

## 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')

Priority Sector Statistics, 2013  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/economy2013/priority-sector-statistics-2013/>

Name of Producer Organisation

Welsh Government (WG)

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 Practice 7.**

Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation<sup>1</sup>, 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.

<sup>1</sup> [The Pre-release Access to Official Statistics \(Wales\) Order 2009](#) sets out the rules and principles relating to the granting of pre-release access to wholly Welsh devolved statistics.

Date of occurrence

22 and 23 August 2013

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

Over the course of the 22 and 23 August 2013, several WG policy officials (named in the pre-release access list) forwarded on "lines to take" based on statistics from the release to other members of their team, none of whom had been named in the agreed pre-release access list. One official saved the lines to take to an unrestricted area in the electronic records management system.

Reasons for breach

The policy officials who sent the brief on were doing so for clearance or for other team members to be aware of the lines to take.

This occurred despite the original pre-release email clearly stating that these were pre-release statistics that should not be shared in any form, and the email containing a further warning asking recipients to ensure they were authorised for pre-release access before opening any attachments. Policy officials were also asked prior to the release to nominate two persons from their areas for pre-release as only those persons would be able to see the statistics before publication.

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

Whilst in the process of checking the lines to take on 23 August, the subject statistician noticed the breaches had occurred; this was within 24 hours of the breaches occurring.

The officials responsible for the breaches have apologised for the mistake and have assured the subject statistician that it will not happen again.

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

#### Short term

- The deputy Head of Profession (HoP) was informed as soon as the breach was discovered on 23 August as the Chief Statistician and HoP were on leave.
- The extent of the breach was quickly ascertained and it was ensured that those who had received the lines to take in error had not forwarded them and knew not to disseminate findings any further.
- The protocols surrounding pre-release access were explained to the policy officials responsible for the breach via email on 23 August, to ensure the issue will not reoccur. The subject statistician has since had follow-up conversations with the officials involved. All officials who had pre-release were reminded of the pre-release protocols.
- The lines to take saved to an unrestricted area were immediately deleted.

#### Other actions

The Chief Statistician has drafted a note reminding officials about the rules surrounding pre-release access to official statistics, emphasising the importance of complying with them. The note has already been sent to Director Generals to cascade to officials within their departments.

We will be accelerating our development of a new system designed to minimise the risk of

breaches to pre-release protocol, whereby pre-release publications will be stored in restricted files on our electronic record management system, with access to the files limited to those on the pre-release access list. We are seeking to implement this as soon as practically possible.

We will also be communicating this issue through the intranet and departmental security newsletter.