



Research and analysis

Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008: statement of compliance

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1. Introduction

The [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order](#) applies to all official statistics produced by Ofsted.

In this statement, the phrase ‘pre-release access’ refers to privileged access to statistical releases in their final form, before they are available in the public domain. It does not refer to the access available to staff who:

- produce and publicise the statistics in question (including those responsible for overseeing this process)
- are asked to quality assure the statistics before their public release

Official statistics are:

- important to decisions across the country and internationally – for example, they provide information about government performance
- produced systematically
- relevant to the whole country
- publicly available

National statistics are a subset of official statistics. National statistics have been

assessed and comply with the [UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

This statement sets out how Ofsted gives officials access to official statistics before they are published. Access has to be justified, controlled, publicised and compliant with statutory rules. This maintains public confidence in the integrity of the statistics, and enables officials to explain the implications of the statistics as they are published.

Ofsted's Head of Profession for Statistics draws up and oversees these arrangements.

2. People included in pre-release access lists

Officials who need pre-release access to the statistical release are included in the pre-release access list. They may include:

- other government statisticians who need to consider coherence with their own departments' data sets
- policy leads who may need to comment publicly on main findings

Pre-release access to official statistics must be limited to the minimum number of people necessary to allow officials to:

- respond to questions or make statements at the time of publication
- take action before or at the time of publication

Access is allowed only in circumstances where the public benefit is likely to outweigh the possible detriment to public trust in official statistics and individuals satisfy the requirements laid out in the [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008](#).

Ofsted publishes job titles and organisations of everyone who has been granted pre-release access, alongside the statistical releases.

3. Grant of pre-release access

The arrangements set out in this statement are confined to people who meet the eligibility criteria. They include:

- senior officials who have operational responsibility for a particular activity covered by a release, and who are accountable for their stewardship of that activity to ministers and Parliament

- the officials with ultimate responsibility for formulating, developing, maintaining, monitoring or implementing that policy
- other officials who have been assigned the responsibility to brief ministers or chief executives about the statistics in question, such as special advisers, policy advisers or analysts
- departmental press officers responsible for managing communications with the media about the policy or statistics in question (plus any immediate supporting staff)

Ofsted may grant pre-release access to supplementary data (such as publications released with our annual report) and releases that:

- include inspection and inspection outcome data
- include provider and places data
- cover matters of wide public interest, such as [our research](#) and blogs

4. Period of access

Pre-release access to Ofsted's official statistics is restricted to a maximum of 24 hours before publication. Ofsted's statistical releases are published at 9.30am.

In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Profession for Statistics, in consultation with others, may grant pre-release access for more than 24 hours before public release if, in their opinion, the public benefit outweighs the possible detriment to public trust.

When this happens, the Head of Profession for Statistics will publish their reasons for granting extended access and will inform the UK Statistics Authority's chief executive (the National Statistician).

5. Conditions of access

The people who are given pre-release access to the department's official statistics must keep the statistics secure and under embargo until their release and they must abide by certain conditions of access. They must avoid:

- disclosing the statistics, or any part of a publication containing them, to anyone not listed as a pre-release recipient
- providing any indication of either absolute levels or trends revealed by the statistics
- using their access for personal gain or political advantage
- exploiting their access to change the content, presentation or timing of

6. Special circumstances

The Head of Profession for Statistics may allow access to a limited number of people in a limited number of special circumstances, for more than 24 hours ahead of release. For example, access may be given to the compilers of complementary reports due to be published at the same time as, or shortly after, the statistics so they can incorporate the latest available figures – this access may be for longer than 24 hours.

7. Breach of the conditions

If the principles set out here are breached, the Head of Profession for Statistics will:

- complete the Breach Report Template and submit to the National Statistician by emailing the [GSS good practice team](#).
- take action to prevent a recurrence
- promptly respond to requests for additional information

The National Statistician may decide to conduct an inquiry on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority, and publish the results on their website.

8. Sanctions against non-compliance

Ofsted's Head of Profession for Statistics may withdraw, for a period of time, pre-release access from anyone judged to have breached the conditions.

A heavier sanction can be imposed by the UK Statistics Authority, which has a statutory duty to assess the extent to which any organisation's national statistics comply with the [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008](#), and the duties set out in this statement.

The Authority can, for instance, challenge an organisation where it considers that pre-release access is not justified or where an organisation is failing to conform to these arrangements.

It can also withdraw, or threaten to withdraw, the title of 'national statistics' from the statistics in question. In the event of such a challenge or withdrawal, Ofsted's Head of Profession for Statistics will publish Ofsted's response on GOV.UK along

with plans for achieving compliance.

Jason Bradbury
Head of Profession for Statistics
Ofsted
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