

## 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')

Adult Alcohol Statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System 2013/14  
<http://www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/adult-alcohol-statistics-report-2013-14.pdf>

Name of Producer Organisation

Public Health England (PHE)

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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### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, 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. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances.

Date of occurrence

27 October 2014

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

As part of the clearance process for a ministerial briefing, an email was disseminated internally within Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health (DH), containing the submission, which included four headline figures from the statistical publication. Not all the recipients of the email were on the pre-release access list for the statistics.

Reasons for breach

Lack of understanding about the restrictions imposed by the pre-release access order when handling restricted statistics internally for ministerial briefing.

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

The impact and reaction were both negligible as the email was recalled immediately once the breach had been identified. All those that had received it in error were asked to delete the relevant email and associated document. None of the statistics were shared outside of PHE or DH. Therefore no one outside of these two government departments had any access to these statistics prior to publication and those that mistakenly received it deleted the contents immediately once notified.

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

The process for clearing ministerial briefings where restricted statistics are involved has been reviewed to ensure that going forward only those named on the pre-release access list are on any subsequent copy list.

Other safeguards to be implemented to prevent reoccurrence:

The responsible statistician to ensure that all colleagues in PHE that will be part of any pre-release use of data to be fully briefed on the conditions relating to pre-release access of official statistics.

The requirements for clear security marking of national or official statistics documents circulated to recipients on pre-release access lists, giving clear instructions that the information is not to be shared before publication, to be emphasised.

All internal (and external) communications where data is appropriately shared before publication to be clearly labelled, to advise recipients on how to treat the data and their responsibilities when handling such data.

### **5. Links to published statements about this breach**

When the breach report is published on the UK Statistics Authority website we will link to it from our website as soon as possible at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/about/statistics>