

**Northern Ireland Statistics
and Research Agency (NISRA)**

**Annual Report and Accounts
For the year ended 31 March 2021**

*Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly
under section 11(3) (c) of the Government Resources
and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001
by the Department of Finance*

*on
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PERFORMANCE REPORT

OVERVIEW

Our organisation

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which incorporates the General Register Office (GRO), is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (NI) and was established on 1 April 1996. The administration of the marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of GRO, along with the registration of births, deaths, adoptions and gender recognition. GRO is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and the production of certificates in relation to these events on request.

The Agency is the principal source of Official Statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. These statistics and research not only inform public policy but also academic and private sector research, and contribute to debate in the wider community. This was never more so than during the past year when NISRA statistics on death registrations routinely appeared in the media and press briefings provided by NISRA staff were referred to on an almost weekly basis. Less publicly, we provide our services to a wide range of Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to assist the policy development process and the delivery of their business objectives. The insight we provide guides the decisions of others. A key element of this is the Census of Population which is run once every 10 years when every household in Northern Ireland must complete their return. The Census is used by central and local government, health and education authorities and other organisations to plan and provide future services. The most recent Census took place in March 2021 and Census Office staff have now begun the task of processing the huge volume of data produced.

Our statisticians also make an important contribution to the Programme for Government (PfG) process, with the development of population indicators based on official data and assisting policy colleagues and other stakeholders in developing report cards at performance level.

Our purpose

Support decision makers in the formulation of evidence-based policy and inform public debate through the production and dissemination of high quality, trusted and meaningful analysis; facilitate research and deliver the decennial population census and every day civil registration services.

Our mission

Provide citizens and decision makers with trusted insight on life in Northern Ireland.

Our vision

We aspire to:

- be the go-to organisation for an accurate and insightful account of life in Northern Ireland, informing decision making and recognising that our people are our strength;
- provide comprehensive registration and genealogy services that give our customers what they need; and
- be motivated and valued people doing excellent work together; innovating, growing, proud of our Agency and our impact.

Our values

Key to the Agency's future success will be the extent to which we live up to the standards we have set for ourselves, both individually and collectively. These are encapsulated within INSIGHT, the initiative we will use to give substance to our shared values, provide a focus for planned transformational activities and be a vehicle for the communication and exploration of organisational culture and the projection of leadership behaviours.

Investment	in people, technology and learning & development.
Network	of specialist staff across the public sector, working within a shared culture of collaboration, supportive team-working and effective communication.
Standards	of best practice, professionalism, personal integrity and respect, taking pride in all we do and delivering on our promises.
Improvement	through innovation and a challenge mind-set, supporting positive change and adding value in all we do to increase our efficiency, effectiveness and impact.
Good governance	of data and our corporate processes.
High quality	insight and analysis, outputs and publications, engendering trust in what we say and the information that supports it.
Trust	extended as a sign of our shared responsibility, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

Risks and Uncertainties

Risk management has been incorporated into the business planning and decision making processes of the Agency. The Agency maintains a Corporate Risk Register which defines the framework of control and describes the process for identifying and managing risks.

NISRA has an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), the purpose of which is to support the Accounting Officer in monitoring NISRA risk, control and governance systems. Additionally, the ARC will give advice to the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of coverage of audit arrangements (internal and external) to provide required assurances.

The Committee includes three Non-Executive independent Members, currently John Smyth, Elizabeth Ensor and Tom Taylor. The Committee is chaired by an independent Non-Executive Member of the Departmental board (Tom Taylor) and during this reporting period, operated under the best practice guidance in accordance with the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) 2018.

The Committee met on 4 occasions during the course of 2020-21. The Corporate Risk Register was provided to all meetings and the Committee reviewed, in detail, risks in relation to:

1. The 2021 Census;
2. Census preparations;
3. Meeting customer needs and expectations;
4. Information management and data and cyber security;
5. Business continuity and the impact of COVID-19;
6. Financial control;
7. Application of the Code of Practice for Statistics;
8. Staff absence and recruitment;
9. Production of key Economic Statistics;
10. Modernisation of Statistical Data Collection Infrastructure; and
11. Impact of leaving the EU.

Chief Executive Overview

I am unable to describe the work of NISRA this year without immediately referencing the global COVID-19 pandemic which, for the whole year, has demanded of us new ways of working, flexibility in meeting data hungry demands, a raised public consciousness of the importance of statistics and science and a media profile which has rarely been as heightened. The General Register Office provided the linchpin to the country in registering all of the deaths which sadly occurred, and all of this was happening while NISRA people had their own worries and health concerns as well as delivering business as usual. To top it all, the decennial Census ran as planned in March 2021 despite all of the extra pressures brought on by the virus. I am always proud to be the Chief Executive of this organisation, but more so than ever in such a year as this.

In the context of ever-reducing resources, the performance of my people is all the more extraordinary this year, as they delivered more and more to meet ever increasing and ever more complex demands. New statistical products have been developed to meet user needs during the pandemic, and all under the professional auspices of the Code of Practice for Statistics through NISRA's close partnership with the Office for Statistics Regulation, with any issues dealt with quickly and effectively on a collaborative basis as they arose.

NISRA's published five year plan <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/nisra-corporate-plan-2019-24>, which was developed with the involvement of staff right across the Agency, continues to provide us with a compass for where we want to get to and the kind of organisation we want to be. The Agency Board has committed to implementing a Transformational Programme designed to produce the changes our customers, stakeholders and staff have asked for and that are demanded by the environment in which we now work. The Programme encompasses a range of activities grouped under the headings of Culture, People, Structure, Collaboration, Data and Legislation.

Our annual Business Plan in the form of a Balanced Score Card sets out the actions we will take over the next 12 months to make progress against our longer term priorities described in the NISRA Corporate Plan.

In this extraordinary year which saw the development and spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic which impacted on all activities but especially on civil registration, emergency legislation was introduced to change how deaths are registered which came into force on 26 March 2020.

The emergence of the crisis also saw an increased demand for NISRA services in the areas of health surveillance, death reporting and modelling for operational purposes. The Agency moved swiftly to reshape how the work gets done, moving to remote working as well as responding to demands for new data. Crucially, protocols were put in place to keep the vitally important registration service operating under these new conditions. Both our statutory business survey

and social survey operations had to be rapidly adapted with, for example, face-to-face interviewing switching to telephone interviews requiring our surveys to be tailored for that particular data collection mode and supporting initiatives to be implemented in order to encourage participation. Across these and other areas spanning government departments, NISRA demonstrated its responsiveness as an organisation to fast-moving and fast-changing user needs.

The Agency has achieved the key Departmental target of planning and rolling out the 2021 Census (see page 11). Further detail on NISRA's performance against all of the targets is included in the NISRA Balanced Scorecard Section at pages 12 to 21.

Highlights of the Year

A key highlight for the year was running the 2021 Census to plan. During the year, legislation was passed to run the Census, a large-scale fieldforce of around 1,700 enumerators was recruited, invitations to take part were issued to 840,000 addresses and at time of writing around 97% of households had completed their return either online or on paper. This is a higher return rate than 2011 and to achieve this in the middle of a pandemic is clearly a significant success story for the Agency.

This year saw a continued interest in understanding trade following NI's exit from the EU on 31 January 2020, particularly in respect of trade flows within the UK and on a north south basis. The Agency prioritised this work to provide support to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and Whitehall colleagues to help inform their decision making and gain a detailed understanding of the baseline prior to the implementation of the NI Protocol. This was achieved by working closely with stakeholders and providing detailed data tables and advice in response to many ad hoc requests from colleagues across government departments including the Department for the Economy, the Cabinet Office, HMRC, HM Treasury and the ONS.

NISRA also continued to update EU Exit related analysis on our website to inform public debate, <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economy/eu-exit-analysis>, as well as publishing its fourth iteration of "*NI: in Profile*", which brings together the key trends in society and the economy in an easily accessible resource pack, <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/ni-summary-statistics/ni-profile>.

NISRA maintained its support for the new outcome-based accountability draft Programme for Government (PfG) which is highly data dependent and statisticians across the NICS worked collaboratively and with their departmental colleagues to produce both population indicators and performance level report cards as well as progressing a detailed population indicator review in preparation for the next version of the PfG.

The Agency has also carried on its investment in the outworkings of the UK Digital Economy Act which provides for access to administrative data for the purpose of producing statistics and research. Public administration is increasingly delivered digitally, changing the way data are

generated and a move to use more administrative data requires new methods, techniques and skills in both analysing and managing these datasets.

The Agency built on the renewed investment from the Economic & Social Research Council as part of the Administrative Data Research Partnership. This recognises the work already achieved via earlier investment but with a more solid focus on meeting the analytical requirements of government. This investment included resource for NISRA to develop analyses using administrative data allowing our researchers to be responsive to user needs during the pandemic with a range of research products on causes of death (alcohol and drugs), excess deaths and pre-existing conditions associated with COVID-19 deaths to be published.

Another highlight this year has been the setting up of the NISRA 'Tech Lab' designed to harness new technologies through a targeted investment bringing together skilled personnel to provide a centralised dedicated technical resource to the Agency. The Lab is in its infancy but is set now to deliver on a number of exemplar projects to illustrate potential in this area for the future.

Despite the operational and logistical challenges presented by the pandemic, NISRA continued to provide its social survey research service to NI government and the wider public sector. This required our 300 survey interviewers to quickly switch from face-to-face interviewing to telephone interviewing in line with government 'stay at home' policy, in order to ensure that key surveys could continue and hence provide key information on a wide range of topics including the labour market, health, crime and well-being. Additionally, the Agency initiated the COVID-19 Opinion Survey in Northern Ireland which continues to provide insights into how the pandemic is impacting on the day-to-day lives of people. In addition, NISRA's Central Survey Unit provided the infrastructure to underpin the recruitment phase of the UK wide COVID-19 Infection Study, facilitating delivery partners to capture some 4 million swab tests and 327,000 blood tests from over 2 million household visits across the UK. The unit also directly provided the sampling frame for potential NI volunteers to the study developing an approach which consistently delivered the highest weekly participation rates across the UK.

NISRA also continued to administer its eleven statutory business surveys which are integral to the functioning of the UK Economic Statistical system and the associated monitoring of the UK, and more specifically, Northern Ireland Economy. We are most grateful to local businesses for their unwavering cooperation and support during the unprecedented circumstances that have prevailed over the last 12 months. The information provided has been central to informing NI's position on both EU Exit and the NI Protocol and has facilitated the development of policy in respect of the support afforded to Northern Ireland businesses in response to the global pandemic. More than ever, the information secured through these statutory surveys is informing major decisions that affect people's lives and livelihoods. Its importance in this respect is not expected to diminish over the next few years as businesses adapt to the new arrangements and NI endeavours to manage the major shocks that the pandemic has had on local businesses and both the NI economy and labour market more generally.

Work on the development of an outputs based quarterly GDP measure continued, building on the Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index methodology, while strengthening the measurement of public sector output. Results from this important new measure will considerably enhance NISRA's current package of economic indicators in the next financial year.

Oversight and accountability for the work carried out by NISRA staff rests with the Chief Executive who is directly responsible to the DoF Minister, through the Department, for the management of the Agency's performance and operations. The relationships between the Agency, the Department and the Minister, as well as internal NISRA governance arrangements, are set out in the NISRA Framework Document which underwent a 5 yearly review at the start of the this accounting period. This was followed later in the year by a review of our Concordat arrangements covering the supply of specialist analytical staff to other departments and host organisations for the purposes of delivering our research and analytical services.

The undoubted highlight of this year however has been the way in which the staff have lived by the values that we set out in the Corporate Plan. They have been innovative in the face of crisis, have worked collaboratively to help each other achieve objectives and have gone above and beyond in finding solutions when presented with difficulties. In summary, they have made me proud every single day.

General Register Office (GRO) Operations

Between April 2020 and March 2021 the GRO processed 77,194 certificates, with 99.99% of priority certificate applications and 100% of standard certificate applications, fulfilled within target timescales (one and five working days respectively).

Additionally, GRO processed 3029 Casework Cases including re-registrations, adoptions, name changes, corrections, approval of religious officiants and humanist celebrants. All were completed within the target timescale of 15 working days.

On the 23 March 2020 GRO closed its public counter and search rooms due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Many local Council Registration offices closed and the Coronavirus Act and NI Executive restrictions were put in place. This reduced the service that the Registrars could provide and the numbers below reflect that.

In Northern Ireland the public has the option of either a religious/belief or a civil marriage ceremony. Between April 2020 and March 2021, Registrars carried out 1,400 civil marriages and 32 Humanist celebrants carried out 133 civil marriages. There were also 1,951 religious marriages carried out in the same period. From 1 November 2020 belief marriages could be carried out under the same legislation as a religious marriage and from 1 November 2020 to 31 March 2021, 46 belief marriages were carried out by 22 Humanist celebrants. Registrars also carried out 40 civil partnership registrations and from 7 December 2020, 150 conversions of Civil Partnerships to Marriage were carried out by Registrars and a belief organisation.

Due to the restrictions the GRO public search room remained closed throughout most of the reporting period however, 1062 members of the public did visit Colby House when restrictions allowed, with 9,310 recorded searches conducted from the GRO terminals. No searches of GRO records from the PRONI terminals were recorded between April 2020 and March 2021

GRO registered 15,582 new accounts on the Family History website. There were 1,197,935 searches carried out, the most popular being the free index search which accounted for 1,035,292 searches.

Non-Executive Directors' Report

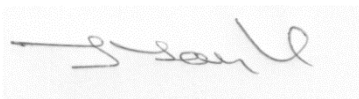
NISRA ARC members are Liz Ensor, John Smyth and myself as Chair of the committee.

During the financial year we met on four occasions and reviewed a number of issues including:

- Reports detailing the financial position of NISRA on both Revenue and Capital budgets;
- Official Statistics update;
- Preparation for the 2021 Census;
- Mid-year and annual Governance Statements;
- NISRA Corporate Risk Register issues;
- Internal Audit Reports including Direct Award Contracts;
- External Audit Reports including the Annual Report & Accounts; and
- Monitoring of NISRA progress in clearing Internal and External Audit Recommendations.

We are satisfied that any issues of concern were reported to the Departmental Audit & Risk Committee.

We are also satisfied that the risk management, control and governance arrangements established by management for Corporate Governance and Risk Management are adequate and effective, and the reasons for the departure from the Corporate Governance Code have been clearly detailed in the Annual Governance Statement included in this document.



Tom Taylor

NISRA Chair Audit and Risk Committee

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Targets

A Balanced Scorecard set out our objectives for 2020-21 and the initiatives and measures that we took towards achieving these.

Performance against Targets

The Agency had one key departmental target for the year 2020-21, which was achieved. The results have been confirmed as accurate by DoF Internal Audit and are summarised in the section below.

Performance against the key departmental target is summarised in the NISRA Balanced Scorecard Section at pages 12 to 28.

NISRA DoF Target

Priority 8: Finalise preparations and start the delivery of the enumeration phase of the 2021 Census to ensure government policies, plans and services continue to be based on strong and accurate population evidence.

Targets	Comment	Status
1. By Summer 2020 finalise legislative and scrutiny process for the 2021 Census.	The Census Order was approved by the Assembly on 5 May 2020 and came into force on 6 May 2020. The Census Regulations were made on 23 June 2020 and came into operation on 17 July 2020.	Green (Complete)
2. Finalise all key systems and services elements to deliver 2021 Census by Winter 2020 (including online and paper questionnaires, printing, call centre plans and services for field follow-up).	This work was completed and at 31 March 2021, the Programme was on track.	Green (Complete)
3. Undertake the first phase of the operational elements of the 2021 Census through Spring 2021.	The first phase of Census operations successfully launched in Spring 2021. Collection, via the online platform and by hardcopy returns, began on 1 March 2021. Fieldwork commenced in a limited manner in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions and active engagement with households was set to commence in April 2021.	Green

NISRA's Balanced Scorecard 2020-21

Quadrant	Objectives	Initiatives	Metrics	PfG Contribution
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Agency will remain within allocated budget. The Agency will optimise its efficiency through revised working practices to meet customer demand. The Agency will deliver outputs and provide services that support customer business needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review organisational / operational models. Review Agency Board remit and related structures. Increase Data Protection / GDPR awareness. FOI Compliance. DEA (Digital Economy Act) Compliance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Underspend to be as close to budget as possible.¹ % customers indicating they have used NISRA statistics in the policy/ decision making process. % customers, using NISRA information for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational Purposes Academic Research Personal research Business decision making Other % general public that state they trust statistics produced by NISRA. Confirmed number of Breaches of DPA / GDPR. Subject Access Requests (SAR) processed on time (number / %). FOI requests processed on time (number / %). Confirmed number of Breaches of DEA. Development and delivery of related INSIGHT Project objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have high quality public services.

¹ The Account Metrics changed from the published Business Plan 2020-21 to reflect DoF.

Initiatives

1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Agency reviewed its internal governance arrangements during the year incorporating a new level of senior management – the Senior Management Team (SMT) - sitting between Agency Board and the Chief Executive. This group comprises the CEO, G5 Directors, the Deputy Registrar General and the Business Development Manager and is primarily business focused, assessing and mitigating business risks, evaluating corporate performance and prioritizing the allocation of resources.• The Agency continues to monitor and react to workforce requirements. This year saw external competitions created for Data Analyst Placement Students, Assistant Statisticians, and Deputy Principal Statisticians and an internal competition for a key Policy Grade 6 Statistician post. In the absence of sufficient permanent staff, NISRA sources appropriately qualified statistical officers through the relevant central framework contract to backfill vacancies.• To manage the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the recruitment process NISRA developed and deployed a suite of online tests. Alongside the existing General Service situational judgement tests NISRA engaged with Fujitsu to develop two bespoke professional tests; the first on Statistical Concepts and the second on Numeracy. These successfully replaced the previous exam room tests and will be the default process by which all recruitment testing will take place in future.• NISRA created two specialised teams; the Collaboration and Research Hub (Hub), a highly successful branch designed to manage the commissioning of and response to new work requests, where existing resource is unable to meet customer requirements; and the Technology and Support Lab (Tech Lab) tasked with the development of innovative solutions to meet evolving customer needs. The lab will also help deliver a key output of the INSIGHT Data Project in identifying a standard toolkit for all NISRA statisticians.• BSDB began work which will see the rollout of Microsoft Teams to all NISRA staff, irrespective of location, in order to provide an enhanced intranet solution incorporating greater functionality with regard to communication and project collaboration.• BSO is now able to provide researchers with secure remote access to anonymised health service research datasets providing a much more efficient and wide-reaching service.• BSO developed and released a new experimental monthly OS publication related to the distribution of PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic.• BSO released new topic specific OS publications covering Dental, Pharmacy, Ophthalmic and General Medical Services in response to an identified customer need. A new key facts OS publication summarising information from the other OS reports was developed and published. A range of new analyses and datasets provided to support professional and operational colleagues during the current pandemic. Further datasets and reports developed to help identify fraudulent claims.	Green
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1 & 2 cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSO worked with senior management to develop Key Performance Indicators, including screening for cervical and bowel cancers. • CSU switched all of its survey operations to telephone mode to maintain data flow for customers and to meet PfG information needs, as field operations were suspended due to COVID-19. CSU developed the COVID-19 Opinion Survey NI, launched on 20 April and run weekly, measuring how COVID-19 pandemic affects peoples' lives in NI. They also host the COVID-19 Opinions survey for ONS on its accredited Blaise 5 data collection system, run on a weekly basis since its inception in the summer of 2020. A link to the publications can be found at Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain Statistical bulletins. • CSU hosted the recruitment phase of the UK wide online Labour Market Survey (LMS) on its Blaise 5 Infrastructure, which was initiated to provide contingency for the Labour Force Survey having to be conducted via telephone interviews. The volume of cases is very large on this survey, with close to 100,000 cases live at any one time. • CSU hosted the recruitment phase of the UK wide COVID19 Infection study on its Blaise 5 Infrastructure, facilitating delivery partners to capture some 4 million swab tests and 327,000 blood tests from over 2 million household visits across the UK. The information from this study was imperative to the formulation of the UK Government and NI Assembly response to the pandemic. CSU also directly provided the sampling frame for potential NI volunteers to the study developing an approach which consistently delivered the highest weekly participation rates across the UK. • Dissemination Branch created a website to host Interactive Data Visualisations, a Health Check was completed and all identified issues resolved. The website went live in October 2020. • ELMS implemented a dedicated helpline to ensure continuity of service delivery in respect of its Business Survey operations whilst the majority of staff worked from home, in response to COVID-19. • As part of the Review of Professional Services in DfC a draft strategy and action plan was developed. • DfI derives all outputs and services from an annual work programme developed through engagement with customers. The full range of outputs are published on the DfI website. • The INSIGHT Collaboration Project created the NISRA Hub, which operates a research consultancy service for NISRA branches and their policy colleagues. Since launching, the Hub has delivered projects for DAERA, DE, DfI, TEO, as well as for branches in NISRA Core (CSU, Business Development). Resource from this peripatetic function provided analytical support to the COVID-19 NI Hub from March to June 2020. 	Green
3, 4 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DoF NISRA Data Protection / GDPR / FOI awareness issued to all staff via e-mails, intranet posts and aide-memoirs issued by NISRA BAIM. The DoF FOI staff handbook was updated and provides guidance to staff in DoF when handling FOI requests, ensuring consistency and best practice across the Department. • NISRA Information Management Action Plan and Work Programme was developed for 2020-21. • DP / FOI guidance/awareness issued to staff by way of 11 aide-memoirs issued by BAIM & bi-monthly features posted on DoF Intranet site. 	Green

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business areas such as BSO, DfC, and VARS, are fully compliant with GDPR, FoI and DEA protocols. No reportable Breaches.• In BSO the privacy notice for the Honest Broker Service has been updated and privacy impact assessments and screenings have been carried out for a number of projects.• NISRA is committed to supporting secondary data research on the data it holds. To that end the Agency has had systems accredited under the Digital Economy Act for both the safe setting for researchers (Secure Research Unit) and the data linkage functions (Trusted Third Party) hosted in Colby House. | |
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Metrics

1	<p>The net cash underspend was £370k. This was mainly due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unexpected Census related savings of £120k derived from ONS contracts and returned to NISRA at year end; and • £200k of funding set aside for delivery of face-to-face training (training space in local hotels, travel cost, materials, overtime costs) of the 1850 Census field staff, which had to be delivered online due to the continuing pandemic restrictions. Face to face training was the preferred option, given the range of issues that had to be covered. It was always hoped that it could still take place in a timely manner and the contingency was kept in place until early 2021, by which time the extant restrictions made it impossible and the expenditure could not be redeployed. 	Red
2	<p>In the Customer Survey (March 2021) 36% of customers indicated they have used NISRA statistics in the policy/decision making process.</p>	Amber
3	<p>In the Customer Survey, customers reported they were using NISRA information for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational Purposes 8% - Academic Research 5% - Personal research 12% - Business decision making 28% - Other 11% 	Amber
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional figures from the Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics 2020 survey (October 2020 to March 2021) suggest that 91% of respondents trusted NISRA statistics a great deal or tended to trust them. • Trust levels were higher among those respondents who had heard of NISRA: 96% trusted NISRA statistics a great deal or tended to trust them. • Finalised figures will be published as Official Statistics in Autumn 2021: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/public-awareness-and-confidence-trust-official-statistics-pcos. 	Green
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NISRA have had no DPA / GDPR breaches reported to ICO during this period. 	Green
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DoF NISRA 14 SAR's received, with 79% issued on time, 3 SAR's not completed within deadlines due to COVID-19 pressures on branch. Non-DoF NISRA reported no SAR's. 	Amber
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In DoF NISRA 74 FOI requests received and 100% issued on time. Non-DoF NISRA reported Fol requests were processed on time. 	Green
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branches have reported they are compliant with DEA legislation, and no breaches were reported. 	Green
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-line INSIGHT Events have proved extremely popular with staff and have become a regular feature each month. With events ranging from COVID-19 Opinion Survey, CCEA Exam Grades Modelling, Furlough and GRO / VARS Death Certification and Death Stats. 	Green

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NISRA Tech Lab established for an initial pilot period of 18 months (the evaluation of which will inform the future of NISRA skillsets and software). The primary aim is to release the efficiencies and other benefits offered through better data management, data visualization, automation and reprogramming; taken forward through a series of projects submitted by branches across all departments. The Tech Lab will also, identify a standard analytical toolset. This is a multi-disciplinary comprising statisticians, data analysts, software developers, data managers and data visualisation experts.• The INSIGHT Collaboration Project created the NISRA Hub, which operates a research consultancy service for NISRA branches and their policy colleagues. The team provides a full-service research consultancy offering both qualitative and quantitative solutions, including small-scale surveys and database set up. Since launching, the Hub has delivered projects for DAERA, DE, DfI, TEO, as well as for branches in NISRA Core (CSU, Business Development). Resource from this peripatetic function provided analytical support to the COVID-19 NI Hub from March to June 2020. | |
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Quadrant	Objectives	Initiatives	Metrics	PfG Contribution
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Areas will be proactive in their engagement with customers and stakeholders in order to enhance the insight and understand the value derived from their services and releases. • The Agency will maintain or improve overall customer satisfaction with its services. • The Agency will improve its level of brand recognition. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish current / future demand for NISRA products and services. 2. Project and promote the NISRA brand. 3. Undertake customer engagement initiatives. 4. Add value to statistical outputs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. % customer satisfaction. 2. Agree / disagree ratings (%): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. NISRA staff are knowledgeable. b. NISRA staff respond to my query promptly. c. NISRA staff are helpful. d. It is easy to find / locate NISRA report / data. e. NISRA reports are easy to understand. f. NISRA staff are courteous and treat customers with respect. g. In my dealings with NISRA I am made to feel valued. 3. Likelihood to recommend NISRA products and/ or services to colleagues. 4. % of awareness of NISRA amongst the general public. 5. Awareness of NISRA among customers (%). 6. NISRA staff will be proactive in engaging with their customers and stakeholders. 7. NISRA releases will aim to enhance insight on Business areas. 8. Development and delivery of related INSIGHT Project objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have high quality public services.

Initiatives

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programmes in several branches (BSO, DfI and DoH) are reviewed annually to ensure that the work carried out by these branches meets the needs of key customers in the Department.• The Census Order was approved by the Assembly on 5 May 2020 and came into force on 6 May 2020. The Census Regulations were made on 23 June 2020 and came into operation on 17 July 2020. The first phase of the Census operations was successfully launched in Spring 2021. Collection via the online platform and of hardcopy returns began on 1st March 2021. The fieldwork commenced in a limited manner to comply with COVID-19 restrictions and active engagement with households was set for April 2021.• In response to COVID-19 ELMS:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– proactively worked with DfE and LPS to optimise the use of business survey data in the development of appropriate support schemes for local businesses;– worked with ONS and other NSIs to support the implementation of the UK Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey;– secured access to new information sources and optimised the use of existing sources to assist with the monitoring of the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy and labour market; and– worked with the Statistics Advisory Committee and Business Bodies in order to raise awareness of the work of NISRA, stress the importance of their continued engagement & co-operation with Business Survey Operations, explore what further assistance they would find advantageous and explore if their information needs are continuing to be met.• BSO met with the DoH to discuss current provision of data and statistics on prescribing of medicines and potential for future developments and investment in this area.• CSU carried out a NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion survey (https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/nisra-coronavirus-COVID-19-opinion-survey).• DoH has been proactive in meeting the demands of customers by producing up to date publications on the impact on COVID-19 on emergency waiting times and related COVID-19 deaths in NI.• DfC provided a range of analysis and management information to support the department during COVID-19 including support at pace for the DOC and evidence gathering /modelling for a series of high profile pandemic related interventions by the department.• VARs has actively engaged with the press and TV media throughout 20-21 and facilitated closed press briefings to assist with their understanding of COVID-19 mortality reports.	Green
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2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 2021 Census questionnaire and the advertising campaign (TV / radio / adverts) included the NISRA logo. NISRA branches consistently use the NISRA logo on key outputs.• The NISRA Brand Ambassador continues to provide NISRA staff with guidance on the NISRA materials and their appropriate use.• VARs actively engaged with media throughout 2020-21 via Press Office facilitated, closed press briefings in assisting understanding of COVID-19 mortality reports.• VARS added value through supporting the production of rapid, ad hoc reports relating to specific areas of COVID-19 mortality; these products were also supported by dedicated media briefing.	Green
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3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSO new deprivation analyses added to each of the main OS publications and interactive maps developed to provide users with new insights. Additional tables added to relevant quarterly publications to include enhanced ophthalmic services, dental claim and patient counts, average numbers of GPs per practice by geographical breakdown. • Work has commenced in BSO on the use of Optical Character Recognition software to provide patient information for a higher proportion of prescriptions and improve the quality of the information produced. • The Census 2021 ensured the Census Questionnaire was available in several languages and formats were available, including British Sign Language, audio and subtitles. • DfC secured approval for a prioritised programme of economic and social research to inform operational delivery and policy making that will be delivered by departmental economists and statisticians working in conjunction with UUEPC. • DfC provided analysis of a public consultation into the proposed changes to the new Bill to modernise liquor licensing laws in 2020. • DfC findings from the consultation on the Regulation of Gambling in Northern Ireland were published in November 2020. This vital piece of public engagement will be used to amend and update gambling regulations in Northern Ireland. • DfC provided advice and guidance to policy colleagues in the <u>COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Scheme</u> on a suitable methodology to allocate £17.6 million used by Councils to deliver measures to help provide a safe environment for visitors, shoppers and workers within town and city centres. They developed a framework based on Outcomes Based Accountability which is used to monitor and evaluate the scheme. • DfE in response to readership survey, published one-off FE Sector student fact sheet and incorporated new tables in main FE Sector Activity bulletin. • Between April 2020 and March 2021 GRO produced 77,194 certificates. • Despite a demanding compressed delivery period, GRO introduced civil and religious same sex marriage and opposite sex civil partnerships, civil partnership and marriage conversions and introduced belief based marriages. • VARS actively engaged with media throughout 2020-21 facilitated by the Press Office, including closed press briefings in assisting understanding of COVID-19 mortality reports. • VARS added value through supporting the production of rapid, ad hoc reports relating to specific areas of NI COVID-19 mortality; these products were also supported by dedicated media briefing. • VARS actively engaged with researchers to allow the reopening of the RSU Secure Environment following the COVID-19 lockdown. 	Green
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Metrics

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall NISRA Customer survey 2021 satisfaction rate was 91% for 2021. 	Green
2	<p>For 2021, the NISRA Customer survey indicated customers have a very positive view of NISRA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NISRA staff are knowledgeable (91%). NISRA staff respond to my query promptly (79%). NISRA staff are helpful (87%). It is easy to find / locate NISRA report / data (72%). NISRA reports are easy to understand (86%). NISRA staff are courteous and treat customers with respect (87%). In my dealings with NISRA I am made to feel valued (71%). 	Green
3	For 2021, Customers' likelihood to recommend NISRA products and / or services to colleagues (90%).	Green
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provisional figures from the Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics 2020 survey (October 2020 to March 2021) suggest that 58% of respondents had heard of NISRA prior to being contacted about the survey, this is an increase of 23 percentage points in comparison the 2019 figure (35%). Finalised figures will be published as official statistics in Autumn 2021: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/public-awareness-and-confidence-trust-official-statistics-pcos. 	Green
5	For 2021, the Customer Survey showed 98% of NICS staff were aware of NISRA.	Green
6 & 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DoH COVID-19 Statistical Reporting Team triumphed with first place in the UK's prestigious Analysis in Government Awards, overcoming stiff competition from a range of disciplines and Departments across UK Government. The DoH COVID-19 Dashboard is the primary source of information related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Northern Ireland. User engagement and understanding was at the forefront of the improvements made to the DoH COVID-19 Dashboard, utilising social media platforms for feedback, addressing queries from Government Ministers and media requests. The COVID-19 Dashboard has not just impacted upon policy decisions in Northern Ireland but has contributed to decisions made in the Republic of Ireland. 	Green
8	Refer to Business Metric 9 on page 5.	Green

Quadrant	Objectives	Initiatives	Metrics	PfG Contribution
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agency will seek ways to innovate and improve its service delivery and optimise efficiently. • The Agency will be fully compliant with all relevant legislation, NICS and DoF policy and procedure and technical good practice. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optimise recruitment process. 2. Review opportunity for flexible/ specialist work. 3. Increase standardisation of NISRA's products & services. 4. Standardise the statistical toolset. 5. Develop process and quality assurance documentation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of approved staff vacancies filled within 6 months of activation (including temporary appointments). 2. Number of official statistics publications with corrections (including major corrections and minor errors). 3. Number of official statistics publications. 4. Number of national statistics publications. 5. Number of social science research reports published. 6. % of official statistical outputs with process documentation. 7. % of official statistical outputs with a documented quality assurance process. 8. Number of breaches of the Code of Practice for Statistics (broken down by IT vs non-IT). 9. Development and delivery of related INSIGHT Project objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have high quality public services. • We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential.

Initiatives

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely staff resourcing has been a persistent problem for NISRA over the years and despite the pandemic, the Agency was determined to improve on the process. Fujitsu were commissioned through the People Project to convert the standard tests normally deployed into online versions, which proved challenging technically but were ultimately delivered and will be utilised in all competitions going forward. The new tests were successfully used in two external competitions for Assistant Statistician and Deputy Principal Statistician competitions. NISRA ultimately successfully recruited a full complement of 14 DP statisticians but again failed to reach the full quota of 45 Assistant Statisticians, however it is important to note that this was not a lack of numbers of eligible candidates but a case of poor performance at interview in a high proportion of interviewees. A grade 6 competition also took place before Christmas 2020 and the successful candidate appointed to a demanding post in DFC. 	Amber
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During further internal research conducted as part of NISRA Insight Culture Project, more 'flexible working practices' as a result of the 'new norm' of working from home should be a catalyst for positive change going forward. It facilitated opportunities for a much greater and positive work / life balance. This is further supported by the People Survey 2020, whereby two fifths of staff (40%) in DoF and NISRA would prefer to 'work from home most days', following by 'have an equal mix of work from home / office' (29% and 33% respectively), followed by 'work from home every day' (24% and 19% respectively). NISRA has two specialised teams the NISRA Tech lab and the NISRA Hub. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hub is designed to manage the commissioning of and response to new work requests, where existing resource is unable to meet customer requirements. The team provides a full-service research consultancy offering both qualitative and quantitative solutions. The Tech Lab's primary aim is to release the efficiencies and other benefits offered through better data management, data visualization, automation and reprogramming; taken forward through a series of projects submitted by branches across all departments. 	Green
3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NISRA has made the move towards ensuring all the documents produced are in accessible mode including five sessions on ensuring documents are accessible, BSO has achieved this for all publications. ELMS has implemented a new streamlined and more efficient working practices in respect of the Quarterly Business Survey data collection operations. NISRA Technology Lab will develop, for the NISRA Data INSIGHT project, a standard methodology for how we work with data and identify a standard analytical toolset. Initial planning has commenced and the work is anticipated to be complete by 31 March 2022. 	Green
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSO developed and introduced a new quality assurance sign-off process for staff in order to drive up the quality of its outputs. DoH publish quality reports for all key outputs. DfE produced a new Quality Report which highlighted any associated quality information for the data, statistics and information referenced in the Energy in Northern Ireland 2020 report. 	Green

Metrics

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Vacancies 2020/2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved vacancies (either by new post created or backfill) – 57. Filled within 6 months of activation – 19. <p>The Agency encountered significant resourcing difficulties during the pandemic (such as poor candidate performance online) which exacerbated the effects of the already lengthy recruitment process.</p>	Red
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2020-21, 2 publications were revised due to major corrections and 14 were re-issued due to minor errors. 	Amber
3, 4 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2020-21, NISRA published 284 Official Statistics outputs, 98 of which were National Statistics. In 2020-21, NISRA published 21 Social Science research reports. 	Green
6 & 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% of recurring NISRA outputs published in 2020-21 have complete process documentation, with a further 21% of recurring outputs having partial process documentation. 96% of recurring NISRA outputs published in 2020-21 had either fully or partially documented quality assurance processes. 	Amber
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were 16 reported breaches of the Code of Practice in 2020-21. Of the 16 breaches, five were attributed to an IT issue, while the remaining eleven were a result of human error. These included eight pre-release access breaches (T3.3, T3.4) including one due to an IT issue; six release time breaches (T3.6) of which three were due to IT issues; and one pre-announced release date breach (T3.1, T3.2) also due to an IT issue. The remaining breach concerned multiple practices within T3 – Orderly Release (T3.1, T3.3, T3.4, T3.6). 	Amber
9	Refer to Business Metric 9 on page 5.	Green

Quadrant	Objectives	Initiatives	Metrics	PfG Contribution
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will strive to improve the level of our wellbeing. All Agency staff will receive relevant, identified training and skills development commensurate with their role and development needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for collaboration. Develop our approach to recognising & appreciating our people. Conduct a cultural survey & action plan findings. Produce a new staff development strategy. Review role requirements across NISRA. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of collaborative² projects initiated. Number of collaborative projects completed. The number of working days lost due to sick absence per staff year. % Overall staff satisfaction. % Employee Engagement. % level of staff wellbeing. % of staff receiving the identified technical training they need to carry out their jobs. % of all NISRA staff indicating they have deployed training in their day to day work. % staff with PPA / PDP completed on time. % of staff exiting within one year of appointment. Development and delivery of related INSIGHT Project objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have high quality public services. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity. We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential.

Initiatives

² The definition of a collaborative project is one involving participants across a number of branches and/or departments.

1	Collaboration Projects Examples:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSO have completed work in collaboration with HSC Organisations and Private Hospitals in data checking and validation in relation to a patient recall. They completed work with HSC Organisations to provide GP contacts for all critically extremely vulnerable patients. • BSO have been collaborating with SAIL hosted by Swansea University and Health Data Research UK on use of the Secure Electronic Research Platform (SeRP) for data linkage and sharing. • BSO collaborated with HDR UK on a programme of work related to the National Core Studies related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this the service is, for the first time working with research groups from across the UK. • BSO assisted the NISRA colleagues with a pilot project to allow the use of secondary care (E.g. hospital data) in the NILS environment. • BSO collaborated with HSCB, DoH and BDA on payment trend analysis for General Dental Services. This work is complete. • In order to deliver a successful 2021 Census NISRA Census Office worked with a wide range of stakeholders including all the local Departments in order to finalise the legislation taken through the Assembly during 2020. Census Office also engaged with a wide range of data suppliers including both universities, the Housing Executive, Land and Property Services, Electoral Office and the Department for Communities. The census team also raised awareness of the census through a wide range of stakeholders including the local councils the voluntary sector, Health and Social Care and other public sector organisations. In the run up to and during the operational phase of the Census extensive engagement took place with delivery partners including local external suppliers and GB based suppliers. There was also extensive engagement with ONS through multiple regular governance and oversight meetings. • Resource from this peripatetic function provided analytical support to the COVID-19 NI Hub from March to June 2020. • Census assisted the DoH with the calculation of area based COVID-19 transmission rates, Census Office provided postcode level population estimates in the early stages of COVID-19. • CSU hosted the recruitment phase of the UK Wide COVID-19 Infection Survey on its Blaise 5 Infrastructure facilitating delivery partners to capture some 4 million swab tests and 327,000 blood tests from over 2 million household visits across the UK. CSU also worked in collaboration with ONS and DoH / PHA to deliver the NI COVID-19 Infection Survey. Finally, CSU hosted the recruitment phase of the UK wide online Labour Market Survey (LMS) on its Blaise 5 Infrastructure, which was initiated to provide contingency for the Labour Force Survey having to be conducted via telephone interviews. • ELMSB worked collaboratively with DfE and LPS to optimise the use of business survey data in the development of appropriate support schemes for local businesses and worked collaboratively with ONS and other NSIs to support the implementation of the UK Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey. Finally ELMSB worked with the Statistics Advisory Committee and Business Bodies in order to raise awareness of the work of NISRA, stress the importance of their continued 	Green

	<p>engagement & co-operation with Business Survey Operations, explore what further assistance they would find advantageous and explore if their information needs are continuing to be met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfE staff participated in CCEA's exam grades modelling process. • GRO worked within NI Executive restrictions and the Coronavirus Act designing policies and legislation, which were implemented across 11 Councils, the Department of Health, Health Trusts and with local GPs. GRO was also restructured to carry out additional roles. • DoH collaborated with staff in local Health and Social Care Trusts, the Health and Social Care Board, relevant arm's length bodies, clinicians dealing with the pandemic on the front line and statistical staff across the UK and Ireland. This was crucial to understanding the virus, its expected impact on hospital services and public health and how best to present the information to fulfil the information needs of a wide and varied range of stakeholders. • The Hub has delivered projects for DAERA, DE, DfI, TEO, as well as for branches in NISRA Core (CSU, Business Development). • VARS collaborated extensively with DAERA, AFBI, NISRA Census Office and UU in creation of the Census- Agriculture Research Dataset. VARS Admin Research Unit (ARU) collaborated with policy colleagues in the DoH in the production and dissemination plan for research outputs on socio demographic analyses of NI drug and alcohol deaths. 	
2, 3, 4 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSO highly commended for the Pharmacy Needs assessment modelling work in the Innovation Category in the UK analysis in Government Awards 2020. • During COVID-19 staff safety and wellbeing was paramount, relevant processes and PPE was put in place to protect staff and the general public. The Agency response also included home working arrangements and equipment for all staff, integrated with rota based attendance for all essential activities that could not be completed offsite. • During 2020-21 there were regular Wellbeing seminars on a wide range of topics with recognition of specific health issues and engagement with national and regional information programmes. These included mental wellbeing, World Suicide Prevention, healthy eating, dementia and cancer awareness and stress management. • NISRA Heads of Branches asked to review vacancy requirements in terms of specialist skills required to undertake roles more proficiently going forward. • To date a cultural survey and action plan has not been planned due to a lack of resources. However, further research was conducted on the Culture Project by the Hub, where participants felt that the 'new norm' of working from home should be a catalyst for positive change going forward. It facilitated opportunities for a positive work / life balance. 	Amber

Metrics

1 & 2	Several Collaboration projects are reported in the Initiatives section above. BSO has reported 6 initiated and 3 completed.	Green
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working days lost per staff year 2020-21 – 4.8 days. Working days lost per staff year 2019-20 – 9.2 days. 	Green
4, 6 & 8	The NICS People Survey 2020 is much shorter than in previous years and focuses mainly on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff and working from home. Despite the extraordinary circumstances experienced by our staff, NISRA DoF core staff reported an Employee Engagement score of 60%. ³	Amber
5	Employee Engagement Score: DoF – 59%, NISRA – 60%, an increase of 8 and 7 percentage points respectively compared to 2019.	Amber
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As agreed by Agency Board only the software courses (Power BI / R / SQL) and Statistical Disclosure Control were deemed as essential due to the number requesting each courses. During 2020-21 all courses were moved successfully to an online delivery through which 209 staff were trained in R (14 courses), 15 staff attended Touchpoint Q&A sessions, 24 staff attended Power BI training (2 courses), 33 staff attended SQL (3 courses). This approach produced a considerable costs saving and provided participants with greater opportunity to engage one on one with the trainer. Consequently, going forward the Agency will use online delivery as the default approach for all technical skills training. Leading Together sessions were held for 6 Senior Mangers over 3.5 days and a Lean Six sigma & Agile training course took place for 11 staff over 6.5 days. Overall feedback was very positive. R and SQL were offered to all the staff who requested the training and to the whole of NISRA in order to fill places after people on the essential list were consulted, thus 100% of staff requesting R and SQL courses were offered the opportunity to attend these courses. 	Green
9	The PPA / PDP process coincided with the start of lockdown in NI, thus adversely affected the timings. The technology was not readily available for all NISRA staff to work from home thus delaying this process, resulting in only 7% of PPA / PDP's being completed by the target date of 30 April 2020. This percentage increased significantly throughout the reporting cycle to 84.2% at the end of 1 March 2021.	Red
10	No permanent staff exited within one year of employment.	Green
11	Refer to Business Metric 9 on page 5.	Green

³ The Staff Survey cannot calculate an Employee Engagement score for all NISRA staff as those located in other organisations are included with their results

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

NISRA is fully committed to complying with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 / UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Within the meaning of the Act, the Department of Finance is the organisational Data Controller for NISRA.

NISRA has processes in place to ensure that all employees, contractors, agents, consultants and other parties who have access to personal information held by or on behalf of NISRA are fully aware of and abide by their responsibilities under the Act. In line with Departmental guidance, NISRA has an Action Plan in place to ensure Agency compliance with the above legislation, which includes the following:

- NISRA have in place an Information Asset Owner (IAO) / Support Information Manager (SIM) in each branch, with a Business Area Information Manager (BAIM) in post for DoF NISRA;
- NISRA builds accountability and privacy by design into all aspects of the business planning process;
- NISRA communicates and raises awareness of DPA / UK GDPR with all staff through e-mails, aide-memoirs, Data Protection Guidance Notes (DPGN's), Departmental Intranet updates, Departmental / Team briefs etc.;
- IAO's and relevant staff attend DP / UK GDPR Awareness Sessions delivered by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and Departmental DPO;
- FOI training for relevant staff has been provided by DoF CAED;
- NISRA has robust policies in place which support UK GDPR in line with Departmental guidance;
- guidance is issued to all NISRA staff i.e. Data Protection Impact Assessments, Data Breach Management Plan, Data Sharing Agreements, Contracts & Records Management etc.;
- GDPR on-line training is completed by all staff including Agency staff;
- NISRA ensures that all holdings of personal data are compliant with UK GDPR requirements, identifying the lawful basis for processing;
- NISRA branches regularly review the Departmental on-line Information Asset Register, with approval by respective IAO's;
- NISRA branches regularly review their procedures for handling personal information;
- Privacy Notices for NISRA and Civil Registration Services are produced and published on the internet, supported by Privacy Information Statements as required;
- procedures are in place to detect, report and investigate data breaches;
- NISRA Retention and Disposal Schedule has been reviewed and updated, to ensure NISRA complies with the requirements of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923 and the Disposal of Documents Order (S.R. & O. 1925 No.167);
- NISRA Fileplan classifications have been reviewed within NICS Records Management system;
- correct safeguards are in place to protect personal data held on Information Technology (IT) systems;

- correct safeguards are in place in all cases where personal data are shared with other organisations, with completion of Data Sharing Agreements, with details logged in the Department's Data Sharing Agreement register; and
- Data Protection induction documentation has been provided to all new staff, including Agency staff, with records of completion retained.

There were no reportable data breaches between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

NISRA's IAOs provide annual input to the Senior Information Risk Owner on the security and use of their information asset and provide Information Assurance Stewardship Statements twice yearly, which are recorded in the NISRA Governance Statement.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

NISRA's net expenditure for the three most recent financial years is outlined below:

	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
	£000	£000	£000
Revenue from contracts with customers	(17,811)	(18,225)	(17,267)
Total operating income	(17,811)	(18,225)	(17,267)
Staff costs	26,518	25,010	22,412
Purchase of goods and services	3,378	2,590	2,610
Depreciation and impairment charges	1,565	1,649	1,527
Provision expense	80	–	–
Other operating expenditure	9,451	6,785	5,780
Total operating expenditure	40,992	36,034	32,329
Net expenditure for the year	23,181	17,809	15,062

The net resource expenditure for the year excluding non-cash expenditure was £17.86m against the closing excluding non-cash budget position of £18.23m. The underspend was due mainly to forecast Census expenditure not going ahead due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Income generated by the General Register Office (GRO) was reduced due to restricted trading conditions during the year. Other operating expenditure (excluding non-cash items, see note 3 in the Financial Statement section) has increased to £6,248k (2019-20: £3,369k) because of Census 2021.

The Agency employed an average of 558 staff during the financial year and total staff costs were £26,518k (2019-20: £25,010k). The increase is due to filling of vacancies and the 2021 Census contributing to average staff numbers increasing from 567 to 558 over the year.

The Agency has been allocated an indicative opening budget (excluding non-cash) of £20.51m for 2021-22. The budget has been increased from 2020-21 to for increased costs associated with processing and analysis of Census 2021 data.

LONG TERM EXPENDITURE TREND

	2020-21 Outturn £000	2019-20 Outturn £000	2018-19 Outturn £000
Total Resource DEL	40,992	36,034	32,329
Of which:			
Staff costs	26,518	25,010	22,412
Purchase of goods and services	3,378	2,590	2,610
Other operating expenditure	9,451	6,785	5,780
Depreciation and impairment charges	1,565	1,649	1,527
Total Resource AME	80	-	-
Of which:			
Provision expense	80	-	-

In 2020-21 the increase is mainly due to increased operating expenditure associated with Census 2021 and subsequent increase in whole time equivalent staff numbers.

Census 2021 funding and spend will continue to increase into 2021-22 as data is processed and analysed. Census spend will drop substantially for 2022-23 as analysis is completed and staff numbers return to pre-Census levels.

AUDITORS

The financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. He is head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO); he and his staff are wholly independent of the Agency and he reports his findings to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The audit of the financial statements for 2020-21 resulted in a notional audit fee of £20,400 (2019-20: £19,800 restated) and is included in the operating expenditure in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

During 2020-21 the Agency did not purchase any non-audit services from its auditor (2019-20: none).

EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

There have been no significant events since the year-end that would affect the accounts.

PAYMENT TO SUPPLIERS

The Agency's policy is to pay bills from all suppliers within 10 working days of receipt of the goods or performance of the services following receipt of a properly rendered invoice or in accordance with contractual conditions, whichever is the earlier. During the financial year, the Agency achieved an average of 91% (2019-20: 85%) of invoices paid to suppliers within 10 working days. The Agency achieved an average of 96% (2019-20: 93%) of invoices paid within 30 calendar days.

Also during this period NISRA did not make any interest payments under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest Act 1988).

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

NISRA through its occupancy of Colby House, continues to follow Departmental guidance as set out in the Department's Office Estate Energy Efficiency Carbon Reduction Plan 2020-21–2022-23 which is aimed at improving energy efficiency across the Northern Ireland Civil Service Estate.

At Colby House NISRA continues to implement a waste management regime which focuses on paper as the dominant waste stream. A number of measures have been implemented including: discouraging routine printing of emails; promoting full usage of the NICS Records Management systems; encouraging double sided and monochrome photocopying / printing in instances where it is necessary to print documents; and using recycled paper. Receptacles have been made available to facilitate recycling of paper, cans, plastics containers, paper towels, envelopes, magazines, and empty printer cartridges. Dry recyclable materials are kept separate from standard domestic waste for collection and recycling by the Department's Waste Recycling service provider. The quantity of office materials collected for recycling in 2020-21 was considerably reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Performance Report is approved and signed



David Patterson*

Accounting Officer and Chief Executive

5 July 2021

*In the absence of Ms Siobhan Carey, Accounting Officer, Mr David Patterson has been temporarily promoted to Grade 5 and appointed (with effect from 25 June) to the position of interim Chief Executive and Accounting Officer pending Ms Carey's return to office later in the year.

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Accountability Report comprises the following:

Corporate Governance Report

The purpose of the corporate governance report is to explain the composition and organisation of the Northern Ireland Statistics Research and Agency's (NISRA) governance structures and how they support the achievement of NISRA's objectives.

Remuneration and Staff Report

The remuneration and staff report sets out NISRA's remuneration policy for directors, reports on how that policy has been implemented and sets out the amounts awarded to directors. In addition, the report provides detail on pension arrangements, staff costs, staff numbers and staff policies.

Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

The Assembly Accountability and Audit report brings together the key Assembly accountability documents within the annual report and accounts. It includes sections on the Regularity of Expenditure (losses and special payments), the Assembly Accountability Disclosure (fees and charges), Remote Contingent Liabilities and the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT

DIRECTORS' REPORT

Introduction

NISRA presents its Annual Report and Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2021.

Management

Ministerial responsibility for the Agency for the 2020-21 financial year rested with the Department of Finance. During this reporting period Siobhan Carey CBE, was the Registrar General and Chief Executive [and thereby Accounting Officer*] and was responsible to the Minister of Finance for the management of the Agency's performance, operations and finances.

NISRA's Corporate Governance Framework sets out the system of direction and control within the agency. The key organisational structures which support the delivery of Corporate Governance within NISRA include the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Agency Board (AB).

Senior Management Team

The NISRA Senior Management Team is the primary formal management unit for the Agency and consists of:

Ms S Carey	Chief Executive and Registrar General
Dr T Power	Director of Analysis
Dr D Marshall	Director of Census and Population Statistics
Mr B Green	Director of Sources
Mr D Patterson*	Business Development Manager
Mrs K Walker	Deputy Registrar General;

The following officers also regularly attend SMT meetings to provide resource management information and advice that will aid routine decision making, though they are not formal members:

Head of Agency Corporate Services.
DoF Finance Business Partner;
NICS HR Business Partner

Excepting those issues identified as being specifically within the role of the Chief Executive, the SMT's function is to advise and support the Chief Executive on a variety of strategic management issues, including:

- setting and agreeing policy and strategic objectives through assessment of needs, risks and opportunities;

- determining organisational strategy and appropriate delivery mechanisms;
- directing implementation of strategy;
- evaluating corporate performance against objectives;
- prioritising allocation of available resource; and
- promoting the organisation to key stakeholders and key customer groups.

Agency Board

The Board is the second tier of formal management and reflects the breadth of wider Agency activity. It consists of the NISRA members of the SMT and all Grade 6 statisticians representing the various NISRA business areas.

Role

Excepting those issues identified as being specifically within the role of the SMT, the Board's function is to:

- advise the Chief Executive on the development of central NISRA policy and support its implementation;
- set business objectives to support delivery of Agency functions;
- lead on the implementation of activities designed to deliver the strategic outcomes described in the Corporate Plan;
- manage the implementation of change strategy;
- evaluate business area performance against objectives;
- utilise allocated resources effectively to meet business objectives and customer needs; and
- engage with key customer contacts and stakeholders to promote Agency policy and objectives.

The Agency Board members during the year were as follows:

Ms S Carey	Chief Executive and Registrar General
Dr T Power	Director of Analysis
Dr D Marshall	Director of Census and Population Statistics
Mr B Green	Director of Sources
Dr S Donnelly	Head of Criminal Justice and Secondments
Dr K Sweeney	Head of Central Survey Unit
Dr J Gillan	Head of EU Exit and Statistics of Trade
Dr E Mooney	Head of Information and Analysis Directorate, DoH
Mrs M Crawford	Head of NICSHR Analytics and Workforce Planning
Mr A Fitzpatrick	Head of Census Office
Mr M Mayock	Head of Information and Registration Unit BSO
Mrs N Fisher	Head of Analytical Services Unit DfE
Mr G Colgan	Head of Economic and Labour Market Statistics
Ms D Lyness	Head of Demographic Statistics
Ms J Doak/ Mr P Martin/	Head of Analytical Services DfC [shared from April 2020]
Mrs C McCallion	
Mr D Patterson*	Head of Business Development
Mrs K Walker	Deputy Registrar General

A Senior Management Forum (SMF), comprising Agency Board and Grade 7 Statistical / Administrative Heads of Branches, support the SMT and Agency Board in the delivery of the Corporate Plan and strategic outcomes and Balanced Scorecard objectives. The SMF provides the membership of issue specific review groups reporting to Agency Board.

Arrangements for external challenge

The composition, role and remit of the NISRA Audit and Risk Assurance Committee are documented in detail throughout this report and the three non-Executive Directors judiciously review Agency Corporate Governance decision making. In addition to this NISRA is committed to complying with the principles of the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics. The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) is an independent body at arm's length from government and has the statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that 'serve the public good'. NISRA's statistical outputs are monitored and assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), which is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. Together the ARC and the UKSA (incorporating OSR) provide external and independent challenge roles with regard to NISRA's corporate governance / strategic management, operational activities and statistically trustworthy products.

Register of Interests

A Register of Interests is maintained by the Agency and no significant interests are currently held by board members which may conflict with their management responsibilities.

Pension Liabilities

The treatment of pension costs and liabilities is disclosed in the Remuneration and Staff Report and in the Accounting Policies note in the financial statements (Note 1.9).

Personal Data

The Agency remains fully committed to complying with the Data Protection Act 2018 / UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). The Agency acts in accordance with a number of Departmental policies to ensure the safe handling of personal information. All of these policies can be found in the [DoF-data-protection-and-information-management](#) hub.

There were no reportable data breaches between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 within DoF NISRA.

Reporting of Complaints

NISRA is committed to providing a high quality service and, as such, welcomes all feedback, both positive and negative, which is used to assist in the improvement of our services.

The Agency keeps a register of complaints received and ensures that these are investigated in line with the Departmental Complaints Procedure and that appropriate responses are issued to

the complainant. The Agency also evaluates 'lessons learned' from individual cases to see if improvements can be embedded into existing operating procedures.

The NISRA Complaints Procedure is published on the NISRA website. Complaints can be made in the first instance to the Head of the Branch occasioning the complaint. Internal unresolved complaints can then be made to the NISRA Chief Executive. Continued dissatisfaction can then be brought to the Office of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman.

In 2020-21 NISRA dealt with 12 complaints (6 in 2019-20) ranging from vital events registration procedures to selection for participation in surveys.

*In the absence of Ms Siobhan Carey, Accounting Officer, Mr David Patterson has been temporarily promoted to Grade 5 and appointed (with effect from 25 June) to the position of interim Chief Executive and Accounting Officer pending Ms Carey's return to office later in the year.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (NI) 2001, the Department of Finance has directed NISRA to prepare, for each financial year,- a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Agency and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the *Government Financial Reporting Manual* and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Finance, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the *Government Financial Reporting Manual* have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements;
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Department of Finance has appointed the Chief Executive of NISRA as Accounting Officer of the Agency.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding NISRA's assets, are set out in the Accounting Officers' Memorandum issued by the Department of Finance and published in *Managing Public Money Northern Ireland*.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that NISRA's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Scope of Responsibility

NISRA is an Executive Agency within the Department. It was established on 1 April 1996 under the Government's Next Steps Initiative. The Agency incorporates the General Register Office (GRO) for NI.

The Agency governance model contains a number of responsibilities.

- The Accounting Officer is responsible to the Minister of Finance for the Agency's performance and operates in accordance with the NISRA Framework Document and NISRA Business Plan.
- The Accounting Officer has responsibilities for the overall day-to-day leadership and management of the Agency, making regular reports to the Permanent Secretary on performance and progress.
- The Agency Board is responsible for reviewing the strategic direction of the Agency, monitoring performance at the corporate level and ensuring that adequate governance controls are in place. The Agency Board comprises three Grade 5 Statisticians, eleven Senior Principal Statisticians and two Administrative Senior Principals.

The Agency Board members are listed in the Directors' Report on page 38. The Agency Board met 11 times during the year and was attended as follows:

(Orange colour indicates attendance)

	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	Sept 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Mar 2021
Siobhan Carey	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tracy Power	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
David Marshall	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kevin Sweeney	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Sandy Fitzpatrick	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Brian Green	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eugene Mooney	X	X								
Stephen Donnelly				X		X				
Michelle Crawford		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gerard Colgan ²	X	X	X	X						X
Kathie Walker	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Martin Mayock	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nicola Fisher	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Deborah Lyness	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
David Patterson	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jennifer Doak ² / Peter Martin ² / Celeste McCallion ²	X C	X C	X J	X J	X J	X P	X P	X P	X P	X J

¹ – Unavailable

² – Temporary capacity

The Governance Statement, which has been agreed by the Agency Board, sets out how these responsibilities have been discharged throughout the year to 31 March 2021.

Context

The overall aim of the Department is 'to help the Executive secure the most appropriate and effective use of resources and services for the benefit of the

community...’ within a Programme for Government (PfG) focused on achieving outcomes of societal wellbeing.

The work the Agency undertakes makes a significant and positive difference to the everyday lives of all the citizens of NI supporting public services, by:

- providing Government departments and agencies with statistics and research services which help inform the policy, process and delivery of their objectives and actions;
- continuing to address the needs of a wide range of users, producing high quality statistics and research, ensuring the quality of those statistics and disseminating information to its users efficiently and effectively;
- providing official information on NI’s population and socio-economic conditions - the statistics produced by the Agency not only inform the policy process within Government, but also inform academic research and contribute to debate in the wider community; and
- providing the GRO function, which offers a civil registration service to the public and produces summary statistics relating to life events.

Financial Management

NISRA regularly reviews actual income and expenditure against budget to form the basis of collective Agency Board decisions regarding the allocation and use of resource to ensure that the NISRA financial management target of avoiding overspend is met.

Risk and Control Framework

Risk management within NISRA continues to be an integral part of the Agency’s governance and control framework. The Corporate Risk Register is used to identify, evaluate, assign ownership of and review, planned mitigations of relevant high level risks present in the Agency’s operating environment. The Risk Register is regularly reviewed and monitored by the Agency senior team and NISRA’s Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC). The ARAC is chaired by one of its three independent members and functions in accordance with best practice contained in the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) 2018 issued under DAO (DoF) 3/18 in March 2018.

The Agency ensures that the risk management and internal controls are regularly reviewed and reported in the following manner:

- all business areas use pre-determined weightings and a standardised approach to risk assessment;

- key risks identified at Agency level are documented on a Risk Register and are reviewed on a formal monthly basis by the Agency senior team during the course of a year;
- NISRA ARC formally reviews risks and controls on a regular basis and assesses the continued proximity of the respective risks and the mitigating actions being taken to manage them - the need to treat, tolerate, transfer or terminate risks is also determined in order to reflect the current business environment;
- Heads of Branches complete stewardship statements at the end of each financial year;
- the Chief Executive provides the NISRA and Departmental ARC's with a mid-year and end-year Stewardship Statement; and
- the Agency adheres to and promotes the Department's 'Raising Concerns Policy'.

All but one of the departmental targets for 2020-21 have been achieved and have been validated by DoF Internal Audit. Our underspend was higher than the target threshold as a consequence of unexpected Census related savings derived from ONS contracts and further savings of the money set aside for Census field staff training, which had to be delivered online as a result of the pandemic. The Agency performance against Balanced Scorecard targets is published on pages 11 to 29 of this report.

Agency Performance

The NISRA Business Plan 2020-21 sets out the Agency's objectives for the year against which performance is reported and monitored. Progress against plan is regularly reported to Agency Board providing details of actual results against target (Ministerial and Chief Executive) and a narrative on the actions taken to deliver the expected outcomes.

Accounting Officer

The Department has designated the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer (AO) for NISRA. The responsibilities of an AO include, ensuring propriety and regularity of the public finances for which an Accounting Officer is answerable, the keeping of proper records and for safeguarding NISRA assets as set out in the 'Accounting Officer's Memorandum' issued by DoF and published in 'Managing Public Money in Northern Ireland'.

The AO has responsibility for maintaining a system of sound internal control that supports the achievement of Agency policies, aims and objectives set by the Minister of Finance, whilst safeguarding public funds and Agency assets, for which they are

responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to them by 'Managing Public Money in Northern Ireland' (MPMNI).

At the beginning of the financial year, the AO delegated responsibility to each of the Heads of Branches for management of budgets within their respective business areas. The AO receives assurance from each Director on risk management, governance, financial management and delegation within their respective areas of responsibility in the format of Stewardship Statements. Key issues emanating from these statements are reflected in this Governance Statement.

The AO Chairs the NISRA Agency Board which met on 11 occasions in 2020-21. The Agency Board operates in compliance with 'Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI) 2013' and directs the strategic management of NISRA by reviewing its strategic options and setting its corporate direction. The Agency Board considered the information received to be fit for purpose.

The Agency maintains a Register of Significant Interests held by Board members which may conflict with their management responsibilities. Board members are requested annually to make a declaration and no such interests were declared by members for the Agency Board for the year ended 31 March 2021.

In response to a request from the Departmental Permanent Secretary, the Agency has obtained declarations of interest from all DoF based Agency staff at DP to Grade 7. Again no interests have been declared which the Agency consider to represent a potential conflict of interest.

The Agency Board also considered and reviewed NISRA risks as detailed in the NISRA Corporate Risk Register. The Agency ARC, which is chaired by an independent Non-Executive Member of the DoF board, supports the AO and the Agency Board on issues of risk, control and governance. In addition, the ARC provides assurance and advice to the AO on the adequacy of both internal and external audit coverage. The ARC met on 4 occasions in 2020-21, attended by its Non-Executive Members as follows:

	Date 1	Date 2	Date 3	Date 4
Tom Taylor	27/05/20	24/06/20	27/10/20	24/02/21
John Smyth	27/05/20	DNA	27/10/20	24/02/21
Liz Ensor	27/05/20	24/06/20	27/10/20	24/02/21

Level of Assurance

The AO has responsibility for ensuring that a robust risk management system is in place, so that risks faced by NISRA are identified and managed accordingly. The

Accounting Officer is also responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review is informed by the work of DoF's Internal Audit Team and Departmental Board members who have responsibility for ensuring that the controls and actions recommended are implemented.

The Department's Internal Audit Team reported on the work of the Agency during 2020-21. These reports provide an objective and widespread assessment of the systems of internal control in operation across the Agency, together with prioritised recommendations to strengthen controls and implement further improvements.

Internal Audit completed a programme of audits during 2020-21 and in his Annual Report the Head of Internal Audit provided NISRA with a satisfactory audit opinion. Further details on the Internal Audit output for the year are included in the following section, 'Significant Internal Control Problems'.

The Agency maintains Information Risk Registers in each Business Area which are linked into the Departmental Risk Register and provide the Departmental Board and the Senior Information Risk Owner with an oversight of corporate and operational information risks.

NISRA is committed to complying with the principles of the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics and its statistical output is monitored and assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), which is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. During the year, three of NISRA's official statistics products were assessed for National Statistics status and five further sets of outputs were checked for compliance with the Code of Practice. All of these statistics, where an outcome was declared within the year, were successfully designated as National Statistics or had the National Statistics status confirmed. No official statistics products failed to achieve National Statistics designation.

Fraud Prevention and Assurance

NISRA takes a zero tolerance approach to fraud and will report all instances of fraud to DoF and the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) as well as to the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI). The Agency complies with the DoF Raising Concerns Policy that sets out staff responsibilities with regard to the prevention of fraud.

Whistle blowing arrangements are in place and can be used to raise concerns about alleged impropriety, wrongdoing, corruption, fraud or malpractice. The Agency has not recorded any instances of suspected or actual fraud, nor any cases of whistle blowing during the year.

Significant Internal Control Problems

DoF Internal Audit undertook the following audits during 2020-21:

- NISRA Corporate Governance and Risk Management Review – satisfactory opinion.
- Central Survey Unit (CSU) Risk based Internal Audit – draft report issued – satisfactory opinion.
- NI Census Advisory Review – advice only.

Completed after the year end:

- Validation of the Agency target performance for 2019-20 – performance accurately reported.

There were no significant internal control problems identified by Internal Audit.

Review of Effectiveness

As AO, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the Governance procedures within the Agency. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers within the Agency who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their 'Report to those charged with Governance' and other reports. I have been advised on the implications, of the result of this review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Senior Management Team and the ARC and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

I consider the information presented to the Agency Board in the Corporate Performance report to be of a high quality, accurate and relevant to the internal control systems within the Agency and that the Agency has complied with the Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI) 2013 in all respects.

Conclusion

Taking into account all of the arrangements set out in this Governance Statement, NISRA has an effective governance structure in place and has satisfactory systems of internal control which have operated effectively throughout 2020-21.

REMUNERATION AND STAFF REPORT

Remuneration Policy

The pay remit for the Northern Ireland (NI) public sector, including senior civil servants (SCS), is approved by the Minister of Finance. The Minister has set the 2020-21 NI public sector pay policy (September 2020) in line with the overarching HMT parameters. Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The pay award for NICS staff, including SCS, for 2020-21 has been finalised but not yet paid.

The pay of SCS is based on a system of pay scales for each SCS grade containing a number of pay points from minima to maxima, allowing progression towards the maxima based on performance.

Service Contracts

The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Code published by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland specifies the circumstances when appointments may be made otherwise.

Unless otherwise stated, the officials covered by this report hold appointments that are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Further information about the work of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland can be found at www.nicscommissioners.org

Remuneration and pension entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior management of the Agency (Grade 6 and above).

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements (Audited)

	2020-21			2019-20		
Officials	Salary £000	Pension Benefits * to nearest £1,000)	Total £000	Salary £000	Pension Benefits* to nearest £1,000)	Total £000
Siobhan Carey	100-105	52	150-155	95-100	33	130-135
Gerard Colgan	60-65	40	100-105	55-60	43	100-105
Michelle Crawford	65-70	31	95-100	60-65	24	85-90
Stephen Donnelly	65-70	-4	60-65	30-35 (60-65 FYE)	20	50-55 (80-85 FYE)
Nicola Fisher	60-65	38	100-105	55-60	31	90-95
Alexander Fitzpatrick	65-70	32	95-100	60-65	5	65-70
Brian Green	70-75	42	110-115	70-75	32	100-105
Deborah Lyness	60-65	38	100-105	55-60	32	85-90
David Marshall	75-80	45	120-125	70-75	24	95-100
Martin Mayock	60-65	45	105-110	55-60	35	90-95
Eugene Mooney	65-70	22	85-90	60-65	12	75-80
David Patterson	70-75	53	125-130	55-60	125	180-185
Tracy Power	75-80	37	110-115	60-65 (FYE 70-75)	38	100-105 (110-115 FYE)
Kevin Sweeney	65-70	14	80-85	50-55 (FYE 60-65)	12	60-65 (FYE 75- 80)
Kathie Walker	55-60	50	105-110	55-60	44	100-105
Peter Martin From 01/10/2020 to 31/01/2021	15-20 (FYE 50-55)	16	30-35 (FYE 65- 70)	5-10 (FYE 50-55)	9	15-20 (FYE 60- 65)
Celeste McCallion From 01/04/2020 to 31/05/2020	5-10 (FYE 50-55)	20	25-30 (FYE 70- 75)	0-5 (45-50 FYE)	2	0-5 (50- 55 FYE)
Jennifer Doak From 01/06/2020- 30/09/2020 and 01/03/2021-31/03/2021	5-10 (FYE 55-60)	4	10-15 (FYE 60- 65)	-	-	-
Paul McKillen	-	-	-	20-25 (FYE 55-60)	12	30-35 (FYE 55- 60)

None of the Agency Board members received any benefits in kind in 2020-21 or 2019-20.

(FYE – Full Year Equivalent)

** The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation and any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.*

Pension benefit accrued and Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) will increase from one year to the next by virtue of an extra year's service and any pay rise during the year. Where there is little or no pay rise, the increase in pension due to extra service may not be sufficient to offset the inflation increase. In real terms the pension value can therefore reduce, hence the negative values.

***Bonus payments are not applicable to departments but may be applicable to other organisations.*

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any severance or ex gratia payments.

For the 2020-21 financial year, NISRA, as an agency of the Department of Finance, was under the direction and control of Mr Conor Murphy, MLA. His salary and allowances were paid by the Northern Ireland Assembly and have been included as a notional cost in the DoF accounts. These amounts do not include costs relating to the Minister's role as MLA/MP/MEP which are disclosed in the appropriate legislature accounts.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument.

Fair pay disclosure (Audited)

The Agency is required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in the Agency and the median remuneration of the Agency's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in [the organisation] in the financial year 2020-21 was £100,000 - £105,000 (2019-20: £95,000 - £100,000). This was 3.1 times (2019-20: 3.0) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £32,800 (2019-20: £32,157).

In 2020-21 and 2019-20 no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid director.

Remuneration ranged from £19,000 to £105,000 (2019-20: £17,000 to £100,000).

	2020-21	2019-20
i. Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration	£100,000-105,000	£95,000-100,000
ii. Median Total Remuneration	£32,800	£32,157
iii. Remuneration ratio	3.1	3.0

The remuneration of the highest paid director in 2020-2021 showed an increase on the previous year of 4.0%. The median remuneration has increased by 2% to £32,800 from £32,157 in the years concerned. There is a 0.1 increase in the remuneration ratio between 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Pension Entitlements (Audited)

Officials	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/21 (or date of leaving if earlier) and related lump sum £000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £000	CETV at 31/03/21 £000	CETV at 31/03/20 £000	Real increase in CETV £000	Employer contribution to partnership pension account (nearest £100)
Siobhan Carey	40-45 plus a lump sum of 120-125	2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 7.5-10	931	888	51	n/a
Gerard Colgan	20-25 plus a lump sum of 35-40	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	321	283	24	n/a
Michelle Crawford	20-25 plus a lump sum of 45-50	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	372	340	16	n/a
Stephen Donnelly	0-5 plus a lump sum of 0-5	0 plus a lump sum of 0	30	33	-4	n/a
Nicola Fisher	20-25 plus a lump sum of 35-40	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	321	286	22	n/a
Alexander Fitzpatrick	25-30 plus a lump sum of 50-55	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	515	475	21	n/a
Brian Green	25-30 plus a lump sum of 85-90	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	667	604	39	n/a
Deborah Lyness	20-25 plus a lump sum of 35-40	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	298	264	21	n/a

Officials	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/21 (or date of leaving if earlier) and related lump sum £000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £000	CETV at 31/03/21 £000	CETV at 31/03/20 £000	Real increase in CETV £000	Employer contribution to partnership pension account (nearest £100)
David Marshall	25-30 plus a lump sum of 55-60	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	502	453	29	n/a
Peter Martin	15-20 plus a lump sum of 25-30	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	199	174	8	n/a
Martin Mayock	25-30 plus a lump sum of 55-60	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	514	464	32	n/a
Eugene Mooney	20-25 plus a lump sum of 70-75	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	592	561	23	n/a
David Patterson	25-30 plus a lump sum of 85-90	2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 7.5-10	694	617	53	n/a
Tracy Power	30-35 plus a lump sum of 75-80	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	641	590	29	n/a
Kevin Sweeney	5-10 plus a lump sum of 15-20	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	109	97	11	n/a
Kathie Walker	25-30 plus a lump sum of 75-80	2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	623	561	41	n/a
Celeste McCallion	15-20 plus a lump sum of 35-40	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	290	275	14	n/a
Jennifer Doak	15-20	0-2.5	240	237	3	n/a

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Schemes

Pension benefits are provided through the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP).

The alpha pension scheme was introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The alpha scheme and all previous scheme arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted each year. The majority of existing members of the classic, premium, classic plus and nuvos pension arrangements also moved to alpha from that date. Members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age did not move to alpha and those who were within 13.5 years and 10 years of their normal pension age were given a choice between moving to alpha on 1 April 2015 or at a later date determined by their age. Alpha is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current accrual rate is 2.32%.

Discrimination identified by the courts in the way that the 2015 pension reforms were introduced must be removed by the Department of Finance. It is expected that, in due course, eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 may be entitled to different pension benefits in relation to that period. The different pension benefits relates to the different schemes eg classic, alpha etc and is not the monetary benefits received. This is known as the 'McCloud Remedy' and will impact many aspects of the Civil Service Pensions schemes including the scheme valuation outcomes. Further information on this will be included in the NICS pension scheme accounts which are available at <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/dof-resource-accounts>.

Currently new entrants joining can choose between membership of alpha or joining a 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (partnership pension account).

New entrants joining on or after 30 July 2007 were eligible for membership of the nuvos arrangement or they could have opted for a partnership pension account. Nuvos is also a CARE arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current accrual rate is 2.3%.

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 may be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' defined benefit arrangements (classic, premium and classic plus). From April 2011, pensions payable under classic, premium, and classic plus are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. New entrants joining on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 could choose between membership of premium or joining the partnership pension account.

Benefits in classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic plus is essentially a variation of premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic.

The partnership pension account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

Active members of the pension scheme will receive an Annual Benefit Statement. The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach their scheme pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. Scheme Pension age is 60 for members of **classic**, **premium**, and **classic plus** and 65 for members of **nuvos**. The normal scheme pension age in alpha is linked to the member's State Pension Age but cannot be before age 65. Further details about the NICS pension schemes can be found at the website www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni.

All pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. Any applicable increases are applied from April and are determined by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure for the preceding September. The CPI in September 2020 was 0.5% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2021.

Employee contribution rates for all members for the period covering 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 are as follows:

Scheme Year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings		Contribution rates – All members
(Salary Bands)		
From	To	From 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022
£0.00	£24,199.99	4.60%
£24,200.00	£55,799.99	5.45%
£55,800.00	£153,299.99	7.35%
£153,300.00	and above	8.05%

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies. The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost. CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 and do not take account of any actual or potential benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period. However, the real increase calculation uses common actuarial

factors at the start and end of the period so that it disregards the effect of any changes in factors and focuses only on the increase that is funded by the employer.

Compensation for loss of office

The Agency did not make any payments for loss of office during 2020-21.

STAFF REPORT

Number of senior civil service staff (or equivalent) by band (Audited)

The number of staff serving as senior civil servants (or equivalent) as at 31 March 2021 is as follows:

Pay Band*	2020-21	2019-20
£60,000 - £64,999	-	-
£70,000 - £74,999	1	3
£75,000 - £79,999	2	-
£95,000 - £99,999	-	1
£100,000-104,999	1	-

* Based on full year equivalent.

Staff costs

Staff costs comprise:

	2020-21		2019-20
	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000
Wages and salaries	16,264	3,435	19,699
Social security costs	1,744	-	1,744
Other pension costs	5,075	-	5,075
Sub total	23,083	3,435	26,518
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	(11,275)	-	(11,275)
Total net costs	11,808	3,435	15,243

£738k (2019-20: £712k) of salary costs have been charged to capital.

Pension arrangements

The Northern Ireland Civil Service main pension schemes are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Department of Finance is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

The Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014 provides the legal framework for regular actuarial valuations of the public service pension schemes to measure the costs of the benefits being provided. These valuations inform the future contribution rates to be paid into the schemes by employers every four years following the scheme valuation. The Act also provides for the establishment of an employer cost cap mechanism to ensure that the costs of the pension schemes remain sustainable in future.

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2016 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in March 2019. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the level of contributions for employers from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2023.

The 2016 Scheme Valuation requires adjustment as a result of the 'McCloud remedy'. The Department of Finance have also commissioned a consultation in relation to the Cost Cap Valuation which will close on 25 June 2021. By taking into account the increased value of public service pensions, as a result of the 'McCloud remedy', scheme cost control valuation outcomes will show greater costs than otherwise would have been expected. On completion of the consultation the 2016 Valuation will be completed and the final cost cap results will be determined.

For 2020-21, employers' contributions of £5,039,896 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements (2019-20: £4,854,663) at one of three rates in the range 28.7% to 34.2% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employers' contributions of £9,579 (2019-20: £10,333) were paid to one or more of the panel of two appointed stakeholder pension providers. Employer contributions are age-related and range from 8% to 14.75% (2019-20: 8% to 14.75%) of pensionable pay.

The partnership pension account offers the member the opportunity of having a 'free' pension. The employer will pay the age-related contribution and if the member does contribute, the employer will pay an additional amount to match member contributions up to 3% of pensionable earnings.

Employer contributions of £549, 0.5% (2019-20: £315, 0.5%) of pensionable pay, were payable to the NICS Pension schemes to cover the cost of the future provision of lump sum benefits on death in service and ill health retirement of these employees. Contributions due to the **partnership** pension providers at the reporting period date were £NIL. Contributions prepaid at that date were £NIL (2019-20: £NIL).

Ill-health retirement

There were no ill-health retirement during the year (2019-20: £NIL). The total additional accrued pension liabilities in the year amounted to £NIL (2019-20: £NIL).

Average number of persons employed

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the year was as follows.

Number			2020-21	2019-20
	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
NISRA Board	18	-	18	17
NISRA Employees	424	34	458	426
Other	-	82	82	124
Staff engaged on capital projects*	-	-	-	-
Total	442	116	558	567

* The Agency does not employ any staff exclusively on capital projects.

Staff composition

The gender analysis of permanent Agency staff as at 31 March 2021 was as follows.

Comparative data for the previous year is shown in brackets.

	Number of female staff	Number of male staff	Total number of staff
Senior Civil Service	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (4)
Agency Board	6 (4)	8 (9)	14(13)
Other NISRA employees	229(242)	198(227)	427(469)
TOTAL	237(248)	208(238)	445(486)

Sickness absence

The average number of days lost per staff member (on a staff year equivalent basis³) during 2020-21 was 4.7 days (2019-20: 9.2 days). The Agency is actively working to decrease its sickness absence and has a nominated 'Well Champion' who organises seminars and other events to highlight health and wellness issues.

³ One staff year equivalent (sye) equates to one member of staff having been available for the entire period being analysed. This is a change of measurement from the 2018-19 Report when non-standardised (total working days lost) figures were reported.

Staff Policies

Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations

In carrying out its functions, powers and duties, the Agency promotes equality of opportunity between certain specified groups, and promotes good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group, in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In addition, as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Agency has due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and to encourage the participation of people with a disability in public life. The Agency is committed to fulfilling its obligations and has mainstreamed these duties across all business areas.

The Agency has outlined how it will fulfil its Section 75 obligations in its Equality Scheme and it submits Annual Progress reports to the Equality Commission in relation to this and on the progress made against the Department's Disability Action Plan. The Department's Revised Section 75 and Disability Action Plans for 2018-23 were finalised following the response to the public consultation and published in October 2018. Sound progress continues to be made towards the delivery of these Plans.

Employment, training and advancement of disabled persons

The Northern Ireland Civil Service applies the recruitment principles as set out in the Recruitment Code of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland, appointing candidates based on merit through fair and open competition. Recruitment and selection training, which includes raising awareness of unconscious bias, is offered to all members of NICS recruitment panels. Unconscious bias training is available to all staff.

To maintain and promote a diverse and inclusive workforce, the NICS has policies in place to support adjustments to the working environment required by disabled persons.

The NICS has a wide and active network of Diversity Champions and one of its' Deputy Secretaries is the NICS Diversity Lead for Disability. The NICS has a Disability Working Group and is a lead partner with Employers for Disability Northern Ireland. During 2020-21 the NICS established a Disability Staff Network. This Network plays a key role in promoting disability equality and inclusion across the NICS.

The NICS is committed to working towards creating a truly inclusive workplace where all colleagues feel valued. The NICS promotes a number of schemes for disabled people, including a Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities.

Other employee matters

The Agency follows Departmental and NICS policy and the 2018-21 [NICS People Strategy](#) sets out the shared view of the 'people' priorities across the NICS under the following themes:

- A well-led NICS
- High performing NICS
- Outcomes-focused NICS
- An inclusive NICS in which diversity is truly valued – a great place to work

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In the NICS, we are committed to building an inclusive workplace culture where diversity is truly valued at all levels, where you are valued for who you are and where you can bring your true self to work. We want to make use of all the talent that exists across the NICS to ensure we are a well-led, high performing, outcome-focused Service and a Service that is a great place to work.

The [NICS People Strategy](#) includes a range of actions that will help accelerate our ambition of a truly inclusive NICS, which reflects the society we serve.

As a key element of the People Strategy, our ambitious diversity and inclusion programme of work is delivered through the implementation of an annual NICS Diversity Action Plan, and overseen by the leadership of the NICS Board, the NICS Diversity Champions Network, Departmental Diversity Champions and Thematic Diversity Champions, NICS colleague networks and NICS HR, as well as through partnership working with stakeholder organisations.

The NICS Diversity Action Plan sets out our priorities for action by diversity and inclusion theme, cross-cutting priorities, departmental priorities and includes supporting plans on communications and outreach.

Equality is a cornerstone consideration in the development and review of all HR policies which determine how staff are recruited and appointed, their terms and conditions, how they are managed and developed, assessed, recognised and rewarded. The NICS' commitment to equality of opportunity is outlined in its [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

As part of the NICS' efforts to ensure equality of opportunity, the NICS continually conducts comprehensive reviews into the composition of its workforce and recruitment activity, publishing a wide range of [NICS human resource statistics](#).

The annual "Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service" reports work force composition and trends over time and, where appropriate, makes comparisons with the wider labour market and the Civil Service in Great Britain.

The NICS continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which includes submission of an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return and a tri-annual Article 55 Review to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), both of which assess the composition of the NICS workforce and the composition of applicants and appointees. In addition, the NICS conducts a similar formal review of the gender profile of its workforce. The findings are published in the NICS [Article 55 and Gender Reviews](#).

The NICS uses the findings of all the equality monitoring and analysis to inform its programme of targeted outreach activity to address any areas of under-representation.

As a public authority, the NICS has due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in carrying out its functions. Further information on the department's equality scheme is available at [Department of Finance](#).

Health & Safety

The Department has a Health & Safety Policy which complies with the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulation (NI) 2000, and all other relevant legislation. The Agency regards it as an integral part of its duties and objectives to ensure, so far as is reasonable practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and of all other persons who may be affected by the Agency's undertakings.

Employee Consultation and Trade Union Relationships

The Department is responsible for the NICS Industrial Relations Policy. The centralised human resource function, NICSHR, consults on HR policy with all recognised Trade Unions and local departmental arrangements are in place to enable consultation on matters specific to a department or individual business area.

Learning & Development

The NICS recognises the importance of having skilled and engaged employees and continues to invest in learning and development.

Development and delivery of generic staff training is centralised in NICSHR⁴. Training is delivered using a variety of learning delivery channels (including on-line, webinars), providing flexible access to learning. Coherent learning pathways are aligned to both corporate need and the NICS Competency Framework.

⁴ NICSHR is the NICS' centralised human resources function. It falls under the responsibility of the Department of Finance

Talent management is a key theme of the NICS People Strategy and this year the focus was on improving the quality of the development conversation between managers and staff, with the introduction of a talent management toolkit.

The NICS offers a wide range of career development opportunities through mentoring, secondment and interchange opportunities, elective transfers, temporary promotion, job rotation and job shadowing.

Expenditure on consultancy and temporary staffing

There was no NISRA expenditure on external consultancy in the financial year 2020-21 (2019-20: £NIL).

NISRA spent £3,444k during the year on temporary staffing (2019-20: £3,122k).

Staff Turnover

The NISRA Staff Turnover percentage (the number of people that have left the Agency but have moved within the NICS) for 2020-21 is 4%, and the general turnover percentage (the people who have left the Agency and have not gone elsewhere in the NICS) is 0%. This has been calculated by NICS HR based on the Cabinet Office Guidance on calculations for Turnover in the Civil Service.

Staff Engagement

The 2020 NICS People Survey was conducted by NISRA across the nine NICS ministerial Departments as well as the Public Prosecution Service and the Health & Safety Executive for NI. All staff working in these organisations were invited to take part in the survey. For NISRA there were 264 (2019-20: 279) staff invited to complete the survey, of which 152 (2019-20: 208) participated, a response rate of 58% (2019-20: 75%). The Employee Engagement Index (EEI) is the weighted average of the responses to the five employee engagement questions, and it ranges from 0% to 100%. NISRA responses indicated an Employee Engagement Index of 60% (2019-20: 53%), compared to the NICS average of 57% (2019-20: 51%). The full survey can be accessed at <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/nics-people-survey-results> .

Staff Redeployment

NISRA had no staff redeployed in relation to COVID-19 or EU Exit in 2020-21.

Off-payroll engagements

The Agency did not have any off-payroll engagements during 2020-21.

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages

There were no early retirements or compulsory redundancies in 2020-21 (2019-20: none).

Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in this section.

OTHER ASSEMBLY ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUDIT REPORT

Other Assembly Accountability Disclosures

Regularity of Expenditure

i. Losses and special payments

Losses statement

The Agency did not make any individual losses in excess of £250,000.

Special payments

The Agency did not make any special payments during the year. (2019-20: £NIL).

ii. Fees and Charges

General Register Office

In setting fees, the General Register Office (GRO) aims to recover 100% of costs directly attributable to estimated volumes of certificates produced and marriage and civil partnership notices and ceremonies. GRO is legislatively required to provide a birth, death, marriage and civil partnership registration service and no costs are charged for this service. In 2020-21 GRO estimated that it would recover £2,449k (2019-20: £ 3,192k) from the supply of certificates and services. The actual cost recovery for the year was £2,689k (2019-20: £3,223k).

Central Survey Unit

In 2020-21 the Central Survey Unit (CSU) estimated that it would recover £1,887k (2019-20: £1,937k) from carrying out surveys on behalf of government departments and non-departmental public bodies. The actual cost recovery for the year was £1,725k (2019-20: £1,920k). The information provided in the table below is for fees and charges purposes, not for IFRS 8.

			2020-21	2019-20
	Income	Full cost	Surplus/ (deficit)	Surplus/ (deficit)
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Registration Services	2,689	(2,632)	57	(18)
Statistics and Research work carried out by CSU	1,725	(1,879)	(154)	56
Recovery of staff costs for staff outside DoF	11,275	(11,268)	7	(15)
Other services	2,122	(1,553)	569	267
TOTAL	17,811	(17,332)	479	290

The above figures represent services where the full cost of the service is in excess of £1m. For Registration Services, the Statutory Provision is as noted in Article 7 to the Births and Deaths Registration (NI) Order 1976. For other services, NISRA's financial objective was to recover the total cost of those activities for which DoF funding was not provided. This objective was met.

iii. Remote Contingent Liabilities

There were no contingent liabilities requiring disclosure under assembly reporting requirements (in addition to within the meaning of IAS 37) for liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of contingent liability.

This Accountability Report is approved and signed



David Patterson*

Accounting Officer and Chief Executive

5 July 2021

*In the absence of Ms Siobhan Carey, Accounting Officer, Mr David Patterson has been temporarily promoted to Grade 5 and appointed (with effect from 25 June) to the position of interim Chief Executive and Accounting Officer pending Ms Carey's return to office later in the year.

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes including significant accounting policies. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adopted by the European Union and interpreted by the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and of its net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and Department of Finance directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs)(UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2019, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis for accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the service which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance directions made under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001; and

- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- such internal controls as the Accounting Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- assessing the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is

not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included the Health and Safety Legislation, the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001, the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 and relevant Tax laws (PAYE and NIC);
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition, posting of unusual journals and unreasonable management estimates;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate and inquiries of management and those charged with governance;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;

- testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
- assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



*KJ Donnelly
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU*

08 July 2021

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2021

	Note	2020-21 £000	2019-20 £000
Revenue from contracts with customers	4	(17,811)	(18,225)
Total operating income		(17,811)	(18,225)
Staff costs	3	26,518	25,010
Purchase of goods and services	3	3,378	2,590
Depreciation and impairment charges	3	1,565	1,649
Provision expense	3	80	-
Other operating expenditure	3	9,451	6,785
Total operating expenditure		40,992	36,034
Net operating expenditure		23,181	17,809
Net expenditure for the year		23,181	17,809
Other comprehensive net expenditure			
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net loss on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	5	(17)	-
Net loss on revaluation of intangible assets	6	(39)	(76)
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		23,125	17,733

Notes 1 to 17 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2021

	Note	2021 £000	2020 £000
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5	747	679
Intangible assets	6	3,527	3,881
Total non-current assets		4,274	4,560
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	8	4,140	4,421
Cash and cash equivalents	7	214	244
Total current assets		4,354	4,665
Total assets		8,628	9,225
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	(5,517)	(2,248)
Provisions	10	-	(3)
Total current liabilities		(5,517)	(2,251)
Total assets less current liabilities		3,111	6,974
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	10	(125)	(42)
Total non-current liabilities		(125)	(42)
Total assets less total liabilities		2,986	6,932
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund		2,732	6,599
Revaluation reserve		254	333
Total equity		2,986	6,932

Notes 1 to 17 form part of these financial statements.



David Patterson*

Accounting Officer and Chief Executive
5 July 2021

*In the absence of Ms Siobhan Carey, Accounting Officer, Mr David Patterson has been temporarily promoted to Grade 5 and appointed (with effect from 25 June) to the position of interim Chief Executive and Accounting Officer pending Ms Carey's return to office later in the year.

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2021

	Note	2020-21 £000	2019-20 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating cost	SoCNE	(23,181)	(17,809)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions:			
Notional charges	3	3,202	3,415
Depreciation and impairment charges	3	1,565	1,649
Provision expense	3	80	-
Decrease/(increase) in trade and other receivables	8	281	(249)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables <i>less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure</i>	9	3,269	(555)
	9	274	(129)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(14,510)	(13,678)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	5	(160)	(262)
Purchase of intangible assets	6	(1,337)	(1,233)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(1,497)	(1,495)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Net Assembly Funding - drawn down		15,977	15,112
Net cash flow from financing activities		15,977	15,112
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents in the period		(30)	(61)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	7	244	305
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	7	214	244

Notes 1 to 17 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2021

	Note	General Fund	Revaluation Reserve	Taxpayers' Equity
		£000	£000	£000
Balance at 31 March 2019		5,738	401	6,139
Net Assembly Funding		15,112	–	15,112
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(17,809)	75	(17,734)
Auditor's remuneration	3	20	–	20
Non-cash notional charges	3	3,395	–	3,395
Transfer between reserves		143	(143)	–
Balance at 31 March 2020		6,599	333	6,932
Net Assembly Funding		15,977	–	15,977
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(23,181)	56	(23,125)
Auditor's remuneration	3	20	–	20
Non-cash notional charges	3	3,182	–	3,182
Transfer between reserves		135	(135)	–
Balance at 31 March 2021		2,732	254	2,986

Notes 1 to 17 form part of these financial statements.

Notes to the Accounts

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2020-21 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context.

Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy that has been judged to be the most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Agency for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Agency for 2020-21 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material in relation to the Accounts.

1.1 Accounting Convention

The Accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets.

1.2 Property, plant and equipment

The Agency's property, plant and equipment includes computer equipment, office machinery, fixtures and fittings which are capitalised at their cost of acquisition and installation and are revalued annually using appropriate indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics. The threshold for capitalisation, as an individual or grouped fixed asset, remains at £500 for the Agency for computer equipment, with all other equipment at £1,000.

Where appropriate, surpluses and deficits on revaluation are taken to the revaluation reserve and reductions in the value of non-current assets arising from a clear consumption of economic benefit should be charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

The Agency does not own the property it occupies, but incurs a notional accommodation charge which is included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.3 Intangible assets

The Agency's intangible assets include computer software, internally and externally developed software, licences, bespoke systems, databases and a website, which are capitalised at their cost of acquisition and installation. Intangible assets are revalued annually using appropriate indices compiled by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

The threshold for capitalisation, as an individual or grouped fixed asset, remains at £500 for the Agency.

1.4 Depreciation and Amortisation

Depreciation/amortisation is provided on a straight line basis in order to write-off the valuation, less estimated residual value, of non-current assets over their estimated useful lives. The estimated useful lives, which are reviewed regularly, are:

- Information technology 3-12 years;
- Telecoms equipment 5-10 years;
- Plant and machinery 3-30 years;
- Furniture and fittings up to 10 years; and
- Intangible assets (IT) 3-12 years.

Depreciation/amortisation, on assets under construction commences when the assets are ready for their intended use.

1.5 Operating Income

Operating income is income which relates directly to the operating activities of the Agency. It principally comprises fees and charges for services provided on a full cost basis to other public bodies and citizens. The Agency's income relates directly to three main activities:

- Statistical Research Activities;
- Central Survey Unit - charges for statistics and research work carried out for all of the NICS and other public bodies; and
- Registration Services.

In 2018-19 the Agency adopted IFRS 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers. The Agency has Service Level Agreements with a wide range of public sector organisations. These contracts enable the Agency to impose a charge on the customer and the requirement for the customer undertaking the relevant activities to be liable to pay the charge. The Service Level Agreement provides the enforceability on both parties. The income from these activities is effectively revenue from contracts with customers for services provided to the NI Departments, Public Bodies and UK

Departments and Public Bodies and external customers. Note 4 shows the income by customers for each of the three activities.

The effect of the adoption of IFRS 15 has not required significant changes in the judgement on the recognition and recovery of these revenue, nor has it resulted in any differences between the previous carrying amount and the carrying amount at the beginning of the annual reporting period that includes the date of initial application in the opening general fund within taxpayers' equity.

The timing and amount of the levy due from the customer is set out in the Service Level Agreement. The customer is invoiced and the revenue recognised on completion of the services. It is probable that the Agency will collect the consideration to which it is entitled. Any amounts due at the year-end but not yet invoiced to the customer are included as accrued income in the financial statements.

Services that are statutory in nature and provided to members of the public are usually paid for in advance of the service being provided or when the service is provided.

The income generated in pursuit of these activities or as part of managing the Agency's affairs is Operating Income in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Operating income is stated net of VAT.

1.6 Financial Instruments

A financial instrument is defined as any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

A financial instrument is recognised when, and only when, the entity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument. A previously recognised financial asset is derecognised when, and only when, either the contractual rights to the cash flows from that asset expire, or the entity transfers the asset such that the transfer qualified for de-recognition. A financial liability is derecognised when, and only when, it is extinguished.

The Agency has financial instruments in the form of trade receivables and payables and cash and cash equivalents. In accordance with IAS 39 Financial Instruments: Recognition and Measurement trade receivables, cash and other receivables are classified as 'loans and receivables'. Loans and receivables are initially measured at fair value and are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less any impairment.

The Agency assesses at each reporting date whether there is any objective evidence that a financial asset or group of financial assets classified as loans and receivables is impaired. Based on historic experience receivables that are past due beyond 361 days are generally not recoverable.

The Agency measures the amount of the loss as the difference between the carrying amount of the asset and the present value of estimated future cash flows from the asset discounted at the effective interest rate of the instrument at initial recognition.

Impairment losses are assessed individually for financial assets that are individually significant and individually or collectively for assets that are not individually significant. In making collective assessment of impairment, financial assets are grouped into portfolios on the basis of similar risk characteristics. Future cash flows from these portfolios are estimated on the basis of the contractual cash flows and historical loss experience for assets with similar risk characteristics.

Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and the carrying amount of the financial asset or group of financial assets reduced by establishing an allowance for impairment losses. If in a subsequent period the amount of the impairment loss reduces and the reduction can be ascribed to an event after the impairment was recognised, the previously recognised loss is reversed by adjusting the allowance.

When a financial asset is deemed unrecoverable the amount of the asset is reduced directly and the impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure to the extent that a provision was not previously recognised.

Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value, net of transaction costs. They are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.7 Value Added Tax

All income and expenditure is stated exclusive of VAT which is recoverable on a departmental basis.

1.8 Programme Expenditure

All of NISRA expenditure is classified as Programme expenditure.

1.9 Pensions

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the NICS Pension Schemes. The defined benefit scheme is unfunded and is non-contributory except in respect of dependants' benefits. The Agency recognises the expected cost of these elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it benefits from employees' services by payment to the NICS Pension Schemes of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the NICS Pension Schemes. In respect of the defined contribution scheme, the Agency recognises the contributions payable for the year.

1.10 Contingent Liabilities

In addition to contingent liabilities disclosed in accordance with IAS 37, the Agency discloses for Assembly reporting and accountability purposes certain statutory and non-statutory contingent liabilities where the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit is remote, but which have been reported to the Assembly in accordance with the requirements of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Where the time value of money is material, contingent liabilities which are required to be disclosed under IAS 37 are stated at discounted amounts and the amount reported to the Assembly separately noted. Contingent liabilities that are not required to be disclosed by IAS 37 are stated at the amounts reported to the Assembly.

1.11 Employee Benefits

Under IAS19 Employee Benefits legislation, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave as at the year end. The cost of untaken leave has been determined using the data from leave records.

1.12 Provisions

The Agency provides for legal or constructive obligations, which are of uncertain timing or amount at the reporting date on the basis of the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation. These relate to the settlement of equal pay claims, other potential legal actions and provision for future liabilities in respect of contracts. Where the effect of the time value of money is significant the estimated risk-adjusted cash flows are discounted using the real rate set by HM Treasury (currently 3.5 per cent).

1.13 Critical accounting estimates and key judgements

As a result of the uncertainties inherent in all business activities, many items in financial statements cannot be measured with precision but can only be estimated. Where estimates have been required in order to prepare these financial statements in conformity with FReM, management have used judgements based on the latest available, reliable information. Management continually review estimates to take account of any changes in the circumstances on which the estimate was based or as a result of new information or more experience.

1.14 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards not yet effective

In addition, certain new standards, interpretations and amendments to existing standards have been published that are mandatory for NISRA's accounting periods beginning on or after 1 April 2020 or later periods, but which NISRA has not adopted early. Other than as outlined below, NISRA considers that these standards are not relevant or material to its operations.

Standard	IFRS 16 <i>Leases</i> IFRS 16 <i>Leases</i> (Replaces IAS 17 <i>Leases</i> and related interpretations)
Effective date	IFRS 16 <i>Leases</i> replaces IAS 17 <i>Leases</i> and is effective with EU adoption from 1 January 2019. In line with the requirements of the FReM, IFRS 16 will be implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1 April 2022.
Summary	<p>The IASB issued IFRS 16 in January 2016 with an effective date for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2019 (as above, NISRA will adopt the standard with effect from 1 April 2022 in line with all of the Northern Ireland Civil Service bodies). Early application is permitted for those entities applying IFRS 15.</p> <p>IFRS 16 represents a significant change in lessee accounting by largely removing the distinction between operating and finance leases and introducing a single lessee accounting model. A lessee is required to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases with a term of more than 12 months, unless the underlying asset is of low value on the Statement of Financial Position. There are corresponding changes to the disclosure requirements to show the effect that leases have on the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the lessee.</p> <p>The lessor accounting model is generally unchanged from IAS 17 but with the introduction and impacts of IFRS 9 <i>Financial Instruments</i>, enhanced disclosure requirements and that a sub-lessor now determines whether a lease is finance or operating based on the right of use asset it subleases.</p>
Comments	<p>NISRA is preparing for implementation in 2021-22.</p> <p>NISRA will consider the implications on the disclosures to the financial statements of the standards on:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What operating leases commitments are currently held by the entity and whether these are material to the financial statements?• The nature of the assets being leased and whether they may be classed as short term or low value leases?• Whether there are sufficient existing disclosures in the financial statements regarding lease commitments where these are considered material.
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1.15 Financial Reporting – Future Developments

NISRA has considered the accounting initiatives identified by HM Treasury for which the Standards are under development and considers these changes are not relevant or material to its operations.

2. Statement of Operating Costs by Operating Segments

2020-21

	Note	General Register Office	Central Survey Unit	Other	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Gross expenditure	3	5,201	4,502	31,289	40,992
Income	4	(2,689)	(1,725)	(13,397)	(17,811)
Net expenditure		2,512	2,777	17,892	23,181
Total assets		1,637	1,826	5,165	8,628
Total liabilities		(772)	(112)	(4,758)	(5,642)
Net assets		865	1,714	407	2,986

2019-20

	Note	General Register Office	Central Survey Unit	Other	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Gross expenditure	3	4,837	4,170	27,027	36,034
Income	4	(3,223)	(1,920)	(13,082)	(18,225)
Net expenditure		1,614	2,250	13,945	17,809
Total assets		2,264	1,563	5,398	9,225
Total liabilities		(675)	(108)	(1,510)	(2,293)
Net assets		1,589	1,455	3,888	6,932

General Register Office (GRO)

Consists of the unit that manages all public births, deaths and marriage records and the District Councils that manage this locally.

Central Survey Unit (CSU)

Consists of the survey unit that would be the largest income generating unit in NISRA that carries out work for all of the NICS and other public bodies.

Other

Covers all the other statistical research activities and the outposted and seconded staff.

3. Programme Costs

	2020-21	2019-20
	£000	£000
Staff costs		
Wages and salaries	19,699	18,638
Social security costs	1,744	1,594
Other pension costs	5,075	4,778
Total staff costs	26,518	25,010
Purchase of goods and services		
Registrar charges	2,701	2,353
Survey costs	659	218
Finance costs	11	16
Exchange losses/(gains)	7	3
Total purchase of goods and services	3,378	2,590
Other operating expenditure		
Accounting and information technology	2,729	1,154
Accommodation, maintenance and utilities	2,238	1,736
Personnel and training	78	104
Travel, subsistence and hospitality	(5)	159
Printing, stationery and advertising	1,080	192
Legal costs	94	4
Other costs	34	20
	6,248	3,369
Non-cash items:		
(Profit)/loss on disposal of non-current assets	–	–
Auditors' remuneration and expenses	20	20
Notional charges	–	–
Intra-departmental notional charges		
Accommodation	651	677
IT Assist	936	1,029
Finance	510	545
HR	811	862
Corporate Services	275	283
	3,203	3,416
Total other operating expenditure	9,451	6,785
Depreciation and impairment charges		
Depreciation	109	151
Amortisation	1,456	1,498
	1,565	1,649
Provision expense		
Provided in year	80	–
	80	–
Total	40,992	36,034

4. Income

Revenue from Contracts with Customers

The Agency charges for a variety of services provided to customers. The largest component is the recovery of salary costs for statistical staff on loan to departments and agencies outside DoF.

				2020-21	2019-20
	Registration Services (GRO) £000	Central Survey Unit (CSU) £000	Statistical Research Activities £000	Total £000	Total £000
Income from NI Departments	35	1,132	10,571	11,738	11,178
Income from other NI Public Bodies	1,077	0	1,554	2,631	3,723
Income from other UK departments and Public Bodies	138	585	1,252	1,975	1,866
Income from external customers	1,439	8	20	1,467	1,458
	2,689	1,725	13,397	17,811	18,225

The income is reported based on the operating segments.

5. Property, plant and equipment

					2020-21
	Information technology	Plant and machinery	Furniture and fittings	Payments on account and assets under construction	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation					
At 1 April 2020	703	24	82	464	1,273
Additions	4	5	–	151	160
Disposals	–	–	–	–	–
Reclassification	–	–	480	(480)	–
Indexation	–	–	18	–	18
At 31 March 2021	707	29	580	135	1,451
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2020	537	13	44	–	594
Charged in year	78	4	27	–	109
Disposals	–	–	–	–	–
Indexation	–	–	1	–	1
At 31 March 2021	615	17	72	–	704
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	92	12	508	135	747
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	166	11	38	464	679
Asset financing:					
Owned	92	12	508	135	747
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	92	12	508	135	747

The Agency does not hold any Land and Buildings. Information Technology and Plant & Machinery were revalued using indices supplied by the Office for National Statistics. Furniture and fittings were not revalued as considered immaterial.

5. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

					2019-20
	Information Technology	Plant and Machinery	Furniture and Fittings	Assets under Construction	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation					
At 1 April 2019	725	22	69	605	1,421
Additions	27	6	(8)	127	152
Disposals	(50)	(4)	–	–	(54)
Reclassification	–	–	21	(268)	(247)
Indexation	1	–	–	–	1
At 31 March 2020	703	24	82	464	1,273
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2019	449	14	33	–	496
Charged in year	137	3	11	–	151
Disposals	(50)	(4)	–	–	(54)
Indexation	1	–	–	–	1
At 31 March 2020	537	13	44	–	594
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	166	11	38	464	679
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	276	8	36	605	925
Asset financing:					
Owned	166	11	38	464	679
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	166	11	38	464	679

6. Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise bespoke systems and software licenses (see note 1.3).

	2020-21			
	Software licences	Internally developed software and website	Externally developed software	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation				
At 1 April 2020	252	5,740	5,960	11,952
Additions	40	789	234	1,063
Disposals	–	–	–	–
Reclassification	–	–	–	–
Indexation	1	72	14	87
At 31 March 2021	293	6,601	6,208	13,102
Amortisation				
At 1 April 2020	193	3,023	4,855	8,071
Charged in year	18	831	607	1,456
Disposals	–	–	–	–
Indexation	–	43	5	48
At 31 March 2021	211	3,897	5,467	9,575
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	82	2,704	741	3,527
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	59	2,717	1,105	3,881
Asset financing:				
Owned	82	2,704	741	3,527
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	82	2,704	741	3,527

6. Intangible assets (continued)

	2019-20			
	Licences	Internally Developed Software and Website	Externally Developed Software	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation				
At 1 April 2019	206	4,649	5,282	10,137
Additions	53	813	605	1,471
Disposals	(9)	(86)	(18)	(113)
Reclassification	–	247	–	247
Indexation	2	117	91	210
At 31 March 2020	252	5,740	5,960	11,952
Amortisation				
At 1 April 2019	166	2,347	4,039	6,552
Charged in year	36	698	764	1,498
Disposals	(9)	(86)	(18)	(113)
Indexation	–	64	70	134
At 31 March 2020	193	3,023	4,855	8,071
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	59	2,717	1,105	3,881
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	40	2,302	1,243	3,585
Asset financing:				
Owned	59	2,717	1,105	3,881
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	59	2,717	1,105	3,881

7. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2020-21	2019-20
	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April	244	305
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	(30)	(61)
Balance at 31 March	214	244

The following balances at 31 March were held at:

Commercial banks and cash in hand	214	244
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8. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2020-21	2019-20
	£000	£000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade receivables	657	1,034
Other receivables	7	6
Prepayments and accrued income	3,414	3,227
VAT recoverable	62	154
	4,140	4,421

There are no amounts falling due after more than one year

9. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2020-21 £000	2019-20 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade payables	5	14
Accruals	5,512	2,234
	<u>5,517</u>	<u>2,248</u>

Accruals above include amounts relating to purchase of property, plant and equipment of £NIL (2019-20: £NIL) and intangible assets of £NIL (2019-20: £274k).

There are no amounts falling due after more than one year.

10. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	2020-21		2019-20
	Other £000	Total £000	Total £000
Balance at 1 April	45	45	45
Provided in year	80	80	–
Balance at 31 March	<u>125</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>45</u>
	2020-21		2019-20
	Other £000	Total £000	Total £000
Not later than one year	80	80	3
Later than one year and not later than five years	45	45	42
Balance at 31 March	<u>125</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>45</u>

Provisions closing balance 2020-21 concern legal costs that may be incurred in relation to ongoing judicial reviews within the General Register Office (£45k) and an ongoing staff related issue (£80k).

11. Capital commitments

	2020-21 £000	2019-20 £000
Property, plant and equipment	5	-
Intangible assets	966	1,568
Total	971	1,568

12. Commitment under leases

Operating leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods:

	2020-21 £000	2019-20 £000
Obligations under operating leases for the following periods comprise:		
Office equipment:		
Not later than one year	2	2
Later than one year and not later than five years	4	10
Later than five years	1	3
Total	7	15

13. Other Financial Commitments

The Agency has entered into non-cancellable contracts (which are not leases or PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts), for the NIROS support contract (GRO), IBSS Support (ELMSB) and for use of an encrypted link with the Office for National Statistics and provision of data from the Business Services Organisation (Census Office). The payments to which the Agency is committed are as follows.

	2020-21 £000	2019-20 £000
Not later than one year	5,420	6,533
Later than one year and not later than five years	10,966	16,154
Later than five years	2,520	2,517
Total	18,906	25,204

14. Financial Instruments

IFRS 7 Financial Instruments: Disclosures requires disclosure that enables evaluation of the significance of financial instruments for the Agency's financial position and performance, the nature and extent of risks arising from financial instruments to which the Agency is exposed during the period and at the reporting date, and how the Agency manages those risks.

As a result of the nature of its activities and the way in which NISRA is financed, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non- public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Agency's expected purchase and usage requirements and the Agency is therefore exposed too little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Details of the significant accounting policies and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset and financial liability are disclosed in Note 1 "Accounting Policies".

Categories of financial instruments

The Agency's financial assets are classified as loans and receivables and comprise trade receivables and other current assets (Note 8) and cash and cash equivalents (Note 7). The Agency's financial liabilities comprise trade payables and other current liabilities (Note 9). These financial assets and liabilities are held at cost which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

Cash and cash equivalents comprises cash and demand deposits with banks. As at 31 March 2020, the carrying value of cash at bank approximates its fair value due to its short term nature.

15. Contingent Liabilities

The Court of Appeal (CoA) judgment from 17 June 2019 (PSNI v Agnew) determined that claims for Holiday Pay shortfall can be taken back to 1998. However, the PSNI has appealed the CoA judgment to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court hearing was scheduled for the 23rd and 24th June 2021 but this has subsequently been adjourned. The 2020-21 Holiday Pay provision has been estimated by NICS HR and covers the period from November 1998 to 31 March 2020. There are still some very significant elements of uncertainty around this estimate for a number of reasons:

1. The appeal to the Supreme Court (as detail above);
2. Lack of accessible data for years previous to 2011;
3. Ongoing negotiations with Trade Unions; and
4. The provision includes a pension element which is based on formulae provided by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) with a variable capitalisation factor (CF). The CF used for these calculations is 12 which is based on the commutation value currently used in public sector pensions. This figure is subject to change as the calculation has not been agreed with Trade Unions.

16. Related party transactions

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Finance.

The Department of Finance is regarded as a related party with which the Agency has had various material transactions during the year.

The Agency has also had various material transactions with all the other Northern Ireland government departments and other central government bodies. Other central government bodies have included:

Business Services Organisation
Economic and Social Research Council
Electoral Office for NI
HM Revenue and Customs
Home Office
HSC Business Services Organisation
Invest NI
Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland
Libraries NI
NI Courts and Tribunals Service
Office for National Statistics
Office for the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Public Health Agency Northern Ireland
The Cabinet Office

During the year none of the board members, members of the key management staff or other related parties have undertaken any material transactions with the Agency.

17. Events after the Reporting Date

There were no events occurring after the reporting date that required disclosure.

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised the issue of these financial statements on 8 July 2021.

GLOSSARY

Acronym	Details
AME	Annually Managed Expenditure
ARAC	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
BAIM	Business Area Information Manager
BSO	Business Services Organisation
CARE	Career Average Revalued Earnings
CETV	Cash Equivalent Transfer Value
C&AG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CSU	Central Survey Unit
DAO	Dear Accounting Officer Letter
DEL	Departmental Expenditure Limit (in accounts)
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DoF	Department of Finance
DoF NISRA	NISRA branches located within DoF
DoH	Department of Health
EU	European Union
FOI	Freedom of Information
FReM	Financial Reporting Manual
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GRO	General Register Office
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
IA	Information Assurance
IAO	Information Asset Owner
IAS	International Accounting Standard
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
IT	Information Technology
MPMNI	Managing Public Money in Northern Ireland
NI	Northern Ireland
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NISRA DoF	NISRA branches located within DoF
NISRAnet	NISRA's intranet site
ONS	Office for National Statistics
ODP	Outcome Development Plan
PfG	Programme for Government
PRONI	Public Records of Northern Ireland
RAG	Red Amber Green Status (Risk Management)
SCS	Senior Civil Service

Acronym	Details
SIM	Support Information Manager
SLG	Senior Leadership Group
SRO	Senior Responsible Owner
TAP	Technical Assessment Panel
TEO	The Executive Office
UK	United Kingdom
UKSA	United Kingdom Statistics Authority
VAT	Value Added Tax
VES	Voluntary Exit Scheme