

Research Unit, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)

Confidentiality and Access Statement

This Statement is issued in conformance with the requirements set out in Principle 5 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. It sets out the arrangements NIHE Research Unit has put in place to ensure the confidentiality of the data that we hold.

Arrangements for maintaining the confidentiality of statistical data

Physical security

All staff working in the organisation and all visitors to the Housing Centre require a pass to access the premises. Within the Research Unit, confidential documents are stored in a locked safe or in locked filing cabinets. Survey forms are stored in a locked safe. The Research Unit operates a clear desk policy.

Technical security

Databases are held on a network drive only accessible to the Unit and access controls to relevant containers are in place. No confidential statistical data are held on laptops or any other portable devices or kept on unprotected portable storage media. All data held on laptops are anonymised. Transmission of data occurs via encrypted email or password protected Iron Keys. Access to personal data is limited to the minimum number of staff required to process for analysis.

Organisational Security

NIHE has policies, procedures and structures in place to ensure the delivery of a safe environment for the handling of the information and data required by the organisation to carry out its responsibilities.

A copy of the organisation's 'Procedures for handling Personal Information under the Data Protection Act 1998' document is available on the internal portal and on the website.

http://www.nihe.gov.uk/procedures_for_handling_personal_information_under_the_data_protection_act_1998.pdf

Disclosure security

Disclosure control techniques are always implemented before Official Statistics are released, for both published figures and ad hoc queries. The Research Unit uses an appropriate combination of techniques to ensure that individuals cannot be identified; these include rounding, aggregation and suppression. Each of our publications will provide details of the statistical disclosure control method adopted in the publication.

Arrangements for providing statistical data to third parties

Third parties may obtain access to data provided they meet the necessary data handling conditions and security requirements and standards. Wherever possible, information provided to third parties is anonymised, with minimal records and variables being supplied. The primary consideration is to minimise the risk of identification and possible distress to individuals. Any organization or individual requesting extracts of data is required to comply with security and confidentiality arrangements outlined in a data access protocol agreement which is signed by both parties.

Staff Training

All staff receive training relating to their obligations under the Data Protection Act. This outlines the key principles behind data protection and their obligations under the act. Research Unit staff are made aware of the contents of the National Statistician's Guidance "Confidentiality of Official Statistics" and sign a Declaration of Confidentiality in Official Statistics.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

While requests under FOIA are treated on a case-by-case basis, the presumption is that requests for individual statistical records will be rejected. The legislation contains exemptions and processes that protect confidential information. Guidance on NIHE and the Freedom of Information Act can be found at:

<http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/rights/foi.htm>

Data Protection Act

All data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

General guidance can be found at:

http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/rights/data_protection_act.htm

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