

**2026-27  
OUTTURN AND  
FORECAST OUTTURN  
GUIDANCE**

**PUBLIC SPENDING GROUP  
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE  
MAY 2026**

## CONTENTS

<u>Chapters</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	Introduction	<u>1</u>
2	How is Outturn and Forecast Outturn used and why is it important?	<u>3</u>
3	The Outturn and Forecast Outturn Template	<u>6</u>
4	Reporting an Overcommitment	<u>11</u>
5	Reporting an Overspend	<u>14</u>
6	Quality of Outturn and Forecast Outturn Data	<u>16</u>
7	Outturn and Forecast Outturn Reports	<u>26</u>
<u><a href="#">Annex A:</a></u>	Indicative Timetable for Submission of Outturn and Forecast Outturn returns	

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Each Whitehall department and all devolved administrations have an obligation to provide the Treasury with monthly outturn and forecast outturn information. Accurate monthly forecasts are essential for the Treasury's management of the overall fiscal position and to inform fiscal policy. The information is also used to facilitate the compilation of overall national statistics on public expenditure and to allow the Treasury to fulfil its role in monitoring the performance of departments and devolved administrations against their agreed expenditure limits.
- 1.2 To ensure compliance with the Treasury's requirements, departments are required to provide a monthly profile for the full financial year showing outturn data for the months past, and a forecast of spend for those months still to come. This information will be collected for all DEL, AME and Other AME record lines.
- 1.3 Recognising the challenge for departments in providing robust outturn and forecast outturn at the start of the year, Central Expenditure Division (CED) has engaged with the Treasury regarding the Outturn and Forecast Outturn (OFO) returns required in the early stages of 2026-27. As a result, Round 0 and Round 1 will be completed centrally by CED using a flat-line profile. Departments will be required to complete returns from Round 2 May onwards, in line with the timetable at Annex A. The first departmental submission will therefore be due on **8 June 2026**.
- 1.4 OFO is an important tool for informing financial decisions of both the Executive and the Treasury, and it is vital that all departmental contacts with any input into the OFO exercises familiarise themselves fully with this guidance.
- 1.5 This guidance sets out how this year's OFO exercises should be completed and the indicative timetable for the completion of each return. Departments will be notified of any changes to this timetable once the Treasury confirms their return dates.

1.6 Guidance is provided at paragraphs 3.10 to 3.16 on the process to be followed in the absence of an agreed Budget.

## 2. HOW IS OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN USED AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

### Uses within the Department of Finance (DoF)

- 2.1 Alongside departmental in-year monitoring returns, DoF uses the monthly outturn and forecast outturn information provided by departments to inform decision making during the in-year monitoring process. Therefore, the importance of timely and realistic actual and forecast outturn cannot be overstated. It is essential that departments provide up to date and accurate information in their monthly returns.
- 2.2 RRI borrowing normally contributes to the funding of the Executive's capital investment programme in each year. When projects are identified as suitable for borrowing, departments are informed and forecast outturn returns will then be used to calculate the amount to be borrowed. **It is therefore essential that departments provide accurate forecast information on these lines as the Executive should not borrow in advance of need or indeed in excess of need as this will incur additional interest charges.** Departments should advise CED at the earliest opportunity if spend relating to a project funded by RRI borrowing is to benefit from any alternative sources of finance (for example EU funding) as this will restrict the level of related borrowing.
- 2.3 Outturn and forecast outturn information and analysis will be routinely provided to the Finance Committee, RaISe and the Fiscal Council on a monthly basis. It may also be included in Executive papers. Furthermore, departments should anticipate that Assembly Committees will request forecast outturn information as part of their scrutiny of departmental spending.

### Uses within the Treasury

- 2.4 The Treasury uses forecast outturn data for three main purposes:
- Monitoring the overall fiscal position and calculating the fiscal aggregates to inform fiscal policy;

- Reporting the state of the public finances to the public and other wider users; and
  - Monitoring individual departments' budgeting positions as part of the Treasury's oversight of public spending (for this purpose the NI Executive is treated as a single department by the Treasury).
- 2.5 The in-year fiscal position is monitored via the Public Sector Finances Statistical Bulletin which is published on a monthly basis jointly by the Treasury and ONS. Forecast outturn data loaded onto OSCAR will be used to produce the aggregate public sector position.
- 2.6 Departmental forecast outturn data feeds into various government publications used to monitor the fiscal/economic position and set Government policy:
- Monthly Public Sector Finances Bulletin (ONS/Treasury);
  - Quarterly National Accounts (ONS);
  - Quarterly GDP estimates (ONS); and
  - Biannual economic and fiscal forecasts (OBR).
- 2.7 Analysis of the information provided is carried out at different levels in the data hierarchy, e.g., economic categories of spend such as pay, procurement etc or by segment.

### **Monetary Policy**

- 2.8 The Bank of England is a very important user of National Accounts data, as it seeks to produce economic analyses and forecasts. The Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is responsible for setting interest rates, for which it uses Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its components. The Government's contribution to GDP is largely derived from outturn and forecast outturn data.

### **Government Output and Productivity**

- 2.9 The allocation of expenditure to different economic categories (pay, procurement etc) and functions (health, education etc) affects the

measurement of Government output and productivity. These measures are one way in which it can be determined whether the efficiency and effectiveness of spending is improving.

### **Other Publications**

- 2.10 Outturn and forecast outturn data may be used for other publications including the Chancellor's Budget and the Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis (PESA).
- 2.11 The Treasury has indicated that there are three key areas where improvements to the reporting noted above may be achieved:
- **Timeliness:** timetable for publication of the data is tight and inflexible;
  - **Realistic profiles:** if profiles are realistic, it is easier to understand if the fiscal position is going off track or is likely to do so over the rest of the year;
  - **Accurate data:** this should align as far as possible with internal management information.
- 2.12 The Treasury monitors the Executive's public spending performance against these measures and publishes internal performance reports showing comparisons to the other devolved administrations and Whitehall departments. The usability of the data we submit is determined by the second and third measures and these are key to ensuring credibility is maintained.
- 2.13 The Public Finance Scrutiny Unit in NI Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISE) is provided with forecast outturn data each month. RaISE has previously published a dashboard of departmental outturn and forecast outturn for capital and resource. Although no updates were published from 2023-24 to 2025-26, the PFSU may decide to resume these monthly updates in 2026-27.

### 3. THE OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN (OFO) TEMPLATE

- 3.1 Departments are required to provide, on a monthly basis, accurate details of DEL and AME spend at record number level for the preceding month(s), and forecast spend for the remaining months of the year. To facilitate this, CED will issue a spreadsheet to departmental Finance Branch contacts to which relevant data should be added. To allow CED to comply with the Treasury's timetable for returns (by 10am on the 8<sup>th</sup> working day) this must be received **by 5pm on the date notified in the commissioning e-mail** (usually the 6th working day). Returns should be sent to [ced.cfg@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:ced.cfg@finance-ni.gov.uk) and copied to your **Supply team**.
- 3.2 There is a very short window between CED receiving departmental returns and submitting the consolidated return to the Treasury. To enable checks of departmental data and analysis of the overall position to be completed in this timeframe, **it is critically important that all departments adhere to the deadline set.**

#### **Process with a Set Budget Position**

- 3.3 Where an agreed budget position has been set, the opening or most recent confirmed monitoring position is shown for each category. **Departments should not amend the figures shown in the approved monitoring column**, these are fixed and confirmed at a point in time and are not subject to amendment outside of a monitoring exercise.
- 3.4 For each DEL expenditure area, i.e., Resource DEL, Capital DEL and Financial Transactions Capital DEL, the total outturn and forecast outturn must not exceed the approved monitoring position.
- 3.5 Departments must report forecast outturn as accurately as possible but are also required to live within the spending envelope agreed by the Executive. Departments may report overcommitments where there is a reasonable expectation that they can be reduced to zero over the course of the year without

requiring additional in-year funding. They must clearly set out the actions and decisions being taken to manage these pressures and live within their agreed budget. Overcommitments must be fully offset within a separate Overcommitment Unit of Service (UOS). Further guidance on reporting an overcommitment is provided in **Chapter 4**.

- 3.6 Where a department does not believe it can take action to live within its budget, it should reflect this in its template by reporting an overspend against its agreed position. Reporting an overspend is a serious matter with significant implications. Further guidance on reporting an overspend is set out in **Chapter 5**.
- 3.7 For AME expenditure the outturn and forecast outturn provided must be the most up to date information and **is not** constrained to an approved monitoring position. However, it should be noted that any changes to AME require Treasury approval as part of an AME forecasting exercise. Any changes processed in monitoring rounds should not be treated as confirmed until approval has been granted by the Treasury.
- 3.8 In some cases, the timing of the monitoring round and Outturn and Forecast Outturn (OFO) exercises may mean a new monitoring position has been agreed by the Executive, but the corresponding changes to record lines have not yet been updated on the RBM database. As a result, the revised position cannot be shown on the template. Where this situation arises, departments will be advised by CED that they should forecast against the most up to date position. In any instance where this occurs, please speak with your Supply team or CED to ensure that the revised position is fully understood before forecasting to the new position.
- 3.9 Upon receipt, completed templates are edited and imported into the RBM database. To ensure this is successful, departments are required to complete the template in the following way. Failure to comply with these requirements impacts upon the limited time we have available to provide the return to the Treasury:

- a) **Do not insert, delete or alter formulas.** If required for internal analysis, save a separate version of the template, but ensure the original template issued is the one returned to CED.
- b) **Do not insert, delete or amend columns or rows.** Again, if this is necessary, save a separate version and ensure the original template is the one that is completed and returned to CED.
- c) **Do not include hidden formulas.** These prevent successful import to RBM.
- d) **Use whole numbers only.** Even hidden decimals will prevent successful import to RBM. Cells containing decimals will be highlighted as red through conditional formatting.
- e) **Do not delete values and leave blank cells.** Blank cells do not load to RBM. Conditional formatting will show these cells as red which will highlight to you that an amendment is required. Always insert a value even if this is zero.
- f) **Do not manually insert new records into the template unless permission has been given by CED.** Please provide the forecast against these new records in the covering email.

### **Process in the Absence of a Set Budget Position**

- 3.10 In the absence of an agreed Budget, the template will not contain a monitoring position for any of the DEL categories. During this period, departmental forecast outturn is therefore not constrained by an agreed financial control total.
- 3.11 The Contingency Planning Envelopes (CPEs), which have been advised separately, are not a substitute for an agreed Executive Budget. Rather, they provide a reasonable working assumption of the minimum any department could anticipate receiving through a subsequent Budget process. Of course, this is not

guaranteed as the Executive could make different decisions in agreeing its Budget. Accounting Officers must assess spending plans against the level of funding they can reasonably expect to receive. Therefore, CPEs are not being used to assess overcommitments or overspends in OFO returns.

- 3.12 Departments should complete the OFO return for each category of expenditure area, reflecting the best possible forecast of expenditure for the year and providing the same level of detail as would normally be expected.
- 3.13 In the absence of an agreed Budget, departments should **not** report overspends or overcommitments.
- 3.14 Returns provided will be used to assess the NI Block trajectory based on departmental expenditure plans. This will be critical to the effective management of the Block in the absence of the normal spending and budgetary control limits and should highlight any areas of concern that need to be addressed. The Public Spending Group (PSG) may seek further information from departments where profiled expenditure indicates a potential breach of the Block control total. Forecast outturn information will be actively scrutinised by DoF and used to inform advice to the Finance Minister. It may also be reported to the Executive. In line with the usual process, monthly forecast will also be provided to the Finance Committee and Fiscal Council.
- 3.15 For AME expenditure, the normal process still applies. Outturn and forecast outturn information must reflect the most up-to-date information and **is not** constrained by any monitoring or contingency limits.
- 3.16 The template completion requirements set out at paragraph 3.9 (a-f) continue to apply in the absence of an agreed Budget and must be followed.

### **Timeliness of Returns**

- 3.17 One of the indicators used by the Treasury to monitor the performance of departments, including Devolved Administrations, is in relation to the timeliness

of the OFO submission. CED has a very tight turnaround from receiving the information from departments to submitting the data on the Treasury database, so it is imperative that **departments send the Outturn and Forecast Outturn (OFO) submission to CED no later than 5pm on the 6<sup>th</sup> working day following the end of each month.** An indicative timetable is attached at Annex A which shows all departmental submission dates for the year 2026-27. These dates will be confirmed in each of the commissioning emails.

### **Permanent Secretary and Finance Director Sign Off**

- 3.18 Departments should ensure that each OFO return has received Permanent Secretary and Finance Director sign-off on the data presented. This includes the monthly profile and the overall expenditure totals for each category.

### **Ministerial Approval**

- 3.19 In the circumstances where an agreed budget position has been set, all overcommitments and overspends should be approved at Ministerial level.

## 4. REPORTING AN OVERCOMMITMENT

4.1 **This chapter only applies where an agreed budget position has been set.**

4.2 Where an agreed budget position is in place, departments may report overcommitments in their monthly Outturn and Forecast Outturn (OFO) returns where there is a reasonable expectation that these can be managed down during the year **without additional in-year funding**. Where a department does not believe it can take action to live within its budget, it must report a **forecast overspend** (see Chapter 5).

4.3 This approach enables transparent reporting of the actions each department is taking to manage its budget. It does **not** give permission to overspend. Departments are expected to address and reduce any overcommitment so they can deliver a balanced budget by year end. It remains imperative that the Executive lives within its overall budget.

4.4 The ability to report an overcommitment does not remove the responsibility of departmental Ministers and Accounting Officers to live within the budget allocations agreed by the Executive. Nor does it imply that additional funding will be provided in-year. Rather, it enables departments to transparently report to DoF the approach they are taking to manage their budget and ensures the Executive can be alerted where there are concerns that a department's approach may put the Block at risk.

4.5 Departments must ensure that any overcommitment reported is credible and supported by a clear plan for reducing it over the course of the year. They must set out the specific actions and decisions being taken to address the pressure. Given the wider constraints on public finances, there can be no expectation of significant in-year resources becoming available. Bidding in a monitoring round is **not** an acceptable action for managing an overcommitment.

- 4.6 Reporting an overcommitment does not provide any advantage in the in-year monitoring process. Departments must bid for additional funding through the standard process. Each bid will be considered on its own merits, in the context of competing priorities and available funding.
- 4.7 Overcommitments are expected to follow a downward trajectory over the course of the year and should provide a realistic reflection of the pressures departments must manage.

### **Supply Engagement**

- 4.8 Departments should engage with their Supply team before submitting their OFO return to ensure that the actions to address overcommitments are robust and understood. Any significant movement in overcommitments between returns must be clearly explained.
- 4.9 If a department is not reducing its overcommitment and appears at risk of breaching its control totals, this may be brought to the attention of the Executive.

### **Actions to Address Overcommitment Template and RBM requirements**

- 4.10 Overcommitments must be fully offset within a separate overcommitment Unit of Service (UoS) that is for OFO purposes only. A single record line should be used for each budget category. Overcommitments must be entered as **negative amounts** to ensure that total outturn remains within control totals.
- 4.11 Departments reporting an overcommitment must also complete the *Actions to Address Overcommitment* template, detailing:
- the actions planned to address the overcommitment;
  - the timescale for delivery; and
  - an explanation of variances compared with the previous month.

- 4.12 Total planned savings from actions must equal the overcommitment line for each budget category in the OFO template. Incomplete or incorrect templates will be returned to departments for correction.

#### **Engagement with Assembly Committees**

- 4.13 Details of overcommitments and the actions to address them will be shared with the Finance Committee. Departments should also be aware that other Assembly Committees and the Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) may also be provided with this information (see Chapter 7).

#### **Engagement with the NI Fiscal Council**

- 4.14 Details of overcommitments and the actions to address them will be shared with the NI Fiscal Council.

#### **Engagement with the Treasury**

- 4.15 Details of overcommitments will be reported to the Treasury as part of the monthly OFO return, which may attract scrutiny.

## 5. REPORTING AN OVERSPEND

- 5.1 **This chapter only applies where an agreed budget position has been set.**
- 5.2 Where an agreed budget position is in place, and where a department cannot take action to live within its budget allocation, it must report a forecast **overspend** rather than an overcommitment.
- 5.3 Reporting an overspend is a significant and concerning step and may call into question whether an Accounting Officer is fulfilling their responsibilities.
- 5.4 A department reporting an overspend must act accordingly. For example, the Accounting Officer:
- may be unable to confirm affordability when seeking approval for pay remits, business cases, or other approvals; and
  - must consider whether Ministerial Directions are required.
- 5.5 Overspending by any department risks the overall integrity of the Block and the implications of doing so cannot be overstated. Overspends will be formally reported to the Treasury and will attract immediate scrutiny. The Treasury views overspending as serious financial mismanagement and under its *Statement of Funding Policy*, any breach of control totals will result in a reduction to the following year's Block Grant equivalent to the value of the overspend. In addition to this financial penalty in 2027-28, reporting an overspend will damage the Executive's credibility with the Treasury and may adversely affect negotiations on matters such as fiscal flexibility and borrowing powers.
- 5.6 Departments should take action from the beginning of the financial year to reduce overcommitments and must exhaust all possible measures to avoid an overspend.

### **Supply Engagement**

- 5.7 Where a department is forecasting an overspend, the Finance Director must engage immediately with their Supply team to set out:
- the actions taken to date, and
  - the further actions that will be taken to minimise the overspend.

### **Engagement with Assembly Committees**

- 5.8 Where a department reports a forecast overspend, this information will be shared with the Finance Committee. Departments should also be aware that other Assembly Committees and the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) may also be provided with this information.

### **Engagement with the NI Fiscal Council**

- 5.9 Information on departmental forecast overspends will also be shared with the NI Fiscal Council.

### **Engagement with the Treasury**

- 5.10 All forecast overspends will be reported to the Treasury and will attract scrutiny.

### **Engagement with the Executive**

- 5.11 Reported overspends will be scrutinised by DoF and used to inform advice for the Finance Minister. Where it is deemed that sufficient action is not being taken to address the overspend, or where the position poses a significant risk to the management of the NI Block, the Finance Minister may escalate this to the Executive.

## 6. QUALITY OF OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN DATA

### How Should Outturn and Forecast Outturn be recorded?

#### Resource Consumed

- 6.1 In terms of outturn data, departments are required to provide the resources consumed using the most accurate and up to date figures available. The forecast outturn must be based on the most accurate forecast using past data, along with any relevant new information in respect of resources not yet consumed. The monthly profile of anticipated spend must be as accurate as possible as this will be used both by the Treasury and DoF to measure forecasting accuracy.
- 6.2 Returns will typically be checked to ensure that:
- Resource DEL, Capital DEL and Financial Transactions Capital DEL control totals have not been breached.
  - EU funded spend and associated EU income receipt lines (unless they are CFER EU income lines relating to past years spend), and release and utilisation of provisions lines, net to zero.
  - Income lines do not show positive figures and payment lines do not show negative figures in the total column.
  - Departments have provided explanations for any restatement to outturn previously recorded against lines.
  - Departments have provided explanations for variances in DEL against the current monitoring position, e.g., June monitoring position, at category level.
- 6.3 Checks relating to control totals and monitoring positions will not be carried out in the absence of a budget position.

#### Forecast v Actuals

- 6.4 Forecast v Actuals is one of the main indicators that the Treasury uses to measure departmental performance and it is an area where there is scope for

considerable improvement across departments. This is also the measure used to show departmental forecasting accuracy. The expectation is that there would not be a significant variance on lines between the last forecast month and the actual spend reported for that same month.

- 6.5 Departments may experience difficulty in obtaining data on actual spend for the month just finished by the 6<sup>th</sup> working day. However, this does not excuse any significant disparity between the final forecast for the next month and the actual reported for it the following month. The final forecast for a month should be an accurate estimate of the expenditure to be incurred. If there is indeed delay in reporting actual spend the following month, then it would be expected that this would at least constitute a much more accurate estimate of the anticipated actual spend.
- 6.6 Departments are required to explain variances in monthly outturn information for each budget category which will be provided to the Finance Committee every month. Departments will be required to complete the *Comparison of Monthly Outturn template* and explain variances greater than 5% and £250k. These must be returned one working day after the OFO templates are due each month.

### **Flatlining Forecasts**

- 6.7 It is appreciated that in the early stages of the year it may be difficult for departments to predict accurately the full pattern of spend on a line-by-line basis, because unforeseen issues may arise throughout the year.
- 6.8 However, departments are expected to utilise previous years' spending patterns to inform their forecasts in the early stages of the year. As the reporting year progresses, necessary adjustments should be made to reflect changing circumstances.
- 6.9 There are instances when a relative flat line may be particularly appropriate. For example, depreciation can have regular month on month consumption, as can pay.

### **Year-End Surge**

6.10 Departments' returns should accurately reflect their anticipated month on month accrued expenditure and forecast of expenditure for the year. Year-end surges, caused by inserting balancing figures in the last month to ensure full spend against the monitoring total, are **not** acceptable. This pattern of spend should only be shown where this is an accurate representation of anticipated spend. An explanation should be provided to clarify where a year-end surge is correctly reported.

### **Monitoring Positions v Forecast Outturn**

6.11 Departments should always provide the most up to date position. However, if a monitoring round is in process but approval has not yet been granted, departments **may not** reflect the following transactions in their returns:

- Reclassifications crossing the Resource DEL and Capital DEL boundaries.
- Bids/Pressures.
- Technical transfers between departments.

6.12 Reduced requirements should always be forecast as soon as they have been identified. However, a forecast underspend will not be automatically regarded as a reduced requirement until it has been declared as such by the department in a monitoring round.

6.13 Any other reallocation not identified in paragraph 6.11, and which does not require approval, can and should be included in the return.

6.14 AME record lines should always show the most up to date position and are not constrained to the approved monitoring position or the most recent AME forecast provided, unless advised that this is the case by CED.

### **The Treasury System**

- 6.15 OSCAR will validate our data input at two levels. The first validation level involves applying rules, which if failed will not permit our data to be submitted (e.g., release and utilisation of provisions not netting to zero). The second validation level applies rules that highlight those rows which breach the inbuilt acceptable variances. In these cases, we will then be required to provide an explanation for those variances, for example OSCAR will highlight where spend against a particular OSCAR subsegment has increased by £20 million compared to the previous return. Departments should note that the Treasury has queried variances as small as £10 million.
- 6.16 **Departments should therefore be proactive in providing an accompanying narrative to their return** especially where it appears spend is moving from one area to another. To inform our use of the information, it would be useful if departments could provide details of any underlying assumptions they have made when making their return.
- 6.17 Departments should also provide information with respect to unusual trends or numbers. For example, if a department is restating outturn or displaying a year-end surge or significant underspend, then they should provide details of the record line affected and an explanation for the anomaly. This should be done in the covering email submitting the return.

## **CORRECTING ERRORS IN PREVIOUS RETURNS**

### **Accrued Outturn up to Date**

- 6.18 The guiding principle for all monthly reporting is to ensure that each month shows the resource consumed in that month and that financial system adjustments should not distort that. It is however recognised that due to timing of returns there may be a need to restate the previous month's outturn to reflect the final reported position for that month. Scoring accounting adjustments on a cumulative basis has the potential to distort actual profiles of spend. The Outturn and Forecast Outturn (OFO) returns should score any accounting adjustments in the correct month so that they report the profile of spend as it would have been had the spend been correctly recorded in the first instance.
- 6.19 As the outturn reported by departments is most likely produced from financial systems which close each period to further adjustment, we would not expect to see restatement of the overall monthly spend more than two months after it is first reported.
- 6.20 However, if it is discovered that there have been errors in reporting then it is expected that a corrected position be reported at the first opportunity.

## Incorrect Mapping

6.21 If outturn is incorrectly reported on a record line then it should be moved from that line. An illustrative example is provided below. This shows firstly where spend has been mapped incorrectly and secondly how at the next available opportunity, the information has been resubmitted to be reflected on the correct lines.

### September Return

	Outturn							Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep								
Record A	100	150	120	130	150	120	130	140	130	120	110	100	<b>1500</b>	

### October Return

	Outturn							Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct						
Record A	60	30	50	50	40	60	20	50	30	50	60	40	<b>540</b>
Record B	40	120	70	80	110	60	110	40	100	100	60	70	<b>960</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1500</b>

- The September return shows full years profile in **Record A**
- In the October return the incorrectly mapped element in **Record A** is removed
- The removed amounts are mapped to **Record B**
- The monthly profile total for any outturn previously stated has not been affected by the correction although the forecasted figures may change due to new information being received.

6.22 Where this example shows that an element of the monthly spend has been mapped incorrectly, likewise it may transpire where all of the monthly spend has been mapped incorrectly. The same strategy would apply and the monthly outturn total would not be affected.

## Correction to line previously forecast

### *Spend Reported to Incorrect Line*

6.23 Where it has been discovered that outturn has been wrongly reported to a line in a previous return, it should be amended in the next available return. This is done by showing the adjustment which will cancel it out of the record line in the most recent outturn month, as in the example below.

**September Return**

	Outturn							Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep								
Record A	0	0	0	0	0	1500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1500</b>

**October Return**

	Outturn							Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep								
Record A	0	0	0	0	0	1500	-1500	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Record B	0	0	0	0	0	0	1500	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1500</b>

- September return shows full years profile totalling 1500
- It is important to note that the monthly profile total for any outturn previously stated has not been affected by the correction.

6.24 If this spend should have been reflected on another record line, this should also be reflected in the subsequent return. Note that by showing both of these adjustments, correcting the line by line reporting, the overall monthly spend is unchanged. This approach supports the monthly period close process in the financial systems. We would only expect such a correction to amend the overall amount in the month following the original report of spend. If there is a need to correct outturn for reasons other than those discussed above, please contact CED.

*Spend Reported is Incorrect*

6.25 Where outturn has been incorrectly reported against a line in a month and when the financial system has closed it is found that no spend has actually occurred, this should be corrected in the next return. In this case the correct amount

should now be reported and not the accounting adjustment. The example below shows both the correct reporting and the most common incorrect reporting of such adjustments.

**September Return**

	<b>Outturn</b>							<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>								
Record A	0	0	0	0	0	1500	0	0	0	0	1000	0	<b>2500</b>	

**October Return**

	<b>Outturn</b>							<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>						
Record A – incorrect reporting	0	0	0	0	0	1500	-1500	0	1500	0	1000	0	<b>2500</b>
Record A – correct reporting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1500	0	1000	0	<b>2500</b>

- The September return shows spend reported in the months of September and February in **Record A**
- In the October return the incorrectly reported spend in September in **Record A** is removed and is now reported as forecast in December and February
- The accounting adjustment to reverse spend reported in September **should not** be shown.
- The monthly profile total for September outturn has been restated in the next month. We would not expect restatement prior to this month. Departments should provide an accompanying narrative where this restatement is significant.

## **DATA QUALITY – COMMON ERRORS**

### **EU Funding and Provisions**

- 6.26 EU funded expenditure and receipts relating to the current year, and the release and utilisation of provisions, should both net to zero. A report showing your department's EU Funding and Provision lines will issue along with templates at the start of the year. Any mismatches between EU spend and receipts (relating to the current year) and release and utilisation of provisions will be returned to the Department concerned for immediate amendment. EU income relating to spend incurred in previous years will be recorded on CFER record lines and will be excluded from this check.
- 6.27 It is possible that a department needs to forecast a profile which shows a provision being released in AME where the funds are not currently reflected in their plans in the utilisation line in DEL. In this case the department should not only profile the correct release and utilisation of the provision but also the reduction in other record lines that will be employed to fund the unavoidable pressure resulting from the utilisation of the provision.
- 6.28 Under no circumstances should a department expect pressures resulting from provisions to be automatically met through in-year monitoring transactions that require approval.

### **Failing to forecast a Reduced Requirement**

- 6.29 Reduced requirements should always be forecast in order to provide an accurate position. Departmental returns forecasting full spend in forecast outturn when reduced requirements have already been declared in monitoring rounds will be returned for correction.

### **Forecasting Unapproved Changes**

- 6.30 In addition to the restrictions noted in paragraph 6.11, departments should **not** forecast proposed changes that require DoF approval until that approval has

been received. Returns providing forecasts that include changes that have not been approved by DoF will be returned to departments for correction.

**Capital spend reported on lines where no project ID exists**

- 6.31 Departments should not record spend on a capital line which does not have an associated project ID. Please contact CED prior to submitting your return to create a project ID if required.

**Negative figures on a payment line or positive figures on an income line**

- 6.32 Departments should note that all income lines are checked to ensure they do not show positive figures and payment lines are checked to ensure they do not show negative figures. Returns showing this pattern in the total column will be returned to departments for correction. This CED check is not applied to individual monthly profiled amounts. If, however, there is a valid reason for reporting what initially seems an error, this should be provided and explained in the email accompanying the return.

## 7. OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN REPORTS

### Finance Committee

- 7.1 CED has a commitment to report the outcome of the monthly Outturn and Forecast Outturn (OFO) exercises to the Finance Committee. The Committee uses this information to assist in its scrutiny of expenditure performance across the Block, with a particular focus on improving the underspend position.
- 7.2 Departmental returns are provided at budget category level. The Committee receives each department's total forecast outturn for the year against the current monitoring position, along with explanations of variances for each department in respect of Resource DEL, Capital DEL, and Financial Transactions Capital. The Committee is not routinely provided with a breakdown by spending area (i.e., Unit of Service).
- 7.3 The Committee is also provided with each department's monthly profiles for the current and the previous month, together with the variance between the two, for the three categories mentioned above. Explanations provided by departments on their *Comparison of Monthly Outturn template* (see paragraph 6.6) will be shared with the Finance Committee as part of the report.
- 7.4 The Committee receives details of departmental overcommitments, including:
- the actions being taken to address them; and
  - explanations for changes in the level of overcommitment since the previous month.
- 7.5 The Committee also receives details of departmental forecast overspends.
- 7.6 Departments should note that the Finance Committee may share this information, along with other financial data, with RaISe and other Assembly Committees.

### Engagement with Departmental Assembly Committees

7.7 Assembly Committees have an important role in the scrutiny of departmental spending. Departments should therefore prepare for engagement with their respective Committees in respect of OFO. The extent and timing of engagement will be a matter for individual Committees, and departments should engage early to establish their requirements. DoF recommends that Committees are kept informed of financial matters on an ongoing basis.

### **Fiscal Council**

7.8 In line with its remit to bring greater transparency and scrutiny to NI's public finances, the Fiscal Council will be provided with headline OFO information each month, which it may subsequently publish in its reports.

7.9 The Fiscal Council will also receive all information that is shared with the Finance Committee, including:

- total forecast outturn for the year against the current monitoring position;
- the *Comparison of Monthly Outturn* template,
- the *Actions to Address Overcommitments* template, and
- details of departmental overspends.

## INDICATIVE TIMETABLE FOR SUBMISSION OF OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN RETURNS

Departments will be advised of any changes to this timetable following the Treasury's confirmation of return dates.

Departmental return dates will also be reconfirmed in commissioning emails.

Return Number	Period Covered	Return Date to CED
0	Forecast of Monthly Spend for 2026-27	Not required
1	Outturn to end of April 2026	Not required
2	Outturn to end of May 2026	Monday 8 June 2026
3	Outturn to end of June 2026	Wednesday 8 July 2026
4	Outturn to end of July 2026	Monday 10 August 2026
5	Outturn to end of August 2026	Tuesday 8 September 2026
6	Outturn to end of September 2026	Thursday 8 October 2026
7	Outturn to end of October 2026	Monday 9 November 2026
8	Outturn to end of November 2026	Tuesday 8 December 2026
9	Outturn to end of December 2026	Monday 11 January 2027
10	Outturn to end of January 2027	Monday 8 February 2027
11	Outturn to end of February 2027	Monday 8 March 2027
12	Outturn to end of March 2027	Thursday 8 April 2027
13	Restated Outturn to end of March 2027	Tuesday 11 May 2027