

**Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead**

Eugene Mooney  
Senior Statistician  
Department of Health Northern Ireland  
(by email)

26 March 2019

Dear Eugene

**Compliance check of Statistics on Community Care for Adults in Northern Ireland**

As part of our ongoing Adult Social Care Systemic Review, we recently carried out a check of compliance with the Code of Practice for the [Statistics on Community Care for Adults in Northern Ireland](#). I am pleased to confirm that these statistics can continue to be designated as National Statistics.

We met with your team who were very open and engaged and shared with us their plans to continually improve the statistics and the collections of the underlying data.

We particularly focussed on the quality and value pillars of the Code in this compliance check and below are the main findings.

**Quality:**

- The quality documentation is regularly reviewed and there is a clear process outlining how the Trusts should submit the data returns that underpin these statistics. However, the process around dealing with delays in submitting these returns wasn't initially clear, particularly the ongoing engagement that happens around these delays. The team explained and gave reassurance around the QA process and have also now included additional information in the [Quality Report](#) following our conversation. A [Statistics Charter](#) is also published which has additional and relevant guidance.

- We noted that these statistics stated that only data of sufficient quality are published. This led us to question what remained unpublished but the team were able to explain that although they collect a lot of information, all published data must be fully quality assured and any data that aren't of sufficient quality will not be published. The team have confirmed that they have added an explanation to the outputs making this clear from the outset.
- Another useful addition to the statistics around referencing other sources for benchmarking and other purposes was discussed. The team have already taken this on board and the statistics and quality report have both been updated.

**Value:**

- When we spoke to users of these, and other statistics, during our Systemic Review of Adult Social Care, it was clear that they were of value across many areas. Additional information has also been added to the Quality Report and statistics publication to reflect the main uses of these statistics.
- The statistics report is very long and clearly aimed at expert users. Following discussions with the team, we were reassured that policy colleagues provide regular feedback on the report, that there was a well-established readership and that the team continues to make sure the report meets their needs.
- However, exactly how far-reaching the engagement with new users went wasn't initially clear from the publications. We were pleased to learn that members of the team regularly attend user forums to extend their reach. These are good initiatives and the question should be asked of users if they would value more-accessible information for the less-expert user.

On a general note, the team told us about the work in adult social care statistics that has been ongoing in Northern Ireland over the past 18 months to align definitions and recording practices across all the Trusts. This is a large-scale project that will take time before the major benefits will emerge and progress is ongoing. As mentioned above, the team has already made changes to the statistics to address many of the comments that we've made and we look forward to keeping in touch about the wider improvement programme for adult social care statistics in Northern Ireland.

I am copying this letter to Siobhan Carey, Chief Statistician Northern Ireland and Malcolm Megaw, statistician Department of Health Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont

Assessment Programme Lead