

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 web link to the relevant output or 'landing page')

28-30 September 2016

- Mental Capacity Act 2005, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Assessments (England) - 2015-16
- Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey - Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, 2014
- Children and Young People's Health Services Monthly Statistics - September 2015, Experimental
- Provisional Accident and Emergency Quality Indicators for England - June 2016, by provider
- Provisional Monthly Hospital Episode Statistics for Admitted Patient Care, Outpatient and Accident and Emergency data - April 2016 - July 2016

<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/pubs/calendar#September>

03-06 October 2016

- All publications

<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/calendar>

Name of Producer Organisation

NHS Digital

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

Principle 2, Practice 1

Publish Statistical Reports in an orderly manner, in accordance with Protocol 2.

Specifically:

Protocol 2, Practice 3

- Ensure that all National Statistics can be accessed from the National Statistics Publication Hub [Release Calendar]

Protocol 2, Practice 4

- Practice 4 - Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours.

Date of occurrence

28-30 September 2016

And then

03-06 October 2016

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

28-30 September 2016

- NHS Digital publishes its Official and National Statistics on its website and links to the publication page from gov.uk.
- On 28 September, the new NHS Digital site went live: <https://digital.nhs.uk/>. As this is a beta site, not all content has been migrated to it.
- The existing site, on which publications sit, moved to <http://content.digital.nhs.uk/>
- The knock-on effect of this was that all links to publications now had the "content" prefix, meaning all of the links that had been set up (including friendly URLs sent to stakeholders) no longer worked. The publications could be accessed on the website, via the search or menu system at this time. (The changes to the website had been advertised well in advance, but the detail of the change to the URLs was not.)
- The publication pages went live on the site, but there was no easy way of reaching them.
- (Note that every announcement has our contact centre email address and telephone number, and the front page of the new and old websites have the contact details on them.)
- Colleagues from other organisations on the N3 NHS wide area network were unable to access the publications pages. The pages were accessible to the public, so NHS colleagues could access them on personal devices, but not on their work network.
- On 30 September publication pages only went live at 10am whilst manual fixes were

employed as the automatic publication process failed.

03-06 October 2016

- Beginning on the 03 October 2016 the Publications Calendar, which holds all of NHS Digitals Official Statistics, failed to link to any content pages containing the official statistics publications.
- An IT update had both removed the remote access of the website provider organisation, GOSS, and affected the link between the new website and the repository of publication documents.
- The remote access failure meant GOSS could not work to resolve the issue until their access was reinstated on 04 October 2016
- Throughout 05 and 06 October 2016 publication web pages were restored in batches by GOSS.
- Between 17:00 on Friday 07 October and 8am on Monday 10 October, planned maintenance activity was carried out which meant no further updates could be made during that time, but that once it was complete all publications were then available and the process of publication was restored.

These incidents relate to previous NHS Digital (then-HSCIC) breaches in as much as there are frailties in the web system. These current breaches are a symptom of the effort to prevent reoccurrence by delivering a new platform on which to publish our statistics.

Reasons for breach

- 28 September: the site hosting our publications had changed address. Therefore, the links that previously worked no longer did.
- 29 September: we learned that the issue affecting other NHS organisations on 28 and 29 September was due to the “content.digital.nhs.uk” domain not being visible via the N3 network (<http://n3.nhs.uk/>).
- 30 September: Potential technical issues with synchronising the SharePoint document repository to our website content management system. A query has been raised with the supplier, GOSS, to check what the cause of the problems was. Exact cause as yet unknown.
- 03 October: An IT update caused the link between the new website and the repository of publication documents to fail, and removed the remote access capability of the organisation that supports the website, delaying repairs to the publication calendar and all publications pages.
- 03 October: Links to the majority of our publications on GOV.UK link back to our web pages, so no files were accessible via this route.
- 07 October: Planned maintenance over the weekend meant no further updates until the fix completed on the morning of 10 October 2016

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

28-30 September 2016

- We received a lot of negative feedback from stakeholders who were unable to access publications.

03-06 October 2016

- Many customers began contacting the contact centre and the individual teams requesting access to information.
- We received a lot of negative feedback from stakeholders who were unable to access publications.

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

28-30 September 2016

- Short-term actions: While the causes of these issues were being investigated, NHS Digital uploaded files to gov.uk and sent the links to the affected teams and stakeholder contacts.
- The N3 access problem has been resolved. This was a teething problem occurring with the new site; as such reoccurrence is unlikely.
- The Publications system problem was resolved by GOSS and we have asked for a fault analysis and report to understand what went wrong in order to attempt to prevent similar problems occurring in future, or at least be able to resolve them more swiftly.
- We are assembling a file of all the emails and calls relating to user access issues over the past few days to ensure that there are no additional problems that we may have missed.
- We will include guidance on where to find publications, so that users are not solely reliant on supplied URLs.

03-06 October 2016

- Short-term actions: While the causes of these issues were being investigated, NHS Digital uploaded files to gov.uk and sent the links to the affected teams and stakeholder contacts.
- Short-term actions: teams began emailing data to customers while the repairs were taking place.
- NHS Digital IT repaired the remote access facility so the website supplier, GOSS, could work on repairing the access to publications.
- GOSS repaired the issue with the new website and its link with the publications repository.