

## 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')

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/annual-survey-hours-and-earnings>

Name of Producer Organisation

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

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

Deborah Lyness, Email: [Deborah.lyness@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.lyness@finance-ni.gov.uk); Tel: 02890529403

### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 (Release Practices); The Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009

Date of occurrence

Breach occurred on 26.10.2016

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

The Department for Economy Press Office issue a daily media update email which outlines the press releases that day. At the bottom of this detailed email it contained a sentence on the Minister's reaction to the release of the ASHE statistics:

"Economy Minister welcomes increase in weekly earnings for full time employees"

The email is normally sent after 9.30am. However due to the small number of Department for Economy relevant press articles in the media that day and the busy nature of their work the email was issued 10 minutes earlier than usual at 9.20am.

The breach was discovered by an Economist in the Department for Economy who received the

email and informed the responsible statisticians at 11.00am. The Press Office was immediately informed of the breach and corrective actions were discussed. It was then agreed that the Minister's reaction to statistical press releases would not be published in the daily media email in future so it doesn't contain any official sensitive information.

#### Reasons for breach

The breach was due to human error on part of a Department for Economy official who issues the daily media update email.

The briefing from NISRA clearly stated the pre release nature of the material and that recipients had an obligation not to forward the material or comment on it. The pre release access email highlighted the pre release access conditions in considerable detail. Pre release access restrictions were also highlighted in the email subject heading.

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

*Minimal – Due to the very limited time period between the breach email and actual publication*

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

The breach was reported to the responsible statistician who reported to the Chief Statisticians office.

In the short term, guidance was provided to the person responsible for the breach.

It has been agreed that the Minister's reaction to statistical press releases will not be published in daily media update emails.

NISRA will also hold a further training session with the Department for Economy Press Office outlining the pre release access requirements

#### **5. Links to published statements about this breach**

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/annual-survey-hours-and-earnings>

#### **6. Any other relevant supporting material**

None