

Contents

1. Overview of NISRA - role, responsibilities and relationships	2
2. NISRA Core Key Business Areas	5
3. Impact of the pandemic on NISRA Core Key Business Areas	6
4. Census of Population (2021 Census).....	8
5. Social Surveys.....	9
6. Statutory Business Surveys/ Economic & Labour Market Statistics.....	16
7. Registration of key vital life events.....	26
8. Key vital event statistics and Administrative Data Research.....	26
9. Corporate Statistical Support and Dissemination	48
10. Corporate Business Support and Development	53
11. NISRA Core's Span of Responsibility	56
Statement of Truth	59
Annex A: Covid Opinion Survey Results.....	58
Annex B: Economic & Labour Market Statistics Produced during the Pandemic ..	62
Annex C: Cross Government Working Groups that ELMS participated throughout the pandemic	64
Annex D: Summary of Data shares established by NISRA Vital Statistics Unit in support of Pandemic monitoring	67
Annex E: Summary of Covid-19 related deaths Fol requests received by NISRA ..	69
Annex F: Assembly Question relating to Covid-19 responded to by NISRA	91

Table of Abbreviations Used in This Statement

Full name	Abbreviation
Administrative Data Research Unit	ARU
Age-standardised mortality rates	ASMR's
Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings	ASHE
Assembly Question	AQ
Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic	BAME
Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics	BESES
Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey	BICS
Business Register and Employment Survey	BRES
Business Services Organisation	BSO
Care home Quality Commission	CQC
Central Statistics Office	CSO
Central Survey Unit	CSU
Continuous Household Survey	CHS
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	CJRS
COVID-19 Infection Survey	CIS
Database for Trade and Economic Research	DTER
Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	DAERA
Department for the Economy	DFE
Department of Finance	DOF
Department of Health	DOH
Deputy Registrar General	DRG
Devolved Economic Statistics Coordination	DESC
Employment and Labour Market Statistics	ELMS
European Mortality Monitoring	EuroMOMO
Facilities Management Team	FMT
Freedom of Information	FOI
General Register Office	GRO
Government Statistical Service	GSS
Health and Social Care	HSC
Health Protection Surveillance Centre	HPSC
Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	HMRC
Her Majesty's Treasury	HMT
Honest Broker Service	HBS
Household Travel Survey	HTS
Information and Analysis Directorate	IAD
Integrated Business Survey System	IBSS
Inter Departmental Business Register	IDBR
International Classification of Diseases-10	ICD-10
Labour Force Survey	LFS
Labour Market Survey	LMS
Medical Certificate of Cause of death	MCCD
Ministry of Defence	MOD
National Records Scotland	NRS

National Statistics Institutes	NSI's
NI Economic Trade Statistics	NIETS
Northern Ireland Civil Service	NICS
Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index	NICEI
Northern Ireland Mortality Study	NIMS
Northern Ireland Passenger Survey	NIPS
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	NISRA
Office for National Statistics	ONS
Office for Statistics Regulation	OSR
Pay As You Earn	PAYE
Police Service of Northern Ireland	PSNI
Public Health Agency	PHA
Quality Assurance of Administrative Data	QAAD
Real Time Information	RTI
Red Amber Green	RAG
Research Support Unit	RSU
Royal Statistical Society	RSS
Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies	SAGE
Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling	SPI-M-O
Self-Employment Income Support Scheme	SEISS
Senior Management Team	SMT
Service Level Agreement	SLA
Statistical Support Branch	SSB
Survey of Overseas Travellers	SOT
The Executive Office	TEO
Vital Statistics & Administrative Research and Support	VARs
Vital Statistics Unit	VSU
World Health Organisation	WHO

Witness Name: Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)

Statement No.:

Exhibits:

Dated:

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND STATISTICS AND RESEARCH AGENCY (NISRA)

I, Philip Wales, will say as follows: -

1. I am a senior Civil Servant, appointed to the joint position of Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and Registrar General for Northern Ireland. My appointment to NISRA commenced on 27th February 2023 and was prompted by the retirement of the previous post-holder, Ms Siobhan Carey, CBE. The material provided relates to the period 11 January 2020 to 18 March 2022 as stipulated and, as such, pre-dates my appointment. In view of this I would suggest that it would be appropriate and prudent that I can be accompanied by key remaining officials at any subsequent evidence session that may be required.

1. **Overview of NISRA - role, responsibilities and relationships**

2. NISRA, which incorporates the General Register Office (GRO), is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (DOF) and was established on 1 April 1996. NISRA's headquarters is located at Colby House, Stranmillis Road, Belfast.
3. GRO has responsibility for the administration of the marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland, along with the registration of births, deaths, adoptions and gender recognition. GRO is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and, on request, the production of certificates in relation to these events.
4. NISRA is the principal source of Official Statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. These statistics and research not only inform public policy but also academic and private sector research, and contribute to wider societal debate. NISRA provide services to a wide range of Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to assist the policy development process and the delivery of their business objectives.
5. NISRA conducts the Census of Population which the Northern Ireland population are required to complete. The Census is used by central and local government, health and education authorities and other organisations to plan and provide future services.
6. A publicly available Agency Framework Document, which is subject to review after 5 years, is available on the NISRA website. It sets out the relationships between the Agency, its parent Department (DOF) and the Minister for Finance along with their respective responsibilities and lines of accountability. The Framework Document also sets out the duties of the Chief Executive regarding official statistics and details relationships with (i) statisticians outposted to Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments/ Non-Departmental Public Bodies and (ii) the rest of the UK statistical system.
7. As agreed with the Inquiry Team, this statement is based on work that was undertaken by NISRA statisticians and administrative staff embedded within the Department of Finance (hereafter referred to as NISRA Core) in response to the pandemic.

8. Statisticians who are outposted to other NICS Departments/ Non-Departmental Public Bodies are managed within and by the Departments/ Non-Departmental Public Bodies to which they are outposted. Their programmes of work, functions, and priorities etc. are stipulated and performance managed by the Departments/ Non-Departmental Public Bodies concerned, not by the NISRA Chief Executive. Such Departments/ Non-Departmental Public Bodies will have determined their respective responses to the pandemic and how to deploy their statistical resources in that work. A Concordat details the nature of the relationship and respective responsibilities between NISRA Core and those Departments/ Non-Departmental Public Bodies utilising NISRA statisticians.
9. By way of example, some of NISRA's statisticians are outposted to the Information and Analysis Directorate (IAD) within the Department of Health (DOH). Their work and day-to-day priorities throughout the pandemic will have been governed, directed and managed by senior officials in DOH, including the Permanent Secretary, Chief Scientific Advisor and Chief Medical Advisor. As with all outposted staff, IAD staff can avail of support from within NISRA Core on professional matters (such as the Code of Practice for Statistics/ National Statistics) and personnel matters (such as the filling of vacancies). As with all NISRA statisticians, IAD can also access NISRA Core delivered services such as, for example, the Technology Lab through a generic application process and the NISRA Core Geography Team.
10. As highlighted above, the Chief Executive in NISRA is also the Registrar General for Northern Ireland. During the period in question, the position was held by Siobhan Carey, CBE (now retired) who was supported by a senior management team (SMT) from within NISRA Core. SMT comprised of the Chief Executive & Registrar General, three Grade 5 Statistician Directors, the head of the General Register Office (the Deputy Registrar General) and head of NISRA's Business Support and Development Branch. NISRA's SMT typically meets on a monthly basis. The main responsibilities of the group include; providing updates and advice to the Chief Executive & Registrar General on operational matters, developing Agency policy, business planning, financial and risk management, and other corporate responsibilities.

11. In terms of the Grade 5 Statistician Directors, and from a NISRA Core perspective, during the time in question Dr David Marshall was the Director of Census and Population Statistics, with responsibility for the planning and conduct of the 2021 Census, which was held on 21st March 2021. Brian Green was the Director of Sources, with responsibility for the planning and conduct of NISRA's Social Survey and statutory Business Survey operations. Dr Tracy Power (now retired) was Director of Analysis, with responsibility for a number of NISRA Core Branches (including Vital Statistics and Administrative Research & Support Branch, Statistical Support Branch and Dissemination Branch) and providing professional oversight (as required) to outposted statisticians.
12. The Chief Executive & Registrar General is also supported by NISRA's Agency Board, which comprises of NISRA's SMT plus representatives from all Senior Principal Statistician led Departmental business areas. The Agency Board considers issues relating to personnel/ resourcing, the Code of Practice for Statistics, National Statistics, policy development and provides updates from the various departments represented.
13. Outside of NISRA's internal governance arrangements there are two external and independent organisations that have an important influence on the work of NISRA and indeed that of the other National Statistics Institutes (NSIs) in the other territories of the UK. They are the UK Statistics Authority (an independent body at arm's length from government) and the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), an independent regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. The principal roles of the OSR, which continued to be exercised throughout the pandemic in respect of NISRA's work, are to:
- set the statutory Code of Practice for Statistics;
 - assess compliance with the Code;
 - award the National Statistics designation to official statistics that comply fully with the Code; and
 - report any concerns on the quality, good practice and comprehensiveness of official statistics.

14. Historically, NISRA has worked very closely with the other NSIs throughout the UK and, in particular, with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Relationships have been built up over many years and are well established. This is important from a harmonisation, coherence, efficiency, sharing of experience (e.g. technical and methodological) and sharing of systems and infrastructure perspective. It is also important as certain statistics are devolved to NI and, as such, the information provided by NISRA is crucial to the production of UK statistics. From a NISRA Core perspective, examples include: the 2021 Census, production of population estimates & projections, production of statistics on vital events (e.g. births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships etc.) and the production of economic and labour market statistics. Very often, such statistics are produced on the basis of common definitions and to harmonised timescales, with releases going out at the same time on the same day (e.g. NISRA's Labour Market estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity). Relevant to the pandemic and hence this inquiry, certain statistics/ information relating to NI were produced by organisations other than NISRA. By way of example, this includes information produced by the ONS from: (i) the new voluntary Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey (BICS) (now called the Business Insights and Conditions Survey), which was specifically developed and maintained to capture and report the experiences of businesses throughout the pandemic and (ii) the ONS/ Oxford University led UK COVID-19 Infection Study. Both of these are referred to later in the witness statement. ONS also produced a variety of economy related 'faster indicators' throughout the pandemic and will be best placed to advise on what, if any, of their analyses covered NI.

15. These long established, tried & tested, professional and productive working arrangements and relationships were particularly beneficial to NISRA in its response to the challenges presented by the pandemic. This was particularly the case from an economy of scale and avoiding duplication perspective, helping to optimise both resources and public expenditure across wider UK statistical system.

2. NISRA Core Key Business Areas

16. NISRA Core has seven key business areas, which governed the senior management team structure and grade 5 statistician areas of responsibility as

described in paragraphs 10 and 11 above. The work in these areas and the impact of, and NISRA Core's response to, the pandemic is particularly relevant/ pertinent to NISRA Core's response to Module 2c of the Covid 19 Inquiry. The seven business areas in question are:

- The planning, conduct and reporting of the 2021 Census.
- The planning and delivery of Social Surveys in Northern Ireland for NISRA customers.
- The planning and conduct of Northern Ireland's statutory Business Surveys and the associated collation, analysis, reporting and dissemination of key economic and labour market statistics.
- The registration of key vital events (such as births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships) as administered through the GRO.
- The collation, analysis, reporting and dissemination of key vital event statistics.
- Corporate Statistical Support and Dissemination; and
- Corporate Business Support and Development.

17. NISRA Core's return of the 2nd March 2020 regarding resilience readiness to the Essential Services, Society and Infrastructure Group set out an early assessment in respect of some of these key Business Areas, which evolved throughout the pandemic as discussed below.

3. Impact of the pandemic on NISRA Core Key Business Areas

18. The paragraphs and sections that follow present how the pandemic impacted on the key business areas of NISRA Core and details the associated responses to the unprecedented circumstances and challenges it presented. As with many other organisations, these unprecedented circumstances and challenges included the requirements to:

- work from home when you can, which not all of our people, processes and systems were initially set-up to do; and
- adhere to the various government lockdowns, which:

i. required staff who had children to home school;

- ii. impacted on both caring responsibilities and the availability of carers given new directives to adhere to 'social bubbles';
- iii. gave rise to the need to provide staff with the necessary IT equipment to facilitate home working (e.g. laptop computer, monitor, keyboard and mouse); and
- iv. gave rise to changes to our channels and methods of engagement and communication (e.g. initially Zoom & Webex then Teams).

19. All of these had a profound impact on not only how we worked but when we could work, requiring more flexible and tailored business area arrangements to be implemented in accordance with NICS policies and procedures. Maintaining the integrity and delivery of NISRA Core business as usual activities (e.g. collecting, analysing and disseminating key societal and economic/ labour market data), while operationally more challenging as detailed below in the relevant sections, remained our priority along with responding to any emerging demands from the pandemic. We consider that our response to the pandemic was positive, helping to ensure that policy leads and hence Ministers had timely access to the suite of information normally provided by NISRA Core and that it continued to be fit for purpose. In addition, we consider that we made a valuable contribution, through the provision of timely business intelligence, to the work that was led by other Departments/ Business Areas charged with developing and implementing the various grant support schemes deployed to support local businesses during the pandemic. Outside of our business as usual activities we also consider that we made a valuable contribution to the work associated with the UK wide Covid-19 Infection Study, our work on the NI Covid-19 Opinion Survey and responding to any emerging demands from the pandemic were key operational priorities. No additional funding nor resources were made directly available to NISRA Core throughout the period in question.

20. It is important to stress that NISRA Core was not responsible for nor directly involved in (i) any statistical modelling relating to Covid-19 or (ii) the calculation of the 'R' rate i.e. the number of individuals who, on average, will be infected by a single person with the infection and therefore central to modelling the course of the pandemic. NISRA Core was however a key delivery partner in the ONS/ Oxford University led UK COVID-19 Infection Study, which was a key resource in the work

that the ONS undertook in respect of (i) and (ii) above. In addition, NISRA Core was also responsible for the implementation and reporting of the COVID-19 Opinion Survey. NISRA Core's involvement in these two important areas is addressed in the Social Surveys section below.

4. Census of Population (2021 Census)

21. Within NISRA, Census Office are responsible for the delivery of the 2021 Census – work on the Census had been meticulously planned ahead of the pandemic with testing in 2017 and a full rehearsal in late 2019. Indeed prior to the pandemic the Census was planned on the basis of a predominantly (80+%) online Census.
22. The Census in Northern Ireland is run as an operational partnership with the Census in England and Wales. As Census Office key staff were already in post prior to the start of the pandemic it was decided that the planning/development work would continue through the early part of 2020 and a decision on stopping would only be taken later in 2020.
23. In Spring 2020 the Census Order was passed in the Assembly on 5 May 2020 and the Census Regulations were passed in the Assembly on 23 June 2020 coming into force on 17 July 2020. At that time Ministers noted in the Assembly that a final decision on whether to go ahead with the 2021 Census would not be made until late 2020/21.
24. Work continued and officials wrote to the Chief Medical Officer outlining the plans for a predominantly online Census in Autumn 2020. The advice was that work could continue with a final decision in early 2021.
25. By early 2021 all the detailed plans had been made and significant work taken forward on field staff recruitment, advertising, printing, online questionnaire system creation etc. Following further engagement with the Chief Medical Officer, advice and Ministerial engagement the Census went ahead with a more limited field follow-up. It should be noted that Scotland and the Republic of Ireland had decided in 2020 to postpone their Census, while England & Wales and Northern Ireland went ahead.

26. The Census then progressed and the results were published to time and plan in 2022/23.

5. Social Surveys

27. NISRA Core's social survey operations fall under the remit of NISRA's Central Survey Unit (CSU) within DOF. Ordinarily, such surveys are conducted on the basis of face-to-face interviews with households & residents who are randomly selected to take part. In line with arrangements in GB, all face-to-face interviewing in NI stopped on 18th March 2020. This had an unprecedented impact on well-established day-to-day operations and, from a continuity of service delivery perspective, required a rapid and comprehensive response. Fundamentally, it gave rise to the need to:

- Adapt our key surveys and questionnaires to make them suitable for telephone completion;
- Implement alternative strategies and incentive schemes to maximise response rates in telephone mode;
- Brief and train our circa 250 survey interviewers on our new ways of working throughout the pandemic; and
- Develop social media campaigns and targeted reminder letters to raise awareness of the surveys and encourage response.

28. On top of all of these efforts, which were initially aimed at keeping NISRA Core's business as usual survey work on track, CSU took the lead in implementing the end-to-end operations associated with a new and specifically tailored NISRA Coronavirus (Covid-19) Opinion Survey in NI. In addition, it contributed to the work of the UK Wide Covid-19 Infection Study, both of which are discussed below. No additional resources were available to NISRA for its engagement in these new projects.

1.1. ***NISRA Coronavirus (Covid-19) Opinion Survey***

1.1.1 Overview

29. The NISRA Coronavirus (Covid-19) Opinion Survey was introduced in April 2020, with the aim of establishing what societal impact the pandemic was having on peoples' lives. This mirrored a similar survey which was being conducted by the ONS in GB. The survey gave an insight into how personal, home and work lives changed and the impact that COVID-19 and the public health response had on individuals and communities. The results from the survey attracted coverage in the media and were disseminated across Government to enable policy leads to deploy and respond as they considered appropriate. At a Ministerial level, the results were copied to the Ministers of Finance and of Health.
30. The survey was large-scale from the outset with a minimum of 1,000 addresses sampled each week. This increased to 2,000 per week from August 2020 to March 2021, which in NI terms was unprecedented in terms of scale. From April 2021 the sample was scaled back to 1,200 per week for the rest of the fieldwork, which ended in March 2022.
31. Because of lockdown measures and in line with arrangements in GB, the survey had to be conducted in telephone mode. Since NISRA does not hold any telephone contact details for sampled addresses, the survey relied on letters being sent to sampled addresses and recipients contacting the Agency directly to participate in the survey. With the aim of boosting response and providing information that would be optimal to inform the Government response to the societal aspects of pandemic, a £20 financial incentive was offered to all those who completed an interview. This was consistent with other Government Surveys operating in telephone mode in both NI and GB. One adult, aged 16 or over, from each address was randomly selected to take part.

1.1.2 Questionnaire

32. In NI, the survey questionnaire changed every 4 weeks to reflect emerging areas of interest, with NI Departments utilising weekly questionnaire updates from ONS to shape their thinking/ priority information needs.

33. The main questionnaire themes included the following:

- Access to medical care;
- Alcohol Consumption;
- Concerns about Coronavirus;
- Effect of Coronavirus on your life (work, education, family, finances, etc.);
- Any diagnosis/symptoms of Coronavirus;
- Long Covid;
- Covid vaccine;
- Self-isolation;
- Contact with other people during Coronavirus pandemic;
- StopCOVIDNI App; and
- Wearing of Face Masks.

34. At the NI Departmental level, the key customers of the Opinion Survey data/ results were the Departments of/for Finance, Health, Communities and Education. Other users include Tourism NI and the Department for Economy, who asked questions about the High Street Spend Local Scheme in Autumn 2021.

1.1.3 Results

35. The first set of results from the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey, which reported on the first four weeks of data collection (Phase 1), were published by Central Survey Unit on 10th July 2020.

36. Across the 21 phases (i.e. 4 weekly periods) of the survey the response rate varied, ranging from a high of 25.4% in Phase 1 to a low of 16.2% in Phase 19. A total of ten statistical bulletins were produced by CSU, with the last being made available on 12th May 2022. These insightful, high-quality bulletins, which outlined the social

impact that the pandemic was having on everyday life in NI, consisted of key findings, visualizations, and data tables – with the latter being accessible as both excel and csv files. Further detail on the bulletins is provided in **Annex A**, which highlights the time period that the report findings relate to, the topics covered/ added/ removed throughout the various phases and the publication date. Supporting technical reports provided further information on weighting, sampling error, significant differences between estimates, as well as the strengths and limitations of the survey. All published reports, associated data and the questionnaires used at each phase of the survey were made publicly available via the NISRA website. Infographics were also used to disseminate information through the NISRA Facebook and Twitter platforms, at the time of publication.

37. In total, approximately 22,000 people in Northern Ireland participated in the survey. Their identities were safeguarded at all times and protected through appropriate disclosure control methods, with all published figures providing appropriate weighted estimates. Trend analyses were included as appropriate.
38. Reports were released at 2 to 3 month intervals and all publication dates were preannounced at and reports were made available at 9.30am on a Thursday to ensure consistency and impartiality in the release of the information and to give users sufficient time to understand and respond to information during normal working hours. It was agreed that DOH and Public Health Agency (PHA) officials would lead on any media interviews that may arise from the various releases which, at Ministerial level, were copied to the Ministers of Finance and of Health.
39. ONS conducted a similar survey, 'Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain' and the findings can be found on the ONS website. While the results of the ONS survey are not directly comparable with those published by NISRA due to differences in the design of some questions, the mode/ time periods for data collection and the weighting methodology applied, they nonetheless afforded the opportunity to view the main findings from the Northern Ireland survey in a wider context.

1.2. ***UK Wide Covid-19 Infection Survey***

1.2.1 Overview

40. The UK wide COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) was set up in April 2020 and was used to gather (on a regular basis) both swab and blood tests from households across the UK who volunteered to take part. The survey, which was led by the ONS along with Oxford University and other delivery partners (e.g. IQVIA who did the initial field work during the period in question) was groundbreaking in nature and the largest epidemiology study of its kind in the UK. The results from the survey provided vital weekly data on virus positivity levels across the UK, details on new variants, the characteristics of those who had the virus and their antibody levels and details of long Covid-19 prevalence. Throughout the pandemic, this was vital to shaping an understanding of the virus and informing the Government's policy decisions and response. Briefings based on the results of the survey were a regular feature in the Government's daily televised address. Funding for the survey was centrally controlled and managed at the UK level.
41. The survey was initiated in England, with the other devolved nations being included at a later date – July 2020 in the case of NI. The survey design was regulated through various protocols, which were managed by Oxford University in conjunction with delivery partners. Funding for the survey in NI was determined on the basis of the Barnett formula, which had a direct influence on the number of NI participants who could be accommodated given the extensive field work and the gathering of swab and blood tests involved. The Department of Health (DOH) and PHA were directly in the lead for NI on the analytical and reporting aspects (along with the ONS) and for using the information to inform the NI policy response through the NI Executive. NISRA Core were not involved in these aspects. It is important to note that Health and Social Services is devolved in NI and that the UK wide COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) was a new and unprecedented initiative in terms of its scale, design and aims. It represented a significant logistical challenge

that required the mobilisation of considerable field force resources, who would interact directly with the General Public in the prevailing circumstances. To ONS's credit it was stood up at real pace (initially in England) with coverage extending to the other territories of the UK as (i) resources permitted and (ii) country specific requirements/ timescales were agreed with the relevant leads (Department of Health (DOH) and PHA in the case of NI). The later implementation in NI enabled initial logistical and operational 'teething problems' to be ironed out, albeit at the expense of delaying the delivery of the NI specific intelligence that the study provided.

42. NISRA's CSU was however involved in two important aspects, namely, (i) providing the hosting infrastructure that the ONS required for the registration phase of the operation (i.e. the system used to capture and secure volunteer details) and (ii) providing the sample of NI households to be approached to take part.

1.2.2 Hosting Infrastructure

43. In GB it was decided that recruitment of participants to the CIS would be via the large-scale online Labour Market Survey (LMS). As described in the Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) section below, the ONS stood this up to serve as a contingency should participation in the regular Labour Force Survey (LFS) (which during the pandemic was operating in telephone capture mode) fall to unacceptably low levels.
44. While ONS had its own robust online data collection system, its priority purpose was for the 2021 Census operation, which NISRA would also utilise through the joint working and collaborative arrangements in place. It was crucial that its ongoing development, testing and live running during the 2021 Census operations was not hindered in any way.
45. Accordingly, it was agreed that NISRA would host the online LMS. This required NISRA to expand its accredited Blaise 5 platform (i.e. the infrastructure that underpins NISRA's Social Survey operations), which was undertaken in conjunction with ITAssist in the NICS. IT Assist is a business area within the Department of Finance (DoF) that provides IT support throughout the NICS. An additional 8 web servers were added to the existing complement of 6, which was

essential to provide the necessary resilience to cope with anticipated maximum volumes (i.e. approximately 100,000 online interviews with 4,000 concurrent users at any one time).

46. Importantly, in addition to asking the respondents about their labour market circumstances, the LMS asked respondents if they would be prepared to participate in other surveys. The information that NISRA captured on those who indicated that they would, was sent to the ONS CIS team via an automated secure pipeline that NISRA developed. The relevant data was transmitted every 30 minutes to the ONS who then extracted the necessary respondent contact information for CIS purposes.
47. This collaboration in respect of NISRA Core providing the underpinning infrastructure for the recruitment phase of the Infection Survey **for the whole of the UK** was absolutely business critical to the success of the operation. It was stood up at an impressive pace and remained exceptionally stable and resilient throughout the entire operation. In keeping with best practice and in view of (i) the UK reliance on the system and (ii) the daily/ weekly decision making that it was helping to inform at the UK level, appropriate automated load monitoring and 'fall-over' arrangements were in place. In addition, NISRA Core key personnel were on 'out-of-hours' standby to ensure continuity of service delivery and that everything ran smoothly.

1.2.3 Providing the sample of NI households to be approached to take part

48. In NI, NISRA's CSU followed a similar approach to recruiting participants to take part in the CIS. Instead of using the LMS, which was being administered by the ONS on behalf of the UK, NISRA utilised its own COVID-19 Opinion Survey, Continuous Household Survey (CHS), Safe Community Survey, Health Survey NI and Travel Survey NI for a period of time. Similar to the above, respondents were asked at the end of the Opinion Survey if they would be prepared to take part in the CIS. The details of those who said that they would were then sent across to the ONS CIS team on a weekly basis.

49. The CIS recruitment process worked particularly well in NI due to the fact that the Opinion Survey interviews were being conducted over the telephone by NISRA's experienced team of survey interviewers. This had an added benefit in that a very high percentage of those who indicated that they would be prepared to take part in the CIS actually went on to do so when approached by the CIS field team (IQVIA). Strategically this was advantageous because the high participation rates considerably reduced the size of the samples that were required. Indeed, as a result of this and NI rapidly approaching its quota of CIS participants, recruitment activities had to be scaled back from April 2021 onwards in keeping with the underlying protocol that was in place. During the period of interest (January 2020 – February 2022) 15 versions of the protocol were implemented, with Version 1 applicable from the 20th April 2020 and Version 15 applicable from 9th February 2022. The protocols were under the management of the Chief Investigator Professor Ann Sarah Walker. Version 8.1 of the Protocol was applicable from 12th April 2021 with Version 9.1 introduced with effect from 9th May 2021.
50. From a NI perspective, CSU's involvement in the CIS was considered to be hugely successful. The approach that was adopted consistently delivered the highest weekly participation rates across the whole of the UK. Results from the survey that were produced by the ONS and DOH NI can be found on their respective websites.

6. Statutory Business Surveys/ Economic & Labour Market Statistics

51. As mentioned above, maintaining the integrity and delivery of NISRA Core business as usual activities and responding to any emerging demands from the pandemic were key operational priorities. This section outlines how this played out in the Economic & Labour Market space, where the work is underpinned by well-established processes and methodologies which, by-and-large, prevailed throughout the pandemic. Examples are however provided of how our approach to data collection and the reporting of statistics (for example to assist businesses and add insight & value) had to be tailored during the pandemic, along with (i) details of important UK initiatives that were helpfully advanced on a collaborative basis and (ii) key avenues of engagement at the UK level.

52. The pandemic had a major impact on businesses, forcing many businesses to close and/or similarly work from home, which made the task of getting a response to NISRA Core's statutory business surveys more difficult. Given the prevailing circumstances and difficulties that local businesses were already experiencing, NISRA suspended its non-compliance prosecution activity in respect of businesses who failed to make a return on a survey they had been invited to take part in. This aligned with the position adopted by the ONS, who conduct business surveys for England, Scotland and Wales. NISRA also suspended the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) Proving survey for 2 months from mid-March 2020. In addition, NISRA Core (in conjunction with NI Direct) set up a dedicated helpline and telecoms facility that enabled staff to continue to provide direct support to businesses (as needed) while working from home. Gaining remote access to our Integrated Business Survey System, which was facilitated by our supplier in a responsive and timely manner, was key from an operational perspective and was secured in March 2020.
53. During the pandemic response and coverage rates across all surveys dropped to varying degrees. These were however kept under review and remained at a level sufficient to support the statistical production of all outputs normally produced by NISRA Core's Economic & Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) Branch.
54. Despite the logistical and operational challenges outlined above, all publications and associated data were released to plan and in accordance with our published release schedule. These included monthly, quarterly and annual releases, all of which continued to be copied to the appropriate Ministers (e.g. in the Department of Finance and Department for Economy) and key policy leads in line with normal arrangements. Further details on the various releases are detailed in **Annex B**. The relevant statistics were a key source for policy colleagues in the Department for Economy (for example) to use along with other relevant indicators to (i) monitor the impact of the pandemic on the economy and labour market and (ii) develop an evidence-based policy response – a matter for the relevant policy leads to comment further on.
55. In line with arrangements throughout the rest of the UK, our statutory business survey questionnaires and guidance were appropriately tailored (as necessary) to

reflect the changing circumstances arising from the pandemic (e.g. the new concept of furloughed workers that emerged). By way of example, for the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2020 a letter and tailored guidance was issued to selected businesses to assist them in completing the survey [PW/01 - INQ000212407]. The letter, which was developed in liaison with the ONS, was issued on the 22nd April 2020 alongside survey forms as facilitated by our service provider.

56. Importantly, our publications detailed new sources/ indicators/ contextual material as and when it became available. For example, the economic commentary included in the quarterly Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index, which provides a quarterly measure of economic activity in NI, was tailored to include the following aspects:

- **Impact on mobility** - analysing traffic flow data to show how lockdowns and associated restrictions impacted cross border travel between NI and Ireland; activity at NI airports; and the Department of Health Covid-19 Mobility Report.
- **Consumer spending** – reporting on the consumer confidence index published by Danske Bank; and car registrations as reported by The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.
- **Government Support measures** implemented in response to support businesses – reporting on uptake within NI from the HMRC Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS); the NI High Street scheme ‘Spend Local’ prepaid card scheme; and NI Government grant schemes and business top up payments.
- **A timeline of NI Lockdown measures** in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

57. Further, a special Labour Market topic report focusing on redundancies in Northern Ireland was published in October 2020. This detailed both proposed and actual redundancies by local businesses since the start of the pandemic, providing comparable information pre-pandemic. A dedicated “Covid-19 related analysis web page” was also created within the Labour Market section of the NISRA website. This provided users with links to relevant analysis undertaken by NISRA, ONS and HMRC.

58. In addition, from October 2020 onwards, experimental data from HMRC's Real Time Information Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system was added to the monthly Labour Market Report. This source, which provides timely measures of the number of pay rolled employees and employee earnings in NI and the UK, was secured through the UK Devolved Economic Statistics Coordination (DESC) Group. Furloughed employees paid through PAYE were included in these statistics.

59. New questions were added to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in 2020 and 2021 in response to the pandemic on topics including:

- Occupation details;
- Sickness absence;
- Home Workers;
- Reasons why respondents were away from work or worked fewer hours in the reference week;
- Reasons why respondents worked more hours than usual in the reference week;
- Reasons why respondents were paid less than usual in the reference week;
- Second jobs;
- Additional work;
- Redundancy;
- Starting work; and
- Universal Credit.

60. A Labour Market newsletter [**PW/02 - INQ000212408**] was published in June 2021 detailing changes NISRA Core had made to how we collect, statistically process, publish and interpret our statistics. For example, NISRA suspended all face-to-face household interviews on 20th March 2020 and from April 2020 all LFS interviews have been conducted by telephone. To try and maintain an appropriate sample size for analysis and to make it as easy as possible to take part, NISRA made changes to the number of households invited to respond as well as changes to communication materials and processes. The newsletter also detailed that those furloughed under the CJRS or receiving a grant through the SEISS are included in

the LFS estimates of employment and not within the LFS unemployment estimates.

1.2. ***Cross UK work/ initiatives relating to economic statistics***

61. NISRA ELMS also worked collaboratively with the ONS and the other NSIs in Scotland and Wales to develop the voluntary Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey (BICS) (now called the Business Insights and Conditions Survey) to ensure that it was more robust and reflective of the NI economy. By way of background, the survey, which the ONS led and administered for the whole of the UK, was established to capture and report the experiences of businesses throughout the pandemic. Throughout, the ONS worked closely with policy & analytical leads across government and the devolved administrations to identify new questions and priority information needs, endeavouring to accommodate specific requests that arose.
62. The analyses that the ONS undertook covered all territories of the UK and the resulting information was part of their 'faster indicators' series. Their outputs from the BICS commenced in April 2020 and continued on a fortnightly basis throughout the pandemic. By way of example, BICS included questions and analyses on topics such as furlough, working from home, regular testing of the workforce and safety measures that businesses had put in place. The ONS will be able to provide further information on the various publications that they released and their associated audiences.
63. ELMS involvement resulted in the initial NI sample of around 300 businesses being boosted by an additional 1,000 businesses. The initial sample was heavily dominated by manufacturing businesses and the boost resulted in it (and the associated analyses) being more representative of all key business sectors (with the exception of human health which was excluded in an attempt to reduce burden during the period in question).
64. As part of this UK collaboration, ELMS staff participated in a BICS working group, which typically met on a fortnightly basis. This was key to ensuring that questions remained relevant and reflected changing information/policy needs. Throughout, ELMS ensured that policy leads from the Department for the Economy (DFE) were

updated on developments, represented on the group and given direct access to the analysis undertaken by the ONS. As part of this engagement, colleagues in DFE were able to secure questions being added to the survey relating to access to skills.

65. NISRA ELMS is a member of the DESC Group, which includes representatives from the ONS and devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. The purpose of the group is, inter alia, to provide formal and informal discussions on ONS's strategic plans for Economic Statistics including wider use of administrative sources; facilitate discussion of harmonisation of methods or approaches at the country and regional level and/or UK level; discuss, emerging ONS transformation challenges; and central co-ordination of ONS / Government Statistical Service (GSS) / devolved initiatives.
66. The group generally met on a quarterly basis pre-pandemic and meetings were attended in person with the venue rotating around the four NSI locations. However, as a result of the pandemic, the frequency of the meetings switched to monthly and were conducted on a virtual basis. These were important meetings in terms of keeping abreast with economic/ labour market developments arising from the pandemic, facilitating discussions, advancing collaborative initiatives and new data requests, discussing analytical outputs and sharing both operational and analytical experiences. ONS helpfully provided the secretariat function for these meetings, which were well attended by representatives from all of the UK NSIs and other bodies as required (e.g. HMRC).
67. An important internal initiative, which was presented to DESC in February 2022, was NISRA Core's development of the Database for Trade and Economic Research (DTER), which comprises the linkage of all key NI quarterly and annual survey data sets dating back to 2014. This new and innovative longitudinal asset was developed in conjunction with statisticians in the DFE Analytical Services Unit who used it to inform their policy response to the pandemic. Their work and utilisation of the DTER included assessing the potential impact of business closures in certain sectors along with informing decisions around the development of various business support grant schemes that were deployed.

68. NISRA Core business surveys are conducted on a statutory basis under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which creates a legal obligation on businesses / organisations to make a return. Article 7 of the Order allows for microdata to be shared with other Government Departments for ‘the purpose of the exercise of its functions’. Applications are considered by the ELMS leadership team and, if approved, named individuals (all of whom are required to sign confidentiality agreements) are granted time bound access to the relevant de-identified data for their proposed research. This process was utilised during the pandemic to ensure NI Government Departments had the information they needed to develop business support initiatives in response to the pandemic. For example:

- In March 2020 Land and Property Services within the Department of Finance was granted access to de-identified data from the inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR). This was used to augment the data that they had access to via their rates collection system to ensure that all relevant businesses were identified and offered the relevant emergency grants that were made available by lead Departments.
- In June 2020 DFE was granted access to unsuppressed businesses counts from the IDBR and employee jobs data from Business Register and Employment Survey at 5-digit Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) level. This allowed them to undertake detailed research and analysis on economic sub-sectors to inform the gradual, step-by-step opening up of Northern Ireland’s economy following the Covid-19 outbreak. Ultimately, such decisions would have been a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive.

69. NISRA ELMS represent NI on a range of cross-Government working groups relating to the economy and labour market. Pre-pandemic, participation in these groups was largely on a virtual basis and this continued fairly seamlessly throughout the pandemic, albeit with some connectivity problems initially arising from the use of home broadband. From a continuity of service delivery perspective the continuance of this engagement and collaboration was key to the successful delivery of our business as usual work. These groups included membership from the other NSI’s in Scotland and Wales, the ONS, HMRC, HMT, Cabinet Office, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, DFE, DFC, The Executive Office (TEO), and others (**Annex C refers**).

70. In addition to close engagement and liaison with the other NSI's and various Government Departments, NISRA Core also maintained its user engagement activities to ensure that users were appraised of relevant developments and afforded the opportunity to provide feedback and convey their priorities in terms of information needs. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) were made aware of such engagements, which included:

- A user consultation for the Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (now called the NI Economic Trade Statistics, was held via Citizen Space in May 2021. In total 22 users responded to the survey.
- A virtual Labour Market Statistics User Group took place on 30th September 2021 to provide users with an update on key labour market statistics and future plans. This was well attended with almost 60 attendees.
- A virtual user Group meeting was held in January 2022 covering the Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics, Annual Business Inquiry, NI Composite Economic Index, Supply-Use Tables, Research & Development, this was well attended with around 50 attendees.
 - A follow up consultation from this User Group meeting was held in February 2022 via Citizen Space, the NICS recommended online Consultation tool, (with 15 responses achieved), providing evidence that was key in securing National Statistics accreditation for the Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics in March 2022. This outcome evidences our drive to maintain business as usual activities with the OSR, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic.
- Training on the various sources of trade data was delivered by the ELMS's trade team to around 50 economist, statistical and policy colleagues from DFE in June 2021. The aim was to educate DFE colleagues on what was available, how it could be accessed and advise on the relevant strengths and limitations of each source.
- Economic impact training was also developed and delivered by a member of the ELMS's Economic Accounts team to economists from within the NICS who wanted to avail of the training.

1.3. ***Labour Force Survey (LFS)***

71. To help prevent the spread of Coronavirus, and in line with the Government's 'Stay at Home Order' and arrangements in GB, NISRA suspended all face-to-face household interviews on 18th March 2020. As mentioned above, this fundamentally affected NISRA Core's data collection operations on social surveys, which are the primary source for key indicators used across Government (including those integral to the Programme for Government).
72. Historically key Labour Market statistics (e.g. the unemployment rate, employment rate and economic inactivity rate) were provided through the LFS using information collected from the general public via face-to-face household interviews. This was the case across the UK, with NISRA Core's CSU doing the LFS data collection for NI and the ONS doing it for GB.
73. Across the UK, there was concern that the response rate to the LFS could fall to unacceptably low levels in telephone only mode and that this could jeopardize the production of robust key labour market indicators.
74. In response to this concern, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) moved to deploy an online Labour Market Survey (LMS) in parallel to the LFS as described above. The field work and data processing of the LMS was managed entirely by the ONS, with the materials that landed on NI doorsteps being suitably tailored. CSU provided the sample of NI addresses that should be invited to take part in the online LMS to the ONS.
75. As it happens, across the UK all key labour market indicators continued to be produced from the LFS throughout the pandemic. The implementation of the online LMS was however a prudent and necessary step during what was a period of considerable uncertainty. The ONS's developmental and operational work in this space has provided constructive and valuable insight in terms of moving social surveys online, which the NSI's across the UK continue to collaborate on.

1.4. *Tourism statistics*

76. NISRA Tourism Statistics, which detail the value and volume of visitors to Northern Ireland, are compiled using the following four surveys, all of which were severely impacted by the pandemic when data collection activities ceased in March 2020:

- NISRA Northern Ireland Passenger Survey;
- NISRA Continuous Household Survey (CHS);
- Failte Ireland (tourism body in the Republic of Ireland (ROI)) Survey of Overseas Travellers; and
- ROI Central Statistics Office (CSO) Household Travel Survey (HTS).

77. The CSO's HTS is a paper survey and, with the easing of travel restrictions, data collection activities resumed in August 2020. The CHS recommenced in May 2020, however the mode of data collection was by telephone resulting in less information being collected on tourism related overnight stays - while outside the timeframe of the Inquiry, the full suite of overnight trips questions returned in April 2022. The passenger surveys were re-introduced at air and sea ports as restrictions and operators permitted (October 2021 onwards), with the key priority of keeping both NISRA's Survey Interviewers and travelers safe.

78. Another important aspect of NISRA Core's Tourism statistics is the occupancy of hotels and small service accommodation, which routinely was collected on a monthly basis through postal and email returns. From March 2020 onwards (and reflecting the new working from home arrangements), collection switched to online only (initially via email) with data being provided for the periods that the establishments were permitted to operate.

79. In the absence of these regular tourism data feeds, work was undertaken to explore alternative data sources that might usefully provide some insight into how the sector was performing. By way of example, NISRA's COVID-19 Opinion Survey included questions on "leaving your house" for certain activities (such as visiting a visitor attraction) and "whether you took a holiday or planned to take a holiday". The CHS also included a question regarding the intention of the respondent to take a holiday over the next year. Importantly, this work also

exploited a range of novel statistics from administrative sources (such as passenger numbers through airports – provided by the Civil Aviation Authority, and passenger numbers through seaports – provided by the Department for Transport in GB). In addition, they included tourism related indicators (e.g. employee jobs, earnings, hours worked, type of business) derived from the LFS and Business Register. The information was collated and presented in one source document that was signaled to key users and disseminated via the NISRA website.

80. This new information was particularly welcomed by key stakeholders (Tourism Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and the Department for Economy) and commended by the Office of Statistics Regulation who highlighted this as good practice in communicating the impact of coronavirus. The tourism alternative data sources work has continued and is provided alongside the routine statistics.

7. Registration of key vital life events

81. The General Register Office (GRO) was involved in all of the NI preplanning for the pandemic and the Deputy Registrar General (DRG) was a member of the NI Excess Death Working Group – membership included the Department of Justice, Department of Health, Local Councils, Ministry of Defence and Police Service of Northern Ireland. Details of briefing to Ministers etc. are contained in the DoF Module 2c Rule 9 response.

82. The DRG was responsible for the writing of the legislation S18 Coronavirus Act 2020, regarding the registration of deaths and still births throughout the Covid period and the day-to-day decisions regarding whether a vital life event could take place as and when the Executive amended the restrictions on the public.

83. Throughout the pandemic period the GRO staff continued to work in the office and delivered a full service to the local Registration staff in local councils and to the public.

8. Key vital event statistics and Administrative Data Research

1.5. *Covid-19 deaths based on death registration data - background*

84. NISRA Vital Statistics Unit (VSU) is a small team within the wider NISRA Vital Statistics & Administrative Research and Support Branch. VSU routinely publish vital events statistics using administrative information collected by the General Register Office (GRO). Death statistics produced by NISRA (as well as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Records Scotland (NRS)) are based on the routine system of death registration, whereby each death in Northern Ireland is medically certified and the Medical Certificate of Cause of death (MCCD) is completed by a doctor. NISRA relies on the accurate completion of the MCCDs for its further processing stages as outlined below. The death is then registered with a local registration office, after which the information held on the death certificate can flow digitally to NISRA VSU for statistical processing purposes. Registration is required by law and is needed to release a body for burial, therefore the information is assumed to be complete.
85. Subsequent coding of the cause of death text, using the International Classification of Diseases-10 (ICD-10) framework, is a key part of the statistical process and NISRA VSU are routinely supported by a dedicated ICD-10 coding team within the ONS to complete this, through a Service Level Agreement. NISRA VSU carry out a range of quality checks on the registration-based data such as trend analysis, bounds checking, internal within and across record consistency and also certain specific checks on certain causes of death e.g. gender specific, suicides and so on. This is to ensure that the resulting vital events official statistics are as robust as possible. As part of the official statistics documentation supporting NISRA deaths statistics, a comprehensive Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) statement is published on the NISRA website. The QAAD is a regulatory standard created by the UK Statistics Authority and outlines information on processes involved in the statistical journey from data collection to publication, with a focus on quality assurance.
86. Prior to the pandemic the NISRA VSU experienced several years of under resourcing and long-term absence and entered the pandemic as a team of 1.8 full time equivalent assistant statisticians and an administrative officer, supported by a Senior Principal Statistician. The immediate challenge for the VSU team was therefore to rapidly upscale and upskill while adjusting to remote working practices as outlined above, as well as meeting the immediate data demands of the

pandemic. This was successfully achieved and the NISRA VSU now comprises a team of 7 statisticians and an administrative support officer, which reflects the continuing, significantly raised profile and demand for this type of information since the height of the pandemic.

1.6. ***Early pandemic monitoring and reporting by NISRA Vital Statistics Unit (VSU)***

87. Prior to the pandemic, there was an established process in place for weekly, aggregate data to be sent by NISRA to the Public Health Agency (PHA) for ongoing surveillance of certain respiratory diseases including daily totals of Flu strains split by age-group and registration date. This was replaced, on 20 March 2020, following the death of the first person in Northern Ireland due to Covid-19. The data was replaced with a daily data feed flowing to the PHA via the Department of Health's Information and Analysis Directorate (IAD) and included all deaths where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. At the same time, a separate, existing data sharing agreement between NISRA VSU and DOH IAD was also rapidly revised to cover the flow of daily deaths microdata to IAD for the purposes of operational intelligence. DOH IAD are the primary source of hospital admissions data, thus it was important for them to have a full picture of admissions and subsequent deaths.

88. NISRA VSU had a number of key functions during the pandemic. These included: the establishment and ongoing development of the weekly registered deaths publication, the reporting of quarterly underlying cause of death statistics, publication of in-depth statistical and research reports; responding to external requests from the public and the Executive via FOIs, Assembly Questions (AQs) and correspondence cases; and the provision of micro-data files under data sharing agreements to key bodies in order to support, among other things, the forecasting, modelling and calculation of the 'R' rate. NISRA VSU was not, however, directly involved in these efforts (nor did it sit on any of the specialist groups such as Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) or Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M-O)) and acted solely as a data provider to support these endeavors. Further detail on each of these areas of information provision is provided below and in the attached **Annexes D-F**.

89. In delivery of its key functions, NISRA VSU provided necessary briefing to ministers and key officials as appropriate and references to such correspondence are outlined in the sections below. NISRA VSU also liaised closely with the ONS and NRS to ensure as consistent an approach as possible in relation to the production and presentation of registration-based Covid-19 deaths statistics, specifically in terms of definitions and methodologies used, and the coverage and timing of analyses. Some inconsistencies arose; however, these did not significantly impact the comparability of the weekly statistics. Differences included:

- (i) Different production timelines across the UK countries: NISRA and ONS both covered the same reporting period - each week ending on a Friday, with NISRA publishing the statistics a week later (each Friday) and ONS publishing on the following Tuesday (11 days after the end of the reporting period). National Records Scotland (NRS) covered a different reporting period of week ending each Sunday and publishing the following Wednesday. Given these different reporting periods, ONS began publishing UK level data on 12th June 2020. Across all the countries, daily counts of Covid-19 related deaths were also published within the weekly breakdowns to aid direct comparison at a daily level or other aggregations.
- (ii) Different bank and public holidays across the nations had the potential to drive fluctuations in death registrations. The impacts of such holidays were routinely highlighted in the NISRA and ONS reports
- (iii) Collation differences: due to an ongoing approach to cause-coding deaths within the ONS and NRS, this enabled them to base their analyses on Covid-19 related deaths around the appearance of any of the relevant ICD-10 codes found anywhere on the death certificate. NI deaths are coded by ONS on a monthly basis so the NI weekly tables were based on a key word search for Covid-19 or variations of this, in the cause of death text fields in the death registration data. This was a procedural difference only; NISRA put manual checks in place to ensure cases were correctly identified for example, ruling out cases that might say 'not Covid'.
- (iv) The number of reporting weeks in a calendar year differed between Northern Ireland and the rest of GB in 2020, where NISRA reported against 52 reference weeks and ONS and NRS reported against 53 reference weeks. The reason for this difference lies in reference weeks being historically related to calendar years in GB, and to flu seasons in NI (which begin in week 39 each year). The difference, however, was inconsequential and caused no user issues, as the dates the week numbers refer to were also provided in

outputs and the UK reporting published by ONS provided daily totals as well as weekly, so data was still easily comparable. A primary forum for collaboration was the ONS chaired Mortality Theme Group, which promptly increased its meeting frequency at the start of the pandemic from quarterly to fortnightly in order to facilitate regular discussion relating to Covid-19 statistical developments such as evidenced at **[PW/03 - INQ000212409]** and to assist with providing a coordinated UK statistical response. This group also had representation from health departments and agencies including the PHA and DOH in order to cover all aspects of Covid-19 mortality reporting.

90. In addition to the connections with GB, NISRA had early conversations with colleagues in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) Central Statistics Office (CSO) with a view to assessing the potential to develop comparable, all-island data using registration based Covid-19 deaths, which might assist in pandemic management decision making and understanding the pandemic on a comparative, all-Ireland basis. However, a key difference between the two jurisdictions is the legal timeframe in which to register a death: in the ROI a death should be registered within three months of occurrence while in NI and E&W this is 5 days with the exception of Coroners cases (in Scotland, deaths must be registered within 8 days). During the pandemic no variations were made to these requirements, although in the ROI all confirmed and suspected Covid-19 deaths were reported to the relevant District Coroner to aid early decision making regarding the Death Notification Form. However, at the time of the correspondence between CSO and NISRA (no records could be found in relation to the one telephone exchange and subsequent email which directed the CSO contacts to NISRA Vital Statistics Unit and which occurred prior to July 2020) there was no clear way to directly compare Covid-19 related death statistics. At that point, Ireland's Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) were publishing daily statistics based on notifications of Covid-19 deaths to the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting System which drew on clinical and coroner's information. HPSC added further weekly reporting in November 2020 and April 2021, both including death notifications by confirmed and suspected status. However as outlined in ROI's Covid-19 data hub, information differences might be expected between HPSC figures and the CSO vital events statistics due to case definition differences and notification timelines

from different systems. In addition, CSO also investigated the use of the website RIP.ie, a privately-owned company which has become a popular website by which to notify deaths and provide funeral details in Ireland, to provide an understanding of the changing picture of total deaths. Statistics using this source were published for the first time in July 2020 covering the period October 2019 to June 2020. This experimental method, however, did not include cause of death information but compared information on health sourced confirmed Covid-19 deaths (excluding probable cases) to provide additional context.

1.7. *Establishing and developing a weekly registered Covid-19 related deaths output*

91. Prior to the pandemic, NISRA VSU routinely published the total number of deaths registered in the reference week – published each Friday, one week after the reference week. These routine weekly figures were first expanded to cover registration based respiratory and Covid-19 related deaths in week ending 27 March 2020 (published on Friday 3 April 2020). The decision to publish registration based Covid-19 related deaths aligned with the ONS approach and was driven by the need for NI equivalent and UK-wide data.
92. In order to publish weekly information on Covid-19 related deaths, NISRA Vital Statistics Unit (VSU) were limited to the information collected during the death registration process, that is, the cause of death as recorded by the medical professional certifying the death. Specific guidance on certifying Covid-19 deaths was made available to medical practitioners via the DOH Website. VSU also liaised with the Medical Advisor in DOH to seek clarification in relation to certain terminology being used by practitioners, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic, for example, use of the wording ‘Covid-pneumonia’. This liaison assisted DOH in the further refinement of their guidance to doctors. Weekly Covid-19 related deaths published by NISRA therefore referred to any mention of ‘Covid-19’ in the cause of death section of death registration records, including suspected cases.
93. The relative brevity of the reports published on 3 and 10 April 2020 reflected the still low numbers of Covid-19 deaths in NI at the time and focused on sex, age

group and occurrence-based analysis as well as definitional commentary. The latter was aimed at addressing growing public confusion in relation to various estimates of Covid-19 deaths being published from different sources across the UK.

94. As enabled by the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (NI) Order 2009, pre-release access to the early weekly statistical reports and accompanying statistical press notice was provided to both the DOF and DOH Ministers **[PW/04 - INQ000212410]**. However, following a breach of the pre-release conditions **[PW/05 - INQ000212411]** involving circulation of the report to officials not included on the pre-release list, NISRA significantly limited its pre-release access to the statistics to 8.30am each Friday morning (i.e. one hour before release), and granted it to the DOH Minister, the DOH Permanent Secretary and a named DOH press officer only.

1.8. ***Decisions associated with the development of the NISRA weekly deaths statistics***

95. NISRA liaised closely with the PHA and DOH in relation to the development of the weekly report over a number of weeks during April and May 2020. Among other things this was to ensure the NISRA report referenced any updates in relation to the changing PHA and DOH definitions, as well as changes to the death certification and registration process during the Covid-19 pandemic, as enabled by the Coronavirus Act 2020. The report's evolution was also monitored closely by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) who were aware of the cross UK issues pertaining to definitional differences.
96. Considerations relating to increasing the frequency of the weekly deaths report to twice weekly or more were outlined by NISRA to the DOH Minister on 13 May 2020 **[PW/06 - INQ000212412]** following a letter from the Minister to NISRA on 11 May 2020 **[PW/07 - INQ000212413]**, in which the Minister asked if it was possible for NISRA to move beyond weekly production of the Covid-19 mortality statistics to twice a week or more. NISRA considered the matter with the Code of Practice for Statistics pillars of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in mind and advised that a twice weekly or more approach was not feasible for several reasons: (i) the

timeliness of the registration data: NISRA considered the times taken to register deaths and the median was around 3 days. The weekly statistical production model for reporting deaths for week ending each Friday allowed for 5 days to the following Wednesday for deaths to be registered. This, in turn, allowed 2 days from the final count of occurrences to be added at that point and for the team to produce and quality assure the statistics for release each Friday. To adopt an earlier cut-off point (say, the median of 3 days after the reference period), the earliest NISRA could produce another output with any meaningful reliability would be the following Wednesday. These figures would be highly provisional and liable to change only 2 days later with the Friday release. This was highly likely to add further confusion for users and would not add value to the series. The alternative consideration by NISRA was for an addition to the current schedule of reporting deaths in the 7 days ending each Friday to release death counts for periods such as the 7 days ending each Tuesday. However, NISRA were concerned that another mid-week interjection would confuse the position even more. (ii) the risk of departure from the rest of the UK position: Both ONS and NRS were publishing registration-based statistics only once a week and they had no plans to change this approach largely due to reasons outlined in (i) above. (iii) The risk of adding to public confusion: The general public and the media had exhibited confusion over the differences between the health based, daily surveillance death figures published on the DOH dashboard and the NISRA weekly statistics. NISRA, having worked hard to brief the media and others on the differences between the two sources, assessed that another mid-week interjection would confuse the position even more and undermine public confidence and trust. iv) The resource implications within the small NISRA VSU: The NISRA team were already working around the clock to produce the weekly outputs in addition to meeting other demands in relation to data shares and ad hoc requests (see Annexes for detail) and maintaining necessary communications both across the UK and the NICS. There was a real risk that, if asked to do more, the quality of the work would be impacted or staff could become ill. Having the time to quality assure the release was deemed essential in maintaining public trust and NISRA was not prepared to compromise staff and quality for what was considered to be little additional benefit to users.

97. On 14 April 2020, NISRA notified the DOF Minister of its decision to include 'place of death' information (Covid-19 related deaths occurring in hospital / care home and hospice / other) for the first time in the weekly reports from 17 April 2020 onwards. **[PW/08 - INQ000212414]** (with the data categories being refined to identify 'care homes' and hospices separately the following week). This decision was made due to considerable public interest as PHA data did not include all non-hospital, Covid-19 deaths. The decision was also supported and encouraged by the NI Chief Medical Officer **[PW/09 - INQ000212415]**. In liaison with departmental press offices, this step was communicated publicly via DOF and DOH press statements on 14 April 2020 **[PW/10 - INQ000212416]**. In addition, NISRA also provided the DoF Minister with speaking notes **[PW/11 - INQ000212417]** for the Executive meeting on 15 April to explain definitional differences between the NISRA based statistics and the PHA surveillance reports. A closed media briefing session led by DOF Press Office and NISRA was held remotely on 17 April 2020 at 9.20am. The OSR was advised of this decision which involved giving the attending media pre-release access to the statistics in a controlled way in order to ensure accurate reporting from the outset. A statistical dashboard containing summary information on Covid-19 related deaths was also developed and published on the NISRA Website in late April 2020 to assist with at-a-glance understanding of the developing trends.
98. A further response to the DOH Minister was provided by NISRA on 14 May 2020 **[PW/12 - INQ000212418]** following interest in care home deaths at a regional level. The Minister was advised that NISRA's weekly deaths statistics due to publish on 15 May 2020 would include, for the first time, a high-level analysis of all cause of deaths and Covid-19 related deaths by Local Government District, based on the usual address of the deceased, in order to add to the overall regional picture. This geographical enhancement also aligned NISRA with approaches taken by the ONS and NRS.
99. On 18 May 2020 the DOH Minister wrote to NISRA **[PW/13 - INQ000212419]** seeking a further analysis based on care home residents to be incorporated within the weekly statistics. Following NISRA's response to the Minister on 21 May **[PW/14 - INQ000212420]**, Covid-19 related deaths of nursing/care home residents were incorporated in the weekly deaths statistics from 29 May 2020. This analysis

aimed to supplement the existing information on deaths occurring in care homes, to include patients dying in hospital whose usual residence was provided in the registration system as a care or nursing home. NISRA provided caveats with the analysis, which excluded patients transferring to hospital from a care home whose usual address was instead their last known private residence. Publication of this data was also in line with that being published by the ONS. The DOH Minister commented publicly on the welcome publication of these figures on the same day **[PW/15 - INQ000212421]**.

100. The NISRA weekly deaths statistics continued to be developed according to user need such as facilitating reporting at a UK level as part of the Downing Street daily briefings **[PW/16 - INQ000212422]**. By the end of September 2020, the report included 12 detailed tables to support user interest and need.

1.9. ***Quarterly provisional statistics reporting on underlying causes of death***

101. NISRA Vital Statistics Unit (VSU) routinely publish quarterly, provisional vital events statistics which include deaths by underlying cause, identified using the International Classification of Diseases-10 (ICD-10) standard coding rules. An agreement has been in place since 2016 between the ONS and NISRA whereby the ONS apply ICD-10 coding rules to the Northern Ireland data and return the coded data to NISRA for quality assurance and publication. Prior to the pandemic, NISRA published this data around 9-10 weeks after the reference period ended; however, as a result of the pandemic this timeline was eventually shortened to around 6-8 weeks; this followed an initial delay with the publication of the quarter 1 2020 figures (August 2020) due to VSU resources being focused on ongoing development of the weekly deaths statistics.

102. On 16 September 2020 Ministers were provided with pre-release access to quarter 2 2020 statistics **[PW/17 - INQ000212423]**. The statistics were published on 17 September 2020 with an accompanying statistical press notice which, among other things, set out the relationship between Covid-19 deaths where Covid-19 was the underlying cause compared to the weekly reported Covid-19 related deaths.

103. Following the introduction of new ICD-10 codes by the World Health Organisation in January 2021, Ministers were given pre-release access to the quarter 1 2021 statistics on 22 June 2021 [PW/18 - INQ000212424] in anticipation of media and public interest on NISRA's first reporting of deaths registered where an adverse effect of the COVID-19 vaccine was the underlying cause of death. NISRA's reporting of these ICD-10 codes was consistent with the rest of the UK and informed growing public interest in the side effects of the Covid-19 vaccines, evidenced in the volume of FOIs on this topic.

1.10. ***Detailed Covid-19 reports in addition to weekly statistics***

104. Due to the enormous demands which the pandemic response placed on NISRA's small VSU, the NISRA Administrative Data Research Unit (ARU) was called on for support by carrying out certain Covid-19 analyses and research. The ARU, comprising three NISRA statisticians, falls under the same NISRA command as the VSU but are an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded research function and form part of a wider partnership between NISRA, and both the Queens and Ulster Universities. The ARU were tasked to produce timely and comprehensive analyses covering four broad topic areas, each of which sought to provide Northern Ireland equivalent information to that available in the rest of the UK. These reports also covered areas of high public and government interest and their development and context is detailed in the sections below.

105. A statistical report focusing on age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) of Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 related deaths, broken down by month, sex, Local Government District, urban/rural and deprivation covered the following cumulative time periods: March – May 2020 (published June 2020), March – August 2020 (published October 2020), March 2020 – Jan 2021 (published February 2021), March-October 2021 (published December 2021). This followed correspondence between NISRA and the DoH Minister advising him of plans for such a report [PW/19 - INQ000212425].

106. ASMRs are a standard methodology used to adjust for different age profiles in different populations (e.g. different regions or countries), thus making the

resulting rates more comparable across jurisdictions. They are presented per 100,000 people and are standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population.

107. The reports also provided counts of deaths by country of birth and occupation, both of which are included on the death certificate. The country of birth analysis followed concern expressed by the Equality Commission relating to the additional risks for different racial/ethnic minority groups in relation to Covid-19 **[PW/20 - INQ000212426]**. Information on the ethnicity of deceased is not, however, collected on death certificates whereas country of birth was readily available. NISRA's initial analysis using country of birth differed to the ONS approach linking Census 2011 and death registration information; NISRA subsequently published a research report based on a Census 2011 to death registration linkage to cover a wider range of demographic markers not included on the death certificate as well as ethnicity – further detail is provided below.
108. Ministers were initially notified of plans for this ASMR focused report on 10 June 2020 **[PW/21 - INQ000212428]** along with plans for an ONS-led four country comparison report.
109. Pre-release access to this report **[PW/22 - INQ000212429]** was granted to the DOH Minister and officials on 16 June 2020, the day before publication, and further detail was subsequently provided to them in relation to a query on deaths among health workers.
110. A separate topic relates to the number of and reasons for 'excess mortality', which has been an area of significant public interest and concern during the course of the pandemic and beyond. The UK wide definition for Excess mortality is the difference between actual deaths in a period minus the expected number of deaths i.e. the average number of deaths for the corresponding period in the previous years. From the outset, the NISRA weekly deaths report included a comparison of deaths each week relative to the average number of deaths for the corresponding week in the previous years' 2015-2019, i.e. using this average as an indication of the number of deaths one might expect in the same week in 2020. This statistic was first referred to as 'excess deaths' in the weekly report published on 23 April 2020 and from 15 May 2020 a clear weekly excess deaths count was built into the tables.

111. The NISRA approach to calculate excess deaths based on the previous 5-year average (2015-2019) aligned with the ONS and NRS in the first year of the pandemic. From the beginning of 2021, however, the NISRA approach differed slightly to the rest of the UK: NISRA opted for an excess deaths comparator based on the 2016-2020 average, whilst also including a 2015-2019 average in its tables for those users wishing to understand excess deaths without the impact of the pandemic. This decision was reflective of the different, less severe impact of Covid-19 in NI in 2020 to the rest of the UK and followed a series of discussions and investigations into the impact of different comparator periods for NI [PW/23 - INQ000212438] [PW/24 - INQ000212440], as well as being informed by an options paper from ONS [PW/25 - INQ000212441] and discussions at the Mortality Theme Group [PW/26 - INQ000212442]. NISRA maintained a similar approach in 2022, using a 2017-2021 5-year comparator as well as including the comparator (years 2016-2019 and 2021) chosen by ONS and NRS, to enable users to make direct UK comparisons. Given that the NISRA and ONS approaches still closely aligned in terms of how they calculated excess deaths, apart from a difference in the 5-year average used to calculate 'expected deaths', the difference did not give rise to any difficulties; this was aided by the fact that NISRA also presented figures based on a fully ONS aligned approach to allow users to make direct comparisons. Due to the pandemic and increased interest in this topic, new measures of excess deaths have become available to calculate excess mortality. As a result of these developments, (outside the period of inquiry interest) a cross-UK 'Excess Mortality Baseline Working Group' was formed, which is being led by the ONS to develop an official, agreed, measure of expected (and excess) mortality. The group has membership from the devolved nations through NRS and NISRA and also involves a range of UK health departments as well as the Cabinet Office. The group will report to the UK Statistics Authority Methodological Assurance Review Panel in due course on a set of agreed options. A particular area of focus is defining the expected number of deaths (baseline) for the calculation of excess mortality in official statistics i.e. estimating the expected number or rate of deaths based on no pandemic, an average flu year, and no other exceptional circumstances affecting health. These are events which one would expect to contribute to the calculated excess mortality as deviations from the 'average' or 'usual'.

112. In addition to the weekly count of excess deaths, NISRA published several detailed statistical reports on 'Excess mortality & Covid-19 related deaths', two of which were published during the period to which the Inquiry relates, and covering the following cumulative time periods: March 2020 – June 2020 (published in July 2020), and March- December 2020 (published in March 2021). NISRA has continued to publish excess deaths updates into 2023 given the ongoing interest in understanding excess deaths post-pandemic, as demonstrated through FOI and media requests. The reports have routinely included breakdowns by age, sex, place of death and different geographical areas including Local Government Districts, area deprivation and urban/rural residence as well as causes of death; in so doing, the outputs have largely mirrored information available in the rest of UK.
113. NISRA was sighted on a letter from the Welsh Chief Medical Officer to Sir Ian Diamond on 8 July 2020, requesting more four nations analyses on excess deaths, **[PW/27 - INQ000212443]**. The first NISRA report on 'Excess mortality & Covid-19 related deaths' was published on 28 July 2020 with associated pre-release access **[PW/28 - INQ000212444]** granted to the DOH Minister and senior DOH officials and was supported by media outreach in the form of a closed media briefing led by the DOF Press Office and NISRA. Following an ONS report comparing European and UK Relative Age Standardised Mortality Rates, published on 30 July 2020, NISRA subsequently provided analytical interpretation of the findings **[PW/29 - INQ000212447]** to DOH IAD following media interest. At a later date NISRA provided comment to FactCheckNI ahead of the release of their article assessing how COVID-19 had contributed to excess deaths in Northern Ireland **[PW/30 - INQ000212448]; [PW/30a - INQ000212450]**.
114. 'Excess mortality' is a mathematical concept, that is, it is not possible to identify whether an individual death was an 'excess death'. It also means that excess deaths may, in some cases, be a negative number, when actual deaths are lower than the expected number. Therefore, connecting excess deaths to specific scenarios during the pandemic, such as the impact of lockdowns, or reduced non Covid-19 health services or economic impacts is not feasible. In contrast, the analysis of Covid-19 related deaths is based on individual deaths, where Covid-

19 was included on the death certificate. Such deaths cannot be automatically classed as excess deaths, however, as we cannot assume that at least some of the people dying from Covid-19 would not have died due to other causes. Throughout the pandemic, NISRA advised caution in making comparisons between excess deaths and Covid-19 related deaths given the issues outlined above.

115. A further area of user interest was around understanding Covid-19 deaths in relation to pre-existing conditions i.e. mentions on the death certificate of a condition that pre-dated or was independent of Covid-19, and the nature of such conditions **[PW/31 - INQ000212451]** **[PW/32 - INQ000212452]**. The ONS developed a methodology in April 2020 to identify pre-existing conditions of deaths involving the coronavirus and applied it to such deaths registered in England and Wales for March 2020. This method was also used by NRS in their weekly deaths reports from 13 May 2020 onwards. NISRA took stock of this methodology and its evolution in later reports **[PW/34 - INQ000212454]** and consulted with the DOH Chief Medical Officer's office **[PW/35 - INQ000212456]** for quality assurance purposes. Minor changes to the ONS methodology were made for the analysis of Covid-19 related deaths in Northern Ireland, to take account of DOH advice on the interpretation of the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) in a very small number of cases where other conditions appeared on the same line as Covid-19 e.g. pneumonia. NISRA published the first of three statistical reports on Covid-19 and pre-existing conditions on 23 December 2020 (with advance pre-release access to DOH) **[PW/33 - INQ000212453]**, covering the period March to November 2020, with subsequent reports covering March 2020 to February 2021 (published March 2021) and March 2020 to November 2021 (published December 2021). The analyses focused on the presence, number and type of pre-existing conditions by age and sex.

116. The final area of detailed Covid-19 related deaths reporting which NISRA covered was in relation to understanding the effect of Covid-19 on equality groupings. The development of this work was informed by a clear user interest for Northern Ireland equivalent information following disparities in Covid-19 deaths being documented by the ONS and particularly in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups **[PW/38 - INQ000212459]** **[PW/39**

- **INQ000212462**]. Correspondence between NISRA and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland [**PW/36 - INQ000212457**] [**PW/37 - INQ000212458**] also evidenced the need to develop local understanding in this evolving space, but also recognised that the information could not be produced solely from the administrative data captured on death certificates and would rely on a data linkage solution. The Northern Ireland solution was to use the long-standing NISRA research resource, the 'Northern Ireland Mortality Study' (NIMS) which is ethically approved by the Office for Research Ethics Committees Northern Ireland for approved research. The NIMS is a large-scale mortality focused, data linkage study linking the 2011 Census of Population returns for the whole of the enumerated population (people counted through the Census) to subsequently registered mortality data from the General Register Office (GRO). The NIMS data therefore enabled access to a range of self-reported information from Census 2011 records (including for example, ethnic group, self-reported health problem or disability, religion brought up in or belonged to) connected to subsequent mortality information. The NIMS cannot, however, take into account any changes in circumstances between the Census and time of death. During the pandemic, improvements were also made to the frequency of mortality updates in NIMS with updates moving from annual, pre-pandemic, to quarterly by late 2020 to support more timely and relevant research on the impact of Covid-19. NISRA has maintained these quarterly updates in order to support approved research in relation to post-pandemic effects. Prior to the work using the NIMS, NISRA also published counts of Covid-19 related deaths by country of birth, a detail which is collected as part of the death registration process (see paragraph 107). While it was acknowledged that country of birth does not equate to ethnic group, this work was completed because any NIMS based work would be limited by the fact that Northern Ireland had a small ethnic minority population at Census Day 2011, with 1.8 per cent (32,400) of the resident population at that time belonging to minority ethnic groups.

117. The first research report based on the NIMS covered the period March to September 2020 (published Dec 2021) with a further update subsequently published outside the timescale of the scope of the inquiry. The analysis included age-standardised mortality rates as well as statistical modelling to determine the

risk of death associated with certain equality characteristics, most notably, having a self-reported disability. This work followed similar work from ONS linking deaths data to Census 2011 in order to ascertain the impact of Covid-19 on BAME groups. However, for the first NISRA report, it was not possible to provide such a breakdown due to the counts being fewer than 10 and thus too low for statistical analysis and to meet privacy controls.

1.11. ***NISRA Covid-19 death registration data provided under data sharing agreements***

118. Throughout the pandemic, NISRA endeavored to publish a comprehensive suite of mortality related statistics to inform public debate, as outlined above. NISRA also continued to support or enhance existing mortality data flows to support academic and/or government led research. In addition to increasing the frequency of mortality data updates to the NIMS (as outlined above), NISRA also worked in collaboration with the Business Services Organisation (BSO), an administration body for the NI Health and Social Care Trusts, the Honest Broker Service (HBS), which is the Trusted Research Environment for Health and Social Care (HSC) Northern Ireland and which supports provision of anonymized, patient level data for the purposes of research. In particular NISRA worked with the HBS officials to authorise remote access arrangements for mortality data to researchers conducting important operational research across the UK, in relation to impacts of Covid-19 as well as studies on the safety and efficacy of the Covid-19 vaccines.
119. In a number of instances new data sharing arrangements were needed between NISRA and organisations leading on pandemic monitoring. **Annex D** details the data sharing agreements put in place by NISRA VSU to support various organisational needs; each were supported by strictly defined data sharing agreements (including for detailed aggregate data files).
120. In relation to the information flows to the DOH Information Analysis Directorate (IAD) (and later to BSO) including daily, identifiable data extracts of Covid-19 related deaths, this was enabled by a legal gateway, specifically section 51 of the

Health and Personal Social Services Act (NI) 2001. The data feed with DoH IAD was rapidly established over 19-20 March 2020, following the confirmation on 19 March of the first Covid-19 related death in Northern Ireland. The existing Data Sharing Agreement between the DOH IAD and NISRA was refined retrospectively over the period March to June 2020 **[PW/40 - INQ000212463]** to cover data sharing for Covid-19 pandemic planning purposes and included the provision of all deaths where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. As part of the early discussions between NISRA and DOH IAD, it was agreed that DOH IAD would also facilitate the onward sharing of NISRA related aggregate data with the Public Health Agency (PHA), rather than a direct flow from NISRA to the PHA (as was customary for Flu epidemic monitoring) **[PW/41 - INQ000212464]**. Onward transmission from the DOH was to enable additional DOH information to be added, as relevant to PHA needs, but also to ensure a single source of authority existed in relation to the NI deaths count being reported in government situation reports (sitreps) which were required by The Executive Office **[PW/42 - INQ000212465]**.

121. During May and June 2020, DOH IAD indicated a desire to use the daily operational VSU data flow for wider publication of a report on Covid-19 health inequalities. Specifically, on 31st May 2020, IAD notified the NISRA Chief Executive of the intention to publish a report on Covid-19 inequality information in relation to:

- positive laboratory completed tests for SARS-COV2 virus,
- patients admitted with confirmed or suspected Covid-19, and
- registered deaths where COVID-19 appeared on the death certificate.

IAD advised that the report would cover information up to 26 May 2020 and publish on 2 June and would include analyses of death rates by sex, age, deprivation areas, urban and rural location and Local Government Districts. NISRA advised IAD that this plan conflicted with publication developments already well advanced within the VSU (see para 105) which also aligned with wider ONS and NRS-based outputs. Specifically, NISRA sought to remain aligned to ONS and NRS by continuing to be the primary source for published data based on Covid-19 mentions on the death certificate and therefore not

blurring lines with health departments which used the different Covid-19 test-based definition. For example, NISRA were aware of and had a quality assurance role in an ONS led, UK wide report on Covid-19 related deaths, which was published on 12 June 2023 and which stated that 'figures on deaths published by the ONS, NRS and NISRA differ from those produced by the Department of Health and Social Care and the UK's public health agencies for two main reasons: the time between death and reporting and the wider inclusion criteria.' The IAD plans to include registration based Covid-19 mentions on death certificates would have contradicted this guidance. Additionally, NISRA Core was concerned about the level of media handling that would accompany the health led publication of GRO-based data; whereas the DOF Press Office had already established close working relationships with VSU and were integrated as part of the statistical production team to facilitate media handling this was not known to be the case for DOH. NISRA considered that in absence of a media briefing on any Covid-19 inequalities report, confusion was likely, particularly if multiple definitions were involved in the output. Finally, NISRA identified that the DOH IAD planned release would also result in a breach of the Statistics Code of Practice (T3.3 which states that 'Access to statistics before their public release should be limited to those involved in the production of the statistics and the preparation of the release, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Accurate records of those who have access before they are finalised should be maintained'). The planned IAD release included Covid-19 related deaths information for a time period that would not be publicly available via the NISRA weekly report until 5 June. DOH IAD subsequently published their report on 17 June 2020 without deaths data and referred readers to NISRA for mortality related analyses which published on the same day. Due to uncertainty regarding the future intended use of the daily data, the data sharing agreement was ceased on 14 July 2020.

122. NISRA, however, continued to support DOH IAD in the publication of statistics utilising coded deaths data i.e. where Covid-19 had been identified as the underlying cause of death through the application of the International Classification of Diseases-10 (ICD-10) coding principles. This enabled DOH IAD to publish underlying cause mortality data in their inequalities report dated 16 December 2020.

123. The re-establishment of a record level data feed was subsequently put in place with the HSC BSO from December 2020 to enable ongoing pandemic surveillance as well as supporting decisions in relation to potential changes to the health related Covid-19 deaths definition [PW/43 - INQ000212466].
124. As outlined in **Annex D**, the remaining data sharing agreements involved detailed aggregate data, one of which was put in place by NISRA to support statistical modelling efforts by Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M-O) at a NI and UK level [PW/44 - INQ000212467]; while the remaining aggregate data shares contributed to the production of UK and European statistics, the latter being the European Mortality Monitoring, the aim of which is to operate coordinated, timely mortality monitoring and analyses in as many European countries as possible, using a standardised approach to ensure that signals are comparable between countries.

1.12. NISRA Covid-19 death registration data provided under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI)

125. **Annex E** outlines the substantial demands placed on the NISRA VSU in the form of FOI requests received and processed during the time frame of interest to the Inquiry. These requests were managed in addition to the notable developmental work undertaken by NISRA VSU in order to place as much Covid-19 related deaths data in the public domain, in as timely a way as possible and also in a way that was clear and understandable to the general public. NISRA VSU of course responded to FOIs openly and transparently, supporting the provision of data in the majority of cases. In a number of instances, already published or planned publication of statistics led to the application of appropriate FOI exemptions i.e. section 21 (information reasonably accessible by another means) and section 22 (information intended for future publication) and indeed helps demonstrate the public demand for the official statistics and research outlined in the sections above.
126. A number of FOIs were received seeking the disclosure of the number of Covid-19 deaths either at specific/ all postcodes, or in specified care homes. NISRA considered these requests very carefully and weighed up the risks of both

disclosure and non-disclosure, as is required by the FOI Act. In relation to postcode level disclosure NISRA determined that, in balance, the provision of Covid-19 related deaths at 4-digit postcode (BTXX) presented minimal risk of harm or disclosure. This information was first released via the DOF FOI 2020-0160 [PW/45 - INQ000212468] on 3 July 2020.

127. In relation to requests for deaths in specific care homes [PW/46 - INQ000212471], [PW/47 - INQ000212472] (or other very detailed requests which sought detail around a single death) NISRA Core applied the FOI exemption 38 (disclosure of information would or would be likely to endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or the safety of any individual).

128. NISRA Core was also mindful in its initial decision that other jurisdictions across the UK had not released such information at the time. (This position subsequently changed with NRS publishing individual care home deaths in May 2021, followed by England's Care home Quality Commission (CQC) publishing individual care home deaths in July 2021. Only the CQC data contained contextual information about the size of the care home, which was limited to whether the home was large, medium or small.) NISRA's core argument for non-disclosure was based around the FOI section 38 exemption, however NISRA was also concerned that disclosure of data relating to a single care home would constitute a breach of the Statistics Code of Practice where there is a requirement to protect the privacy of individuals and businesses.

129. Another key area of public interest emerging through the FOI process was in relation to numbers and demographics of people dying where Covid-19 was the only illness mentioned on the death certificate. NISRA did not produce official counts of such 'Covid-only' deaths as part of its official statistics outputs. While FOI requests demonstrated interest in this concept, it was deemed to be potentially misleading as it did not include deaths where Covid-19 led to other conditions which were the direct cause of death. Instead, NISRA Core routinely pointed users to underlying cause of death statistics (quarterly statistics as outlined above) or pre-existing conditions analyses. The latter report explained that Covid-19 deaths with no pre-existing conditions would involve cases where Covid-19 led to another condition causing death, while also excluding cases

where the deceased had a condition prior to Covid-19 which was noted via the death certificate to contribute to the death. Such has been the continued interest in 'Covid-only' deaths, the issue was raised for discussion at the Mortality Theme Group and members agreed that data should be provided based on 'no pre-existing conditions' going forward. [PW/48 - INQ000212473]. FactCheckNI also published an article on 19 February 2021 to explain the relationship between Covid-19 and other pre-existing conditions and why looking at 'Covid-only' analysis could be misleading.

130. Further FOI areas of interest included requests relating to the Covid-19 vaccinations, such as adverse reactions to the vaccines and deaths post vaccination. Many of these questions could not be answered by NISRA Core as the information held was limited to cases where a Covid-19 vaccination was mentioned on the death certificate – NISRA Core could not determine who or when an individual had received a vaccination.

1.13. ***NISRA Covid-19 death registration data provided in response to Assembly Questions (AQs)***

131. A range of questions were also received by NISRA Core's VSU during the period of interest in the form of AQ's and these are set out in **Annex F**. These questions largely reflect similar themes as already addressed above. In addition, NISRA Core regularly provided 'lines to take' for the DOF Minister for Topical Questions (unseen questions) as part of Question Time sessions in the Assembly. Typical, as per example [PW/49 - INQ000212474] these lines covered definitional differences in reporting Covid-19 deaths, the latest position as reported in the NISRA Core weekly deaths statistics and also any updates relevant to upcoming releases.

132. In mid-December 2021 The Executive Office (TEO) asked NISRA senior management team for help with the creation of a data solution to monitor and inform senior NICS staff and local civil contingency organisations about the expected surge of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. TEO required the development of an internal interactive dashboard to provide weekly (or more

frequent) information for the use by The Executive and Assembly, senior NICS staff and NI civil contingency organisations to measure the impact of COVID-19 Omicron on society. The dashboard and enabling IT infrastructure needed to be in place by the end of January.

133. NISRA mobilised staff quickly and arranged (through ITAssist) to get the internal IT infrastructure in place (access to a PowerBI Server, a shared drive and appropriate security officer approval). NISRA staff collaborated with TEO colleagues to create a dashboard which was refined through a number of iterations as TEO requirements became clearer. This collaboration resulted in the creation of a new interactive PowerBI dashboard with 8 key themes (health, workforce, supply chain, service delivery, economic impacts, societal impacts, education impacts and cumulative impacts).

134. The dashboard and process documentation were passed to TEO analysts at the end of January and NISRA trained them in how to update, modify and deploy the dashboard. The home page of the dashboard included a simple visual overview of each of the 8 themes with Red Amber Green status. The dashboard could be easily updated with some high level DOH metrics (infections, hospitalisations and deaths) and data from other sources to provide the users with a wider understanding of the situation. The solution was well received by all and has been used in subsequent civil contingencies situations (e.g., cost of living, Ukraine) by the team in TEO.

9. Corporate Statistical Support and Dissemination

135. NISRA Statistical Support Branch (SSB), within NISRA Core, provides support and guidance to all NISRA branches, and other Northern Ireland producers of official statistics, on compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics **[PW/50 - INQ000212476]** (a legal requirement for National Statistics), Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007, paragraph 13 **[PW/51 - INQ000212477]**, the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order **[PW/52 - INQ000212478]** and the production and release of National Statistics, official statistics, experimental statistics and other numerical information such as Management Information.

136. The Code of Practice for Statistics is structured around three pillars (Trustworthiness, Quality and Value). Trustworthiness is about the processes, people and systems of government organisations. Quality is about the data and how they are processed into statistics. And Value is about producing statistics that support society's needs for information. Value means that the statistics and data are useful, easy to access, remain relevant, and support understanding of important issues.
137. As well as supporting NISRA and non-NISRA producers of official statistics in Northern Ireland, SSB acts as a contact point for the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) which comprises the Office for National Statistics (ONS), UK Government Departments and other producers of official statistics in England, Scotland and Wales. As part of this role, SSB supports the flow of information, and the sharing of guidance and expertise between the GSS, ONS and NISRA and ensures that where possible NISRA (and the relevant people within NISRA and NI more widely) are considered and involved in UK initiatives.
138. SSB also acts as an initial contact point for the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and the UK Statistics Authority. While Northern Ireland Departments, Crown Bodies, and other producers of official statistics (listed in Official Statistics Orders) are independently accountable to the OSR, this centralised contact point supports the effective cascading of information, co-ordination of responses and ensures that OSR are put in contact with the correct people.
139. During the pandemic, SSB built on this established foundation to support NISRA branches (and other NI producers) in producing high quality, valuable and trustworthy statistics and other numerical outputs to support decision making and inform the public. Due to the ongoing work of SSB, NISRA branches were already familiar with the requirements of the Code of Practice, and had embedded these requirements within their standard working practices. NISRA staff (and other NI producers) also knew who to contact should they have a query or concern. The volume of queries received by SSB indicated that this was a valuable resource.
140. As well as responding to individual queries, SSB circulated timely reminders on best practice and the correct procedures to follow, for example when delaying or reducing publications due to data unavailability, quality issues or higher priority

work; **[PW/53 - INQ000212479]**, **[PW/54 - INQ000212480]** and **[PW/55 - INQ000212481]**. The focus was on ensuring clear and transparent communication with users (trustworthiness) and meeting user needs as far as possible (value). During the pandemic, there was also a need for more rapid release of statistics and data to inform decision-making. SSB was able to reassure branches that this was consistent with the Code of Practice, and that the standard four weeks advance notice could be balanced against the need to release the statistics as soon as they are ready to meet the needs of users.

141. Prior to the pandemic, almost all NISRA outputs were official or National Statistics but management information releases were produced during the pandemic in response to the need for more timely information. To support NISRA branches, SSB finalised and circulated guidance on releasing management information in March 2020 **[PW/56 - INQ000212482]**, with further guidance produced in July 2020 **[PW/57 - INQ000212485]**.
142. Guidance produced by the OSR and the GSS, in response to the pandemic, was also circulated by SSB. The GSS guidance provided advice on maintaining quality when working to tight timescales and communicating the impact of COVID-19 on statistical outputs; **[PW/58 - INQ000212486]** and **[PW/59 - INQ000212488]**. The OSR guidance focused initially on managing the impact of the pandemic on existing outputs, and then on the transparent use and release of management information; **[PW/60 - INQ000212490]** and **[PW/61 - INQ000212492]**.
143. SSB played a key role in identifying and mitigating risks of non-compliance with both the Code of Practice for Statistics and OSR requirements regarding the transparent use and release of data and statistics **[PW/62 - INQ000212494]**. SSB worked with NISRA colleagues across government as they worked to ensure that data quoted by Ministers was released, easily accessible and included appropriate explanations of context and sources **[PW/62 - INQ000212494]**. In addition, SSB circulated material to NISRA branches (for example, guidance from the OSR; previous letters to UK Departments) that could be used in discussions when Code compliance was at risk; **[PW/63 - INQ000212498]** and **[PW/64 -**

INQ000212500]. Feedback from NISRA branches indicated that this material was helpful and encouraged compliance with the Code and OSR requirements.

144. The centralised support provided by SSB worked well and ensured a consistent approach to compliance with the Code of Practice and the release of official statistics and management information by NISRA branches. It enabled answers to be re-used, highlighted where additional guidance was needed and raised awareness of potential issues. It also ensured that NISRA staff were aware of recent guidance issued by the GSS and OSR.
145. SSB also collated and circulated information on COVID-19 related National and official statistics outputs and management Information releases produced by NISRA, other NI official statistics producers and their host Departments/Organisations (including the PHA) **[PW/65 - INQ000212501]**. This increased awareness of published data, statistics and analysis - across NISRA, other analysts involved in the response to COVID-19 and the wider GSS - and supported a co-ordinated approach. It also supported the sharing of good practice.
146. In addition, SSB circulated weekly information on COVID-19 related outputs produced by the rest of the GSS **[PW/66 - INQ000212503]**; updates on external and internal data sources related to COVID-19, with supporting information on quality & methodology **[PW/67 - INQ000212504]** and information on international responses by other government statistical offices, including the Republic of Ireland Central Statistics Office **[PW/68 - INQ000212506]**, as well as information relevant to specific NISRA branches and other NI producers such as the PHA.
147. SSB ensured that queries from OSR were sent to the correct people (both within and outside NISRA) and all relevant parties were involved in and aware of the response. Many of these queries involved Vital Statistics Unit in NISRA Core, the Public Health Agency (PHA) and/or Information Analysis Directorate in DoH **[PW/69 - INQ000212507]**. SSB also ensured OSR was aware of the range of data and statistics produced for Northern Ireland, and where equivalent Northern Ireland information could be found.

148. SSB co-ordinated NISRA's input into a range of cross-UK material produced by ONS. In addition, SSB liaised with Cabinet Office to ensure that the equivalent Northern Ireland links were added to the 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics and analysis' GOV.UK page **[PW/70 - INQ000212509]**, and also with the Royal Statistical Society to correct and add additional Northern Ireland information to the 'Covid-19 FAQs' page **[PW/71 - INQ000212511]**.
149. Having a branch with an overview and knowledge of the various outputs produced by NISRA, and across the UK, supported the effective flow of information, reduced inaccuracies in UK summary material and improved collaboration, coherence and comparability. SSB also acted as a default contact point for the wider GSS, ONS and the OSR. This improved communication and supported the effective dissemination of information to NISRA and other Northern Ireland producers.
150. To ensure that users were kept appropriately informed, SSB worked with NISRA Senior Management and Dissemination Branch to add a note to the NISRA website on 23rd March 2020 regarding the potential disruption to NISRA outputs and where to find updates on their status **[PW/72 - INQ000212512]**. This note was updated on 8th April to include a link to the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics page **[PW/73 - INQ000212513]** and information on the 7am release time for NISRA Market Sensitive statistics was added on 28th April **[PW/74 - INQ000212514]**.
151. To support NISRA statisticians in other Departments, a link to the NISRA note, as well as the standard form of words issued by the GSS was shared **[PW/75 - INQ000212515]** and **[PW/76 - INQ000212516]**. This allowed branches to add a similar note on their Departmental/Organisational websites, where appropriate.
152. SSB also worked with NISRA branches to ensure that users could easily find the statistics they were looking for. For example, a direct link to a postcode-based FOI request used by Belfast Telegraph in a popular article was added to the Deaths page **[PW/77 - INQ000212517]**.
153. A NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics page was created by Dissemination Branch on 8th April 2020, following a discussion at NISRA's Agency Board and

direction from the Director of Analysis [PW/78 - INQ000212518]. At 20/04/20, this overview page included all COVID-19 related National Statistics, official statistics and management information releases produced, overseen by or contributed to by NISRA branches [PW/79 - INQ000212519]. The content was arranged by topic. Each section included a short description of the information available and links to the relevant outputs. It also included a link to the equivalent ONS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Webpage and the GOV.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics webpage. GOV.UK covers all UK Government Departments, as at 26/02/21[PW/80 - INQ000212521], current [PW/81 - INQ000212522].

10. Corporate Business Support and Development

154. As mentioned previously, maintaining the integrity and delivery of NISRA Core business as usual activities and responding to any emerging demands from the pandemic were key operational priorities. Throughout the period in question (11 Jan 2020 – 18 March 2022), NISRA Core’s Corporate Business Support and Development Branch played a vital role in this respect, keeping Colby House open and safe for those staff who were designated as essential workers and required access to the building during the pandemic.
155. By way of background, prior to the pandemic Colby House accommodated some 290 NISRA Core staff working across different business areas and branches. It incorporated the accommodation for two NISRA Core public facing services, namely (i) the General Register Office (GRO) Public Counter and Public Search Office and (ii) the Secure Setting that is managed by the Research Support Unit and utilised by researchers to conduct approved administrative data research.
156. In the run up to the first lock down in March 2020, precautionary mitigation measures had been introduced in Colby House. For example, in accordance with National Advice, staff were encouraged to wash their hands often, to use the crook of their arms when coughing and adhere to the national advice of Catch it, Bin it, Kill it. Additionally, a text messaging service was specifically developed to enable the dispatch of key business continuity messages to all staff who had signed up to the service. Managers were encouraged to review and familiarise

themselves with the new arrangements and to encourage active compliance with any new arrangements across their teams.

157. Staff were notified that they should work from home wherever possible on 16th March 2020 and the two public facing offices mentioned above were closed with effect from 18th March 2020 (17th March being a Public holiday). The first Covid-19 Risk Assessment for the building was completed on 20 March 2020 resulting in new building protocols, procedures and guidance for staff. These were routinely reviewed as appropriate with mitigation measures, procedures and protocols amended as required.

158. Throughout all lockdowns, Colby House operated under strict COVID-19 protocols. The building Facilities Management Team (FMT) co-ordinated the introduction of many onsite COVID-19 mitigation measures and assisted in the distribution of IT equipment (laptops, screens, peripherals etc.) to enable staff to work from home. Fulfilling these IT equipment requirements was a centralised function that fell to ITAssist within DOF, who were co-ordinating for the NICS as a whole.

159. A small number of staff (between 20 and 30) required access to Colby House on an ongoing basis due to the nature of their work, which couldn't be conducted from home. They were designated essential workers and issued with travel letters in accordance with national travel restrictions. The staff concerned comprised of people from the General Registers Office (GRO), FMT, Vital Statistics & Administrative Research and Support, Central Survey Unit, Economic & Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) and Census business areas. All were required to adhere to the changes and mitigations introduced following the building risk assessment, which included:

- new 2m social distancing measures, with guidance posters on all doors leading from reception;
- the wearing of face coverings when moving around the building;
- one-way systems in operation on all floors;
- stairwell usage restricted to one person per flight;
- reconfiguration of desk clusters;

- meeting room usage reduced, or re-purposed or declared closed until further notice depending on size;
- only one person at any given time in a facility area;
- one chair per table in breakout areas;
- unused furniture removed to adhere to social distancing;
- all nonessential soft furnishing removed;
- one person per toilet area at a time with indicator signage in place;
- pod usage prohibited and taped off;
- floors marked off with anti-slip yellow and black hazard tape to maintain social distancing at choke points;
- comprehensive surface cleansing routine and systematic deep cleans by onsite cleaning staff;
- all surfaces cleaned after every use, including door handles, toilet seats and printer screens;
- hand-sanitisers strategically positioned throughout the building;
- a moratorium on all non-essential or casual visits to the site; and
- the names of all staff accessing the building recorded for track and trace purposes.

1.14. ***Recovery management***

160. As lockdown measures began to ease, the Agency senior management team developed and implemented a 3-phase recovery plan to run from winter 2020 through to summer 2021. This flexible plan (which reflected national guidance and social distancing rules at the time, the pace of implementation of the NI Executive Recovery Plan and central NICS guidance), enabled:

- the number of staff attending the building to increase, accommodating those who could not work from home effectively; and
- the opening of the public facing services mentioned earlier.

161. These changes did however have to be rolled back with the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants of the virus, which enforced further lockdowns in late 2020 and throughout 2021 and early 2022. Onsite numbers in Colby House rarely peaked above 50 on any given day during this period through to the beginning of February 2022.
162. February 2022 saw the removal of many of the pandemic restrictions across Northern Ireland but significantly though, the instruction to work from home where possible remained. To help manage the developing situation effectively, the Colby House Recovery Plan was revised, with Phase 2 being split into Phases 2a and 2b to allow for a more controlled transition that would support business needs.
163. At this juncture, the NISRA senior management team agreed that the plan moved to Phase 2a, which retained the 2m social distancing. This facilitated the return of further staff to Colby House and the resumption of small face-to-face meetings. At this stage staff attending Colby House, were encouraged to participate in the NICS asymptomatic testing scheme. Lateral Flow Device Test kits were held in Colby House and issued to staff as required until such times as stocks were exhausted. These measures were in place at the end of the period in consideration – 18 March 2022.
164. As stated earlier, all of these activities were pivotal to NISRA Core continuing to meet its business as usual requirements and emerging needs that arose as a result of the pandemic. At all times, the safety of the General Public and our staff was paramount.

11. NISRA Core's Span of Responsibility

165. In the context of the questions presented to NISRA Core by the Inquiry Team, the narrative above seeks to address these through detailing how its key business areas were impacted by COVID-19 during the period in question along with the response to meeting specific information needs that emerged. It also summarises the important collaborative engagement across government including with the other National Statistics Institutes (in particular the ONS) and the provision of key information that was produced and disseminated to key NI

policy officials and Ministerial colleagues in order to help shape their decision making throughout. Deliberately, the narrative is more expansive in nature in those NISRA Core business areas considered to be of most relevance in respect of Module 2C – the focus of which concerns the decision-making by the government in Northern Ireland.

166. Importantly and notwithstanding the evidence provided throughout the narrative, the following bullet points are important in this respect as they highlight areas where NISRA Core was either not directly/ significantly involved and/or had limited interaction.

- Beyond the position outlined regarding mortality statistics, NISRA Core had limited interaction with any international bodies, including the relevant data and statistical analysis bodies in the Republic of Ireland in respect of the collection, analysis and dissemination of data and statistics relevant to the response to Covid-19.
- NISRA Core's senior management team were not involved in any informal or private communication with the government in Northern Ireland and/ or Ministers or officials about the response to Covid-19.
- NISRA Core's senior management team were not directly involved in any key meetings with the NI Executive, the UK Government or the Scottish or Welsh Governments, where data or statistics which informed key decisions on the management of the pandemic were discussed. Accordingly, recordings of such meetings are not available.
- NISRA Core had limited involvement in responding to any specific and/or significant work directly requested by the government (i.e. NI Executive) in NI in respect of data, statistics, advice or briefings to inform their response to the pandemic. Specifically, other than the work on developing mortality statistics as previously outlined, this was the case in respect of: (i) the initial understanding of COVID-19; (ii) the initial response to the transmission of COVID-19; (iii) herd immunity; (iv) the imposition or easing of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) as outlined in paragraph 3 of the Provisional Outlines of Scope; (v) transmission rates; (vi) public health communications and their impact; or (vii) public health and coronavirus legislation and their impact.

- NISRA Core was not involved in providing any NI or UK committees with oral or written evidence relating to data and statistics concerning COVID-19;
- NISRA Core's senior management team were not participants in any specialist groups such as the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) or indeed any of its sub-groups, including Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M-O). In addition, NISRA Core did not provide direct assistance to these specialists in respect of the provision of data (other than in relation to mortality data), statistics, modelling, analysis, advice and/or papers. This was also the case in respect of: (i) Technical Advisory Group or Technical Advisory Cell, including any of its subgroups; (ii) NI Government Specialist Modelling Response Expert Group; (iii) NI Strategic Intelligence Group; and (iv) NI Covid-19 Modelling Group.
- Finally NISRA Core was not consulted by any national or NI-specific groups in relation to the statistical models that were built to predict the spread of the COVID-19. As such, NISRA Core is unable to provide an opinion on how effective, 'joined up' and/or collaborative in nature the work the work undertaken by these specialist groups was.

Statement of Truth

167. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 4 October 2023

Annex A: Covid Opinion Survey Results

Set of Results	Time Period	Topics Covered	Topics Added	Topics Removed	Publication Date
1	21 April 2020 to 22 June 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus (COVID-19) Diagnosis and Symptoms • Concerns about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) • Ways the Coronavirus (COVID-19) was affecting lives • Financial Concerns • Staying at Home • Self-Isolation • Protecting Older and Vulnerable People • Personal Wellbeing Indicators • Loneliness • Community Support • Information and Advice • Hygiene Behaviour 			Friday 10 July 2020.

Set of Results	Time Period	Topics Covered	Topics Added	Topics Removed	Publication Date
2	21 April 2020 to 23 July 2020.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Schooling • Key Workers • Consumer Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene Behaviour 	Thursday 27 August 2020.
3	21 April 2020 to 17 September 2020.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Distancing • Community Support and Safety • Lifestyle • Hygiene Behaviour • Face Coverings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Workers • Staying at Home 	Thursday 21 October 2020.
4	21 April 2020 to 7 November 2020.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Medical Care • Buying Consumer Products • StopCOVIDNI App • Socialising and Support • Enforcement of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus (COVID-19) Diagnosis and Symptoms • Home Schooling • Consumer Support • Social Distancing • Lifestyle • Hygiene Behaviour 	Thursday 17 December 2020.

Set of Results	Time Period	Topics Covered	Topics Added	Topics Removed	Publication Date
5	21 April 2020 to 21 January 2021.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Regulations and Guidelines • Alcohol Consumption • Concerns about Children or Young people attending School in the pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying Consumer Products • Information and Advice • Socialising and Support Bubbles 	Thursday 18 February 2021.
6	21 April 2020 to 3 April 2021.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations • Lockdown Measures • Mental Health (GHQ-12) • Home Schooling and Remote Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Regulations and Guidelines • Access to Medical Care • Concerns about Children or Young people attending School in the pandemic • StopCOVIDNI App • Face Coverings 	Thursday 29 April 2021.

Set of Results	Time Period	Topics Covered	• Topics Added	• Topics Removed	Publication Date
8	July 2021 to September 2021.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Risk from Catching Coronavirus (COVID-19) • Ways Coronavirus is affecting lives Alcohol Consumption in the last twelve months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifestyle Changes • Concerns about Children or Young people attending School in the pandemic • 	Thursday 11 November 2021.
9	October 2021 to December 2021.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus (COVID-19) Booster Vaccinations • Coronavirus (COVID-19) First and Second Vaccinations • Prevalence of Long COVID • Protecting Older and Vulnerable People • Easing of Restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Risk from Catching Coronavirus (COVID-19) • Information and Advice • Ways Coronavirus is affecting lives • Alcohol Consumption in the last twelve months 	Thursday 17 February 2022.
10	January 2022 to March 2022.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid Lateral Flow Tests • Winter Flu Vaccinations • Use of Face Coverings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus First and Second Vaccinations • Slowing the Spread of Coronavirus 	Thursday 12 May 2022.

Annex B: Economic & Labour Market Statistics Produced during the Pandemic

The NISRA Economic and Labour Market Statistics branch (ELMS) produced a wide range of official statistics outputs during the period (January 2020 – March 2022). These business as usual outputs were used by Government Officials, economic commentators, researchers, analysts, etc to understand how the NI economy and labour market was impacted by the pandemic.

It is noted however that it is not possible to differentiate the direct impact of Covid-19 on the economy and labour market in these publications. Rather, they provided details on the performance of the economy and labour market at that point in time.

In terms of the datasets produced these covered a range of topics relating to the structure and performance of the NI economy and labour market including publications relating to, inter alia, employee jobs, earnings, economic output, business demography, trade and Tourism. **Please note that these datasets are not in the public domain** and can be summarised as follows:

Economy

- 9 x quarterly NI Composite Economic Index publications – providing details on the performance of the NI economy and it's sub sectors each quarter. The economic commentary within the bulletin was tailored over the period to ensure relevance to users and incorporated analysis of topics such as the performance of the Labour market, number of people supported via furlough, people movement and mobility, government measures introduced to support businesses during the pandemic, etc.
- 9 x quarterly Index of Services publications – providing details of the performance of the Service sector
- 9 x quarterly Index of Production publications – providing details of the performance of the Production sector
- 9 x quarterly Construction Enquiry publications – providing details of the performance of the Construction sector
- 27 x Traffic Counts of Vehicles at the Fifteen Main Northern Ireland-Ireland Border Crossing Locations publications - providing details of the number and type of vehicles crossing the NI-Ireland border
- 1 x Annual Business Inquiry publication – providing an overview of the approximate GVA, turnover and purchases of the NI non-financial business economy in 2020
- 1 x Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics publication – providing an overview of exports and external sales by NI businesses in 2020
- 1 x NI Business Demography publication providing details of business births, deaths and survival rates of NI businesses by

industry and district Council area in 2020

- 1 x Research and Development activity in NI publication – providing details of the R&D spend & activity, R&D employment, etc in NI in 2020
- New monthly trade in goods dashboard first published in February 2022 – providing details of imports and exports of goods to/from NI to partner countries outside of the UK since January 2021
- 8 annual, 13 quarterly and 27 monthly Tourism publications
- 9 trade and people movement slide packs plus 9 economic overview slide packs.
- Approximately 73 iterations of our economic output and economic overview dashboards which are updated whenever new data is published via any of our publications.
- 27 iterations of our labour force survey dashboard.

Workforce

- 9 x Quarterly Employment Survey publications – providing short term employee jobs estimates for NI
- Business Register and Employment Survey 2020
- 2 x Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings Publications (2020 & 2021)
- 27 x Labour Market Reports
- 1 x Labour Force Survey Annual Reports
- 9 x Quarterly Labour Force Survey Tables
- 1 x Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET): 2020 publication
- 1 x Qualifications in Northern Ireland 2020 publication
- 1 x Disability Employment Gap in Northern Ireland 2020 publication
- 1 x Underemployment in Northern Ireland publication
- Women in Northern Ireland 2020/2021
- Work Quality in Northern Ireland – July 2020 to June 2021
- Employment and hours worked
- Redundancies in NI Special Focus – March to August 2020
- Usual method of travel to work
- Ways in which employees are temporarily employed

Annex C: Cross Government Working Groups that ELMS participated throughout the pandemic

An overview of cross-Government working groups NISRA ELMS participated in during the period in Question is presented below.

Economic Accounts	
Group	Membership
NI Economic Accounts Project Board	ONS, Scot Gov, Central Procurement Directorate, DoF
Regional Quarterly GDP working group	ONS, Scot Gov
Regional Statistics Groups	
Group	Membership
Devolved Economic Statistics Co-ordination Group	ONS, Welsh Government, Scottish Government,
ONS Regional Accounts Government User Group (covers GDHI & HHFCE)	ONS, Welsh Government, Scottish Government, Local Government representatives (GB)
ONS Faster Indicators QA group	ONS, BEIS, Fiscal commission, OBR, DWP, DIT, HMT, Scottish Government, Welsh Government
ONS Annual Surveys User Group (covers ABS, Annual Purchases Survey, Annual Survey of Goods and Services, International Trade in Services)	ONS, BEIS, HMRC, Scot Gov, Welsh Gov, DCMS, DFT
Sub-UK Public Sector Finances Working group	ONS, Fiscal commission, HMRC, HMT, Office for Budget Responsibility, Greater London Authority, DoF, Scot Gov, Welsh Gov
Sector Accounts Local Government Working Group	ONS, HMT, OBR, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Scot Gov
ONS Research & Development Survey working group	ONS

Trade / EU Exit Groups	
Group	Membership
ONS Global Trade and Investment Working Group	ONS, Scottish Gov, Welsh Gov
ONS Sub-National Trade in Services Working Group	ONS
ONS Sub-National Trade working group	ONS, HMRC, DFT, Scot Gov, Welsh Gov

NI Specific Groups	
Group	Membership
Programme for Government Working Group	The Executive Office, out-posted statisticians across a range of NI Departments
Statistics Advisory Committee	Independent committee members from the public and private sectors.

Previous groups that are no longer operational	
Economic and Trade Data through EU Exit	ONS, DExEU, HMT, HMRC, DfT, BEIS, Cabinet Office, DIT, Scot Govt, Welsh Govt
Regional Short Term Indicators Working Group	ONS, Scot Govt, Welsh Govt
ESCOE Interregional Trade Working Group	ESCOE, ONS, Scottish Gov, Welsh Gov
Trade Data Through EU Exit Working Group	UKSA, ONS, DIT, HMRC, Scot Gov, Welsh Gov
UK Trade Analytical group	ONS, HMT, BEIS, HMRC, DIT, DfE, DEFRA, DfT, DCMS
NI Analysis Working Group	ONS, HMT, BEIS, HMRC, DIT, DfT, Cabinet Office, DfE, NI Office, TEO,
Data capture Cross Departmental Network	Food Standards Agency, DEFRA, DAERA, NI Councils
Trade Bill Workshop	ONS, HMRC, Scottish Gov, Welsh Gov
EU Exit Workshop	UKSA, DIT, ONS, HMRC, Scot Gov, Welsh Gov
ONS Business Impact of Coronavirus QA group	ONS, Welsh Government, Scottish Government

Labour Market	
Group	Membership
NI Labour Market User Group	NI councils, DfE, DoF, ECNI, DfC, Higher Education bodies, other users of labour market statistics
GSS Income Analysis Working Group	ONS, Welsh Gov, Scottish Gov, DWP, HMT, BEIS
PAYE RTI Labour Market Statistics Steering Group	ONS, Welsh Gov, Scottish Gov, HMRC, Bank of England, BEIS, DWP, HMT
LFS Steering Group	ONS, NISRA, Welsh Gov, Scottish Gov, English Govt Departments, other public bodies
LFS Quarterly Bilateral	ONS

Annex D: Summary of Data shares established by NISRA Vital Statistics Unit in support of Pandemic monitoring

Data Provided to:	Coverage	Frequency	Date of first provision	Broad Purpose
DoH (IAD)	Aggregate deaths data by Age Group, Sex, Respiratory class	Daily	20/3/20	Onward transmission to PHA for pandemic monitoring (at request of DoH (IAD) – NISRA previously sent this report straight to PHA). Shared under existing DSA adapted for Covid-19
DoH (IAD)	Line data at personal level – Name, Address, Date of Birth, Date of Death, Place of Death, Place of Death Address, Causes of Death	Daily	20/3/20 – 14/7/20	Pandemic monitoring/ surge planning/ exit from lock down planning. Section 51 of the Health and Personal Social Services Act (NI) 2001 (updated by the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (NI) 2009 Act) gives the Registrar General for Northern Ireland the power to disclose death data to the Department of Health (DoH) or the Regional Business Services Organisation (BSO) to allow them to fulfil their functions. Shared under an existing DSA adapted for Covid-19
ONS (for SPI-M-O) – ONS coordinating devolved input (Ben Humberstone)	Numbers of deaths by Date of Death categorised into 5yr Age groups, Local Authority & NHS Region August 2020: NUTS3 added	Weekly	Initial: 4/5/20 Update: 1/8/20	SPI-M-O were producing 3 forecasts per week for COVID-19 deaths for the UK. Ian Diamond convened a meeting with the SPI-M-O lead (Prof Graham Medley) to discuss what data could be provided to help the forecasting effort. This download was the out-workings of this meeting. Request expanded in August 2020 to include NUTS3. This request was backdated to 2015. This was to satisfy the Eurostat request for each nation's excess deaths Shared under DSA.
Public Health England (PHE)	Date of Death, Age, Sex, Postcode	weekly	Ongoing	Monitoring excess deaths on a European basis – published at country level via euromomo.eu. Shared under existing DSA. <i>Note: This was an already established download with PHE that was used for Covid monitoring.</i>
ONS	Registration date and Occurrence date data	Weekly	4/5/20	To create UK level data beyond what is already published – occurrence and location in particular. <i>Note: This was incorporated into ONS (for SPI-M-O) data provision above as one download</i>

Business Services Organisation (BSO)	Line data at personal level – Name, Address, Date of Birth, Gender, Date of Death, Date Registered, Place of Death(including address and postcode), Causes of Death, Place of death	Weekly	1/12/20	<p>Pandemic monitoring/ surge planning/ exit from lock down planning. Developing a unified approach to measuring deaths that could provide meaningful comparisons across the UK.</p> <p>Section 51 of the Health and Personal Social Services Act (NI) 2001 (updated by the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (NI) 2009 Act) gives the Registrar General for Northern Ireland the power to disclose death data to the Department of Health (DoH) or the Regional Business Services Organisation (BSO) to allow them to fulfil their functions.</p> <p>Other Relevant Legislation: Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 (section 43) Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 – Section 15 Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 – Section 13 Shared under DSA.</p>
--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------	---------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Annex E: Summary of Covid-19 related deaths FOI requests received by NISRA

FoI Title	Detail	Variables in analysis	Date of provision	Additional Information
FOI DoF 2020-0160 - The post codes of the Covid-19 related deaths in Northern Ireland in alphanumerical order	Number of covid-related deaths by 4-digit postcode area.	4-digit postcodes	June 2020	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF 2020-0180 - Request for the algorithm used to generate the effective r number for Covid- 19, which determines public policy in Northern Ireland	Details of the calculation used to derive the 'R' factor for covid infections.	N/A	June 2020	N/A - No exemptions applied. The requester was advised to submit their request to DoH as the data controller for this information, for response.
FOI DoF 2020-0159 - Recorded deaths at the Cottage Care Home, Coleraine, which involved Covid-19		N/A	July 2020	FoI Exemption Section 38(1)(a) & (1)(b), Health and Safety.
FOI DoF 2020-0178 - Outbreaks/Deaths/Tests of Covid-19 in Northern Ireland	Covid outbreaks and deaths in care homes by LGD; Names of care homes with outbreaks and/or deaths, city/town and date of death; list of people who died known to have covid and a list who were suspected of having covid.	N/A	July 2020	FoI Exemption Section 21, Information accessible by other means for weekly deaths by place of death and LGD. FoI Exemption Section 38 (1)(a), endanger the physical or mental health of any individual and (1)(b), endanger the safety of any individual. Data not available in death registrations on whether cases were

				suspected or confirmed.
FOI DoF 2020-0201 - Average number of deaths in NI in last 5 years / Covid-19 Statistics	Deaths from covid alone. Number of covid-19 related deaths; Nursing home deaths with covid listed in cause where they hadn't seen a doctor; Number of deaths by Liverpool care pathway; Average number of deaths in NI in last 5 and current number of deaths.	N/A	July 2020	FOI Exemption Section 21, Information accessible by other means for average deaths in last 5 years compared with current weeks. Other information requested is not held within the General Register Office NIROS system used to collate information on death registrations.
FOI DoF 2020-0232 - Deaths that are Covid-19 related per Nursing or Care Home in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	A breakdown of the number of deaths that are Covid-19 related per Nursing or Care Home in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area to date.	LGD2014	August 2020	FOI Exemption Section 38 (1)(a) & (1)(b) [Health & Safety} applies in relation to the information requested, however a de-identified list of counts of Covid-19 related deaths in the care homes in the LGD was provided.
FOI DoF 2020-0252 - Bus worker deaths attributed to Covid-19 during current Pandemic	The number of Coronavirus deaths recorded during the pandemic in Northern Ireland, by job sector – and specifically: how many bus workers and/or drivers had contracted and died from the virus.	Word search for bus and coach in occupation. Causes of death	August 2020	N/A - No exemptions applied. Explanation provided regarding methodology and definitions used in calculations.
FOI DoF 2020-0299 – Source locations of Covid-19 clusters since 3 July 2020	The number of Covid-19 clusters identified within workplaces in NI since 3 July 2020 to present. The percentage of	N/A	October 2020	N/A as DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested.

	<p>Covid-19 clusters identified within workplaces in NI since 3 July 2020 to present 3.</p> <p>The number of Covid-19 clusters identified within domestic settings in NI since 3 July 2020 to present.</p> <p>The percentage of Covid-19 clusters identified within domestic settings in NI since 3 July 2020 to present.</p>			
FOI DoF 2020-0305 – A postcode breakdown of Covid-19 cases	The postcode breakdown of covid cases, as the requester stated that NISRA had previously provided such a breakdown for deaths.	N/A	October 2020	N/A as DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested.
FOI DoF 2020-0309 – 5-year average death stats - Part Covid-19	<p>The previous 5-year average death toll in NI (and monthly average, if possible). Number of NI deaths for 2020. (Monthly, if possible).</p> <p>Number of deaths attributed to Covid-19?</p> <p>The total number of deaths for 2020 that is over the 5-year average but not attributed to Covid-19?</p>	N/A	October 2020	FOI Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means) applies to all 4 questions in this request, as it is reasonably accessible by other means.
FOI DoF 2020-0333 – Covid-19 patients who had the Flu vaccine	Number of covid-19 patients had the Flu vaccine.	N/A	November 2020	N/A as DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested.
FOI DoF 2020-0330 – Deaths in hospitals, care homes, or at home, where Covid-19 is a factor. Cancer / Suicide Stats	<p>1. The total number of deaths in (a) hospitals (b) care homes or (c) at home where Covid-19 is a factor?</p> <p>2. Of the above deaths, how many death certificates list Covid-19 as the primary cause of death, how many list Covid-19 as the secondary cause, and how many list Covid-19 as present but coincidental?</p> <p>3. Number who tested positive within the last 28 days but had tested negative before death?</p>	Causes of Death. Place of Death.	November 2020	Section 22 Exemption of the FOI Act (Intended for future publication) was applied with regards to the data for July 2020 onwards, as this was scheduled for release in December 2020. FOI Exemption Section 21 (Information is

	<p>4. Number Covid19 deaths who were admitted to hospital as a result of a crime or accident</p> <p>5. How many of them contracted Covid-19 whilst in hospital?</p> <p>6. Number of deaths from cancer in 2020.</p> <p>7. Number of suicides in 2020.</p>			<p>accessible by other means) was applied for Parts 1, 6 and 7 as this information was available from the weekly statistical bulletin and associated tables and table 4a of the Registrar General Quarterly Tables 2020 for Quarter 1 and 2. For Parts 3 to 5, this information is not collected as part of the death registration process.</p>
FOI DoF 2020-0360 – Breakdown of deaths linked to Covid-19 by community background	Breakdown of deaths linked to Covid-19 by community background	N/A	November 2020	N/A. DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested as Community background (Religion and Ethnicity) information is not collected as part of the death registration process.
FOI DoF/2020-0377 – Deaths where Covid-19 was the only cause of death mentioned on the death certificate	Number of deaths recorded where Covid-19 was the only cause of death mentioned on the death certificate, for the period March 1 st , 2020, to November 20 th , 2020.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	January 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2020-0383 – Covid-19 death stats for Civilians / Military Personnel	Of the 1301 COVID-19 deaths registered up to 20-Nov, how many deaths were civilians and how many were military personnel?	Totals only	January 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.

FOI DoF/2020-0411 – COVID-19 and/or SARS-CoV-2 pandemic stats published in the media	Information on definitions/methodology used, dates published, additional information on ethnic origin and social-economic circumstances; availability of data broken down by place of death	Signposting and text response only.	January 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2020-0417 – COVID-19 deaths in NI since March 2020 with/without any underlying health conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of COVID-19 deaths in NI since March 2020 without any underlying health conditions. 2. Number of deaths where a person had a positive COVID-19 test, where death occurred due to an underlying health problem. 3. Number of deaths recorded as COVID19 just because the death occurred within 28 days of a positive COVID-19 test. 4. Number of hospital beds occupied during September-December 2019 in NI. 5. Number of hospital beds occupied during September-December 2020 in NI. 	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	January 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied. Part 1 answered. For Parts 2 to 5: this information is not collected as part of the death registration process.
FOI DoF/2020-0420 – Deaths in NI for the period of February 2020 to November 2020, due to Covid-19 and 10 year deaths from Flu/Cancer/Heart/Suicides	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NI Deaths due to Covid-19 for the period of Feb 2020 to Nov 2020. 2. Flu deaths for this year and last ten years 3. Cancer deaths for this year and last ten years 4. Heart deaths for this year and last ten years 5. Suicides for this year and last ten years. 	Total deaths (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	January 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to Part 1, and Exemption 22 (Intended for future publication) was applied to ALL Parts (including for 2020 figures for Part 2).
FOI DoF/2020-0432 – What percentage of the 1,305 Covid-19 related deaths in NI were from Covid-19 alone	What percentage of the 1,305 NI Covid-19 related deaths were from Covid-19 alone (i.e. without any pre-existing comorbidities present at the time of death)?	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	January 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.

<p>FOI DoF/2020-0433 – Excess deaths in 2020 from covid-19 only with no major underlying health conditions and total overall deaths this year compared to the highest amount of recorded deaths in the previous 10 years</p>	<p>1. The number of excess deaths in 2020 from covid-19 only (with no major underlying health conditions). 2. Total number of deaths in 2020, compared to the largest annual total of deaths in the previous 10 years.</p>	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).</p>	<p>January 2021</p>	<p>N/A for Part 1. Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to Part 2. The requester was directed to the relevant NISRA publications and tables.</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2020-0435 – Death statistics for Suicides, Flu and Covid-19</p>	<p>1. Number of deaths in 2020 where Covid was the only cause of death i.e. with no other underlying co-morbidities present. 2. Number of flu deaths only for 2020 and 2019. 3. Number of people hospitalized in 2020 vs the number of people in hospitalized in 2019 4. Number of people in hospital during 2020 for reasons other than Covid but were said individuals tested positive for Covid 5. Number of people who have tested positive for Covid more than once 6. Number of suicides recorded in 2020 vs the number of suicides recorded in 2019.</p>	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).</p>	<p>January 2021</p>	<p>N/A for Part 1. Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to Parts 2 and 6. The requester was directed to the relevant NISRA publications and tables. For Parts 3, 4 and 5: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested.</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2021-0006 – Post-codes of the Covid-19 related deaths in NI by alpha / numerical order</p>	<p>The post-codes of the Covid-19 related deaths in Northern Ireland by alpha/numerical order.</p>	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). 4-digit postcodes</p>	<p>January 2021</p>	<p>N/A - No exemptions applied.</p>

FOI DoF/2021-0022 – Number of people who have died FROM / WITH Covid-19 in NI from 27th February 2019 - 10 January 2020	Number of people who have died FROM / WITH Covid-19 in NI from 27th February 2019 - 10 January 2020	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	January 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0031 – Weekly death totals where Covid 19 is the sole and exclusive reason for death	Weekly death totals where Covid-19 is the sole and exclusive reason for death listed on the death certificate for 2020, in excel format.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	February 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0040 – Deaths from/with Covid-19 from 27th February 2020 - 10 January 2021	The number of people who have died 'from' Covid-19 and the number of people who died 'with' Covid-19 from the 27th February 2020 to 10 January 2021 in NI.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	February 2021	N/A for Part 1. Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) and Exemption 22 (Intended for future publication) was applied to for deaths from October 2020. The requester was directed to the relevant NISRA publications and tables.
FOI DoF/2021-0048 – Death stats by age in NI since the uptake of the covid vaccine	1. Number on NI Deaths since the uptake of the covid-19 vaccine, including by age. 2. Details of recorded adverse reactions linked to any of the vaccines that have been administered.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	February 2021	Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means) applied to Part 1 as it is reasonably accessible by other means (in weekly deaths tables) . Part 2: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested.

FOI DoF/2021-0061 – Death stats in NI from January 2020 to end January 2021, where only Covid-19 is specified on the death certificate	Number of deaths in NI from January 2020 to and including January 2021 due to Covid-19 only – i.e. the number of deaths solely of Covid-19.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	February 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0091 – Weekly death totals of Covid-19 only, as listed on the death certificate for 2020 and 2021, in excel format	Breakdown of weekly death totals where Covid-19 is the sole and exclusive reason for death listed on the death certificate for 2020 and 2021, in excel format.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	March 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0093 – Deaths recorded between 1 March 2020 and 31 Jan 2021 in NI and Ulster Hospital (under 40 years of age), where Covid was the sole cause of death	1. Number of deaths recorded between 1 March 2020 and 31 Jan 2021 in NI where Covid was the sole cause of death and those who passed away were aged under 40. 2. Number of deaths recorded at the Ulster Hospital, in Dundonald where Covid was the sole cause within the same time period.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). Age. Place of Death.	March 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0115 – Death stats of only Covid-19 in NI, for 2020-2021	The number of people that have died in NI in 2020 and 2021 from Covid-19 alone i.e. with Covid-19 as the sole cause broken down into Local Government Districts.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). LGD2014.	March 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0131 – Deaths in 2020 were recorded with Covid-19 (only), by age bracket	Number of deaths in 2020 recorded with Covid-19 / sars-cov-2 as the ONLY cause of death by age bands	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). Age bands.	April 2021	Part 1: Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means) applied to part of this question, as it is accessible by other means. The requester was directed to the NISRA publications and tables. Part 2: N/A.

FOI DoF/2021-0148 – Covid -19 death stats within Northern Ireland Health Trusts	Number of Covid ONLY deaths i.e. with those who died with no other underlying conditions within each NI Health Trust, for each hospital within the trusts.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). Hospital name.	April 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0173 – Death registration criteria / Deaths from covid19 in NI with no pre-existing health conditions / obesity as the single pre-existing condition	38 questions relating to Covid including vaccines, risks, side effects, ingredients, autopsies, medical training, informed consent, ICU facilities, social distancing, virus transmission, strains, incubation, mutations, visors, symptoms, genetic material, vaccine trials and use, cost of vaccines, and the definition of vaccine-related death. Q5: definition of vaccine-related death. Q37: number of NI Covid deaths without any pre-existing conditions. Q38: number of NI Covid deaths with obesity as the only other pre-existing condition.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	May 2021	DoF NISRA only holds information in relation to 3 of the 38 questions - Q5, 37 and 38 - and therefore could only respond to these. Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to Q37, as it is reasonably accessible by other means. The requester was directed to the relevant NISRA publications and tables.
FOI DoF/2021-0163 – Covid-19 deaths in NI hospitals with / without underlying conditions	1. Number of NI hospital deaths from Covid-19 alone (i.e. with no pre-existing conditions), from 1st January 2020 to the 31st of March 2021. 2. The number and percentage of people with 'underlying health conditions' in the overall (Covid-19) total 3. The number and percentage of people with no 'underlying health conditions' in the overall total 4. the total number of deaths for any reason within 28 days of having a Covid	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	May 2021	N/A for Part 1. Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) and Exemption 22 (Intended for future publication) was applied to for deaths from October 2020, for Parts 2 and 3. The requester was directed to the relevant NISRA

	vaccine, from the start of the vaccination role out to date.			publications and tables. Part 4: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested (on vaccinations).
FOI DoF/2021-0240 – Deaths involving an adverse reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine	Adverse reactions and/or deaths related to all ongoing Covid vaccines being used in NI.	N/A	June 2021	N/A – DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested (on vaccinations).
FOI DoF/2021-0269 – Total number of deaths in NI where Covid-19 was the sole cause of death listed on the deceased's death certificate	Total number of NI deaths where Covid-19 was the sole cause of death listed on the death certificate, with an additional breakdown by: a) Date (including total for 2020 and 2021 from February 2020 to today's date (9th June 2021)and b) by 5 year age bands.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). Regdate. Age bands.	July 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0274 – Total amount of deaths recorded as the cause of death for Covid-pneumonia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirmation required of existence of a new classification of Covid called Covid-pneumonia 2. The total amount of deaths recorded in NI with Covid-pneumonia as the cause of death from March 2020 3. Number of pneumonia deaths in NI in each of the last 5 years. 4. Number of flu deaths in NI in each of the last 5 years. 5. Reason for using ventilators to treat patients and secondly what are you doing to differentiate between covid-pneumonia and other types of pneumonia like VAP? 	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	July 2021	Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means) applies to the years up to 2019, as this information is reasonably accessible by other means for Parts 3 and 4. The requester was directed to the relevant NISRA publications and tables. Part 5: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested.

FOI DoF/2021-0275 – Deaths in NI which covid-19 is the only cause and no other co-morbidities stated	1. Number of 'Covid only' deaths (i.e. with no other co-morbidities stated) in NI, from 1st March 2020 to 31st March 2021 2. Number of 'Covid only' deaths through the whole of the UK including Northern Ireland for the same dates.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	July 2021	N/A however the requester was directed to ONS and NRS instead in relation to non-NI deaths in the UK for Part 2.
FOI DoF/2021-0287 - Deaths in NI directly as a result of the Covid-19 virus	1. The number of deaths FROM (and not WITH) Covid from 1st February 2020 to 3rd April 2021. 2. Please confirm which diagnostic tests are considered reliable enough by NISRA to be evidence of a deceased party's having had COVID-19 e.g. is a PCR test considered 100% reliable etc.?	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	July 2021	N/A however DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested for Part 2 (on diagnostic tests).
FOI DoF/2021-0313 – Deaths from Covid in NI from March 2020 to July 2021 that have only Covid on their death certificate	1. How many people from March 2020 to July 2021 have died directly from Covid and have only Covid on their death certificate 2. Where are all these new case numbers coming from, and what are the NI figures for “double jab people in hospital”?	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	July 2021	N/A however DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested for Part 2 (re: vaccinations).
FOI DoF/2021-0312 – Deaths in NI from Covid only with no underlying health conditions	1. Number of the current covid NI hospital admissions who have had both vaccinations 2. Number of deaths since the start of the pandemic from Covid only, with no underlying health conditions. 3. At this point of time last year July 2020 how many Covid cases and hospital admissions there were in comparison to July 2021.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	July 2021	N/A however DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested for Parts 1 and 3 (on hospital admissions and/or vaccinations).

<p>FOI DoF/2021-0310 – Covid-19 deaths in NI with/without underlying health issues</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total number of individuals in NI who have died since the start of the pandemic to the present day with Covid 19. 2. Of the above deaths, number of individuals who died with Covid 19 with underlying health issues. 3. Number of individuals in NI who died from Covid 19 alone with no underlying health issues. 	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).</p>	<p>July 2021</p>	<p>Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means) applied to Part 1 and requester was referred to relevant tables. Parts 2 and 3: N/A – answered.</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2021-0327 - Deaths in NI for 2018, 2019 and 2020, including Covid stats</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total number of all deaths for 2018, 2019 and 2020. 2. Total number of Covid deaths for 2019 and 2020 and the actual number of deaths where Covid is the actual cause of death and there are no other underlying health conditions. 3. Death figures for 2019 and 2020 where Covid 19 is the only cause of death. 	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).</p>	<p>July 2021</p>	<p>Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to all 3 parts. The requester was directed to the relevant tables and publications, including a previous FOI response (for Part 3).</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2021-0349 – ‘Recorded Covid deaths between Saturday 31/7/21 and Sunday 1/8/21’</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of the 13 Covid-19 deaths between 31 July 2021 and 1 August 2021, who died from other illnesses or accidents but had Covid-19 within the last 28 days, including details. 2. Number of these 13 deceased who died within a hospital or care home setting, including details. 3. Number of these 13 deceased who had at least one other underlying condition, including details. 4. Number of these 13 deceased who had 1 or both vaccine jabs, including details. 	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).</p>	<p>August 2021</p>	<p>NISRA did not hold data on Covid-19 tests and therefore could not provide data for Covid-19 related deaths where the death occurred within 28 days of a positive test (Part 1). Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to Part 2. The requester was directed to the most relevant tables</p>

				available in response to Parts 1 and 2. Part 3: N/A (answered). Part 4: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested for Part 4 (vaccination status).
FOI DoF/2021-0363 – 'Total deaths from all causes in NI for 2010 - 2021 inclusive'	1. Total NI deaths from all causes in for the years 2010 - 2021 inclusive. 2. Deaths from influenza 2010 - 2021 inclusive. 3. Deaths with Covid-19 recorded on their death certificate 2019, 2020, 2021. 4. Deaths with Covid-19 and no co-morbidity, recorded on their death certificate 2019, 2020, 2021. 5. Deaths within 28 days of vaccination against covid-19.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	August 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied for data up to March 2021, for Parts 1,2 and 3. The requester was directed to the relevant tables and publications. Exemption 22 (Intended for future publication) was also applied for deaths from April 2021, for Parts 1 and 2. Part 4: answered. Part 5: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested for Part 4 (vaccination status).
FOI DoF/2021-0316 – 'Covid-19 Deaths With/Without Underlying Conditions / Flu and Pneumonia Death Stats 2020/21'	1. Number of deaths 'With Covid-19' and the number of deaths 'From Covid-19'. 2. Number of deaths recorded as Covid-19 deaths which had underlying health conditions already, and the number of those deaths which had no underlying health conditions.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	September 2021	Part 1: Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) applied for deaths up to and including July 2021. Links provided to

	3. Number of cases and deaths due to the general winter seasonal conditions such as flu and pneumonia recorded for the year 2020 until as most recent as possible in the year 2021.			relevant tables. Parts 2 and 3: N/A (answered).
FOI DoF/2021-0373 – 'Covid-19 deaths in NI from 01/01/2020 to 31/07/2021, where Covid-19 was the sole or primary cause of death'	Number of NI deaths from 01/01/2020 to 31/07/2021, where Covid-19 was the sole or primary cause of death.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	September 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied for data up to June 2021. Exemption 22 (Intended for future publication) was also applied for deaths from July 2021. The requester was directed to the relevant tables.
FOI DoF/2021-0400 – 'The number of people whose cause of death can be directly attributed to the Covid-19 vaccine in NI'	Number of people who have died because of the vaccine - i.e. the number of people whose cause of death can be directly attributed to the vaccine in NI.	Causes of Death	September 2021	Exemption 22 (information intended for future publication) applies to the number of NI deaths registered since the end of June 2021 as this was due for release later in autumn 2021. The requester was directed to the relevant tables.
FOI DoF/2021-0397 – 'Deaths in NI for the period 2019 -2021 / Covid-19 deaths in NI'	1. Number of people in NI who have received the first vaccination, and the number of those who died within 28 days of receiving this (regardless of morbidity). 2. The number of people in NI who have received both vaccinations, and the number of those who died within 28	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	October 2021	N/A. Parts 1 and 2: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested (vaccination status). Parts 3, 4 and 5: answered.

	<p>days of receiving the second vaccination (regardless of morbidity).</p> <p>3. The number of Covid-19 deaths reported in NI for the period 01/09/2020-13/07/2021 (by 10 year age groups), where there was no other cause of death or existing morbidity.</p> <p>4. The total number of deaths in NI for the period 01/09/2020-13/07/2021.</p> <p>5. The total number of deaths in NI for the period 01/09/2019-13/07/2020.</p> <p>6. The total number of deaths in NI for the period 01/09/2018-13/07/2019.</p>			
FOI DoF/2021-0405– 'Deaths in NI from Covid-19 from 1st February 2020 to 17th September 2021'	<p>1. Number of people in NI who died after getting vaccinated from 1st January 2021 to 17th September 2021.</p> <p>2. From 1st February 2020 to 17th September 2021 , number of people have died in NI only of Covid.</p> <p>3. On 17th September 2021, number of people in NI hospitals who had Covid that are a) Vaccinated b) Unvaccinated.</p>	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	October 2021	N/A. Parts 1 and 3: DoF NISRA does not hold the information requested (vaccination status and hospital admissions). Part 2: answered. Requester was directed to DoH, and also to a previous FOI answer.
FOI DoF/2021-0440 'Deaths in NI where COVID is the only cause of death recorded on the death certificate, from January 2020 to date'	<p>1. The number of deaths where COVID is the only cause of death recorded on the death certificate from January 2020 to date.</p> <p>2. The number of deaths recorded each month from January 2020 to date, where COVID was the only cause of death recorded on the death certificate.</p> <p>3. All-cause mortality numbers for each month from January 2020 to date.</p>	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	October 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied, and requester was directed to relevant table (monthly deaths). Parts 1 and 2: answered.

FOI DoF/2021-0428 'Deaths in NI, where Covid-19 was listed, as the sole cause of death'	1. Total number of NI deaths, where Covid-19 was the sole cause of death on the death certificate. 2.Data (above) by month for 2020, and 2021 to date, and by 5 year age group band.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	October 2021	Exemption 22 (Intended for future publication) was applied for deaths from July 2021 as this was due for release later in autumn 2021. Remainder was answered.
FOI DoF/2021-0460 - 'Deaths only from covid-19 in NI across all health trusts from 01/02/2021 to 25/10/2021'	Number of people who have died directly from Covid-19 only (i.e. with Covid-19 being the only cause listed on the Death Certificate), across all NI health trusts.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). HSCT.	November 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0482 'Covid 19 deaths in NI with/without underlying health issues'	Of the 3666 deaths mentioning Covid-19 on the death certificate, registered between 18 March 2020 and 29 October 2021: how many had underlying health conditions, and how many did not?	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	November 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2021-0497 'Covid 19 deaths in NI with no underlying conditions up to November 2021'	Total number of Covid deaths with no underlying health conditions, from the start of the pandemic to current day.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	December 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to part of the question, for data up to February 2021. The requester was directed to the relevant tables for the data that was already available. Exemption 22 (Intended for future publication) was also applied for deaths from March 2021.
FOI DoF/2021-0500 'Stats where someone has solely died from	Data regarding statistics where someone has solely died from COVID-	Causes of Death (Covid	December 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is

COVID-19, compared to someone who has died within 28 days of testing positive for COVID-19'	19, compared to someone who has died within 28 days of testing positive for COVID-19.	and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).		accessible by other means) was applied to part of the question, for data up to September 2020. The requester was directed to the relevant report containing this data. DoF NISRA does not hold information relating to Covid-19 testing.
FOI DoF/2021-0525 'data on covid only deaths from March to December 21, where no other conditions were a factor'	Data on covid only deaths from March 21 to date in UK, where no other conditions were a factor.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	December 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to part of the question. The requester was directed to the relevant report containing this data. Requester was directed to ONS and NRS for other (Non-NI) UK data.
FOI DoF/2021-0537 'Deaths per year in NI from 2000, Covid-19 / Suicide Stats'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total NI deaths per year from 2000 until the present day, for all causes. 2. Total deaths from Covid-19 with 1 or more comorbidity on the death certificate. 3. Total deaths from Covid 19 with no comorbidities 4. Why was the recording method for suicides changed (in 2020) during a period of time when people would especially want to know these figures. 	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). ICD10 codes for self-harm.	December 2021	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to part of the question (Parts 1,2 and 3). The requester was directed to the relevant tables. Parts 4 and 5: N/A – answered.

	5. How are the total suicide figures calculated to come up with a single figure.			
FOI DoF/2021-0541 - 'Covid-19 death stats recorded as being the cause of death at Part 1 (a) of the Death Certificate and Part 1 (b) of the Death Certificate'	<p>1. The number of instances in NI since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to date where Covid-19 is recorded as the cause of death at Part 1(a) of the Death Certificate.</p> <p>2. The number of instances in NI since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to date where Covid-19 is recorded as the cause of death at Part 1(b) of the Death Certificate.</p> <p>3. In respect of EACH of requests 1. and 2. Above, please confirm:</p> <p>(i) The age of the deceased;</p> <p>(ii) Whether the death certificate records any co-morbidity or underlying condition; and (iii) the number of cases where obesity is recorded on the death certificate.</p>	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). Age bands.	December 2021	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2022-0008 'Deaths in NI from 18/03/20 to 10/12/21 with Covid-19 stated on the death certificate, with / without conditions'	<p>Of the 3,950 deaths mentioning Covid-19 on the death certificate having occurred from 18 March 2020 to 10 December 2021:</p> <p>1. How many had at least one other health condition listed on the death certificate?</p> <p>and 2. How many had only Covid-19 listed as the sole cause of death on the death certificate?</p>	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).	January 2022	N/A - No exemptions applied.
FOI DoF/2022-0011 - 'Deaths in NI with Covid-19 recorded solely as the cause of death on their death certificate from the 1st March 2020 to January 2022 and the number of people who died with / of covid-19'	1. Number of NI deaths with covid 19 recorded as the only cause of death on their death certificate (i.e. with no co-morbidities recorded) from the 1st March 2020 to present.	Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). Age.	January 2022	Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to Part 6 of the question. The requester was

	<p>2. Number of NI deaths within 28 days of a covid 19 vaccine.</p> <p>3. Number of NI deaths after 28 days of a covid 19 vaccine.</p> <p>4. Of those who died within 28 days of a covid 19 vaccine, the number who died at (A) a residential property (B) a NI hospital trust (C) a hospice, and the same for people who died after 28 days of vaccine.</p> <p>5. Number of NI vaccine deaths in Northern Ireland by each manufacturer from March 2020 to present.</p> <p>6. Number of people who died with covid 19 and the number of deaths of people who died of covid 19.</p> <p>7. Numbers of people in NI who suffered any of the following after receiving a covid 19 vaccine: heart attack, stroke, myocardis, pericardis, aneurysm, cardio arrhythmias, blindness, micro clotting or clotting or any form of thrombosis including deep vein thrombosis or multiple system inflammatory organ failure, from March 2020 to present.</p> <p>8. The average age of people who died in NI with only covid 19 recorded as sole cause of death and no other co morbidities.</p> <p>9. On 7th of Jan 2022 Downtown radio news released the NISRA Covid-19 deaths as 4,024. Can you confirm this figure is correct and provide a full breakdown?</p>			<p>directed to the quarterly tables containing this data. Parts 1,8 and 9: N/A – answered. Parts 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7: DoF NISRA does not hold this information (vaccinations).</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2022-0015 - 'Deaths in nursing homes / care facilities of Covid-19 with no other co morbidities</p>	<p>1. Number of people who died in a nursing home or a care facility setting with only covid 19 listed as cause of</p>	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia,</p>	<p>January 2022</p>	<p>N/A – no exemptions applied. Part 1: answered.</p>

<p>from 1st march 2020 to January 2022'</p>	<p>death on the death certificate, with no other co morbidities, from 1st march 2020 to present. 2. Number of people within a nursing home or care facility setting who died with 28 days of receiving a covid 19 vaccine from 1st March 2020 to present. 3. Number of people within a nursing home or care facility settings who were put on end-of-life pathway from 1st March 2020 to present. 4. Number of people within a nursing home or care facility settings who were put on end-of-life pathway who had received either of the following covid 19 vaccine or vaccines, or boosters or a influenza vaccine from March 2020 to present. 5. Number of people on end-of-life pathway within a nursing home or care facility settings received midazolam prior to their death.</p>	<p>per DoH advice).</p>		<p>Parts 2, 3, 4, and 5: DoF NISRA does not hold this information (vaccinations/end-of-life pathway/medication).</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2022-0037 - 'Deaths in NI, from the start of the Pandemic to date, where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, with/without co-morbidities</p>	<p>1. The total number of deaths in NI, from the start of the Pandemic to date, where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. 2. Of the total in 1. above, how many had no co-morbidities, including obesity and had Covid-19 listed as the sole cause of death? 3. Of the total in 1. above, how many had two, three, or more co-morbidities, including obesity? 4. Of the total in 1. above, what was the average age? 5. All-cause mortality statistics for NI for each year since 2014.</p>	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice). Age.</p>	<p>January 2022</p>	<p>Exemption 21 (Information is accessible by other means) was applied to Parts 1,2,3, and 5 of the question. The requester was directed to the relevant tables and reports. Exemption 22(1) (information intended for future publication) also applied to Parts 1,2, and 3 for the number of deaths due</p>

	<p>6. The total number of patients currently in NI hospitals with Covid-19.</p> <p>7. Of the total in 6. above, how many have had at least 2 doses of the vaccination?</p> <p>8 Of the total in 6. above, how many were admitted for a cause other than Covid-19?</p> <p>9. How many patients in ICU and being treated for Covid-19 have had at least 2 doses of the vaccination?</p>			<p>to Covid-19 by the number of pre-existing conditions registered since September 2021 as this was due to be released in a later report.</p> <p>Part 4: n/a – answered.</p> <p>Parts 6, 7, 8, and 9: DoF NISRA does not hold this information (vaccinations and hospital admission/status).</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2022-0083 - ' Covid-19 Deaths when it is only mentioned on section 1 (a) of death certificate, with no other conditions mentioned, for the period 01/03/2020-31/01/2022'</p>	<p>Number of people who died of Covid-19 i.e. where this is only mentioned on section 1(a) of the death certificate, with no other conditions mentioned, from the 1st of March 2020 to 31st January 2022.</p>	<p>Causes of Death (Covid and Pneumonia, per DoH advice).</p>	<p>February 2022</p>	<p>FOI Exemption Section 21 (Information is accessible by other means) applies to this question up to 14 January, as NISRA had published relevant data as part of a response to another FOI request. Requester was directed to that FOI response.</p>
<p>FOI DoF/2022-0075 - 'Death stats in NI for people died from covid by age group – Covid only and with at least 1-2 other underlying health conditions'</p>	<p>Provide an update to my previous FOI request (DOF/2021-0482): Of the 3666 deaths mentioning Covid-19 on the death certificate, registered between 18 March 2020 and 29 October 2021: how many had underlying health conditions, and how many did not?</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>February 2022</p>	<p>The Department is unable to provide the information you requested as it considers this to exceed the fees threshold. Under Section 12 of the</p>

	<p>Provide the answer in age groups as follows: 0-4 years, 5-11, 12-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80-89, 90 plus years, for the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number who died from Covid-19 (with no underlying health conditions). 2. Number who died from Covid-19 with at least one other underlying health condition. 3. Number who died from Covid-19 with at least two other underlying health conditions. 		<p>Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Department has estimated that the cost of complying with this request is £6,925, in order to manually identify how many causes of death are recorded for each of the 4,154 death certificates which include Covid-19 as a cause. This exceeds the appropriate limit of £600 as set out in the Fees Regulations.</p>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Annex F: Assembly Question relating to Covid-19 responded to by NISRA

Request/Question	Type of request	Asked by	Date Answered
AQW 3941/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many deaths have been certified as COVID-19 deaths without positive tests for the disease.	AQW [Priority Written]	Mr Jim Allister KC (TUV - North Antrim)	01/05/2020
AQW 3938/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance, since the COVID-19 lockdown, how does the number of deaths, excluding those related to COVID-19, compare with this period in a normal year; and whether the non-deployment of regular hospital care is considered to be a factor.	AQW	Mr Jim Allister KC (TUV - North Antrim)	13/05/2020
AQW 4252/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance when the Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency will release a breakdown of the age profile of total deaths during the period from the week ending 30 March to the week ending 1 May.	AQW	Ms Paula Bradshaw (APNI - South Belfast)	22/05/2020
AQW 4144/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance for an update on the information provided pursuant to AQW 3941/17-22.	AQW	Mr Jim Allister KC (TUV - North Antrim)	26/05/2020
AQW 4155/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the number of deaths in March and April 2019 compared with March and April 2020.	AQW	Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)	29/05/2020
AQW 4601/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the number of COVID-19 related deaths in (i) private; and (ii) public nursing and care homes.	AQW	Miss Jemma Dolan (SF - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)	12/06/2020
AQW 4717/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people, who were detained under (i) the Mental Capacity Act 2016; and (ii) the Mental Health Order 1986, have died, or are suspected to have died, from COVID-19.	AQW [Priority Written]	Miss Órlaithí Flynn (SF - West Belfast)	19/06/2020
AQW 6851/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people have died since 1 June 2020 of (i) cancer; (ii) heart disease; (iii) stroke; (iv) COVID-19; and (v) other causes.	AQW	Mr Jim Allister KC (TUV - North Antrim)	23/09/2020

AQW 8120/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the number of deaths for each week from the 1 March 2020 until 1 September 2020, were COVID-19 was given as the sole cause of death.	AQW	Mr Keith Buchanan (DUP - Mid Ulster)	20/10/2020
AQW 8355/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance what is the death rate as a result of COVID-19.	AQW	Ms Joanne Bunting (DUP - East Belfast)	15/10/2020
AQW 9017/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance what steps his Department has taken to ensure that those registered as having died from COVID-19 have actually died as a result of COVID-19.	AQW	Ms Joanne Bunting (DUP - East Belfast)	02/11/2020
AQW 9016/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance for a breakdown of the age profile of people who have died from COVID-19.	AQW	Ms Joanne Bunting (DUP - East Belfast)	28/10/2020
AQW 8965/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people have died from (i) cancer; (ii) stroke; (iii) heart problems; (iv) dementia; (v) suicide; and (vi) COVID-19, in each of the last 6 months.	AQW	Mr Tom Buchanan (DUP - West Tyrone)	28/10/2020
AQW 10175/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail (i) the number of COVID-19-related deaths that have comorbidities; (ii) the comorbidities by category; and (iii) the categories of comorbidity by number.	AQW	Mr Christopher Stalford (DUP - South Belfast)	20/11/2020
AQW 10150/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many registered COVID-19 deaths there has been amongst staff in Health and Social Care Trusts.	AQW [Priority Written]	Mr Fra McCann (SF - West Belfast)	12/11/2020
AQW 10288/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance, following the Public Health England report that identified the COVID-19 death rate for adults with learning disabilities was 3.1 times the rates for adults without, whether his Department will review and produce the death rate in Northern Ireland for people with learning disabilities compared with adults without; and whether priority access to a future vaccine will be provided to this group.	AQW	Ms Kellie Armstrong (APNI - Strangford)	01/12/2020
AQW 11583/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance what are the five most common pre-existing conditions involved with those dying (i) as a result of COVID-19; and (ii) with COVID-19 as a factor.	AQW	Mr Colin McGrath (SDLP - South Down)	15/12/2020

AQW 12461/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people have died of COVID-19, without any underlying conditions.	AQW	Mr Christopher Stalford (DUP - South Belfast)	26/01/2021
AQW 14017/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the number of people under the age of 60 years who have died of COVID-19.	AQW	Mr Christopher Stalford (DUP - South Belfast)	12/02/2021
AQW 14016/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people who had no previously identified underlying health conditions have died of COVID-19.	AQW	Mr Christopher Stalford (DUP - South Belfast)	12/02/2021
AQW 14009/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance (i) how many deaths by suicide has there been for each week since the start of lockdown in March; and (ii) how this compares with similar periods in each of the previous four years.	AQW	Mr Paul Frew (DUP - North Antrim)	11/02/2021
AQW 14882/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people with (i) learning disabilities; and (ii) dementia have died with COVID-19.	AQW	Mr William Humphrey (DUP - North Belfast)	25/02/2021
AQW 14880/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people in care homes in the North Belfast constituency have died with COVID-19.	AQW	Mr William Humphrey (DUP - North Belfast)	26/02/2021
AQW 21433/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance for a breakdown of the deaths attributed to (i) cancer; (ii) heart disease; (iii) dementia and Alzheimer disease; (iv) suicide; and (v) COVID-19, in each month since January 2020.	AQW	Mr Jim Allister KC (TUV - North Antrim)	14/07/2021
AQW 21699/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the number of deaths in which COVID-19 alone was mentioned on the death certificate in each month since March 2020, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.	AQW	Mr Jim Allister KC (TUV - North Antrim)	22/07/2021
AQW 21698/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance what is the average age of those to die from COVID-19 in each Health and Social Care Trust area.	AQW	Mr Jim Allister KC (TUV - North Antrim)	19/07/2021
AQW 24572/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the number of COVID-19 deaths of people with a learning disability, broken down by setting.	AQW	Mr Colm Gildernew (SF - Fermanagh and South Tyrone)	26/10/2021
AQW 24868/17-22	AQW	Mr Paul Frew (DUP - North Antrim)	27/10/2021

To ask the Minister of Finance (i) how many people died with COVID-19 between 1 September 2021 and 13 October 2021; and (ii) how many of these were (a) vaccinated; and (b) unvaccinated.			
AQW 27439/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the number of (i) d/Deaf; and (ii) disabled people who have died within 28 days of testing positive for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.	AQW	Mr Pádraig Delargy (<i>SF - Foyle</i>)	22/12/2021
AQW 27766/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance, during the course of the pandemic, what action has been taken to (i) discern the distinction between; and (ii) accurately record, those who have died from COVID-19 and those who have died with COVID-19.	AQW	Ms Joanne Bunting (<i>DUP - East Belfast</i>)	25/01/2022
AQW 29210/17-22 To ask the Minister of Finance how many people in Northern Ireland to date have died solely of COVID-19.	AQW	Mr Paul Frew (<i>DUP - North Antrim</i>)	09/02/2022
AQW 3360/22-27 To ask the Minister of Finance to detail the total excess deaths in each of the last five years, compared to (i) the Republic of Ireland; (ii) England; (iii) Scotland; and (iv) Wales.	AQW	Mr Justin McNulty (<i>SDLP - Newry and Armagh</i>)	29/09/2022