
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Siobhan Carey
Chief Executive
Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency

30 April 2019

Dear Siobhan

ASSESSMENT OF SICKNESS ABSENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE STATISTICS

Thank you for inviting us to assess NISRA's Sickness Absence in Northern Ireland Civil Service statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics. We have completed the assessment and have today published our Assessment Report. I appreciate your team's positive engagement throughout the assessment process, and for its proactive approach and commitment to addressing our requirements during the course of the assessment.

The sickness absence statistics provide a quality controlled annual version of management information on Northern Ireland civil service sickness absence. The value of these statistics to users is clear, and they recognise the high data quality standards applied to their production. Our report identifies many examples of good practice. In particular:

- The team producing the statistics is experienced and exercises sound judgment, especially around decisions relating to definitions of part-time and full-time employee sickness absence;
- The processes for data gathering and collection are robust and well-established;
- The team has positive links with users of the statistics and is flexible to their needs; and
- We found the team signposted relevant statistics, providing a coherent picture of sickness absence statistics in UK.

We identified a number of improvements, which in the course of the assessment your team started working on. These include publishing the headline figures earlier, before the release of the analysis and insight report. Meeting the requirements will ensure that further value is added to the statistics.

We judge that the Sickness Absence in Northern Ireland Civil Service statistics can be designated as National Statistics once we have confirmed that the five requirements set out in the report have been met. Addressing the requirements will demonstrate that your statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. We have agreed that you will report back to us by 31 July 2019 outlining how you have addressed the requirements.

I am copying this letter to Tracy Power, Director of Analysis NISRA; Tony Mathewson, NISRA and Ruth Fulton, Chief Statisticians Office.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation