

Analytical Services Group Quality Assurance of Administrative Data Report

Incorporating the following statistics

for Northern Ireland –

- Judicial Statistics
- Mortgages: Action for Possession
- Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service

Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures

Updated June 2022



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnstríe O tha Laa



Northern Ireland
**Courts and
Tribunals Service**
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Background

About This Report

The primary purpose of administrative data is for service delivery, including the generation of official records, documentation of processes and for informing decision making. Improvements in the systems and processes used to collect such data, have led to it being identified as a useful, affordable and efficient source of information for official statistics. While the UK Statistics Authority highlight the limitations, they also recognise that administrative data can be central to the production of official statistics. To enable statistics producers to assess data quality, the UK Statistics Authority introduced guidance (Quality Assurance for Administrative Data (QAAD)) in 2015. This report documents the findings of the assessment of the administrative data used in the production of the Departments of Justice's (DoJ) Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) Official and National statistical publications.

The Department of Justice Statistical Function

DoJ was established in April 2010, following the devolution of justice powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has a range of powers relating to devolved policing and justice functions, set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Function) Order 2010 and is responsible for the resourcing, legislative and policy framework of the justice system. The department has four Directorates (Access to Justice, Safer Communities, Justice Delivery and Reducing Offending) and five agencies (Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), NICTS, Youth Justice Agency (YJA), Forensic Science Agency and Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland) to deliver on these priorities.

Analytical Services Group (ASG) is the statistical and research team posted within the DoJ. Comprising of 18 statisticians, on loan from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the team are responsible for the production of official and National statistics relating to crime and justice in Northern Ireland. Staff within ASG are located in four separate sites across Belfast – Core in Castle Buildings, YJA in Waring Street, NIPS in Dundonald House and NICTS in Laganside House.

Statisticians are a specialist grade within the Northern Ireland Civil Service and work to the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics as published by the UK Statistics Authority. Responsible for providing official and National statistics for DoJ (the Northern Ireland Office prior to 2010) for the last two decades, the statisticians in ASG have continually developed the systems and processes over the years to improve data quality while also ensuring the secure handling of sensitive and personal information.

Background

Data Sources

The key administrative data sources used and shared with ASG for the official and National statistics publications produced by the NICTS team are the –

- Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS);
- Office of Care and Protection Patients System (OCP Patients System);
- Judgement Enforcement Management System (JEMS); and
- Manual Excel spreadsheets relating to Social Security Commissioners, Pension Appeals Tribunals and Coroners.

The systems were designed to support the operational function of the Department. A by-product of the systems is a variety of management information and official and National statistics sourced from them which is used to inform internal management and the wider public about the operation of NICTS. The systems however weren't designed for the production of official statistics and therefore validation and cleansing is required to ensure that meaningful and accurate statistics can be provided from them. Full details of each system can be found in chapter 3.

The data systems used in the production of the Core, NIPS and YJA teams' publications are documented in a separate QAAD report specific to those statistics.

Statistical Outputs – Designation and Key Measures

In accordance with the Statistics and Registration Act 2007, statistical outputs can be assessed for compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics and if found compliant are then designated as National Statistics. This means that they meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value. The process of determining compliance with the Code and designation as National Statistics is known as Assessment.

The Judicial Statistics publication and the Mortgage Press Release publication have been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority and have been designated as 'National Statistics'. The NICTS Business Quarterly Provisional Figures publication has not yet been assessed and so is currently deemed 'Official Statistics'. Details of all three of ASG's NICTS publications are detailed below -

1. Judicial Statistics

An annual **National** statistical publication based on data sourced from **ICOS, Patients System and JEMS along with information held in Excel**. It provides information in relation to criminal, civil and family business conducted by the NICTS and the work of some associated offices. The information included is based on the business volumes and processing times across court tiers and key business areas. The key measures in the publication are -

- High Court Chancery cases disposed;
- High Court Bankruptcy cases disposed;
- High Court Companies cases disposed;
- High Court Queen's Bench Writs disposed;
- High Court Judicial Reviews disposed;

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- High Court Probate Grants issued;
- High Court Divorce Decrees granted;
- High Court Wardship and Adoption applications disposed;
- High Court Bails;
- Crown Court cases disposed;
- Crown Court defendants disposed;
- County Court civil bills cases disposed;
- County Court ejectment cases disposed;
- County Court small claims cases disposed;
- County Court Divorce decrees granted;
- Magistrates adult defendants disposed;
- Magistrates youth defendants disposed;
- Magistrates civil/family applications disposed; and
- Children Order applications disposed.

2. *Mortgages: Action for Possession*

A quarterly **National** statistical publication based on data sourced from **ICOS**. It presents statistics in relation to Mortgage cases which are dealt with in the Chancery division of the High Court, which sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. These cases relate specifically to properties or land owned at least in part with a mortgage. In cases where the owner (defendant/respondent) defaults on their mortgage payments, the lender (claimant/plaintiff) initiates legal proceedings for an order of possession of the property. This entitles the plaintiff to apply to have the defendant evicted. This publication includes information regarding the cases received and dealt with during the period, and the associated outcomes of those cases. The key measures in the publication are -

- Mortgage cases received;
- Mortgage cases disposed; and
- Final orders made in mortgage cases disposed.

3. *NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures*

A quarterly **official** statistical publication based on data sourced from **ICOS and the OCP Patients System**. It presents prosecutions and convictions data for the Magistrates' and Crown Courts, disaggregated by age and gender. Information on out of court disposals completed during the period is also included. The key measures in the publication are -

- High Court Chancery cases disposed;
- High Court Bankruptcy cases disposed;
- High Court Companies cases disposed;
- High Court Queen's Bench Writs disposed;
- High Court Judicial Reviews disposed;
- High Court Probate Grants issued;
- High Court Divorce Decrees granted;
- High Court Wardship and Adoption applications disposed;
- High Court Bails;
- Crown Court cases disposed;
- Crown Court defendants disposed;
- County Court civil bills cases disposed;
- County Court ejectment cases disposed;
- County Court small claims cases disposed;
- County Court Divorce decrees granted;
- Magistrates adult defendants disposed;
- Magistrates youth defendants disposed;
- Magistrates civil/family applications disposed; and
- Children Order applications disposed.

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Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit

The UK Statistics Authority introduced QAAD guidance to help statistics producers review their quality assurance arrangements for the administrative data used to produce official statistics. The toolkit comprises -

- Quality Management Actions;
- Quality Assurance Matrix; and
- Risk/Profile Matrix.

This report aims to apply the requirements of the UK Statistic Authority’s Quality Assurance toolkit to the administrative data used by ASG in producing the statistics for DoJ. The aim being to provide reassurance and transparency regarding the quality of the data underpinning these statistics to give users a better understanding of their reliability and accuracy.

The QAAD states that the critical judgement about the suitability of the administrative data for use in producing official statistics should be pragmatic and proportionate, made in the light of an evaluation of the likelihood of quality issues arising in the data that may affect the quality of the statistics, and of the nature of the public interest served by the statistics.

They recommend that the matrix below is used by producers of statistics to assess the risk profile of the statistics they produce that are derived from administrative sources. The resultant rating then determines the level of assurance required for each of the 4 stages in the Quality Assurance framework.

Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit - Level of Risk of Quality Concerns/Public Interest Profile

Level of risk of quality concerns	Public Interest Lower	Public Interest Medium	Public Interest Higher
Low	Statistics of lower quality concern and lower public interest [A1]	Statistics of low quality concern and medium public interest [A1/A2]	Statistics of low quality concern and higher public interest [A1/A2]
Medium	Statistics of medium quality concern and lower public interest [A1/A2]	Statistics of medium quality concern and medium public interest [A2]	Statistics of medium quality concern and higher public interest [A2/A3]
High	Statistics of higher quality concern and lower public interest [A1/A2/A3]	Statistics of higher quality concern and medium public interest [A3]	Statistics of higher quality concern and higher public interest [A3]

A1 to A3 = Levels of assurance required in the UK Statistics Authority’s QA matrix (A1 = Basic assurance, A2 = Enhanced assurance, A3 = Comprehensive assurance)

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Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit - Risk of Data Quality Concerns

Level of Risk	
Low Risk	The data may have a low risk of data quality concerns in situations in which there is a clear agreement about what data will be provided, when, how, and by whom; when there is a good appreciation of the context in which the data are collected, and the producer accepts that the quality standards being applied meet the statistical needs.
Medium Risk	The data may be regarded as having a medium risk of data quality concerns when high risk factors have been moderated through the use of safeguards for example, integrated financial audit and operational checks, and effective communication arrangements. It is also appropriate to consider the extent of the contribution of the administrative data to the official statistics, for example, in cases where the statistics are produced in combination with other data types, such as survey or census data.
High Risk	The data may have a high risk of data quality issues when there are many different data collection bodies, intermediary data supplier bodies, and complex data collection processes with limited independent verification or oversight.

Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit – Public Interest Profile

Interest Profile	
Low Profile	Politically neutral subject; interest limited to niche user base, and limited media interest.
Medium Profile	Wider user and media interest, with moderate economic and/or political sensitivity.
High Profile	Economically important, reflected in market sensitivity; high political sensitivity, reflected by Select Committee hearings; substantial media coverage of policies and statistics; important public health issues; collection required by legislation

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Risk Profile of ASG Statistics When QAAD Quality Assurance Toolkit Applied

Risk Profile of ASG Statistics When QAAD Toolkit Applied

ASG Statistic	Data Quality Concern	Public Interest	Risk Profile Rating
1. Judicial Statistics	Medium	Medium	A2
2. Mortgages: Action for Possession	Medium	Low	A1/A2
3. NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures	Medium	Medium	A2

A1 = Basic assurance, A2 = Enhanced assurance, A3 = Comprehensive assurance

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Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

The reasoning behind the risk profile rating associated with each ASG statistical output is provided below –

1. Judicial Statistics

In terms of data quality the Judicial statistics are deemed to be of **medium risk**. While there is a clear formal process in place to provide the required data to ASG on a regular basis covering an agreed time period, the data are sourced from three separate systems (ICOS, JEMS, Patients System) plus several manual Excel spreadsheets. ICOS, JEMS and the Patients System are used to manage day to day business within NICTS. The data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed a complex and detailed series of validation checks which are applied to the data to ensure any anomalies are corrected.

As well as informing the public, the statistics are also of significant interest to policy officials, the media, those involved in research and academia and Members of the NI Assembly (MLAs) including the Justice Committee and other government organisations. Published in June each year, the annual statistics don't generally receive much media attention or coverage. The general level of interest demonstrated through ad hoc queries, freedom of information requests, media queries and assembly questions however suggest that the annual Judicial Statistics should be considered as being of a **medium profile**.

The overall risk profile rating associated with the Judicial Statistics is **A2 – Enhanced Assurance**.

2. Mortgage: Action for Possession

In terms of data quality, the Mortgage statistics are deemed to be of **medium risk**. While there is a clear formal process in place to provide the required data to ASG on a regular basis covering an agreed time period, the data are sourced from ICOS, the main source of information used to manage day to day business within NICTS and the data needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed a complex and detailed series of validation checks which are applied to the data to ensure any anomalies are corrected.

As well as informing the public, the statistics are also of significant interest to policy officials, the media, those involved in research and academia and Members of the NI Assembly (MLAs) including the Justice Committee and other government organisations. Published in February, May, August and November each year, the quarterly statistics don't generally receive much media attention or coverage. In light of this, the quarterly mortgage statistics are considered as being of a **low profile**.

The overall risk profile rating associated with the Mortgage statistics is **A1/A2 – Basic/Enhanced Assurance**.

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Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

3. NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures

In terms of data quality the NICTS Quarterly Business statistics are deemed to be of **medium risk**. While there is a clear formal process in place to provide the required data to ASG on a regular basis covering an agreed time period, the data are sourced from two separate systems (ICOS, Patients System). These systems are used to manage day to day business within NICTS. The data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed a complex and detailed series of validation checks which are applied to the data to ensure any anomalies are corrected.

As well as informing the public, the statistics are also of significant interest to policy officials, the media, those involved in research and academia and Members of the NI Assembly (MLAs) including the Justice Committee and other government organisations. Published in February, May, August and November each year, the quarterly statistics don't generally receive much media attention or coverage. The general level of interest demonstrated through ad hoc queries, freedom of information requests, media queries and assembly questions however suggest that the quarterly business statistics are considered as being of a **medium profile**.

The overall risk profile rating associated with the Quarterly Business statistics is **A2 – Enhanced Assurance**.

3 Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

About This Chapter

This chapter provides a description of the administrative systems involved in the production of ASG’s statistics. Table 1 provides an overview of how the three data sources are used for the Official and National statistics they produce.

As the three statistical outputs covered in this report are sourced from one, two or all of these systems (ICOS, JEMS, Patients System, Coroners, Social Security Commissioners, Pensions Appeal Tribunal), the same data quality procedures applied to the IT systems apply across the outputs. Further details of additional checks and balances applied by ASG to each of the individual statistical outputs are covered in later sections of the report.

Figure 1: Administrative Data Sources Used for ASG Official and National Statistical Publications

ASG Statistic	ICOS	JEMS	Patients System	Coroners (Excel spreadsheet)	Social Security Commissioners (Excel Spreadsheet)	Pensions Appeal Tribunal (Excel Spreadsheet)
1. Judicial Statistics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Mortgages: Action for Possession	✓					
3. NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures	✓		✓			

3 Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Figure 2: Administrative Data Sources Summary – Type, Content and Supply Schedule

	ICOS	JEMS	Patients System	Coroners (Excel spreadsheet)	Social Security Commissioners (Excel Spreadsheet)	Pensions Appeal Tribunal (Excel Spreadsheet)
Data type (individual/counts)	Individual records	Counts	Individual records	Counts	Counts	Counts
Data Content	All key court processing information for criminal, civil and family business areas	Business volume information regarding the processing of the enforcement of judgements made in court	Information regarding the processing of the administrative work relating to Persons registered as a Patient and whose financial affairs are subject to the Courts control	Business volume information regarding the Coroners Service	Business volume information regarding the Social Security Commissioners	Business volume information regarding the Pension Appeal Tribunals
Supply Schedule	Weekly downloads	Quarterly updates	Quarterly updates	Monthly updates	Monthly updates	Monthly updates

3 Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS)

Data from ICOS is used in the production of the Judicial Statistics, Mortgage and NICTS Quarterly Business reports.

Environment and processes for compiling administrative data

ICOS is a live operating system that was implemented across the NICTS over a two year period from 2005 to 2007. Introduced in the High and County Courts in 2005, the Crown and Criminal Magistrates' Courts followed in 2006 and the Civil and Family in 2007. ICOS is used in each court tier to process every part of court business from receipt of payments through to the production of final orders made. The contract for delivery and enhancement is currently held by Version 1.

In 2016, following a competitive procurement process, the department awarded the contract (which commenced in 2017) for ICOS continued delivery and enhancement to Version 1. Since then Version 1, have managed the technical aspects of ICOS and are involved in fixing problems and in implementing changes to the system on behalf of NICTS.

The key principle underlying the operation of ICOS is that it relies on individual court clerks to input and update records on a daily basis with the information also checked on a daily basis by another member of staff. As the purpose of the information contained on ICOS is to enable the NICTS to manage their day to day business it is critical that it is highly accurate.

The statistics team receive a download of information on a monthly basis from the ICOS system. The information is downloaded using a web based platform called Sharepoint. This package extracts all the relevant data from ICOS into text files which are refreshed with up to date information each weekend. The text files are downloaded by ASG on a monthly basis, using a weekly rotation based on each court tier. The text files are downloaded onto a secure internal facility that only specified statistical personnel have access to. The data contained in the files are individual records identified only by numbers; names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the branch.

In terms of governance ICOS is overseen by the ICOS team within NICTS. Any changes to the system must be raised with this team, who liaise with Version 1, the external IT provider, to implement the changes. Prior to roll out changes are tested within a 'dummy environment' to ensure consistency of processing and accurate data is captured. All changes must be signed off before being released into the live operating system, and court staff are provided with updated user guidance prior to changes being implemented. This ensures data quality and consistency is maintained.

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Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Day to day business and operational delivery for ICOS is the responsibility of the ICOS Team. This team's role is to manage the ICOS contract with Version 1; provide ICT technical advice and guidance on technical solutions to support new business development of the system; coordinate and manage incident resolution and facilitate the provision of ICOS data to approved third party organisations.

At a high level, the contract with Version 1 includes a formal change control process. The change request is then considered against a range of change factors and if deemed viable, is then agreed, designed, tested and implemented. Requests for changes to Version 1 are generally dealt with by the ICOS team. ASG would generally be informed by the team of any changes that could affect the reliability of our statistics or data extracts during this process.

The multiple layers of governance built into the ICOS contract involves the ICOS Team within NICTS, and Version 1 and includes the following oversight meetings –

- *Monthly review meetings, chaired by the NICTS Contract/Operations manager are held between ICOS staff, EJO staff, and Version 1 to address ongoing ICOS and JEMS administration, maintenance or developmental issues.*
- *Monthly ICOS Business Design Authority (BDA) meetings are chaired by a senior manager within the department. BDA comprises business and IT representatives from NICTS and the other Criminal Justice Organisations.*

The ICOS team and Version 1 are responsible for the executive management and continuous enhancement of ICOS services, for driving realisation of ICOS benefits and for developing and progressing new business requirements for consideration by ICOS and resolving any business related issues.

Data Input Process Summary

1. Central input teams based in the court offices input/update records on ICOS.
2. Information held on ICOS on secure servers located within NICS premises.
3. Data routinely validated/checked by local NICTS staff within the various court offices.
4. ASG statisticians extract data from the ICOS system storing it on a secure server within ASG. Files are restricted to staff within ASG who need access.
5. ICOS data (merged with other data for Judicial Statistics and Quarterly Business publications) used to compile statistical outputs which are published on the DoJ website.

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Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Factors affecting data quality or causing bias and safeguards to minimise risk

Data provided via ICOS relies on staff to input information. Like many administrative systems therefore, the resultant statistics are potentially prone to human error or to the system not being able to cater for every scenario encountered. Cross checks for data entry are however incorporated across the system. Given that the information recorded is used to manage day to day business within the NICTS it is essential that it is highly accurate.

Risks to data quality and mitigating actions are detailed opposite.

Risk - Inaccurate details recorded by staff when logging information

- Independent validation checks carried out at each stage of the input process.
- System used for the management of day to day business so staff held to account by senior management if information is incorrect.

Risk - Data Protection & Information Security requirements not complied with

- ASG granted live read access which enables statisticians to securely extract and download bespoke frozen file segments.
- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Secure storage and transfer of personal & sensitive data

- ICOS has an IT health check completed annually.
- ASG granted live read access which enables statisticians to securely extract and download bespoke frozen file segments, as well as access live court records.
- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Insufficient data quality checks and validation processes incorporated into ICOS

- Regular in-house checks on data are conducted by court clerks and anomalies are corrected.
- ASG statisticians apply numerous additional validation checks and quality control measures when compiling reports.

Risk - Insufficient levels of internal and external auditing of data and processes

- Regular audits conducted by DoJ Internal Audit.
- External audits by NI Audit Office and Criminal Justice Inspectorate.
- NICTS Management Board oversees audit findings and any significant issues arising.

Risk - ASG statisticians not aware of their Data Protection & Information Security responsibilities

- ASG statisticians must complete annual mandatory data protection and information security training. They also receive training in statistical disclosure control.
- Each report is checked by other statisticians within ASG before publication.

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Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Office of Care and Protection Patients System (OCP Patients System)

Data from the OCP Patients System is used in the production of the Judicial Statistics and NICTS Quarterly Business reports.

Environment and processes for compiling administrative data

Recording system used by the Office of Care & Protection to detail the administrative work relating to a person registered as a patient and whose financial affairs are subjected to the courts control under the supervision of the Master. The Master is the judicial officer of the Court who is authorised to exercise any discretion, power or other functions of the Court, and he/she may also in some cases refer a question to the Judge for a decision. There is often no formal hearings conducted and the data are input on a daily basis by the administrative team. The information is then checked by the line managers, to ensure the data entries are correct with line managers assuming the data quality assurance role for the OCP Patients System.

ASG statisticians request the data on a quarterly basis from the OCP. The data contained within the return are counts of individual records, prepared by the OCP office manager and returned to ASG for inclusion within the relevant publications. ASG query any unusual trends with the OCP office and additional notes or explanations for peaks or troughs are included within the report.

In terms of governance the OCP Patients System is overseen by the Deputy Principal of the High Court Family Division.

Data Input Process Summary

1. OCP staff input data onto OCP Patients System on a daily basis.
2. Information held on OCP Patients System on secure servers located within NICS premises.
3. Data routinely validated/checked by line managers on a daily basis.
4. Quarterly return of aggregated counts prepared by the OCP office manager and returned to ASG statisticians.
5. Aggregated counts from OCP Patients System provided to ASG, included in related statistical outputs which are published on the DoJ website.

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Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Factors affecting data quality or causing bias and safeguards to minimise risk

Data provided via OCP Patients System relies on staff to input information. Like many administrative systems therefore, the resultant statistics are potentially prone to human error or to the system not being able to cater for every scenario encountered. Cross checks for data entry are however incorporated into the system. Given that the information recorded is used to manage day to day business within the OCP it is essential that it is highly accurate.

Risks to data quality and mitigating actions are detailed opposite.

Risk - Inaccurate details recorded by staff when logging information

- Independent validation checks carried out at each stage of the input process.
- System used for the management of day to day business so staff held to account by line managers if information is incorrect.

Risk - Data Protection & Information Security requirements not complied with

- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Secure storage and transfer of personal & sensitive data

- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Insufficient data quality checks and validation processes incorporated into OCP Patients System

- Regular in-house checks on data are conducted by OCP staff. Any anomalies are corrected.
- ASG statisticians apply numerous additional validation checks and quality control measures when compiling reports.

Risk - Insufficient levels of internal and external auditing of data and processes

- Regular audits conducted by DoJ Internal Audit.
- NICTS Management Board oversees audit findings and any significant issues arising.

Risk - ASG statisticians not aware of their Data Protection & Information Security responsibilities

- ASG statisticians must complete annual mandatory data protection and information security training. They also receive training in statistical disclosure control.
- Each report is checked by other statisticians within ASG before publication.

3 Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Judgement Enforcement Management System (JEMS)

Data from JEMS is used in the production of the Judicial Statistics report.

Environment and processes for compiling administrative data

The JEMS system is the recording system used by the Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO) to detail the administrative work relating to the enforcement of court orders. The data are input on a daily basis by the EJO staff, and this information is checked routinely by office managers.

ASG statisticians request the data on a quarterly basis from the EJO. The data contained within the return are counts of individual records, prepared by the EJO staff and returned to ASG for inclusion within the relevant publications. ASG query any unusual trends with the EJO office and additional notes or explanations for peaks or troughs are included within the report.

In terms of governance the JEMS System is overseen by the Deputy Principal within the EJO.

Monthly review meetings, chaired by the NICTS Contract/Operations manager are held between ICOS staff, EJO staff, and Version 1 to address ongoing ICOS and JEMS administration, maintenance or developmental issues.

Data Input Process Summary

1. EJO staff input data onto JEMS on a daily basis.
2. Information held on JEMS on secure servers located within NICS premises.
3. Data routinely validated/checked by office managers on a daily basis.
4. Quarterly return of aggregated counts prepared by EJO staff and returned to ASG statisticians.
5. Aggregated counts from JEMS provided to ASG, included in related statistical outputs which are published on the DoJ website.

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Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Factors affecting data quality or causing bias and safeguards to minimise risk

Data provided via JEMS relies on staff to input information. Like many administrative systems therefore, the resultant statistics are potentially prone to human error or to the system not being able to cater for every scenario encountered. Cross checks for data entry are however incorporated into the system. Given that the information recorded is used to manage day to day business within the EJO it is essential that it is highly accurate.

Risks to data quality and mitigating actions are detailed opposite.

Risk - Inaccurate details recorded by staff when logging information

- Independent validation checks carried out at each stage of the input process.
- Systems used for the management of day to day business so staff held to account by line managers if information is incorrect.

Risk - Data Protection & Information Security requirements not complied with

- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Secure storage and transfer of personal & sensitive data

- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Insufficient data quality checks and validation processes incorporated into OCP Patients System

- Regular in-house checks on data are conducted by EJO staff. Any anomalies are corrected.
- ASG statisticians apply numerous additional validation checks and quality control measures when compiling reports.

Risk - Insufficient levels of internal and external auditing of data and processes

- Regular audits conducted by DoJ Internal Audit.
- NICTS Management Board oversees audit findings and any significant issues arising.

Risk - ASG statisticians not aware of their Data Protection & Information Security responsibilities

- ASG statisticians must complete annual mandatory data protection and information security training. They also receive training in statistical disclosure control.
- Each report is checked by other statisticians within ASG before publication.

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Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Excel Spreadsheets for Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeal Tribunals

Data contained within the Excel spreadsheets is used in the production of the Judicial Statistics report.

Environment and processes for compiling administrative data

The excel spreadsheets are designed to capture business volumes information at the count level, and individual level information in relation to sittings and inquests. The data are input into these spreadsheets on a daily basis.

ASG statisticians request the data on a quarterly basis from the Offices. The data contained within the return are counts of individual records. These counts are prepared by staff from the Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals and checked by the office managers before being returned to ASG for inclusion within the relevant publication. Any unusual trends are queried with the relevant office and additional notes or explanations for peaks or troughs are included within the report.

In terms of governance each spreadsheet is overseen by the relevant office manager.

Data Input Process Summary

1. Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals staff input data into spreadsheets on a daily basis.
2. Information held on spreadsheets on secure servers located within NICS premises.
3. Data routinely validated/checked by office managers.
4. Quarterly return of aggregated counts prepared by Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals staff and returned to ASG statisticians.
5. Aggregated counts provided to ASG, included in related statistical outputs which are published on the DoJ website.

3

Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Factors affecting data quality or causing bias and safeguards to minimise risk

Data provided via Excel spreadsheets relies on staff to input information. Like many administrative systems therefore, the resultant statistics are potentially prone to human error or to the system not being able to cater for every scenario encountered. Cross checks for data entry are however incorporated into the system. Given that the information recorded is used to manage day to day business within the Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals offices it is essential that it is highly accurate.

Risks to data quality and mitigating actions are detailed opposite.

Risk - Inaccurate details recorded by staff when logging information

- Independent validation checks carried out at each stage of the input process.
- Spreadsheet used for the management of day to day business so staff held to account if information is incorrect.

Risk - Data Protection & Information Security requirements not complied with

- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Secure storage and transfer of personal & sensitive data

- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

Risk - Insufficient data quality checks and validation processes incorporated into spreadsheet

- Regular in-house checks on data are conducted by Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals staff. Any anomalies are corrected.
- ASG statisticians apply numerous additional validation checks and quality control measures when compiling reports.

Risk - Insufficient levels of internal and external auditing of data and processes

- Regular audits conducted by DoJ Internal Audit.

Risk - ASG statisticians not aware of their Data Protection & Information Security responsibilities

- ASG statisticians must complete annual mandatory data protection and information security training. They also receive training in statistical disclosure control.
- Each report is checked by other statisticians within ASG before publication.

3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

Potential Sources of Bias/Error in Individual Publications

1) Judicial Statistics

While there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day to day business within the NICTS, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Consequently errors and missing data are highly unlikely.

2) Mortgages: Actions for Possession

Like the previous report, while there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day to day business within the NICTS, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Significant errors or missing data therefore are highly unlikely.

3) NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures

Like the previous report, while there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day to day business within the NICTS, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Significant errors or missing data therefore are highly unlikely.

4 | Communication with Data Suppliers

About This Chapter

This section documents communication with the data suppliers involved in the production of ASG's statistics.

Integrated Court Operations System

Collaborative relationships and engagement with data collectors, suppliers, IT specialists, policy and operational officials

The agreement of the ASG data requirement from ICOS involved submitting formal data requests to the ICOS team to get the required variables made available in the required format in a regular data download. The process involved -

- Identification of the required variables for the various ASG statistical outputs;
- Working out the most suitable method of securely downloading and transferring the data from ICOS to ASG;
- Agreeing the system for ASG to download extracts as required;
- ASG testing the process and checking the statistics at the beginning of the process to ensure that they were fit for purpose; and
- Ensuring that the downloads were complete and accurate with processes in place to address/correct any problems encountered.

The ASG data requirement from ICOS is now long established with amendments made over the years to ensure that changes to the processes or systems can be included/allowed for in the statistics.

Although long established, there is still regular communication between ASG staff and the relevant staff within ICOS regarding the data download process. This ranges from informal telephone/email queries to resolve data or system problems, to ASG staff attending formal meetings with the respective organisations to address larger scale project board or working group meetings.

Any changes to the recording of data on ICOS are communicated via email to ASG. These emails are logged and necessary changes made to the computer syntax. A brief note of the date, changes made and who made them are also recorded, providing an audit trail for the statistics team.

The ICOS team within NICTS act as data controllers for the information held on ICOS and oversee/approve all changes or improvements to it. They also liaise with Version 1 regarding operational issues and technical aspects. ASG are informed by the ICOS team of any changes that could affect the reliability of our statistics or data extracts.

ASG staff are in regular contact with their customers in NICTS regarding their data needs. The vast majority of these are covered by the variables included in the regular data downloads from ICOS. Any additional variables or ad hoc data requirements would be arranged via discussions with colleagues in the ICOS team. Any problems experienced with the completeness of the downloads are raised by ASG staff with colleagues within ICOS as soon as they come to light.

Formal agreements detailing arrangements

In terms of the legal basis for data supply, the information is collected in order to meet legal obligations and public functions and to enable NICTS to deliver its services, maintain its records, support and manage the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, and for litigation and legal advice purposes.

4

Communication with Data Suppliers

Office of Care and Protection Patients System (OCP Patients System)

Collaborative relationships and engagement with data collectors, suppliers, IT specialists, policy and operational officials

The agreement of the ASG data requirement from OCP Patients System involved submitting formal data requests to the OCP team to get the required aggregated data available in the required format. The process involved –

- Identification of the required information for the various ASG statistical outputs;
- ASG testing the process and checking the information at the beginning of the process to ensure that it was fit for purpose; and
- Ensuring that the data were complete and accurate with processes in place to address/correct any problems encountered.

The ASG requirement from OCP Patients System is long established with amendments made over the years to ensure that changes to the requirements can be included/allowed for in the statistics. Although long established, there is still regular communication between ASG staff and the relevant staff within OCP. This generally involves informal telephone/email queries and meetings.

The OCP team within NICTS act as the data controller of the information on the system and oversee/approve all changes or improvements to it. ASG would generally be informed by the team of any changes that could affect the reliability of our statistics.

ASG staff are in regular contact with their customers in NICTS regarding their needs. Any additional information or ad hoc requirements would be arranged via discussions with colleagues in the OCP team.

Any problems experienced with the information are raised by ASG staff with colleagues within OCP as soon as they come to light.

Formal agreements detailing arrangements

In terms of the legal basis for data supply, NICTS is deemed the data controller with regard to the data held on OCP. The information is collected on OCP Patients System in order for NICTS to meet its legal obligations and public functions and to enable it to deliver its services, maintain its records, to support and manage the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, and for the purposes of litigation and legal advice.

4

Communication with Data Suppliers

Judgement Enforcement Management System (JEMS)

Collaborative relationships and engagement with data collectors, suppliers, IT specialists, policy and operational officials

The agreement of the ASG data requirement from JEMS involved submitting formal data requests to the EJO team to get the required aggregated data available in the required format. The process involved –

- Identification of the required information for the various ASG statistical outputs;
- ASG testing the process and checking the information at the beginning of the process to ensure that it was fit for purpose; and
- Ensuring that the data were complete and accurate with processes in place to address/correct any problems encountered.

The ASG requirement from JEMS is long established with amendments made over the years to ensure that changes to the requirements can be included/allowed for in the statistics. Although long established, there is still regular communication between ASG staff and the relevant staff within EJO. This generally involves informal telephone/email queries and meetings.

The EJO team within NICTS act as the data controller of the information on the system and oversee/approve all changes or improvements to it. ASG would generally be informed by the team of any changes that could affect the reliability of our statistics.

ASG staff are in regular contact with their customers in NICTS regarding their needs. Any additional information or ad hoc requirements would be arranged via discussions with colleagues in the EJO team.

Any problems experienced with the information are raised by ASG staff with colleagues within EJO as soon as they come to light.

Formal agreements detailing arrangements

In terms of the legal basis for data supply, NICTS is deemed the data controller with regard to the data held on JEMS. The information is collected on JEMS in order for NICTS to meet its legal obligations and public functions and to enable it to deliver its services, maintain its records, to support and manage the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, and for the purposes of litigation and legal advice.

4

Communication with Data Suppliers

Excel Spreadsheets for Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeal Tribunals

Collaborative relationships and engagement with data collectors, suppliers, IT specialists, policy and operational officials

The agreement of the ASG data requirement from the Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals offices involved submitting formal data requests to the teams to get the required aggregated data available in the required format. The process involved –

- Identification of the required information for the various ASG statistical outputs;
- ASG testing the process and checking the information at the beginning of the process to ensure that it was fit for purpose; and
- Ensuring that the data were complete and accurate with processes in place to address/correct any problems encountered.

The ASG requirement is long established with amendments made over the years to ensure that changes to the requirements can be included/allowed for in the statistics. Although long established, there is still regular communication between ASG staff and the relevant staff within the offices. This generally involves informal telephone/email queries and meetings.

The Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals teams within NICTS act as the data controller of the information on the system and oversee/approve all changes or improvements to it. ASG would generally be informed by the team of any changes that could affect the reliability of our statistics.

ASG staff are in regular contact with their customers in NICTS regarding their needs. Any additional information or ad hoc requirements would be arranged via discussions with colleagues in the teams.

Any problems experienced with the information are raised by ASG staff with colleagues within the offices as soon as they come to light.

Formal agreements detailing arrangements

In terms of the legal basis for data supply, NICTS is deemed the data controller with regard to the data held on Excel spreadsheets. The information is collected in order for NICTS to meet its legal obligations and public functions and to enable it to deliver its services, maintain its records, to support and manage the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, and for the purposes of litigation and legal advice.

4

Communication with Data Suppliers

Data Protection

ASG act as data processors to the NICTS data controller. ASG statisticians have access to the live ICOS system and can download bespoke data extracts. All data files are stored on secure ASG servers within NICTS with access restricted solely to those staff within the branch who need it.

The NICTS information Asset owner acts as the Information Asset Owner for the branch and is required to ensure that branch procedures are in place and staff are adequately trained in data protection requirements. All statistical staff must complete mandatory on-line data protection and information security training on joining NISRA and complete further annual refresher training.

ASG ensures that procedures are updated and reviewed on a six-monthly basis and has local systems operating procedures in place to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of ASG data by outlining the data handling and security procedures that ASG staff must comply with.

ASG staff apply statistical disclosure control to all data sourced from ICOS, JEMS, the OCP Patient System and the Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals offices to ensure that no one is identifiable from the data or any sensitive information relating to them. The only exception being where DoJ staff need more detailed information for operational reasons. In this instance, the data is protectively marked as 'official sensitive' and the recipient is reminded that the information cannot be shared outside of their unit.

4 | Communication with Data Suppliers

Engagement with Users

ASG conducts a bi-ennial survey of the users of our statistical publications to ascertain their views of the statistics we produce, how well they meet their needs and whether they have any suggested improvements.

Whilst the majority of ASG work is undertaken for key users of our statistics within DoJ, a range of other users of the statistics both within the wider public sector and also members of the general public are also included in the survey. The most recent survey was conducted in June 2020 and the results are summarised on the DoJ [website](#). The survey was sent out to 162 users of our statistics and 34 questionnaires were completed giving a response rate of 21%.

The vast majority (93%) of respondents worked for the NICS; remaining responses came from other non-NICS public sector employees and academia. In general, the most frequently stated reasons for using our publications were policy making/monitoring, performance monitoring and media related/informing public/public interest.

The key findings of the most recent survey are highlighted below and on the following page.

ASG Publication	They fully meet their needs	Mostly meet their needs	Partly meet their needs	Don't meet their needs at all
Judicial Statistics	42%	58%	0%	0%
Mortgages: Action for Possession	100%	0%	0%	0%
NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

4

Communication with Data Suppliers

ASG Publication	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied
Judicial Statistics	92%	8%	0%
Mortgages: Action for Possession	100%	0%	0%
NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures	N/A	N/A	N/A

Any suggested improvements or problems identified for each statistical output in the survey are presented in the survey report along with a response from ASG. All suggested improvements or problems identified are considered by ASG and are implemented where possible. If the change is not feasible, an explanation is provided as to why that is the case.

In addition to the annual user survey, ASG staff liaise and meet with the key users of their statistics on a regular basis throughout the year. In practice this tends to be in the form of small ad hoc meetings with a number of specialist staff within the Department who have responsibility for the relevant work area. In addition to these meetings, ASG staff also have regular telephone and email contact with key users to respond to urgent queries or to provide policy colleagues with relevant statistics or associated advice and guidance. Contact details are also provided in all publications and on the ASG website where users are also invited to provide feedback and to complete a short survey.

The statistics across the publications are used to inform policy decisions within DoJ, as well as to inform requests from other Government organisations and to answer NI Assembly questions, freedom of information requests and general queries from the public.

5

Quality Assurance Principles and Checks Applied by Data Suppliers

About This Chapter

This section documents the quality assurance procedures applied by data suppliers.

Integrated Court Operations System

Data assurance arrangements in data collection and supply

The ICOS system is extremely complex and has significant validations built into the system to maximise data quality. The key principle underlying the operation of ICOS is that it relies on individual court clerks to input and update records on a daily basis with the information checked and confirmed on a daily basis by a second member of staff.

In addition, Case Progression Officers were introduced in 2007, alongside the roll out of the criminal modules of ICOS which came with a much greater emphasis on the capture of live court data. Each court office has a Case Progression Officer who is responsible for –

- Monitoring accuracy levels on ICOS by carrying out sample checks on data entry and court resulting, ensuring that all validations on ICOS and manual statistical returns are completed in a timely manner. Providing advice and identifying training needs;
- Monitoring the confirmation of ICOS criminal court resulting, including the inputting of adjournment codes; and
- Promoting awareness of the impact error can have, its wide ranging consequences and negative impact on the reliability of management information.

As the purpose of the information contained on ICOS is to enable the NICTS to progress cases and to record and produce the resulting legal decisions, it is critical that it is highly accurate.

Role of operational inspection and internal/external audit

In addition to the various statistical publications, the data recorded on ICOS is also used to compile the annual NICTS business performance report. This report is externally audited by the DoJ Audit Office. The audit covers all the ICOS data used to produce the business performance report, and involves random checks of individual cases alongside manual checks of the calculations used.

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Quality Assurance Principles and Checks Applied by Data Suppliers

Office of Care and Protection Patients System (OCP Patients System)

Data assurance arrangements in data collection and supply

Internal checks occur within the OCP office by line managers on a regular basis. The OCP system is used to manage caseloads on a day to day basis, and therefore these data need to be accurate for the purpose of case management. The OCP system has limited validation built in, however there are ongoing negotiations to acquire a new IT solution which will include higher levels of built in validations.

Role of operational inspection and internal/external audit

In addition to the various statistical publications, the data recorded on OCP Patients System is also used to compile the annual NICTS business performance report. This report is externally audited by the DoJ Audit Office. The audit covers all the OCP Patients System data used to produce the business performance report, and involves random checks of individual cases alongside manual checks of the calculations created within the spreadsheet returned to ASG.

Judgement Enforcement Management System (JEMS)

Data assurance arrangements in data collection and supply

Regular internal checks are undertaken by the line managers of the EJO staff who update the JEMS system. Used to manage caseloads on a day to day basis, the JEMS data needs to be accurate for the purpose of case management. Validation checks are also built in to help ensure data quality remains high.

Role of operational inspection and internal/external audit

In addition to the various statistical publications, the data recorded on JEMS is also used to compile the annual NICTS business performance report. This report is externally audited by the DoJ Audit Office. The audit covers all the JEMS data used to produce the business performance report, and involves random checks of individual cases alongside manual checks of the calculations created within the spreadsheet returned to ASG.

5

Quality Assurance Principles and Checks Applied by Data Suppliers

Excel Spreadsheets for Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeal Tribunals

Data assurance arrangements in data collection and supply

Internal checks occur within the Coroners office by line managers on a regular basis. The Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeal Tribunals data is used to manage caseloads on a day to day basis, and therefore needs to be accurate for the purpose of case management. The systems have validation checks built in to help ensure data quality levels remain high.

Role of operational inspection and internal/external audit

In addition to the various statistical publications, the Coroners data is also used to compile the annual NICTS business performance report. This report is externally audited by the DoJ Audit Office. The audit covers all the Coroners data used to produce the business performance report, and involves random checks of individual cases alongside manual checks of the calculations created within the spreadsheet returned to ASG.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

About This Chapter

This section documents the additional series of quality assurance checks that ASG apply to the data they receive from ICOS, PRISM, JEMS and the Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals systems.

Integrated Court Operations System

QA checks and quality indicators for input data

ASG extract a data download from ICOS and import the data into Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Validation exercises are then conducted, to ensure that the data are accurate and up to date with over 100 checks against each business area incorporated into the program, for example -

- Checking consistency over time and between variables;
- Reliability of data using logic checks;
- Checking that variables fall within accepted ranges; and
- Checking with the ICOS support team in the event of any major discrepancies that have occurred since the last download.

The validation program runs in unison with the download program, for example in week 1 the magistrates' civil and family information is downloaded and the corresponding validation checks are run on the newly downloaded information. This pattern follows for all the court tiers and business areas.

The validation program is designed to produce user friendly tables highlighting the potential problems with data in the title of the table, and the case numbers of the records affected. A validation report is compiled for each court venue and circulated to the Case Progression Officer in each court office for amendment.

The Case Progression Officer is given a two week period from the date the validation report issues until all records are amended on ICOS. This ensures that the corrections are updated before the next download of files by the statistics and research team. After the files have been refreshed each weekend all the data is then downloaded again (in accordance with the schedule) and this new download will reflect the amendments made as a result of the validation reports. If any errors have not been corrected, they will continue to appear in the validation reports until the necessary amendments are made on the ICOS system.

The statistics and research team then ensure that all validations in relation to the reporting period are amended prior to publication. Once these amendments have been checked, computer syntax is then used to produce the tables within the publications.

While the quality assurance procedures are extensive and robust, the statistics are inevitably subject to the limitations inherent in any large-scale recording system, to variations in recording practice over time and to error. The data however focus on core business practices and therefore there is a strong interest by the respected areas in ensuring the accuracy of data recorded.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

Strengths

- The system has many rigorous built in and manual confirmation checks to maximise data quality.
- Regular engagement with data entry staff with validations returned on a weekly basis to designated staff in each court office; ASG also have a dedicated member of staff who co-ordinates the validation and correction process.
- Information is recorded in real time, and available the following day for download via a secure server.
- The system works well and is trusted by the staff who use it. It is reliable and needs minimal maintenance.
- A number of key personnel are involved in managing ICOS and have developed a high level of competence and experience of the system. Communication between these staff and the statistics team is very good.
- The data are sourced from an administrative data system and therefore are a complete record of all cases (i.e. are not based on a sample of staff). Data is extracted at the individual record level and therefore is very versatile in terms of data analysis.

Weaknesses/Limitations

- There are huge amounts of data captured, and to summarise the information for publication recoding of variables is completed within SPSS. Although the recode programming is constructed in consultation with court operational staff, there is room for errors to occur.
- The data are manually input by court staff, and there is potential for some errors to remain undetected.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

Office of Care and Protection Patients System (OCP Patients System)

QA checks and quality indicators for input data

ASG undertake manual checks on the count level data received to ensure consistency over time and that the variables fall within acceptable levels. Yearly checks are also completed on the annual return against quarterly level returns received.

Strengths

- Data provides the only coverage of OCP patients business and Official Solicitors business, and while the system has limited validation built in, manual checks are completed by line managers to maximise data quality.
- Information is recorded on a daily basis, and can be requested from OCP office at any time.
- There is an operational need to have accurate and up-to-date information to ensure effective handling of day to day operations. It is critical that the system is accurate and kept up to date.
- Information recorded on the OCP Patients System is manageable with approximately 2,000 cases per year.
- The information is input by trained staff.
- A number of key personnel are involved in managing the OCP Patients System and have developed a high level of competence and experience of it.
- The data are sourced from an administrative data system and therefore are a complete record of all cases (i.e. are not based on a sample of cases).
- The data used to support the business performance targets is audited annually by the DOJ Audit team.

Weaknesses/Limitations

- The data returned to ASG statisticians are at the count level, and therefore errors in individual level data may remain undetected.
- The data are manually input by court staff, and there is potential for some errors to remain undetected.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

Judgement Enforcement Management System (JEMS)

QA checks and quality indicators for input data

ASG undertake manual checks on the count level data received to ensure consistency over time and that the variables fall within acceptable levels. Yearly checks are also completed on the annual return against quarterly level returns received.

Strengths

- Data provides the only coverage of EJO business. The system has some validation built in and manual checks are completed by line managers to maximise data quality.
- Information is recorded on a daily basis, and can be requested from the EJO office at any time.
- There is an operational need to have accurate and up-to-date information to ensure effective handling of day to day operations. It is critical that the system is accurate and kept up to date.
- Information recorded on JEMS is manageable with approximately 3,000 notices of intention to enforce lodged per year.
- The information is input by trained staff.
- A number of key personnel are involved in managing JEMS and have developed a high level of competence and experience of it.
- The data are sourced from an administrative data system and therefore are a complete record of all cases (i.e. are not based on a sample of cases).
- The data used to support the business performance targets is audited annually by the DOJ Audit team.

Weaknesses/Limitations

- The data returned to ASG statisticians are at the count level, and therefore errors in individual level data may remain undetected.
- The data are manually input by court staff, and there is potential for some errors to remain undetected.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

Excel Spreadsheets for Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeal Tribunals

QA checks and quality indicators for input data

ASG undertake manual checks on the count level data received to ensure consistency over time and that the variables fall within acceptable levels. Yearly checks are also completed on the annual return against quarterly level returns received.

Strengths

- Data provides the only coverage of Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeal Tribunals business. The system has some validation built in and manual checks are completed by line managers to maximise data quality.
- Information is recorded on a daily basis, and can be requested from the offices at any time.
- There is an operational need to have accurate and up-to-date information to ensure effective handling of day to day operations. It is critical that the system is accurate and kept up to date.
- Recorded information is manageable with approximately 4,000 deaths reported to the Coroner, 150 Pension Appeals and 200 Social Security Commissioner appeals per year.
- The information is input by trained staff.
- A number of key personnel are involved in managing the data and have developed a high level of competence and experience of it.
- The data are sourced from an administrative data system and therefore are a complete record of all cases (i.e. are not based on a sample of cases).
- The data used to support the business performance targets is audited annually by the DOJ Audit team.

Weaknesses/Limitations

- The data returned to ASG statisticians are at the count level, and therefore errors in individual level data may remain undetected.
- The data are manually input by court staff, and there is potential for some errors to remain undetected.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

Quality Assurance Measures Specific to Individual Statistical Outputs

In addition to the set-up checks that are carried out when the files are received from ICOS, PRISM, JEMS and the Coroners, Social Security Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals systems additional individual quality assurance measures are also undertaken when producing the statistical output for each publication.

1. Judicial Statistics

The data used to produce Judicial Statistics are also subject to quality assurance procedures using SPSS syntax which is regularly updated to take account of changes to data recording. Quality assurance checks undertaken include –

- i. Checking that all court information is complete and missing information obtained from ICOS or Case Progression Officers;
- ii. Check if included cases have been completed;
- iii. Checks to ensure cases entered and flagged on the system as 'entered in error' have been removed;
- iv. Logic checks completed to ensure key dates are in order, age of defendants are correct, pleas and findings are recorded, sittings have been resulted and confirmed, judiciary have been recorded;
- v. Logic checks of dates completed, e.g. dates of birth and logical sequences of key dates through the justice process; and
- vi. Check all the 'length of stage' variables that have been generated and revise where possible using ICOS and Case Progression Officers.

The resulting data is changed where errors/issues are identified. These changes range from completion of missing data, standardisation of variables such as gender and date variables, to the correction of erroneous information by checking back to source information (ICOS, Case progression Officers and if necessary court files).

Additionally, time-series checks are carried out to compare, on a quarterly basis, the number of cases that fall into each court, and time taken to complete cases of different court and offence types. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are investigated and either confirmed or corrected. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with expected trends or not.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

2. Mortgages: Action for Possession

The data used to produce Mortgages Statistics are also subject to quality assurance procedures using SPSS syntax which is regularly updated to take account of changes to data recording. Quality assurance checks undertaken include –

- i. Checking that all court information is complete and missing information obtained from the ICOS database;
- ii. Check if included cases have been completed;
- iii. A manual check of all free text orders alongside a 10% sample of orders to ensure categorisation is correct;
- iv. Logic checks of dates completed, e.g. logical sequences of key dates through the justice process; and
- v. Check all the 'length of stage' variables that have been generated and revise where possible using ICOS.

The resulting data is changed where errors/issues are identified. These changes range from completion of missing data, standardisation of variables such as date variables, to the correction of erroneous information by checking back to source information (mainly ICOS and court files).

Additionally, time-series checks are carried out to compare, on a quarterly basis, the number of cases that fall into each court, and time taken to complete cases. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are investigated and either confirmed or corrected. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with expected trends or not.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

3. NICTS Quarterly Business: Provisional Figures

The data used to produce the Quarterly Business Statistics are also subject to quality assurance procedures using SPSS syntax which is regularly updated to take account of changes to data recording. Quality assurance checks undertaken include –

- i. Checking that all court information is complete and missing information obtained from ICOS or Case Progression Officers;
- ii. Check if included cases have been completed;
- iii. Checks to ensure cases entered and flagged on the system as 'entered in error' have been removed;
- iv. Logic checks completed to ensure key dates are in order, age of defendants are correct, pleas and findings are recorded, sittings have been resulted and confirmed, judiciary have been recorded;
- v. Logic checks of dates completed, e.g. dates of birth and logical sequences of key dates through the justice process; and
- vi. Check all the 'length of stage' variables that have been generated and revise where possible using ICOS and Case Progression Officers.

The resulting data is changed where errors/issues are identified. These changes range from completion of missing data, standardisation of variables such as gender and date variables, to the correction of erroneous information by checking back to source information (ICOS, Case progression Officers and if necessary court files).

Additionally, time-series checks are carried out to compare, on a quarterly basis, the number of cases that fall into each court, and time taken to complete cases of different court and offence types. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are investigated and either confirmed or corrected. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with expected trends or not.

6

Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

Explanation for users about the data quality and impact on the statistics

Each publication contains a section detailing data sources and any issues or guidance needed, relating to the quality of data and the interpretation of information. A background quality report is also published for each publication. Statisticians also work closely with policy colleagues to ensure there is the appropriate level of understanding pertaining to the information in question.