

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)

HMRC Tax and NIC Receipts
http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/tax_receipts/tax-nic-receipts-info-analysis.pdf

Name of Producer Organisation

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

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

Sean Whellams, Head of Profession (HoP) for Statistics, HMRC
sean.whellams@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk
0207 1470309

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Principle 1, Practice 4: Publish statistical reports according to a published timetable that takes account of user needs.

Protocol 2, Practice 1: Release statistical reports as soon as they are judged ready, so there is no opportunity, or perception of opportunity, for the release to be withheld or delayed.

Practice 4: Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 09:30 on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours.

Date of occurrence

Friday 20 July 2012

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

The publication was not released onto the HMRC website until around 13:00 on the pre-announced date.

Reasons for breach

Unfortunately, the web publishing team experienced technical issues with the publishing process. As the web publishing environment is a complex one, comprising of multiple servers across several locations investigations can take time to identify where the point of failure lies and then to implement a suitable solution that does not compromise the integrity of the overall website when the services are restored. In this instance as soon the point in the publishing process that caused the failure (resulting to the breach) had been identified - that an automatic reboot to the servers had not run - a manual reboot to complete a successful publish was quickly implemented.

3 Reactions and Impact

On the morning of publication, one external query was received regarding the delay but they were satisfied with the quick response in getting the issue resolved. There were no further queries (internally or externally).

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

- At the point that the automatic reboot on the servers had been identified as not working as it should have and therefore causing the delay to the publication, a manual reboot was immediately put in place as a short-term fix to make the release public as soon as possible – in this case making the release live a few hours later than originally scheduled.
- As a long-term solution for other such releases, changes were then developed and initiated to the servers to ensure automatic reboots would occur if needed. This was fully implemented by 26 July.
- HMRC can confirm that to date there have been no further occurrences of this issue.

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

A statement about the breach was made on the HMRC Statistics Announcements page: http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/ann_index.htm