

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

## 1. Core Information [\[guidance\]](#)

<b>Title and link to statistical output</b>	Forces Help to Buy Scheme monthly statistics <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forces-help-to-buy-scheme-monthly-statistics">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forces-help-to-buy-scheme-monthly-statistics</a>
<b>Name of statistical producer</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>Name and contact details of person dealing with report</b>	MOD Chief Analyst <a href="mailto:DefStrat-Stat-ChiefStatsOffice@mod.uk">DefStrat-Stat-ChiefStatsOffice@mod.uk</a>
<b>Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)</b>	N/A
<b>Date of report</b>	23 February 2017

## 2. Circumstances of breach [\[guidance\]](#)

<b>Relevant principle/protocol and practice</b>	<b>Protocol 2 - Release Practices: Practice 7</b>
<b>Date of occurrence of breach</b>	<b>Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017</b>
<p><i>At 1237 on 21 February 2017, headline figures for the Forces Help to Buy Official Statistics were emailed, two days before the report was scheduled for publication, to two Media &amp; Comms colleagues who were not entitled to access the figures at that time. The figures were included in a request for comment on the wording of caveats relating to the interpretation of the statistics. The sender was the administrative lead within the policy team responsible for the production of the statistics but is not a member of Defence Statistics, and as such is not as familiar as badged statisticians with the protocols for pre-release access. The sender incorrectly assumed the recipients were entitled to receive the figures before the date of publication or the pre-release access period.</i></p> <p><i>The breach was discovered within 30 minutes of the figures being sent. The sender was immediately asked to recall the original email, and the unauthorised recipients were immediately advised not to circulate the figures any further and to delete the email.</i></p> <p><i>The MOD Chief Analyst (Head of Profession for Statistics) was notified the following working day (22<sup>nd</sup> February).</i></p>	

## 3. Impact of the breach [\[guidance\]](#)

<p><i>Given that only two individuals received the headline figures two days prior to publication, the impact of the breach was minimal. The figures were not circulated further, either inside or outside MOD.</i></p>
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## 4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence [\[guidance\]](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The sender was informed that his action constituted a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and was reminded of the protocols for pre-release access.</i></li> </ul>
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- *The MOD Chief Analyst (Head of Profession for Statistics) will meet with the Director of Defence Communications (DDC) to re-emphasise the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.*
- *Responsible Statisticians have been asked to remind all the individuals involved in the production of MOD Official Statistics of the protocols for pre-release access.*

## **Guidance on completing the template**

If any further guidance is needed, please contact the Good Practice Team via email in the first instance: [goodpracticeteam@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:goodpracticeteam@statistics.gov.uk)

### **1. Core Information**

Please provide the name and contact details of the person who would be best placed to deal with any correspondence relating to the breach.

Published statements about the breach may not be available at the time of reporting, in which case this box can be left blank.

### **2. Circumstances of breach**

Please indicate which part of the Code of Practice the breach relates to e.g. 'Principle 2, practice 3' or 'Protocol 2, principle 4'. This will help us to monitor which parts of the Code the most common breaches relate to.

Provide details of the nature and circumstances of breach in a way that would be clear to a user of the statistics. This should clearly identify how and why the breach occurred, and include references to previous breaches in the same area (where relevant).

The level of detail needed is likely to depend on the exact circumstances, but for minor breaches (e.g. related to minor delays to publication) brief details will be sufficient.

### **3. Impact of the breach**

Please give brief details of the impact of the breach, covering impacts both inside and outside the producer body.

The information supplied will depend on the type of breach, but for example where the breach relates to accidental or wrongful release useful information might include the number of people accessing the statistics, and whether any press reports were published before the official release.

### **4. Corrective actions**

Please provide as much detail as possible to help users and the Authority to understand how the breach has been addressed.

Appropriate actions will depend on the circumstances and severity of the breach; as a guide, some examples of considerations and suitable actions for the most common types of breach are below

<b>Accidental or wrongful early release (Protocol 2, principle 8)</b>	
<p>Things to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How sensitive are the statistics and how long is it before the scheduled publication date?</li> <li>• How many people are likely to have accessed the statistics?</li> <li>• Has pre-release access to the statistics been restricted? Should you ask people with pre-release access not to disclose or discuss the statistics until further notice?</li> </ul>	<p>Possible corrective actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdraw the data as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Bring forward the time of the general release.</li> <li>• Issue a statement on your organisation's website alerting users to the problem.</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-release data shared with someone not on the pre-release list (Protocol 2, principle 7)</b>	
<p>Things to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people received the statistics in error and who?</li> <li>• Are the statistics high profile or market sensitive?</li> <li>• How long have the recipients had access to the data before the error was discovered?</li> <li>• Have the recipients shared or discussed the data with others?</li> <li>• Can the offending email or statistics be recalled or deleted?</li> <li>• Was the correct security marking applied to the pre-release access email?</li> </ul>	<p>Possible corrective actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recall the data.</li> <li>• If the statistics have been forwarded by somebody that was eligible to receive pre-release access, consider removing their pre-release access.</li> <li>• Remind staff about correct pre-release protocol.</li> <li>• Strengthen the wording of all text accompanying pre-release material.</li> <li>• Consider further training to educate staff on their obligations under the Code of Practice.</li> <li>• Increased management control of the processes.</li> <li>• Should stronger words be used in the text that is sent out with pre-release access?</li> </ul>
<b>Statistics published after the required time of 9.30am (Protocol 2, principle 4)</b>	
<p>Things to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How sensitive are the statistics and how long is the delay likely to be?</li> <li>• Has pre-release access to the statistics been restricted? Should you ask people with pre-release access not to disclose or discuss the statistics until further notice?</li> <li>• Can social media channels be used to acknowledge or apologise for the delay?</li> </ul>	<p>Possible corrective actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider emailing key users a copy of the release.</li> <li>• Issue a statement on your organisation's website alerting users to the problem</li> <li>• Consider whether there is another way to publish the release.</li> </ul>

