

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')

Lower level public corporations data for 4 series associated with those published in Public Sector Finances for the period 2014Q1 – 2016Q3

[Link to Public Sector Finances](#)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/search?q=public+sector+finances>

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics

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

Date of occurrence

20th December 2016

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

Data for 4 series was released to an area of a centrally shared database early. The data status was set to accessible for authorised individuals outside of ONS and subsequently swept up in the morning delivery to the Bank of England before it could be retracted. Outside of ONS staff in the Bank of England were the only external individuals who could access the data.

Reasons for breach

Incorrect desk instructions resulted in a member of staff transferring data 24 hours earlier than they should have.

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

The error was identified by ONS staff shortly after the transfer had been made. Contacts in the Bank of England were alerted immediately after the error was identified and a revised dataset was provided that overwrote and replaced the incorrect data set within a few hours, thus minimising the impact. While approximately 350 Bank of England staff have access to the system, it is unlikely that any of them logged into it during the short period the incorrect data was available as staff were not expecting a delivery until the following day.

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

Business area supplying data – Public Corporations

The desk instructions on the Standards and Guidance database have been updated to ensure that the task is carried out only on the publication day. In the medium term we will look to transfer this activity to a central team that carries out main data transfers for Public Sector Finances data. This will reduce the potential for errors in data transfers.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

None

6. Any other relevant supporting material

None