

Passenger Focus statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Introduction

1. This statement sets out Passenger Focus's operational arrangements for compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and with the Pre-release access to Official Statistics Order 2008. As of the 1st April 2009, Passenger Focus was named as a provider of Official Statistics and undertakes two pieces of research which need to be produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>) and the standards described in the eight principles and three detailed protocols. These pieces of research are the National Passenger Survey (NPS) and the accredited National Statistic¹ the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey (BMTS)².
2. Passenger Focus's Statistical outputs are prepared by Passenger Focus researchers and statisticians, who are accountable professionally to the National Statistician. Information about our publications can be found at the Passenger Focus website (www.passengerfocus.org.uk), and also from the National Statistics website (www.ons.gov.uk). You can download any of our research publications from our website or contact us at info@passengerfocus.org.uk for a free copy.

Timing of releases and pre-announcement

3. Release dates for the NPS and BMTS results are pre-announced on our website and in the case of the BMTS on the ONS statistical publications site (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/>) at least twelve months prior to publication. The exact date of publication will be announced at least one month ahead of releasing the results. We aim to release statistics as soon as possible after they have been compiled.

Format of releases

4. The Head of Research maintains responsibility for the content and format of all research outputs (and where necessary in consultation with the National Statistician), in addition to Passenger Focus's Head of Communications.
5. Releases are normally in the form of a published document providing a number of tables and graphs with commentary to assist media reporting. In addition, Passenger Focus will provide a media release shortly after the publication of results which will provide additional commentary on the results including any policy statements we would make as a result of the research.

Pre-release access to statistics

¹ According to the ONS 'National Statistics' is the national standard for official statistics. The 'National Statistics' Quality Mark indicates that the statistics have been produced in accordance with a Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice requires the statistics to be produced, managed and disseminated to high professional standards. The statistics must be well-explained and meet users' needs. The 'National Statistics' standard has statutory backing.¹

² From 1st April 2010 Passenger Focus will take on the responsibility of conducting the Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey from the Department for Transport.

6. Passenger Focus maintains a record of any individual who has pre-release access to the statistics for the purpose of peer review or quality assurance. Access of this kind is under the strict understanding that the material is restricted until published, and may not be shared with others or used for purposes other than quality review/validation and to allow action to be taken immediately the results are published.
7. Individuals having 24 hours pre-release access will be published on Passenger Focus website (and where relevant the National Statistics website). Pre-release access is determined on a need to know basis and is subject to quarterly risk assessment by the Information Strategy Group.

Authority

8. These arrangements have been drawn up by Passenger Focus's Head of Research (as equivalent lead official to a Head of Profession for Statistics) in consultation with the Chief Executive of Passenger Focus and other relevant Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Department for Transport (DfT) officials. The Head of Research is also responsible for ensuring the day-to-day implementation of these arrangements.

General principle

9. Passenger Focus operates under the general principle that pre-release access to official statistics must be:
 - Limited to the minimum number of persons deemed necessary to allow the Chief Executive to either:
 - Provide responses to questions, or make statements about those statistics at, or shortly after, their time of publication.
 - Take action just before, at, or shortly after the time of publication.
 - Allowed only in those circumstances where the public benefit likely to result from such access outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from doing so.

Grant of advance access

10. The arrangements set out in this statement are confined to those persons who meet the eligibility criteria set out in **Annex A (i)** which can be found on page five of this document. Recipients can, in addition, share their access with their immediate administrative support staff even though those staff may not directly engage with the statistics in question. Their advance access is limited to statistics which meet the eligibility criteria set out in **Annex A (ii)** (which is available to view on pages five and six of this document), and which are in their final form prior to being published for the first time.

Documentation and publication

11. In the interest of openness and transparency, Passenger Focus maintains a public record on its website listing the titles of all the statistical releases to which these arrangements apply, as well as the job titles of all those persons to whom pre-release access has been granted, and the organisations to which they belong.
12. To view the complete list of official statistics to which this Statement applies, [please click here](#). Clicking on the title of each release will show a list of which persons have been given access to each release. (The justification for giving advance access to each listed recipient is available on request).

Period of access

13. In line with the legislation, pre-release access to Passenger Focus's official statistics is restricted to a maximum of 24 hours before their public release on the following day – usually at 9.30am.
14. In exceptional circumstances only, and in accordance with Principle 5 of the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, the Head of Research may grant pre-release access in excess of 24 hours. This will only occur if, in his opinion, the public benefit outweighs the detriment to public trust, which is likely to result from such extended access. When this happens, the Head of Research will publish on the Passenger Focus website the reasons for granting extended access, and will also inform the UK Statistics Authority's Chief Executive (the National Statistician) or the Chair of the ONS.

Conditions of access

15. Those persons who are given access to Passenger Focus's official statistics ahead of their release must keep the statistics secure and under embargo, and they must abide by the following conditions of access. They must avoid:
 - Disclosing the statistics or any part of a publication containing those statistics to any person not listed as a pre-release recipient.
 - Providing any indication of the size or direction of any trend revealed by the statistics.
 - Using such access for personal gain, or taking any action for political advantage.
 - Exploiting such access to change or compromise the content, presentation, or timing of publication of official statistics.

Breach of conditions of release

16. In the event where an organisation becomes aware that a lapse in release practices for any of their designated National Statistics or Official Statistics has led to a substantive breach of the principles and rules set out in the legislation and described in this statement, the Head of Research will notify the UK Statistics Authority's Chief Executive (the National Statistician); take action to prevent a recurrence; and provide the Authority with a written explanation using the Authority's standard reporting form. The National Statistician may decide to conduct an inquiry on behalf of the Authority, the results of which will be posted on the Authority's website. In the case of minor

breaches, or genuinely accidental breaches, which have no major repercussions, the Head of Research may deal with the matter informally.

Sanctions against non-compliance

17. Any cases of failure to comply with the Official Statistics Code will be investigated by Passenger Focus and a full report provided to the National Statistician. The National Statistician will report regularly on compliance with the Code of Practice. This Statement of Compliance will be kept up to date.
18. In addition, the Head of Research will publish Passenger Focus's response or reaction on its website along with its plans for achieving conformance.
19. Passenger Focus's Head of Research may, for a period, withdraw pre-release access from any person judged to have breached the conditions of their access.

Further information can be obtained from:

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Annex A

Criteria for granting pre-release access

(i) - Categories of persons within government to whom Passenger Focus would normally grant pre-release access to its statistical releases:

- Those Ministers who have policy or operational responsibility for a particular subject-matter 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, at the time of release of those statistics.
- Those Chief Executives 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 through them to Parliament; and who are in a similar position to those Ministers described above.
- The top Departmental or Agency officials with ultimate responsibility for formulating, developing, maintaining, monitoring or implementing that policy.

- Other Departmental or Agency officials who have been assigned the specific responsibility to brief Ministers or Chief Executives about the statistics in question (for example, Special Advisers, Policy Advisers, Analysts).
- Departmental press officers responsible for managing Ministers' interface with the media with respect to the policy or statistics in question.

(plus any immediate ancillary staff who support the above).

Categories of persons outside of government to whom Passenger Focus would normally grant pre-release access to its statistical releases (this list will be available once agreement with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been reached) but could include:

- Train Operating Companies – Senior Executive teams.
- Association of Train Operating Companies – Commercial Director.
- Network Rail – Senior Management.
- Office of Rail Regulator – Senior Management Team.
- Transport for Scotland.
- Welsh Assembly Government.
- Public Transport Executives.
- British Transport Police.

(ii) - Categories of statistical release to which Passenger Focus would normally grant pre-release access:

- Releases categorised as 'market-sensitive' (in other words, releases which embody statistics which, when disclosed, would be reasonably likely to have a significant effect on the value or traded volume of any investment).
- Releases which incorporate statistics which are used to monitor or measure the government's performance (either generally, or against formal targets).
- Releases which have the potential to impinge substantially on the formulation, implementation, or monitoring of government policy.
- Releases which have the potential to inform, or impact on, decisions about the allocation of public funds.
- Releases which have, demonstrably and historically, had a high public profile (in other words, regularly generate column inches in the print media or regularly attract the attention of the broadcast media) and on which Ministers or Chief Executives with responsibility for the subject-matter might reasonably be expected to comment at the time of release.
- Releases which incorporate statistics derived from other Departments' or Agencies' administrative or management systems, and for which Ministers or Chief Executives in those other Departments have ownership and operational responsibility.
- Compendia publications (for example, Social Trends, Regional Trends which often include data which has already been released) or complex publications which have been made available to the media in advance of their public release, and under embargo, in order to give journalists time to absorb and understand their contents.
- Releases which cover matters of wide public interest.

Introduction

The following statements and policies augment individual protocols and give more detail of specific aspects of our arrangements for compliance.

Publication Strategy

Release Practices

Revisions and Errors

Confidentiality and Access

Data Management Policy

Customer service and Complaints