



Background Quality Report: Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland Assessment by the author

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Date: August 2021

Summary:

The following Background Quality Report sets out the ways in which these Official Statistics releases produced by Community Information Branch comply with the pillars and principles contained in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). The Pillars are [Trustworthiness](#), [Quality](#) and [Value](#), and the meaning behind each pillar and their underlying statements are included.

Abbreviations:

CIB – Community Information Branch

DoH – Department of Health

HSC – Health and Social Care

EDCS – Electronic Data Collection System

CIG – Community Information Group

BSO – Business Services Organisation

Trustworthiness

“Trustworthiness is a product of the people, systems and processes within organisations that enable and support the production of statistics and data.

Trustworthiness comes from the organisation that produces statistics and data being well led, well managed and open, and the people who work there being impartial and skilled in what they do.”

T1: Honesty and integrity

“People in organisations that release statistics should be truthful, impartial and independent, and meet consistent standards of behaviour that reflect the wider public good.”

Statisticians in Community Information Branch (CIB) produce, manage and disseminate statistics for the maximum benefit, in an impartial manner that is free of political or personal interests and they adhere to the values expressed in the code of practice that, additionally, align to those of the wider NISRA community.

T2: Independent decision making and leadership

“Organisations should assign a Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics who upholds and advocates the standards of the Code, strives to improve statistics and data for the public good, and challenges their inappropriate use.”

Community Information Branch sits within the Information Analysis Directorate (IAD), headed up by the Head of Profession for Statistics within Department of Health (DoH) NI. The Head of Profession is ultimately responsible for the statistics produced by the department and that it complies with the standards of the Code.

T3: Orderly release

“Organisations should commit to releasing their statistics in an open and transparent manner that promotes public confidence.”

“Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland” is always published within a year of the reference period. The time lag between publication and the reference period to which the data refer is normally around 5 months.

The Minister, limited, relevant policy officials and the press office have 24 hours pre-release access to the reports prior to publication. A list of all officials receiving pre-release access is published alongside the reports.

T4: Transparent processes and management

“Organisations should have effective business processes and appropriate resources to support their statistical functions and be open about their plans, priorities and progress.”

The CC7b statistical information return used to produce this publication refers to a survey week in September and is submitted annually by HSC Trusts. CIB publish a “Community Returns Timetable” annually to notify HSC Trust staff of the submission deadline for this return. Delayed submissions are normally due to a lack of resources or validation issues with HSC Trusts.

The EDCS has validation checks pre-programmed which on completion of tables in the return, may provide data entry users with a list of queries to resolve before they can save the return on the system. These errors must be cleared or an explanation provided for them. Following this, the data manager has responsibility for quality assuring the return online, and authorising its submission to CIB.

On receipt of the CC7b return, further quality assurance checks are undertaken by statisticians in the DoH.

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T5: Professional capability

“People producing statistics should be appropriately skilled, trained and supported in their roles and professional development.”

All CIB staff go through a lengthy induction programme to ensure they are skilled and gain the appropriate knowledge of their role. NISRA corporate functions provide additional oversight, ensuring staff are fully trained on the relevant procedures, legislation and regulations as well as best practice methods.

T6: Data governance

“Organisations should look after people’s information securely and manage data in ways that are consistent with relevant legislation and serve the public good.”

The CC7b statistical information return used by CIB is a pre-defined template which collects aggregate information and therefore does not include personal information. It is hosted on an EDCS on the DoH extranet site. Data is submitted via this system, which provides a secure direct link between the DoH and HSC Trusts. The online survey is password protected and data entry users and data managers in each Trust are approved by CIB to allow access to the CC7b return on this system. CIB maintain and manage the site, providing technical support and online help to nominated users of this system e.g. creating/deleting user accounts, resetting passwords.

Statisticians in CIB extract the data from the EDCS. Following this, it is held on a network that is only accessible to the statisticians who need access.

CIB's "Statistical Policy Statement on Confidentiality" can be found in the [Statistics Charter](#).

Any hard copies containing small cell sizes are locked away shredded as soon as possible.

Quality

“Quality means that statistics fit their intended uses, are based on appropriate data and methods, and are not materially misleading.

Quality requires skilled professional judgement about collecting, preparing, analysing and publishing statistics and data in ways that meet the needs of people who want to use the statistics.”

Q1: Suitable data sources

“Statistics should be based on the most appropriate data to meet intended uses. The impact of any data limitations for use should be assessed, minimised and explained.”

All of the information presented in “Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland” derives from the annual CC7b statistical information return, provided by each of the five HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland to CIB in the DoH.

The CC7b return is an aggregated statistical count which monitors information on the number of domiciliary care contact hours provided, the number of client visits, the number of clients receiving domiciliary care and the length of visits during the survey week.

HSC Trusts are allowed several weeks to update relevant internal management information systems, from which the CC7b return is produced.

HSC Trusts are then required to submit the CC7b return via an EDCS on the DoH Extranet site. Each HSC Trust has a nominated data entry user and data manager who have access to the CC7b return on this system.

The toolbar of the EDCS contains options which should be consulted by data entry users and data managers to aid with the completion of the return;

- (i) a “Guide” section contains separate guidance manuals for data entry users and data managers on how to use the system and how to validate the information entered.
- (ii) a “Notes” section provides guidance on the information to be included in the return.
- (iii) a “Worked example” of HSC Trust Domiciliary Care Provision is also available to aid with the completion of tables.

The EDCS has validation checks pre-programmed which on completion of tables in the return, may provide data entry users with a list of queries to resolve before they can save the return on the system. These errors must be cleared or an explanation provided for them. Following this, the data manager has responsibility for quality assuring the return online, and authorising its submission to CIB.

Q2: Sound methods

“Producers of statistics and data should use the best available methods and recognised standards, and be open about their decisions.”

“Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland” contains key quality information in respect of the specific content of the statistical output. Numerous footnotes/ caveats and annexes are provided in the publication which cover a range of explanatory information; including data quality e.g. sources, missing data.

Q3: Assured quality

“Producers of statistics and data should explain clearly how they assure themselves that statistics and data are accurate, reliable, coherent and timely.”

The CC7b statistical information return used in the production of this publication is a census of the cohort involved, and as such, coverage is inclusive of all the relevant population.

As a census rather than a survey, no estimates are produced, and issues of sampling error and confidence intervals are not relevant.

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On receipt of the CC7b return, further quality assurance checks are undertaken by statisticians in the DoH.

Previous domiciliary care data are revised if necessary and appropriate. All revisions are conducted in line with [DoH's Statistics Charter](#).

Value

“Value means that the statistics and data are useful, easy to access, remain relevant, and support understanding of important issues.

Value includes improving existing statistics and creating new ones through discussion and collaboration with stakeholders, and being responsible and efficient in the collection, sharing and use of statistical information.”

V1: Relevance to users

“Users of statistics and data should be at the centre of statistical production; their needs should be understood, their views sought and acted on, and their use of statistics supported.”

Data presented in this publication helps to meet the information needs of a wide range of internal and external users

Information from “Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland” is used by a variety of users for a range of purposes. The Northern Ireland Assembly devolved administration and the DoH (statutory users) use the information to support the formulation and monitoring of related policy, to develop and monitor related Programme for Government, Public Service Agreements and Priority for Action Targets, and to inform the HSC Commissioning Plan Direction. It is used by the HSC Board for strategic organisational planning and for benchmarking performance and characteristics within and between HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland.

Private companies may use it to monitor and target domiciliary care services, academics for research, and other government Departments and Agencies to inform cross-cutting policy and strategy development. CIB ensures that “Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland” remains relevant to users in a number of ways; a Regional Information Group exists to ensure that the requirements of statutory users are met; feedback received through readership and online user satisfaction surveys help to shape the information collected and the content of this publication. In this way the needs of user communities are continuously monitored, and if appropriate and practical, acted upon.

V2: Accessibility

“Statistics and data should be equally available to all, not given to some people before others. They should be published at a sufficient level of detail and remain publicly available.”

The Minister, limited, relevant policy officials and the press office have 24 hours pre-release access to the reports prior to publication. A list of all officials receiving pre-release access is published alongside the reports.

The publication contains contact details for further information. Additional ad-hoc analysis, where appropriate, may be provided on request.

The publications are published in accordance to best practice for Accessibility.

V3: Clarity and insight

“Statistics and data should be presented clearly, explained meaningfully and provide authoritative insights that serve the public good.”

There is currently no other official source of domiciliary care statistics in Northern Ireland however CIB have produced several one off publications on domiciliary care in the past; a “Survey of Home Care Service Users Northern Ireland” and the “Domiciliary Care Module – Continuous Household Survey”. Where appropriate, CIB compare their data to external sources to ensure HSC Trusts are providing reliable and robust data.

CIB provide HSC Trust staff with guidance documents on the completion of the CC7b statistical information return. These are available online at the [Department of Health website](#).

CIB also have regular CIG meetings with HSC Trust staff to discuss guidelines and data validation issues. This aims to ensure consistent recording, coverage and timeframes of data between HSC Trust areas and with previous year’s figures.

All data submitted by the five HSC Trusts for this publication are comparable. Comparisons can be made over time and publications are available from 2008 onwards. Inter-country comparisons are difficult as social care operates within different legislative frameworks across devolved administrations.

V4: Innovation and improvement

“Statistics producers should be creative and motivated to improve statistics and data, recognising the potential to harness technological advances for the development of all parts of the production and dissemination process.”

The DSF returns that these publications are based on, have historically been manual returns. The project “Children’s Return Project” was established in 2019 to assess the possibility of enhancing the HSC Trust administrative systems to enable more returns to be captured electronically without the need for manual counts or manipulations. Findings from this work will be implemented with the rollout of Encompass as new overarching HSC Trust administrative system for Northern Ireland.

V5: Efficiency and proportionality

“Statistics and data should be published in forms that enable their reuse. Producers should use existing data wherever possible and only ask for more where justified.”

Currently CIB do not have access to HSC Trust information systems therefore Information Officers working in HSC Trusts must provide CIB with the data requested. All of the information is submitted electronically.

The returns are also used for internal management information and regional commissioning monitoring, and would be produced whether requested by CIB or not.