

## BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

### 1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Pre-release versions of Combined Ministerial Brief as well as the Labour Market, Index of Services and Index of Production Statistical Press Releases.

Name of Producer Organisation

Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

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### 2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Practice 8 – accidental release of information to a NISRA Senior Principal Statistician who was not granted 24-hour pre-release access for October 2012.

Date of occurrence

16 October 2012

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

An error was made when an Assistant Statistician, acting on behalf of the Deputy Principal Statistician, sent the email to those granted 24-hour pre-release access but inadvertently included the name of a Senior Principal Statistician who had been granted one-off 24-hour pre-release access to the publications in September 2012.

## Reasons for breach

The Assistant Statistician, acting on behalf of the Deputy Principal Statistician, included all email recipients from the previous month and was unaware this list included the name of a Senior Principal Statistician who was not eligible for 24-hour pre-release access in October 2012.

### **3 Reactions and Impact**

Only one NISRA Senior Principal Statistician received the 24-hour pre-release data in error. The error was discovered by the Deputy Principal Statistician fifteen minutes after the 24-hour pre-release email was sent out at 09:30 on 16 October. The immediate reaction of the Deputy Principal Statistician was to ring the Senior Principal Statistician who had been included by mistake. The Senior Principal Statistician was in an early morning meeting and therefore did not have the opportunity to open or read the email in question. The Deputy Principal Statistician then instructed the Senior Principal Statistician's Personal Assistant to delete the email. The email was deleted and cleared from the email system in an unread state with immediate effect.

### **4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)**

On realisation of the error and as the Senior Principal Statistician was occupied in an early morning meeting, the Deputy Principal Statistician instructed the Senior Principal Statistician's Personal Assistant, via a telephone conversation, to delete the email. The email was deleted and cleared from the Senior Principal Statistician's email system in an unread state with immediate effect.

Those involved have been reminded of the existence and location of 24-hour pre-release email lists and how these can change occasionally. Refresher training has been arranged to cover those circumstances where the Deputy Principal Statistician cannot send the 24-hour pre-release email as scheduled.

It has been made clear that the pre-release list is to be checked each month for accuracy and that this list is to be the only source of pre-release recipients.

In addition, all pre-release emails will now have additional warnings to recipients that the email is only to be opened if they have been granted pre-release access.