

## 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)

Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly First Release to March 2012

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/period-ending-march-2012/index.html>

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

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

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### 2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 release practices/Practice 4 issue releases at 09:30

Date of occurrence

19 July 2012

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

Release published before 09:30 on the ONS intranet page (internal webpage for ONS staff).

Reasons for breach

The release commentary page was originally set to go live automatically at 07:00 along with other items on the internal ONS intranet page.

This time was later changed to 09:30 because of it being an Official/National Statistic (cannot be published before 09:30) and to coincide with the actual public release time of 09:30.

Due to system upgrades, the system failed to change to the new time and the page went live at 07:00.

The error was discovered at 07:57 and the article was removed immediately.

### **3 Reactions and Impact**

Moderate – The system failure is being investigated – see corrective actions.

The article was republished at 09:47.

Between 07:00 and 07:57 there were 74 views of the page by internal ONS Staff. ONS understands the importance of equal access to statistics and ONS is ensuring this transgression and its wider implications are being addressed – see corrective actions below.

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

#### **Short tem**

When the error was discovered the article was removed immediately.

It is not standard practice for the ONS intranet team to receive Official/National Statistics before 09:30.

ONS has issued a notice to the heads of the business areas within ONS reminding them that their responsibilities under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics apply to information published on its internal and external websites. Specific emphasis was placed on not submitting time sensitive bulletins or releases before 09:30 on their intended day of publication. The Communications team have updated their desk notes to ensure that they check whether items they are sent are market sensitive or

not and their appropriate release times.

**Longer Term**

A disclaimer reflecting the notice to the business areas described above has been added on the internal ONS intranet form. It states the ONS intranet team will not publish time sensitive releases until after 09:30 and reiterates time sensitive bulletins or data must not be submitted before 09:30 on the intended day of publication.

Further communication to business areas on their obligations under the Code of Practice and in particular in relation to the publication of time sensitive releases is being reiterated through Code of Practice training which is being rolled out in September 2012.

System failure investigation - the ONS Tridion Support team and the Fujitsu project manager have been working to identify a fix since the breach was reported. An SDL contractor (the company that make Tridion) is now on site and is working to resolve the issue. A fix has been identified and is undergoing rigorous testing to ensure it works.