



NRLS official statistics publications: pre-release statement of compliance

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Introduction

This document outlines the arrangements for NHS England and NHS Improvement to pre-release the following National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS) official statistics on patient safety incidents to ministers and officials once they are in their final form before publication:

- national patient safety incident reports ([NaPSIR](#) previously the Quarterly Data Summary – QDS)
- organisation patient safety incident reports ([OPSIR](#))
- [monthly summary data](#) on patient safety incident reports¹.

These arrangements are part of the [code of practice for statistics](#) and are designed to ensure that pre-release access is justified, limited, controlled, publicised and compliant with statutory requirements. Their purpose is to maintain public confidence in the integrity of official statistics, while allowing ministers to account immediately for the implications of such statistics covering policy areas for which they are democratically responsible.

Authority

These arrangements have been drawn up by the lead official for statistics at NHS England and NHS Improvement and are maintained by the responsible statistician for these statistics.

¹ Although not formally an official statistic this output is included here due to its similarity to the OPSIR and NaPSIR

Principles of pre-release access

We use the principles outlined below to ensure that pre-release access to our official statistics is limited to the minimum number of people to allow the minister or accountable person either to respond to questions or make statements about the statistics at or shortly after their publication.

Granting advance access

Pre-release access is only given to those who meet the criteria below. In addition, these individuals may share access with immediate administrative support staff even if these staff may not directly use the statistics themselves.

Period of access

Public release of statistics occurs at 9.30am on a pre-announced date. In line with legislation, pre-release access is restricted to a maximum of 24 hours before the public release.

Conditions of access

Individuals who are given pre-release access to these official statistics are obliged to keep the statistics secure and under embargo until their public release and must avoid:

- disclosing the statistics or any part of the publication containing the statistics to any person not listed as a pre-release recipient
- indicating the size or direction of any trend identified by the statistics
- using the access for personal or political gain
- using the access to change or compromise the content, presentation or timing of publication of official statistics.

Special circumstances

In special circumstances, and in accordance with Principle 5 of [the pre-release access to official statistics order 2008](#), the lead official may grant pre-release access for more than 24 hours. This will only be allowed for a limited number of people in a limited number of special circumstances. Early pre-release will only happen if the public benefit outweighs the detriment to public trust likely to result from extended early access. The lead official will publish the reasons for the early release on the webpages where the data is normally published.

Criteria for granting pre-release access

Categories of persons to whom we would normally grant pre-release access to our statistical releases:

- ministers who have policy responsibility for a particular subject covered by a statistical release; who are accountable to Parliament and the electorate for their stewardship of that policy; and who may need to respond to questions about the statistics, or take appropriate action, when they are released
- NHS England and NHS Improvement and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) chief executives or very senior staff who have operational responsibility for a particular activity covered by a release
- other NHS England and NHS Improvement and DHSC officials who have been assigned the specific responsibility to brief ministers or very senior staff at their organisation about the statistics (eg special advisers, policy advisers, analysts, clinicians)
- NHS England and NHS Improvement press officers responsible for managing contact with the media about the policy or statistics in question
- any immediate ancillary staff who support the staff listed above.

Categories of statistical release to which we would normally grant pre-release access:

- releases that cover matters of wide public interest
- releases that incorporate statistics used to monitor or measure the health system's performance (either generally or against formal outcome measures)
- releases that could impinge substantially on formulating, implementing or monitoring health policy

- releases that could inform, or affect, decisions about allocating public funds.

Breach of these conditions

If these conditions are significantly breached, the lead official will:

- notify the UK Statistics Authority's chief executive (the national statistician) and its head of assessment
- take action to prevent a recurrence
- provide the authority with a written explanation.

The national statistician may decide to conduct an inquiry on the authority's behalf, the results of which will be posted on the authority's website.

Where the lead official considers that a breach was minor in nature and results in no damage to the integrity of the statistics involved, they may choose to deal with the manner informally through internal discussion.

Sanctions against non-compliance

The lead official for statistics is responsible for ensuring compliance within NHS England and NHS Improvement, and has discretion over how they respond to breaches to the regulations. The lead official will decide the most appropriate course of action in this situation through consultation with the head of profession, as appropriate.

Documentation and publication

The lead official for statistics is responsible for ensuring compliance within NHS England and NHS Improvement, and has discretion over how they respond to breaches to the regulations. The lead official will decide the most appropriate course of action in this situation through consultation with the head of profession, as appropriate.

Contact us for help

If you have any questions about the NRLS data collection, the published data or your organisation's data please contact the NRLS team: nrls.datarequests@nhs.net

Contact: nrls.datarequests@nhs.net

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