

## BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

### 1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Experimental Official Statistics on the 2012 Statutory Child Maintenance Scheme

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-the-2012-statutory-child-maintenance-scheme>

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

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### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Principle 2: Practise 3. Make official statistics equally available to all, subject to statutory provisions for pre-release access.

Principle 4: Practise 2. Ensure that official statistics are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs.

Protocol 2. Release practices

Date of occurrence

02 December 2014

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

DWP were notified on the 02 December of an unintentional release of DWP Child Maintenance Group (CMG) statistical information to a small number of attendees at the Northern Ireland Stakeholder Forum on 02 December 2014.

Northern Ireland Child Maintenance Service (NI CMS) deliver the child maintenance service for clients in Northern Ireland. In addition to this, they also deliver the service to clients in the Eastern region of GB through a Service Level Agreement with the Child Maintenance Group of the Department for Work and Pensions. NI CMS therefore receive both Northern Ireland specific management information (MI) and the GB MI to monitor the performance of the Eastern caseload compared to the other regions in GB.

NI CMS held an external stakeholder engagement event providing a view of key statistics on the NI 2012 Scheme. Alongside the presentation, attendees were also supplied with a hand-out which contained the source data tables used to produce the graphs in the presentation.

One of the measures included in the hand-out was the proportion of cases contributing towards current liability. In the technical notes of the final report, figures for Great Britain (GB) were provided.

There are currently issues with this GB measure following a change in methodology, therefore DWP did not include these in the Experimental Official Statistics on the GB 2012 Scheme released at the end of September, nor is it intended to be included in the next release of Experimental Official Statistics due on 17 December. DWP intends to produce a back series of these data once we are assured of the quality.

The initial draft of the pack was produced for the NI Director, responsible for both NI and GB Eastern Area performance, including the NI information to be shared at the stakeholder event, but also the equivalent GB information to provide a level of context around the NI performance. The intention was never to include GB information in the pack for external stakeholders, it was provided to the NI Director as internal MI to support briefing and planning for the stakeholder meeting.

The GB information was subsequently removed to form the stakeholder information pack. It is highly regrettable that the proof-reading of the final report did not pick up the line containing GB information was still included within the technical notes.

This Management Information (MI) was supplied to Department for Social Development (NI DSD) as part of a joint MI report produced by CMG's colleagues in Business Intelligence Competency Centre (for Child Maintenance), covering GB and NI which is supplied to both DWP and NI colleagues.

## Reasons for breach

Proof reading of the final report failed to identify unpublished GB information in a technical annex.

### **3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)**

Statistics which are not of the quality or standard of our usual releases are now in the public domain which may lead to reputational damage.

However there was no associated media release or wider dissemination of the information. Furthermore, the seven stakeholders in attendance were advised that the presentation was not for wider circulation and the information was provided with the caveat that it may be liable to subsequent revision.

### **4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)**

The Director of Child Maintenance Service in Northern Ireland has personally spoken to the officer involved to reinforce the seriousness of this breach and provided further guidance.

The process for preparing for meetings/communications with external stakeholders has been reviewed and for any future communications with NI stakeholders the pack will be produced from scratch as a standalone document, with internal briefing drafted as a separate document.

In addition NI analysts have been in liaison with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to provide a seminar for NI CMS on the Code of Practice for Official Statistics via the National Statistician's Office (NSO). An event for other colleagues in the Department was also run on 24 March and we have requested a future event specifically for NI CMS.