

## Quality Assurance of Administrative Data

### Administrative data used in the NI Housing Stock Statistics: Property records from Northern Ireland Valuation List

#### Background to Data

NI Housing Stock statistics measures the number of domestic dwellings recorded in Northern Ireland at the beginning of each financial year.

In line with the Rates Order (NI) 1977, Housing stock is defined as a count of properties which are valued as domestic or mixed for the purposes of rating. This refers to properties in the Valuation list which are used (or when next in use, will be used) for the purposes of a private dwelling. This includes properties which are temporary incapable of beneficial occupation, but excludes caravans, domestic garages, domestic stores and car parking spaces.

This document will focus on the attributes of a property from the Northern Ireland Valuation List, which is maintained by Land & Property Services (LPS). The NI Domestic Valuation List holds a record of the characteristics of all dwellings assessed for rates. All domestic property in Northern Ireland is assessed on the basis of its capital value in line with comparable properties in its locality. A property is considered to be domestic if it is used (or when next in use, will be used) for the purposes of a dwelling. The current Valuation List for domestic properties became operative on 1 April 2007 and is based on capital values as at 1 January 2005.

The NI Valuation List is a live system which is updated daily through LPS business as usual activity. Each month a snapshot is extracted and the property characteristics are validated using sense checks on a number of variables eg. size of property outside defined limits.

QA Level

**A1: Basic Assurance**

#### Risk Rationale

The production and publication of house price data can be considered as **low profile**, in that there is limited user/media interest in the results that are published, as it is a politically neutral subject. Errors in the construction and publication of the statistics would have no impact on the economy.

The data quality concern attached to the NI Valuation List is considered a **low quality** concern, given that the data is collected by chartered surveyors with a view to assessing the property for tax. The data is published on the Department of Finance website and provided to the property owners on an annual basis, thus allowing for any errors to be identified and corrected. Further detail is provided in

each of the areas below to justify this assessment.

When taking into consideration the public profile of house price statistics, its potential impact and the level of quality concern from the provider, the level of assurance attached to the use of the NI Valuation List data in the production of the NI Housing Stock statistics has been assessed as [A1: Basic Assurance](#). As such, this Administrative data is deemed as being of low risk, and an enhanced level of quality assurance is not required.

#### Practice Area 1: Operational Context and Admin Data Collection

LPS collect, process and manage land and property information, which underpins the collection of rates, in support of the Executive's commitment to economic and social development in Northern Ireland.

The Domestic Capital Value List holds a record of all domestic properties in NI which have been assessed for the purposes of collecting rates. Data is collected under the Rates Order (Northern Ireland) 1977. There are five LPS offices across Northern Ireland and each office collects the same information by following a detailed process map. The property characteristic information is held in the IT system Assessment Office (AO), which has in-built validation tools for key characteristics.

Each characteristic held within the AO system is defined within a codebook listing the possible value names and a short explanation of when and how these should be used. LPS Statistics Branch in conjunction with Valuation Directorate have introduced an internal data quality feedback mechanism, where errors or issues found within the data are highlighted to local staff and are corrected quickly.

Characteristic details of each property in the Valuation List are published on the Department of Finance website, and are available to purchase from LPS in a machine readable format. The details are also provided on the annual rates bill sent to customers at the beginning of the financial year. Property owners have the ability to check the accuracy of their property details and contact LPS to highlight any issues. Contact is available through a number of channels including online and by telephone.

#### Practice Area 2: Communication with Data Supplier Partners

Statisticians work closely with Valuation colleagues within LPS regarding the specification and supply of Domestic Valuation List data. The supply of data is supported through a service level agreement. The data provided includes individual records of each domestic property in NI along with their characteristics such as size, type, address, power, glazing type etc.

The data are held securely within the LPS servers and are accessed by LPS statisticians using an ODBC connection via the statistical package SPSS.

LPS Statistics Branch in conjunction with Valuation Directorate have introduced an

internal data quality feedback mechanism, where errors or issues found within the data are highlighted to local staff and are corrected quickly.

### Practice Area 3: QA Principles, Standards and Checks by Data Suppliers

The NI Valuation List is a live system from which statisticians take an extract on a monthly basis. The data showing the position at the beginning of the financial year is used in the production of the NI Housing Stock statistics.

The property details are entered onto the AO electronic system. AO is a bespoke database, specifically designed for the purposes of assessing the valuation of properties and came into use in 2007. Each record is uniquely identified by a Property Identifier number, so there is no issue of duplicate records. There is in-built validation of fields within the system e.g. number of bedrooms must be numeric, however there is no restriction on the magnitude of the number entered.

Data is entered by various levels of staff at each stage of the process. Data entered at the previous stage of the process are checked by those entering data at the current stage. Anomalies are highlighted and amended in a timely manner. The final data is only entered into the list following approval by a chartered surveyor.

Records entered into the list for newly built dwellings or altered dwellings, where the alterations are value significant, are included in a certificate which is sent to the owner of the property. The owner can contact LPS to highlight any errors or inconsistencies in the data and these will be corrected on the system.

### Practice Area 4: Producers' QA Investigations and Documentation

The NI Valuation List is a set of characteristics (about a property) that is used to calculate the Housing Stock in NI at the beginning of the financial year. More details on the NI Housing Stock statistics can be accessed at: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/housing-stock-statistics>

LPS statisticians quality assure the monthly extract of the NI Valuation List to assess the property characteristics held within the system. The main quality assurance is to check that all build type, property type, and location values are valid. The size variable is also checked to highlight any extreme values in the data. Any anomalies are notified to the local LPS office responsible for the area in which the property is located, and are corrected promptly.

There is no issue with missing characteristic data within the Valuation List as all key characteristics (size, type, location etc) must be present to support the assessment when the property is entered into the list.

Further quality assurance takes place on a regular basis as a by product of analysing the dataset to answer operational queries, ad-hoc queries, and assembly questions.