

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')

Insolvency Statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/insolvency-service-official-statistics>

Name of Producer Organisation

The Insolvency Service

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

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Date of report: 2 September 2016

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

Unknown, but may affect several releases.

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

The BEIS Head of Profession had approved two private office officials at No. 10 for pre-release access to this release. During a recent cross-government audit of No.10 pre-release access it has become apparent that seven officials at No.10 had been receiving access.

Reasons for breach

Pre-release copies of the release do not go directly from the Insolvency Service to No.10 but instead go via HM Treasury, who provide accompanying economic briefing. HM Treasury produces a large number of such briefings, and has expanded the list of No. 10 officials receiving these briefings under PRA arrangements. The Insolvency Service and BEIS were not aware of this until 4 August.

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

No external reaction. The Insolvency Service raised the issue immediately with the BEIS HOP, who determined that a breach had occurred. The National Statistician's office was notified on 12 August. BEIS and HMT discussed the issue and determined the reason for the breach.

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

- As part of cross-government audit, restrict pre-release access at No.10 to those that require it for briefing purposes, and draw up a new pre-release access list signed off by the BEIS HOP.
- About a week before each statistics release, the Insolvency Service already seeks confirmation of which email addresses the statistics on PRA should be sent to. This check will now also seek confirmation of any changes required to the list of postholders, such that HOP approval can be sought.
- The BEIS HOP and Insolvency Service Lead Official will speak to those officials at HMT who are responsible for forwarding on the statistics during the pre-release period, to reinforce the importance of ensuring that the guidance is followed, to reduce the likelihood of future breaches occurring in this area.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/insolvency-statistics-april-to-june-2016>

6. Any other relevant supporting material

None