

## 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')

Taking Part 2012/13 annual child publication – a National Statistic which covers engagement and participation in sport and culture for 5-15 year olds.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taking-part-201213-annual-child-release>

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

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

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

Practice 8:

Ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances.

Date of occurrence

Tuesday 20 August 2013.

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

The annual Taking Part 2012/13 child release had been scheduled for publication on Thursday at 09:30 on the 22 August.

However, the annual child release was accidentally published on GOV.UK as soon as the documents were received on Tuesday 20 August.

#### Reasons for breach

There was some confusion about the correct way of configuring the GOV.UK publishing software to schedule automatic publishing at the specified time. It appears that the DCMS communications officer responsible for uploading the release entered the publication date into a different field from the one which automates future publishing. The user was unsure at the time and attempted to, but was unable to get, clarification from .GOV.UK (help to resolve specific live issues is not part of the service). It is not completely clear how this misunderstanding occurred. While scheduling the publication, the user therefore inadvertently triggered an immediate release. They were unable to get local expert help as the DCMS's digital communications team leader had recently left the organisation, and the post was vacant (now filled). Therefore there was a lack of expert knowledge on hand within DCMS of how the GOV.UK publishing system works.

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

DCMS press office became aware of this accidental release following a phone call from a journalist at the Daily Telegraph on Tuesday afternoon.

The Daily Telegraph produced an article on Wednesday Morning at 06:00 which made use of pre-release data. This is the only publication we are aware of which made use of pre-release data, although the story was then syndicated through the media.

There has been no coverage related to the breach itself, simply on the data. No complaints have been received as of 30 August.

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

#### Action Taken:

Once the breach was identified DCMS Communications immediately asked Government Digital Service (GDS) to remove the documents which was actioned within half an hour.

The DCMS HoP was made aware of the breach as soon as the statistical team had been notified, on the afternoon of Tuesday 20 August when the breach was discovered.

The National Statistician's Office was informed of the early release by email at 16:50 Tuesday 20 August.

The DCMS HoP then decided to move the release date forward to Wednesday 21 August, in line with published National Statistician's Office (NSO) advice for dealing with an early statistical release, to ensure equal access to all and to prevent further breaches of the data.

GDS then re-published the documents on DCMS's behalf.

The DCMS Statistics HoP, in discussion with DCMS Head of Communications, is considering what additional action should be taken to prevent further such breaches, including:

- A review of process to ensure DCMS has sufficient resource and knowledge of how GDS systems can be used appropriately for scheduled statistical releases.
- Ensuring that, at times of staff cover, there is adequate resource and appropriate GOV.UK permissions for DCMS to enable publication of planned statistical releases and to resolve issues locally.
- Asking GDS to make the different purpose of the two date fields in the GOV.UK publishing tool clearer to reduce the risk that others make the same mistake.
- Establishing more direct lines of communication with GDS, including direct telephone contact, to facilitate better support and assurance around releases should emergency issues arise which cannot be resolved locally.

An update on any corrective actions, including any further detail on the cause of the breach will be reported back to NSO who may wish to pursue with DCMS / GDS at a strategic level.

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

The statement is in the detail immediately below the release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taking-part-201213-annual-child-release>

Also linked from the publication Hub:

[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/release-calendar/index.html?newquery=\\*&uday=0&umonth=0&uyear=0&title=Taking+Part%3A+Engl+and%27s+survey+of+culture%2C+leisure+and+sport&pagetype=calendar-entry&lday=&lmonth=&lyear](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/release-calendar/index.html?newquery=*&uday=0&umonth=0&uyear=0&title=Taking+Part%3A+Engl+and%27s+survey+of+culture%2C+leisure+and+sport&pagetype=calendar-entry&lday=&lmonth=&lyear)