

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Help to Buy mortgage guarantee scheme quarterly statistics: October 2013 to June 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/help-to-buy-mortgage-guarantee-scheme-quarterly-statistics-october-2013-to-june-2015>

Name of Producer Organisation

HM Treasury (HMT)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

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11 September 2015

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Release Practices

Practice 4: "Issue statistical releases at a standard time of 09:30 on a weekday to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours".

Date of occurrence

9 September 2015

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

The publication due to go out at 9.30 on Wednesday 9 September 2015 was not made

available until 10:58.

A similar breach was recorded on 5 February 2014, the report is at the link below:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/breach-reports/uk-official-holdings-of-reserves---january-2014.pdf>

Reasons for breach

A policy statement on Help to Buy that was published on the same day as the Official Statistics was subject to late amendment and its publication on the website was therefore subject to delay. Due to a misunderstanding the publication of the Official Statistics release was similarly delayed and therefore not published at 9.30.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

The team that produce the statistics, who are policy officials rather than professional statisticians and have had recent staff turnover, contacted me, as HoP, for advice on how to respond to the delay in publication at 10.20. I was attending conference so was not able to respond immediately. When I did respond, my advice to publish as soon as possible was acted on promptly and the release was published at 10.58.

The Department for Communities and Local Government, who also released statistics on the Help to Buy scheme (the Equity Loan element) on 9 September, contacted the Help to Buy policy team at around 10.20 to inquire as to why the HMT release had not yet been published.

I have not been made aware of any other reaction from outside HMT.

4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

The existing guidance on the treatment of Official Statistics will be reinforced and recirculated within the Communication team.

The communications arrangements around the transmission of documents for publication as Official Statistics, mentioned in the previous breach report, will be recirculated and reinforced amongst teams that produce Official Statistics. These involve, flagging as Official Statistics with a scheduled release time, providing the Communications team with advance notice of Official Statistics releases and ensuring that group inboxes are used for these communications.

As Head of Profession, I will ensure via documentation and personal contact that all new (and existing) members of teams who produce Official Statistics are aware of all the above arrangements and the requirements of the Code of Practise in the area of release practises.