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Analytical Services Group
CONSULTATION PAPER

C Darragh

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For further information write to:

**Analytical Services Group,
NI Courts and Tribunals Service,
4th Floor, Laganside House,
23-27 Oxford Street,
Belfast BT1 3LA**

Telephone: 028 9072 8927

Email: caroline.darragh@courtsni.gov.uk

This bulletin is available on the Internet at:

www.courtsni.gov.uk

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INTRODUCTION

This consultation invites users to provide comments on the proposed changes in the methodology used to report on the numbers of orders made within the Children Order courts in Northern Ireland. This change in methodology will affect tables 3, 4 and 5 within the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service quarterly Children Order bulletin and Tables F4, F5 and F6 within the Judicial Statistics publication.

In summary the proposed changes in methodology are being introduced to amend the reporting of orders made on applications under the Children (NI) Order 1995, from the **participant** level to the **application** level. There are multiple participants involved on each application made under the Children (NI) Order 1995, and currently the orders made are counted at the **participant** level ie. each order that is made is counted against each participant to whom the order applies. The proposed new methodology will amend this practice to count orders made at the **application** level regardless of how many participants to whom the order applies. Counting the orders at the application level will provide a clearer picture as to the numbers of distinct orders and trends in the types of orders being made, whilst removing the potential for inconsistencies in the recording of the participants to whom the order applies.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Analytical Services Group (ASG) statisticians based in the Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service (NICTS), are responsible for a range of publications covering criminal, civil and family courts within Northern Ireland. These statistical publications can be accessed on the NICTS website at:

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Since April 2007, statistical data published with the Quarterly Children's Order Bulletin and Section F of Judicial Statistics, have been extracted from the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). The relevant data is exported into text files which are imported directly into a secure internal facility. A Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used to validate and analyse the data produced within the Statistical Publications.

The recording of orders made within the Children Order courts have been reported at the participant level since 2007, and the introduction of ICOS. Children Order data in relation to orders made, is recorded on ICOS at the **application level**. The data is then extracted based on the **participants** selected on ICOS which indicate all relevant parties to whom the order applies.

Following an operational review of recording practices surrounding the selection of participants to whom orders apply in November 2013, a training program was implemented by operational colleagues. This training was delivered in early 2014 to ensure all relevant participants were being consistently applied on ICOS. This has had a knock-on effect on the numbers of own motion, interim and final orders being reported within the Children Order courts, with figures showing large increases in 2014.

The proposal is to change the reporting of the orders being made within the Children Order courts from the participant level to the application level. This change in methodology will overcome any issues surrounding the inconsistent recording of participants to whom the orders apply and provide more user friendly data in terms of relating the orders made to the applications being received and disposed. Application level data will count distinct orders made during the court process. This new methodology would be introduced to cover own motion, interim and final orders.

NATIONAL STATISTICS OBLIGATIONS

The Judicial Statistics annual publication is designated as a National Statistic by the UK Statistics Authority. The tables affected by this proposed change in methodology will be Tables F4, F5 and F6. The Quarterly Children Order Bulletin is designated as an Official Statistics publication and the National Statistics Code of Practice is still applicable as a matter of best practice. Tables 3, 4 and 5 within this publication will be affected.

National Statistics publications are governed by the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 and the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics. These statistics are produced to the highest professional standards set out in the Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are also produced free from political interference.

Within this Code, Protocol 1 on User Engagement requires all changes be subject to a public consultation. In compliance with this Protocol, ASG are carrying out this consultation which covers the proposed changes to the National Statistics and Official Statistics publications.

PROPOSED CHANGES

The proposed change in methodology is to move from the reporting on own motion, interim and final orders made within the Children Order courts from the participant level to the application level. The definitions for each approach are detailed below.

Participant level data records orders made against each party involved in the application (which have been selected on ICOS to indicate the order applies to them). For example if one application is dealt with and there was a contact order and a residence order made and there were five parties involved (which were all selected on ICOS to indicate the order applies to them), this is currently counted as 5 contact orders and 5 residence orders. The issue with participant level data was that prior to the training which ran in early 2014 the court offices were not consistently selecting all the parties that the order related to on ICOS, and therefore training was rolled out to ensure all relevant parties were being selected. However this resulted in large increases in the numbers of orders being reported.

Application level data records orders made at the application level regardless of the number of parties involved. For example if one application is dealt with and there was a contact and residence order made, this would be counted as one contact order and one residence order.

If this new methodology is successfully introduced, a back series of data from April 2007 will be published via the NICTS website, and going forward the data for the first quarter of 2016 will be published within the Quarterly Children Order Bulletin on Friday 20th May 2016 and the Judicial Statistics Publication for 2015 on Friday 24th June 2016.

For comparison purposes Tables 1, 2 and 3 indicate the impact of the change in methodology upon the numbers of own motion, interim and final orders made for the calendar year 2014.

Table 1: Own motion orders granted in 2014

	Participant Level	Application Level
Appointment of Guardian ad Litem	610	215
Article 53 Contact	-	-
Care	400	97
Child Assessment	56	18
Contact: Permission	666	193
Declaration of Parentage	7	2
Education Supervision	9	3
Emergency Protection	45	10
Extension of Emergency Protection Order	17	4
Family Assistance	4	1
Non-Molestation Order	-	-
Occupation Articles	-	-
Other orders, applications etc	1022	284
Parental Responsibility	27	9
Prohibited Steps	164	52
Recovery	11	3
Residence	440	133
Secure Accommodation	28	11
Specific Issues	169	51
Supervision	34	7
Total	3709	1093

Table 2: Interim orders granted in 2014

	Participant Level	Application Level
Appointment of Guardian ad Litem	-	-
Article 53 Contact	-	-
Care	14420	3567
Child Assessment	-	-
Contact: Permission	15182	4865
Contact: Refusal	-	-
Contribution and other Financial	-	-
Education Supervision	27	6
Emergency Protection	-	-
Exclusion Requirement	-	-
Extension of Emergency Protection Order	-	-
Family Assistance	-	-
Non-Molestation Order	12	6
Occupation Articles	-	-
Other orders, applications etc	-	-
Parental Responsibility	3	1
Prohibited Steps	549	177
Recovery	-	-
Residence	1670	550
Secure Accommodation	515	161
Specific Issues	108	34
Supervision	654	168
Total	33140	9535

Table 3: Final Orders Made in 2014

	Participant Level	Application Level
Adjourn Generally	31	11
Article 3 Legal Aid granted	1028	375
Article 8 Contact	7251	2254
Care Order	1146	277
Child Assessment Order	4	1
Contact with a child in care	250	57
Declaration of Parentage	126	47
Discharge of a Care Order	176	42
Discharge Interim Contact Order	262	88
Discharge Non-Molestation/Occupation	1	1
Discharge Prohibited Steps Order	120	32
Discharge Residence Order	66	18
Dismissed	1387	397
Education Supervision	242	70
Emergency Protection Order	284	83
Emergency Protection Order – out of hours	36	10
Extension of an Emergency Protection Order	84	22
Family Assistance Order	30	8
Financial Provision	44	16
Leave to change surname by which the child is known	17	6
Non-molestation order	20	8
Occupation Order	2	1
Order of No Order (Final Order)	254	67
Other Order	3986	1165
Parental Responsibility Order	558	183
Prohibited steps	623	202
Recovery of a child	25	7
Refusal of Article 3 Legal Aid Certificate	8	7
Residence Order	4365	1322
Residence and Contact Order	22	6
Secure Accommodation Order	74	23
Specific Issues	742	241
Strike Out Order	510	176
Supervision Order	396	87
Terminating Appointment of Guardian Ad Litem	1922	462
Withdrawn	2415	710
Total	28507	8482

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

The advantages of moving from the participant level to the application level to report data on orders made include:

- Any inconsistencies in the recording practice of selecting the participants to whom orders apply will be overcome, thereby improving data quality.
- A back series of data from April 2007 will be published to ensure a consistent back series of data, allowing for reliable comparisons over time.
- The data will be more user friendly in terms of understanding the relationship between the orders made and the applications being received and disposed.
- The data will provide a clearer picture of the numbers of distinct orders and the trends in the types of orders being made.

The disadvantages include:

- The reporting of orders at the participant level will no longer be published.

RESPONSE FORM

You are invited to consider the proposed change in methodology in relation to the reporting of orders made within the Children Order courts in Northern Ireland. Please complete the pro-forma below and submit your response to this proposal no later than **Monday 16th May 2016**.

Details of respondent

Name:

Organisation represented (If applicable):

If replying on behalf of an organisation, please indicate if the responses reflect:

Individual response

Organisational response

Address:

Telephone Number

Email Address

Q1. Do you currently use Children Order information contained within the Quarterly Children Order Bulletin or Judicial Statistics publication?

Yes

No

Q2. If yes, what information do you use? For example do you use the order information specifically?

Q3. Will the proposed changes have a significant impact on your use of the information / data?

Yes

No

If yes, please list the main impacts the proposed changes would have?

Q4. Do you see any advantages to the proposed changes in reporting?

Q5. Is there any new information that you would like to see included in the publications? If so please provide details.

Yes

No

Q6. Do you agree with the proposed change in methodology?

Yes

No

Q7. Any other comments

Responses should be returned no later than Monday 16th May 2016.

Please return to: caroline.darragh@courtsni.gov.uk

Mrs Caroline Darragh

Statistics and Research Team

4th Floor Laganside House

23-27 Oxford Street

Belfast

Northern Ireland

BT1 3LA

Many thanks for your response to this consultation. Please note that all responses will remain anonymous in any future publications.