

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')

Time spent in Accident and Emergency Departments, December 2015

<http://www.infoandstats.wales.nhs.uk/page.cfm?orgid=869&pid=62956>

Name of Producer Organisation

NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

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

Tim O'Sullivan

Head of Information Services

02920 502570

tim.osullivan@wales.nhs.uk

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, 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

19 January 2016

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

On 19 January 2016, BBC Wales ran this story: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-35344514>

It included this line:

A Welsh government spokesman said: "**There was a 23% reduction in the number of people who spent more than 12 hours in emergency departments in December compared to November but we know there is more work to do.**"

We expect all health boards to ensure they have the right mix of staff to ensure services are safe, sustainable, and to ensure patient experience and outcomes are optimised."

The section in bold included figures for December which were not due for publication by the NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) until 09:30 that morning.

Reasons for breach

On the 18 January 2016 the Welsh Government (WG) press office were informed by BBC Wales that they planned to run a story about A&E in Wales on the 19 January, to coincide with the latest monthly A&E release. The Welsh Government was asked for an official response.

Whilst drafting that response, one of the lines which had been cleared with statisticians in WG containing the December statistics (which were intended for use only following the publication those statistics) was incorrectly included. Statisticians within the WG were not copied into any of the correspondence regarding the BBC story and the response was issued after 16:00 on Monday (18 January) with a reference to December's figures included.

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

The Head of Health Statistics at the WG saw the BBC Wales story and alerted the WG Press Office and the Chief Statistician at 06:36 via e-mail, notifying them of the breach and asked them to identify where it had occurred and the reasons why. NWIS were contacted at 08:37 to inform them that the WG had breached pre-release. The Head of Health Statistics at WG spoke with the lead official in NWIS at 09:58 regarding the breach.

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

In future, statisticians within WG will be copied into relevant draft media responses as part of the clearance process. This typically does happen, but did not on this occasion due to an accidental oversight.

The Senior Press Officer within WG will use this incident to remind the Press Office of the pre-release obligations at his next team meeting.

In the weekly update from the Director General to all Health and Social Services Group staff (including KAS) a reminder was included regarding the importance of pre-release access

and ensuring that information should be always cleared with the relevant statistician.