

# REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS



## 1. Core Information

<b>Title and link to statistical output</b>	<p><b>Monthly Deaths</b>  <a href="https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/monthly-deaths">https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/monthly-deaths</a></p> <p><b>Monthly Births</b>  <a href="https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/monthly-births">https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/monthly-births</a></p>
<b>Name of producer organisation</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency</b>
<b>Name and contact details of person dealing with report</b>	<p><b>Deborah Lyness</b>  <a href="mailto:Deborah.Lyness@nisra.gov.uk">Deborah.Lyness@nisra.gov.uk</a>            (028)90255390</p>
<b>Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)</b>	<p><a href="https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Breach%20of%20the%20Code%20of%20Practice%20for%20Statistics%200.pdf">https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Breach%20of%20the%20Code%20of%20Practice%20for%20Statistics%200.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Breach%20of%20the%20Code%20of%20Practice%20for%20Statistics%200.pdf">https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Breach%20of%20the%20Code%20of%20Practice%20for%20Statistics%200.pdf</a></p>
<b>Date of breach report</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> January 2020</b>

## 2. Circumstances of breach

<b>Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)</b>	<b>Practice T3.1/ 3.2</b> - statistics should be published on their pre-announced release dates; any changes should be announced promptly explaining the reasons for the change.
<b>Date of occurrence of breach</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> December 2019</b>
<p><i>Give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc</i></p> <p>The affected output was pre-announced on www.gov.uk to release on 7th January 2020; however it was published in error at 09.30am on 31st December 2019. Monthly figures are usually released at the end of each month, however due to other release pressures in December along with accommodation of Christmas leave the December figures were scheduled for release on 7<sup>th</sup> January. The team, however was able to get the statistics finalised by year end.</p> <p>The breach was a result of miscommunication within a relatively new team, exacerbated by experienced members of staff being on leave over the Christmas period. The NISRA Vital Stats Unit is also undergoing significant staff pressures so cover over the holiday period was at a bare minimum in order to ensure any urgent queries could be fielded as needed.</p> <p>Due to staff leave over this time, the Head of Branch was only made aware of the breach on 6th January.</p>	

## 3. Impact of the breach

<p><i>Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally</i></p> <p>The 2 figures in question became available to the public ahead of schedule, however this is considered a low key monthly release which has no pre-release access or associated media briefings.</p>
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No complaints or queries have been received as a result of the early release. While we can ascertain that there were 166 unique page views of the data, there is no evidence to show that the figures have been reported by media or elsewhere.

#### **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*

Short term actions involved a statement being issued on the NISRA website on afternoon of 6th stating the nature of the breach.

Internal processes will be reviewed – this will include a fortnightly team review of the Vital Stats pre announced work plan which resides on the NISRA website <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/vital-statistics-documentation>. This will mean all staff in the branch will be clear about key dates and any agreed deviation from these.

Code of Practice training will be prioritised for new staff who have not received such training, and refresher training on this principle (T3 Orderly Release) will be provided to existing staff at a branch meeting.

Sign off checklists are already in place for quarterly, and annual outputs and the checklist collates evidence of QA and sign off up to Head of branch. This sign off process will be embedded for monthly figures going forward.