REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

Government Statistical Service

1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	**DoH COVID-19 Dashboard (PDF Version)** **https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/daily-dashboard-updates-covid-19-september-2020**
Name of producer organisation	**Information & Analysis Directorate, Department of Health**
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	**Siobhán Morgan** **Siobhan.morgan@health-ni.gov.uk** **Tel: 028 90522442**
Name and contact details of Senior Statistician/Lead Official	**Eugene Mooney** **Eugene.mooney@health-ni.gov.uk** **Tel: 028 90520726**
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	**https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-daily-dashboard-updates**
Date of breach report	**22 September 2020**

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	**Practice T3.6 - statistics not released at the scheduled time of 09:30am (early or delayed publication)* (Note that the regular reporting time is 2pm)**
Date of occurrence of breach	**22 September 2020**

Give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc

There was an error in the publication time of the PDF version of the Department of Health (DoH) COVID-19 Dashboard, when it was published shortly after 1pm instead of 2pm.

The PDFs are sent to Press Office after 1pm daily for upload to the website after 2pm, when the Dashboard goes live. The report was accidentally set live shortly after 1pm instead of being left in draft. The report was active for approximately 5-8 minutes. A decision was taken to take down the report because most users access the latest statistics from the dashboard rather than the PDF, and it would not have been possible to refresh the dashboard before 2pm.

The PDF was set live due to human error. The normal process was to upload the documents to the website prior to 2pm and have them set as draft. At 2pm the documents would be set live. On the day of the breach, a member of staff set the PDF live in error.

During this time, a journalist from the BBC happened to google search the COVID-19 data and it brought up the DoH webpage including the 22nd September report. The journalist then tweeted this, which alerted DoH Press Office to the error. The journalist in question said that he always searches on google for the information rather than going directly to the health website however he would have found the information regardless. He happened to look at the right time. This was one individual who works for the BBC. He has 15K followers but the tweet itself only had 5 retweets and 5 likes.

3. Impact of the breach

Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally
The PDF report was accessed by a journalist, who tweeted some of the key figures shortly after 1pm before the Dashboard went live at 2pm. The tweet included the number of individuals tested in NI in the last 24 hours, the number testing positive and a breakdown by Local Government District (LGD) of the positive tests.

A search of social media found only this one reference to the data, prior to the 2pm release time.

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

On discovery of a tweet made by a BBC NI journalist, the report was taken down.
The usual practice has been to upload PDFs to the website in draft form and set live at 2pm. Press Office has since introduced new measures to prevent the error happening again. The PDFs will not be uploaded to the website until after the 2pm deadline. This may result in a slight delay in the PDF being available but will remove any further prospect of the same error reoccurring.