

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)

This report covers the nine reportable breaches of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, protocol 2, practice 4 (09:30 releases). The time period covered is from the end of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) exemption on 31 August 2011, until the end of February 2012 (note that there were no reportable breaches in January or February 2012). These breaches have occurred because of problems with the ONS website and release publication system launched in August 2011.

The table below lists all ONS reportable breaches of protocol 2, practice 4 since the end of the exemption.

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics

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

Stephen Penneck, Director-General, ONS

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, practice 4

Date of occurrence

See table below for a full list of outputs and dates

Table of reportable breaches to protocol 2, practice 4 1 September 2011 – 31 January 2012

output	date of release	time of release
Cancer Statistics Registration, England, 2009	7.9.11	10:30
Labour Force Survey Single Month Estimates - September 2011	9.9.11	12:30
Labour Productivity	6.10.11	13:25
UK Economic Accounts Q2 2011	25.10.11	10:50
GDP Preliminary Estimate Q3 2011	1.11.11	16:15
Labour Market Statistics	16.11.11	09:33
Blue Book 2011	23.11.11	19:00
Retail Sales Index - November 2011	15.12.11	09:33
Labour Productivity Q3 2011	23.12.11	09:47

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

Releases not published at 09:30 on the ONS web site.

Reasons for breach

In August 2011, ONS launched our new website, and a new system for publishing our statistical releases on the website. This launch did not go as well as we had hoped, and delays to publishing over this time period have occurred as a result of both technical issues with the new website and processing issues with publication using the new system.

3 Reactions and Impact

Minor - issues have generally been fixed quickly, limiting the external impact.

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

ONS implemented a Web Recovery Programme to address the issues with the new website. The Web Recovery team has carried out a programme of ongoing improvements and fixes as technical issues have arisen. The launch of the final package of improvements in March 2012 should resolve many outstanding technical issues, although some may remain.

Recommendations for progressing these will be taken forward in the next financial year. The Web Recovery Programme has also looked at improvements to the process of publishing releases. Options and recommendations will be put forward by the team as part of the final Web Recovery Programme report due for delivery Spring 2012.

As technical issues have been fixed, and staff have familiarised themselves with the new way of publishing, the number of reportable breaches has fallen, with none occurring in January or February 2012.

In addition to the internal actions taken to improve our website, ONS has been working with stakeholders to prioritise the Web Recovery work plan and keep them informed.

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

A statement on the problems with our website, and corrective actions taken, was published in December 2011:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/media-centre/statements/website-update/index.html>