

# REPORTING A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

## 1. Core Information

<b>Title and link to statistical output</b>	UK Trade: October 2016 ( <a href="#">link</a> )
<b>Name of statistical producer</b>	Office for National Statistics (ONS)
<b>Name and contact details of person dealing with report</b>	Hannah Finselbach (Tel: 01633 45 5635, E-mail: <a href="mailto:Hannah.Finselbach@ons.gov.uk">Hannah.Finselbach@ons.gov.uk</a> )
<b>Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)</b>	Not relevant.
<b>Date of report</b>	16.12.2016

## 2. Circumstances of breach

<b>Relevant principle/protocol and practice</b>	Protocol 2/Practice 7
<b>Date of occurrence of breach</b>	08.12.2016
<p>Due to the timing of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on 8 December 2016 (day of UK Trade pre-release) those with pre-release access at the Bank of England had special pre-release access at 25.5 hours before release i.e. at 8 am. This is granted to allow the MPC members to be briefed before the meeting.</p> <p>The UK Trade: October 2016 statistical bulletin and data publication tables were correctly sent to all pre-release recipients at the Bank of England at this time.</p> <p>Pre-release is currently sent via email, and one of the UK Trade team inadvertently sent the same email at 8 am to pre-release recipients at HM Treasury (HMT) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) who have standard pre-release access but are not eligible for the special early access granted to the Bank of England. There is guidance in the desk instructions covering the pre-release process, which was not followed on this occasion. This resulted in 6 additional recipients gaining access to the UK Trade bulletin (but not the publication tables) 1.5 hours before they should.</p> <p>The statistician in charge was alerted to the breach at 8.30 am by the team member that sent the email in error, and escalated to senior managers (the Grade 6 and Divisional Director) at the earliest opportunity, by 9.15am. At this point possible impact was discussed, and next steps were agreed.</p> <p>The recipients at BEIS and HMT with normal pre-release access (i.e. for 9.30 am on the day before release) gained early access to the UK Trade statistics and had extra time available to prepare briefing based on the bulletin alone. During this extra period we were in contact with these users, as they had not received the password to allow access to the zipped publication tables. We explained that these would not be sent until 9.30 am.</p>	

## 3. Impact of the breach

<p>Six individuals at BEIS and HMT had additional time (up to an hour and a half) to prepare briefing on the trade statistics. The impact of this is minimal, and the potential impact was reduced as only the bulletin was shared with the recipients early, not the more detailed publication data.</p>
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#### 4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

- Meeting held with the GSS Good Practice Team on the morning of 8 December to discuss the nature of the issue, to confirm a breach report was needed, and agree next steps.
- Branch head discussed the issue with the individual responsible, worked through what happened, and reiterated the importance of the team's responsibilities under the Code of Practice. The desk instructions were reviewed, and checked that guidance was clear.
- In the short-term, more senior staff will be in charge of sending and/or signing-off the provision of UK trade statistics for pre-release, until there is sufficient evidence that the process is robust.
- Post-round 'lessons learned' meeting for whole Trade team held at 10am, Monday 12 December, at which the Grade 6 walked through the recent round, particularly the issue with pre-release, emphasised the importance of following the desk instructions and process carefully and to seek advice where required. A reminder of all staff obligations under the Code of Practice was also issued at this meeting.
- An extra step was identified and implemented to prevent this happening again i.e. to include information at the top of draft emails to explicitly state what time the pre-release access is granted from, therefore distinguishing the email to the Bank of England from other users on months that coincide with MPC meetings.
- Desk instructions have also been updated to reflect that if pre-release is sent in error again, recipients must be contacted to explain and asked to delete any documents they have received.
- A lean six-sigma review of the UK Trade production process is ongoing. The scope of this review already includes the pre-release access processes, but the importance of making this process tight will be emphasised as a priority and additional checks of this process will be implemented before the next monthly round in January 2017. Lessons learnt will be disseminated across ONS, where appropriate.
- UK Trade will introduce ONS's new Secure Data Exchange service, called Moveit File Transfer, to encrypt and securely share pre-release information with external stakeholders. This new system allows ONS to set parameters for accessing information and allows external stakeholders to link to a secure web-based version of the Moveit File Transfer service to download the specified data/attachment.