

## 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.

*All breach reports are published on the UK Statistics Authority's website and need to explain (clearly and concisely) what happened to cause the breach and what is being/has been done by the statistical Head of Profession (HoP) to ensure the risk of recurrence is minimised.*

### 1. Background information

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

Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD)

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

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

Guy Goodwin - [guy.goodwin@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:guy.goodwin@ons.gsi.gov.uk)  
01633 455226

### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 release practices

Practice 8: "Ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances."

Date of occurrence

Friday 20 November 2015

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

- ONS produces and publishes UK data on BERD. On the same day ONS publishes the UK data the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) publishes their own Northern Ireland statistical bulletin on BERD. To provide context, this also contains ONS UK data.

- NISRA have two statisticians approved to receive the ONS BERD bulletin. ONS sent Pre-Release Access (PRA) to them on Thursday 19 November 2015. ONS clearly stated on the email which contained PRA who was approved to receive PRA within NISRA.
- A new team in NISRA took over responsibility for producing the Northern Ireland BERD bulletin. The new team were following previous guidance and sent the Northern Ireland BERD bulletin for PRA to six individuals who had been approved to receive PRA to the NI bulletin by the Statistical Head of Profession in NI.
- As the Northern Ireland bulletin contains UK data and the six individuals had not been approved to receive the UK data this is considered a breach with ONS data.
- Immediately after sending the Northern Ireland bulletin out within NISRA, the team contacted ONS to confirm who was approved to receive ONS data. When they realised they had breached, the team quickly contacted all individuals and asked them to delete the email which was actioned.

#### Reasons for breach

This breach was the consequence of human error. The NISRA team were following guidance from the previous team and thought the individuals were approved to receive UK data.

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

ONS is not aware of any reaction or impact to this breach. We are not aware of the information being disseminated beyond the secure government network to which it was sent.

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

- Following the breach, ONS confirmed and received the correspondence which showed the breach. NISRA are also sending confirmation that the all individuals deleted the e-mail.
- NISRA confirmed no figures were actually sent to any individual but the email did imply the UK figures.
- NISRA always seek permission from ONS to add recipients to their own PRA lists if the bulletin contains UK data. It appears the previous team who produced BERD were not aware they needed to seek permission. The new team are aware of the protocols and have submitted a request to ONS to share UK BERD data under PRA with their approved lists.