

Report of a breach of the Code of Practice for Statistics

Core Information

Information needed	Response
Title and link to statistical output	The People and Nature Survey for England: Children's survey
Name of producer organisation	Natural England (NE)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Simon Doxford (NE Lead Official) simon.doxford@naturalengland.org.uk
Name and contact details of Head of Profession for Statistics or Lead Official	Defra Head of Profession – Ken Roy (ken.roy@naturalengland.org.uk)
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of breach report	13/10/2020

Circumstances of breach

Information needed	Response
Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Trustworthiness: Principle T3, Practices T3.3,T3.4
Date of occurrence of breach	13/10/2020

The People and Nature Survey for England: Children's survey is due to be published for the first time on the 14 October 2020 at 9.30. This survey includes research commissioned by Natural England to understand the perspective of children and young people relating to nature during COVID-19.

A draft of the statistics was shared with a pre-arranged list of individuals under the 24-hour pre-release access order on 13 October 2020. At 15.02 of 13 October, one of these individuals – a senior communications officer – circulated a draft press release containing some headline statistics from the Children's survey to others on the pre-release access list, but mistakenly included another Natural England colleague without permission to receive details of the statistics. The production team quickly realised the mistake, the colleague was contacted, and the email and its contents deleted at 15.17 on the 13 October.

Impact of the breach

The impact of this breach was low. The unpublished data – summary statistics only - were received by one unauthorised email account within government for a period of 15 minutes. The email was read by the recipient and deleted without being shared further.

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

In the short term, the individual who was mistakenly provided with the unpublished summary figures was contacted as soon as the error was noticed, advised not to share them more widely and deleted the information received.

In advance of the next People and Nature survey statistical release, the production team will review those granted pre-release access. The Lead Official at Natural England will remind staff, verbally and in writing, about the correct protocols and will hold additional training sessions where necessary. All documents had been circulated with the correct accompanying guidance detailing responsibilities under the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008 including security markings and instructions not to share more widely. However, the team will consider options to strengthen this messaging and ensure this guidance is included on all subsequent communications.