

REPORT OF EXCEPTION TO THE NATIONAL STATISTICS CODE OF PRACTICE, RELEASE PRACTICES PROTOCOL

Organisation: Department for Work and Pensions

Relevant document: Release Practices protocol.

Relevant section: Principle 4 paragraph (e).

Exception: Households Below Average Income (HBAI) results for 2002/3 were published on 30th March. Permission has been given to share results with three policy officials in the DWP children and poverty teams and two Treasury officials in the Work Incentives and Poverty Analysis team, from 17th March, 9 working days in advance of publication.

Reason for exception: The HBAI report is a large and complex piece of analysis that is used to monitor progress on the joint DWP/HMT PSA target to reduce child poverty. Publication of the results always generates considerable media interest and Ministers will be extensively questioned on the results and on the implications for government policy. The policy analysts given early access have experience of the topic and will be of great help in dealing with queries and preparing briefing in the run up to publication.

The likely need to give earlier pre-release access for this type of report was mentioned by DWP's Secretary of State in his response to the draft Release Practices Protocol. Provision for early access for officials, to assist in Ministerial briefing on complex results, is made in DWP's National Statistics Compliance Statement for the Protocol on Release Practices.

Given these circumstances I judged it appropriate to agree to the limited early access requested – noting that Ministers and other advisors will remain within the protocol limit of five days pre-release access.

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