

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Affordable Housing Provision in Wales, 2010-11
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2011/111019/?lang=en>

Name of Producer Organisation

Welsh Government

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

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16 November 2011

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Code of Practice Protocol 2: Release Practices – Practice 7
...limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes.

Date of occurrence

12th October 2011. We became aware of the breach on the afternoon of 12th October as we were finalising the release and preparing briefing for the Minister (publication was on 19th October 2011).

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

An e-mail to policy colleagues with pre-release access was sent to ascertain whether

policy were recommending a statement or if the release was likely to attract attention at weekly questions on Assembly Business, and to clarify whether a reference to capital funding was correct. In order to respond to our e-mail one of the policy colleagues passed the e-mail and draft release on to 3 other policy colleagues who did not have pre-release access. This happened despite our e-mail being comprehensively marked as "RESTRICTED STATISTICS" and including a warning about the nature of pre-release access under the Code of Practice, instructions not to forward or divulge the contents to anyone and to contact the originator if circumstances should arise where an additional colleague should require pre-release access.

Reasons for breach

The e-mail recipient did not realise that it meant the e-mail and contents could not be passed on to the colleagues in question.

3 Reactions and Impact

There is no evidence that the inadvertent release has been read by anyone other than those stated above, leaked into the public domain or has compromised the official release. The person responsible apologised for mistakenly passing on the information.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

Immediate actions taken: as soon as the breach was discovered the colleague who had forwarded the email and all other recipients were contacted. All involved were informed immediately via e-mail from Rhiannon Caunt that this was a breach and were reminded that if when receiving pre-release material they realise others need access they need to come back to us to request this access. Those who had wrongly received the e-mail and its content were asked to delete the e-mail and not to forward on any further. This was done within 30 minutes of the e-mail being accidentally passed on.

The individual responsible apologised and stated they forgot about the code of practice in their attempt to ascertain an accurate response to a question we posed.

No further action is required at this stage. The colleague was fully aware of the rules and I am assured that this was a one off mistake. I have informed the colleague in question via telephone conversation that pre-release access is a privilege and any further breach could result in the privilege being removed.