
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Jonathan Slater
Permanent Secretary
Department for Education

23 November 2017

Dear Jonathan

BREACHES OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

I am becoming increasingly concerned over the lack of secure pre release access arrangements in the Department for Education. Since September there have been three reported breaches¹²³ of the Code of Practice in your Department. In each case communications or policy staff who had been granted pre-release access shared official statistics with individuals within the Department ahead of the publication of the data.

Repeated breaches of pre-release access pose a significant risk to the trustworthiness of the Department, and have the potential to undermine the independence of government statistics. We acknowledge the candour of the correct reporting of these breaches and the efforts being made to reinforce pre release access protocols and enhance the understanding of the Code of Practice through training and regular dialogue, as outlined in the breach reports. However it is clear that more effective and timely measures need to be taken to avoid future reoccurrences.

I would strongly recommend that you, along with your Head of Profession for Statistics, consider what appropriate actions need to be taken to make access arrangement secure and implement these at the earliest opportunity.

I have copied this letter to Neil McIvor, Head of Profession for Statistics, Mike Jones, deputy Head of Profession for Statistics and John Pullinger, the National Statistician.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

¹ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Phonics-screening-check-and-key-stage-1-assessments-England-2017.pdf>

² <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Further-Education-and-Skills-October-2017.pdf>

³ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/key-stage-2-national-curriculum-test-review-outcomes-2017/>