

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

Measuring National Well-being – Life in the UK 2012 Report

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

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

Glen Watson, Director General (DG) 20 November 2012

Email: dg@ons.gsi.gov.uk

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Practice 7: Release Practices:

“Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on Pre-release Access (PRA) set out in legislation, limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Publish records of those who have access prior to release”

Protocol 2, Practice 8: Release Practices:

“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.”

The PRA to Official Statistics Order 2008 sets out the rules and principles relating to the granting of pre-release access to official statistics produced by the UK Government. This came into force on 1 December 2008.

Date of occurrence

19 November 2012

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

Pre-release versions of the above report were sent to two incorrect contacts at the Scottish Government.(SG)

Reasons for breach

A pre release database is used to select the list of names that receive the (PRA). However, the individual from the business area did not follow the correct process for identifying the correct names and this meant that the list selected for the (SG) was for a different release. This led to the two people at SG receiving the PRA in error.

3 Reactions and Impact (both within the producer body and outside)

The release did not contain any market sensitive information or new data, therefore the impact if read by the two incorrect recipients at SG would have been low.

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

Short Term

Once the error was realised ONS contacted the individual at SG (who also had PRA) and asked her to ensure the two e-mails sent in error were deleted. This person called back and to notify ONS that both e-mails had been deleted and were not opened by the individuals.

The business area has updated the desk instructions and increased awareness in the team to ensure that names are double checked against business cases in future to ensure the correct business cases have been used and the correct names extracted.

Long Term

The DG's Office are holding a review with the business areas in terms of how pre

release is managed and how the process is followed. This will form part of the wider review of pre release and ensure the process is followed correctly in future to prevent reoccurrence.