

# Publication Report



## Diagnostic Waiting Times

Monthly Data to 31 December 2013

Publication date – 25 February 2014



## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Key points .....	3
Results and Commentary.....	4
All Key Diagnostic Tests and Investigations .....	4
Endoscopy Diagnostic Tests and Investigations .....	4
Radiology Diagnostic Tests and Investigations .....	6
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

As at 31 December 2013:

- 47,248 patients in NHS Scotland were waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. This is approximately 15% higher than 31 December 2012.
- 96.2% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test had been waiting less than six weeks. This has decreased from 97.4% at 30 September 2013. The drop in performance is mainly been due to the increase in patients waiting over six weeks for a Lower Endoscopy (up 7.0%), Colonoscopy (up 5.1%) and CT Scan (up 2.1%).
- Although performance has dropped when comparing to the previous quarter end, performance against the six week standard has seen an improvement of 2.1% from 31 December 2012.
- 86.8% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test had been waiting less than four weeks. This has decreased from 92.4% at 30 September 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 and Investigations

Table 1 shows the number of [patients waiting](#) for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. At 31 December 2013, 96.2% (45,461 out of 47,248 patients on the list) had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of six weeks in NHS Scotland. This has decreased from 97.4% at 30 September 2013.

With NHS Boards working to local targets that patients will wait no more than four weeks, Table 1 shows that there has been an increase in the number of patients waiting over four weeks since 30 September 2013. At 31 December 2013, 86.8% (40,996 out of 47,248 patients on the list) had been waiting less than four weeks which had decreased from 92.4% at 30 September 2013.

Although performance has dropped when comparing to the previous quarter end, performance against the six week standard has seen an improvement of 2.1% since 31 December 2012. Performance against the four week target has dropped by 1.6% for the corresponding period.

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

Month end	Total patients waiting	Waiting over 4 weeks	Waiting over 6 weeks
31 December 2013	47 248	6 252	1 787
30 November 2013	48 603	3 942	1 277
31 October 2013	48 108	3 882	1 202
30 September 2013	47 269	3 595	1 231
31 December 2012	41 340	4 785	2 434

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 31 December 2013, 94.1% (12,546 out of 13,336 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 96.8% at 30 September 2013.

With NHS Boards working towards local targets of four weeks – Table 2 shows that 84.7% (11,299 out of 13,336 patients on list) of patients waiting for a key Endoscopy diagnostic

test had been waiting less than four weeks at 31 December 2013. This has decreased from 90.3% at 30 September 2013.

The decrease in NHS Scotland’s performance against the six week standard and four week target is primarily due to increased waiting times for both Lower Endoscopy and Colonoscopy in NHS Fife and NHS Forth Valley. This is due to ongoing demand and capacity issues.

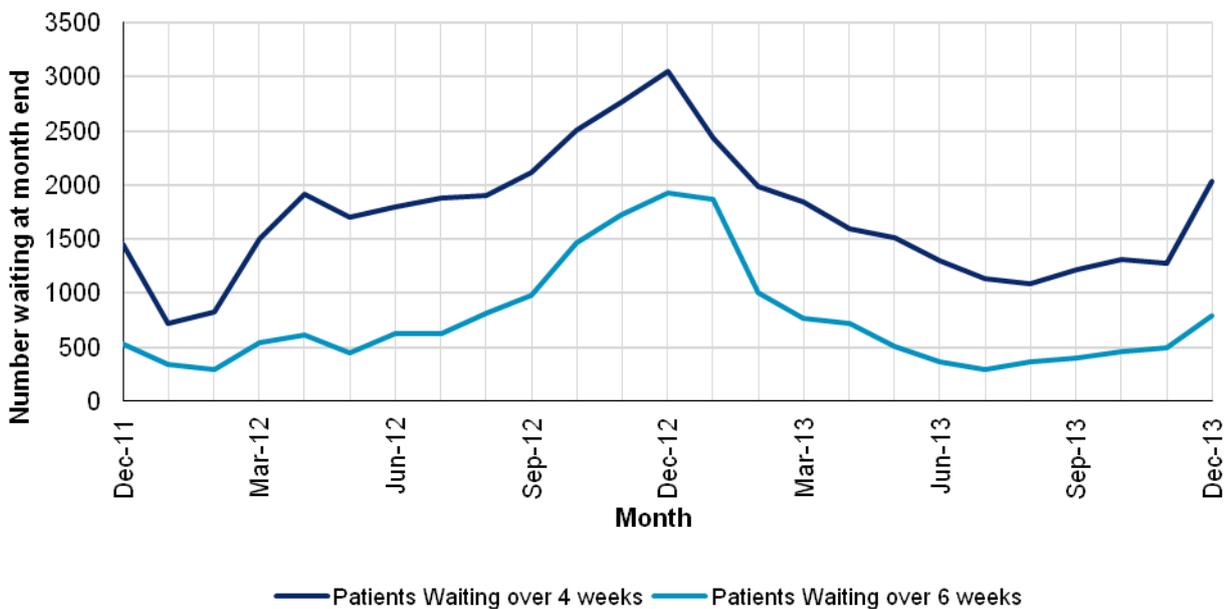
Although there has been a decrease in performance from the previous quarter end, when comparing to the previous year there has been an improvement of 8.8% and 8.0% against the six week standard and four week target respectively. This is primarily due to NHS Lothian increasing their capacity to meet the demand for these services.

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

Diagnostic Test	Indicator	31-Dec-12	30-Sep-13	31-Oct-13	30-Nov-13	31-Dec-13
<b>All Endoscopy</b>	Number on List	13 080	12 504	13 232	13 516	13 336
	Waiting over 4 weeks	3 050	1 217	1 315	1 337	2 037
	Waiting over 6 weeks	1 925	398	457	504	790
Upper Endoscopy	Number on List	4 722	4 132	4 388	4 427	4 592
	Waiting over 4 weeks	895	346	286	236	467
	Waiting over 6 weeks	609	117	96	67	110
Lower Endoscopy (excl. colonoscopy)	Number on List	1 729	1 565	1 677	1 786	1 885
	Waiting over 4 weeks	430	157	207	251	370
	Waiting over 6 weeks	279	45	72	114	186
Colonoscopy	Number on List	4991	4828	5158	5203	5014
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1418	344	469	489	713
	Waiting over 6 weeks	1014	89	198	236	344
Cystoscopy	Number on List	1638	1979	2009	2100	1845
	Waiting over 4 weeks	307	370	353	361	487
	Waiting over 6 weeks	23	147	91	87	150

Chart 1 shows the number of patients waiting over four and six weeks for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test from December 2011 to December 2013. From December 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. While there was a slight increase in September 2013, the sharp increase in the number of patients waiting longer than six and four weeks at 31 December 2013 is primarily due to NHS Fife and NHS Forth Valley’s ongoing resource and capacity issues.

**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 31 December 2013, 97.1% (32,915 out of 33,912 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. Performance has decreased from 97.6% at 30 September 2013.

With NHS Boards working towards local targets of four weeks, 87.6% (29,697 out of 33,912 patients on list) of patients waiting for a key Radiology diagnostic test had been waiting less than four weeks at 31 December 2013. This has dropped from 93.2% at 30 September 2013.

Table 3 shows that there has been a marked increase in the total number of patients waiting over four weeks for one of the key Radiology diagnostic tests over recent months. The number of patients waiting over four weeks for a CT Scan has more than doubled (212 to 590) since September 2013. The majority of these patients are waiting to be seen in NHS Fife and NHS Highland. NHS Fife’s radiology department is experiencing resource

issues while NHS Highland capacity decreased while awaiting the installation of a new scanner, which has resulted in longer waiting times.

Consequent to resource issues and staff vacancies within the radiology department in NHS Lanarkshire, the number of patients waiting over six and four weeks for a Non-Obstetric Ultrasound has noticeably increased over the last quarter. The posts have since been filled.

In contrast with the drop in performance for Radiology tests over the most recent quarter, there has been an improvement of 1.1% and 6.3% against the six week standard and four week target when comparing to the previous year end.

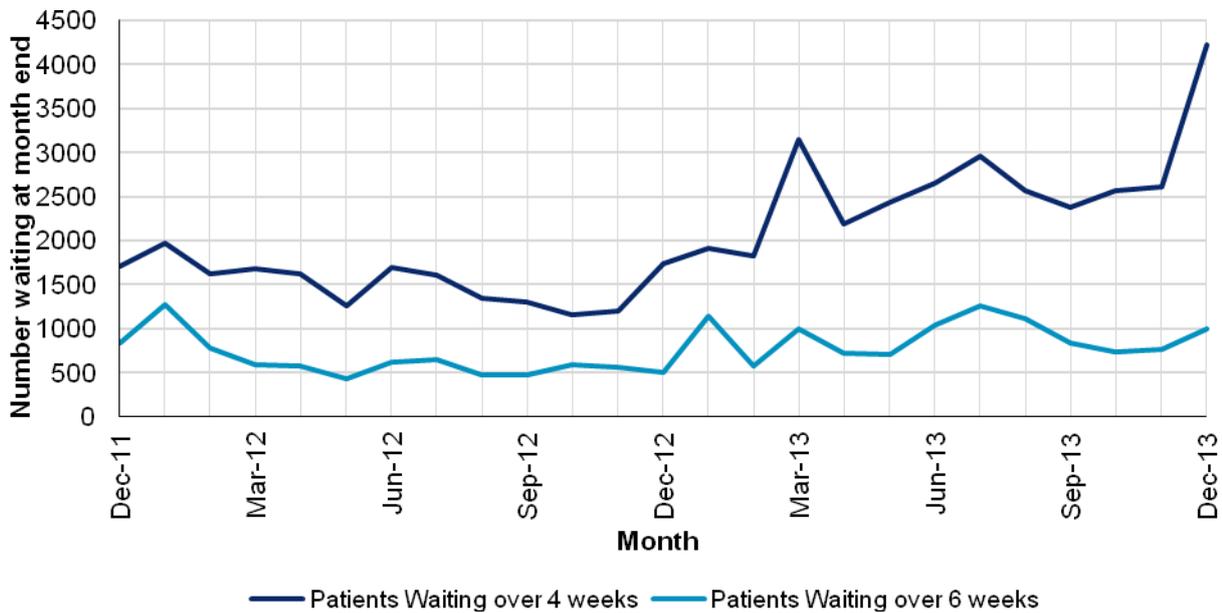
**Table 3: Patients waiting for each Key Radiology Diagnostic test, NHS Scotland**

Diagnostic Test	Indicator	31-Dec-12	30-Sep-13	31-Oct-13	30-Nov-13	31-Dec-13
<b>All Radiology</b>	Number on List	28 260	34 765	34 876	35 087	33 912
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1735	2378	2567	2605	4215
	Waiting over 6 weeks	509	833	745	733	997
Computer Tomography (CT)	Number on List	6 524	8 002	7 619	8 115	7 780
	Waiting over 4 weeks	197	212	254	419	590
	Waiting over 6 weeks	93	21	52	139	188
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)	Number on List	7 647	8 467	8 565	9 038	8 777
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1075	1050	1023	1025	1311
	Waiting over 6 weeks	326	501	358	403	422
Barium Studies	Number on List	334	264	221	237	262
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1	5	5	7	13
	Waiting over 6 weeks	0	0	2	2	0
Non-obstetric ultrasound	Number on List	13 737	18 032	18 471	17 697	17 093
	Waiting over 4 weeks	462	1111	1285	1154	2301
	Waiting over 6 weeks	90	311	333	229	387

Chart 2 shows the number of patients waiting over four and six weeks from December 2011 to December 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 to September 2013, NHS Fife’s Radiology department continues to have staffing issues.

The number of patients waiting over four weeks for a Radiology diagnostic test reached a 2-year high at 31 December 2013. This sharp increase is primarily due to the increase in the number of patients waiting for a Non-Obstetric Ultrasound in NHS Lanarkshire.

**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	<a href="#">Waiting times for diagnostic tests : monthly census dates</a>	31 December 2011 to 31 December 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 <a href="http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/">http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/</a>
Relevance and key uses of the statistics	<p>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.</p> <p>Other uses of the data include information requests for a variety of customers, e.g. research charities; public companies; freedom of</p>

	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 <a href="#">published guidelines</a> .
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 <a href="#">ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol</a> is followed.
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published 29 <sup>th</sup> July 2010. <a href="http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf">http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf</a>
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Date form completed	12 February 2014

## **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 8 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)

## 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.