

## 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')

[Public Sector Finances, October 2012](#)

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics

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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21 November 2012

### 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

21 November 2012

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

Releases not published at 09:30 to Office for National Statistics (ONS) website

Reasons for breach

Public Sector Finance Statistics were published at 10:20 instead of the usual 09:30 release time. On the evening the day before publication the business area and Publishing Support Team attempted to correct some errors spotted in the publication. While most instances of this error were corrected, one error remained. Upon final checks of the publication a member of staff in the business area spotted that a minor error in the supporting material remained.

At 08:05 the individual then attempted to correct the error. This correction occurred after the bulletin was already in the publishing queue and too late for publication at 09:30 (official guidance is only to make changes at this time through contact with the Publishing Support Team).

This caused a duplicate copy of the bulletin on the system to be created. The publishing Support team spotted that there were now two copies in the queue and without contacting the business area deleted the bulletin scheduled for publication at 09:30 (the version which still had the minor error).

Due to these issues, neither version was published at 09:30 and the corrected version missed the 08:10 transfer window due to the late corrections made and was scheduled to publish in the next window (in this case 10.20).

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

The Customer Contact Centre (CCC) took 13 calls about the Public Sector Finance release not being available at/after 09:30, of these -

1 call came in before 09:30  
9 calls were from Media people  
3 calls were from non media people

The CCC advisors supplied 5 media callers with a PDF of the release.

There were no complaints from calls to CCC or media team

There were 5 tweets commenting on the delay

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

Short Term action:

Statistical bulletin was available from the Media Relations team if required and because this is a joint release with HM Treasury, the information was also available through the Treasury website. Most major known media users were at ONS lock-in and so had access already to key information.

Long term actions:

- Refresher training for business area on handling late discovery of issues and how to process these into the bulletin while still meeting Publication Schedules in partnership with Publishing Support Team (PST) completed in December.
- Meeting held and new procedures developed to improve communications between business area and PST so that where choices can be made quickly to ensure publication is on time, the business can help steer these choices.
- Publishing at 9.30 is part of a wider issue that is being dealt with by the office with a number of improvements being made and further options are being developed with regular reporting at Director level.