1. Purpose
This note describes the main ways in which users access and use statistics produced by ISD on sexual health in Scotland and how these data are collected.

2. Sexual Health Statistics Source and Collection
Sexual health statistics published by ISD are sourced from a variety of data sources.

Abortion/Termination of Pregnancy
All abortion procedures in the UK (sometimes referred to as a termination of pregnancy) are carried out under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967, which applies to England, Wales and Scotland. Doctors have a legal requirement to notify the Chief Medical Officer in Scotland of all terminations carried out in Scotland and complete a Notification of Abortion paper form for each procedure. These forms are then processed by Production Support, a section of NHS NSS IM&T, where the data on the form are manually entered into an electronic database. ISD receive an anonymised extract of this database annually from which statistics on termination of pregnancies are produced.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
Data on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) diagnosed in Scottish genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinics have been continuously collected since 1922. There have been several revisions to the data gathered and the way that this has been collected over that time.
Until recently, data on STIs diagnosed in GUM clinics were collected on a dedicated IT system called STISS (Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance System). STISS was run as a stand alone web-based system, available to each NHS health board for the coding of each STI episode seen in their clinics. Specific STI diagnoses were recorded using detailed codes and further data on person demographics were also collected, such as gender and age. The STISS database was maintained by ISD and an extract taken annually was used to produce statistics on STIs in Scotland.

In 2009 clinics started a phased transition from recording data on STIs in STISS (Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance System) to NaSH (National Sexual Health System - a clinical management IT system being rolled out across all sexual health settings in Scotland). The implementation, which will be of considerable benefit in the future, produced initial 'teething problems' inherent in the migration from one system to another. The use of NaSH to record STI information became further complicated by the integration of sexual health services in Scotland. This means that whereas people would traditionally attend a specific GUM clinic, they now attend generic sexual health clinics which encompass a wide range of purposes. This will increase the number of diagnoses recorded for STIs as people who typically attending Family Planning style clinics will now have their details entered into NaSH.

Whilst the capture of data from a wider range of services is beneficial for disease/workload monitoring, the increase causes complications as it becomes difficult to ascertain whether increases in numbers of diagnoses reflect a genuine increase in disease or the increased workload volume now being recorded.

Due to the transition from one system to another, it was decided in conjunction with stakeholders that the annual update to statistics on STIs diagnosed in GUM clinics would no longer be produced. Instead data on STIs diagnosed in sexual health settings would be included in the sexual health annual report.
ISD have undertaken some work in 2011 to identify a minimum input criteria of fields in NaSH that will support the production of sexual health statistics in Scotland.

**Key Clinical Indicators for Sexual Health**
The Key Clinical Indicators (KCIs) for sexual health in Scotland were developed to address data deficits in reporting, specifically on key indicators identified in Respect and Responsibility: Strategy and Action Plan for Improving Sexual Health.

There are a range of KCIs, each of them using their own unique method of data collection and analyses. Two baseline reports were produced which between them detail the data collection used for each indicator. These reports can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#).

### 3. Accessing Information
Core users of sexual health statistics i.e. Scottish Government and NHS boards tend to access statistics principally in the form of routine and adhoc data management – this is analysis provided directly for the purposes of planning, managing and monitoring sexual health service provision and for policy development. This usually takes on one of the following form:

- Routine management reports issued annually
- Bespoke data extraction and analyses

There are a number of ways for other users to access sexual health data held by ISD and different levels of access. These can be summarised as follows:

a) Published information – published routinely on the ISD website [here](#), freely available to all for use under the general copyright conditions. In addition, ISD provide data for other official statistic publications at a UK level in particular:

b) Published responses to Parliamentary Questions, available via the Scottish Parliament website [here](#).

c) Published responses to specific Freedom of Information Requests published [here](#).

d) Information Requests – data not in the public domain can be requested as a formal information request (see [here](#)).

### 4. Uses of Sexual Health Data
The main known uses of sexual health statistics are described below with presentation informed by guidance provided by the UK Statistics Authority in their monitoring brief on the Use Made of Official Statistics.

#### 4.1 Policy Development
Sexual health data are used by the Scottish government for policy development. The most current policy set by the Scottish government is the [Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework](#) which was published in August 2011. The Framework has adopted an outcomes based approach and states that “progress against the outcomes will be monitored nationally through a small set of indicators using, wherever possible, national generated data”.

Evidence tables contained with the Framework utilise sexual health data from ISD to demonstrate the current trends in Scotland. Table 3.1 specifically in the Framework, based on the Outcome of “few newly acquired STIs; fewer unintended pregnancies”, presents ISD data under the headings of Sexually Transmitted Infection, Teenage...
Pregnancy and Termination of Pregnancy. The data featured are a mixture of those published routinely and those specifically requested for this purpose.

4.2 Policy Monitoring
The Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework details how the outcomes identified in the framework will be monitored and in Appendix 1 of the document, ISD data are identified as the means of monitoring certain outcomes at national level.

The Sexual Health KCIs were developed along side the NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (now called NHS Health Improvement Scotland) sexual health service standards. The indicators closely mirror particular standards and allow each NHS board in Scotland to monitor and report their progress against key standards.

4.3 Resource Allocation
The sexual health KCIs provide an indication of the workload on sexual health services for the provision of Chlamydia testing, sterilisation procedures, contraception and termination of pregnancy procedures. There is anecdotal evidence from NHS clinicians that these reports in particular are used as evidence during consultations with executive leads over budget considerations.

4.4 NHS Management
NHS boards use sexual health data to manage the provision of sexual health services in their areas, both from a clinical and resource point of view. Typically they access routine publications issued by ISD which are provided at NHS board level and available generally through the ISD website. A further breakdown of certain data (relating to termination of pregnancy and contraception provision) are provided to the clinical leads for each NHS board at community health practice (CHP) level. This further break down of NHS board data can show where differences in service provision/access occur within a NHS board and allows for the tailoring of interventions to address these.

4.5 Commercial Uses
Pharmaceutical companies, with a focus on sexual health, use the KCI on the distribution of long acting methods of contraception to monitor the uptake of certain methods. The KCI was also cited as a means to monitor the impact of a Social Marketing campaign, launched by NHS Health Scotland which ran in 2009 on long acting reversible contraception.

4.6 Other Uses
Information Requests from a range of users such as clinicians, journalists and those working in the voluntary sector are regularly answered using sexual health data from ISD. An example of a recent response on termination of pregnancy data to a Freedom of Information request can be found here.

5. Users Views
ISD regularly conducts a customer survey to gauge user views on a number of ISD services including the provision of statistics and information. The most recent survey in November 2010 was expanded to seek views on statistics provided by ISG on a topic by topic basis, including sexual health statistics. Results of the survey can be found on the website here.