

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Crime and Justice in Northern Ireland

(produced by the Department of Justice Northern Ireland)

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.

Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act requires all statistics currently designated as National Statistics to be assessed against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*³. The report covers the following set of statistics produced by the Department of Justice Northern Ireland (DOJ):

- *Experience of Crime; Findings from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey*⁴ (*Experience of Crime*);
- *Perceptions of Crime; Findings from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey*⁵ (*Perceptions of Crime*);
- *Northern Ireland Prison Population*⁶ (*Prison Population*); and
- *Digest of Information on the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice System*⁷ (*CJS Digest*).

1.1.2 Assessments of compendium publications against the *Code of Practice* relate to the processes involved in preparing the publication, rather than in producing the statistics that are included. Those sets of statistics will normally be subject to separate assessment. Designation of a compendium publication as National Statistics therefore means that the producer body has, for example: identified and met user needs in terms of the content of the publication; considered the appropriateness of each series for inclusion; and written appropriate commentary.

1.1.3 Section 3 of this report adopts an ‘exception reporting’ approach – it includes text only to support the Requirements made to strengthen compliance with the *Code* and Suggestions made to improve confidence in the production, management and dissemination of these statistics. This abbreviated style of report reflects the Head of Assessment’s consideration of aspects of risk and materiality⁸. The Assessment team nonetheless assessed compliance with all parts of the *Code of Practice* and has commented on all those in respect of which some remedial action is recommended.

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r.htm>

⁵ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r.htm>

⁶ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/prison-population.htm>

⁷ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/compendia-publications-stats-and-research.htm>

⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/guidance-about-assessment/criteria-for-deciding-upon-the-format-of-an-assessment-report.pdf>

1.1.4 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in *Experience of Crime*, *Perceptions of Crime*, *Prison Population* and *CJS Digest* are designated as National Statistics, subject to DOJ implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by November 2012.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

1.3.1 *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* include clear information about the aim of the Northern Ireland Crime Survey. They do not provide much information about how the statistics are used, for example, by government or the police service.

1.3.2 *CJS Digest* contains explanations that aid user understanding of the statistics presented. For example, changes in policy and legislation are presented in charts to help explain notable differences in the statistics. *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* include some useful comparisons with statistics from the *Crime Survey for England and Wales*, but does not discuss some of the significant differences between the results of the two surveys.

1.3.3 In 2011, the introduction of a new prison data management system caused unexpected problems that prevented the supply of a large proportion of the data needed to produce *Prison Population*. In response, DOJ cancelled the publication of *Prison Population* for that year. The statistics team informed its key stakeholders within DOJ, but did not take steps to inform other users.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that DOJ could strengthen its compliance with the *Code*. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

Requirement 1	Take steps to engage with the users of <i>Prison Population</i> and <i>CJS Digest</i> , and publish information about the use made of all these statistics and the types of decisions they inform (para 3.1).
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- Requirement 2** Investigate and document the needs of users of *CJS Digest*, including the need for publication on a bi-annual basis (para 3.2).
- Requirement 3** Correct errors that are discovered in statistical reports, alert users promptly, and provide them with information about the nature and extent of the changes that have been made (para 3.3).
- Requirement 4** Publish more information about the quality and reliability of the statistics included in *Prison Population* and *CJS Digest* (para 3.4).
- Requirement 5** Explain the distinction between National Statistics and other types of statistics presented in *CJS Digest*, label individual tables accordingly and confirm that the statistics published elsewhere as official statistics are of adequate quality to meet user needs (para 3.5).
- Requirement 6** Improve the commentary in the statistical releases for these statistics so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.6).
- Requirement 7** Ensure that users are informed of cancellations of statistical publications, and of the reasons for the cancellations (para 3.7).
- Requirement 8** Review the problems encountered in the supply of PRISM data and publish information about the lessons that can be learned for the future (para 3.7).
- Requirement 9** Provide contact details for the responsible statistician in *Prison Population* and *CJS Digest* (para 3.8).

2 Subject of the assessment

2.1 *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* are both produced using data collected by the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS). *Experience of Crime* presents statistics on property crime, such as vandalism and domestic burglary, and violent crime, including common assault and mugging. It also presents trends in crime prevalence; comparisons with crimes recorded by the police; and comparisons with similar statistics for England and Wales, collected by the Crime Survey for England and Wales⁹ (CSEW), previously known as the British Crime Survey. The statistics from CSEW were assessed by the Authority as National Statistics, and the findings were published in *Assessment Report 102 – Crime Statistics in England and Wales*¹⁰ in April 2011.

2.2 *Perceptions of Crime* presents statistics about respondents' perceptions of the causes of crime, recent changes in crime levels and the extent of anti-social behaviour in their local area. The publication presents statistics for three commonly used measures of concern about crime:

- worry about crime and personal safety;
- perceptions of the risk of victimisation; and
- perceptions of the effect of 'fear of crime' on peoples' quality of life.

Perceptions of Crime includes an analysis of perceptions of crime by a range of socio-demographic characteristics such as age, sex, living arrangement, disability and religious belief. As with *Experience of Crime*, the publication includes comparisons with similar statistics for England and Wales from the CSEW.

2.3 NICS is a representative, continuous, personal interview survey of the experience and perceptions of crime on the part of adults living in private households in Northern Ireland. In January 2005, NICS began operating on a continuous basis after previously being conducted as an ad-hoc survey in 1994/95, 1998, 2001 and 2003/04. NICS is an important source of information about levels of crime and public attitudes to crime in Northern Ireland. It closely mirrors the format and core questions of the CSEW.

2.4 DOJ publishes some additional statistical bulletins based on the findings from NICS which are released as official statistics rather than National Statistics:

- *Perceptions of Policing, Justice and Anti-Social Behaviour: Quarterly Update*¹¹. This is a quarterly statistical bulletin which presents the most recent statistics on the level of public confidence in policing and the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland as well as public perceptions of anti-social behaviour.

⁹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Crime+in+England+and+Wales>

¹⁰ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-102---crime-statistics-in-england-and-wales.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r/r-s-quarterly-update-perceptions-of-policing-justice-and-anti-social-behaviour-quarterly-update-to-december-2011.htm>

- *Perceptions of Policing, Justice and Organised Crime: Findings from the NICS*¹². This is an ad hoc statistical bulletin which presents statistics that are used to measure progress towards government targets concerning confidence in policing and community engagement; confidence in the criminal justice system; and perceptions of the level of harm caused by organised crime in Northern Ireland.
- *Experience of Drug Misuse*¹³. This is an ad hoc statistical bulletin which presents the results from a self-reporting module of NICS on drug misuse.

These statistics are not covered in this Assessment, as DOJ did not ask for them to be assessed.

- 2.5 *Prison Population* provides information about the size and composition of the prison population in Northern Ireland. The publication presents statistics on the annual average prison population, and the number of receptions to prison during the year. Comparisons are made with the previous ten years. The statistics are produced using data from PRISM, the prison records management system of the Northern Ireland Prison Service. PRISM is continuously updated with information provided by all prisons in Northern Ireland.
- 2.6 *CJS Digest* is a compendium publication that aims to provide an accessible and comprehensive picture of activities and developments relating to crime and justice in Northern Ireland. The majority of the statistics presented in *CJS Digest* has previously been released through a variety of publications. Statistics on recorded crime, experience and perceptions of crime, and prison population have previously been published as National Statistics. The publication also presents statistics about support for victims, sentencing and reconvictions that are published elsewhere as official statistics.
- 2.7 These statistics are an important operational tool for Police Service Northern Ireland and for those in DOJ who develop, implement and monitor crime policy in Northern Ireland. The Probation Service NI uses the statistics to monitor changes in public perceptions of policing and justice in Northern Ireland. The statistics are important to a wide variety of other groups with an interest in crime and the criminal justice system, including charities. Academics use the statistics to inform research across a broad range of crime-related issues.
- 2.8 DOJ told us that it costs the department around £495,000 each year to produce these statistics. This includes staffing costs of around £160,000 and £335,000 to fund the NICS.

¹² http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r/r-s-bulletin-3-2010_-perceptions-of-policing_-justice-and-organised-crime_-findings-from-the-2009-10-northern-ireland-crime-survey-.htm

¹³ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r/r-s-bulletin-1-2010--experience-of-drug-misuse--findings-from-the-2008-09-northern-ireland-crime-survey.htm>

3 Assessment findings

- 3.1 DOJ conducts an ongoing short web-based survey of the users of the crime and justice statistics to determine users' views and experience of the statistical publications. DOJ also hosts a NICS Working Group for the main stakeholders of the crime statistics within DOJ; external users are generally consulted with through the UK Crime Surveys User Group, which meets annually. The UK group also covers CSEW and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey¹⁴. DOJ has little formal engagement with users of *Prison Population* and of *CJS Digest*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should take steps to engage with the users of *Prison Population* and *CJS Digest*, and publish information about the use made of all these statistics and the types of decisions that they inform¹⁵ (Requirement 1). In meeting this Requirement we suggest that DOJ refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*¹⁶, when documenting use.
- 3.2 *CJS Digest* was initially published on an ad hoc basis, subsequently biennially and since 2008, biannually, with spring and autumn editions, to provide more timely statistics. Sections of the Digest that are normally reported on a calendar year basis are updated for the spring edition; and sections that are normally reported on a financial year basis are updated for the autumn edition. DOJ told us that it is unsure who the main users of *CJS Digest* are. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should investigate and document the needs of users of *CJS Digest*, including the need for its biannual publication¹⁷ (Requirement 2).
- 3.3 DOJ told us that during the production of the 2010/11 edition of *Perceptions of Crime*, it found a processing error which affected statistics on the perceived level of anti-social behaviour for 2003/04 and 2009/10. DOJ published the correct figures in the 2010/11 edition along with a footnote which explains that the estimates have been corrected, although it does not provide information about the nature or extent of the error. The 2009/10 edition still presents the incorrect estimates, although DOJ has provided a notification¹⁸ of the error on its website. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should ensure that it corrects errors that are discovered in statistical reports, alerts users promptly, and provides them with information about the nature and extent of the changes that have been made¹⁹ (Requirement 3).
- 3.4 *CJS Digest* and *Prison Population* do not provide an indication of the quality or reliability of the statistics; for example, the accuracy and timeliness of the prisoner records data held on PRISM. *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* provide some information about the methods used and the accuracy of the statistics in a technical annex. Further information is provided in a Summary

¹⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/crime-and-justice-survey>

¹⁵ In relation to Principle 1, Practices 1 and 2 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

¹⁷ In relation to Principle 1, Practices 2 and 4 and Principle 7, Practice 5 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁸ http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r/r-s-bulletin-2-2011-perceptions-of-crime_-findings-from-the-2009-10-northern-ireland-crime-survey-.htm

¹⁹ In relation to Principle 2, Practices 6 and 7 of the *Code of Practice*

Quality Report²⁰, a User Guide²¹ and a Technical Report²², although links to these documents are not provided in the statistical releases. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should publish more information about the quality and reliability of the statistics included in *Prison Population* and *CJS Digest*, particularly in relation to use²³ (Requirement 4). We suggest that DOJ provide links to the Summary Quality Report, the User Guide and the Technical Guide in *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime*.

- 3.5 *CJS Digest* presents some statistics that have already been published as official statistics, including statistics on support for victims, court sentencing, and reconvictions. *CJS Digest* includes a brief statement about which statistics are National Statistics; but the release does not otherwise record which statistics are not National Statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should explain the distinction between National Statistics and other types of statistics presented in *CJS Digest*, label them clearly, and confirm that the statistics published elsewhere as official statistics are of adequate quality to meet user needs²⁴ (Requirement 5).
- 3.6 *CJS Digest* contains some useful context that helps aid user understanding of the statistics presented. For example, changes in policy and legislation are presented in charts to help explain any notable differences in the statistics. *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* include some useful comparisons with statistics from the CSEW. However, the publications do not contain much discussion about the significant differences between the results for England & Wales and those for Northern Ireland; for example, the lower crime rates in NI. Although *Prison Population* includes some time series, it does not provide much analysis of how the composition of the prison population has changed over time. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should improve the commentary in the statistical releases for these statistics so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics²⁵ (Requirement 6). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement DOJ consider the points detailed in annex 2.
- 3.7 The introduction of PRISM in 2011 caused unexpected problems which prevented the supply of a large proportion of the data needed to produce *Prison Population*. In response, DOJ cancelled the publication of *Prison Population* for that year. The statistics team informed key stakeholders within DOJ, but did not take steps to inform other users. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should ensure that users are informed of cancellations of statistical publications, and of the reasons for the cancellations²⁶ (Requirement 7). DOJ told us that it is working with IT staff responsible for PRISM to ensure that future datasets are supplied to the correct specification. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should review the problems

²⁰ <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r/northern-ireland-crime-survey-quality-report.htm>

²¹ http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r/northern-ireland-crime-survey-user-guide-_april-2012_.htm

²² <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-s-r/ni-crime-survey-2010-11-technical-report.htm>

²³ In relation to Principle 4, Practices 1 and 2, and Principle 8, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁴ In relation to Principle 4, Practices 1 and 2 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁵ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁶ In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 5 and Protocol 3, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

encountered in the supply of PRISM data and publish information about the lessons that can be learned for the future²⁷ (Requirement 8).

- 3.8 The crime and justice publications include appropriate headings and logos for National Statistics products. The publications also clearly identify the originating department; however no contact details are given for the responsible statistician in *Prison Population* or *CJS Digest*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, DOJ should provide contact details for the responsible statistician in *Prison Population* and *CJS Digest*²⁸ (Requirement 9).

²⁷ In relation to Principle 1, Practice 3; Principle 6, Practice 3; and Protocol 3, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁸ In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to DOJ’s crime and justice statistics, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Suggestion 1 | Refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority’s Monitoring Brief, <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> when documenting use (para 3.1). |
| Suggestion 2 | Provide links to the Summary Quality Report, the User Guide and the Technical Guide in <i>Experience of Crime</i> and <i>Perceptions of Crime</i> (para 3.4). |
| Suggestion 3 | Consider the points detailed in annex 2, in seeking to improve the statistical releases (para 3.6). |

Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Releases

- A2.1 In October 2010, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Releases*²⁹. While this is not part of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, the Authority regards it as advice that will promote both understanding and compliance with the *Code*. In relation to the statistical releases associated with these crime and justice statistics, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards.
- A2.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical releases, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

Appropriate identification of the statistics being released

- A2.3 DOJ uses appropriate headings and logos for a National Statistics product. All releases clearly identify the originating department; however no contact details are given for the responsible statistician in *Prison Population* or *CJS Digest*.
- A2.4 *Experience of Crime*, *Perceptions of Crime* and *Prison Population* provide an overview of the release and some key points at the start of each release. *CJS Digest* does not include a summary explaining the content of the publication.

Include commentary that is helpful to the non-expert and presents the main messages in plain English

- A2.5 The language used in the publications is mostly straightforward and clear. All releases include some technical terms, for example the use of the terms 'reception' and 'remand' in *Prison Population*. These terms are not well explained and their meaning may not be immediately obvious to all users and potential users of the statistics.
- A2.6 *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* include some useful comparisons with statistics from the CSEW. However, there is little explanation for some of the significant differences between the two survey results; for example, the differences between the reasons given for not reporting crime to the police. No comparisons are made with the results from the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*³⁰, produced by the Scottish Government. *CJS Digest* contains explanations that aid user understanding of the statistics presented; for example, changes in policy and legislation are presented in charts to help explain any notable differences in the statistics. However, an overview of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland near the start of the release would be useful.

²⁹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-releases.html>

³⁰ See footnote 14

Use language that is impartial, objective and professionally sound

A2.7 The text in all these releases is impartial. In *Experience* and *Perceptions of Crime*, sampling and non-sampling variability are discussed in the text, but the descriptions could provide clearer examples to aid interpretation. The description of confidence intervals in both *Experience* and *Perceptions of Crime* publications is well explained.

Include information about the context and likely uses

A2.8 *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* include clear information about the aim of the NICS; however, they do not provide much information about how this information is used by government or the police service, for example. *Experience* and *Perceptions of Crime* provide some background information about the need for both the NICS crime figures and the recorded crime figures produced by PSNI. *Experience of Crime* also contains a section about crime reporting in NI, but it does not include any information about how this relates to the statistics produced by PSNI.

A2.9 *CJS Digest* and *Prison Population* do not specify why the statistics are important, to whom, and for what purposes they are likely to be used.

Include, or link to, appropriate metadata

A2.10 *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime* are accompanied by a detailed set of technical reports, but links to these are not provided in the publications. *CJS Digest* does not contain much information about the statistics presented in the publication.

A2.11 *Prison Population* contains some definitions about the types of prisoner and the counting rules used at the end of the publication. However, no information is provided about the methods used to collect or quality assure the data used to produce the statistics.

Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A3.1 This assessment was conducted from April to July 2012.

A3.2 The Assessment team – Neil Jackson and David Duncan-Fraser – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of DOJ in March 2012. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 27 April 2012. The Assessment team subsequently met DOJ during May to review compliance with the *Code of Practice*, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A3.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare Assessment reports.

A3.4 The Assessment team received four responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

DOJ	2
Police Service NI	1
Department of Finance and Personnel NI	1

A3.5 Users responding to our consultation were generally satisfied with the level of engagement with DOJ statisticians. Three of the users who responded told us that they tend to use *Experience of Crime* and *Perceptions of Crime*. However, these users told us that they tend to focus on the quarterly reports as they provide more timely information to monitor changes in public perceptions of crime and policing. One user told us that both *Experience* and *Perceptions* could employ more creative methods of displaying the statistics to show how they relate to other demographic information, such as: the experience of crime by age; or as a rate per 100,000 population. One user also told us that DOJ should consider holding an annual user event to inform users of developments as part of improving its engagement with users.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

