

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')

[UK Defence Statistics 2012 Compendium](#)

Name of Producer Organisation

Ministry of Defence (MOD)

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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Breach report completed on 18 December 2012.

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Release practices

Practice 7: "Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation, limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes."

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.”

Date of occurrence

Thursday 6 December 2012

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

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) published its report and accounts in early December with information about the number of houses used by the Services for family accommodation. The first publication of those numbers should have been in UK Defence Statistics (a National Statistics publication) which was published about a week later.

The Report and Accounts gave the number of properties, the percentage vacant and the number of properties in poor condition (tables 8.7 and 8.8). The authorisation process for the Report and Accounts involved a large number of individuals in the department and National Audit Office. Although all persons involved in this authorisation had access they would have had to comply with the separate disclosure control associated with the financial reporting.

On Wednesday 12 December 2012 the MOD published UK Defence Statistics (UKDS) 2012 in accordance with its pre-announcement and pre-release schedules as a National Statistics compendium publication. Chapter 6 of UKDS contains the Service Family Accommodation National Statistics for which the breach occurred (commentary and table 6.4).

Reasons for breach

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) supply UKDS with the Service Family Accommodation statistics for publication. The report and accounts and UKDS were both delayed from their normal publication schedules. However, as part of the investigation into the breach it was found that same thing had happened last year.

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

A senior statistician from the MOD read the newly issued report and accounts and noticed a section on Service Family Accommodation and suspected this should have been published in UKDS. This was confirmed the next day (13 December). The breach was discovered internally and there appears to have been no external coverage in the media or complaints received by the department. Internally, there is serious concern that our processes failed to prevent a breach and has been escalated to Director level.

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

The Head of Profession was informed there had been a breach with the Service Family Accommodation tables last week. The report and accounts is a substantial document and action was taken immediately to review its contents and check for any further breaches.

An email was sent to the UK Statistics Authority on the morning of Friday 14 December giving the broad outline of the breach and explaining the 300 or so pages in the report and accounts were being checked. By Monday morning it had been established there were no other breaches from the report and accounts.

The Head of Profession for Statistics takes responsibility for the following actions.

Short term actions:

- work with Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the financial reporting team to help them understand the importance of publishing information in a planned way;
- ensure that staff in Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the financial reporting team understand their responsibilities under the Code of Practice and have access to up to date guidance;
- work with the report and accounts production team to determine whether some of the wider non financial performance statistics would be better presented as Official Statistics in the first instance in the future.

Medium term actions in light of the duplicate breach:

- begin a departmental review of the coverage of official statistics, including whether there is resource for us to publish some statistics from UKDS earlier in future;
- refresh the departmental guidance on the handling of statistical information for publication, Parliamentary Questions and ministerial correspondence and Freedom of Information requests.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

When the breach report is published on the UK Statistics Authority website we will link to it from our website <http://www.dasa.mod.uk>.