
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

John Marais
Acting Chief Statistician and Deputy Director Justice Statistics
Ministry of Justice
(by email)

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Dear John

COURT STATISTICS

We have completed our checks of compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) for three sets of Ministry of Justice statistics and data:

- [Civil Justice Statistics](#)
- [Criminal Court Statistics](#)
- [Family Court Statistics](#)

We welcome the improvement work that you have begun to undertake across all MoJ's official statistics outputs to reflect the ambitions for trustworthiness, quality and value incorporated into version 2.0 of the Code. Our review of the three outputs confirmed some important areas for improvement that should be addressed to support the statistics retaining their National Statistics status. We hope our findings – which were similar across all three – support your own endeavours and provide a helpful steer on priorities for improvement.

Value

You could increase value by extending the use of the data and statistics and by improving the clarity and insight provided by the publications.

- The statistics and data are made available in several useful formats and clearly have value for policymakers and other expert users. However, aspects of the statistics, including the workings of the courts, have the potential to be of wider public interest. To increase public value and extend the reach of the statistics your teams should consider who uses, or has the potential to use the data and statistics, paying attention for example to third sector and other less-expert users, and build up meaningful dialogue with those users.
- To improve clarity and insight your teams should give broader context to the statistics, straightforward explanations of the technical language and a clear explanation of the meaning and relevance of the statistics and their implications. For example, the statistical publications use technical language and explanations that are not easily available to a less-technical audience. With a few exceptions, the narrative largely describes rises and falls without providing a clear insight into the meaning and relevance for the operation of the courts. It often focuses on describing the most recent quarter-on-quarter or year-on-year change without explaining the significance of longer term trends, or considering the variability of short-term changes.

Quality

To support user confidence in the statistics you should publish more information about their quality. For example, your Guide to criminal court statistics about Libra Management Information System says: “The data are necessarily subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale data recording system”, but doesn’t specify what these are, indicate their scale, or explain what steps have been taken to ensure that the statistics are the best possible and not materially misleading.

This information should include:

- insights into the nature of the data systems that can affect the quality of the data
- your own assessment of the quality
- details of steps you have taken to assure yourselves of the quality of the data for all data sources.

To assist you in this work, the interactive Code includes [guidance on the standards the Code expects for quality assurance of administrative data](#) and some [case study examples](#) where these standards have been met.

While our compliance checks focused on three outputs, many of the lessons may be applicable more widely across MoJ official statistics. Members of the GSS Good Practice Team and Quality Centre have indicated that they would be happy to support your teams as they develop the quality and value of your statistics. I would welcome regular updates on how this work is proceeding and particularly ask that you provide us with an action plan for the work by the end of April 2019.

Yours sincerely



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