

GUIDANCE TO PRODUCERS OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS ABOUT REPORTING BREACHES OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE RELATING TO RELEASE PRACTICES

Introduction

1. Being open about the occurrence of breaches offers a level of public accountability of the statistical service, enhances transparency, and therefore helps to build trust in it. It is inevitable that things will go wrong from time-to-time in an organisation such as a statistical producer body; being open about such circumstances, and publicising what improvements have been made to systems as a result of such events, are some of the positive ways to improve trust in the statistical service.

Which breaches to report?

2. Breaches of the Code in relation to official statistics (whether designated as National Statistics or not) must be reported to the National Statistician if at least one of the following criteria is met.
 - i. Statistics are not made equally available to all (Principle 2, practice 3).
 - ii. Statements or comments based on prior knowledge of the statistics are published ahead of the publication of the statistics (Principle 3, practice 1).
 - iii. The professional independence of statisticians is challenged (Principle 3, practices 2 to 4).
 - iv. Unpublished information is used for personal gain (Principle 3, practice 6).
 - v. Confidential (disclosive) information is inadvertently/inappropriately made available outside the producer body (Principle 5, practices 1, 2, 5, 6).
 - vi. Statistical reports have been released contrary to Protocol 2 of the Code, including where the content of a statistical report has been made public, or available to anyone not essential for statistical production who are not on the relevant pre-release access list (Protocol 2).
3. Breach reporting is the responsibility of the body producing the statistics, irrespective of whether the breach occurred within that body. It is for the relevant senior statistician (Head of Profession for statistics, or Lead Official in an arm's length body) of the body producing the set of statistics to determine whether a breach has occurred, and to document it appropriately. If in doubt about whether an event constitutes a breach, the National Statistician's Office will provide advice.

Timing of breach reporting

4. When a breach of the Code has occurred, the senior statistician should:
 - i. Issue an initial public statement explaining the breach on both the organisation's own website (in the same place that the statistics to which the breach relates have been, or should have been, published) and the National Statistics Publication Hub, as soon as he/she is aware of the breach. This should be done no later than the time of the publication of the relevant statistics if the breach has occurred before publication, or as soon as possible afterwards in other cases.
 - ii. Inform the National Statistician of the breach as soon as it is discovered.
 - iii. Ensure that the nature of the breach, the impact of the breach, and the steps taken (or planned to be taken) to reassure users and to prevent such a breach reoccurring are reported to the National Statistician as soon as possible, and ideally within one working day of the breach unless otherwise agreed with the Statistics Authority. A template to report breaches is available on the [UK Statistics Authority's](#) website.
 - iv. Update the statement about the breach on its website as soon as practicable.

Procedure for reporting

5. Once a breach has been reported to the National Statistician, the National Statistician's Office will discuss the breach with the producer body. It will also consider, in consultation with the Assessment Team, what action the Statistics Authority should take.

National Statistician's Office

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