

Report of a breach of the Code of Practice for Statistics

Core Information

Information needed	Response
Title and link to statistical output	Annual Report on Complainant Satisfaction with services provided by the Police Ombudsman's Office in Northern Ireland, 2019/20 Complainant Satisfaction Survey - Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland - Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Name of producer organisation	Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (PONI)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Lead Official for Statistics in the Police Ombudsman's Office info@policeombudsman.org
Name and contact details of Head of Profession for Statistics	Lead Official for Statistics in the Police Ombudsman's Office info@policeombudsman.org
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	Complainant Satisfaction Survey - Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland - Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Date of breach report	7 January 2021

Circumstances of breach

Information needed	Response
Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Trustworthiness: T3: Orderly release
Date of occurrence of breach	23 October 2020

Please give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates and times:

Circumstances surrounding the pandemic have affected many departments in different ways. Within the office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (PONI), staff are working at a significantly reduced capacity in order to adhere to mandated social distancing policies in the workplace. While staff are able to work remotely, this is in a very limited capacity as they can only work 'offline', without remote access. Due to the sensitive nature of information that statisticians in PONI work with, staff are required to only access this in the workplace and not remotely.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) within PONI publish an Annual Corporate Report. The Statistics Team within PONI provide figures from the Annual Complainant Satisfaction Report to SMT to be included within the Annual Corporate Report.

Due to these constraints and increased work pressures, the publication of the Annual Complainant Satisfaction Report was delayed until 5 January 2021, although this publication date has since been delayed again due to the current closure of the Office to all but essential workers during January 2021. Prior to this date, the figures were included within the Annual Corporate Report published by SMT on 23 October 2020, meaning that unpublished figures were accessible prior to their official release.

Impact of the breach

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

There has been little impact both internally and externally as a result of this breach. The Annual Corporate Report which contains the unpublished official statistics was published on the Police Ombudsman's website and was laid before the Assembly on the 23 October 2020. The Annual Corporate Report contained 5 out of the 15 statistics in the official statistical release due to be published in early 2021.

As it was not published on the home page of the website, and as there was no social media or press release, it did not attract any media coverage or queries from the public/other organisations. Therefore, it is highly likely that only a limited number of people have seen the statistics prior to the official statistics publication.

There have been no complaints regarding the breach.

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:

Under normal circumstances, this breach would not have occurred as the Annual Complainant Satisfaction Report is published in advance of the Annual Corporate Report, with the Statistics Team providing published figures to SMT, as is normal practice. This breach resulted from a lack of communication between the Statistics Team and SMT, compounded by constraints and pressures resulting from the pandemic.

The lead statistician advised SMT of the breach and the importance of ensuring that statistics are not released in Corporate reports prior to the official statistics publication in future, and is confident that the breach was an unintentional mistake due to current working conditions and is unlikely to happen again.

To further mitigate against a re-occurrence all emails containing unpublished statistics will be clearly marked with appropriate caveats and warnings, including a reminder to check that the official statistics have been published before releasing any publication containing the statistics.

This breach only impacts the Annual Complainant Satisfaction Report, as all other end of year publications were published either fully or partially before the 23 October 2020.