

## 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 Trade Statistical Bulletin, December 2012

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/uktrade/uk-trade/december-2012/stb-uk-trade--december-2012.html>

A National Statistics release.

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

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

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 February 2013

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

The statistical bulletin was scheduled to publish automatically at 09:30.

At 09:30 the system failed to publish the bulletin. Manual monitoring processes are in place to immediately rectify such a failure but, on this occasion, the item was overlooked due to human error.

A routine secondary check detected the failed item, action was taken, and the bulletin was available on the ONS website at 09:40.

Reasons for breach

The underlying reason for the failure to publish is a known IT systems issue. It can affect any release, although occurrences are extremely rare.

A solution to the problem had been identified previously but not yet implemented. Manual system monitoring process were therefore in place to detect and immediately rectify any failure to publish.

An oversight during the routine system monitoring on this occasion led to a 10 minute delay in publishing the bulletin.

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

No complaints were received by Media Relations, Social Media, or the Customer Contact Centre.

The UK Trade business area received one telephone call before 09:40 from a user who was unable to find the bulletin.

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

As soon as the error was detected, the bulletin was successfully published at 09:40.

As a result of this error, higher priority has been given to fixing the 'bug' in the IT system and this is planned to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

In the meantime, all team members responsible for manual monitoring have been reminded of the process and their responsibilities.