

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Household Estimates, 1991-2009

(<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2011/110217/?lang=en>)

Sickness Absence in the NHS, Quarter Ending September 2010

(<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2011/110217/?lang=en>)

Police Reported Road Traffic Fatalities, 2010

(<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/transport2011/110217/?lang=en>)

Students in Higher Education Institutions, 2009/10

(<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/post16education2011/110217/?lang=en>)

Name of Producer Organisation

Welsh Assembly Government

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

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Thursday 17 February 2011

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Releases Practices

Practice 4: Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am 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

Thursday 17 February 2011

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

The WAG website was unavailable to all users, internal and external; therefore the four outputs detailed above did not appear online until 10.45am when normal service was resumed.

Reasons for breach

The website crash was caused by two issues happening simultaneously. Our first production tier breached the upper limit on the number of files being open at one time by both internal and external users. This is the first time this error has occurred in three years. The second production tier experienced a server malfunction.

3 Reactions and Impact

Outputs were just over an hour late appearing online and during this time a telephone call was received from an external organisation awaiting the information. The user was informed of the availability of certain data via the StatsWales website (which is hosted on an external server) site.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

As all publishing was delayed it wasn't possible to post a notice on the WAG website explaining the problem, but any enquiries received were replied to promptly with an explanation and apology. The usual emails announcing the release of the publications to key users were also not distributed to avoid inconsistent levels of access.

If there are problems with the WAG site in the future the contingency plan is to upload the outputs to StatsWales until normal service is resumed on the WAG website. This will be at the usual 9:30 release time, or as soon after as it practically possible given the issues arising. The links on the Publication Hub would be updated to reflect this change.

There has also been a WAG corporate approach that will reduce future likelihood. The Central Web Team are currently monitoring the average use per day to see if we need to increase the upper limit of the server for files being opened at once. They are currently looking to resolve the server malfunction issue by a manual restart of this service on a weekly basis.