

## 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')

HMRC Tax Receipts and National Insurance Contributions for the UK  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk#history>

Name of Producer Organisation

HM Revenue and Customs

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

Sean Whellams, Head of Profession for Statistics, HMRC, 7th June 2016

### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Principle 4 – Practice 3

3. Adopt quality assurance procedures, including the consideration of each statistical product against users' requirements, and of their coherence with other statistical products.

Date of occurrence

19 June 2015, 22 March 2016, 21 April 2016, 24 May 2016

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

- The HMRC tax receipts and national insurance contributions for the UK statistics are published monthly.
- The May release was published at 9.30am on 24th May 2016 containing incorrect tax credit figures relating to the monthly data from April 2015 to March 2016.
- An external user contacted the department at 13:55 on 24th May 2016 enquiring about the tax credit figures in the publication, prompting investigation and identification of the error.
- The March and April 2016 releases were published containing incorrect Corporation Tax figures relating to 2002-03 to 2013-14.

- The releases for May and June 2015 published in June and July 2015 contained incorrect tax credit figures relating to monthly data from April 2014 to April/ May 2015. These figures were corrected in a revised version of the June 2015 release.  
(See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk#history>)

#### Reasons for breach

In July 2015 there was an incorrect formula in a spreadsheet and QA procedures were reviewed. This review resulted in an addition to the original QA process where the table is sent each month to tax head experts to confirm they have reviewed it before publication.

Despite these improved QA processes two new errors appeared in more recent releases. The main reason the QA processes failed were that the errors were not identified by a second person responsible for checking and approving the publication. During May 2016 there was an aggravating factor that the second reviewer was on annual leave at this key time which led to a breakdown in the QA procedures.

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

Immediate action was taken to resolve the error. The corrected documents were published at 15:18 on 24th May 2016.  
The breach was discussed with the Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics, the team statistician and the Head of Profession for Statistics.  
The external user wrote an article describing this error and referred back to the July error calling into question the quality of this publication's QA procedures.

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

This breach was as a result of an incorrect formula.  
A full review of the production and quality assurance process of this publication has been performed internally.  
The review identified a number of improvements to the QA process, these have been signed off and agreed with the SCS team leader and include:

- Review of the design of the spreadsheet to minimise risks of inadvertent mistakes
- Addition of further automated checks to minimise human error.
- Introduction of a QA review checklist to complete monthly to document the QA process and record when each part of the QA has been completed.

### **5. Links to published statements about this breach**

This breach resulted in republishing the statistics and the following article documented by an external user: <https://medium.com/@StrongerInNos/dont-panic-85cde6bdf5c9#.zfkncmsp>