make *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release* accessible from the Publication Hub²⁵ (Requirement 7).
- 3.27 The publications provide contact details only for the NICTS Customer Services and Communications team. This is in line with NISRA guidance. However the most prominent contact details at the front of *Judicial Statistics* direct users to the ONS Customer Contact Centre, rather than NICTS. As part of the designation as National Statistics, NICTS should provide contact details for the responsible statistician in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release*²⁶ (Requirement 8). We also suggest that NICTS ensure that the general contact details provided are relevant for the statistics in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release*.
- 3.28 NICTS has published a pre-release access list²⁷ on its website. The list consists of 11 individuals from within NICTS and DoJ.

²⁴ *Ibid.* footnote 13

²⁵ In relation to Protocol 2 Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁶ In relation to Protocol 2 Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁷ <http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en->

[GB/Publications/Policy_and_Policy_Development/p_pd_stats_StatementCompliancewithPreReleaseAccessstoOfficialStatisticsOrder2008.htm](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Policy_and_Policy_Development/p_pd_stats_StatementCompliancewithPreReleaseAccessstoOfficialStatisticsOrder2008.htm)

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

- 3.29 NICTS uses ICOS to compile the statistics in *Judicial Statistics* and the *Mortgage Press Release*. NICTS statisticians told us that they influenced the development of the system and that the definitions and concepts in ICOS are appropriate for statistical purposes. NICTS has published a Statement of Administrative Sources²⁸, which includes ICOS, on its website. The Statement also lists some other administrative sources which NICTS uses in producing *Judicial Statistics*.
- 3.29 NICTS works with other departments in Northern Ireland, such as the Public Prosecution Service and the Police Service, to produce statistics on the criminal justice system as a whole.

²⁸ http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Policy_and_Policy_Development/p_pd_stats_StatementAdminSources.htm

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to the court statistics produced by NICTS, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Suggestion 1 | Refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority Monitoring Brief, <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> (para 3.3). |
| Suggestion 2 | Supplement the published revisions policy with details of how users will be informed about revisions (para 3.7). |
| Suggestion 3 | Clearly inform users about the difference between the National Statistics published in <i>Judicial Statistics</i> and the underlying official statistics (para 3.11). |
| Suggestion 4 | Provide links to, and explain the differences between, similar statistics in the other countries and published by other organisations (para 3.13). |
| Suggestion 5 | Include a glossary of terms in <i>Judicial Statistics</i> and the <i>Mortgage Press Release</i> and refer to the Statistics Authority's <i>Standards for Statistical Releases</i> for more guidance on writing statistical releases (para 3.20). |
| Suggestion 6 | Review the requests for additional analyses and consider whether it is feasible and useful to publish details of these requests (para 3.21). |
| Suggestion 7 | Change the name of the <i>Mortgage Press Release</i> to clarify that it is a statistical release (para 3.22) |
| Suggestion 8 | Ensure that the general contact details provided are relevant for the statistics in <i>Judicial Statistics</i> and the <i>Mortgage Press Release</i> (para 3.27). |

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from November 2010 to April 2011.

A2.2 The Assessment team – Cathy Kruger and Emma Bowditch – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of NICTS in November. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided in December. The Assessment team subsequently contacted NICTS in January to review compliance with the *Code of Practice*, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A2.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare assessment reports.

A2.4 The Assessment team received 11 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

NICTS	6
Other government departments	4
Academic	1

A2.5 The users responding to our consultation were satisfied with the presentation and quality of the statistics. Most of the users responding also reported that the statistics meet their needs. Users were also happy with the level and quality of the engagement with the statisticians. Requests for improvements to *Judicial Statistics* included a year-on-year comparison, a narrative of the changes from the previous year's *Judicial Statistics*, a summary of the key statistics and more detail in certain topic areas.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

