

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')

- NICE Technology Appraisals in the NHS in England (Innovation Scorecard) to March 2016
- <http://content.digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB21784>

Name of Producer Organisation

NHS Digital

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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2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

(Protocol 2, principle 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

Date of occurrence

06 October 2016

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

A draft infographic containing unpublished figures (intended for publication as part of the release of statistics on NICE Technology Appraisals in the NHS) went live on a dedicated webpage and became searchable on our website 6 days prior to the release of the associated publication.

The content was only accessible by searching “Innovation Scorecard” on the NHS Digital website, which is how the one interested user managed to locate it, or by randomly guessing the web page address.

Reasons for breach

The NHS Digital website is currently in transition to a new site.

A draft version of the infographic was being produced with help from the communications team as a standalone web page on the old site (in line with previous practice). As dedicated pages will not be created on the NHS Digital website in future (after transition to the new site), it was subsequently decided to embed the infographic as part of the main publication page and so production of the standalone infographic page stopped. However, the draft webpage was not removed, and subsequently went live on the old website (which is where all publication pages are currently hosted) by mistake.

It is usual practice for the communications team to assist in the production of infographics for releases and they are aware of their responsibilities under the Code of Practice; however in this case the person working on the infographic was helping at a time of resource pressure, and did not follow the usual approach.

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

- One customer contacted NHS Digital to ask for the report associated with the infographic
- Google Analytics confirms that only one external computer accessed the web page while it was live.
- The team responsible informed the customer of the error and gave them details on when and where the correct infographic and publication would be available
- The team responsible for the breach confirmed that this was a human error and not a system fault.

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

- Short-term action: the web page has been removed and the customer advised of the location and publication time of the final associated report. The person responsible for the breach has been made aware of the relevant guidance
- Long-term change: the new website best practice does not support dedicated pages for infographics, and so this issue should not occur in future; all infographics will be created as files (rather than pages) which will be embedded in publication pages whose publication is controlled by the statistics team and which only go live at 9.30 on the day of release.