

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 Safety Thermometer Report – May 2012-May 2013

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/thermometerrepjun13>

NICE Technology Appraisals in the NHS in England – 2012; Experimental Statistics

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/nicetechappr12>

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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11 June 2013

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

11 June 2013

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

Release of the publications was delayed by 6.5 hours.

The fact that these publications would be delayed was brought to the attention of the Statistical Governance team at 09:25 as serious IT problems had been identified and work had already begun to rectify the situation.

Reasons for breach

The HSCIC releases are held in a SharePoint repository that populates the publications catalogue and an internal inventory. The SharePoint server that stores the publications had undergone planned maintenance over the weekend and a notice had been posted on the website advising users of this activity and its effects. When the server was restored, the service that drives the updates from the SharePoint repository to the inventory and catalogue did not restart properly but there was no way to know that this element had failed. As a consequence, the first scheduled publications following the maintenance were not released to the catalogue. When the nature of the problem had been identified, the settings were overridden so that the publications were released manually. The solution, however, required a complete re-index of the site which experienced difficulties and took several hours to resolve correctly.

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

The organisation-wide IT problem was identified in advance of publication time. No complaints about the delay were received.

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

- To advise potential users that the release was temporarily delayed due to technical issues, a message was placed on the catalogue homepage of the HSCIC website. The ONS Publications Hub was experiencing performance issues and as a consequence, it was not possible to upload a notice for users on this site.
- We did not proactively send the reports to users, but would have done so to anyone who asked. No one did.
- This issue has now been fixed and the IT department has created a tool to test the service and ensure that this problem will not be able to recur in the future.
- 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.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

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