

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')

Mental Health Community Teams Activity, 2015/16 Q2:
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/mental-health-community-teams-activity/>
Direct Access Audiology, September 2015: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/direct-access-audiology/>

Name of Producer Organisation

NHS England

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

Mark Svenson, Lead Official for Statistics in NHS England

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence

Date of occurrence

Mental Health Community Teams Activity, 2015/16 Q2: Friday 6 November 2015
Direct Access Audiology, September 2015: Thursday 12 November

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

The Mental Health Community Teams Activity report for 2015/16 Q2 was published at 9.30am on Friday 6 November 2015, rather than at 9.30am on Friday 13 November 2015.
The Direct Access Audiology report for September 2015 was published at 2.30pm on Thursday 12 November 2015, rather than at 9.30am.

Reasons for breach

There was an inconsistency in the publication dates on our internal timetable and on the published calendar.

On our internal timetable, the mental health statistics were listed for publication on 6 November 2015 but on the published calendar were shown as due for release on 13 November 2015. Publication occurred at 9.30am on 6 November 2015. The date of 6 November 2015 is the date that should have appeared on the published calendar.

Similarly, on our internal timetable, the audiology statistics were listed for publication on 19 November 2015, but on the published calendar were listed for release on 12 November 2015. Publication occurred at 2.30pm on 12 November 2015.

The two calendars should of course be aligned. The internal calendar contains the dates for each stage of the collection and production process for each of our collections/publications. It is supplied to those responsible for submitting and signing-off data. The dates for the published calendar should be taken from the internal calendar.

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

The failure to publish the audiology statistics at 9.30am on 12 November was brought to our attention at about 10.30am on 12 November 2015 by our data warehouse team, who were querying why the audiology statistics were not available to add to the internal data warehouse. We received one query about the availability of the data – from an analyst at a Commissioning Support Unit – in the period between us being alerted to the problem and the data being published at 2.30pm.

We have not received any feedback about the release of the mental health statistics on 6 November 2015 rather than 13 November 2015.

The two sets of statistics have a lower profile than most of our other series.

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

Short-term actions

1. After being alerted to the problem with the release of the audiology statistics, we checked the timetables to confirm that there are no other inconsistencies. This led us to identify the related problem with the Mental Health statistics.
2. We placed a notice on the audiology web page stating that publication was delayed due to a timetabling error.
3. We published the audiology statistics as quickly as possible, at 2.30pm on the afternoon of the pre-announced date.

Long-term actions

We will try to determine why the inconsistencies arose. Our process for pre-announcement already includes cross-checking by a second party between our internal timetable and the published calendars. This process has not prevented an error. We will consider what additional checks need to be introduced to reduce the risk further.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

The holding note about the delay to the audiology statistics was superseded by the publication of the statistics later that day.

A sentence was included in the statistics notice to say that publication occurred at 2.30pm due to a timetabling error. (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/direct-access-audiology/>)

6. Any other relevant supporting material

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