

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 web link to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Deaths Related to Drug Poisoning in England and Wales: 2015 registrations

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/previousReleases>

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

Glenn Everett, Head of Profession, Office for National Statistics

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 release practices

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

8 September 2016

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

Public Health Wales (PHW) has one approved role to receive "Deaths Related to Drug Poisoning in England and Wales: 2015 registrations" prior to release.

ONS sent an encrypted winzip7 file to the recipient containing the pre-release statistical bulletin. The email containing the winzip7 file included text on how pre-release access (PRA) material should be handled until publication.

The approved PRA recipient was travelling at the time they received PRA so was unable to unzip the file. To obtain the information they forwarded the PRA material to a non-approved analyst colleague within same organisation. The pre-release content was not viewed by the non-approved colleague.

Reasons for breach

Breach was a result of human error. As the approved recipient wanted to obtain the PRA while travelling to a meeting with ONS they requested a colleague unzip the file for them. The pre-release content was not viewed by non-approved colleague.

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

Since the content was not viewed by the non-approved colleague, there was no direct impact from the breach.

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

The Grade 7 responsible for Mortality Statistics was notified of the breach in a meeting with the PHW recipient. They discussed the matter with them face-to-face, explaining that ONS takes these breaches seriously.

ONS has contacted the colleagues involved in PHW by phone and e-mail to ascertain the scale of breach and to explain that PHW has breached the pre-release rules.

It has been proposed that when ONS next meets with PHW colleagues on other work matters we will raise the issue of pre-release and again inform them of how pre-release should be handled and explain the Code of Practice.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

N/A

6. Any other relevant supporting material

N/A