

Publication Report



Diagnostic Waiting Times

Monthly data to 30 September 2013

Publication date – 26 November 2013



Contents

Contents.....	1
Introduction	2
Key points	3
Results and Commentary.....	4
Glossary.....	9
List of Tables.....	10
Contact.....	11
Further Information.....	11
Rate this publication.....	11
A1 – Background Information	12
A2 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details).....	13
A3 – Early Access details (including Pre-Release Access)	15
A4 – ISD and Official Statistics.....	16

Introduction

Waiting times are important to patients and are a measure of how the NHS is responding to demands for services. Measuring and regular reporting of waiting times highlight where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS Scotland's performance. Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland continues to be committed to improving the information on waiting times along with our key stakeholders, the NHS Boards and Scottish Government.

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Weeks Referral to Treatment standard (a maximum whole journey waiting time of 18 weeks from general practitioner to treatment).

The Scottish Government introduced a six week maximum waiting time for eight key diagnostic tests and investigations from 31 March 2009. This supersedes a target of nine weeks which was initially introduced on 31 December 2007.

Waiting Time information on the following eight key diagnostic tests and investigations has been collected nationally since 2006:

Endoscopy

- Upper Endoscopy
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy)
- Colonoscopy
- Cystoscopy

Radiology

- CT Scan
- MRI Scan
- Barium Studies
- Non-obstetric ultrasound

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests and investigations at the end of the month. The number of patients reported as waiting includes those who have an appointment date or those who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester.

Key points

- At 30 September 2013, 47,269 patients in NHS Scotland were waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.
- 97.4% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test had been waiting less than six weeks. This has increased from 97.0% at 30 June 2013.
- While combined performance for the eight key diagnostic tests has improved, the proportion of patients waiting over six weeks for a Cystoscopy or MRI Scan has increased by 4.9% and 3.9% respectively since 30 June 2013.
- 92.4% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test had been waiting less than four weeks which is an increase from 91.7% at 30 June 2013. This is the local target that NHS Boards are working to.

Results and Commentary

From 31 March 2009, the Scottish Government set a national waiting time standard that patients will wait no more than six weeks for any of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. NHS Boards are currently working to local targets that patients will wait no more than four weeks.

All key diagnostic tests

Table 1 shows the number of [patients waiting](#) for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. During month ending 30 September 2013, 97.4% (46,038 out of 47,269 patients on the list) had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of six weeks in NHS Scotland. This has increased from 97.0% at 30 June 2013.

With NHS Boards working to local targets that patients will wait no more than four weeks – Table 1 shows that there has been a drop in the number of patients waiting over four weeks since 30 June 2013. At 30 September 2013, 92.4% (43,674 out of 47,269 patients on the list) had been waiting less than four weeks which is an increase from 91.7% at 30 June 2013.

When comparing to 30 September 2012 - performance against the six week standard has seen a slight improvement while performance against the four week target has remained stable.

Table 1: Patients waiting for all Key Diagnostic Tests, NHS Scotland

Month end	Total patients waiting	Waiting over 4 weeks	Waiting over 6 weeks
30 September 2013	47 269	3 595	1 231
31 August 2013	45 729	3 659	1 477
31 July 2013	45 151	4 094	1 546
30 June 2013	47 479	3 946	1 413
30 September 2012	44 966	3 421	1 450

Caution should be taken when interpreting this data as there are differences in performance between waits for each Endoscopy and Radiology diagnostic tests and between NHS Boards. Please see the following sections below for more detail.

Endoscopy Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

Table 2 shows the number of patients waiting for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test at month end. At 30 September 2013, 96.8% (12,106 out of 12,504 on the list) of patients had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of six weeks for one of the key Endoscopy diagnostic tests and investigations. This has decreased from 97.1% at 30 June 2013.

The drop in performance for patients waiting for an Endoscopy diagnostic test is largely due to the increase in patients waiting over six weeks for a Cystoscopy diagnostic test.

Performance has dropped from 97.5% at 30 June 2013 to 92.6% at 30 September 2013. The majority of patients waiting over six weeks are waiting to be seen in NHS Lothian. NHS Lothian are experiencing resource issues.

With NHS Boards working towards local targets of four weeks – Table 2 shows that 90.3% (11,287 out of 12,504 patients on list) of patients waiting for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test had been waiting less than four weeks at 30 September 2013. This has improved from 89.7% at 30 June 2013. While overall performance against the four week target has improved, there has been an increase in the proportion of patients waiting longer for a Cystoscopy diagnostic test.

It should also be noted that NHS Grampian experienced technical difficulties in accessing data, limiting the time available for the usual validation processes. This has potentially inflated the number of patients being reported as waiting over the six and four weeks for the four key Endoscopy Diagnostic tests during the most recent quarter.

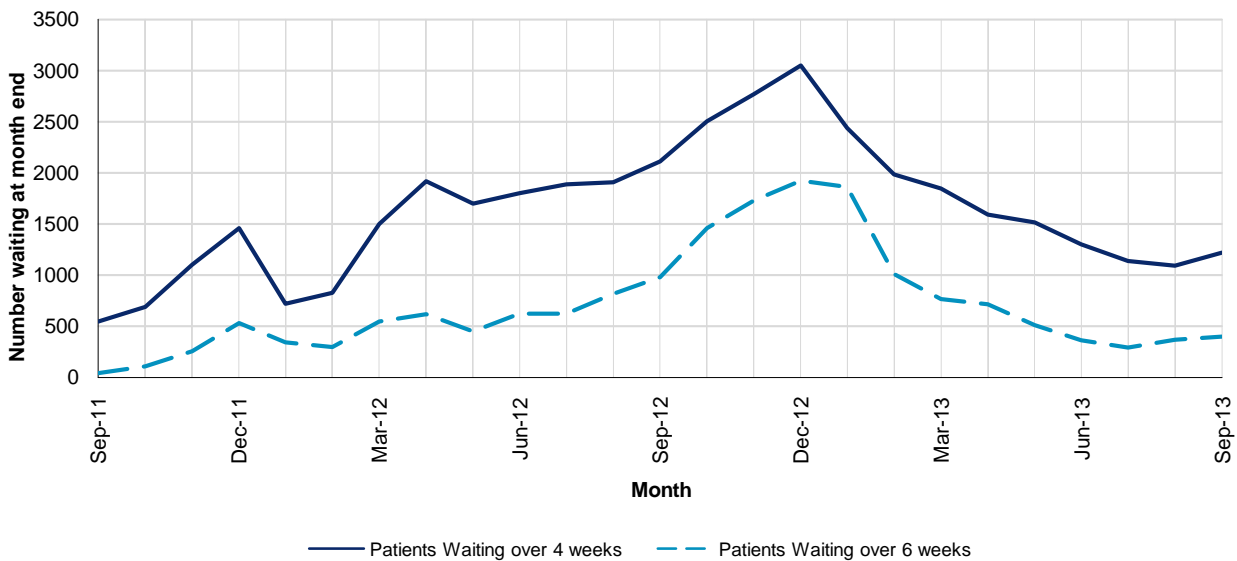
When comparing to the previous year – three out of the four Endoscopy diagnostic tests have seen a drop in the proportion of patients waiting over the six week standard and four week target. However the proportion of patients waiting for a Cystoscopy diagnostic test has increased by 7.0% and 14.6% respectively.

Table 2: Patients waiting for each Key Endoscopy Diagnostic Test, NHS Scotland

Diagnostic Test	Indicator	30-Sep-12	30-Jun-13	31-Jul-13	31-Aug-13	30-Sep-13
All Endoscopy	Number on List	13 394	12 572	12 333	12 316	12 504
	Waiting over 4 weeks	2 110	1 299	1 139	1 092	1 217
	Waiting over 6 weeks	978	365	292	368	398
Upper Endoscopy	Number on List	4 865	4 102	4 148	4 089	4 132
	Waiting over 4 weeks	717	314	309	320	346
	Waiting over 6 weeks	323	68	73	103	117
Lower Endoscopy (excl. colonoscopy)	Number on List	1 863	1 719	1 535	1 582	1 609
	Waiting over 4 weeks	369	217	199	125	157
	Waiting over 6 weeks	183	71	58	41	45
Colonoscopy	Number on List	5 290	4 778	4 783	4 818	4 828
	Waiting over 4 weeks	967	511	419	347	344
	Waiting over 6 weeks	466	174	129	151	89
Cystoscopy	Number on List	1 376	2 048	1 867	1 890	1 979
	Waiting over 4 weeks	57	257	212	300	370
	Waiting over 6 weeks	6	52	32	73	147

Chart 1 shows the number of patients waiting over four and six weeks for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test from September 2011 to September 2013. From September 2011 until December 2012 there was a gradual increase in the number of patients waiting over both four and six weeks. Due to NHS Lothian’s increase in capacity, the number of Endoscopy waits over four and six weeks continued to drop until August 2013. The increase seen in September 2013 is primarily due to the resource issues with Cystoscopy experienced in NHS Lothian, a drop in NHS Forth Valley’s performance for Upper Endoscopy and NHS Grampians aforementioned technical difficulties.

Chart 1: Key Endoscopy tests - Patients waiting over four and six weeks, NHS Scotland



Data for total patients waiting and those waiting over four, six and nine weeks for any key Endoscopy test provided at NHS Board level is provided in the [List of Tables](#).

Radiology Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

Table 3 shows the number of patients in NHS Scotland waiting for a key Radiology diagnostic test at month end. At 30 September 2013, 97.6% (33,932 out of 34,765 on the list) of patients throughout NHS Scotland were recorded as having been waiting less than six weeks for one of the key Radiology diagnostic tests and investigations. This has improved from 97.0% at 30 June 2013.

While the combined performance for Radiology has improved, there has been an increase in the proportion of patients waiting over six weeks for an MRI Scan from 98.0% at 30 June 2013 to 94.1% at 30 September 2013. The majority of these patients are waiting to be seen at NHS Highland and NHS Fife. NHS Highland have addressed the issue with long waits by introducing measures to increase capacity and ensure a reduction in patients waiting times. NHS Fife have experienced ongoing staffing issues which have recently been addressed by recruitment and additional services such as a MRI van and extended hours, to increase capacity as an interim measure. This increase in capacity has seen a reduction in the proportion of patients waiting over six weeks at 30 September 2013.

With NHS Boards working towards local targets of four weeks – Table 3 shows that 93.2% (32,387 out of 34,765 patients on list) of patients waiting for a key Radiology diagnostic test had been waiting less than four weeks at 30 September 2013. This figure has improved from 92.4% at 30 June 2013.

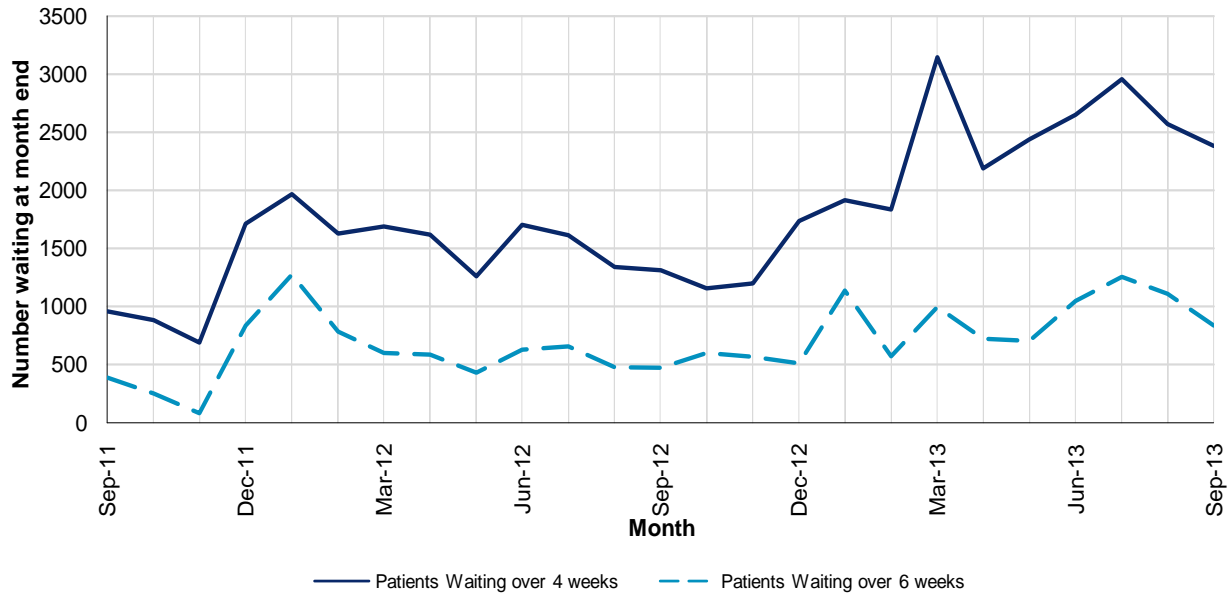
When comparing to the previous year – there has been a drop in Radiology performance against the six week standard and four week target. This is largely due an increase in the proportion of patients waiting over six and four weeks for a MRI Scan which has risen by 4.0% and 5.0% respectively.

Table 3: Patients waiting for each Key Radiology Diagnostic test, NHS Scotland

Diagnostic Test	Indicator	30-Sep-12	30-Jun-13	31-Jul-13	31-Aug-13	30-Sep-13
All Radiology	Number on List	31 572	34 907	32 818	33 413	34 765
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1 311	2 647	2 955	2 567	2 378
	Waiting over 6 weeks	472	1 048	1 254	1 109	833
Computer Tomography (CT)	Number on List	7 445	7 662	6 760	7 207	8 002
	Waiting over 4 weeks	23	225	216	141	212
	Waiting over 6 weeks	3	32	38	14	21
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)	Number on List	7 425	8 996	8 539	8 504	8 467
	Waiting over 4 weeks	548	878	1 133	1 184	1 050
	Waiting over 6 weeks	143	177	360	464	501
Barium Studies	Number on List	474	285	268	246	264
	Waiting over 4 weeks	0	2	1	1	5
	Waiting over 6 weeks	0	0	1	1	0
Non-obstetric ultrasound	Number on List	16 228	17 964	17 251	17 456	18 032
	Waiting over 4 weeks	740	1 542	1 605	1 241	1 111
	Waiting over 6 weeks	326	839	855	630	311

Chart 2 shows the number of patients waiting over four and six weeks from September 2011 to September 2013. It can be seen from April 2013 until July 2013 that there was an increase in the number of patients waiting over four weeks – the vast majority of these patients were waiting to be seen with NHS Fife. Although there has been a drop in the number of patients waiting over four and six weeks from August 2013, NHS Fife’s Radiology department continues to have staffing issues which are being address with Locum Radiologists alongside additional services such as a MRI Van and extended hours are being brought in to reduce the number of patients waiting.

Chart 2: Key Radiology tests - Patients waiting over four and six weeks, NHS Scotland



Data for total patients waiting and those waiting over four, six and nine weeks for any key radiology test provided at NHS Board level is provided in the [List of Tables](#).

Glossary

Diagnostic test: test or procedure that is used to identify a person's condition, disease or injury to enable a medical diagnosis to be made.

Key Diagnostic test: There are eight key diagnostic tests, for which the current National Waiting Times Standard is a maximum wait of six weeks. These eight tests/investigations are:

- Upper Endoscopy,
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy),
- Colonoscopy,
- Cystoscopy,
- Computer Tomography (CT),
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI),
- Barium Studies,
- Non-obstetric Ultrasound.

Patient's completed wait: the period of time between the date the request for the test or procedure is received within the department and the date when the verified report has been received by or made available to the requester.

Patients waiting: number of available patients waiting at the census date, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester. The number of patients waiting at the census date in each time band corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the receipt of the referral.

List of Tables

Table No.	Name	Time period	File & size
4	Waiting times for diagnostic tests : monthly census dates	30 September 2011 to 30 September 2013	Excel [209KB]

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Further Information

Further information can be found on the [ISD website](#)

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Appendix

A1 – Background Information

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Week Referral To Treatment standard (18 Weeks RTT) with waiting times information on the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations having been collected nationally since 2006.

The Scottish Government introduced a nine week maximum waiting time for these eight key diagnostic tests and investigations from 31 December 2007. This wait was reduced to six weeks from 31 March 2009.

NHS Boards also supply data that allows measurement of the number of patients waiting over four weeks. The number of patients waiting over four weeks is included from 31 March 2010. From January 2010, the Scotland total includes Golden Jubilee National Hospital.

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests and investigations at the end of the month, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester. This includes all referral routes (i.e. whether the patient was referred by a GP, by a hospital-based clinician or other route) and also all settings (i.e. outpatient clinic, inpatient ward, x-ray department, primary care one-stop centres etc.).

The diagnostics waiting times national delivery team has worked with NHS Boards and ISD over recent years to support the compilation of the diagnostic waiting time data. Common definitions have been established and reporting systems improved so the coverage and quality of these data has improved month-on-month from April 2006.

ISD receives aggregate diagnostics data from each NHS Board and so patient-level information is not systematically validated by ISD, however, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is carried out by individual NHS Boards in collaboration with ISD.

A2 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details)

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication title	Diagnostic Waiting Times
Description	Monthly summary of patients waiting times for eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.
Theme	Health and Social Care
Topic	Access and Waiting Times
Format	Excel workbooks
Data source(s)	Aggregate counts accredited and derived from individual NHS Scotland Boards are submitted monthly to ISD using a defined Excel template. Associated with individual NHS Scotland Boards Local Delivery Plans integrated to the 18Weeks RTT national standards.
Date that data are acquired	Deadline for data submission is the 22nd of each month, though files can be resubmitted up to one week before publication where the quality assurance process identifies differences with local figures.
Release date	The last Tuesday of the month for each publication.
Frequency	Quarterly
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Data from December 2007 to date. There have been no delays in reporting.
Continuity of data	From January 2010 Golden Jubilee National Hospital data is included in the Scotland total.
Revisions statement	Historic data is not normally revised unless revision of data is required due to NHS Board resubmission of revised local data following publication.
Revisions relevant to this publication	November 2013 - NHS Lanarkshire revised figures for Upper and Lower Endoscopy diagnostic tests dating back to October 2011. This was due to a report grouping issue however this did not affect the total number on list or the number of long waits.
Concepts and definitions	A Data Submission Guidance document is available in printed and electronic form. These have been provided to all NHS Boards' key DMMI contacts. This information is now published and available to view at http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/
Relevance and key uses of the statistics	Waiting times are important to patients and are a measure of how the NHS is responding to demands for services. Measuring and regular reporting of waiting times highlights where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS performance throughout the country. The NHS in Scotland has been set a number of targets for maximum waiting times. Other uses of the data include information requests for a variety of customers, e.g. research charities; public companies; freedom of Information requests; information support to Boards; health intelligence work; parliamentary questions and HEAT targets.
Accuracy	ISD only receives aggregate data from each NHS Board where the data for the previous quarter is confirmed by the submitting Board. Although aggregated data can not be systematically validated by ISD, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. Reported data are compared to previous figures and to expected trends. Derivation of the

	figures and data accuracy is a matter for individual NHS Boards.
Completeness	100% of submitted data is used for analysis and publication.
Comparability	Comparative waiting times information is not possible at present using these data due to inconsistencies in definitions of waiting times for treatment across the four countries.
Accessibility	It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines .
Coherence and clarity	Key statistics for the latest quarter are linked to on the main Waiting Times page of the publication. Statistics are presented within Excel spreadsheets. NHS Board and national figures are presented. Geographical hierarchies and national figures are presented using drop down menus. Further features to aid clarity: 1. Tables use drop down menus to display data by a single Board. 2. Tables are printer friendly.
Value type and unit of measurement	Count of number of patients waiting over four, six and nine weeks for Scotland and NHS Scotland Health Boards
Disclosure	The ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol is followed.
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published 29 th July 2010. http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf
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A3 – Early Access details (including Pre-Release Access)

Pre-Release Access

Under terms of the "Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008", ISD are obliged to publish information on those receiving Pre-Release Access ("Pre-Release Access" refers to statistics in their final form prior to publication). The standard maximum Pre-Release Access is five working days. Shown below are details of those receiving standard Pre-Release Access and, separately, those receiving extended Pre-Release Access.

Standard Pre-Release Access:

Scottish Government Health Department
NHS Board Chief Executives
NHS Board Communication leads

Extended Pre-Release Access

Extended Pre-Release Access of eight working days is given to a small number of named individuals in the Scottish Government Health Department (Analytical Services Division). This Pre-Release Access is for the sole purpose of enabling that department to gain an understanding of the statistics prior to briefing others in Scottish Government (during the period of standard Pre-Release Access).

Scottish Government Health Department (Analytical Services Division)

Early Access for Quality Assurance

These statistics will also have been made available to those who needed access to help quality assure the publication:

NHS Board Information and Delivery Leads

A4 – ISD and Official Statistics

About ISD

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

Purpose: To deliver effective national and specialist intelligence services to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland.

Mission: Better Information, Better Decisions, Better Health

Vision: To be a valued partner in improving health and wellbeing in Scotland by providing a world class intelligence service.

Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

ISD's statistical publications are currently classified as one of the following:

- National Statistics (ie assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as complying with the Code of Practice)
- National Statistics (ie legacy, still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- Official Statistics (ie still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- other (not Official Statistics)

Further information on ISD's statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the [ISD website](#).

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.