

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')

National Rail Passenger Survey

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction>

Name of Producer Organisation

Transport Focus

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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Date of report: 16/02/16

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 (release Practices), 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

27 January 2016

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

A half page advertisement in London's Metro newspaper read '95 per cent of rail passengers on the Heathrow Express were satisfied overall with their journey'.

Reasons for breach

Certain authorised communication and media contacts along with a limited number of key stakeholders have access to data 24 hours prior to publication, known as pre-release access (PRA). The data provided is confidential and not to be shared prior to publication, this guidance is re-iterated within the accompanying e-mail provided. However a member of staff from Heathrow Express who was on the pre-release list made a mistake by not reading the accompanying email thoroughly enough and so did not realise that the embargo was until 09:30 on the 27 January (assuming instead that it was midnight the night before) and therefore the advertisement was put in the Metro newspaper one day too early.

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

The breach was first spotted by a member of the Transport Focus communications team on their way to work whilst reading the newspaper. We are not aware of any other comment or reaction to the matter.

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

An investigation was launched to trace the source of the breach by contacting Heathrow Express, who appeared to be the source of the breach. They admitted someone within their organisation had been at fault and apologised for the error. Those with pre-release access have been reminded about their responsibilities under the code. Also the person who was responsible for the breach has discussed the circumstances with senior colleagues and as a consequence received additional training on their responsibilities regarding the embargo rules.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction>