

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

## 1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	<p><b>Mortgages: Actions for Possession Bulletin October to December 2019</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-mortgages-action-possession">https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-mortgages-action-possession</a></p> <p><b>County Court Bulletin October to December 2019</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-county-court-bulletin">https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-county-court-bulletin</a></p> <p><b>High Court Bulletin October to December 2019</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-high-court-bulletin">https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-high-court-bulletin</a></p>
Name of producer organisation	NI Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS), Department of Justice
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Joan Ritchie <a href="mailto:Joan.Ritchie@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk">Joan.Ritchie@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk</a>
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	Link will be published on this page: <a href="https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/ni-courts-and-tribunals-service-statistics">https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/ni-courts-and-tribunals-service-statistics</a>
Date of breach report	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2020

## 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	<b>Code of Practice: Trustworthiness (T3.6)</b> Statistics should be released to all users at 9.30am on a weekday.
Date of occurrence of breach	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
<p><i>Give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DoJ Press Office is responsible for publishing documents online and was due to release the statistical bulletins “<b>Mortgages: Actions for Possession Bulletin October to December 2019</b>”, “<b>County Court Bulletin October to December 2019</b>” and “<b>High Court Bulletin October to December 2019</b>” at 9.30am on 14 February 2020.</li> <li>On 3 February 2020 the relevant DoJ Deputy Principal (DP) Statistician contacted (by email and return call) the DoJ Press Office to advise that a series of bulletins were to be published on 7, 14 and 21 February 2020. This followed the same procedure agreed for the November 2019 series of publications.</li> <li>Following normal practices, the relevant DoJ DP Statistician sent an e-mail to DoJ Press Office, at 9.30 am on 6 February, with instructions to upload the first series of bulletins and related material at 9.30 am on 7 February. These were uploaded successfully.</li> </ul>	

- Following normal practices, the relevant DoJ DP Statistician sent an e-mail to DoJ Press Office, at 9.30am on 13 February, with instructions to upload the second round of bulletins (outlined above) and related material at 9.30am on 14 February.
- The DP Statistician became aware that the bulletins did not go live on the internet at 9.30am. They immediately contacted the Press Office, but the contact normally responsible for uploading publications was on leave and the alternative contact was in a meeting. A message was left with a request for a return call as soon as possible.
- The Principal Statistician was made aware of the breach and contacted NISRA's Statistical Support Branch who said that if the Press Office contact was having difficulty, NISRA staff from another department could provide them with advice. This however was not required as the Press Office contact returned the DP Statistician's call. They said they were unaware that upload of the publications to the internet was required and were unwilling, at that stage, to progress the request. They said that this was the responsibility of a named individual within the NI Courts and Tribunals Service. However, if the named individual was unable to upload the publications, they said to forward the bulletins to the Press Office and they would attempt an upload.
- The DP Statistician immediately contacted the named individual within the NICTS who was able to assist and the publication went 'live' in the link on the website at 10.30am.
- The uploading of reports/bulletins had been the responsibility of admin staff within NI Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) prior to November 2019. Due to staff changes and vacancies there was no one available to upload the series in November. It was then that DoJ Press Office stepped in to facilitate the upload of the November series of reports.
- Press Office subsequently published the first series of reports on 7 February. At the same time, they were providing training to administrative staff in NICTS to return that responsibility to NICTS. Statistical staff were not informed of this development. The person from Press Office responsible for uploading the reports (who also provided the training to NICTS admin staff) took leave and the breakdown in communication was responsible for the breach.

### 3. Impact of the breach

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

As the publication was not available at the time of release, notification of the release on social media and to external users was delayed. No known press reports were published before the full release on the DOJ website. No complaints are expected and none have been made to date.

### 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**

The responsible DP Statistician identified and liaised with an individual within the NI Courts and Tribunals Service to ensure the issue was resolved as promptly as possible.

**Longer term actions**

The Principal Statistician will liaise with the Principal Information Officer to discuss the current breach including the breakdown in communication by staff within the Press Office and what steps can be taken by the DoJ Press Office and/or the Statistics branch to prevent a re-occurrence. The Principal Statistician will emphasise the importance of releasing official statistics publications at 9.30am and NISRA's obligations under the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Following the previous breach, to minimise the risk of reoccurrence, it had been agreed at a meeting between the Principal Statistician and the Press Office on 19 November 2019 that responsibility for uploading the DoJ, YJA and NICTS publications would pass to the Statistics Branch with a DoJ Statistician being given editorial access to the website, enabling them to upload and publish documents. To enable this, full training from the Press Office was required. At that time the Press Office advised that timescales for training were dependent on when changes to the system (moving to Drupal 8) took place.

Press Office subsequently published the first series of reports on 7 February, at the same time they provided training to admin staff in NICTS to return that responsibility to NICTS. DoJ Statisticians were not informed of this development.

Given the repeated breaches, Administrative staff based within NICTS will facilitate training for statistical staff before the release of the new round of reports in May 2020. Furthermore, staff within NICTS are now aware of where responsibility for uploading reports lies, which should prevent similar breakdowns in communication. Further training will take place when changes to the new system (Drupal 8) take place.

As this is the second release time breach by the DoJ Press Office in three months, NISRA's Chief Executive will also write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Justice, in the next couple of weeks, to reinforce NISRA's obligations under the Code of Practice for Statistics.