

## 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')

Statistics on Smoking, England 2013, Additional Tables  
(<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB11454>)

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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8 October 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

7 October 2013

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

The release was a pre-announced planned revision to an existing publication "Statistics on Smoking in England – 2013" that was published on 15 August 2013.

The planned revision was the addition of tables reporting figures from the General Lifestyles Survey and mortality data, which were not available for release in August. These were planned to be added to the original publication with an explanatory note at 09:30 on 8 October but went live during the afternoon of 7 October.

#### Reasons for breach

- This is only the second planned revision where additional materials have been added to an existing publication since the new HSCIC website went live in December 2012.
- The current system does not have the technical capability to pre-set a publication time for updates, but instead depends upon manual release processes to revise a live publication.
- For most publications, the release is given digital approval and a go live date and time which are usually the following day; this ensures that the publication is released at the correct time.
- In this instance, the web team digitally approved the publication in error having overlooked the fact that it was already live and that the additional tables would be published immediately. The digital approval should have been delayed until the day of publication, manually run and subsequently made live at 09:30.

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

- The early release of the additional tables was advised to HSCIC by a contact who had discovered it on the HSCIC website after normal business hours on 7 October.
- We are not aware of anyone else accessing the material in advance of the intended publication date and time.
- No pre-release access was requested by anyone for these additional tables.

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

- The early release of the additional tables was advised after normal business hours on 7 October and the tables were withdrawn as soon as the web team had arrived on 8 October.
- The additional tables were digitally approved and manually re-published at 09:30 on 8 October.
- Details of the processes for planned revisions to existing publications have been added to the training document and user manual for the content management system; all relevant staff understand the requirements.
- At end of the year a new content management system will be used which is able to schedule changes to live publications so that the changes do not go live until the appropriate date and time.

#### **5. Links to published statements about this breach**

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