

## 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 PRA to statistics are covered in the relevant PRA 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)

[Winter fuel payments](#), September 2012

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

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, 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

25 September 2012

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

On 25 September, Pre-Release Access (PRA) to the Winter Fuel payments statistical tables and their associated briefing material was given to individuals

holding the posts listed on the PRA list.

After the emails were sent at 09:30, an eligible recipient of this PRA forwarded the material to an individual not eligible for PRA.

Reasons for breach

The two officials involved work in the same policy team and although the more senior official had requested and been granted PRA, it was actually the junior who in this instance was asked to complete the necessary ministerial handling submission and briefing.

### **3 Reactions and Impact**

When the statisticians involved in producing the report saw the e-mails, they informed the HoP and the Permanent Secretary 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 publicly 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 PRA.

The Chief Statistician spoke with the policy team concerned and explained the context and obligations behind PRA arrangements, and detailed the possible consequences of failing to adhere to the requirements.

The HoP wrote to all senior policy leads and departmental lead analysts to similarly restate these obligations. The departmental executive team have discussed the issue and have reiterated the seriousness of any breaches of the Code.

Departmental statisticians have established more formal, closer working relationships with the policy team and will also be running seminars with more junior policy officials and press officers to educate non-Statisticians on the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The PRA lists for the publication have been amended to ensure that the most useful eligible official from the policy team now receives PRA.

We have also amended the text that accompanies all pre-release statistics, to strengthen the message that the statistics should not be forwarded or discussed with those who have not been granted PRA.

**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 the Authority website and referenced from DWPs website.