

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

NHS Outcomes Framework Indicators – June 2013 release
(www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/nhsfijun13)
CCG Indicators – June 2013 release
(www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/ccgindicatorsjun13)

Name of Producer Organisation

Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)

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

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2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 - Release practices
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

27 June 2013

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

- These publications each consist of a main publication page with a brief overview of the clinical indicators being published. These indicators are released in separate files on the HSCIC's Indicator Portal (<https://indicators.ic.nhs.uk/webview/>). Although both publication pages went live at 09:30, the Indicator Portal was not available until 10:10.
- The reasons for this are still under investigation but appear to be software related.

Reasons for breach

The release system involves placing the proposed updates on two servers (hidden from public view behind a holding page) and opening up as required at 09:30 on the day of publication. On the day prior to the publication date, at 16:46 26 June 2013, it was confirmed that the update had been successful (on both live servers: Indicator Portal Public & Private). Testing, which includes bypassing the holding page, showed that both sites operated as expected.

Subsequently, at 09:35 on 27 June 2013, both sites were reported to be live and the holding pages had been removed. On checking it was discovered that whilst the Private site was working, the Public site had an error and would not load. The Database Administrator confirmed that in the morning (27 June) when the holding page was removed and the Jboss (name of the software that controls this web service) application server restarted, it failed to restart properly. There was no apparent cause. The server was manually rebooted, the Jboss service was manually restarted and the portal went live in the public domain.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

There were 2 calls received enquiring after the data which were successfully handled.

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

The HSCIC includes a lessons learned stage as a part of the review process for incidents and the outcomes will be incorporated into future working practices.

As a part of our on-going commitment to continuous improvement, to enhance the robustness of our systems, and in line with the revised role of the HSCIC as encapsulated in the Health and Social Care act 2012, the organisation is the process of procuring a new portal with enhanced functionality including the capacity to allow managed and frequent changes to be implemented in a controlled environment. It is anticipated that this new software will be available spring 2014.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/calendar#cmsanchormonthJune>