

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')

Crown Court Bulletin January to March 2016 (provisional figures) and
Magistrates Court Bulletin January to March 2016 (provisional figures)
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Name of Producer Organisation

Department of Justice (Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service)

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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11 May 2016

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Code of Practice: Protocol 2, Release Practice 8

Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation, limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Publish records of those who have access prior to release.

Date of occurrence

05 May 2016

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

A member of the Department of Justice with the same name as a person on the pre-release access list received a pre-release copy of the two publications in error. This error occurred as the outlook email lists were being updated by IT Assist and the correct person on the pre-release list had been removed from the email list in error.

Reasons for breach

- There are two people within the Department of Justice (DOJ) with the same name, one who is on the pre-release access and one who is not.
- Neither of these two email addresses are currently showing within the outlook address book due to the address lists being updated as a result changing format following departmental restructuring. In the absence of the pre-release person being available on the email list, the email address was manually typed into the email list using the set DOJ email format.
- Unfortunately as the outlook address book was not showing either of the two people it was not possible to assess any potential for error.

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

The responsible statistician was notified on their return from leave. No complaints were received. The unintended recipient replied to the email to indicate that the wrong person had been in receipt of the information and that no attachments had been read, the e-mail was deleted immediately.

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

The email address for each person on the pre-release access list will be detailed in full on a file saved on the network which each member of the statistics team has access to. All future pre-release emails will copy this list of email address and paste them into the email each quarter removing any reliance on the outlook address book.

As an added check, each quarter prior to any publication, a test email will be issued to those on the pre-release access list requesting a response to confirm that their email address is correct and that they should be receiving pre-release access to the relevant publications.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crown-court-bulletin-january-to-march-2016>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/magistrates-court-bulletin-january-to-march-2016>