

## 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)

Audiology Waiting times

Name of Producer Organisation

Information Services Division, NHS National Services Scotland

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

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### 2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 – Release Practices; Practice 7 – limit pre-release access

Date of occurrence

15 February 2010

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

A recipient in a supplier in a Scottish NHS Board area given early access to the data for quality assurance purposes inadvertently forwarded on the data by email to someone in another NHS organisation in England (a Primary Care Trust). This happened via the NHSmail application which gives access to a register of mail addresses of all NHS employees in the UK.

Reasons for breach

Incorrect email address was used.

### **3 Reactions and Impact**

As soon as the mistake was recognised in the NHS Boards attempts were made to retract the email and remove it from local IT systems although this could not guarantee that it had not been read. The person who had been sent the email in error was contacted by email and phone to alert them and ask them to delete the email. No direct contact was made despite several attempts.

There is no evidence that the inadvertent release has been read by anyone, leaked into the public domain or has compromised the official release (planned for 23 February 2010).

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

The person responsible in the supplier Board recognised the error straight away and took corrective action to contact the recipient straight away. Internally, staff will be reminded to take care when using the register of email addresses within NHSmail particularly in the case with multiple entries of the same name across different NHS organisations.

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