

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')

NHS Dental Statistics for England Quarter 1, 2015-16 at:

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB19117>

Name of Producer Organisation

Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)

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

Chris Roebuck
Director of Benefits & Utilisation and Interim Head of Profession for Statistics
Health and Social Care Information Centre
Trevelyan Square, Boar Lane, Leeds LS1 6AE
0113 254 2484
chris.roebuck@hscic.gov.uk
27 November 2015

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 - Release practices

- Practice 7 – Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation, limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Publish records of those who have access prior to release.
- 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. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances.

Date of occurrence

25 November 2015

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

- A Department of Health (DH) pre-release recipient mistakenly issued 24-hour pre-release material to someone not on the approved list. This occurred at 13:23 on 25 November 2015.
- The error happened when forwarding the pre-release access email and the wrong contact was selected from Outlook's AutoComplete list.
- The mistake was noted immediately and the briefing co-ordinator contacted the HSCIC.
- The incorrect contact was a colleague within DH itself rather than an external party.
- The materials were deleted unread from the incorrect recipient's Inbox and Deleted Items folders.

Reasons for breach

Human error occurred. The instructions in the email clearly stated that the material must not be shared, circulated, published or otherwise discussed with anyone not on the approved list prior to the official publication date and time. However, the contents were inadvertently forwarded to the wrong contact.

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

The recipient confirmed that the email and attachment were deleted unread. The pre-release materials were not seen by any unauthorised parties.

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

- The HSCIC Head of Profession has discussed the breach with the DH Head of Profession in and has been assured that colleagues in the Department (especially the Press Office) understand the importance of complying with the Code when handling pre-release access material.
- The DH Head of Profession and DH briefing co-ordinator have discussed this with the Press Office and will be updating their information pack for their Press Office.
- The Statistical Governance Officer discussed the breach with the briefing co-ordinator and sought assurances that this will not reoccur.
- We will reiterate the controls needed when future pre-release access requests are received. This will be clearly stated when the breaching parties are next involved in a PRA request, in addition to being stated every time we grant approval to a pre-release access request.