

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')

Health Survey (NI) First Results 2015/16

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-survey-northern-ireland-first-results-201415>

Name of Producer Organisation

Department of Health (DoH)

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

Dr Eugene Mooney Eugene.mooney@health-ni.gov.uk Tel: 02890520726

Report completed on 15th November 2016

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 (release practices) Practice 8

Date of occurrence

14th November 2016

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

A number of DoH policy officials were granted Pre-release Access (PRA) to this report. Briefing/lines to take were derived from this report (which gave indications of the content of the report) during pre-release access period that were shared by one of the lead policy officials with another officer within his team that had not been granted Pre-release Access.

Reasons for breach

The Special advisor (SpAd) to the Minister for Health had asked for urgent further briefing (lines to take) regarding the Health Survey First Results publication during the 24 hour Pre-release access period.

The lead policy official who had been granted PRA drafted briefing from the report as required.

In order to meet the deadline, the lead policy official copied these draft lines to take to a small number of individuals in his team for their input and comments, one of whom had not been given Pre-release Access to the publication. This was brought to the attention of DoH statisticians 20 minutes after the breach occurred, when this official forwarded the draft briefing to a statistician that had produced the report along with a request for access to the publication itself.

This request was denied and the lead policy official was contacted to be informed of the breach shortly afterwards.

The e-mail that accompanied the report for PRA clearly stated that neither the report nor any findings from it should be shared during the Pre-release Access period. The accompanying submission also clearly highlighted the Pre-release conditions.

This breach occurred because of an oversight by the lead policy official in trying to meet an urgent deadline.

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

The breach was contained within the lead policy official's branch. The statisticians acted quickly when this breach came to their attention to ensure that it was contained and that the information was otherwise maintained among those granted Pre-release Access. The policy Head of Branch was made aware of the breach and reminded of his duties under PRA.

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

The Senior Statistician has communicated with Senior officials throughout the Department and has reissued guidance to remind them (and their staff) of their responsibilities with the release of Official Statistics publications particularly around the Pre-release access period.

Detailed guidance has been reissued to ensure that individuals receiving PRA are aware of and understand the implications of breaching pre-release.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/breach-of-the-code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>

6. Any other relevant supporting material

None applicable