

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS



1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	Shielding Behavioural Survey results England
Name of producer organisation	Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Division and Branch	Strategy and engagement, Public Services Analysis Team
Responsible Divisional Director (DD)	Hugh Stickland
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Name: Tim Gibbs Email: Tim.gibbs@ons.gov.uk Telephone: 01633 456921
Name and contact details of Head of Profession for Statistics	Name: Iain Bell Email: iain.bell@ons.gov.uk
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of breach report	31 May 2010

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Trustworthiness: Orderly release T3.4 - The circulation of statistics in their final form ahead of their publication should be restricted to eligible recipients. No indication of the statistics should be made public and the statistics should not be given to any other party without prior permission for access.
Date of occurrence of breach	31 May 2020
<p>The Shielding Behavioural Survey is a new survey commissioned to provide an evidence base for individuals Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) to COVID-19. The survey involves collaboration between the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Government Digital Service (GDS).</p> <p>Given the necessity for timely availability of information to aid Government operational decision-making in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, ONS provide management information based on the survey, in the form of a slide pack, for internal Government use. This is in line with the Government Statistical Service's published policy on use of Management Information (MI). In order to achieve equal access to the information in these circumstances, ONS publishes the information as soon as is practicable, taking account of relevant protocols.</p> <p>The slide pack is sent to DHSC for review. On reaching agreement to the final version, the MI is then shared with other government departments including MHCLG, DWP and Cabinet Office, with instructions that it is for internal use only.</p> <p>Some of the findings from the slide pack were used by the Secretary of State (SoS) of MHCLG in the UK Government daily coronavirus update on 31 May 2020. The lines were included in his speaking notes in error, due to multiple individuals involved in drafting at pace, in the run up to the press conference. The SoS for MHCLG did not mention the source of the information. The language he used was general, for example, "I know that a number of</p>	

those shielding are working from home”. The most specific comment made was “half of those shielding haven’t left their home for eight or nine weeks”.

3. Impact of the breach

The data were presented at the UK Government’s daily coronavirus press conference. As that event was televised there would have been many viewers watching the announcement. Subsequently, no further uses of the data in public have come to our attention. At the time of the broadcast the data were unpublished and not in the public domain.

A full publication was released on 15 June 2020 for data collected between 28 May and 3 June:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronavirusandshieldingofclinicallyextremelyvulnerablepeopleinengland/28mayto3june2020>

However, a table containing the findings that were shared, relating to data collected between 14-19 May, was published 3 June 2020:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthcaresystem/adhocs/11815behavioursofclinicallyextremelyvulnerableindividualsandthosetheylivewithinresponsetoshieldingguidance14to19may2020england>

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

- The MHCLG Head of Profession for Statistics will reiterate to Private Offices and Ministerial teams, their responsibilities to comply with the principles and practices of the Code of Practice for Statistics.
- An ad-hoc table was published on 3 June 2020, effectively bringing forward the date of publication:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthcaresystem/adhocs/11815behavioursofclinicallyextremelyvulnerableindividualsandthosetheylivewithinresponsetoshieldingguidance14to19may2020england>
- When the findings were shared in public, a full publication plan was devised to ensure that data is in the public domain as soon as practical and of sufficient quality. The first publication was on 15 June, publishing data collected between 28 May and 3 June. Slide packs were still shared with DHSC for policy purposes prior to publication, as data needed to be signed off by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) or their deputy.