

NISRARSU026 - User Engagement Strategy

Introduction

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires NISRA's Research Support Unit (RSU) to publish transparent guidance on its policy on engaging with users in order to ensure their needs are being considered and, where possible, met.

The RSU provides user support to government and academic researchers accessing the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study (NILS), the Northern Ireland Mortality Study (NIMS), the Administrative Data Research Centre (ADRC) and the Virtual Microdata Laboratory (VML). This document describes RSU's commitment to provide a high level of service to all customers who avail of our services. It explains how we meet the requirements of Protocol 1 (User Engagement) in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Our commitment

RSU will support researchers accessing de-identified data for NILS, NIMS, ADRC and VML research by:

- Supporting researchers in the application stage of a project;
- Liaising with data providers to promote the benefits of proposed research and facilitate access to de-identified individual level data for research projects;
- Providing a secure environment for researchers;
- Running code for researchers; and
- Checking outputs to ensure they are free from disclosure risks in a timely manner.

Our commitment to the users of RSU is:

- To respond quickly and accurately to questions and enquiries from our users;
- To allow users to supply us with their views and opinions;
- To consult annually with users on our work plan;
- To consult with users on developments and changes to our services;
- To respond in a timely manner to any complaints from users; and
- To be transparent when we are unable to meet any of these commitments.

User Engagement Strategy

Our users

Our users are mainly from the following groups:

- Academics;
- Departmental researchers; and
- Policy makers within Government including Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

Maintaining contact with our users

We recognise that our customers will have different needs depending on the complexity of their projects.

- Some users simply require access to the secure environment;
- Others will have more contact with RSU staff if they have complex projects/application forms/data requirements;
- Others will wish to be informed of the latest developments in RSU;
- Finally some users wish to be fully involved in steering the work programme and ensuring their needs are met by the programme of work.

Through this strategy, the RSU will seek to ensure that there are transparent and clear processes allowing for views from both internal and external users. Users can maintain contact in a number of ways:

- Users can access the NILS RSU website and the ADRC-NI website which includes up-to-date information on opening hours, policies and procedures and data;
- Users can be kept up-to-date by joining our email distribution list, which will give regular information on the latest news in RSU. Contact details will remain confidential and will not be used by RSU for any other purpose, nor passed on to any other authority without the users' explicit and informed consent;
- Contact telephone numbers are available on the NILS RSU website;
- NILS RSU will provide an update to bi-annual User Group meetings.

Annual work plan

RSU, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, will consult regularly with users on its work plan. The Code requires the Senior Statistician to ensure the statistical work plan reflects the needs of all users, both internal and external to the Department, and balances the needs of users with the cost and burden on data suppliers.

Changes in RSU

We will discuss minor changes to our services with the NILS User Group and announce any changes on the NILS RSU website. RSU will provide information on the changes and the rationale for the decisions to the User Group. Where possible, users will be given one month's notice of any planned changes to the services provided by the RSU.

There may be times when we need to change RSU policies and procedures for security reasons. In such circumstances, we will not be able to liaise with the user group as outlined above. However, we will endeavour to contact the chair of the user group prior to any major changes of this nature taking place and provide as much background information as possible.

Complaints

If for any reason the user feels that the service they receive from the RSU has fallen below the standards they expect; they should contact the RSU so that the matter can be investigated. Complaints should be addressed initially to the Grade 7 Statistician in the RSU. Where the nature of the complaint relates to information provided under the Freedom of Information Act, the RSU will review and respond in line with the internal review process set out under the Freedom of Information Act.

If the complaint relates to any other aspect of the service, then the Grade 7 Statistician in RSU will send confirmation of receipt of the complaint within five working days and aim to provide a full response within twenty working days. If the user is still not satisfied, then they can then refer their complaint to the Senior Statistician in RSU. If it is not possible for the RSU to provide a full response within these time periods, the user concerned will be advised accordingly. Complaints can be made in writing or email. Users will be encouraged to provide as much relevant information as possible in order to ensure that their complaint is dealt with promptly and accurately to:

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