

REPORTING A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	R&S Bulletin 29-2017 Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2014/15 Cohort) https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/research-and-statistical-bulletin-29-2017-adult-and-youth-reoffending-northern-ireland-2014-15
Name of statistical producer	Department Of Justice (DOJ)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Laura Duncan Analytical Services Group, Department of Justice, Laganside House, Oxford Street Belfast BT1 3LA
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/research-and-statistical-bulletin-29-2017-adult-and-youth-reoffending-northern-ireland-2014-15
Date of report	11 October 2017

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle/protocol and practice	Protocol 2: Release practices <i>Practice 7 – ‘content of a statistical report has been shared before publication with someone not on the relevant pre-release access list’.</i>
Date of occurrence of breach	4 October 2017
<p>A copy of the ‘Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2014/15 Cohort)’ publication with associated statistical press release, was issued via email to pre-release access (PRA) recipients on 4 October 2017.</p> <p>The e-mail was sent from a DOJ Statistician to two named recipients in the DOJ Press Office. The email was marked as Official-Sensitive and clearly stated that the information was embargoed until 9.30am on the morning of the 5 October 2017. Also stated in the e-mail was that the documents provided were not to be shared beyond those individuals identified in the e-mail.</p> <p>Following receipt of the email and information, a Press Office official forwarded the e-mail and documents to four DOJ policy officials, who had not been granted pre-release access, requesting some briefing notes in case of media attention. This occurred at 10.28am on 4 October 2017. The e-mail was also distributed to three individuals who were included on the pre-release access list.</p> <p>One of these recipients alerted the Press Office official that this constituted a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and advised them to report it immediately to the Senior DOJ Statistician. They did not report it to the Senior DOJ Statistician themselves at this point, but the recipient did so on Monday 9 October 2017 at 16.47, when checking to see if the Senior DOJ Statistician had been notified by the Press Office official. At this time the Senior DOJ Statistician was on leave. The Senior DOJ Statistician initiated breach</p>	

proceedings on 11 October 2017 on her return.

On investigation it was ascertained that one of the four recipients was on leave and did not view or forward the e-mail during the pre-release period. The e-mail was subsequently deleted without viewing. The remaining three recipients, who had not been granted pre-release access, received and opened the e-mail on the 4 October but immediately realised it was an official statistic and reported that they did not open the attachments and deleted the e-mail without forwarding it.

All documentation provided to the Press Office official was clearly marked as Official Statistics and not for wider circulation. The Senior DOJ Statistician has investigated the matter and is content that internal processes within the statistics branch provided appropriate instruction about the release. She has conducted a refresher session with pre-release access recipients within the Press Office to highlight obligations under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

3. Impact of the breach

Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally

No press release was issued within the pre-release period and as detailed above no wider distribution of the publication or press release occurred. The breach, caused by the Press Office official, was, therefore contained within the Department of Justice. No internal or external users of these statistics were therefore impacted by this breach.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

Describe the short-term actions made to redress the situation and the longer term changes to procedures etc

A report of the incident was not received by the Senior DOJ Statistician until 11 October 2017. Immediate action measures, such as alerting recipients of the breach and deleting unread e-mails, was not appropriate.

The Senior DOJ Statistician has discussed the issue with the Press Office official and their direct line management. This exercise served to identify how the breach occurred and to clarify obligations under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Senior DOJ Statistician has also conducted a refresher session with pre-release access recipients within the Press Office to highlight obligations under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.