

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)

Northern Ireland Claimant Count data
<http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-surveys/stats-claimant-count.htm>
Northern Ireland Redundancy data
<http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-surveys/stats-redundancies.htm>

Name of Producer Organisation

Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency

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

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20 June 2011

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Practice 8 – accidental release of information prior to scheduled publication date and time.

Date of occurrence

Breach occurred on 15 June 2011.

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

An error was made when setting the 'go live' dates of two web pages containing Northern Ireland Claimant Count data and Northern Ireland Redundancy data. The new data was therefore available on the website at 13:12 on 14 June 2011, instead of at the intended publication date/time of 09:30 on 15 June.

Reasons for breach

In order to update labour market data on the website, firstly a 'web publisher' updates the relevant web page and sets the 'go live' time/date. This work is then sent to a 'web authoriser' for final checking and approval. Both members of staff failed to follow documented procedures correctly and the 'go live' time/date was not entered correctly. The web page was therefore published early.

3 Reactions and Impact

The web pages that were released early (Northern Ireland Claimant Count and Redundancy data) are sub pages on the Northern Ireland Labour Market Statistics Website, which require some 'drilling down' from the Homepage before they can be accessed.

They are therefore not heavily used pages and there were only 3 and 4 'hits' respectively on these web pages during the time that they were accidentally open to the public (It is thought that some of the above 'hits' were caused by internal users involved in the update of the website, but this can not be confirmed by the system administrator).

We are not aware of any early use of these statistics by the media or any public organisation. The impact of the breach was therefore small.

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

The manuals containing the instructions used to update the website have been amended to include a checklist, which must be completed by those working on website updates. Refresher training has also been arranged for all those involved in web updates. The new processes should help ensure that the potential for human error during website updates is minimised.