

Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation  
Office for Statistics Regulation  
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Sent via E-mail

17 April 2020

## EXCEPTIONAL PRE-RELEASE ACCESS GRANTED FOR NISRA WEEKLY DEATHS

Dear Ed

You will be aware of the recent publicity surrounding deaths due to COVID-19 and whether the published daily figures for the UK, and Northern Ireland, cover just deaths in hospital or also include deaths in care homes. You will also be aware that ONS published deaths split by location for the week ending 3<sup>rd</sup> April last Tuesday and NISRA [plan to publish deaths split by location for the week ending 10<sup>th</sup> April](#) this morning at 9.30am.

Not only is there high public interest in this information but there is also high potential for misunderstanding (due to the complexity of the definitions for both the [weekly deaths](#) published by NISRA and [daily figures](#) provided by the PHA).

To avoid the risk of misinterpretation, NISRA has taken the decision to brief journalists in advance of the release (via interactive video conferencing) with the data being released to these journalists at 9.20am. We have applied the public interest test outlined in section (5)(2)(b) of the [Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order \(NI\)](#) (*the public benefit likely to result from such access (including the timing of such access) significantly outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from such access*) and concluded that in the current circumstances the criterion is met. In particular, we consider that the Value of the statistics will be significantly enhanced at the expense of only a small risk of reduced Trustworthiness.

A list of the organisations represented by the journalists who attended the briefing (see Annex A) has been published as part of the [Pre-release Access list](#), along with the rationale for granting such access.

Yours sincerely,



**SIOBHAN CAREY, CBE**  
**Registrar General for Northern Ireland & Chief Executive NISRA**

## **ANNEX A: ORGANISATIONS GRANTED EXCEPTIONAL PRE-RELEASE ACCESS**

BBC

UTV

Belfast Telegraph

Daily Mirror

Irish Times

Sluggar O'Toole

Financial Times

Reuters

Downtown Cool FM

Q Radio

JPI media

Impartial Reporter

Belfast Media Group

Derry News

Causeway Coast and Glens News