Overview of users and uses of statistical publications

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**Information and technology
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Contents

Overview of uses and users of statistical publications

Purpose

This document describes briefly which organisations and individuals use NHS Digital statistical publications and provides some examples of the types of use.

NHS Digital statistical publications

NHS Digital produces a wide range of statistical publications in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the NHS Digital Publication Strategy. In 2015/16 it produced over 300 such releases, which included National Statistics, Official Statistics and Audits. These covered many areas including hospital activity; mental health; workforce; lifestyle choices e.g. smoking, drinking habits and physical activity; information on prescribing and the remuneration of GPs. These releases have a great variety of users and stakeholders with differing levels of specialist knowledge and experience. Publications are accessed in a number of ways; a significant proportion of users find publications using search engines such as Google and Bing.

NHS Digital publications are used by many national stakeholders as the main nationally comparable and complete source of information.

Some publications report data as a high level overview of the output while others report at sub-national levels.

Generally publications consist of a report and a data quality statement (which may be included in the main document) and supporting data tables in Excel and CSV (enabling users to choose how they access the outputs. Some releases now additional options for users including one-page summaries and interactive features such as dynamic tables released on the Tableau or Microsoft Power BI platforms and interactive maps created using Google Maps.

Publications are released via the NHS Digital website, and can also be accessed via the GOV.UK platform.

Feedback is welcomed and is actively invited on our publications.

Why user views are important and how feedback is collected

Suggestions, recommendations and other feedback are collected and reviewed to enable NHS Digital to understand and review how well user and stakeholder needs are being met by its publications and to determine how these releases may be improved.

Examples of how user views are collected include:

- Asking users to rate the usefulness of releases
- Consultations

- During meetings / workshops / fora

- E-bulletins

- "Have your say" form on the NHS Digital website

- Mailing lists

- Naming Responsible Statistician on all Official Statistics releases

- Online surveys

- Queries directed to publications teams

- Records maintained in analytical areas

- Telephone or face to face interviews

- User groups

- User surveys

Links to examples:

Consultation on changes to NHS Digital Statistics 2016/17 - 2018/19

NHS Digital consultation and survey page

Social Services User Survey Group

The "have your say" form

HSCIC Publication Strategy Annexes 8 and 9

Who uses our statistics?

Known users of NHS Digital releases include the following organisations and groups:

- Academics, Life Sciences and Research

- Central Government / Policy Officials

- Charities, Pressure groups and Patient Representative Groups

- Clinical groups

- Commentators / Think tanks

- Commercial Organisations

- Commissioners

- Health and Social Care Providers (refer to Appendix A for more detail)

- Independent Sector Care Providers

- International Bodies

- Media

- Non-Health Government Departments

- Patients and Members of the Public

- Producers and Users of Official Statistics

- Public Health Bodies

- Regulators / Supervisory Bodies

Following the publication of the HSCIC Publication Strategy, NHS Digital have adopted the ONS approach of considering our statistical users in terms of three distinctive and robust 'persona types' – 'Expert Analyst', 'Information Forager' and 'Inquiring Citizen', each with a unique set of goals, behaviours and motivators. This applies to NHS Digital statistical data and users and therefore is a very helpful and useful approach due to its simplicity. Using it helps us to deliver appropriate outputs to meet the needs of each user type, and to meet our responsibility of providing public authoritative information to improve public debate.

Uses of NHS Digital publications

NHS Digital publications are used for numerous purposes:

- Allowing scrutiny and monitoring of health and social care

- Answering PQs and correspondence from Members of Parliament

- Briefing Ministers

- Budgeting / Monitoring assets

- Educating

- Enabling members of the public to make informed choices about their care

- Identifying areas of need

- Informing policy

- Interpreting and analysing data by demographics e.g. age, sex, ethnicity, disability

- Interpreting and analysing trends over time

- Monitoring impact (e.g. of change or policy introduction) on relevant organisations

- Planning and prioritisation provision

- Preparing research papers / compendia of information / books etc.

- Recognising and disseminating good practice

- Undertaking local / region / European / international comparisons and analysis

- Undertaking secondary analysis by third party organisations

- Using data for management purposes

Areas of unmet need and recognised constraints

Feedback is particularly welcomed to enable NHS Digital to determine the extent to which its releases meet the needs of its users. Typical requests for additional information to be included in certain publications may include:

- Additional clinical information such as more detail on procedures / conditions / diagnosis codes

- Additional regional analysis

- Data covering additional reporting years

- Analysis by demographics, for example age, sex, ethnicity, deprivation

- More frequent publications (for example monthly rather than quarterly releases)

- Reporting data for the UK as a whole or including information for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland separately within the publication

- Special topical analyses

Constraints to implementing all requested changes can include:

- The need to balance the cost of data collection, analysis and publication against the benefits of such changes

- It may not be feasible, in some instances, to produce data to particular level of disaggregation due to the nature of the data collection

- Protecting confidentiality is essential and may preclude reporting at a more detailed level

- Funding constraints and pressure on resources may prevent or delay the implementation of changes

How feedback is used

Responses to formal consultations are considered and outcomes reported on the NHS Digital website. More general user feedback for specific publications is considered during the design stage for subsequent releases. Some examples of changes made in response to feedback include those:

- GP Practice populations (patient list sizes) were added to the Quality Outcomes Framework (QOF) Recorded Dementia Diagnoses publication to facilitate the calculation of prevalence following requests from a number of stakeholders and other users.

- The format and content of the "Inpatients formally detained in hospitals under The Mental Health Act 1983, and patients subject to supervised community treatment – Annual figures" publication has been significantly revised on a number of occasions, including following a public consultation and subsequent work with our invited Mental Health Act Expert User Group, and more recently in response to the UKSA Assessment of these statistics (see "Content of this publication" on page two of the report.

- Several changes were made to the content and format of the Quality Outcomes Framework – Prevalence, Achievements and Exceptions Report 2014 following a public consultation.

How to comment and get involved

In addition to the options listed above, many publications include a feedback page and all provide details of how feedback can be submitted.

Appendix A – Known Users

The following list, which is not exhaustive, shows some of the bodies known to use HSCIC statistical releases.

Academics, Life Sciences and Research

- Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs)
- Academic Researchers
- Alzheimer's UK
- Association of Medical Research Charities
- British Heart Foundation
- Cancer Research UK
- Health Research Authority
- Medical Research Council (MRC)
- National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
- The Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD)
- Wellcome Trust

Central Government / Policy Officials / Other UK Governments and Agencies

- Cabinet Office
- Department of Health
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Northern Ireland (DHSSPS(NI))
- Health Education England (HEE)
- National Audit Office
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
- NHS Business Service
- NHS Confederation
- NHS England
- NHS Isle of Man
- NHS Northern Ireland
- NHS Scotland
- NHS Wales
- Other HM Government Departments
- Public Health England (PHE)

- Scottish Government
- Welsh Government

Charities, Pressure Groups and Patient Representative Groups

- Ability.net
- Age UK
- Cancer Research UK
- Diabetes UK
- Disability Rights UK
- Genetics Alliance
- HealthWatch
- Independent Cancer Patient Voices
- INVOLVE
- KIDS
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- MENCAP
- Mental Health Alliance
- MIND
- National Association of Patient Participation
- National Voices
- Patient Opinion
- Rethink
- RNIB
- Turning Point

Clinical Groups

- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Care
- Association of Independent Healthcare Organisations (AIHO)
- British Dental Association
- British Medical Association
- General Dental Council
- Health and Care Professions Council

- NHS Partners Network (Part of NHS Confederation)
- Royal College of Nursing
- Royal College of GPs
- Royal College of Physicians
- Royal College of Psychologists
- Royal College of Surgeons

Clinical Information / Health Informatics Groups

- Confidentiality Advisory Group / Data Access Advisory Group (DAAG)
- The Professional Records Standards Body
- UK Council for Health Informatics Professionals

Commentators / Think Tanks

- Kings Fund
- Nuffield

Commercial Organisations

- Association of the British Healthcare Industries (ABHI)
- Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI)
- Pharmaceutical companies Nuffield

Commissioners

- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGS)
- Commissioning Support Units (CSUs)
- Data Service for Commissioners Regional Offices
- Local Authorities (LAs)
- NHS England Area Teams (LATs) & Analytics Team
- Specialised commissioning

Health and Social Care Providers

- Dental Practitioners
- Independent providers of health care
- Local Authorities

- NHS Providers
- Acute
- Ambulance
- Care Homes
- Community
- Learning Disability
- Mental Health
- Pharmacy
- Social Care
- Urgent Care Centres and Out of Hours
- Optometrists
- Primary Care / General Practitioners

International Bodies

- Eurostat
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- World Health Organisation (WHO)

Media

- Broad
- Online
- Print

Non-Health Government Departments

- Department for Communities and Local Government
- Department for Education
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Justice
- National Archives
- Prison Service

Other Bodies

- National Police Chiefs Council (formerly Association of Chief Police Officers)

Patients and Members of the Public

- Patients
- Public
- Patient Representative Groups (see above)

Producers and Users of Official Statistics

- Office for National Statistics
- Health Statistics User Group

Public Health Bodies

- Health Protection Agency
- National Cancer Intelligence Network
- Registries (such as Cancer, Renal, Stroke) + End of Life Care

Regulators / Supervisory Bodies

- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
- Monitor
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
- NHS Trust Development Authority (NTDA)