

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

1. Core Information [\[guidance\]](#)

Title and link to statistical output	England NHS Health Check 2018-19 quarter 4 activity data https://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk/commissioners-and-providers/data/
Name of producer organisation	Public Health England
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Official Statistics support officer - Elizabeth Asher Head of Profession – Clare Griffiths
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	https://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk/commissioners-and-providers/data/
Date of breach report	15 May 2019

2. Circumstances of breach [\[guidance\]](#)

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Principle T3 – Orderly Release Practice T3.6 - statistics not released at the scheduled time of 09:30am (early publication)
Date of occurrence of breach	1 ST April 2019- 9 May 2019
<p><i>Give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc</i></p> <p>Every quarter, 152 local authorities submit their quarterly NHS Health Check activity data: number of NHS Health Check offers and number of NHS Health Check completed in the quarter.</p> <p>Local authorities enter the data via a log-in only portal on the https://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk website to submit the data to PHE.</p> <p>In addition to the <i>data collection</i> function provided by this website, the website also provides a <i>data publication</i> function: https://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk/commissioners-and-providers/data/ (for clarity, this link is referred to as the “<i>Healthcheck data page</i>” in the account below).</p> <p>Note that NHS Health Check quarterly activity data are also published on PHE website: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/nhs-health-check-detailed: for clarity, this link is referred to as the “<i>Fingertips page</i>” in the account below.</p> <p>For Quarter 4, the portal was opened for submissions from 1st April to 10th of May 2019.</p> <p>2018-19 Quarter 4 data (Jan-Mar 2019) will be published on the 13th of June: this is an official statistics release.</p> <p>INCIDENT</p> <p>We discovered on 9 May that Quarter 4 data was included in cumulative counts displayed on the “<i>Healthcheck data page</i>” as local authorities submitted their Quarter 4 data. It meant that although Quarter 4 data themselves were not displayed, Quarter 4 numbers were included in these totals.</p> <p>The issue was discovered by analyst from PHE South East who noted that data displayed on the “<i>Healthcheck data page</i>” did not match the data published on the “<i>Fingertips page</i>”.</p>	

Therefore, between 1st April and 9th May, people using the “*Healthcheck data page*” to obtain NHS Health Check activity data would have obtained incorrect cumulative (Quarter 1 2014-15 to Quarter 3 2018-19) data.

CAUSE

The company managing the HealthCheck website had carried out a major and planned software update: the breach was a consequence of this update. While tests were undertaken by the provider to check that the numbers displayed were accurate, those tests were done prior to the opening of the Quarter 4 data collection portal.

3. Impact of the breach [\[guidance\]](#)

Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally

Data published on the “*Healthcheck data page*” is publicly available.

Between 1st April and 9th May, people using the “*Healthcheck data page*” to obtain NHS Health Check activity data would have obtained incorrect cumulative (Quarter 1 2014-15 to Quarter 3 2018-19) data as well as incorrect annual 2018-19 data.

In theory, someone suspecting the problem could also have subtracted the correct “*Fingertips page*” cumulative data from the data on the “*Healthcheck data page*” (incorrect as now including some but not all Quarter 4 data) to obtain an estimate of Quarter 4 data before its due Publication date of 13th June.

This would have only been an *estimate* as the “*Healthcheck data page*” incorrect cumulative data would have changed constantly as local authorities were submitting new Q4 data. It is not uncommon for a local authority to submit data several days before the deadline to then change it again on deadline day (10th May) as they receive new information.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence [\[guidance\]](#)

Describe the short-term actions made to redress the situation and the longer term changes to procedures etc

Short term actions

- As soon as the breach was discovered, PHE asked the website manager to investigate and he stopped the Quarter 4 data being included in the cumulative counts. The breach ceased on 9 May within an hour of being reported.
- PHE has logged the data breach on its internal Data breach log.
- PHE is preparing a statement to appear on <https://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk>

Draft Statement:

“PHE has become aware that between 1 April 2019 and 9 May 2019, incorrect yearly and 5-year cumulative NHS Health Check activity data were displayed on <https://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk/commissioners-and-providers/data/>

The error also affected columns D, E, F, G, J, K, L M, P and Q of the associated csv file: NHS Health Check Data (last quarter and cumulative).

The issue was resolved on 9 May 2019 at 11:50am.

This issue **did not** affect yearly and 5-year cumulative NHS Health Check activity data displayed on [Fingertips](#).

Please contact nhshealthchecks.mailbox@phe.gov.uk if you have any questions or concerns regarding this issue.”

Longer term action

As of August 2019, PHE will no longer publish data on the <https://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk> website; NHS health Check activity data will only be published on <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/nhs-health-check-detailed>. This means there is no risk of such a breach occurring in future.