

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')

06 December 2016

Children and Young People's Health Services Monthly Statistics - April to June 2016

Link: <http://www.content.digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB22637>

Interim link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-and-young-peoples-health-services-monthly-statistics-april-to-june-2016>

Female Genital Mutilation - July to Sept 2016, enhanced data set

Link: <http://www.content.digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB22619>

Interim link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/female-genital-mutilation-july-to-sept-2016-enhanced-data-set>

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 - Release practices
 - Practice 4 - Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours.

Date of occurrence

06 December 2016

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

06 December 2016

- Both publications due for release at 09:30 failed to go live, returning a “Sorry, Publication PUBXXXXX could not be found” error.
- By 10:05 we had updated the links on our website to point to GOV.UK, and uploaded the files to the GOV.UK website so the public would be able to access them.

These incidents relate to previous NHS Digital (then-HSCIC) breaches in as much as there are frailties in the web system.

Reasons for breach

- The content management system, iCM 9, hosted by our website supplier, GOSS, failed.
- The indexing tool, which updates the website with new material, became stuck in a loop and no new material was recognised by the website.

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

- Both internal production teams responsible for their respective publications raised concerns over the website failure.
- We received complaints via our contact centre from customers complaining that they could not access the documents.
- The Web team responsible for the website contacted the supplier, GOSS, to instil the urgency of reaching a resolution.

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

- Short-term actions: While the causes of these issues were being investigated, NHS Digital uploaded files to our GOV.UK pages and sent the links to the affected teams and stakeholder contacts.
- For the foreseeable future the teams will check the publication system the night before release to verify it is working, as well as checking the publications go live at 09:30 to spot any faults as soon as possible.
- The Publications system problem was resolved by GOSS by repairing the indexing process.
- GOSS assured us that this particular cause of incident was a one-off failure that is unlikely to reoccur. However, there remains concern around the overall frailty of the current publication system, which is being addressed as follows:
 - Medium term project underway to replace publication system and website with a product that is stable and meets user needs.
 - Short-term tactical changes to simplify current system by moving to one platform rather than separate systems communicating with one another, reducing the risk of problems.