

**Northern Ireland Statistics
and Research Agency (NISRA)**

**Annual Report and Accounts
For the year ended 31 March 2018**

*Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly
under section 11(3) (c) of the Government Resources
and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001
by the Department of Finance
on
2 July 2018*



© Crown copyright 2018

This publication is licenced under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is also available to download from our website at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk>

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent by e-mail to info@nisra.gov.uk , by telephone: (028 9038 8400) or by post:

NISRA
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
Belfast
BT9 5RR

CONTENTS

	Page
PERFORMANCE REPORT	2
OVERVIEW	3
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	8
Ministerial Targets	9
Balanced Scorecard	10
Information Management	19
Financial Review	20
Long Term Expenditure Trend	21
Auditors	21
Events after the Reporting Period	22
Payment to Suppliers	22
Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives	22
ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT	24
OVERVIEW	25
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT	26
Directors' Report	27
Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities	28
Governance Statement	29
REMUNERATION AND STAFF REPORT	36
OTHER ASSEMBLY ACCOUNTABILITY DISCLOSURES	46
THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY	49
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS	52
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE NET EXPENDITURE	53
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	54
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS	55
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN TAXPAYERS' EQUITY	56
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS	57
GLOSSARY	75

PERFORMANCE REPORT

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this overview section is to outline the performance of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) during the 2017-18 financial year and to highlight the key issues and risks identified by management.

History and Statutory Background

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (DoF), was established on 1 April 1996 under the Government's Next Steps Initiative. The Agency incorporates the General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland.

The Business

The Agency's Mission is:

- to produce and disseminate high quality, trusted and meaningful statistics and research to inform decisions and improve understanding; and
- to provide a high quality and cost effective civil registration service to meet users' needs.

NISRA is the principal source of official information on Northern Ireland's population and socio-economic conditions. Its statistics and research services are afforded to a wide range of government departments and agencies to assist them in the delivery of their objectives and actions. The statistics produced by the Agency not only inform the policy process within government, but also inform academic research and contribute to debate in the wider community. Statistics are produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics published by the UK Statistics Authority in January 2009. NISRA ensures that its statistical outputs are fit for purpose such that users have a high degree of confidence in them.

The General Register Office (GRO), which is incorporated within NISRA, provides a civil registration service and produces summary statistics relating to life events.

Vision

NISRA's vision is -

Trusted statistics and research for a better society

In striving to deliver our vision we will build on our history and our reputation for quality and customer service, and on advancements in information communication technologies.

Key Aims, Principal Functions and Targets

Aims

The corporate aims of NISRA are -

- (i) to provide a statistical and research service to support decision making by Northern Ireland ministers and departments;
- (ii) to inform elected representatives and the public through the dissemination of reliable official statistics; and
- (iii) to administer the marriage laws and provide a system for the civil registration of births, marriages, civil partnerships, adoptions and deaths in Northern Ireland.

Principal Functions

The principal functions of the Agency are -

- to provide and co-ordinate professional statistics and research services, and to be the principal advisory body on statistics and social research for Northern Ireland departments, agencies and non-departmental bodies;
- to carry out the Census of Population and provide high quality demographic information to enable the number and the condition of the population to be monitored and changes over time to be identified;
- to collect, analyse and make available official statistics which describe Northern Ireland's society, economy and public services;
- to ensure that statistical and research standards are adhered to and that the best and most appropriate methodological practice is employed in official statistics, social research and policy evaluation;
- to provide Northern Ireland statistics required for the United Kingdom, European Union and international statistical series; and
- to administer the marriage laws and provide an efficient and effective system for the registration of births, marriages, civil partnerships, adoptions and deaths in Northern Ireland.

Risks and Uncertainties

Risk management has been incorporated into the business planning and decision-making processes of the Agency. The Agency maintains a Risk Register which defines the framework and describes the process for identifying and managing risks.

The purpose of the Audit and Risk Committee is to support the Accounting Officer in monitoring NISRA risk, control and governance systems. Additionally the Audit and Risk Committee will give advice to the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of coverage of audit arrangements (internal and external) to provide required assurances. The Committee comprises three non-executive independent members, currently John Smyth, Elizabeth Ensor and Tom Taylor. The Committee is chaired by an independent Non-Executive member of the DoF board (John Smyth) and during this reporting period operated under the best practice guidance in accordance with The DoF Audit and Risk Assurance Handbook (March 2014).

The Committee met on 4 occasions during the course of 2017-18. The Corporate Risk Register was provided to all meetings and the Committee reviewed in detail departmental level risks in relation to:

Census Risk (2021 Census);

Customer Risk;

Official Statistics Risk;

GRO Risk (NIROS, GENI Income);

Finance/Resources Risk;

Information Assurance Risk;

HR Risk General;

HR Risk Sickness Absence;

Economic Statistics Risk;

Modernisation of Statistical Data Collection Infrastructure;

Impact of leaving the EU; and

New Technologies.

Chief Executive Overview

Like all other public sector bodies NISRA has witnessed an increasing demand for services against a backdrop of constrained staffing and resourcing. Despite this NISRA has continued to provide a high quality service to its customers, delivering its Official Statistics Work Programme (Impact1(vi)), supporting policy colleagues and engaging with users (Trust1(ii)). NISRA has also continued to provide a high quality and cost-effective Civil Registration service.

The Agency has achieved both headline Ministerial targets, supporting the development of a new Programme for Government and preparing for the 2021 Census (see page 9). Of the remaining 28 targets (that could be measured^[1]), NISRA has fully achieved or substantially achieved 20 targets and partially achieved a further 3 targets^[2]. The main reasons for failing to achieve part of a target were dependencies on other stakeholders, delays in source data and higher priority work such as EU-exit analysis.

NISRA did not achieve its two targets relating to modernising GRO systems (Impact2(i)) and preparing the Corporate plan (Governance2(i)), the first was due to staff shortages, and the second due to the decision to await the outcome of the progress of the Digital Economy Act through Parliament as it provides a different context for our work and also to implement a more extensive process in order to meet the longer term needs of NISRA and ensure appropriate engagement with all staff. The targets relating to the completion of Personal Performance Agreements (PPAs) for 2017/18 (Governance 2(viii)) and End-year Performance Reviews for 2016/17 (Governance 2(ix)) by the agreed deadline, and complying with DoF timescales for sickness absence management and recording (Governance2(vii)) were not achieved. This is in part a consequence of NISRA staff deployment outside central reporting arrangements and is an area that NISRA has been focusing on in 2017-18 and will continue to focus on in 2018/19.

[1] The NISRA customer Survey was not carried out in 2017/18, thus it was not possible to measure the percentage of key users rating NISRA's services as satisfactory (Trust1(i)).

[2] Overall Performance (non-Ministerial Targets): 15 achieved; 5 substantially achieved; 3 partially achieved; 5 not achieved and 1 not measured.

Further detail on NISRA's performance against all of the targets is included in the NISRA Balanced Scorecard Section at pages 10 to 19.

Highlights of the Year

This year was topped and tailed by some significant events. At the end of March 2017 the invocation of Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon placed a new emphasis on understanding trade flows between UK/NI and the EU but especially trade flows with and through Ireland. NISRA reprioritised work to provide support to NICS and Whitehall colleagues to inform their decision making. NISRA published EU Exit related analysis on our website to inform public debate. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economy/eu-exit-analysis>. This year NISRA also published NI: in Profile, which brings together the key trends in society and the economy in an easily accessible resource pack. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/ni-summary-statistics/ni-profile>

NISRA continued to support the development of draft outcomes and associated indicators for the new style of outcome-based accountability draft Programme for Government (PFG). This approach is highly data dependent and NISRA statisticians all across the NICS worked together this year to develop high quality and relevant population level indicators for the current draft PFG. This year NISRA also worked to strengthen the basis of those measures derived from household surveys, for example increasing the size of the Labour Force Survey— this step will also improve our understanding of the labour market in the period before and after EU exit.

Preparations for the Census advanced considerably this year with the approval of the 2021 Census business case and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Office for National Statistics on procurement of services. Being able to procure as part of a larger consortium delivers efficiencies of scale and increases value for money against what we could achieve on our own. Last year NISRA also developed systems to take forward work on enhanced Census Outputs, using administrative data alongside the Census to provide a richer set of statistical outputs.

After a period where NISRA lost staff through the Voluntary Exit Scheme and there was a moratorium on recruitment and promotion, 2017-18 saw a return to a more normal cycle. Following the Assistant Statistician recruitment competition in 2016-17 which resulted in 25 successful candidates being allocated to longstanding vacancies in June 2017, a further 30 Assistant Statisticians joined in January 2018 following a second competition. This still left a shortfall of 13 posts continuing to be filled by recruitment agency statistical officers. A further competition has been raised and is currently progressing through departmental clearances. Promotion opportunities were available during the year to Deputy Principal and Senior Principal (Grade 6) Statistician and staff were promoted off the Grade 7 list from the competition concluded in 2016-17. A further promotion competition to Grade 5 Statistician is planned for 2018-19.

And the year closed with the launch by the UK Statistics Authority of the new Code of Practice for statistics which set out the refreshed principles and practices followed by producers of official statistics so that they are trustworthy, of high quality and of public value. <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>

General Register Office Operations

Between April 2017 and March 2018 the General Register Office (GRO) processed 102,582 certificates. 99.6% of priority certificate applications and 89.6% of standard certificate applications were fulfilled within target timescales - one and five working days respectively. This

was despite the continuing high demand for birth certificate applications for Irish Passports following the EU exit vote.

Additionally, GRO processed 2169 Casework Cases including re-registrations, adoptions, name changes and corrections, all were completed within the target timescale of 15 working days.

Just under 1000 members of the public visited the new Public Search room in Colby House, feedback has been very positive about the facilities. The four terminals installed in the PRONI search room have been well received with customers advising that it is saving them time being able to access the official birth, death and marriage records in the city centre and also in PRONI where they are often searching for other records.

12,815 new accounts were registered on the GRO Family History website. There were 1,185,949 searches carried out – the most popular being the free index search which accounted for 1,035,623 searches.

Preparations for General Data protection Regulations (GDPR) have focused the attention of all staff on the guardianship of the data held by GRO. GRO has a number of Data Sharing Agreements with other Government Departments, mainly for the provision of death registration data to enable organisations to maintain the accuracy of their databases and reduce opportunities for fraud. The data for these agreements is issued using the Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) but following the introduction of the Northern Ireland Registration Office System (NIROS) it has been possible to provide HMRC with an electronic birth verification data source for use in the Tax-Free Childcare scheme. This means that HMRC can access birth registration directly on the NIROS system with the aim being that this will help HMRC facilitate a more efficient customer journey, remove the need for a paper application process, speed up delivery for customers and reduce costs for both parents and HMRC. This is a limited service at present but it is anticipated that once the opportunity is available for GRO to bring forward new legislation that it will be possible for GRO to provide the electronic birth verification process to other HMRC services and the wider government sector.

A number of presentations were made to different organisations including Belfast Family History Society explaining what records GRO holds and how to use that information to trace family members. This was very well attended and the members asked numerous questions and organised a visit to GRO a week later.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Targets

The Agency's targets are grouped under four strategic themes. These reflect the Agency's strategic priorities, and also NISRA's position within the wider government statistical community:

- **Impact** - delivering a modernised registration service and supporting and influencing decision making in government and the wider community through engagement and the dissemination of reliable official statistics;
- **Quality** - ensuring outputs are produced to the highest professional and methodological standards; and developing and managing appropriately skilled people who take pride in their work and their organisation;
- **Trust** - through the trustworthiness, impartiality and independence of its outputs, responsiveness to users' needs and adherence to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics; and
- **Governance (Management)** - through adherence to procedural and legislative requirements, including UK Statistics Authority guidance and departmental policies, and the application of appropriate financial controls.

The Department consults with the Agency on the development of key (or Ministerial) targets, which form part of the Department of Finance's Business Plan. These key targets are supplemented by a suite of Chief Executive targets, all of which are detailed in NISRA's Annual Business Plan.

Performance against Targets

The Agency had two key ministerial targets for the year 2017/18. Both targets were achieved. The results have been confirmed as accurate by DoF Internal Audit and are summarised in the Ministerial Targets section below.

Performance against the Chief Executive targets is summarised in the NISRA Balanced Scorecard Section at pages 10 to 18.

Ministerial Targets

Targets	Result
<p>Programme for Governance: To assist Government Departments in the development and monitoring of the Programme for Government (PfG).</p>	<p>Reporting and monitoring arrangements are in place in NISRA and TEO and are ready to implement immediately a PfG is agreed.</p> <p>Enhancements to various social and economic surveys are progressing to provide the level of data needed.</p> <p>Annual wellbeing statistics were published on 20th July 2017.</p>
<p>2021 Census of Population: To make further detailed preparations for a 2021 Census of Population.</p>	<p>The Outline Business Case was submitted to DoF Economist on 28th June 2017. The plans have also been outlined to the new NISRA Audit and Risk Committee in February 2018.</p> <p>The draft Enumeration Strategy was considered and approved by Census Oversight Board in January 2018. The strategy will also be presented to the newly established Census Advisory Panel in May 2018.</p> <p>Plans for the use of administrative data in the 2021 Census were approved by the Census Oversight Board in September 2017. The paper was sent to Demographic Statistics Advisory Group in January 2018 and presented at its March 2018 meeting.</p> <p>The Census Oversight Board signed off on the detailed structure of the 2021 Proposals document on 23 March 2018. The Proposals paper will be finalised in 2018/19 with a view to publication later in financial year.</p>

NISRA's Balanced Scorecard 2017/18

Impact		
Objective I1: To influence decision-making in government and improve understanding in the wider community.		
Targets	Measures	Outcomes
<p>(i) To assist Government Departments in the development and monitoring of the Programme for Government (PfG).</p> <p>DoF (Ministerial) Target</p>	<p>Once PfG is agreed, reporting and monitoring arrangements in place in time for the uploading of the first population-level indicator.</p> <p>DoF capital investment for 2017/18 to support Economic Statistics and associated data for PfG implemented in response to data development agenda and Technical Assessment Panel (TAP) recommendations.</p> <p>Annual wellbeing statistics published for Northern Ireland before end July 2017.</p>	<p>Achieved: Reporting and monitoring arrangements are in place in NISRA and TEO, and are ready to implement immediately a PfG is agreed.</p> <p>Enhancements to various social and economic surveys are progressing to provide the level of data needed.</p> <p>Annual wellbeing statistics were published on 20th July 2017</p>
<p>(ii) To publish and promote new Northern Ireland spatial measures of multiple deprivation.</p>	<p>Publication of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 (NIMDM 2017) final report and statistics along with a supporting methodology paper and user guidance / metadata by September 2017.</p> <p>Events organised, held and evaluated by December 2017.</p> <p>Deprivation measures for the new Electoral Wards (2014) published by March 2018.</p> <p>Project milestones achieved.</p>	<p>Substantially Achieved: Due to a delay in the supply of key datasets, the NIMDM 2017 final report was published on 23rd November 2017.</p> <p>Dissemination events took place in November for key stakeholders and wider dissemination events took place in February / March 2018. This was a more substantial programme of events than originally planned.</p> <p>Small Area results were released on 12th April 2018; results for the new Electoral Wards is planned for summer 2018.</p>
<p>(iii) To make further detailed preparations for a 2021 Census of Population.</p> <p>DoF (Ministerial) Target</p>	<p>Outline Business Case for 2021 Census sent to DoF Economist / Supply by end June 2017.</p> <p>Enumeration strategy developed and approval obtained from 2021 Census Project Board by March 2018</p> <p>Plans relating to the use of administrative data in the 2021 Census developed and approval obtained from the Census Project Board by December 2017.</p> <p>Proposals document drafted and approval obtained from Census Project Board by March 2018, ready for public consultation in 2018/19.</p>	<p>Achieved: The Outline Business Case was submitted to DoF Economist on 28th June 2017. The plans have also been outlined to the new NISRA Audit and Risk Committee in February 2018.</p> <p>The draft Enumeration Strategy was considered and approved by Census Oversight Board in January 2018. The strategy will also be presented to the newly established Census Advisory Panel in May 2018.</p> <p>Plans for the use of administrative data in the 2021 Census were approved by the Census Oversight Board in September 2017. This paper was sent to Demographic Statistics Advisory Group in January 2018 and presented at its March 2018 meeting.</p> <p>The Census Oversight Board signed off on the detailed structure of the 2021 Proposals document on 23rd March 2018. The Proposals paper will be finalised in 2018/19</p>

		with a view to publication later in the financial year.
(iv) To modernise statistical data collection and make greater use of administrative data in Official Statistics.	<p>Implementation of NISRA Address Register (derived from Pointer and administrative data that provides a frame for statistical data collection) by March 2018.</p> <p>Methodology paper (for the production of population counts solely from Administrative data, that will be used to Quality Assure the mid-year estimates and support the 2021 census) produced by March 2018.</p> <p>New population survey data collection platform (Blaise 5) implemented in two population surveys.</p> <p>Level of uptake of Business Survey Electronic Data Collection in March 2018.</p> <p>Progressing work to gain access to (amongst others) (i) HMRC Export (ii) OFCOM Broadband (iii) HMRC business turnover data</p> <p>Paper (Investigating the potential of setting up a centralised data linkage service to support Official Statistics) produced for Agency Board consideration.</p>	<p>Achieved: Census Office has produced a NISRA Address Register using a range of administrative data sources. It is being used by NISRA Central Survey Unit (CSU) to draw samples for household surveys.</p> <p>A methodology paper for Administrative Data Population Estimates has been produced and shared with relevant staff in Census Office and Demographic Statistics.</p> <p>Blaise 5 has been implemented as the data collection platform for the NI Passenger Survey and the Continuous Household Survey.</p> <p>Electronic data collection (EDC) uptake has increased for both quarterly and annual business surveys. For quarterly surveys, EDC rates ranged from 46% to 78% (Q4 2017) and for annual surveys EDC rates ranged from 17% to 30%.</p> <p>Work has progressed to gain access to administrative data for improved Official Statistics. The EU-Exit team have secured trade data from HMRC and work is ongoing to match HMRC records with our survey records.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to investigate the potential of setting up a centralised data linkage service to support Official Statistics.</p>
(v) To further develop Economic Accounts for Northern Ireland.	<p>Database system to hold and maintain input and output data for 2012 and 2013 Supply-Use Tables developed by March 2018.</p> <p>Two meetings of the Project Board held in 2017-2018. Appropriate project documentation in place.</p> <p>SAS code produced to replicate the key Excel processes used for Supply-Use Tables and visual aids to Quality Assure data.</p> <p>Users consulted on comparisons between NI and UK Purchases Inquiry results to inform development by September 2017.</p> <p>Ensure NI sample boost is maintained for 2017 Purchases Inquiry.</p>	<p>Substantially achieved: Database system development for Economic Accounts was put on hold to prioritise EU-Exit analysis. This included the production of 2014 and 2015 Supply Use Tables (SUTs) – the latter was not on the original workplan. By March 2018 database system design was progressed significantly and initial implementation had started.</p> <p>Two meetings of the Project Board were held and documented.</p> <p>Progress has been made in replicating the key excel processes in SAS. Visual aids have been produced.</p> <p>Purchases Inquiry data provision was delayed by ONS, due to additional time and resources required for validation of results. NISRA have been involved in informing</p>

		<p>methodology for allocating UK figures to NI.</p> <p>The NI sample boost has been secured for the 2017 Purchases Inquiry.</p>
(vi) To deliver NISRA's Official Statistics Work Programme for 2017/18.	NISRA's 2017/18 Official Statistics Work Programme delivered, subject to resources and circumstances outside NISRA's control.	Achieved: NISRA branches reported that their 2017/18 Official Statistics Work Programme had been delivered.
Objective I2.To enhance the profile of NISRA and the services NISRA delivers		
Targets	Measures	Outcomes
(vii) To further modernise GRO systems to enhance the customer experience	<p>New processes agreed by September 2017.</p> <p>Processes tested over the autumn period and fully in place by December 2017.</p> <p>Use of services.</p>	Not Achieved: The necessary training took longer to procure than expected so there was a delay in starting this work. The majority of processes have been mapped out, but due to staff shortages and changes in staff, the development work has not been progressed as far as expected. This work will be taken forward in 18/19.
(viii) To consider and develop data science and data analytics within NISRA.	<p>Actions agreed by NISRA Agency Board implemented.</p> <p>Improved data analytics knowledge / skills based on survey baseline.</p> <p>Competence framework reviewed.</p>	<p>Substantially achieved: Following the pilot programme in 2016/17 – Agency Board have taken on board the evaluation of the programme and supported the progression of specific projects.</p> <p>On-going support and liaison with ONS Data Science Campus has been formalised as a resource for NISRA. Pathfinder projects have commenced and a Data Science training plan has been developed in draft form in conjunction with the Data Science campus. Training in QGIS was rolled out to a new cohort of trainees and two statisticians have commenced the MSc in Data Analytics at QUB.</p> <p>A preliminary review of NISRA's professional competence framework was presented to Agency Board in February 2018.</p>
(ix) To improve dissemination of NISRA outputs.	<p>Way forward agreed for Phase 2 of website development. Business Case drafted if required.</p> <p>Number of visits to NINIS website.</p>	<p>Achieved: An options paper for the dissemination of 2021 Census results was prepared, and the decision made to proceed to explore and develop the implementation of the PX-family of software for future use on the NISRA and NINIS website.</p> <p>There were 135,000 visits to the NINIS website in 2017/18, an increase of 17,000 on 2016/17.</p>

(x) To promote NISRA data through engagement with the Open Data Agenda.	<p>Percentage of NISRA products with a 3 star rating.</p> <p>NISRA represented on the Open Data Implementation Board.</p>	<p>Achieved: The percentage of NISRA products with a 3 star rating increased to 45% in 2017/18.</p> <p>The NISRA Director of Analysis sits on the Open Data Implementation Board.</p>
(xi) To support the use of administrative data for external research.	<p>Number of safe-setting bookings / attendances.</p> <p>Successful health check of NISRA safe-setting with re-accreditation by September 2017</p> <p>Number of datasets placed in Data Archive.</p>	<p>Achieved: There have been 53 bookings from 19 different researchers. Capacity has been increased to up to 20 concurrent users.</p> <p>Re-accreditation of NISRA safe-setting achieved for a period of 3 years from 26 June 2017.</p> <p>Police Recorded Injury Road Traffic Collision Data, Birth Registrations and Mortality Records are updated annually in the Data Archive. NISRA also places Social Survey data in the Data Archive.</p>

Quality		
Objective Q1: To further develop NISRA as a desirable place to work.		
Targets	Measures	Outcomes
(i) To implement key improvements identified through staff survey, staff engagement or by benchmarking with other organisations.	<p>NISRA Staff Attitudes Survey.</p> <p>HR Action Plan produced and progress against targets updated quarterly.</p> <p>NISRA intranet, with improved functionality, acting as a central source of information for NISRA staff, implemented by end March 2018.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved: The Staff Survey Task & Finish Group report 2016/17 was completed and presented to Agency Board in March 2017. This was followed by Focus Groups to prioritise the actions. The Task & Finish Group investigated other organisations for better ways of doing things and referred to these in its report.</p> <p>HR Action Plan available to all on NISRAnet and updated on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>A specific NISRA staff survey was not carried out in 2017/18 as the NICS wide People Survey was carried out in Autumn 2017. The NICS People Survey is now going to be conducted annually and NISRA is looking to accommodate a NISRA focused element within the design of the larger people survey. This will reduce the burden on staff and deliver efficiencies and cost savings albeit for a smaller set of questions.</p> <p>Although NISRAnet continues to be updated, functionality developments have been suspended pending a decision on transfer of site content to the DoF intranet NISRA offshoot. A requirement is that the solution provided is at least as good as the current platform is allowing outposted staff access.</p>

Objective Q2: To demonstrate Trust, Quality and Value in the production of NISRA Official Statistics outputs.

Targets	Measures	Outcomes
<p>(ii) Where appropriate, to progress statutory National Statistics assessments and achieve designation.</p>	<p>All products to obtain National Statistics designation where an assessment outcome is declared within the year.</p> <p>Number of National Statistics assessments of NISRA statistics progressed by March 2018.</p> <p>Reduction in number of products to which pre-release access is given and the number of people on pre-release access lists.</p> <p>Paper presented to Agency Board in 2017/18, to determine the future of the peer review scheme.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved: The Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics were designated as National Statistics (NS) on 8th May 17. No outputs have failed to obtain NS status.</p> <p>A NS Assessment report for the NI House Price Index was published in November 2017.</p> <p>A review of pre-release access was completed in 2017/18 and a paper presented to Agency Board on 11th April 2018. A way forward has been agreed and will be implemented in 2018/19.</p> <p>The paper on the NISRA peer review scheme has been postponed, as the GSS Good Practice Team are currently looking at this area which may replace the need for the scheme.</p>
<p>(iii) To implement the Statistics Authority quality guidance across NISRA.</p>	<p>Evidence of implementation of quality guidance in NISRA branches.</p> <p>QAAD completed by the end of March for all administrative data used in Official Statistics.</p> <p>Professional training provided.</p> <p>Information disseminated through the quality pages of the intranet, STARzine and other corporate communications.</p>	<p>Substantially achieved: 95% of NISRA products published in 2017/18 had some quality documentation in place.</p> <p>60% of Official Statistics products based on administrative data had a QAAD in place and a further 11% had a QAAD in progress. This was highlighted as part of the quality risk assessment for each output in the business planning branch meetings with the Agency Board and will be flagged again for review at the next quality risk assessment.</p> <p>NISRA provided 30 statistical training courses during 2017/18. This included both Quality Management and QAAD training.</p> <p>The NISRA Quality guidance and other relevant documentation is available on the intranet. Information on external training courses, conferences and seminars of interest to statisticians is circulated regularly.</p>

Trust

Objective T1: To be trusted as an impartial and independent body.

Targets	Measures	Outcomes
<p>(i) To achieve 96+% of key users rating</p>	<p>Key user satisfaction level recorded in NISRA Customer Survey.</p>	<p>Not measured: The NISRA Customer Survey was not carried out in 2017/18 following a review of the methodology. There is significant circularity in customer</p>

NISRA's services as satisfactory.		relations within the Agency and the survey did not adequately distinguish between customers for different services. Alternative methods of getting customer feedback will be investigated in 18/19.
(ii) To engage with users throughout 2017/18 to ensure that needs are identified, considered and where possible, met.	<p>Branches to report annually on user engagement completed and how identified needs have been addressed.</p> <p>NI specific data provided and analysis carried out to inform preparations for the UK's withdrawal from the EU</p> <p>NISRA participation in Policy Champions Network (PCN) and other relevant cross-departmental groups.</p> <p>Number of Statistics Co-ordinating Groups (SCG) meetings held per annum. SCG agenda reflects cross-departmental issues.</p> <p>Percentage of National Statistics released through the on-line Release Calendar.</p> <p>Number of Official Statistics released through the on-line Release Calendar.</p>	<p>Achieved: User engagement has been carried out by the majority of NISRA branches. This includes formal consultations, surveys, meetings with policy/ operational colleagues, workshops, participation in working groups, discussions with key users, user groups meetings and specific stakeholder engagement events. As a result new products have been developed, existing products have been adapted and alternative ways of disseminating information have been explored.</p> <p>Several NISRA Branches have provided data and analysis to prepare for UK withdrawal from the EU including DE, DfE, DS, ELMSB and PSNI.</p> <p>Demographic Statistics provided a presentation to the PCN on the changing demographics of NI in October 2017. SCB developed 'NI in profile', which brings together the key trends in society and the economy. This was presented to the NICS Top Leadership Forum in January 2018. Several other branches have participated in cross-departmental groups.</p> <p>Three SCG meetings were held with the agenda reflecting cross-departmental issues.</p> <p>All National Statistics publications and 80% of Official Statistics publications are released through the on-line release calendar.</p>
(iii) To comply with Data Protection and ICO policy and legislation.	<p>Reported cases of unauthorised disclosure of personal / sensitive information.</p> <p>Completed Stewardship statements by Agency Board members.</p>	<p>Achieved: Within DoF NISRA there was no reported cases of unauthorised disclosure of personal / sensitive information.</p> <p>All stewardship statements have been signed and recorded. Agency Board members have confirmed that adequate procedures are in place for dealing with information management and data security.</p>
(iv) To maintain public confidence in Official Statistics.	<p>Breaches of the Code of Practice investigated and actions taken to prevent reoccurrence.</p> <p>Confirmed breaches notified to Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).</p> <p>Relevant guidance supporting the Code of Practice disseminated to branches.</p>	<p>Achieved: There have been 3 breaches of the Code or Practice in 2017/18. Two of these were pre-release access breaches and one was a release time breach (statistics not made available at exactly 9.30am). In all cases appropriate action has been taken to prevent reoccurrence.</p> <p>All confirmed breaches have been notified to SAC and ARC.</p>

		<p>All NISRA statisticians and non-NISRA lead officials have been provided with a copy of the revised Code of Practice, as well as supporting information.</p> <p>Statistical Support and Business Planning branch (SSBP) has provided guidance on a range of Code of Practice issues including pre-release access, breaches, consulting on changes to Official Statistics/ National Statistics, handling revisions/ errors and protecting confidentiality.</p>
--	--	---

Governance / Management		
Objective G1: To manage the resources available to NISRA DoF efficiently and effectively.		
Targets	Measures	Outcomes
(i) To review / update business models to ensure the strategic and efficient alignment of resources with priority business needs.	<p>Level of cost reductions delivered.</p> <p>Paper to Agency Board setting out a means to identify a priority vacancy.</p>	<p>Partially achieved: NISRA Senior Management Team take decisions regarding prioritisation of vacancies as required.</p> <p>Posts supporting EU Exit analysis were prioritised as were posts facilitating managed moves for staff who needed a move for career development purposes. Where possible staff preferences were accommodated with most staff being placed in their first or second choice of post.</p> <p>In placing newly recruited Assistant Statisticians, vacant posts and managed move releases were prioritised and the skills of new entrants matched with the requirements of the post.</p> <p>Analysis work to support EU exit was prioritised and resourced with existing staff with the required knowledge of the necessary data sources and specific topic areas.</p>
(ii) To provide an Annual Report on NISRA's activities and finances.	Draft Annual Report and Accounts prepared by mid-May 2017.	Achieved: Annual Report and Accounts prepared by mid-May 2017.
(iii) To prepare NISRA's annual accounts for audit and acceptance by NIAO.	Report accepted as a true account of Agency activities and finances.	Achieved: Accepted by auditors as a true account of Agency activities and finances.
(iv) To have no overspend and an underspend not greater than 2.5% within baseline allocation.	Level of overspend or underspend.	Achieved: The agency underspend for 2017/18 was within DoF tolerances (0.7 % of final baseline).

Objective G2: To ensure NISRA is well managed according to existing policies and procedures.

<p>(v) To have 3/5 year NISRA Corporate Plan prepared by end March 2018.</p> <p>(Dependent on DoF)</p>	<p>NISRA Corporate Plan prepared.</p>	<p>Not Achieved: In order to ensure that the development of the Corporate Plan identifies and meets the longer term needs of NISRA, while engaging all NISRA staff (grade, location and specialty) a more extensive process is planned. This requires the sourcing of external expertise which has taken long to identify than expected. Other factors such as changes in legislation materially impact on the medium and long term context so the delay was fortuitous in that the context is now clearer ahead of the plan development commencing. External resource has now been procured.</p>
<p>(vi) To maintain Level 3 compliance, in support the DoF Information Assurance Target¹.</p>	<p>NISRA DoF Data Protection / GDPR Implementation Plan</p> <p>(NISRA DoF) Information Assurance Risk Schedule.</p> <p>Input to DoF Information Asset Register.</p>	<p>Achieved: All required work has been completed.</p>
<p>(vii) To secure a positive audit report on risk management, and manage risk appropriately.</p>	<p>Level of assurance provided.</p> <p>Completed Stewardship statements by Agency Board members.</p>	<p>Achieved: The NI Audit Office 'Report to those charged with Governance' for 2016/17 gave an unqualified audit report for the year. Internal Audit reported that Ministerial Targets for 2016/17 had been accurately reported by the Agency.</p> <p>Mid and End Year Stewardship Statements completed for the Agency and End-Year stewardship Statements completed by Heads of Branches.</p>
<p>(viii) During 2017/18 to hold: - ten Agency Board meetings, - three Senior Leadership Group (SLG) meetings, - three Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meetings.</p>	<p>Ten Agency Board meetings held.</p> <p>Three Senior Leadership Group (SLG) meetings held.</p> <p>Three Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meetings held.</p>	<p>Substantially Achieved: Eleven Agency Board meetings were held during 2017/18.</p> <p>Four SLG meetings were planned for 2017/18 but due to a number of factors, only one SLG meeting (Business Planning) took place prior to March 2018. A further two (GDPR and Data Science) took place in April and May 2018 respectively.</p> <p>Four ARC meetings were held in 2017/18</p>
<p>(ix) To provide support to the Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC).</p>	<p>Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings held.</p> <p>SAC agenda and minutes, which are to be published.</p>	<p>Achieved: Three SAC meetings were held in 2017/18. Agenda and minutes published online.</p>

¹ Maintain Level 3 compliance with the "HMG Information Assurance (IA) Maturity Model and Assessment Framework" during 2017/2018.

<p>(x) To manage sickness absence in line with targets, processes and standards set by the Department of Finance (DoF).</p> <p>(xi) To comply with DoF timescales for entering sickness absence information on HRConnect Portal and carrying out follow-up reviews / meetings / back-to-work interviews.</p>	<p>Monthly / annual absence reports.</p>	<p>Achieved: Sickness absence monitored by NICSHR with input from line managers. NISRA Corporate involved in exceptional cases.</p> <p>Monthly report to Agency Board on NISRA compliance with targets.</p> <p>Not Achieved: Although NISRA has carried out the required activities, this has not been done within DoF timescales. This remains below the required level and is monitored regularly with reminders issued.</p>
<p>(xii) 90+% of staff to have completed on time Personal Performance Agreements (PPA) and Personal Development Plans (PDP) and have them assessed as 'Agreed' on HR Connect.</p>	<p>HR Connect Performance Management Reports.</p>	<p>Not Achieved: 73.2% of PPAs/ PDPs were set to 'Agreed' by the due date of 31 May 2017. Some of the difficulty relates to outposted staff being off system but this is still below the level required and expected.</p>
<p>(xiii) 90+% of End-year performance reviews for 2016/17 to be completed on time and recorded on HR Connect.</p>	<p>HR Connect Performance Management Reports.</p>	<p>Not Achieved: 77.2% of End-year performance reviews were completed and recorded on HR Connect by the due date of 31 May 2017. Some of the difficulty relates to outposted staff being off system but this is still below the level required and expected.</p>

INFORMATION

NISRA is an information-based business. The service it delivers to customers, whether internal or external, depends on how well it can create and use information to aid decision-making and analysis, and thereby meet its business objectives. This information needs to be recorded and stored in a shared area that allows easy access, and published in an appropriate manner.

NISRA is committed to increasing the amount of Data released in open and re-usable formats in the production of its statistical outputs and thereby continues to publish high value datasets on the OpenDataNI portal.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

With the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations (25 May 2018) NISRA commenced preparations during 2017-18 to fulfil its obligations. The Agency's Business Area Information Manager (BAIM) and Information Asset Owners (IAOs) provided advice and guidance on data and record management in line with the legislative requirements of the Data Protection (DP) Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the General Data Protection Regulations, which ensured Information Assurance compliance remained a priority across NISRA. To facilitate this compliance, DoF NISRA produced Data Protection/GDPR Action Plans, issued Data Protection Impact Assessment guidance (which became mandatory in July 2017), completed Data Protection checklists (September 2017 and March 2018), and issued a DP compliance report issued to the Department. Branch procedures for staff handling personal information were reviewed in all DoF branches. All staff completed the mandatory 'Managing Information Effectively' on-line training, which incorporates Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations, with branch specific Data Protection training provided as required. Data Protection induction documentation has been provided to all new staff. Data Sharing Agreements have been put in place, with details held on a departmental register. Data Protection compliance checklists have been completed for Third Party Suppliers, to ensure they are handling personal information appropriately. NISRA IAO's have updated the DoF holdings of personal data spreadsheet, identifying the lawful basis for processing in line with GDPR, together with populating the DoF on-line Information Asset Register. GDPR consultation on contracts guidance has been issued to IAO's, with Contract Managers appointed and relevant letters issued. A Data Protection objective has been included in the draft NISRA Business Plan, and branches have been advised of this objective in order that it may be rolled forward into Branch plans. Draft Privacy Notices have been produced for the Statistical & Research work within NISRA, together with one for Civil Registration Services within GRO.

NISRA's DoF branches have contributed to the core Department maintaining Level 3 compliance of the Information Assurance Maturity Model. NISRA's Information Asset Owners (IAOs) provide annual input to the Senior Information Risk Owner on the security and use of their information asset and provide Information Assurance Stewardship Statements twice yearly, which are recorded in the NISRA Governance Statement.

DoF NISRA has reviewed its content within the DoF Retention and Disposal Schedule, which identifies the disposal arrangements for all records created by DoF NISRA and the Department of Finance. This is to ensure all records held in all formats, paper, electronic, and all media are included in the schedule. This Schedule complies with the requirements of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923 and the Disposal of Documents Order (S.R. & O. 1925 No.167).

FINANCIAL REVIEW

NISRA's net expenditure for the three most recent financial years is outlined below:

	2017-18 £000	2016-17 £000	2015-16 £000
Income from sale of goods and services	(6,951)	(6,688)	(6,211)
Other operating income	<u>(9,518)</u>	<u>(8,972)</u>	<u>(8,770)</u>
Total operating income	<u>(16,469)</u>	<u>(15,660)</u>	<u>(14,981)</u>
Staff costs	20,437	19,210	20,356
Purchase of goods and services	2,646	2,483	2,715
Depreciation and impairment charges	1,309	1,306	1,089
Provision expense	45	–	–
Other operating expenditure	<u>5,055</u>	<u>4,496</u>	<u>3,889</u>
Total operating expenditure	<u>29,492</u>	<u>27,495</u>	<u>28,049</u>
Net expenditure for the year	<u>13,023</u>	<u>11,835</u>	<u>13,068</u>

The net resource expenditure for the year excluding non cash expenditure was £10.4m against the closing budget position of £10.47m. This underspend was due to a number of factors including lower salary costs from those forecast due to difficulties in filling all vacancies throughout the year.

The Agency employed an average of 474 staff during the year ended 31 March 2018 and total staff costs were £20.437m (2016-17: £19.210m). The increase is due to the average staff numbers increasing from to 424 to 474 over the year.

Other operating expenditure has increased to £5.055m (2016-17, £4.496m) mainly as costs begin to be incurred on preparation for Census 2021.

The Agency has been allocated an indicative opening budget of £10.83m.

LONG TERM EXPENDITURE TREND

	2017-18 Outturn £000	2016-17 Outturn £000	2015-16 Outturn £000
Total Resource DEL	29,492	27,495	28,049
<i>Of which:</i>			
Staff costs	20,437	19,210	20,356
Purchase of goods and services	2,646	2,483	2,715
Other operating expenditure	5,055	4,496	3,889
Depreciation and impairment charges	1,309	1,306	1,089
 Total Resource AME	 45	 -	 -
<i>Of which:</i>			
Provision expense	45	-	-

In 2017-18 the increase is mainly due to increased spend on preparatory work for Census 2021 and subsequent increase in staff numbers.

Census funding will continue to increase until completion of the Census with bids made for £2m additional funding for 2018-19 and £3m additional funding for 2019-20.

AUDITORS

The financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. He is head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO); he and his staff are wholly independent of the Agency and he reports his findings to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The audit of the financial statements for 2017-18 resulted in a notional audit fee of £10,000 (2016-17: £10,000) and is included in the operating expenditure in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

During 2017-18 the Agency did not purchase any non-audit services from its auditor.

EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

There have been no significant events since the year-end that would affect the accounts.

PAYMENT TO SUPPLIERS

The Agency's policy is to pay bills from all suppliers within 10 working days of receipt of the goods or performance of the services following receipt of a properly rendered invoice or in accordance with contractual conditions, whichever is the earlier.

During the financial year, the Agency achieved an average of 72% (2016-17: 76%) of invoices paid to suppliers within 10 working days. The Agency achieved an average of 93% (2016-17: 93%) of invoices paid within 30 calendar days.

During this period NISRA did not make any interest payments under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest Act 1988).

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

NISRA continues to follow DoF guidance as set out in the Department's Sustainable Development Action Plan 2015 - 2018, which outlines the strategic objectives and targets including:

- installation of renewable technologies;
- conservation of fuel and power;
- streamlining of the office accommodation portfolio and the meeting of higher thermal standards;
- improved recycling of waste; and
- taking account of sustainable development principles when procuring works, supplies and services.

NISRA (Colby House) continues to implement a Waste Management regime which, in keeping with the DoF Action Plan, focuses on paper as the dominant waste stream. A number of measures have been implemented including: discouraging routine printing of e-mails; promoting full usage of Hewlett Packard Records Management (HPRM); encouraging double sided and monochrome photocopying / printing; and using recycled paper. Receptacles have been made available to facilitate recycling of paper, cans, plastic containers, paper towels, envelopes, magazines and

empty printer cartridges. Dry recyclable materials are kept separate from standard domestic waste for collection and recycling by the Department's Waste Recycling service provider.

This Performance Report is approved and signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhan Carey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Siobhan Carey
Accounting Officer, Registrar General and Chief Executive
25 June 2018

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Accountability Report comprises the following:

Corporate Governance Report

The purpose of the corporate governance report is to explain the composition and organisation of the NISRA's governance structures and how they support the achievement of NISRA's objectives.

Remuneration and Staff Report

The remuneration and staff report sets out NISRA's remuneration policy for directors, reports on how that policy has been implemented and sets out the amounts awarded to directors. In addition the report provides details on pension arrangements, staff costs, staff numbers and staff policies.

Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

The Assembly Accountability and Audit report brings together the key Assembly accountability documents within the annual report and accounts. It includes sections on the Regularity of Expenditure (losses and special payments), the Assembly Accountability Disclosure (fees and charges), Remote Contingent Liabilities and the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT

DIRECTORS' REPORT

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) presents its Annual Report and Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2018.

Management

Ministerial responsibility for the Agency for the 2017-18 financial year rested with the Department of Finance (DoF). During this reporting period Ms Siobhan Carey was the Registrar General and Chief Executive [and thereby Accounting Officer] and was responsible to the Minister* (for the management of the Agency's performance, operations and finances.

*In the absence of a Minister in 2017-18 the Accounting Officer was responsible to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance.

Agency Board

The Chief Executive was assisted in the management of the Agency by the NISRA Agency Board (AB) comprised of two Grade 5 Statisticians, seven (9 from January 2018) Senior Principal Statisticians and two General Service Grade 7s. The Board advises the Chief Executive on strategy and major issues of Agency policy and is responsible for ensuring the effective operation and performance of NISRA.

The Agency Board members during the year were as follows:

Ms S Carey	Registrar General and Chief Executive (September 2016 onwards)
Dr T Power	Director of Analysis
Dr D Marshall	Director of Sources
Dr S Donnelly	Head of Criminal Justice and Secondments
Dr K Sweeney	Head of Central Survey Unit
Dr J Gillan	Head of Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch
Dr E Mooney	Head of Information and Analysis Directorate DoH
Mr B Green	Head of Demographic Statistics
Mrs M Crawford	Head of Analytical Services DfC
Mr A Fitzpatrick	Head of Census
Mr M Mayock	Head of Information and Registration Unit BSO (joined during the year)
Mrs N Fisher	Head of Analytical Services Unit DfE (joined during the year)
Mrs K Walker	Deputy Registrar General
Mrs J Hyvart	Corporate Services & Facilities Management

A Senior Leadership Group (SLG), comprised of Agency Board and Grade 7 statistical/administrative Heads of Branches, supports and advises the Chief Executive in the formulation, implementation and review of Agency policies. The SLG is in turn supported by a series of working groups that deal with cross-Agency issues remitted to them by the Board.

Register of Interests

A Register of Interests is maintained by the Agency and no significant interests are currently held by board members which may conflict with their management responsibilities.

Pension Liabilities

The treatment of pension costs and liabilities is disclosed in the Remuneration and Staff Report and in the Accounting Policies note in the financial statements (Note 1.9).

Personal Data

The Agency remains fully committed to complying with the Data Protection Act 1998. DoF NISRA acts in accordance with a number of DoF policies to ensure the safe handling of personal information - the DoF Data Protection Policy, the DoF Information Security Policy, DoF Records and Information Management Policy, DoF Access Information Policy and DoF Data Breach Management Plan

No reportable data breaches were identified between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 within DoF NISRA.

Reporting of Complaints

NISRA is committed to providing a high quality service and, as such, welcomes all feedback, both positive and negative, which is used to assist with the improvement of our services.

The Agency is responsible for keeping a register of complaints received and ensuring that these are investigated in line with DoF Complaints Procedure and that appropriate responses are issued to the complainant. The Agency will also evaluate 'lessons learned' from individual cases to see if any improvements can be embedded into existing operating procedures.

Complaints can be made in the first instance to the Head of Branch occasioning the complaint. Internal unresolved complaints can then be made to the NISRA Chief Executive. Continued dissatisfaction can be brought to the Office of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman.

In 2017-18 NISRA dealt with 10 complaints.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Under Section 11(2) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001, the Department of Finance have directed the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to prepare a statement of Accounts for each financial year in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The Accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the Agency's state of affairs, its income and expenditure, changes in taxpayers' equity and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the Accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Finance, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgments and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis.

The Department of Finance has appointed the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency as the Accounting Officer for the Agency. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which an Accounting Officer is answerable, for the keeping of proper records and for safeguarding NISRA's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money in Northern Ireland (MPMNI) published by the Department of Finance.

So far as the Accounting Officer is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the Agency's auditors are unaware.

The Accounting Officer has taken all the steps necessary to make herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Agency's auditors are aware of that information.

The Accounting Office can confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole are fair, balanced and understandable and that she takes personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Scope of Responsibility

NISRA is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (DoF). It was established on 1 April 1996 under the Government's Next Steps Initiative. The Agency incorporates the General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland.

The Agency is governed under a model with the following responsibilities. The Accounting Officer is responsible to the Minister of DoF for the Agency's performance and operates in accordance with the NISRA Framework Document and NISRA Business Plan:

- The Accounting Officer has responsibilities for the overall day-to-day leadership and management of the Agency, making regular reports to the Minister* on performance and progress, and
- The Agency Board is responsible for reviewing the strategic direction of the Agency, monitoring performance at the corporate level and ensuring that adequate governance controls are in place. The Agency Board comprises the Chief Executive, two Grade 5 Statistician Directors, nine Senior Principal Statisticians and two General Service Grade 7s. The Agency Board members are listed in the Directors' Report on page 27. The Agency Board met 11 times during the year and was attended as follows:

	April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	Sept 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
Siobhan Carey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tracy Power	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
David Marshall	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kevin Sweeney	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
James Gillan	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sandy Fitzpatrick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Brian Green	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eugene Mooney	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			
Stephen Donnelly	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michelle Crawford			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>
Jacquie Hyvart	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gerard Colgan					<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kathie Walker						<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Martin Mayock							<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nicola Fisher									<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Governance Statement, which has been agreed by the Agency Board, sets out how these responsibilities have been discharged throughout the year to 31 March 2018.

*In the absence of a Minister in 2017-18 the Accounting Officer was responsible to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance.

Context

NISRA is an Agency of the Department of Finance (DoF). The overall aim of DoF is 'to help the Executive secure the most appropriate and effective use of resources and services for the benefit of the community' within a Programme for Government (PfG) which is focused on achieving outcomes of societal wellbeing.

The work we do makes a significant and positive difference to the everyday lives of all the citizens of Northern Ireland. We provide and support public services, by:

- providing Government departments and agencies with statistics and research services which help inform the policy, process and delivery of their objectives and actions;
- continuing to address the needs of a wide range of users, producing high quality statistics and research, ensuring the quality of those statistics and disseminating information to its users efficiently and effectively;
- providing official information on Northern Ireland's population and socio-economic conditions. The statistics produced by the Agency not only inform the policy process within Government, but also inform academic research and contribute to debate in the wider community; and by
- providing the 'General Register Office' (GRO) which offers a civil registration service to the public and produces summary statistics relating to life events.

Financial Management

NISRA regularly reviews actual income and expenditure against budget to form the basis of collective Agency Board decisions regarding the allocation and use of resource to ensure that the NISRA financial management target of avoiding overspend is met.

Risk and Control Framework

Risk management within NISRA continues to be an integral part of our business planning process. This includes identification of risk, assignment of ownership, presentation of the risk, mitigation, management, evaluation and review.

The Corporate Risk Register is an integral part of the NISRA Risk Management policy and approach. The Risk Register records the status of each high level risk and the actions being taken to address the risk.

The Corporate Risk Register is regularly reported to and monitored by the Agency Board and NISRA's Audit and Risk Committee. The Audit and Risk Committee is chaired by one of its three independent members and functions in accordance with best practice contained in the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) issued under DAO(DoF) 5/14 in March 2014.

The Agency Board ensures the risk management and internal control are regularly reviewed and reported on in the following manner:

- All business areas use pre-determined weightings and a standardised approach to risk assessment;
- Key risks identified at Agency level are documented on Risk Registers and are reviewed on a formal basis by the Agency Board at least three times during the course of a year;
- NISRA Audit and Risk Committee formally reviews risks and controls on a regular basis;
- The Audit and Risk Committee assess the continued appropriateness of the respective risks and the means through which they are managed. The need to add, delete, delegate or promote risks is also determined in order to reflect the current business environment;
- Heads of Branches complete stewardship statements at the end of each financial year;
- The Chief Executive provides the NISRA's Audit and Risk Committee and DoF with a mid-year and end-year Stewardship Statement; and
- The Agency adheres to the department's 'Whistle Blowing' policy.

The main areas of concern for NISRA are not achieving the Ministerial Targets noted on page 9 of this report and the targets outlined in the NISRA Balanced Scorecard on pages 10 to 19.

Two Ministerial Targets for 2017/18 have been achieved and have been validated by DoF Internal Audit. The Agency performance against Balanced Scorecard targets are published on pages 10 to 18 of this report.

Agency Performance

The NISRA Business Plan 2017-18 set out the targets and objectives for the year against which performance is reported and monitored. Progress regularly reported to Agency Board provides details of actual results against the targets (Ministerial and Chief Executive Targets) and a narrative on the actions taken to deliver the expected outcomes.

Accounting Officer

DoF has designated the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer for NISRA. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, include responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which an Accounting Officer is answerable, the keeping of proper records and for safeguarding NISRA assets as set out in the Accounting Officer's Memorandum issued by DoF and published in Managing Public Money in Northern Ireland (MPMNI).

The Accounting Officer has responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of Agency policies, aims and objectives set by the Minister of DoF, whilst safeguarding the public funds and Agency's assets for which she is responsible in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to her by MPMNI.

At the beginning of the financial year, the Accounting Officer delegated responsibility to each of the Heads of Branches for management of budgets within their respective business areas. She receives assurances from each Director on risk management, governance, financial management and delegations within their respective areas of responsibility in the format of stewardship statements. Key issues emanating from these statements are reflected in this Governance Statement.

The Accounting Officer chairs the NISRA Agency Board which met on 11 occasions in 2017-18. The Agency Board operates in compliance with 'Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI) 2013' and directs the strategic management of NISRA by reviewing its strategic options and setting its corporate direction. The Agency Board considered the information received to be satisfactory for purpose.

The Agency maintains a Register of significant interests held by Board members which may conflict with their management responsibilities. Board members are requested on an annual basis to confirm that they have no such interests, or make a declaration of interests that may be considered to create a potential conflict of interest with their management responsibilities. No such interests have been declared by members for the Agency Board for the year ended 31 March 2018.

In response to a request from the Departmental Permanent Secretary, the Agency has obtained declarations of interest from all DoF based Agency staff at DP to Grade 7. No interests have been declared which the Agency consider to represent a potential conflict of interest.

The Agency Board also considered and reviewed NISRA risks as detailed in the NISRA Corporate Risk Register.

NISRA's Audit and Risk Committee, which is chaired by an independent Non-Executive member of the DoF board in line with best practice with regards to Audit and

Risk, supports the Accounting Officer and the Agency Board on issues of risk, control and governance. In addition the Audit and Risk Committee provides assurance and advice to the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of both internal and external audit coverage. The Audit and Risk Committee met on four occasions in 2017-18.

No Ministerial Directions were received by NISRA during 2017-18.

Level of Assurance

The Accounting Officer has responsibility for ensuring that a robust risk management system is in place, so that risks faced by NISRA are identified and managed accordingly. The Accounting Officer is also responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review is informed by the work of DoF's Internal Audit and Departmental Board members who have responsibility for ensuring that the controls and actions recommended are implemented.

The Department's Internal Audit reported on the work of the Agency during 2017-18. These reports provide an objective and widespread assessment of the systems of internal control in operation across the Agency, together with prioritised recommendations to strengthen controls and implement further improvements.

Internal Audit completed one of two scheduled audits during the year. One of the scheduled audits (an Audit of the Central Survey Unit) was completed in June 2018.

Further details on the Internal Audit output for the year are included in the following section, 'Significant Internal Control Problems'.

In his Annual Assurance Report, the Head of Internal Audit provided NISRA with a satisfactory level of assurance.

The Agency maintains Information Risk Registers in each Business Area which are linked into the Departmental Risk Register and provide the Departmental Board and the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) with an oversight of corporate and operational information risks.

NISRA has achieved 'Level 2 compliance' within the HMG Information Assurance Maturity Model and Assessment Framework and Security Policy Framework.

NISRA is committed to complying with the principles of the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice and its statistical output is monitored and assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. During the year a number of NISRA's National Statistics and some of its Official Statistics products were assessed for compliance with the Code of Practice, and all of those where an outcome was declared were successfully accredited/reaccredited as National Statistics. No outputs have failed to achieve National Statistics designation.

Fraud Prevention and Assurance

NISRA takes a zero tolerance approach to fraud and will report instances of fraud to DoF and the C&AG as well as to the PSNI. The Agency complies with the DoF Anti-Fraud Policy that sets out staff responsibilities with regard to the prevention of fraud.

Whistle blowing arrangements are in place and can be used to raise concerns about alleged impropriety, wrongdoing, corruption, fraud or malpractice.

The Agency has not recorded any instances of suspected or actual fraud during the year.

Significant Internal Control Problems

DoF Internal Audit completed the following audits during 2017-18:

- Validation exercise of the Ministerial Targets for 2017-18 – All targets achieved,
- Risk Based Internal Audit of Procurement – IA 51/17 – Limited opinion.

The report on Procurement (IA 52/17) was issued in May 2018 and made twelve Priority 2 and six Priority 3 recommendations. The issues identified included the need for consistent application of Departmental procurement policy throughout the Agency. Action is being taking action to address these recommendations.

Internal Audit issued the report 'Review of Central Survey Unit – IA 44/17' on 18 June 2018. Although Internal audit made some minor recommendations, they provided a satisfactory audit opinion.

There were no reportable breaches of Data Protection Act 1998 identified between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the Governance procedures within the Agency. My review of the effectiveness of the Governance and of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers within the Agency who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their 'Report to those charged with Governance' and other reports. I have been advised on the implications, of the result of this review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Senior Management Group and the Audit and Risk Committee and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

I consider the information presented to the Agency Board in the Corporate Performance report to be of a high quality, accurate and relevant to the internal control systems within the Agency and that the Agency has complied with the Corporate

Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI) 2013 in all respects.

Conclusion

Taking into account all of the arrangements set out in this Governance Statement, NISRA has an effective governance structure in place and has satisfactory systems of internal control which have operated effectively throughout 2017-18.

REMUNERATION AND STAFF REPORT

Remuneration Policy

The Senior Civil Service (SCS) remuneration arrangements are based on a system of pay scales for each SCS grade containing a number of pay points from minima to maxima, allowing progression towards the maxima based on performance. In 2012, upon creation, there were 11 points on each scale. The minimum point has been removed in each year from 2014 to 2016 (the scales now have 8 pay points) to allow progression through the pay scales within a reasonable period of time.

The pay remit (for the NI public sector and SCS) is normally approved by the Minister of Finance but in the absence of an Executive the DoF Permanent Secretary has set the 2017-18 NI public sector pay policy in line with the overarching HMT parameters and in a manner consistent with the approach taken by the previous Finance Minister in 2016-17. [The pay award for SCS staff for 2017-18 has not yet been finalised.]

Service Contracts

Civil service appointments are made in accordance with the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code, which requires appointment to be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition but also includes the circumstances when appointments may otherwise be made.

Unless otherwise stated below, the officials covered by this report hold appointments which are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Further information about the work of the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at www.nicscommissioners.org

Salary and pension entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior management of the agency.

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements (Audited)

Officials	2017-18				2016-17			
	Salary £0	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits* to nearest £1,000)	Total £0	Salary £0	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits* to nearest £1,000)	Total £000
Siobhan Carey	90-95	Nil	26	120-125	50-55 (FYE 90-95)	Nil	5#	55-60
Michelle Crawford	60-65	Nil	19	80-85	60-65	Nil	26#	90-95#
Stephen Donnelly	60-65	Nil	-44	60-65	60-65	Nil	9#	70-75#
Nicola Fisher From 2 January 2018	60-65	Nil	10	70-75	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Alexander Fitzpatrick	65-70	Nil	13	80-85	65-70	Nil	52#	120- 125#
James Gillan	65-70	Nil	11	80-85	65-70	Nil	3#	70-75#
Brian Green	60-65	Nil	-1	60-65	60-65	Nil	11#	75-80
David Marshall	70-75	Nil	47	120-125	70-75	Nil	59#	130- 135#
Martin Mayock From 2 January 2018	60-65	Nil	8	70-75	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Eugene Mooney	60-65	Nil	1	65-70	60-65	Nil	12#	75-70
Tracy Power	70-75	Nil	3	75-80	70-75	Nil	41#	115- 120#
Kevin Sweeney	50-55 (FYE 60-65)	Nil	10	60-65	50-55 (FYE 60-65)	Nil	10#	60-65#
Band of Highest paid Director's Total Remuneration	90-95				90-95			
Median Total Remuneration	31,446				31,446			
Ratio	2.9				2.9			

(FYE – Full Year Equivalent)

* The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation and any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.

restated based on updated information.

Pension benefit accrued and CETV will increase from one year to the next by virtue of an extra year's service and any pay rise during the year. Where there is little or no pay rise, the increase in pension due to extra service may not be sufficient to offset the inflation increase. In real terms the pension value can therefore reduce, hence the negative values.

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any ex gratia payments.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument.

Bonuses

The Agency did not make any bonus payments to Board members during the year.

Fair pay disclosure

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The median total is based on the full time equivalent remuneration of staff directly employed by NISRA at the reporting end date on an annualised basis.

The banded total remuneration* of the highest paid director in NISRA in the financial year was £90-95k (2016-17: £90-95k). This was 2.9 times (2016-17: 2.9) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £31,446 (2016-17: £31,146).

In 2017-18 and 2016-17 no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid director.

Remuneration in 2017-18 ranged from £17,796 to £90,000-95,000.

** Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits in kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.*

Pension Entitlements (Audited)

Officials	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/18 (or date of leaving if earlier) and related lump sum £0	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £0	CETV at 31/03/18 £0	CETV at 31/03/17 £0	Real increase in CETV £0	Employer contribution to partnership pension account (nearest £100)
Siobhan Carey	30 - 35 plus a lump sum of 100 - 105	32.5 - 35 plus a lump sum of 97.5 - 100	777	9	761	-
Michelle Crawford	15 - 20 plus a lump sum of 40 - 45	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	263	239	5	-
Stephen Donnelly	20 - 25 plus a lump sum of 135 - 140	0 plus a lump sum of 60 - 62.5	562	585	-37	-
Nicola Fisher	10 - 15 plus a lump sum of 30 - 35	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0 - 2.5	201	188	5	-
Alexander Fitzpatrick	20 - 25 plus a lump sum of 55 - 60	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	405	377	3	-
James Gillan	30 - 35 plus a lump sum of 45 - 50	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	718	693	10	-
Brian Green	20 - 25 plus a lump sum of 65 - 70	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0 - 2.5	467	438	-2	-
David Marshall	25 - 30 plus a lump sum of 50 - 55	2.5 - 5 plus a lump sum of 0	464	407	31	-
Martin Mayock	20 - 25 plus a lump sum of 50 - 55	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0 - 2.5	356	348	5	-
Eugene Mooney	20 - 25 plus a lump sum of 60 - 65	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0 - 2.5	473	442	1	-
Tracy Power	25 - 30 plus a lump sum of 75 - 80	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	506	475	-1	-
Kevin Sweeney	0 - 5 plus a lump sum of 10 - 15	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0 - 2.5	72	60	9	-

Pension benefit accrued and CETV will increase from one year to the next by virtue of an extra year's service and any pay rise during the year. Where there is little or no pay rise, the increase in pension due to extra service may not be sufficient to offset the inflation increase. In real terms the pension value can therefore reduce, hence the negative values.

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Schemes

Pension benefits are provided through the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP).

The alpha pension scheme was introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The alpha scheme and all previous scheme arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted each year. The majority of existing members of the classic, premium, classic plus and nuvos pension arrangements also moved to alpha from that date. Members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age did not move to alpha and those who were within 13.5 years and 10 years of their normal pension age were given a choice between moving to alpha on 1 April 2015 or at a later date determined by their age. Alpha is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The rate is 2.32%.

New entrants joining can choose between membership of alpha or joining a good quality 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (partnership pension account).

New entrants joining on or after 30 July 2007 were eligible for membership of the nuvos arrangement or they could have opted for a partnership pension account. Nuvos is also a CARE arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current rate is 2.3%.

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 may be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' defined benefit arrangements (classic, premium and classic plus). From April 2011, pensions payable under classic, premium, and classic plus are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. New entrants joining on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 could choose between membership of premium or joining the partnership pension account.

All pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. Any applicable increases are applied from April and are determined by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure for the preceding September. The CPI in September 2017 was 3% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2018.

Employee contribution rates for all members for the period covering 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 are as follows:

Scheme Year 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands)		Contribution rates – Classic members or classic members who have moved to alpha	Contribution rates – All other members
From	To	From 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019	From 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019
£0	£15,000.99	4.6%	4.6%
£15,001.00	£21,636.99	4.6%	4.6%
£21,637.00	£51,515.99	5.45%	5.45%
£51,516.00	£150,000.99	7.35%	7.35%
£150,001.00 and above		8.05%	8.05%

Benefits in classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic plus is essentially a variation of premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic.

The partnership pension account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach their scheme pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. Scheme Pension age is 60 for members of **classic**, **premium**, and **classic plus** and 65 for members of **nuvos**. The normal scheme pension age in alpha is linked to the member's State Pension Age but cannot be before age 65. Further details about the NICS pension schemes can be found at the website <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/working-northern-ireland-civil-service/civil-service-pensions-ni>.

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme

or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies. The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost. CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 and do not take account of any actual or potential benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period. However, the real increase calculation uses common actuarial factors at the start and end of the period so that it disregards the effect of any changes in factors and focuses only on the increase that is funded by the employer.

Compensation for loss of office

The Agency did not make any payments for loss of office during 2017-18.

STAFF REPORT

Number of senior civil service staff (or equivalent) by band (Audited)

The number of staff serving as senior civil servants (or equivalent) as at 31 March 2018 is as follows:

Pay Band*	2017-18	2016-17
£70,000 - £75,000	2	2#
£90,000 - £95,000	1	1

* Based on full year equivalent.
restated

Staff costs

Staff costs comprise:

			2017-18	2016-17
	Permanently employed staff £000	Others £000	Total £000	Total £000
Wages and salaries	14,994	1,296	16,290	15,102
Social security costs	1,236	–	1,236	1,277
Other pension costs	2,911	–	2,911	2,831
Sub total	19,141	1,296	20,437	19,210
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	(9,518)	–	(9,518)	(8,972)
Total net costs	9,623	1,296	10,919	10,238

£198k (2016-17: £50k) of salary costs have been charged to capital.

Pension arrangements

The Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but NISRA is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The most up to date actuarial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2012. This valuation is then reviewed by the Scheme Actuary and updated to reflect current conditions and rolled forward to the reporting date of the DoF Superannuation and Other Allowances Annual Report and Accounts as at 31 March 2018.

For 2017-18 employers' contributions of £3,010,991 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements (2016-17: £2,858,101) at one of three rates in the range 20.8% to 26.3% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The scheme's Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following a full scheme valuation. A new scheme funding valuation based on data as at 31 March 2012 was completed by the Actuary during 2014-15. This valuation was used to determine employer contribution rates for the introduction of alpha from April 2015. For 2018-19 the rates will also range from 20.8% to 26.3% however the salary bands differ. The contribution rates are set to meet the cost of the benefits accruing during 2017-18 to be paid when the member retires, and not the benefits paid during this period to existing pensioners.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employers' contributions of £10,701 (2016-17: £4,755) were paid to one or more of the panel of three appointed stakeholder pension providers. Employer contributions are age-related and range from 8% to 14.75% (2016-17: 8% to 14.75%) of pensionable pay. Employers also match employee contributions up to 3% of pensionable pay. In addition, employer contributions of £442, 0.5% (2016-17: £177, 0.5%) of pensionable pay, were payable to the NICS pension schemes to cover the cost of the future provision of lump sum benefits on death in service and ill health retirement of these employees.

Ill-health retirement

No persons (2016-17: none) retired early on ill-health grounds; the total additional accrued pension liabilities in the year amounted to £nil (2016-17: £nil).

The Agency meets the additional costs of benefits beyond the normal NICS pension schemes benefits in respect of employees who retire early by paying the required amounts annually to the NICS pension schemes over the period between the early departure and the normal retirement date. The Agency provides for this in full when the early retirement programme becomes binding by establishing a provision for the estimated payments discounted by the Treasury discount rate of 3.5 per cent in real terms.

Average number of persons employed

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the year was as follows.

Number	Permanently employed staff	2017-18		2016-17
		Others	Total	Total
Directly employed including Senior Management	401	-	401	356
Other	-	73	73	68
Staff engaged on capital projects*	-	-	-	-
Total	401	73	474	424

* The Agency does not employ any staff exclusively on capital projects.

Staff composition

The gender analysis of permanent Agency staff as at 31 March 2018 was as follows.

Comparative data for the previous year is shown in brackets.

	Number of female staff		Number of male staff		Total number of staff	
Senior Civil Service	2	(2)	1	(1)	3	(3)
Agency Board	2	(1)	7	(6)	9	(7)
Other NISRA employees	216	(211)	186	(173)	402	(384)
TOTAL	220	214	194	(180)	414	394

Staff Policies

Sickness absence

The provisional figure for the average number of days lost per staff member (on a staff year equivalent basis²) during 2017-18 was 9.2 days (2016-17: 8.2 days). The Agency is actively working to decrease its sickness absence and has a nominated 'Well Champion' who organises seminars and other events to highlight health and wellness issues.

Persons with disabilities

NISRA adheres to the Disability Action Plan, developed by the former Department of Finance and Personnel, in recognition of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (and subsequent amendments) which states that in carrying out its functions DoF (and consequently NISRA, as an Agency of DoF) will have due regard to the need to :

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties').

The Department of Finance produces a disability action plan to illustrate how it proposes to fulfil these duties.

Equal Opportunities

NISRA staff are employees of the Department of Finance which is an Equal Opportunity employer and is fully committed to the elimination of all forms of harassment and bullying, discrimination and victimisation. The Department recognises the legal obligations under which it operates and promotes working relationships that are based on mutual trust, respect and understanding. This enables the maximum potential to be realized with regard to the wide variety of skills, abilities and attributes available within the Department.

In addition, the Department continues to offer a range of work-life balance and family friendly policies including flexible working hours, career breaks, special leave and alternative working arrangements such as job sharing, part-time and term-time working.

Equality Agenda

The Department of Finance remains committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and human rights. We continue to ensure that all our policies comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 and that the Department continues to fulfill the duties required of it by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

² One staff year equivalent (sye) equates to one member of staff having been available for the entire period being analysed.

Expenditure on consultancy

The Agency did not incur any spend on consultancy during 2017-18 (2016-17: nil).

Off-payroll engagements

The Agency did not have any off-payroll engagements during 2017-18.

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages

There were no early retirements or compulsory redundancies in 2017-18 (2016-17: nil).

Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in this section.

OTHER ASSEMBLY ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUDIT REPORT

Other Assembly Accountability Disclosures

Regularity of Expenditure

i. Losses and special payments

Losses statement

The Agency did not make any individual losses in excess of £250,000.

Special payments

The Agency did not make any special payments during the year. (2016-17: £3,844).

ii. Fees and Charges

General Register Office

In setting fees, the General Register Office (GRO) aims to recover 100% of costs directly attributable to estimated volumes of certificates produced and marriage and civil partnership notices and ceremonies. GRO is legislatively required to provide a birth, death, marriage and civil partnership registration service and no costs are charged for this service. In 2017-18 GRO estimated that it would recover £3,030k (2016-17: £2,872k) from the supply of certificates and services. The actual cost recovery for the year was £3,576k (2016-17: £3,312k).

Central Survey Unit

In 2017-18 the Central Survey Unit (CSU) estimated that it would recover £1,600k (2016-17: £1,900k) from carrying out surveys on behalf of government departments and non-departmental public bodies. The actual cost recovery for the year was £1,585k (2016-17: £1,887k). The information provided in the table below is for fees and charges purposes, not for IFRS 8.

	Income	Full cost	2017-18	2016-17
			Surplus/	(restated)
			(deficit)	Surplus/
£000	£000	£000	£000	
Registration Services	3,576	(3,491)	85	438
Statistics and Research work carried out by CSU	1,585	(1,645)	(60)	(162)
Recovery of staff costs for staff outside DoF	9,518	(9,667)	(149)	18
Other services	1,790	(1,594)	196	48
	16,469	(16,397)	72	342

The above figures represent services where the full cost of the service is in excess of £1m. For Registration Services, the Statutory Provision is as noted in Article 7 to the Births and Deaths Registration (NI) Order 1976. For other services, NISRA's financial objective was to recover the total cost of those activities for which DoF funding was not provided. This objective was met.

iii. Remote Contingent Liabilities

There were no contingent liabilities requiring disclosure under assembly reporting requirements (in addition to within the meaning of IAS 37) for liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of contingent liability.

This Accountability Report is approved and signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhan Carey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Siobhan Carey

Accounting Officer, Registrar General and Chief Executive
25 June 2018

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for the year ended 31 March 2018 under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2018 and of its net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and Department of Finance directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis of opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs) and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate. My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2016, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Other Information

The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information included in the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in the report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance directions made under the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

I am required to obtain evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Matters on which I report by exception

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



KJ Donnelly
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

27 June 2018

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2018

	Note	2017-18	2016-17
		£000	£000
Income from sale of goods and services	4	(6,951)	(6,688)
Other operating income	4	(9,518)	(8,972)
Total operating income		(16,469)	(15,660)
Staff costs	3	20,437	19,210
Purchase of goods and services	3	2,646	2,483
Depreciation and impairment charges	3	1,309	1,306
Provision expense	3	45	0
Other operating expenditure	3	5,055	4,496
Total operating expenditure		29,492	27,495
Net operating expenditure		13,023	11,835
Net expenditure for the year		13,023	11,835
Other comprehensive net expenditure			
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net (gain)/loss on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	5	(7)	(16)
Net (gain)/loss on revaluation of intangible assets	6	(156)	(105)
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		12,860	11,714

Notional costs relate to services received for which no actual payment is made. They are included in the Accounts so as to reflect the full economic cost of provision.

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Financial Position
as at 31 March 2018

	Note	2018 £000	2017 £000
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5	802	655
Intangible assets	6	4,009	4,560
Total non-current assets		4,811	5,215
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	9	5,385	5,534
Cash and cash equivalents	8	259	212
Total current assets		5,644	5,746
Total assets		10,455	10,961
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	(2,555)	(2,157)
Provisions	11	(45)	0
Total current liabilities		(2,600)	(2,157)
Total assets less current liabilities		7,855	8,804
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund		7,404	8,419
Revaluation reserve		451	385
Total equity		7,855	8,804



Siobhan Carey

Accounting Officer, Registrar General and Chief Executive
25 June 2018

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2018

	Note	2017-18 £000	2016-17 restated £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating cost	SoCNE	(13,023)	(11,835)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions:			
(Profit)/loss on disposal of non-current assets	3	1	–
Notional charges	3	2,623	2,482
Depreciation and impairment charges	3	1,309	1,306
Provision expense	3	45	–
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	9	149	(1,485)
(Increase)/decrease in inventories		–	–
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables <i>less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure</i>	10 10	398 (230)	660 (142)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(8,728)	(9,014)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	5	(222)	(185)
Purchase of intangible assets	6	(291)	(207)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(513)	(392)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Net Assembly Funding - drawn down		9,288	9,404
Net financing		9,288	9,404
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period		47	(2)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	8	212	214
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	8	259	212

Notional costs relate to services received for which no actual payment is made. They are included in the Accounts so as to reflect the full economic cost of provision.

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2018

	Note	General Fund	Revaluation Reserve	Taxpayers' Equity
		£000	£000	£000
Balance at 31 March 2016		8,285	347	8,632
Net Assembly Funding		9,404	–	9,404
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(11,835)	121	(11,714)
Auditor's remuneration	3	10	–	10
Non-cash notional charges	3	2,472	–	2,472
Transfer between reserves		83	(83)	–
Balance at 31 March 2017		8,419	385	8,804
Net Assembly Funding		9,288	–	9,288
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(13,023)	163	(12,860)
Auditor's remuneration	3	10	–	10
Non-cash notional charges	3	2,613	–	2,613
Transfer between reserves		97	(97)	–
Balance at 31 March 2018		7,404	451	7,855

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these accounts.

Notes to the Accounts

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2017-18 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy that has been judged to be the most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Agency for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Agency for 2017-18 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material in relation to the Accounts.

1.1 Accounting Convention

The Accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets.

1.2 Property, plant and equipment

The Agency's property, plant and equipment includes computer equipment, office machinery, fixtures and fittings which are capitalised at their cost of acquisition and installation and are revalued annually using appropriate indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics. The threshold for capitalisation, as an individual or grouped fixed asset, remains at £500 for the Agency for computer equipment, with all other equipment at £1,000.

Where appropriate, surpluses and deficits on revaluation are taken to the revaluation reserve and reductions in the value of non-current assets arising from a clear consumption of economic benefit should be charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

The Agency does not own the property it occupies, but incurs a notional accommodation charge which is included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

1.3 Intangible assets

The Agency's intangible assets include computer software, internally and externally developed software, licences, bespoke systems, databases and a website, which are capitalised at their cost of acquisition and installation. Intangible assets are revalued annually using appropriate indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics.

Notes to the Accounts

The threshold for capitalisation, as an individual or grouped fixed asset, remains at £500 for the Agency.

1.4 Depreciation and Amortisation

Depreciation/amortisation is provided on a straight line basis in order to write-off the valuation, less estimated residual value, of non-current assets over their estimates useful lives. The estimated useful lives, which are reviewed regularly, are:

Information technology	3-12 years
Telecoms equipment	5-10 years
Plant and machinery	3-30 years
Furniture and fittings	up to 10 years
Intangible assets (IT)	3-12 years

Depreciation/amortisation, on assets under construction commences when the assets are ready for their intended use.

1.5 Operating Income

The Agency’s income represents receipts from three main activities.

- The recovery of salary cost for Agency staff on loan outside DoF;
- Charges for statistics and research work carried out for customers; and
- Fees associated with the Registration Services.

All income is accruals based and accounted for in the financial year to which it relates.

1.6 Financial Instruments

A financial instrument is defined as any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

A financial instrument is recognised when, and only when, the entity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument. A previously recognised financial asset is derecognised when, and only when, either the contractual rights to the cash flows from that asset expire, or the entity transfers the asset such that the transfer qualified for de-recognition. A financial liability is derecognised when, and only when, it is extinguished.

The Agency has financial instruments in the form of trade receivables and payables and cash and cash equivalents. In accordance with IAS 39 Financial Instruments: Recognition and Measurement trade receivables, cash and other receivables are classified as ‘loans and receivables’. Loans and receivables are initially measured at

Notes to the Accounts

fair value and are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less any impairment.

The Agency assesses at each reporting date whether there is any objective evidence that a financial asset or group of financial assets classified as loans and receivables is impaired. Based on historic experience receivables that are past due beyond 361 days are generally not recoverable.

The Agency measures the amount of the loss as the difference between the carrying amount of the asset and the present value of estimated future cash flows from the asset discounted at the effective interest rate of the instrument at initial recognition.

Impairment losses are assessed individually for financial assets that are individually significant and individually or collectively for assets that are not individually significant. In making collective assessment of impairment, financial assets are grouped into portfolios on the basis of similar risk characteristics. Future cash flows from these portfolios are estimated on the basis of the contractual cash flows and historical loss experience for assets with similar risk characteristics.

Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and the carrying amount of the financial asset or group of financial assets reduced by establishing an allowance for impairment losses. If in a subsequent period the amount of the impairment loss reduces and the reduction can be ascribed to an event after the impairment was recognised, the previously recognised loss is reversed by adjusting the allowance.

When a financial asset is deemed unrecoverable the amount of the asset is reduced directly and the impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure to the extent that a provision was not previously recognised.

Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value, net of transaction costs. They are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.7 Value Added Tax

All income and expenditure is stated exclusive of VAT which is recoverable on a departmental basis.

1.8 Programme Expenditure

All of NISRA expenditure is classified as Programme expenditure.

1.9 Pensions

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the NICS Pension Schemes. The defined benefit scheme is unfunded and is non-contributory except in respect of dependants' benefits. The Agency recognises the expected cost of these

Notes to the Accounts

elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it benefits from employees' services by payment to the NICS Pension Schemes of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the NICS Pension Schemes. In respect of the defined contribution scheme, the Agency recognises the contributions payable for the year.

1.10 Contingent Liabilities

In addition to contingent liabilities disclosed in accordance with IAS 37, the Agency discloses for assembly reporting and accountability purposes certain statutory and non-statutory contingent liabilities where the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit is remote, but which have been reported to the Assembly in accordance with the requirements of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Where the time value of money is material, contingent liabilities which are required to be disclosed under IAS 37 are stated at discounted amounts and the amount reported to the Assembly separately noted. Contingent liabilities that are not required to be disclosed by IAS 37 are stated at the amounts reported to the Assembly.

1.11 Employee Benefits

Under IAS19 Employee Benefits legislation, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave as at the year end. The cost of untaken leave has been determined using the data from leave records.

1.12 Provisions

The Agency provides for legal or constructive obligations, which are of uncertain timing or amount at the reporting date on the basis of the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation. These relate to the settlement of equal pay claims, other potential legal actions and provision for future liabilities in respect of contracts. Where the effect of the time value of money is significant the estimated risk-adjusted cash flows are discounted using the real rate set by HM Treasury (currently 3.5 per cent).

1.13 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards and FReM – issued and effective in 2017-18 for the first time

NISRA has considered these standards and considers that they are not relevant or material to its operations.

Notes to the Accounts

1.14 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards not yet effective

In addition, certain new standards, interpretations and amendments to existing standards have been published that are mandatory for NISRA's accounting periods beginning on or after 1 April 2017 or later periods, but which NISRA has not adopted early. Other than as outlined below, NISRA considers that these standards are not relevant or material to its operations.

Standard	IFRS 9 <i>Financial Instruments</i>
Effective date	1 January 2018 (EU Endorsed 22 November 2016). FReM application is in 2018-19.
Summary	<p>IFRS 9 includes several improvements, and introduces substantially greater disclosure requirements, to the previous IAS 39 which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a single approach to classification and measurement • a new forward-looking 'expected loss' impairment model; and • a revised approach to hedge accounting <p>The application of this standard is <u>retrospective</u> (without restatement). This has been mandated in the FReM with approval from the FRAB.</p>
Impact	IFRS 9 will affect all public sector bodies that have any financial Instruments (including trade receivables, lease receivables, loan commitments and contract assets).

Standard	IFRS 15 <i>Revenue from Contracts with Customers</i>
Effective date	1 January 2018 (EU Endorsed 31 October 2017). FReM application is in 2018-19
Summary	<p>IFRS 15 introduces a new five stage model for assessing and recognising revenue from contracts with customers. It also introduces substantially greater disclosure requirements to address the shortcomings of the previous Standards (IAS 1 and IAS 18).</p> <p>The application of this standard is <u>retrospective</u> (without restatement).</p>
Impact	IFRS 15 will affect all public sector bodies.

Notes to the Accounts

Standard	IFRS 16 <i>Leases</i> IFRS 16 <i>Leases</i> (Replaces IAS 17 <i>Leases</i> and related interpretations)
Effective date	January 2019 (EU Endorsed 31 October 2017). FReM application is in 2019-20
Summary	<p>The IASB issued IFRS 16 in January 2016 with an effective date for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2019. Early application is permitted for those entities applying IFRS 15.</p> <p>IFRS 16 represents a significant change in lessee accounting by largely removing the distinction between operating and finance leases and introducing a single lessee accounting model. A lessee is required to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases with a term of more than 12 months, unless the underlying asset is of low value on the Statement of Financial Position. There are corresponding changes to the disclosure requirements to show the effect that leases have on the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the lessee.</p> <p>The lessor accounting model is significantly unchanged from IAS 17.</p>
Impact	<p>IFRS 16 is subject to analysis and review by HM Treasury and the other Relevant Authorities. A cross government Technical Working Group has been formed to assist with this assessment. Early application is not expected to be permitted and adopted in the FReM is expected from 1 April 2019.</p> <p>NISRA will consider the implications on the disclosures to the financial statements of the standards on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What operating leases commitments are currently held by the entity and whether these are material to the financial statements? • The nature of the assets being leased and whether they may be classed as short term or low value leases? • Whether there are sufficient existing disclosures in the financial statements regarding lease commitments where these are considered material.

1.15 Financial Reporting – Future Developments

NISRA has considered the accounting initiatives identified by HM Treasury for which the Standards are under development and considers these changes are not relevant or material to its operations.

Notes to the Accounts

2. Statement of Operating Costs by Operating Segments

2017-18

	Note	General Register Office	Central Survey Unit	Other	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Gross expenditure	3	4,840	3,738	20,914	29,492
Income	4	(3,576)	(1,585)	(11,308)	(16,469)
Net expenditure		1,264	2,153	9,606	13,023
Total assets		3,586	647	6,222	10,455
Total liabilities		(677)	(108)	(1,815)	(2,600)
Net assets		2,909	539	4,407	7,855

2016-17

	Note	General Register Office	Central Survey Unit	Other	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Gross expenditure	3	4,631	3,732	19,132	27,495
Income	4	(3,312)	(1,887)	(10,461)	(15,660)
Net expenditure		1,319	1,845	8,671	11,835
Total assets		3,700	411	6,850	10,961
Total liabilities		(704)	(87)	(1,366)	(2,157)
Net assets		2,996	324	5,484	8,804

Segments have been selected based on their distinct areas.

General Register Office (GRO)

Consists of the unit that manages all public births, deaths and marriage records and the District Councils that manage this locally.

Central Survey Unit (CSU)

Consists of the survey unit that would be the largest income generating unit in NISRA that carries out work for all of the NICS and other public bodies.

Other

Covers all the other statistical research activities and the outposted and seconded staff.

Notes to the Accounts

3. Programme Costs

	2017-18	2016-17
	£000	£000
Staff costs		
Wages and salaries	16,290	15,102
Social security costs	1,236	1,277
Other pension costs	2,911	2,831
Total staff costs	20,437	19,210
Purchase of goods and services		
Registrar charges	2,339	2,166
Survey costs	294	281
Finance costs	11	34
Exchange losses/(gains)	2	2
Total purchase of goods and services	2,646	2,483
Other operating expenditure		
Accounting and information technology	1,034	1,122
Accommodation, maintenance and utilities	1,092	786
Personnel and training	134	(39)
Travel, subsistence and hospitality	90	58
Printing, stationery and advertising	78	69
Legal costs	–	15
Other costs	3	3
	2,431	2,014
Non-cash items:		
(Profit)/loss on disposal of non-current assets	1	–
Auditors' remuneration and expenses	10	10
Notional charges	45	55
Intra-departmental notional charges		
Accommodation	688	690
IT Assist	546	583
Finance	611	549
HR	586	486
Corporate Services	137	109
	2,624	2,482
Total other operating expenditure	5,055	4,496
Depreciation and impairment charges		
Depreciation	103	109
Amortisation	1,206	1,198
Impairment of non-current assets	–	(1)
	1,309	1,306
Provision expense		
Provided in year	45	15
Written back in year	–	(15)
	45	–
Total	29,492	27,495

Notional costs relate to services received for which no actual payment is made. They are included in the Accounts so as to reflect the full economic cost of provision.

Notes to the Accounts

4. Income

The Agency charges for a variety of services provided to customers. The largest component is the recovery of salary costs for statistical staff on loan to departments and agencies outside DoF.

	Note	2017-18	2016-17
		£000	£000
Sales of goods and services			
Statistics and research services		3,375	3,376
Registration services		3,576	3,312
		6,951	6,688
Other operating income			
Recovery of secondees costs		9,518	8,972
		9,518	8,972
Total		16,469	15,660

The above Statistics and Research services income includes £58,100 (2016-17: £58,700) from the Public Health Authority (PHA).

Notes to the Accounts

5. Property, plant and equipment

2017-18

	Information technology	Plant and machinery	Furniture and fittings	Payments on account and assets under construction	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation					
At 1 April 2017	933	52	41	348	1,374
Additions	162	5	2	75	244
Disposals	(442)	(35)	(2)	–	(479)
Indexation	14	–	–	–	14
At 31 March 2018	667	22	41	423	1,153
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2017	657	44	18	–	719
Charged in year	92	3	8	–	103
Disposals	(442)	(34)	(2)	–	(478)
Indexation	7	–	–	–	7
At 31 March 2018	314	13	24	–	351
Carrying amount at 31 March 2018	353	9	17	423	802
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	276	8	23	348	655
Asset financing:					
Owned	353	9	17	423	802
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	353	9	17	423	802

Note - The Agency does not hold any Land and Buildings. Information Technology and Plant & Machinery were revalued using indices supplied by the Office for National Statistics. Furniture and fittings were not revalued as considered immaterial.

Notes to the Accounts

5. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

2016-17

	Information Technology	Plant and Machinery	Furniture and Fittings	Assets under Construction	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation					
At 1 April 2016	839	44	41	212	1,136
Additions	71	6	2	136	215
Disposals	(4)	–	–	–	(4)
Impairments	2	–	–	–	2
Reclassifications	–	2	(2)	–	–
Revaluations	25	–	–	–	25
At 31 March 2017	933	52	41	348	1,374
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2016	552	42	10	–	604
Charged in year	99	2	8	–	109
Disposals	(4)	–	–	–	(4)
Impairments	1	–	–	–	1
Reclassifications	–	–	–	–	–
Revaluations	9	–	–	–	9
At 31 March 2017	657	44	18	–	719
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	276	8	23	348	655
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	287	2	31	212	532
Asset financing:					
Owned	276	8	23	348	655
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	276	8	23	348	655

Notes to the Accounts

6. Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise bespoke systems and software licenses (see note 1.3).

2017-18

	Software licences	Internally developed software and website	Externally developed software	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation				
At 1 April 2017	256	3,267	4,798	8,321
Additions	11	388	100	499
Disposals	(72)	(51)	(1)	(124)
Indexation	7	145	197	349
At 31 March 2018	202	3,749	5,094	9,045
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2017	157	1,533	2,071	3,761
Charged in year	37	311	858	1,206
Disposals	(72)	(51)	(1)	(124)
Indexation	5	70	118	193
At 31 March 2018	127	1,863	3,046	5,036
Carrying amount at 31 March 2018	75	1,886	2,048	4,009
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	99	1,734	2,727	4,560
Asset financing:				
Owned	75	1,886	2,049	4,009
Carrying amount at 31 March 2018	75	1,886	2,049	4,009

Notes to the Accounts

6. Intangible assets (continued)

2016-17

	Licences	Internally Developed Software and Website	Externally Developed Software	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or valuation				
At 1 April 2016	216	5,039	4,472	9,727
Additions	41	63	215	319
Disposals	(5)	(1,911)	-	(1,916)
Impairments	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-
Revaluations	4	76	111	191
At 31 March 2017	256	3,267	4,798	8,321
Amortisation				
At 1 April 2016	75	3,114	1,204	4,393
Charged in year	84	296	818	1,198
Disposals	(5)	(1,911)	-	(1,916)
Impairments	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-
Revaluations	3	34	49	86
At 31 March 2017	157	1,533	2,071	3,761
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	99	1,734	2,727	4,560
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	141	1,925	3,268	5,334
Asset financing:				
Owned	99	1,734	2,727	4,560
Carrying value at 31 March 2017	99	1,734	2,727	4,560

Notes to the Accounts

7. Impairments

	2017-18 £000	2016-17 £000
Charged direct to the SoCNE		
Property, plant and equipment	–	(1)
Intangible assets	–	–
	<u>–</u>	<u>(1)</u>
Taken through the revaluation reserve		
Property, plant and equipment	(7)	(16)
Intangible assets	(156)	(105)
	<u>(163)</u>	<u>(121)</u>
Total impairment charge for the year	<u>(163)</u>	<u>(122)</u>

8. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2017-18 £000	2016-17 £000
Balance at 1 April	212	214
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	47	(2)
Balance at 31 March	<u>259</u>	<u>212</u>

The following balances at 31 March were held at:
Commercial banks and cash in hand

<u>259</u>	<u>212</u>
-------------------	-------------------

9. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2017-18 £000	2016-17 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade receivables	2,190	2,155
Deposits and advances	–	–
Other receivables	6	4
Prepayments and accrued income	3,122	3,189
VAT recoverable	67	186
	<u>5,385</u>	<u>5,534</u>

There are no amounts falling due after more than one year

Notes to the Accounts

10. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2017-18 £000	2016-17 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade payables	20	53
Accruals	2,535	2,104
	<u>2,555</u>	<u>2,157</u>

Accruals above include amounts relating to purchase of property, plant and equipment of £73,905 (2016-17 £52,090) and intangible assets of £319,987 (2016-17 £112,322).

There are no amounts falling due after more than one year.

11. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	2017-18		2016-17	
	Early departure costs	Other	Total	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April	-	-	-	-
Provided in year	-	45	45	15
Provision not required written back	-	-	-	(15)
Provision utilised in year	-	-	-	-
Balance at 31 March	<u>-</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>-</u>

Analysis of expected timing of cash

	2017-18		2016-17	
	Early departure costs	Other	Total	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Not later than one year	-	45	45	-
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-	-	-
Later than five years	-	-	-	-
Balance at 31 March	<u>-</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>-</u>

Provisions made in 2017-18 concern legal costs to be incurred in relation to ongoing judicial reviews within the General Register Office.

Notes to the Accounts

12. Capital commitments

There was no capital commitments at 31 March 2018 not otherwise included in these accounts.

13. Commitment under leases

Operating leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods:

	2017-18 £000	2016-17 £000
Obligations under operating leases for the following periods comprise:		
Office equipment:		
Not later than one year	2	2
Later than one year and not later than five years	2	4
Later than five years	-	-
Total	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>

Notes to the Accounts

14. Other Financial Commitments

The Agency has entered into non-cancellable contracts (which are not leases or PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts), for the NIROS support contract (GRO), IBSS Support (ELMSB) and for use of an encrypted link with the Office for National Statistics and provision of data from the Business Services Organisation (Census Office). The payments to which the Agency is committed are as follows.

	2017-18 £000	2016-17 £000
Not later than one year	3,818	1,108
Later than one year and not later than five years	15,769	8,218
Later than five years	90	168
Total	19,677	9,494

15. Financial Instruments

IFRS 7 Financial Instruments: Disclosures requires disclosure that enables evaluation of the significance of financial instruments for the Agency's financial position and performance, the nature and extent of risks arising from financial instruments to which the Agency is exposed during the period and at the reporting date, and how the Agency manages those risks.

As a result of the nature of its activities and the way in which NISRA is financed, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non- public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Agency's expected purchase and usage requirements and the Agency is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Details of the significant accounting policies and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset and financial liability are disclosed in Note 1 "Accounting Policies".

Categories of financial instruments

The Agency's financial assets are classified as loans and receivables and comprise trade receivables and other current assets (Note 9) and cash and cash equivalents (Note 8). The Agency's financial liabilities comprise trade payables and other current liabilities (Note 10). These financial assets and liabilities are held at cost which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

Cash and cash equivalents comprises cash and demand deposits with banks. As at 31 March 2018, the carrying value of cash at bank approximates its fair value due to its short term nature.

Notes to the Accounts

16. Contingent Liabilities

NISRA has no contingent liabilities at 31 March 2018.

17. Related party transactions

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Finance.

The Department of Finance is regarded as a related party with which the Agency has had various material transactions during the year.

The Agency has also had various material transactions with all the other Northern Ireland government departments and other central government bodies. Other central government bodies have included:

- Electoral Office for NI
- Health and Social Care Board
- Health and Safety Executive for NI
- HSC Business Services Organisation
- Ilex-Urban Regeneration Company
- Invest NI
- Libraries NI
- NI Courts and Tribunals Service
- NI Policing Board
- Office for National Statistics
- Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland
- Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
- Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Public Health Agency
- Youth Justice Agency Northern Ireland

During the year none of the board members, members of the key management staff or other related parties have undertaken any material transactions with the Agency.

18. Events after the Reporting Date

There were no events occurring after the reporting date that required disclosure.

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised the issue of these financial statements on 25 June 2018.

GLOSSARY

Acronym	Details
AME	Annually Managed Expenditure
BSO	Business Services Organisation
CARE	Career Average Revalued Earnings
CETV	Cash Equivalent Transfer Value
CIB	Community Information Branch
CMB	Communication and Marketing Branch
CS	Corporate Services
CSU	Central Survey Unit
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DAO	Dear Accounting Officer Letter
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Departmental Expenditure Limit (in accounts)
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DS	Demographic Statistics
DoF	Department of Finance
DoF NISRA	NISRA branches located within DoF
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
DP	Deputy Principal
ELMSB	Economic Labour Market Statistics (Branch)
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GRO	General Register Office
GSS	Government Statistical Service
HIB	Hospital Information Branch
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HR	Human Resources

Acronym	Details
HR Connect	NICS HR Portal
HRCS	Human Resource Consultancy Services
HSC	Health and Social Care
IA	Information Assurance
IAO	Information Asset Owner
IAS	International Accounting Standard
IBSS	Integrated Business Survey System
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
LPS	Land and Property Services
NI	Northern Ireland
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NICSHR	Northern Ireland Civil Service Human Resources
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIMDM	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure
NINIS	Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service
NIROS	Northern Ireland Registration Office System
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NISRA DoF	NISRA branches located within DoF
NISRAnet	NISRA's intranet site
OFCOM	Office of Communications (UK Communications Regulator)
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PfG	Programme for Government
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PHIRB	Public Health Information and Research Branch
PSAB	Project Support Analysis Branch
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
QAAD	Quality Assurance of Administrative Data
QGIS	An Open Source Geographic Information System
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
SAS	A Statistical Software Package

Acronym	Details
SCB	Statistical Co-ordination Branch
SCS	Senior Civil Service
SSBP	NISRA Statistical Support and Business Planning
STARzine	NISRA's Internal Statistics and Research E-zine
TEO	The Executive Office
UK	United Kingdom
VAT	Value Added Tax
VES	Voluntary Exit Scheme