

# Analytical Services Group

## Quality Assurance of Administrative Data Report

Incorporating the following statistics for Northern Ireland:

- Adult and Youth Reoffending
- Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Court
- Court Prosecutions, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals
- First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System
- Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases
- Northern Ireland Prison Population
- Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases
- Youth Engagement
- Youth Justice Agency Workload



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# 1 | Background

## About This Report

The primary purpose of administrative data is for service delivery, including the generation of official records, documentation of processes and for informing decision making. Improvements in the systems and processes used to collect administrative data, mean that it's now seen as a useful, affordable and efficient source of information for official statistics. While the UK Statistics Authority acknowledge the limitations, they also recognise that administrative data can play a key role in producing official statistics. To enable statistics producers to assess data quality, the Authority introduced guidance in 2015 called Quality Assurance for Administrative Data (QAAD). This report documents the findings of the assessment of the administrative data used in the production of the Department of Justice's (DoJ) Official and Accredited Official statistics publications.

## The Department of Justice Statistical Function

DoJ was established in April 2010, following the devolution of justice powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has a range of powers relating to devolved policing and justice functions, set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Function) Order 2010 and is responsible for the resourcing, legislative and policy framework of the justice system. The department has four Directorates (Access to Justice, Safer Communities, Justice Delivery and Reducing Offending) and five agencies (Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS), Youth Justice Agency (YJA), Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) and Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland) to deliver on these priorities.

Analytical Services Group (ASG) is the statistical and research team posted within the DoJ. Comprising of 14 statisticians, on loan from the Northern Ireland Statistics and

Research Agency (NISRA), the team are responsible for the production of Official and Accredited Official Statistics relating to crime and justice in Northern Ireland. Staff within ASG are located in two sites – the Core and NIPS teams in Castle Buildings on the Stormont Estate and the YJA team in Charles House in Belfast city centre.

Statisticians are a specialist grade within the Northern Ireland Civil Service and work to the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics as published by the UK Statistics Authority. Responsible for providing of Official and Accredited Official Statistics for DoJ (the Northern Ireland Office prior to 2010) for the last two decades, the statisticians in ASG have continually developed the systems and processes over the years to improve data quality while also ensuring the secure handling of sensitive and personal information.

# 1 | Background

## Data Sources

The three main data systems used and shared with ASG for the production of their Official and Accredited Official statistics publications are the –

1. Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism – an integrated messaging system that allows electronic sharing of information between the five main NI Criminal Justice organisations, the Police Service for NI (PSNI), the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), FSNI, NICTS and NIPS;
2. Prisoner Record Information System Management (PRISM) – the system used by NIPS to manage prisoner records; and
3. YJA Case Management System – the system used by YJA to manage case information.

These systems are mainly designed to help the Department carry out its day-to-day work. However, they also produce useful data that can be turned into official statistics. Since the systems weren't originally built for statistical reporting, the data needs to be checked and cleaned to make sure the statistics are accurate and meaningful. Full details of each system can be found in chapter 3.

## Statistical Outputs – Designation and Key Measures

Under the Statistics and Registration Act 2007, some statistics can be checked to see if they meet the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. If they do, they are given the title Accredited Official Statistics, which means they are trustworthy, high-quality, and useful. The process of determining compliance with the Code and designation as Accredited Official is known as Assessment.

The UK Statistics Authority has assessed the Northern Ireland Prison Population publication and confirmed that it meets the standards, so it is now classed as Accredited Official Statistics. The other seven publications mentioned in this document are simply called Official Statistics. Details of all eight publications are provided on the following pages.

### 1. Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland

This is an annual **official** statistics publication using data from **Causeway, PRISM and the YJA Case Management System**. Based on financial year, it looks at how many people reoffend within one year of being released from prison or receiving a non-custodial sentence at court or a diversionary disposal (an alternative to going to court).

The report includes the following key measures for the full cohort along with a breakdown for adults (those aged 18 and over) and youths (those aged 17 and under) -

- Reoffending rates by baseline offence, disposal type, custodial sentence length;
- Offending history (past criminal record);
- Number of reoffences (how many time someone reoffended);
- Number of specified offences; and
- Number of serious offences.

### 2. Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Courts in Northern Ireland

This is an annual **official** statistics publication using data from **Causeway**. Based on financial year, it shows how long it takes for criminal cases to be processed in Northern Ireland's Crown and Magistrates' courts. Key measures include -

- Number of cases, overall and by court type;
- Median time it took to complete a case, overall, and broken down by Crown Court charge cases, Crown Court summons cases, adult Magistrates' charge cases, adult Magistrates' summons cases, youth Magistrates' charge cases, youth Magistrates' summons cases;
- Number of days it took to complete 80% and 90% of cases, overall and for each of the case types listed above; and
- Median time taken by type of offence.

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## Background

### 3. Court Prosecutions, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals for Northern Ireland

This is an annual **official** statistics publication using data from **Causeway**. Based on calendar year, it shows the number of prosecutions and convictions in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts along with information about cases dealt with outside of court. Key measures include -

- Number of prosecutions overall and for Crown and Magistrates' Courts each broken down by age and gender;
- Number of convictions overall and for Crown and Magistrates' Courts each broken down by age, gender, disposal type;
- Number of prosecutions completed by type of offence and court type;
- Number of convictions disposed by type of offence broken down by age and gender of defendants and court type;
- Number of cases dealt with outside of court and type of outcome;
- Number of penalty notice for disorder issued; and
- Number of diversionary disposals used overall and by type of disposal, gender, age and offence category.

### 4. First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland

This is an annual **official** statistics publication using data from **Causeway**. Based on financial year, it focuses on people entering the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system for the first time. The data is broken down by age, gender, type of offence,

and how the case was handled. Key measures include –

- The number of offences that were dealt with either by a conviction or through diversion (an alternative to prosecution), shown both overall and split into first-time and repeat offences.
- Details about first-time offences, broken down by the person's age, gender, type of offence, and how the case was resolved.

### 5. Northern Ireland Prison Population

This is an annual **Official Accredited** statistics publication using financial and calendar year data sourced from **PRISM**. Key measures include -

- The average number of people in prison each day, broken down by type (on remand, serving a sentence, or in for fines/non-criminal reasons), and further split by gender and age.
- The average daily prison population by religion.
- The average number of people serving immediate custody sentences, broken down by sentence length and offence they were convicted of.
- The number of people entering prison, again broken down by type (remand, sentenced, fines/non-criminal), gender, and age.
- The number of sentenced prisoners entering prison, with details on sentence length and offence.
- The number of people released from each prison.
- Comparisons with prison statistics from other countries.

## 6. Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases

This is an annual **official** statistics publication using data from **Causeway**. Based on financial year, it shows what happened with criminal cases related to domestic abuse prosecuted under the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 in Northern Ireland courts. It includes information about cases that were handled outside of court and how long cases took to go through the court system. Key measures include -

- Number of cases including details about any aggravating factors or special support measures used;
- Number of prosecutions overall and broken down by court type;
- Number of convictions overall and broken down by court type, offence category and how the case was resolved;
- Number of cases dealt with outside of court overall and by offence type;
- Number of defendants by gender and age;
- Number of enhanced sentences; and
- Median time taken for cases to be completed in court – overall and broken down by court type.

## 7. Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland

This is an annual **official** statistics publication using data from **Causeway and the YJA Case Management System**. Based on financial year, it looks at cases involving young people aged 10 to 17 who came into formal contact with the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland and who were considered by the Public Prosecution Service as being suitable for the Youth Engagement process, which is an alternative way to deal with offences. The key measures are –

- Cases considered suitable for youth engagement;
- Referrals by gender and age;
- Reasons why some referrals were considered unsuitable;
- Outcomes of youth engagement clinics;
- How long youth engagement process took to complete;
- Whether young people had legal representation at the clinic.
- Whether victims were involved in the process.
- Whether young people felt the clinic helped them understand available choices; and
- Whether parents or carers felt the clinic helped them understand the options available to their child.

# 1

## Background

### 8. Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics

This is an annual **official** statistics publication using data from the **YJA Case Management System**. Based on financial year, it shows statistics for the last five years about the work done by the Custodial Services (Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC)) and Youth Justice Services (YJS). The report breaks down information by the 11 local council areas that have been in place since April 2015. It also looks at trends based on different characteristics of the young people involved. The key measures are -

- Number of PSNI Referral Schemes by topic, gender and age;
- Number of referrals to the YJS overall and by type, gender, age, area of residence, offence type;
- Number of individual children referred to the YJS overall and by type, gender, age, area of residence, offence type;
- Number of individual children admitted to the JJC overall and by gender, age, religion, looked after status, area of residence;
- Number of admissions to the JJC overall and by status, gender, age, religion, looked after status;
- Number of movements within the JJC overall and by status, gender, age, religion, looked after status;

- Maximum and minimum monthly population;
- Average population by status;
- Number of custody days by status;
- Custody conversion estimate for PACE admissions;
- Number of children and parents who felt their experience of YJS would help avoid further offending;
- Number of victims who attended or were represented at a meeting;
- Number of individual victims who participated in the youth conferencing process;
- Number of community resolution notices by area of direction; and
- Number of children with a reintegration plan in place on discharge from JJC.

## 2 | Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

### UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit

The UK Statistics Authority introduced QAAD guidance to help statistics producers review their quality assurance arrangements for the administrative data used to produce official statistics. The toolkit comprises -

- Quality Management Actions;
- Quality Assurance Matrix; and
- Risk/Profile Matrix.

This report uses the QAAD toolkit to review the administrative data used by ASG when producing DoJ statistics. It aims to provide reassurance and transparency about the quality of the data underpinning these statistics and help users understand how reliable and accurate it is.

The QAAD says that deciding whether administrative data is suitable for official statistics should be practical and balanced. This decision should consider how likely it is that data quality problems could affect the statistics, and how important the statistics are to the public.

The UK Statistics Authority recommends using the matrix below to assess the risk of using administrative sources. Based on this risk rating, producers can then decide how much quality assurance is needed at each of the four stages in the QAAD framework.

Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit - Level of Risk of Quality Concerns/Public Interest Profile

| Level of risk of quality concerns | Public Interest Lower                                                      | Public Interest Medium                                                | Public Interest Higher                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Low                               | Statistics of lower quality concern and lower public interest [A1]         | Statistics of low quality concern and medium public interest [A1 /A2] | Statistics of low quality concern and higher public interest [A1 /A2]   |
| Medium                            | Statistics of medium quality concern and lower public interest [A1 /A2]    | Statistics of medium quality concern and medium public interest [A2]  | Statistics of medium quality concern and higher public interest [A2/A3] |
| High                              | Statistics of higher quality concern and lower public interest [A1 /A2/A3] | Statistics of higher quality concern and medium public interest [A3]  | Statistics of higher quality concern and higher public interest [A3]    |

A1 to A3 = Levels of assurance required in the UK Statistics Authority's QA matrix  
(A1 = Basic assurance, A2 = Enhanced assurance, A3 = Comprehensive assurance)

## 2 | Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

### Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit - Risk of Data Quality Concerns

| Level of Risk |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Low Risk      | The data may have a low risk of data quality concerns in situations in which there is a clear agreement about what data will be provided, when, how, and by whom; when there is a good appreciation of the context in which the data are collected, and the producer accepts that the quality standards being applied meet the statistical needs.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Medium Risk   | The data may be regarded as having a medium risk of data quality concerns when high risk factors have been moderated through the use of safeguards for example, integrated financial audit and operational checks, and effective communication arrangements. It is also appropriate to consider the extent of the contribution of the administrative data to the official statistics, for example, in cases where the statistics are produced in combination with other data types, such as survey or census data. |
| High Risk     | The data may have a high risk of data quality issues when there are many different data collection bodies, intermediary data supplier bodies, and complex data collection processes with limited independent verification or oversight.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

### Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit – Public Interest Profile

| Interest Profile |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Low Profile      | Politically neutral subject; interest limited to niche user base, and limited media interest.                                                                                                                                                          |
| Medium Profile   | Wider user and media interest, with moderate economic and/or political sensitivity.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| High Profile     | Economically important, reflected in market sensitivity; high political sensitivity, reflected by Select Committee hearings; substantial media coverage of policies and statistics; important public health issues; collection required by legislation |

## 2 | Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

### Risk Profile of ASG Statistics When QAAD Quality Assurance Toolkit Applied

Risk Profile of ASG Statistics When QAAD Toolkit Applied

| ASG Statistic                                                                       | Data Quality Concern | Public Interest | Risk Profile Rating |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Adults and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland                                 | Medium               | Medium          | A2                  |
| 2. Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Courts in Northern Ireland | Medium               | Medium          | A2                  |
| 3. Court Prosecution, Convictions and Out of Court Disposal for Northern Ireland    | Medium               | Low             | A1/A2               |
| 4. First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland           | Medium               | Low             | A1/A2               |
| 5. Northern Ireland Prison Population                                               | Low                  | Low             | A1                  |
| 6. Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases | Medium               | Medium          | A2                  |
| 7. Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland                                 | Medium               | Low             | A1/A2               |
| 8. Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics                                         | Low                  | Low             | A1                  |

A1 = Basic assurance, A2 = Enhanced assurance, A3 = Comprehensive assurance

## 2

# Applying the Data Quality Assurance Toolkit to Individual Publications

The reasoning behind the risk profile rating associated with each ASG statistical output in the above is provided below –

### 1. Adults and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland

The reoffending statistics are considered to have a [medium level of risk](#) when it comes to data quality. Although there's a formal process in place to regularly provide the required data to ASG, the data are sourced from three separate systems (Causeway, PRISM, YJA Management System). Causeway is the main source communicating important information between PSNI, PPS and NICTS. PRISM and the YJA Management System are the main sources of information used to manage day-to-day business in NIPS and YJA respectively. The data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed detailed validation checks to find and correct any issues in the data. However, due to ongoing issues with bail and remand in Northern Ireland's prisons, the number of manual checks has increased substantially. For the latest cohort over 2,000 checks were required. Work is ongoing to try to reduce this number.

These statistics are not only used to inform the public about reoffending rates but are also important to Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLA) and other government bodies. They are published every October and usually get media attention in Northern Ireland. Because of this, the statistics are considered to have a [medium public profile](#).

Overall, the reoffending statistics have a risk profile rating of [A2 – Enhanced Assurance](#).

### 2. Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Courts

The case processing time statistics are considered to have a [medium level of risk](#) when it comes to data quality. Although there's a formal process in place to regularly provide the required data to ASG, the data are sourced from Causeway, the main source for communicating important information between PSNI, PPS and NICTS; the data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed detailed validation checks to find and correct any issues in the data.

These statistics help the public understand how long it takes for cases to move through the Criminal Justice system, and they're seen as a way to measure how well the system is working. MLAs and government organisations are also interested in these figures. They are also one of the indicators in the Wellbeing Framework that accompanies the NI Programme for Government. The statistics are published every September and usually get media attention in Northern Ireland. Because of this, the statistics are considered to have a [medium public profile](#).

Overall, the case processing time statistics have a risk profile rating of [A2 – Enhanced Assurance](#).

### 3. Court Prosecution, Convictions and Out of Court Disposal for Northern Ireland

The prosecutions, convictions and out of court disposals statistics are considered to have a [medium level of risk](#) when it comes to data quality. Although there's a formal process in place to regularly provide the required data to ASG, the data are sourced from Causeway, the main source for communicating important information between PSNI, PPS and NICTS; the data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed detailed validation checks to find and correct any issues in the data.

These statistics show how many prosecutions and convictions happen in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts in Northern Ireland. The public is interested in how the criminal justice system works, and this report helps people understand it better. MLAs and other government organisations also have an interest in the statistics. The report is published every June and covers the previous calendar year. It doesn't usually get much media attention, so it's considered to have a [low public profile](#).

Overall, the Prosecution, Convictions and Disposal statistics have a risk profile rating of [A1/A2 – Basic/Enhanced Assurance](#).

### 4. First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland

The first time entrant statistics are considered to have a [medium level of risk](#) when it comes to data quality. Although there's a formal process in place to regularly provide the required data to ASG, the data are sourced from Causeway, the main source for communicating important information between PSNI, PPS and NICTS; the data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed detailed validation checks to find and correct any issues in the data.

The statistics help the public understand who is committing crimes in Northern Ireland for the first time, what types of crimes they're committing, and what happens to them afterward (like whether they go to court or receive other penalties). This kind of information is useful because people are interested in how the justice system works. MLAs and other government organisations also have an interest in the statistics. The report is published every June and covers the previous calendar year. It doesn't usually get much media attention, so it's considered to have a [low public profile](#).

Overall, the First Time Entrants statistics have a risk profile rating of [A1/A2 – Basic/Enhanced Assurance](#).

### 5. Northern Ireland Prison Population

The prison population statistics are considered low risk in terms of data quality. This is because there's a formal and regular process for collecting and sharing the data with ASG. The data comes from PRISM, which is the main system used by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) to manage daily operations, so it needs to be very accurate. Over time, systems and processes have been improved to fix any issues with data quality. Statisticians also use detailed checks to spot and correct any errors in the data.

These statistics help the public understand the size of the prison population, which is often seen as a reflection of how the Criminal Justice system is performing. People are generally interested in how the justice system works, and this report helps inform their views. MLAs and other government organisations also have an interest in the statistics. The report is published every September and covers the previous financial year. It usually doesn't get much attention from the media, so it's considered to have a low public profile.

Overall, the Prison Population statistics have a risk profile rating of A1 – Basic Assurance.

### 6. Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases

The domestic abuse related statistics are considered to have a medium level of risk when it comes to data quality. Although there's a formal process in place to regularly provide the required data to ASG, the data are sourced from Causeway, the main source for communicating important information between PSNI, PPS and NICTS; the data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed detailed validation checks to find and correct any issues in the data.

These statistics help keep the public informed about how many people are prosecuted and convicted in domestic abuse cases in Northern Ireland's Magistrates' and Crown Courts. They also show how long these cases take to go through the courts. Domestic abuse is an issue that many people care about, so this report gives useful information to the general public. MLAs and other government organisations also have a strong interest in the statistics. The first report was published in January 2025, and from now on, it will be released in autumn each year. The first releases got media attention in Northern Ireland, and that's expected to continue. Because of this, the statistics are seen as having a medium profile.

Overall, the statistics for domestic abuse related cases have a risk profile rating of A2 – Enhanced Assurance.

### 7. Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland

The youth engagement statistics are considered to be of medium risk in terms of data quality. Although there's a formal process in place to regularly provide the required data to ASG, the data are sourced from two separate systems (Causeway, YJA Management System). Causeway is the main source communicating important information between PSNI, PPS and NICTS. The YJA Management System is the main source of information used to manage day-to-day business in YJA. The data therefore needs to be highly accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed detailed validation checks to find and correct any issues in the data.

These statistics help inform the public about the youth engagement clinics run by YJA for young people. People are generally interested in how the Criminal Justice system works, and this report helps them understand that better. The report is published every October and covers the previous financial year. It usually doesn't get much attention from the media so because of this, the statistics are considered to have a low public profile.

Overall, the Youth Engagement statistics have a risk profile rating of A1/A2 – Basic/Enhanced Assurance.

### 8. Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics

The YJA workload statistics are considered to be of low risk in terms of data quality. This is because there's a formal and regular process for collecting and sharing the data with ASG. The data comes from the YJA Management System, the main system used by YJA to manage daily operations, so it needs to be very accurate. Processes and systems have been developed and refined over the years to address any quality concerns that emerged and the statisticians have developed detailed validation checks to find and correct any issues in the data.

These statistics help inform people about what YJA does. Since the public is interested in how the Criminal Justice system works, this report gives useful insights. The report is published every September and covers the previous financial year. It usually doesn't get much attention from the media so because of this, the statistics are considered to have a low public profile.

Overall risk the YJA Workload statistics have a risk profile rating of A1 - Basic Assurance.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## About This Chapter

This chapter provides a description of the administrative systems involved in the production of ASG’s statistics. Table 1 provides an overview of how the three data sources are used for the Official and Accredited Official statistics they produce.

All eight statistical reports covered in this document use data from one, two or three of these systems (Causeway, PRISM, YJA case management system) so the same data quality procedures apply to the three IT systems apply across all reports. Later sections of the report explain any extra checks ASG applies to each individual report.

Table 1: Administrative Data Sources Used for ASG Official and Accredited Official Statistical Publications

| ASG Statistic                                                                       | Causeway | PRISM | YJA Case Management System |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|----------------------------|
| 1. Adults and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland                                 | ✓        | ✓     | ✓                          |
| 2. Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Courts in Northern Ireland | ✓        |       |                            |
| 3. Court Prosecution, Convictions and Out of Court Disposal for Northern Ireland    | ✓        |       |                            |
| 4. First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland           | ✓        |       |                            |
| 5. The Northern Ireland Prison Population                                           |          | ✓     |                            |
| 6. Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases | ✓        |       |                            |
| 7. Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland                                 | ✓        |       | ✓                          |
| 8. Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics                                         | ✓        |       | ✓                          |

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism

Data from the Causeway system is used in the production of six of the eight publications covered by this document (Reoffending, Case Processing Time, Prosecution, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals, First Time Entrants, Domestic Abuse and Youth Engagement).

## Environment and processes for compiling administrative data

Causeway is an integrated messaging system that enables the five main NI Criminal Justice organisations - the PSNI, PPS, FSNI, NICTS and NIPS – to share information electronically. It also generates the NI Criminal History database.

The system has been in use since 2004. In 2017, after a competitive process, DoJ chose Fujitsu Services Limited to continue running and improving Causeway; the contract started in 2019. The technical infrastructure is provided by the Department of Finance’s Enterprise Shared Services (ESS), who hosts the system in NICS data centres. Fujitsu and ESS work together to manage the technical aspects of Causeway, fix issues, and make updates for DoJ.

Causeway relies on individuals in each of the five Criminal Justice organisations updating records on their own systems. Depending on the originating organisation, this includes local administrative staff, police officers, court officials and legal, scientific or prison grade staff. As the information recorded within the individual organisations is used to manage their day-to-day business and to communicate between the other Criminal Justice organisations it is critical that it is highly accurate.

The updated information is then sent to Causeway through a messaging service, where it’s stored and shared between organisations. Causeway acts as a central distribution between the organisations, absorbing messages from each and then feeding out those deemed relevant to their respective systems. The messages and data elements for each organisation have been agreed in formal Causeway protocols. Some of this data, such as court activity and diversionary disposals, is extracted from the Causeway system by ASG statisticians to enable them to complete statistical analysis and evaluation, and to produce subsequent reports.

In terms of governance, the Causeway Team, led by the Justice Performance Team, handles the day-to-day running of the system. They manage the Causeway contract with Fujitsu; overseeing the hosting and infrastructure services provided by ESS; giving technical advice to support development of the system; coordinating and managing incident resolution and facilitating the provision of Causeway data to approved third parties.

### 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

At a high level, the contract with Fujitsu includes a formal change control process, so changes are documented, issued to Criminal Justice Organisations for impact and a decision taken on whether or not to proceed. The change request is then considered against a range of factors and if deemed viable, it is then agreed, designed, tested and implemented. The Causeway Operations Management team handles these requests and keeps statisticians informed if changes might affect data quality.

There are several layers of oversight to ensure the system runs smoothly –

- Monthly review meetings, chaired by the DoJ Contract/Operations manager involve Causeway operational staff, ESS, and Fujitsu and focus on addressing ongoing administration, maintenance or developmental issues.
- Monthly Business Design Authority (BDA) meetings are led by a senior DoJ manager and include business and IT representatives from Causeway Business and Operations, Criminal Justice organisations, Fujitsu and ESS. BDA oversees the management and continuous enhancement of Causeway services. It helps guide improvements, progress new requirements for consideration by Causeway Management Board and resolve business-related issues.
- Quarterly Management Board meetings are chaired by a senior DoJ manager. Comprising senior representatives from Causeway Business and Operations, Information Services Division, Criminal Justice organisations, Fujitsu and ESS these meetings provide senior level strategic oversight, leadership, direction and management for the overall delivery and development of Causeway services.
- Twice yearly Causeway Relationship Group meetings are led by a senior DoJ manager. With representatives from Fujitsu, Causeway, ISD, ESS and Criminal Justice organisations including statisticians, they discuss planned changes, data quality or data audits.
- Technical Design Authority meetings are held as needed to approve technical and/or security related changes. Chaired by DoJ's Chief Technology Officer, they consist of Causeway operational staff, IT representatives from the Criminal Justice organisations, Causeway Business, technical representatives from ESS and Fujitsu and Departmental ITSO.

#### Data Input Process Summary

1. Each of the five main Criminal Justice organisations has a central team that inputs/updates records on their own organisation's internal system.
2. Specific, predefined information recorded by these five organisations is then transferred to the Causeway system – located in a secure NICS data centre.
3. ASG statisticians extract data from the Causeway system storing it on a secure server within ASG. Only authorised ASG staff can view these files.
4. Causeway data (merged with other data for some publications) is used to create various statistical reports which are published on the DoJ website.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## Factors affecting data quality or causing bias and safeguards to minimise risk

The information in Causeway comes from each organisation's internal administrative data system and relies on staff to input the information. Like many administrative systems this means the data are potentially prone to human error or do not cover every possible situation. Each organisation has its own checks and alerts to help ensure accuracy. The risks to data quality and mitigating actions are detailed below.

### Risk - Staff may enter incorrect information into their organisation's internal system

- Each organisation has its own checks and alerts to monitor its own data systems.
- These internal systems are used to manage daily operations, and staff are held accountable by senior management to ensure the data is complete and accurate.

### Risk - Data Protection & Information Security requirements not complied with

- Data sharing with Fujitsu is covered by the Causeway contract and is overseen through a formal governance process within DoJ.
- All processes and systems now established.
- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files according to their retention and disposal policy.

### Risk – Ensuring personal & sensitive data is stored and transferred securely

- Causeway is a high-security system (Category A) and undergoes an annual IT health check.
- Fujitsu staff access the system directly using secure IT Assist Confidential devices.

### Risk - Insufficient data quality checks and validation processes incorporated into Causeway

- ASG statisticians apply extra validation checks and quality control measures when compiling reports.

### Risk - Insufficient levels of internal and external auditing of data and processes

- IT health check completed annually.

### Risk - Statisticians not aware of their Data Protection & Information Security responsibilities

- ASG statisticians must complete annual mandatory data protection and information security training. They also receive training in statistical disclosure control.
- Reports are peer-reviewed by other ASG statisticians before publication to ensure compliance.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## Prisoner Record Information System Management (PRISM)

Data from PRISM is used in the production of the Prison Population and Reoffending reports.

### Environment and processes for compiling administrative data

PRISM is a live recording system used by NIPS to manage prisoners in the four establishments across Northern Ireland. It has been in use since 2006 and is currently maintained by a company called Soprasteria. PRISM helps staff keep track of prisoner details, including their sentence length, release dates, and privileges. The data from which receptions and release information are derived are core fields; their accuracy is essential for daily prison operations.

The data held on PRISM originates from the results of court hearings recorded on the NICTS own data system (ICOS). Court results are recorded by the court clerk and quality assured by their line manager. They are then sent to PRISM through a messaging system (Causeway, documented in the previous section). This alerts NIPS staff within the prison main gate team that a new prisoner will be arriving.

When the person arrives at the prison gate, staff check their name and date of birth in PRISM. This information is then transferred to the reception committal screen and the individual goes to the reception area where further details, including the type of sentence, and a custodial category based on the court decision are assigned. This information is double-checked by the custody office and the PRISM team to make

sure it's correct. Reception staff then instruct PRISM to request a 'harvest' from other Criminal Justice agencies via Causeway to see if the person has other live cases, appeals, sentences, warrants, status of charges and cases. If they have been in custody before PRISM pulls up their records including inmate identification. If they haven't been in custody before, PRISM creates a new record for them.

The total sentence is calculated manually by the Central Custody Office. Staff enter the sentence type, start date, and total effective sentence. A senior staff member checks and approves this calculation. Throughout the sentence, regular checks are done to make sure everything is accurate and the prisoner is released at the right time with an alert generated to ensure checking occurs.

Before release, PRISM generates a notification called a "time served appointment," which tells staff when the person should be discharged. This is shared with staff in the prison and at the main gate. When the person is released, gate staff update PRISM to remove them from the prison list.

PRISM relies on prison staff to keep it updated. Accurate information is essential for managing prisoners properly. Some statisticians also have live read access to PRISM

# 3

## Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

and to Business Objects (the PRISM extractor programme), to extract data for reports and analysis.

The system is managed by the NIPS IT department, and any changes are handled by them, sometimes with help from Soprasteria. PRISM is also overseen by the NIPS ICT Management Board.

### Data Input Process Summary

1. Courts staff enter hearing results on Courts own data system (ICOS).
2. Result from ICOS messaged to PRISM.
3. PRISM stores data securely on servers within NICS premises.
4. Prison staff at the four prisons update prisoner in PRISM as part of daily operations.
5. NIPS staff and the PRISM team regularly check and validate the data.
6. ASG extract specific data files from PRISM and import into SPSS for analysis.
7. PRISM data, sometimes combined with other sources, is used to create statistical reports published on the DoJ website.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## Factors affecting data quality or causing bias and safeguards to minimise risk

Data provided via PRISM relies on staff to input information. Like many administrative systems this means the data are potentially prone to human error or do not cover every possible situation. Cross checks for data entry are however incorporated across the system. Given that the information recorded is used to manage day-to-day business within the NI prisons it is essential that it is highly accurate. The risks to data quality and mitigating actions are detailed below.

### Risk – Staff may enter incorrect information

- Independent validation checks carried out at each stage of the input process.
- Systems used used to manage daily operations, and staff are held accountable by senior management to ensure the data is complete and accurate.

### Risk - Data Protection & Information Security requirements not complied with

- ASG granted live read access which enables statisticians to securely extract and download bespoke frozen file segments.
- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files according to their retention and disposal policy.

### Risk - Ensuring personal & sensitive data is stored and transferred securely

- PRISM system is accredited to security level ‘Impact Level 4’ (previously known as confidential).
- ASG granted live read access which enables statisticians to securely extract and download bespoke frozen file segments.

### Risk - Insufficient data quality checks and validation processes incorporated into PRISM

- Regular in-house checks on data are conducted by both NIPS staff within the establishments and the PRISM team. Any anomalies are corrected.
- ASG statisticians apply numerous additional validation checks and quality control measures when compiling reports.

### Risk - Insufficient levels of internal and external auditing of data and processes

- Regular audits conducted by DoJ Internal Audit.
- External audits by NI Audit Office and Criminal Justice Inspectorate.
- Prison Service Management Board oversees audit findings.

### Risk - Statisticians not aware of their Data Protection & Information Security responsibilities

- ASG statisticians must complete annual mandatory data protection and information security training. They also receive training in statistical disclosure control.
- Reports are peer-reviewed by other ASG statisticians before publication to ensure compliance.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## Youth Justice Agency (YJA) Case Management System

Data from the YJA Case Management System is used in the production of the YJA Workload, Youth Engagement and Reoffending reports.

### Environment and processes for compiling administrative data

YJA’s Case Management System is a live recording system used for the day-to-day management of cases supervised by YJA, both within a custodial and community setting. The key principle underlying its operation is that it relies on case officers within the Juvenile Custody Centre and Youth Justice Service teams, along with administrative and statistical staff across the organisation to input and update information about the young people from their first contact and throughout their time in YJA’s care. Key aspects of the information recorded on the system are required for the successful day-to-day operation of the organisation and needs to be highly accurate to enable the effective supervision of the young people within YJA’s care.

ASG has been granted live access to the YJA system enabling the statisticians to extract or download bespoke data extracts via SQL syntax.

In terms of governance, the case management system is overseen by the small team of statisticians within YJA. Requests for any relatively small changes to the system are made to them on a case-by-case basis. They then liaise with IT Assist staff within DoJ, who support the system to see if the change is feasible. Larger policy decisions, would be made by YJA senior management in conjunction with their colleagues DoJ.

### Data Input Process Summary

1. YJA staff within the Juvenile Custody Centre and Youth Justice Service teams input/update records.
2. Information held on YJA Case Management on secure servers located within NICS premises.
3. Data routinely validated/checked by an individual within Youth Justice Services and a Statistician.
4. ASG extract or download bespoke data extracts via SQL syntax.
5. YJA data (merged with other data for some publications) used to compile a range of related statistical outputs which are published on the DoJ website.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## Factors affecting data quality or causing bias and safeguards to minimise risk

The YJA Case Management is a live system with multiple users that relies on staff to input information. Like many administrative systems therefore, the resultant statistics can potentially be prone to error, timely updating of information or to the system not being able to cater for every scenario encountered. As the system is used for day-to-day case management, this helps to moderate these issues. Risks to data quality and mitigating actions are detailed below.

### Risk - Inaccurate details recorded by staff on own internal system when logging information

- Monthly validation checks carried out by a member of the Youth Justice Service team and a statistician to flag up and ensure anomalies are corrected.

### Risk - Data Protection & Information Security requirements not complied with

- ASG statisticians extract or download bespoke data extracts via SQL syntax.
- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

### Risk - Secure storage and transfer of personal & sensitive data

- ASG has been granted live access to the YJA system enabling the statisticians to extract or download bespoke data extracts via SQL syntax.
- ASG store data on a secure server and delete files in accordance with their retention and disposal policy.

### Risk - Insufficient data quality checks and validation processes incorporated into system

- Regular in-house checks on data are conducted by the Youth Justice Service team and a statistician. Any anomalies are corrected.
- ASG statisticians apply numerous additional validation checks and quality control measures when compiling reports.

### Risk - Insufficient levels of internal and external auditing of data and processes

- Regular audits conducted by DoJ Internal Audit.
- External audits by NI Audit Office.
- YJA Management Board oversees audit findings and any significant issues arising.

### Risk - ASG statisticians not aware of their Data Protection & Information Security responsibilities

- ASG statisticians must complete annual mandatory data protection and information security training. They also receive training in statistical disclosure control.
- Each report is checked by other statisticians within ASG before publication.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## Potential Sources of Bias/Error in Individual Publications

### 1) Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland

While there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day-to-day business within and across Criminal Justice organisations, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Ongoing issues with bail and remand in NIPS, and increasing numbers of individuals released on bail, have meant that the number of manual checks has increased substantially year-on-year with over 2,000 checks required for the most recent cohort; work is ongoing to determine ways to reduce this. Consequently, there is the potential for some errors due to the extensive manual validation necessary although errors are unlikely to be significant.

### 2) Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With at Courts in Northern Ireland

Like the previous report, while there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day-to-day business within and across Criminal Justice organisations, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Additionally, a period of 3 months after the reporting period is left before data is extracted to allow source systems to be updated. Significant errors or missing data therefore are highly unlikely.

### 3) Court Prosecution, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals for Northern Ireland

Like the previous report, while there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day-to-day business within and across Criminal Justice organisations, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Additionally, a period of 2 months after the reporting period is left before data is extracted to allow source systems to be updated. Significant errors or missing data therefore are highly unlikely.

### 4) First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland

Like the previous report, while there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day-to-day business within and across Criminal Justice organisations, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Additionally, a period of 2 months after the reporting period is left before data is extracted to allow source systems to be updated. Significant errors or missing data therefore are highly unlikely.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## 5) Northern Ireland Prison Population

### Missing Offences and Sentence Lengths

Offence data is unavailable on PRISM in a small number of cases. This occurs because offence and sentence data is imported to PRISM from Causeway and occasionally individuals are not recorded on the Causeway system e.g. when the individual is an immigration detainee and is only being temporarily held before being transferred to GB for processing; or when an individual is sentenced outside NI (i.e. in GB or Ireland) and then transferred to NI to serve their sentence. As a result, the criminal case has not been processed through Causeway, and so there is no data to provide to PRISM.

For the purposes of the population report, immigration detainees are counted as 'unsentenced', and therefore offence categories and sentences lengths are not applicable. If there is no data for the classification of offence or sentence length, they are assigned to the 'missing' category.

### Human Input Error

The dataset for population report is constructed from daily snapshot information which is updated into the Business Objects SQL database each day from PRISM. As part of the data stored in PRISM is input by custody officers and therefore open to human error, any such mistakes are preserved in the daily snapshot. There are checks in place to correct errors on PRISM so the instances of such errors is small. Similarly, cases can occur whereby an individual may have no data provided against them for the

first few days of custody. This occurs when there is a delay in custody officers conducting the committal interview with a new arrival, meaning information used in the report which is generated during this interview will be missing.

### Less than one Day in Custody

Only individuals who spend a full day or more in custody are included in the population report. A small number of cases therefore will be excluded from the report as they are committed into custody and released on the same day.

## 6) Prosecution at Court and Case Processing Times for Domestic Abuse Cases

While there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day-to-day business within and across Criminal Justice organisations, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Additionally, a period of up to one month after the reporting period is left before data is extracted to allow source systems to be updated. Significant errors or missing data therefore are highly unlikely.

# 3 | Operational Context and Administrative Data Collection

## 7) Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland

While there is always a chance of human error with data entry, the information feeding into the report is used to manage day-to-day business within and across Criminal Justice organisations, it's accuracy and completeness therefore is critical. Additionally, a period of 6 months after the reporting period is left before data is extracted to allow for completion of the relevant outcome and for source systems to be updated. Significant errors or missing data therefore are highly unlikely.

## 8) Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics

An individual's response to the section 75 monitoring form is not compulsory and as a result we do not have full coverage. This is under continuing annual review. Coverage for the 2024/25 publication was as follows -

- Youth Justice Services - PSNI Referral Schemes - Gender 99.7%; YJA Referrals – Gender 99.3%; Religion 56.0% (not reported in the publication due to the number of missing cases).
- Custodial Services - Gender 98.9%; Religion 85.3%.

# 4 | Communication with Data Suppliers

## About This Chapter

This section documents communication with the data suppliers involved in the production of ASG's statistics.

## Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism

### **Collaborative relationships and engagement with data collectors, suppliers, IT specialists, policy and operational officials**

The agreement of the ASG data requirement from Causeway involved submitting formal data requests to the Causeway team to get the required variables made available in the required format in a regular data download. The process involved -

- Identification of the required variables for the various ASG statistical outputs;
- Working out the most suitable method of securely downloading and transferring the data from Causeway to ASG;
- Agreeing the system for ASG to download extracts as required;
- ASG testing the process and checking the statistics at the beginning of the process to ensure that they were fit for purpose; and
- Ensuring that the downloads were complete and accurate with processes in place to address/correct any problems encountered.

The ASG data requirement from Causeway is now long established with amendments made over the years to ensure that changes to the processes or systems can be included/allowed for in the statistics.

Although long established, there is still regular communication between ASG staff and the relevant staff within Causeway and Fujitsu regarding the data download process. This ranges from informal telephone/email queries to resolve data or system problems, to ASG staff attending formal meetings with the respective organisations to address larger scale project board or working group meetings.

## 4 | Communication with Data Suppliers

Causeway and the main Criminal Justice Organisations act as joint data controllers for the information held on Causeway, with a data sharing agreement in place between these organisations. ESS host the system and provide the infrastructure services liaising with Fujitsu regarding operational issues and therefore in practice, act on behalf of DoJ with technical aspects. ASG are informed by the DoJ Causeway team of any changes that could affect the reliability of our statistics or data extracts.

ASG staff are in regular contact with their customers in DoJ regarding their data needs. The vast majority of these are covered by the variables included in the regular data downloads from Causeway. Any additional variables or ad hoc data requirements would be arranged via discussions with colleagues in the DoJ Causeway team. Any problems experienced with the completeness of the downloads are raised by ASG staff with colleagues within Causeway and Fujitsu as soon as they come to light.

### **Formal agreements detailing arrangements**

In terms of the legal basis for data supply, the information is collected to meet legal obligations and public functions and to enable DoJ to deliver its services, maintain its records, support and manage the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, and for litigation and legal advice purposes.

At its conception, data sharing agreements were established between Causeway and each of the organisations and agencies involved, to ensure that information can be easily, yet appropriately, shared, for both day-to-day management and wider use, for example in the production of statistics.

### **Prisoner Record Information System Management (PRISM)**

#### **Collaborative relationships and engagement with data collectors, suppliers, IT specialists, policy and operational officials**

The agreement of the ASG data requirement from PRISM involved submitting formal data requests to the PRISM team to get the required variables made available in the required format in a regular data download. The process involved –

- Identification of the required variables for the various ASG statistical outputs;
- Working out the most suitable method of securely downloading and transferring the data from PRISM to ASG;

# 4

## Communication with Data Suppliers

- Agreeing the system for ASG to download extracts as required;
- ASG testing the process and checking the statistics at the beginning of the process to ensure that they were fit for purpose; and
- Ensuring that the downloads were complete and accurate with processes in place to address/correct any problems encountered.

The ASG data requirement from PRISM is long established with amendments made over the years to ensure that changes to the processes or systems can be included/allowed for in the statistics. Although long established, there is still regular communication between ASG staff and the relevant staff within PRISM. This ranges from informal telephone/email queries to resolve data or system problems, to ASG staff attending formal meetings with the respective to address larger scale project board or working group meetings.

The PRISM team within DoJ act as the data controller of the information on the system and oversee/approve all changes or improvements to it. Larger scale changes to PRISM are referred to the head of the NIPS IT team. ASG would generally be informed by the PRISM team of any changes that could affect the reliability of our statistics or data extracts during this process.

ASG staff are in regular contact with their customers in NIPS regarding their data needs. The vast majority of these are covered by the variables they can access. Any additional variables or ad hoc data requirements would be arranged via discussions with colleagues in the PRISM team.

Any problems experienced with the completeness of the extracts are raised by ASG staff with colleagues within PRISM as soon as they come to light.

### Formal agreements detailing arrangements

In terms of the legal basis for data supply, DoJ is deemed the data controller with regard to the data held on PRISM. The information is collected on PRISM in order to meet its legal obligations and public functions and to enable it to deliver its services, maintain its records, to support and manage the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, and for the purposes of litigation and legal advice.

# 4

## Communication with Data Suppliers

### YJA Case Management System

#### **Collaborative relationships and engagement with data collectors, suppliers, IT specialists, policy and operational officials**

The ASG data requirement from the YJA Case Management System is long established with amendments made over the years to ensure that changes to the processes or systems can be included/allowed for in the statistics.

The ASG statisticians have responsibility for maintaining the YJA Case Management System and have access to the live system, downloading bespoke data extracts via SQL syntax. They are in regular communication with IT Assist who maintain the system. This communication can range from informal telephone/email queries to resolve data or system problems, to ASG staff attending formal meetings.

ASG staff are in regular contact with their customers in YJA regarding their data needs. The vast majority of these are covered by the variables included in the monthly data downloads from the system. Any additional variables or ad hoc data requirements would be arranged via discussions with colleagues in IT Assist.

#### **Formal agreements detailing arrangements**

In terms of the legal basis for data supply, YJA is deemed the data controller with regard to the data held on the YJA Management System. The information is collected in order to meet its legal obligations and public functions and to enable it to deliver its services, maintain its records, to support and manage the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, and for the purposes of litigation and legal advice.

# 4

## Communication with Data Suppliers

### Data Protection

ASG act as data processors to the DoJ data controller. ASG statisticians have access to the live systems (Causeway, PRISM and YJA Case Management System) and can download bespoke data extracts. All data files are stored on secure ASG servers within Core, NIPS and YJA with access restricted solely to those staff within the branch who need it.

The Head of Financial Services Division (the DoJ Division within which ASG sits) acts as the Information Asset Owner for the branch and is required to ensure that branch procedures are in place and staff are adequately trained in data protection requirements. All ASG staff must complete mandatory on-line data protection and information security training on joining the branch and complete further annual refresher training.

ASG ensures that procedures are updated and reviewed on a six-monthly basis and has local systems operating procedures in place to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of ASG data by outlining the data handling and security procedures that ASG staff must comply with.

ASG staff apply statistical disclosure control to all data sourced from Causeway, PRISM and the YJA Case Management System to ensure that no one is identifiable from the data or any sensitive information relating to them. The only exception being where DoJ staff need more detailed information for operational reasons. In this instance, the data is protectively marked as 'official sensitive' and the recipient is reminded that the information cannot be shared outside of their unit.

### Engagement with Users

ASG conducts a bi-ennial survey of the users of our statistical publications to ascertain their views of the statistics we produce, how well they meet their needs and whether they have any suggested improvements.

Whilst the majority of ASG work is undertaken for key users of our statistics within DoJ, a range of other users of the statistics both within the wider public sector and also members of the general public are also included in the survey. The most recent survey was conducted in February 2025, and the results are summarised on the [DoJ website](#). The survey was sent out to 121 users of our statistics and 27 questionnaires were completed giving a response rate of 22%.

## 4 | Communication with Data Suppliers

The vast majority (72%) of respondents worked for the NICS; remaining responses came from academia (20%), non-NICS public sector employees, trade union and voluntary sector workers. The most popular reason for using ASG publications was for policy/performance/resource (89%). This was followed by academic research (30%) and media/public interest (19%). The key findings of the most recent survey are highlighted below and on the following page.

| ASG Publication                                                                  | They fully meet their needs | Mostly meet their needs | Slightly meet their needs | Don't meet their needs at all |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Adults and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland                                 | 38%                         | 62%                     | 0%                        | 0%                            |
| Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Courts in Northern Ireland | 56%                         | 44%                     | 0%                        | 0%                            |
| Court Prosecution, Convictions and Out of Court Disposal for Northern Ireland    | 50%                         | 50%                     | 0%                        | 0%                            |
| First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland           | 42%                         | 58%                     | 0%                        | 0%                            |
| The Northern Ireland Prison Population                                           | 33%                         | 50%                     | 17%                       | 0%                            |
| Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics                                         | 23%                         | 77%                     | 0%                        | 0%                            |
| Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland                                 | 88%                         | 13%                     | 0%                        | 0%                            |
| Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases | 67%                         | 33%                     | 0%                        | 0%                            |

Any suggested improvements or problems identified for each statistical output in the survey are presented in the survey report along with a response from ASG. All suggested improvements or problems identified are considered by ASG and are implemented where possible. If the change is not feasible, an explanation is provided as to why that is the case.

## 4 | Communication with Data Suppliers

| ASG Publication                                                                  | Satisfied | Neither | Dissatisfied |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| Adults and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland                                 | 100%      | 0%      | 0%           |
| Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Courts in Northern Ireland | 100%      | 0%      | 0%           |
| Court Prosecution, Convictions and Out of Court Disposal for Northern Ireland    | 100%      | 0%      | 0%           |
| First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland           | 100%      | 0%      | 0%           |
| The Northern Ireland Prison Population                                           | 83%       | 17%     | 0%           |
| Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics                                         | 83%       | 17%     | 0%           |
| Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland                                 | 100%      | 0%      | 0%           |
| Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases | 100%      | 0%      | 0%           |

In addition to the annual user survey, ASG staff liaise and meet with the key users of their statistics on a regular basis throughout the year. In practice this tends to be in the form of small ad hoc meetings with a number of specialist staff within the Department who have responsibility for the relevant work area. In addition to these meetings, ASG staff also have regular telephone and email contact with key users to respond to urgent queries or to provide policy colleagues with relevant statistics or associated advice and guidance. Contact details are also provided in all publications and on the ASG website where users are also invited to provide feedback and to complete a short survey.

The statistics across the publications are used to inform policy decisions within DoJ, as well as to inform requests from other Government organisations and to answer NI Assembly questions, freedom of information requests and general queries from the public.

# 5

## Quality Assurance Principles and Checks Applied by Data Suppliers

### About This Chapter

This section documents the quality assurance procedures applied by data suppliers.

### Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism

#### **Data assurance arrangements in data collection and supply**

Causeway is an integrated messaging system specifically designed to support information sharing between the five main NI Criminal Justice organisations. The key principle underlying Causeway's operation is that it relies on individual staff within the five organisations to update records on their own systems. Specific, predefined information recorded by these organisations is then messaged to Causeway, via the data sharing messaging system where it is held on the central database. The information on individual systems is updated on a day-to-day basis by staff in the originating organisation. These systems are used for the management of day-to-day business, with data linked to progress of cases navigating through the Criminal Justice system and ultimately legal decisions including those pertaining to an individual's innocence or guilt. Accuracy therefore is critical so each organisation has its own set of comprehensive checks and alerts for their system. These include a range of regular data quality processes to identify and correct errors or anomalies in key variables.

#### **Role of operational inspection and internal/external audit**

The multiple layers of governance built into the Causeway contract have already been documented in section 3. Involving the Causeway Team (Operations & Business) within DoJ, Fujitsu, ESS and the Criminal Justice Organisations, the meetings include monthly review, monthly Causeway Business Design Authority, quarterly Causeway Management Board, twice yearly Causeway Relationship Group and ad hoc Causeway Technical Design Authority meetings.

# 5

## Quality Assurance Principles and Checks Applied by Data Suppliers

### Prisoner Record Information System Management (PRISM)

#### Data assurance arrangements in data collection and supply

The core modules used for statistical purposes are derived from the administrative data modules on PRISM linked to custody and prisoner location. It is critical that the data in these modules is reliable and accurate as it is used for managing prisoner movements and identifying where a prisoner should be at any given time so a range of checks are put in place.

As previously stated, the data held on PRISM originates from the results of court hearings recorded on the NICTS own data system (ICOS). These results are recorded by the court clerk and quality assured by their line manager. The confirmed result is then messaged to PRISM through Causeway where a flag is generated for any missing cases/variables which are then checked individually and corrected.

When the individual arrives at the prison gate the main gate team verify and check that the correct information is on the PRISM system. The total overall sentence element is not automatically applied but is instead accumulated manually as part of the sentence calculation process by the Central Custody Office. The calculation process involves one person calculating a sentence and recording the sentence type. The information is then quality assured by a more senior grade who confirms and authorises it. Periodic checks are undertaken during the sentence.

As a specific data check, on every occasion that an individual enters or leaves the prison (including for court appearances), the main gate team will check that their information on PRISM is correct.

#### Role of operational inspection and internal/external audit

In addition to the above the DoJ Internal Audit unit would regularly inspect and check the data quality aspects of the PRISM system. These internal audit reports are presented to the NIPS IT Management Board and to NIPS senior management for consideration and appropriate action. The NI Audit Office and the Criminal Justice Inspectorate also regularly inspect the NIPS, including data quality.

# 5

## Quality Assurance Principles and Checks Applied by Data Suppliers

It should also be noted that in November 2010 the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) completed a detailed review of the PRISM system. While the focus was warrant and discharge rather than on the custodial screens which form the basis of the population statistics, the findings resulted in the introduction of a series of additional controls and validation checks for the system as a whole. In particular, an audit trail of alerts for individual inmates and a means of confirming that they had been actioned; a process of independent check and authorisation stages involving different members of staff; and a restructuring of inmate files to align with the details of records held on PRISM.

### YJA Case Management System

#### Data assurance arrangements in data collection and supply

A number of measures have been included in the YJA Case Management System to help reduce the chance of errors. These have included, input where possible, restricted to drop down menus and the introduction of a series of validation prompts including alerts for missing or mismatched information. Monthly validation checks have also been included for key pieces of information, with the statisticians alerting individuals with responsibility for data input, to ensure issues are resolved quickly.

The co-location of a statistician within YJA and the links forged with those inputting data, has been invaluable at improving data quality and understanding of how the data is being used.

#### Role of operational inspection and internal/external audit

In addition to the above the DoJ Internal Audit unit would regularly inspect and check aspects of the policy and practice regarding the management system. This includes checking whether data recorded on the system is accurate and correct. These internal audit reports are presented to YJA senior management for consideration and appropriate action. The NI Audit Office also conducted an independent review of performance targets and how data are collated and stored. These reports are made available to YJA and to DoJ senior management. They reported no evidence of erroneous data entry to manipulate figures or meet targets and found support for the general quality of information contained within YJA case management databases.

# 6 | Producer's Quality Assurance Investigations and Documentation

## About This Chapter

This section documents the additional series of quality assurance checks that ASG apply to the data they receive from Causeway, PRISM and the YJA Management System.

## Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism

### QA checks and quality indicators for input data

A data download is extracted from Causeway. Validation exercises are then conducted, to ensure that the data are accurate and up to date with manual checks undertaken and data corrected to ensure -

- that all important date markers follow logical sequences;
- that information is complete with regard to personal and sentence information;
- that offences and sentencing information are correct according to specified genders and ages;
- that the stated age of the individuals concerned is appropriate and realistic (e.g. no-one under the age of 10); and
- that a general check of the data as a whole suggests no other anomalies.

Identified discrepancies are investigated and resolved on an individual basis.

Data are also validated against the original administrative data systems from which they came, in particular, NICTS systems, and checks are also made against the Criminal Records Viewer (CRV) as part of the statistical validation checks.

While the quality assurance procedures are extensive and robust, the statistics are inevitably subject to the limitations inherent in any large-scale recording system, to variations in recording practice over time and to error. The data however focus on core business practices and therefore there is a strong interest by the respected organisations in ensuring the accuracy of data recorded.

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## Strengths

- Causeway is an integrated messaging system specifically designed to support information sharing between the five main NI Criminal Justice organisations. The information recorded within the individual organisations is used to manage day-to-day business and to communicate between other the other organisations so needs to be highly accurate.
- The system works well and is trusted by the staff who use it. It is reliable and needs minimal maintenance.
- Personnel involved in managing Causeway have developed a high level of competence and experience of the system.
- The data are sourced from an administrative data system and therefore are a complete record of all cases (i.e. are not based on a sample of staff).

## Weaknesses/Limitations

- The system depends on staff within five separate Criminal Justice organisations inputting details and updating records on their own systems. While there is the potential for problems to occur if details aren't updated on a timely basis or if input errors occur, the nature of the information make accuracy critical.

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## Prisoner Record Information System Management (PRISM)

### QA checks and quality indicators for input data

A data download is extracted from PRISM which includes details on individual prisoners. This is used as the primary source of information to calculate prison receptions and releases. Validation exercises are then conducted, to ensure that the data are accurate and up to date with manual checks undertaken and data corrected to ensure -

- that all sentenced prisoners have a sentence length;
- that there are no sentence lengths that are discrepant (e.g. murder offences attracting a sentence of 7 days);
- that the total effective sentence adds up to the custody sentence plus the licence sentence;
- that the stated age of prisoners is appropriate and realistic (e.g. no-one aged 8,108, etc.);
- that the gender of prisoners is appropriate for the prison establishment (e.g. no male prisoners in a female prison); and
- that a general check of the data as a whole suggests no other anomalies.

Identified discrepancies are investigated and resolved on an individual basis.

While the quality assurance procedures are extensive and robust, the statistics are inevitably subject to the limitations inherent in any large-scale recording system, to variations in recording practice over time and to error. PRISM is used extensively for the operation of NIPS core business; in addition, the data fields used for the publications are those that the officers themselves would have a strong vested interest in being accurate, therefore one can be confident in the accuracy and robustness of the source administrative data, to a degree much greater than would normally be the case with administrative systems requiring lower degrees of operational precision.

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## Strengths

- There is an operational need to have accurate and up-to-date details on prisoners to ensure effective handling of day-to-day prison operations. It is critical that the system is accurate and kept up to date.
- Information recorded on PRISM is manageable with an average daily prison population of 1,500 and approximately 5,300 receptions per year.
- The information is input by trained staff.
- The system works well and is trusted by the staff who use it. It is reliable and needs minimal maintenance.
- Personnel involved in managing the PRISM system have developed a high level of competence and experience of the system.
- The data are sourced from an administrative data system and therefore are a complete record of all cases (i.e. are not based on a sample of cases).

## Weaknesses/Limitations

- The system is dependent on prison officers and administrative staff across the department accurately inputting details onto it. Problems could potentially occur if staff don't update the details on a timely basis or if input errors are made. Given the nature of the information, it is critical that the system is kept up to date and is accurate.

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## YJA Case Management System

### QA checks and quality indicators for input data

On a monthly basis, key validation reports are distributed among teams, to ensure that any potential errors detected are checked at source and corrected when needed. In addition to this, annual checks are also completed by the statistician within YJA, with information again being checked for;

- Accuracy and completeness (identifying blanks in the data and obvious input errors);
- Logic (for example age-appropriate disposals); and
- Against information held in other recording systems, such as CRV.

In addition, when release information is shared with the DoJ statistician, to produce official statistics in relation to reoffending, further checks are completed. These include comparing information held within the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service case management system (ICOS) and further checks on CRV.

Whilst these checking procedures are extensive and robust, the statistics contained in the statistical publications are inevitably subject to the limitations inherent in any large-scale recording system, to variations in recording practice over time and to the fallibility of human input in areas which are not capable of automatic crosscheck. However, as the YJA administrative databases are used extensively for the operation of the acute business provision, a degree of confidence can be had in the accuracy and robustness of this source administrative data.

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## Strengths

- There is an operational need to have accurate and up-to-date details for the young people in the care of the YJA to ensure the effective handling of day-to-day operations. The system therefore is accurate and kept up to date.
- The information recorded on the YJA Case Management System is manageable with approximately 1,600 referrals per year.
- The system works well and is trusted by the staff who use it. It is reliable and needs minimal maintenance.
- A small number of key personnel are involved in managing the YJA Case Management System and have developed a high level of competence and experience of the system.
- The data are sourced from an administrative data system and therefore are a complete record of all cases (i.e. are not based on a sample of cases).

## Weaknesses/Limitations

- The system is dependent on case officers, administrative staff and statisticians across the department accurately inputting details onto it. Problems could potentially occur if staff don't update the details on a timely basis or if input errors are made.
- The system is quite dated.

## Quality Assurance Measures Specific to Individual Statistical Outputs

In addition to the set-up checks that are carried out when the files are received from Causeway, PRSIM and the YJA Case Management System additional individual quality assurance measures are also undertaken when producing the statistical output for each publication.

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## 1. Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland

Quality assurance checks undertaken using SPSS syntax include –

### *Causeway Specific Checks*

- i. Checking personal and sentence information is complete;
- ii. Checking court information data is complete; if not gaps filled manually from information obtained from the NICTS database ICOS;
- iii. Checks for duplicate entries of same disposal with same penalty;
- iv. Checks to assess whether pertinent dates match (e.g. 'ParticipantDealtWithDate' and 'ResultDate');
- v. Logic checks of date variables to ensure date markers follow a logical sequence (e.g. is 'ParticipantDealtWithDate' the same or later than 'OffenceDate', do all diversion/cautions have a diversion/caution completed date);
- vi. Logic checks car of age variables (e.g. age of offender for YOC/JJC, age at offence check against age at 'ResultDate');
- vii. Logic checks on all disposal types (e.g. do all monetary disposals have an associated amount and vice versa, do all custodial terms have an associated period and vice versa, does every DCS and ECS have a license period and vice versa, etc.);
- viii. Check for removal of appeals;
- ix. Check for cases that have dealt with dates across different years, as, in some cases, some of the defendants will have been dealt with in previous years but not included in that year's file;
- x. Check all offences have an offence code and offence suffix;
- xi. Check for amended/revoked offence codes or codes that do not indicate a guilty finding; and
- xii. Check offence codes against offence reference file and any new ones added to the look up list for principal offence ranking.

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## PRISM Specific Checks

- i. Check personal and sentence information is complete;
- ii. Records marked as 'sentence releases' by the NIPS Statistician are checked to ensure that court, committal and release dates are included and are logical;
- iii. Records marked 'to be checked' cross referenced using data from CRV, ICOS and PRISM to see if these cases have been released as 'time served' or if cases have not resulted in a custodial sentence at court. Only those marked as 'time served' kept for analysis;
- iv. Following identification of 'time served', these cases are checked to ensure that court, committal and release dates are included and are logical;
- v. Those not marked as 'sentence releases' or 'time served' are deleted; and
- vi. Using sentence date, Party URN, name and DOB, the remaining cases are matched to the validated Causeway files, adding prison release details to the file. This matching process involved logic checks -
  - a) Only custodial sentences are matched;
  - b) Offence and court dates should pre-date release dates; and
  - c) Offender name and DOB should match prison information.

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### YJA Case Management Specific Checks

- i. Checking personal and sentence information is complete;
- ii. Small number of cases checked and marked as 'sentence releases' or 'non-sentence prisoners'. Only 'sentence releases' are kept; and
- iii. Using sentence date, Party URN, name and DOB, the remaining cases are matched to the validated Causeway files, adding prison release details to the file. This matching process involved logic checks -
  - a) Only custodial sentences are matched;
  - b) Offence and court dates should pre-date release dates; and
  - c) Offender name and DOB should match prison information.

Any anomalies or errors identified as a result of these checks are referred back to Causeway, PRISM or YJA to be corrected at source by the data supplier on their IT systems.

Time-series checks are carried out. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are investigated with the data supplier and either confirmed or corrected. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with historical trends or not.

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## 2. Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases Dealt With At Courts in Northern Ireland

The data used to produce Case Processing Time statistics are also subject to quality assurance procedures using SPSS syntax which is regularly updated to take account of changes to data recording in Criminal Justice organisation systems and in Causeway. Quality assurance checks undertaken include –

Checking data for all court information is complete and missing information obtained from the NICTS ICOS database;

- i. Check if included cases have been completed;
- ii. Check if third party cases are appropriately marked;
- iii. Logic checks completed for age at offence and age at result date in relation to court types;
- iv. Checks conducted to ensure appeals, breaches, and diversions/cautions at magistrates' have been removed;
- v. Ensure SOC cases which have been withdrawn at magistrates and sent to the Crown have been removed;
- vi. Logic checks of dates completed, e.g. dates of birth and logical sequences of key dates through the justice process; and
- vii. Check all the 'length of stage' variables that have been generated and revise where possible using ICOS and CRV.

The resulting data is changed where errors/issues are identified. These changes range from completion of missing data, standardisation of variables such as gender and date variables, to the correction of erroneous information by checking back to source information (mainly ICOS but also CRV within Causeway).

Additionally, time-series checks are carried out to compare, on a quarterly basis, the number of cases that fall into each court, and time taken to complete cases of different court and offence types. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are investigated and either confirmed or corrected. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with expected trends or not.

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## 3. Court Prosecutions, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals for Northern Ireland

The data used to produce Prosecutions, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals statistics are also subject to quality assurance procedures using SPSS syntax which is regularly updated to take account of changes to data recording in Criminal Justice organisation systems and in Causeway. Quality assurance checks undertaken using SPSS syntax include –

- i. Checking data for all court information is complete and missing information obtained from the NICTS ICOS database;
- ii. Logic checks completed for dates e.g. dates of birth and for offence dates and disposal dates;
- iii. Logic checks completed for disposal types and relevant quantitative amounts, e.g. does every monetary disposal have an associated amount and every custodial term an associated period;
- iv. Logic checks completed for age of offender at juvenile/magistrates' court;
- v. Logic checks completed for disposals that have more than one part, e.g. do combination orders have both a probation and community service order element;
- vi. Checks conducted to ensure appeals have been removed;
- vii. Checks conducted to ensure cases were not counted in the previous year, as some cases may not be recorded as completed on the same date;
- viii. Logic checks completed to ensure all diversions/cautions have a diversion/caution completed date;
- ix. Checks conducted for double entries of the same disposal (with the same penalty period/amount); and
- x. Checks conducted for duplication of motivational fields and those that are surplus are removed.

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The resulting data is changed where errors/issues are identified. These changes range from completion of missing data, standardisation of variables such as gender and date variables, to the correction of erroneous information by checking back to source information (mainly ICOS but also CRV within Causeway).

Additionally, time-series checks are carried out to compare, on an annual basis, the number of cases that fall into each court and disposal category. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are investigated and either confirmed or corrected. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with historical trends.

### 4. First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland

The data used to produce first time offender statistics are updated from the annual prosecutions, convictions and out of court disposals dataset once it has been validated. The quality assurance checks are documented on the previous page.

The resulting data are changed where errors/issues are identified. These changes range from the completion of missing data, the standardisation of variables including gender and date, to the correction of erroneous disposal information. Erroneous information is corrected by checking back to source information, mainly ICOS, but also CRV.

First time offender markers and first conviction markers are generated following a merge with the historical offending dataset. Additionally, time-series checks are carried out to compare, on an annual basis, the number of cases that fall into each category. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are investigated and either confirmed or corrected. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with historical trends or not.

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### 5. The Northern Ireland Prison Population

There are a number of quality assurance checks conducted on the data using SPSS syntax which is regularly updated and takes into account changes in policy relating to sentencing and custody of an individual. The following checks are undertaken -

- i. Identification of statuses that indicate an individual is not part of the prison estate and therefore not included in the report;
- ii. Duplicate cases in which a single individual has more than one inmate number during the course of the year. Prison staff will have identified these cases and corrected the duplicate inmate number to the original, however errors are still present in snapshot data;
- iii. Principal offence is based on the most serious offence the individual is in custody for and that this offence is applicable to their custodial category;
- iv. Multiple data points for a single variable in a given day can arise when an individual changes custodial category. In such cases the custodial category that the individual ended the day as is favoured and the other data points removed;
- v. Gender is checked against establishment, as only Hydebank Wood house females, and cases identified as female outside Hydebank should not be female. Care is taken to manually verify PRISM records of transgender individuals, as the assumptions used to flag errors for males and females may not apply;
- vi. Sentence type is a derived variable based on PRISM's custodial category which can have errors in the daily snapshot due to manual updates by staff. This can be checked by extracting or manually checking aggregated custodial category information from PRISM which contains corrected records and markers to indicate input errors;
- vii. All lifers are correctly categorised; and
- viii. Sentence Lengths

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- a) Check one: The sum of the custodial and licence components equates to the total effective sentence.
- b) Check two: Remand cases have a sentence length of 0 and sentenced individuals have sentence lengths greater than 0.
- c) Check three: The principal offence is one that the individual committed and received a sentence for as recorded by CRV.
- d) Check four: Sentence lengths fit with the seriousness of the principal offence.
- e) Check five: Recall to prison as an offence carries a low weighting for seriousness, and will often not be automatically identified as the principal offence.

All data flagged during checks is validated against a number of other variables contained within PRISM or with alternative sources such as CRV and ICOS. If PRISM cannot be used to identify the correct value for given variable during a check, NIPS staff are available to search records manually and if needed, further investigate any issues.

After each of the variables has been validated, comparisons are carried out with historical trends in the data to ensure there has not been any significant deviation (without cause) from prior population reports. Any differences compared to trends are investigated to uncover whether or not an error has occurred at some point during data collection and analysis, or if it is due to policy changes.

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## 6. Prosecutions at Courts and Case Processing Time for Domestic Abuse Related Cases

The data used to produce statistics on domestic abuse related cases are updated from the case processing time dataset and prosecutions, convictions and out of court disposals dataset once they have been validated. The quality assurance checks are documented in previous sections.

The data used to produce domestic abuse statistics are subject to quality assurance procedures, using SPSS syntax, similar to those used to produce prosecutions, convictions and out of court disposals and case processing time statistics, as the basis of the domestic abuse statistics dataset is the same as for those broader datasets. Validation syntax and processes are updated as necessary, to take account of changes to data recording in Criminal Justice Organisation systems and in Causeway.

### Explanation for users about the data quality and impact on the statistics

Each publication contains a section detailing data sources and any issues or guidance needed relating to the quality of data and the interpretation of information. A background quality report is also published for each publication. Further, statisticians work closely with policy colleagues to an appropriate level of understanding pertaining to the information in question is detailed in the publication.

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## 7. Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland

The data used to produce Youth Engagement statistics are also subject to quality assurance procedures using SPSS syntax and manual query using CRV. The syntax is regularly updated to take account of changes to data recording in Criminal Justice organisation systems and in Causeway. In addition to the set-up checks that are carried out when the files are received from Causeway and YJA , the following quality assurance checks are also undertaken –

- i. Checking data for key fields such as suitability for youth engagement, outcomes and relevant dates are complete and missing information obtained from CRV or the NICTS ICOS database;
- ii. Logic checks completed for dates, e.g. dates of birth (age of offender suitable for youth engagement), offences dates and disposal dates;
- iii. Logic checks completed in relation to disposal types and outcomes between Causeway and YJA data;
- iv. Logic check on dates associated with the reporting period;
- v. Logic check on clinic dates, to ascertain first clinic date but final clinic outcome; and
- vi. Checks for duplicate entries

These checks may result in data being corrected, where errors or issues have been identified. These changes range from the completion of missing data, the standardising of variables such as gender and date variables, to the correction of erroneous information. Erroneous information is corrected by reference to the source information, mainly CRV, but also ICOS and through consultation with YJA colleagues.

Routine, time-series checks are carried out to compare, on a quarterly and annual basis, the number of cases that fall into each category. Any significant and unexplained increases or decreases which occur are further investigated and remedial action taken if necessary. There is no set measure of tolerance in terms of the change which would trigger a query to the data supplier, but the time-series comparisons provide a useful indication of whether the data are consistent with historical trends or not.

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## 8. Youth Justice Agency Workload Statistics

In addition to the set up checks carried out when the files are extracted from the YJA Case Management System and described earlier in this document, the YJA annual workload statistics are also subject to quality assurance procedures (within SQL management studio) both on a monthly and 12 monthly basis. This syntax is regularly updated when new errors are identified within the datasets. The following checks are undertaken -

- i. Ensuring conferences have valid ID types;
- ii. Make sure all conferences have an associated young person;
- iii. Ensuring all the conferences in the period of interest have an associated offence;
- iv. Ensuring only one primary offence is recorded;
- v. Ensure cases have appropriate completion dates; and
- vi. Identifying duplicate children.

When the data has been extracted from SQL and imported into R Studio, a further review is carried out and where possible, missing postcodes are manually updated using the children's case notes.