

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



## 1. Core Information

<b>Title and link to statistical output</b>	<a href="#">Covid-19 Daily Dashboard</a>
<b>Name of producer organisation</b>	Department of Health, Northern Ireland
<b>Name and contact details of person dealing with report</b>	Eugene Mooney <a href="mailto:Eugene.mooney@health-ni.gov.uk">Eugene.mooney@health-ni.gov.uk</a> 02890 90520726
<b>Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)</b>	<a href="https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-daily-dashboard-updates">https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-daily-dashboard-updates</a>
<b>Date of breach report</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> May 2020

## 2. Circumstances of breach

<b>Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)</b>	T3.1, T3.2 Statistics not published on pre-announced date
<b>Date of occurrence of breach</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
<p><i>Give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc</i></p> <p>At 9am on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May, the Department of Health (DoH) statisticians who produce the data for the daily COVID-19 dashboard were unable to access the SAS server to commence their analyses to enable the daily dashboard of statistics to be refreshed. IT Assist who are responsible for IT throughout the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) were contacted immediately and informed that the SAS metadata server failed to restart correctly following an overnight patch and reboot of the system undertaken by IT Assist. IT Assist worked to identify the cause of the problem for several hours and then it was decided to try to roll-back the server in an effort to try to rectify the issue as the server was operating correctly the day before. This process took a few hours.</p> <p>In the interim, when we realised that the problem was unlikely to be resolved in time to allow us to undertake the analysis to refresh the dashboard at 2pm we contacted the press office to enable users to be alerted to the situation. At noon, a statement was put on the DoH website home page, beside the link to the dashboard, stating that the dashboard daily refresh would be delayed. The team pursued the server issue with IT Assist throughout the day. By 8pm it was discovered that the issue was caused by a SAS licensing issue and SAS were contacted to provide assistance. They were able to solve the issue that evening on a call and the server was restored, enabling the scheduled daily refresh of the dashboard for 18<sup>th</sup> May to proceed normally.</p> <p>The only available data during 17<sup>th</sup> May was the cumulative number of COVID-19 deaths, and this was reported via a <a href="#">statement</a> on the DoH website homepage, beside the link to the dashboard, at 2pm.</p>	

### 3. Impact of the breach

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

Every attempt was made to minimise the impact. Publication of the available key statistic went ahead via the DoH website, the daily [tweet](#) was issued and the dashboard was refreshed normally on the following day (18<sup>th</sup> May).

Because we were unable to complete our analyses, The daily Cabinet Office briefing had to proceed without the NI data. There was some criticism of this, and of the lack of updated dashboard data on social media.

### 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 thorough review for the reason for the server failure was undertaken with SAS colleagues and steps have been put in place to ensure that it will not be repeated. There is now a clear method in place for ensuring both the application and metadata server are kept fully licenced and the error messages shown this time will be kept for reference in case of any repeat.