



Department
for Work &
Pensions

From the Permanent Secretary

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Dear Ed,

8 February 2016

I have received your letter regarding the perceived breach of the ONS Labour Market Statistics. Our full response and explanation is in the attached report, but I would like to clarify some points in your letter here.

The perceived breach occurred when a member of the communications team indicated a direction of travel of the statistics minutes prior to 9:30am when the statistics were officially released. The substance of the statistics was not shared, nor were any specific numbers from the release. The information was shared via a closed, members-only project management platform used by some Government communicators. It was not shared via social media. The individual who shared the information had no idea that a non-specific reference to the statistics would be considered a breach of the statistics. It was a genuine mistake.

This is not an excuse, but I hope it provides useful context and helps to reassure you that the scale of this perceived breach was quite small and had limited if any real impact. I'm sure you would agree that this was no wilful distribution of the statistics before they were public.

DWP goes to great lengths to ensure that all of our processes around official statistics fully comply with the rules. However, in this instance we fell short of our usual high standards and I apologise for that.

My team took immediate action to ensure that this kind of error does not occur again, including, but not limited to: reviewing the pre-release access rules with the entire press and digital team, including those who do not have pre-release access to statistics; and scheduling further training with the statisticians for those that do have access.

The Department releases around 180 statistical releases every year, and had pre-release access to many more, and all comply with your rules. I know our statisticians work closely with your team, and I was therefore surprised to hear that my press office was taking calls from journalists about your letter at approximately the same time as it arrived in my office, and before the ONS had filed the official breach report – leading to inaccurate media speculation.

Nevertheless, I hope the above reassures you of the seriousness with which my Department takes all statistical releases and that we are doing all we can to ensure this doesn't happen again.

Yours sincerely

Rob Devereux

Robert Devereux