

## 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)

[Employment Support Allowance: Outcomes – new claims](#), July 2012 release

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

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

David Frazer, Head of Profession for Statistics, DWP  
0191 216 6664  
30 July 2012.

### 2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Practice 7 – limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Protocol 2, Practice 8 - ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication.

Date of occurrence

23 July 2012

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

The day before release, a press officer sent a draft ministerial press release to a number of policy contacts, including one who was not on the Pre-Release Access (PRA) list. This press release contained restricted statistics excerpted from the full publication.

The press officer had received the statistics under usual PRA arrangements, via an e-mail that states that the enclosed statistics were not to be forwarded to anyone not on the PRA list.

The statisticians responsible for the publication immediately contacted the press office, and the Official who was erroneously sent the statistics to make them aware of their error. The e-mail had already been opened.

One of the policy contacts with Pre-Release Access then replied to the email chain. The statisticians responsible contacted them to make them aware of the breach and informed all of those in the email chain not to reply to or forward on the information.

Reasons for breach

There is no reason to believe that this was anything other than an honest mistake by the official concerned, who was looking to clear lines to be used in the press release and overlooked the requirements of the pre-release arrangements.

### **3 Reactions and Impact**

When the statisticians involved in producing the report saw the e-mails, they informed the Head of Profession that a breach had taken place. They also contacted the officials who had sent the e-mails, informing them that their actions had caused a breach, and reminding them of their responsibilities under the Code, given their privileged access.

There was no adverse impact, as the information was not used in advance of its official release.

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

As stated above, all officials who transmitted or received the restricted submission have been informed of the breach and reminded of the need to limit Pre-Release Access.

The Head of Profession for Statistics has also spoken with the Director of Communications, and the Chief Statistician's office will be organising training on awareness and implementation of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics for the Press Office and other departmental officials.

The Chief Statistician will also write to all departmental officials who receive Pre-Release Access and stress the importance of maintaining its integrity.

**5 Any other relevant supporting material (including link to published statements about this breach)**

A copy of this breach report will be published in the relevant areas of both DWP's and the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) websites.