



NHS National Services Scotland Information Services Division

Statistical Revisions Policy

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Revision history

Version	Date	Summary of changes
0.1	21 October 2009	Initial draft by Philip Johnston, for Duncan Buchanan consideration. For SAG consideration, 02/12/09.
0.2	15 December 2009	Comments from SAG meeting (02/12/09) and Katrina Bird telecom (14/12/09). Addition of 'definitions' section and clarity of 'scope'. For Duncan Buchanan consideration.
0.3	6 January 2010	Comments from Duncan Buchanan (05/01/10). For Duncan Buchanan and ISD SMT consideration.
0.4	10 February 2010	Agreed by SMT for release

1 Scope

- 1.1 The Code of Practice for Official Statistics (UK Statistics Authority, January 2009) requires producers of Official Statistics to publish a Revisions Policy. ISD, as part of NHS National Services Scotland, are specified in relevant legislation as a producer of Official Statistics. This policy therefore covers ISD's compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics requirement for a Revisions Policy.
- 1.2 Relevant links to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and from related National Statistician's guidance, are shown in Annex 1.
- 1.3 This protocol covers 'planned revisions' (including methodological changes) and 'unplanned revisions' (including corrections to errors).

2 Definitions

2.1 The following are definitions on which this policy is based:

- A '**revision**' is a change to any statistic, once it has been placed in the public domain
- '**Planned revisions**' can occur for a number of reasons, including the following:
 - where they form a normal part of the release process for a given statistical series.
 - as a result of seasonal adjustment, benchmarking or rebasing exercises.
 - changes – for example to the underlying methodology, or to sources or classifications.
- '**Unplanned revisions**' are those which do not fit into the managed pattern of revisions normally associated with the statistics in question. They can occur, for instance, at an unusual point in the revision cycle, or have an impact on the statistics which was not anticipated. They can be caused, for example, by errors, by unforeseen changes in methodology, by the unexpected acquisition of new data, or by the effects of changes to source systems
- '**Substantial revisions**', whether planned or not, are those which lie outside the range of revisions normally associated with the statistics in question.
- '**Corrections to errors**' mean instances where ISD, or a supplier organisation, has made an error in methodology, calculation, presentation or interpretation. It does not relate to aspects of data quality.

3 Policy

3.1 In compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the ISD Revisions Policy is:

- The organisation will be open and transparent about any revisions we make to official statistics and we will ensure that users of our statistics will have easy access to comprehensive information about those revisions.
- The organisation will indicate on our website those publications that are subject to a scheduled pattern of planned revisions. These releases will also explain the revisions policy for that publication.
- The decision on how to treat an unplanned revision will consider the costs and benefits to users of any changes, and the impact on national and local statistics, before an appropriate method of revision is determined such as re-release or simple notification.
- The organisation will highlight on our website substantial unplanned revisions, and corrections to errors; these will also include instances where we have not made changes after an error has been identified.
- For each individual statistical series/report, timeliness of release will be balanced with the need to avoid unplanned revisions. Where, in the interests of timeliness, provisional data are released in advance of revised final figures, these will be clearly highlighted to users of the data. Many of ISD's statistical series/reports routinely release provisional statistics, partly reflecting use of data from administrative sources, the dynamic nature of some databases, and user need for timely data.
- Where a revision has been made, or a future revision is planned, the publication concerned will explain the impact on key statistics and findings.
- Where revisions are planned as a result of changes to methodology or definitions, consideration will be given as to the appropriate method of publicity, including potential user consultation.
- Substantial methodological changes will be announced before the release of statistics based on the new methods.
- Decisions on whether to revise historical data will be influenced by the material impact of any revisions and user needs.

4 Further information

4.1 It is planned that ISD will in future produce a Revisions Protocol. The Revisions Protocol would describe the procedure for managing and recording revisions to publications and other material released by ISD.

Annex 1 References

A1.1 Code of Practice for Official Statistics – relevant extract

[from: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>]

A1.1.1 From 'Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity':

6. Publish a Revisions Policy for those outputs that are subject to scheduled revisions. Provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released.

A1.2 National Statistician's guidance – relevant extracts

A1.2.1 The (UK) National Statistician has published guidance in support of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The following guidance documents refer to revisions:

'Quality, Methods and Harmonisation' (August 2009):

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/guidance/quality--methods-and-harmonisation.pdf>

[see, for example, paragraphs 50 and 51]

'Presentation and Publication of Official Statistics' (August 2009):

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/guidance/presentation-and-publication-of-official-statistics.pdf>

[see, for example, paragraphs 8 and 13]