

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)

Defence Inflation Estimates 2010/11
<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&thiscontent=750&date=2011-09-28&pubType=0&PublishTime=09:30:00&from=home&tabOption=1>

Name of Producer Organisation

Defence Analytical Services and Advice

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

Ian Gouldbourne, Head of Profession for Statistics, Ministry of Defence

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice(s)

Breach of pre-release access: the information was passed by a Defence official who was on the pre-release list for this publication to another Defence official, with a different area of responsibility, who was not; this official also forwarded it to one further Defence official who likewise was not on the pre-release list. (Protocol 2, practice 8).

Date of occurrence

27th September 2011

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

DASA sent the Statistics Notice, Press Brief and Submission to our policy lead (in Defence Resources) and Press Office at 09:30 on 27th September (the pre-release date) for comment, prior to sending them to Defence Ministers.

An official at Defence Resources sought advice on a specific aspect of it – “civilian pay LTT” – from an official in Defence Civilian Policy (who was not on the pre-release access list); he was provided with access after 09:30. This official in Defence Civilian Policy forwarded it to an official in Defence Service Personnel Policy because there was a comparison between Civilian and Service pay.

Reasons for breach

There is no reason to believe that these were anything other than honest mistakes by the officials concerned who were seeking advice from the appropriate policy experts, and overlooked the requirements of the pre-release arrangements.

3 Reactions and Impact

When DASA staff realised what had happened they immediately contacted the officials concerned (see also 4 below).

There was no adverse impact; information was not used in advance of its official release.

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

Following discussions: the HOP agreed that the official in Defence Civilian Policy (who had received the pre-release information) had good reason to be given access, so the post was added to the pre-release list; it was determined that the official in Defence Service Personnel Policy (who had received the pre-release information) had insufficient reason to be given access, so the post was not added to the published pre-release list.

The official who first forwarded the information inappropriately was reminded of the need, under the Code of Practice, to keep the information under a tight hold during the period of pre-release and not to forward it beyond the agreed set of officials.

The official who had been given access improperly (and had forwarded it improperly) was informed of the Code and the arrangements whereby he was granted pre-release access and had been added to the list of pre-release recipients.

More broadly, a note will be issued to ensure that all pre-release recipients of Defence Official Statistics appreciate and follow the Code of Practice rules under which they are allowed this privileged access.

5 Link to published statements about this breach

[NONE]

6 Any other relevant supporting material

The updated pre-release list is as follows:

Defence Inflation Estimates

As at: 30 September 2011

24-hour pre-release access given to:-

PS/Secretary of State

PS/Min(AF)

PS/Min(DPWV)

PS/Min(DEST)

PS/Min(ISS)

PS/USofS

PS/PUS

PS/CDS

DES CDM

DMC-Director Media Communication

DG Finance

DG Transformation

DG PERS

SofS-Special Advisers SA1

SofS-Special Advisers SA2

SofS-Special Advisers SA3

Def Res Hd

Def Res Dep Hd (Sec)

Def Res Exp Sec

DCP-EF PMRR AH [#]

DMC-News Equipment 1

DMC-News Equipment 2

DASA-DESA-DD

DASA-DIR

DASA-HEALTH INFO AND SURVEYS Hd

DASA-PSA DD

[#] is the extra recipient added.

The updated pre-release list was published on the DASA website on 30th September 2011