

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Summary Hospital-level Mortality Indicator (SHMI) - Deaths associated with hospitalisation, England, April 2010 - March 2011, Experimental Statistics

Link: <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/shmi1011>

Name of Producer Organisation

NHS Information Centre for health and social care ('the NHS IC')

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

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Report made: 02 November 2011

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 'Release practices', Practices 3 and 4

Date of occurrence

27 October 2011

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

The statistical output – which is not designated as National Statistics – was not available on our website for around 30 minutes after its planned release and was not accessible through published URLs (including that entered onto the National

Statistics Publication Hub) for around 1 hour after its planned release, contrary to the requirements of Protocol 2, Practice 4 and (for official statistics designated as National Statistics) Protocol 2, Practice 3.

Reasons for breach

Our website hosting suffered a major technical fault which corrupted its backend content management system and thus prevented the release from being able to be made live on the web at 9:30am.

3 Reactions and Impact

Our press office issued our statistical press notice at 9:30am on 27 October to approximately 500 journalists, including a weblink to the statistical release. An announcement of the publication, including a weblink, was also tweeted onto the Twitter website (a popular micro-blogging site).

Around 10 journalists contacted us directly alerting us to the problem with the website. Some mention of the difficulties and delay has been made in the press and on Twitter. We subsequently tweeted to our Twitter followers that our web pages, including the statistical release and the statistical press notice, had become accessible.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

Technical solutions were explored with all possible effort with our web agency. The publication was available on our website by 10:00am and the access URLs (including the URL for the link on the Publication Hub) were working by 10:30am.

Our press office emailed Excel spreadsheets and other materials to key national journalists, making the statistics otherwise available to them.

We are procuring a new web hosting contract.

5 Any other relevant supporting material (including link to published statements about this breach)

None.