



Home Office

Consultation on the changes to Police Recorded Crime classifications: Response from Home Office Statistics

March 2012

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1. Introduction

Home Office Statistics launched a 13-week consultation alongside the publication of the quarterly crime statistics update on 20 October 2011 about proposed changes to police recorded crime classifications. The consultation period ended on 12 January 2012 and this document provides a summary of the responses to the consultation and an outline of actions and decisions taken, or to be taken.

2. Background

When the Home Secretary commissioned the National Statistician to undertake an independent review of crime statistics for England and Wales in December 2010, the terms of reference asked her to consider “whether or not the categories of notifiable offences for police recorded crime reported in the national statistics can be sensibly rationalised without reducing public trust or damaging transparency”.

The National Statistician found that there may be some scope to reduce the number of crime categories used for the reporting and collection of police recorded crime, and to consider how some offences currently excluded from notifiable crime might be reflected in published crime statistics. The National Statistician also stated that any change must be managed and introduced in a controlled and transparent way. She recommended that the issue should be considered by the new independent Advisory Committee on crime statistics that her Report also recommended be established.

To inform the Committee’s consideration of these proposals, the Home Office issued a National Statistics consultation on 20 October 2011 on proposed changes to the collection.

3. Responses to the consultation

A total of 23 responses were received to this consultation from 20 police forces, the Association of Chief Police Forces (ACPO), Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMIC) and the University of Portsmouth (see Annex A for the full list). The proposals were broadly supported although some concerns were raised. A summary of responses to key questions is given below, but it should be noted that not all respondents provided a response to all the questions raised in the consultation paper. Furthermore, a wide range of comments on additional areas were received and it is not possible to respond to each of these here. These have been broken down separately for data producers and data users.

For Data producers (Police)

Consultation question 1: Do you support these proposals either in whole or in part?

Support

Better understanding for the Public and Data Users

- 1.1 Should make crime statistics easier for the public to understand (Sussex, Staffordshire and Northumbria Police). The terms victim based and non victim based have been used by the

Crime and Policing Comparator website and are considered more easily understood by the public (Lancashire Constabulary).

- 1.2 The simplified presentation of data, by reducing categories, will improve understanding for the Data User; whilst retaining most of the current classifications will minimise change and retraining for operational and recording staff (Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Constabulary).
- 1.3 A minor reduction in the ability to track crime types over time is an acceptable price to pay for clearer descriptions of crimes, particularly as the transparency agenda increases our engagement with the public around recorded crime (Devon and Cornwall Constabulary).

Violence Against the Person

- 1.4 The move to the higher level reporting of victim-based offences is particularly welcome (ACPO). The changes to police recorded crime classifications for assaults is supported in part. The combined category of assault with injury is considered a positive change (Thames Valley Police).
- 1.5 The amalgamation of inflicting grievously bodily harm (GBH) without intent and actual bodily harm (ABH) is supported (Northumbria Police, Dyfed-Powys Police and Devon and Cornwall Constabulary). The proposal to reduce the burden and effort to determine the appropriate classification of offences causing injury will achieve a greater level of confidence in data quality (Northumbria Police). From an operational perspective there is often a fine line between some of the offences classified as GBH (Section 20) and ABH. This coupled with subjective interpretation often leads to inconsistent recording and often created a perverse incentive. (By classifying all borderline offences as ABH rather than GBH (Section 20), one could reduce the levels of Most Serious Violence (Dyfed Powys Police).
- 1.6 The removal of public order and weapon offences from the violence against the person category is supported (Bedfordshire Police and Lancashire Constabulary) The move to the reporting and therefore separation of victim based offences from other offences is particularly welcome (Lancashire Constabulary).
- 1.7 The proposals to bring all offences that amount to an actual injury to a specific intended victim into either Wounding (more serious injury) or Assault with Injury (less serious injury) and to amalgamate offences amounting to acts endangering life into one classification are welcomed. The current crime classification (5A) does not differentiate between actual woundings and acts deemed to have endangered life. Given the relatively low numbers of reported woundings in DPP, the recording of endangering life offences in the same classification (with subjective interpretation and inconsistent recording) often created a false impression of significant increases in the levels of reported serious violence (Dyfed-Powys Police).

Racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury

- 1.8 The amalgamation of R/R aggravated GBH (Section 20) and R/R aggravated ABH into the 'R/R/ aggravated 'Assault with injury' category is welcomed. This makes sense because the more important statistic is the extent of R/R aggravated assault. The breakdown of those assaults into Section 20s and Section 47s is less important.

Prostitution related offences

- 1.9 Historically prostitution related offences have accounted for up to 50% of the sexual offence category and have caused large year on year variation in this category. These will be moved

to the Other miscellaneous category (i.e. there is some benefit in terms of being able to understand trends as police generated activity in this area will no longer lead to major variations in recorded sexual offences).

Concerns

Violence against the Person

- 1.10 The ongoing separation of wounding will continue to cause problems with regard to the issue of attempted wounding where either less serious or no actual injury occurs. (Thames Valley Police)
- 1.11 It is not clear whether the violent crime meta-category is affected by these proposals. Clarification would be welcomed that the violent crime category is being retained and will have the same constituents as now (Northumbria Police).
- 1.12 Moving GBH with intent to its own group is welcomed. However calling it "Wounding" will be confusing to the public. It is not clear that the public would understand from the title the difference between assault with injury and wounding especially as some wounding offences will not actually involve physical injury. We feel that the public understand ABH and GBH in general terms (Metropolitan Police). Bedfordshire Police also commented that the new heading for Endangering Life would require a wounding to endanger life rather than the offence title of wounding or act endangering life. The latter does not require a wounding or other act endangering life, so more thought needs to be given to clarity and definitions in this area.
- 1.13 We would like more clarification on the old 5A codes that are morphing into 5D and 5E and the difference between 'endangering life' and 'intent' (where there is no injury but an attempt S18 OAP act is charged). As the report states, the previous change to the classifications to support the PSA targets caused all police forces problems. Whilst it appears a good idea it may cause us problems with implementation if the categories are not clear (South Wales Police).
- 1.14 The proposal to change police recorded crime classifications for assaults is supported strongly in principle. The previous adoption of the 'Most Serious Violence' category probably reduced the validity of comparisons between forces and undoubtedly damaged public confidence in statistics. The changes introduced significant subjectivity and uncertainty into crime recording decisions and then sought to use the material produced as a key component of policy making. The police service continues to wrestle with the current recording practices but most could be persuaded to wait a little longer if the eventual decision was significantly better. As the proposals stand I am not satisfied the consistency and accuracy of data will improve as some of the subjectivity remains. There is certainly more scope to strive for greater public confidence (ACPO).
- 1.15 If the Advisory Committee is minded to commission further work there may be merits in publishing data on assaults in far fewer categories; this could be as simple as 'with injury' and 'without injury'. In the context of national statistics this might be sufficient and would certainly achieve greater consistency. This would also achieve a reduction in bureaucracy as a great deal of effort currently goes into placing crimes into certain classifications (sometimes involving re-classifications) based on opinion and subjectivity. This is further compounded by subsequent audit activity which again tries to rule on points of detail (ACPO).

- 1.16 We accept that policy and operational decision makers will want greater detail and granularity for specific purposes but our view is that this should involve dedicated research, drawing on the wealth of detail in crime reports and case files (ACPO).
- 1.17 Altering offences involving 'intent' may have an impact on court cases where intent plays a key role which needs to be thought through. Offence codes 8F (Inflicting grievous bodily harm without intent), 8G (ABH and other injury) and 8K (Poisoning or female genital mutilation) to become 8N could be too broad an area to be covered by one code. This could impact how forces understand criminality around Honour based violence/forced marriages for example (Bedfordshire Police).

Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage

- 1.18 The proposed changes to Racially or Religiously Aggravated Criminal Damage seem curious. Why consolidate these offences into one category and leave their non-racially or religiously equivalents as separate entities (Lancashire Constabulary).

Offences against the State or public order

- 1.19 The descriptor of state based offences for the other category may be less clear to the public, a more straightforward descriptor of non victim based may be preferable. This alternative descriptor is already used in the public domain on the recently introduced HMIC public facing Crime & Policing Comparator web-site. This is one example of inconsistency which could be addressed by the Advisory Committee (Lancashire Constabulary & ACPO).
- 1.20 The proposal to combine a large number of fairly disparate offences types under the 'other miscellaneous' banner. This will in itself come to form a huge category and we would question whether the separation of state and victim base crimes is an entirely appropriate one. The category of violent crime is a particularly complex one in any event and it may be appropriate to focus on this and get it right given the complexities that it throws up (Dyfed-Powys Police).
- 1.21 An increase in the volumes of public order offences or possession of weapon offences could (with some justification) be indicative of increased Police productivity effectiveness; an alternative view would be that people have to be committing the offence in the first place before the Police can proactively deal with them. A sceptic might think that presenting these statistics on a quarterly basis in one broad 'Other Miscellaneous' category could be politically motivated in an attempt to allay public fears. Whilst conceding the point that an extensive annual publication in July will provide detailed breakdowns at the level of data collection, this could be regarded as slightly at odds with the terms of reference that "National Statistics can be sensibly rationalised without reducing public trust or damaging transparency" (Dyfed-Powys Police).

Public fear, alarm or distress (9A and 9B) being moved to Other Miscellaneous Offences

- 1.22 This could inhibit rather than support transparency. We would propose that all Public Order Act offences are reported under a single headline classification which is capable of disaggregation into two sub-classifications (serious disorder to include 62-65 and less serious disorder to include 9A, 9B and 66) (Thames Valley Police).
- 1.23 This would appear to have a reduction in Violence however this would not be a true reduction as the Notifiable Offences have only moved to another classification (South Yorkshire Police).

- 1.24 We support the move to group state based crimes together but we do not feel that sections 4 and 4a of the Public Order Act 1986 are state based offences because they require a victim to confirm the circumstances (Metropolitan Police).
- 1.25 The possession of weapons offences could easily fit into this category also (South Wales Police).
- 1.26 This type of offence can very much impact communities, especially near town centres. 'Other miscellaneous' does not make it sound important. Perhaps this could be reworded to 'public order offences' (Surrey Police).

Threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage – move to other miscellaneous

- 1.27 The only classification we disagreed with was the moving of 'threats to commit criminal damage' to other miscellaneous offences. The consultation this is because (offences largely being recorded as a result of policy activity to disrupt criminality) is not our experience within Northern Ireland. The Home Office indicates states that this will include some offences where an individual has been threatened that their property would be damaged, however reports of this nature account for the vast majority of such offences recorded in Northern Ireland. This effectively classes these offences as victimless crimes when in fact our experience is that the vast majority of these have person of business victims (PSNI).
- 1.28 Moving Handling stolen goods from theft and Threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage from Criminal damage to Other Miscellaneous could be considered to be artificially lowering crime in these areas (South Yorkshire Police).

Sexual Offences

- 1.29 The changes do not address serious sexual offences. We are currently reporting every sexual assault (regardless of circumstance) as being of a serious nature thereby unintentionally giving an inflated picture of sexual offending. It might be argued that it is difficult to draw the line on these offences but we believe that better categories could involve offences where the alleged offender is known to the victim or not. We could also seek to discern between persons in a position of trust and those engaged in behaviour where the victim was in some way complicit (not children)' (Bedfordshire Police).

Other Comments

- 1.30 Consideration needs to be given to the changes required to National systems such as PND, Crime Mapper, Police UK, Data Hub and other web developers who use data to support the proposals (Thames Valley).
- 1.31 A national steer is required in terms of how the changes should be implemented by forces (e.g. end date' or 'back record convert') to ensure that national data comparison is consistent (North Yorkshire Police & Thames Valley Police).
- 1.32 Moving notifiable offences to what is considered to be a lesser category could lead to perverse incentives to downgrade crimes recorded which would lead to a lack of public trust (South Yorkshire).
- 1.33 The current strengths of crime statistics is the ability to allow comparative analysis of trends, and comparisons between forces. These proposals may make it difficult for forces to interpret

if a real reduction has taken place and would be difficult for the public to undertake a comparison (South Yorkshire).

- 1.34 The grouping of a large number of offences (68 to 99) as 'other offences' may appear attractive in terms of simplification but there may be an impact on other areas of the business, notably Freedom of Information and the ability to draw back data for requests under this umbrella (Dyfed-Powys Police).
- 1.35 It would make more sense for the Home Office to obtain data from forces as they do now and present it for public consumption as they see fit. This would be considerably less time-consuming and bureaucratic than expecting each Force to individually comply with a new presentation style and then submit to the centre – particularly when one considers that further changes are likely to be recommended on an annual basis (Dyfed-Powys Police).

2. Subject to a decision being made by 31 January 2012 could you implement them for April 2012?

- 2.1 It was generally accepted that changes could be implemented by the required timeframes, however as much notice as possible would be appreciated. Only Dyfed-Powys Police expressed concern as they are undergoing a major period of change early in 2012, including a change to one single territorial policing model from the end of February.

3. To what extent do you consider they will contribute to reduction in the burden associated with crime recording?

- 3.1 Feedback on this question generally stated that the proposals would have a limited effect in reducing the burden associated with crime recording in the long term with a small burden in the short term to adapt to the changes. ACPO response was that whilst it would not ease the burden this was not a reason to reject a change if the other reasons for progressing the change were justified.
- 3.2 Dyfed-Powys Police stated that the best way to reduce bureaucracy further would be to marry up the systems for recording and presenting data, something that would also serve to make the process that much more transparent. This was mentioned by several forces.

4. Do you have any further suggestions or proposals for consideration by the Independent Advisory Committee?

Violence against the person

- 4.1 This section is confusing as these changes will not take us back to the pre-2008 position. The document confuses where the actual recording of attempted GBH W/I sits. The comparison between GBH without intent and ABH is somewhat meaningless. Attempt 5/1 would still fit within the higher return classification it currently does. Presuming the changes were to go through Attempt 5/1 would sit in 5D & 5E and not 8N which appears to be the conclusion. That said removing Attempt 5/1s and record on an "injury only" basis would make the application of the rules a little simpler (Sussex Police).
- 4.2 Does the term "wounding" really aid public understanding? Given how we hear how outdated the offences against the persons act is which uses similar terminology it maybe time to go for something more simplistic. Perhaps 'Serious Injury or attempt to cause serious injury' is more suitable for 5D? (Sussex Police)

- 4.3 Great care needs to be taken in defining what will constitute Grievous Bodily Harm (class 8F) and what will constitute ABH and other injury (class 8G). A very minor wound (split lip) at present is a Wound. It would be most unfortunate if this opportunity were not taken to clarify, beyond doubt where the distinction lay. The continued use of the word 'Wound' would perhaps appear counter productive? (Suffolk Constabulary) Further thought should perhaps be given to 'wounding' as it may not be as clear as is proposed (Cambridgeshire Constabulary).
- 4.4 Although maximum publicity was anticipated for the previous amendments around violent crime (interpretation of 'intent' and introduction of 'minor wound'), there was some misunderstanding and apprehension for Data Users, in the amended figures, especially when comparison could not be made with previous statistical returns (Suffolk Constabulary).
- 4.5 In terms of suggestions for the Committee, we are not sure the term 'violence without injury' is understood outside the wider police community (Metropolitan Police).
- 4.6 Due to the summary only aspect of common assault and the closeness with S4/4A could this also be considered for moving to other offences? (Sussex Police)
- 4.7 The only specific suggestion would be to focus on the classifications of violent crime given the technicalities involved and it is a significant volume crime area for most if not all forces. (Dyfed-Powys Police)

Alignment of Crime Categories and Standards

- 4.8 The recent progress in the alignment of HMIC and NPJA crime groupings on their public facing web-sites is a positive move. In particular the clear distinction between victim-based and non victim-based crime adds valuable context for members of the public when assessing their personal risk of crime. We would encourage the Independent Advisory Committee to consider further work to better align crime categories for public reporting (Thames Valley Police).
- 4.9 The national CrimeMapper web-site has made considerable progress in terms of data transparency. In their recent work HMIC sought to follow this model. It would be a retrograde step if CrimeMapper were to regress to a different set of Home Office crime categories (Thames Valley Police). In May 2012 Police.uk will expand to display additional data relating to Crime Resolutions. With these moves in mind it would be more beneficial, if changes are to be made, that all Crime Reporting undertaken be aligned to a common set of Defined Crime Groups. Simplification and re-alignment can only assist in making it easy for the Forces and the Public to understand the figures being presented (West Mercia Police). The ideal situation would be for one single system of categorisation for both the recording and presentation of data through the police.uk website and other channels (Dyfed-Powys Police).
- 4.10 CPS Charging Standards vs. National Recording Standards continues to be a challenge. Suggest both standards are reviewed and brought into line with each other (North Yorkshire Police and Devon and Cornwall Constabulary).

Possession of weapons offences (8B, 10A, 10C and 10D)

- 4.11 Can we look at splitting real firearm offences to those covered by imitation ones to produce a more accurate picture of threat, harm and risk associated with real firearms, rather than group BB guns or children's toys in the same categories? (Leicestershire Constabulary)

Public fear, alarm or distress (9A and 9B)

- 4.12 The proposed changes to public fear (page 6) are fully supported however; there is confusion about how police record these. The circumstances identified would not routinely be recorded as a crime due to no victim confirmation. Given the proposal advocates a change to the way 4/4A especially is dealt with it is recommended the Home Office relent on the victim conformation aspect and the offences should become state or victim for recording purposes (Sussex Police).

Other Comments

- 4.13 Review sanctioned detections with a view to developing 'positive disposal' outcomes. Submission of CRD disposals to be made mandatory and shown as a positive disposal in published national statistics (North Yorkshire Police).
- 4.14 Duplication of HO classifications. There are a number of classifications at HO level that are duplicated within the group level e.g. 008/01 within groups 8F and 8G and 058/04 within groups 58E, F, G and H. It would be beneficial if the Home Office would consider having a unique HO class for each offence in order to streamline processes and prevent additional technical work implement changes (North Yorkshire Police)
- 4.15 A move to "other state offences and public order" and not "other miscellaneous" is suggested as more appropriate. By introducing greater transparency of data there is value in ensuring that the words we use resonate with members of the public. It is essential therefore that the language chosen for the new classifications is that which members of the public can easily understand (Sussex Police).
- 4.16 Separating those crimes reported by the public (call for service) from those generated by police activity (state crimes - e.g. offensive weapons, drugs etc) would be beneficial to identifying the level of crime and allaying the fear of crime. Consideration could be given to whether or not any summary only offences need to be (Sussex Police).
- 4.17 There is a need to consider the data implications of police crime recording for the public. In the modern policing environment crime recording, every crime report brings with it a detailed record of the crime, the victim and those suspected to be, responsible. In the post-Bichard environment these personal details are routinely transferred to the Police National Database (PND) allowing nationwide checks to be carried out. For the overwhelming majority of offences this is a positive move. However for some it can result in life changing decisions being made in terms of future disclosure. In this environment there is an increasingly compelling case to consider a public interest test to be applied to crime recording. Whilst most cases would pass such a test there are some that would not. For example, teenagers discovered in non-abusive sexual activity which contravenes the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Thames Valley Police).
- 4.18 We would also propose that lessons are learnt from previous amendments to changing offence categories to ensure that Data Users are fully appreciative of the impact of these changes and that comparison with previous years should not be made without very careful consideration (Cambridgeshire Constabulary).
- 4.19 Could consideration be given to counting victim based and state based offences separately as the recording of state based offences increase if a force is being proactive (e.g. drug operations) and this should be identified as positive for Forces in tackling crime (South Yorkshire Police).

- 4.20 At the inaugural committee meeting brief mention was made of a weighted crime index and some academic work is already ongoing around an index specifically based on threat and harm. These are significant pieces of work but over time it is hoped the committee can co-ordinate and quality assure this type of development activity. The committee may wish to take stock of alternative models and the academic work currently being conducted here and abroad (ACPO).
- 4.21 ACPO has had growing concerns that the current recording regime is disadvantaging certain groups of young people, particularly those in care. Earlier proposals which sought to remove this element of discrimination were put on hold pending the formation of the Committee and ACPO will seek to submit a fresh proposal at the earliest opportunity (ACPO).
- 4.22 ACPO will contend that the Notifiable Offences list does not serve the wider public interest. The National Statistician noted the arguments for and against in her report but in time it would be desirable for the Advisory Committee to arrive at a definitive conclusion (ACPO).

For Data Users

5. Do you support these proposals either in whole or in part?

- 5.1 The proposals were widely supported although a few concerns were raised in a few of the responses as outlined below.
- 5.2 Loss of historical comparison data for performance, intelligence/analytical purposes, although it has been confirmed that the loss of *detail* would not have a negative impact for analytical purposes as this is completed at a higher level (North Yorkshire Police).
- 5.3 Requirement to carry out significant re-configuration work to amend the parameters and tolerance levels used to predict and identify emerging crime trends. Dependant upon the decision in relation to the query raised in question 1, regarding national steer (North Yorkshire Police).
- 5.4 Yes. However, forces are seeing significant reductions in funding and we would wish to reduce 'back office' work significantly rather than impact equally on the front line. The changes proposed are welcome but do not have a great impact on, or address the bureaucratic burden of producing crime statistics both on the front line and the back office. We also believe they do not go far enough in producing statistics that the public will easily comprehend. As such we would ask that a far more audacious approach is considered to the whole area of HOCR and for it to be in place for 2013/14 (West Mercia Police).

6. Do you agree that these proposals would bring greater coherence to official statistics on crime?

- 6.1 Only six of the 23 responses commented on this question – comments below.

Yes, some of the current classifications are difficult to follow. Making a separation between state-based crime and personal crime is sensible and there is good rationale for moving the crime categories as proposed (e.g. kidnapping). Making a clear distinction between violence with and without injury is helpful (Suffolk Constabulary). Making a split between personal and state-based crime is sensible and this supports the move of certain specific crimes as proposed (e.g. kidnapping). Making a clear distinction between violence with and without any injuries is also helpful in the understanding of the offences (Cambridgeshire Constabulary). The University of Portsmouth also agreed with the question.

- 6.2 It is likely that these changes will cause confusion. The rationale provided for the removal of Section 4, 4A and 5 POA offences from the 'Violence' classification is confusing. Whilst it is agreed that Sec 4A and Sec 5 may not amount to violence without injury, the decision to remove the Section 4 POA offence from the 'Violence' classification appears to be an attempt to make a reduction in recorded violent crime, leaving forces to explain the reasons for statistical differences due to this change. The decision to move Section 4 POA offences from the 'Violence' classification does not support the proposal for a clearer split between victim-based and state-based offences (North Yorkshire Police).
- 6.3 This will take us back to pre 2008, and will not help public confidence. As a force our priority and commitment to victims is that we deal with an incident as alleged. It bears little consequence to the victim whether we record it as a 'wounding' or 'assault with injury.' The victim wants assurances that we have caught the culprit/s. Members of the public interested in police recorded crime and incident data will want to see this information tabled in one consistent & transparent format (West Mercia Police).
- 6.4 In theory the proposals would bring greater coherence to crime official statistics. However, with CrimeMapper (NPIA) and HMIC having already adopting the new crime tree approach in advance of this consultation we are in danger of having a two track approach if this proposal is not implemented (i.e. we will have HMIC/NPIA providing crime statistics on one classification system and the Home Office reporting the same statistics using a different set of classifications). It would be preferable if the Home Office approach mirrored the HMIC crime tree and NPIA CrimeMapper approach for consistency purposes (or perhaps that they were amended to match any final Home Office classification. Ideally these changes should be made at once and not to have a gradual change over a number of years (PSNI).

7. Will these proposals aid public understanding of crime statistics?

In general there was acceptance that the proposals would aid public understanding but to differing degrees.

- 7.1 Generally the public do not have a detailed understanding of recorded crime categories, CPS Charging Standards or Recording Standards which inevitably impacts the interpretation of any published statistics (North Yorkshire Police).
- 7.2 Without a national steer and a single enforced (and publically communicated) national approach forces will have to provide additional commentary when providing statistics to explain the changes and the effect those changes have on the data (North Yorkshire Police).
- 7.3 The proposal to move sections 4, 4A and 5 public order from 'Violence' to 'Other' will result in a reduction in violent crime recorded in England and Wales. It is recommended that a national communication is provided to the public to ensure that this result is not misinterpreted as a reduction in violent crime in order to support transparency (North Yorkshire Police).
- 7.4 This may lead to better understanding, but is subjective. The move from 'GBH' and 'ABH' to 'Wounding' and 'Assaults' is a good start and will need to include the legal definitions to clarify the differences between a 'wounding' and an 'assault' (West Mercia Police).
- 7.5 Reporting and recording of fraud offences continues to be inconsistent across the 43 forces due to the restrictions placed on forces in respect of full referrals to Action Fraud and forces compliance to adhere to these restrictions. An update in relation to the pilot and when forces are going to be able to make full referrals is required as this would support the objective to reduce bureaucracy in addition to making any published statistics on fraud consistent and transparent (North Yorkshire Police).

- 7.6 A little. But don't expect any widespread realisation or acknowledgement of this (University of Portsmouth). They may contribute to aiding public understanding, but not if there are different terminologies used by the various contributors to the provision of crime figures (e.g. HMIC, NPIA, and Home Office) (PSNI).
- 7.7 Yes. There is a need to concentrate crime statistics towards personal crime and state crime and the public will be able to see the distinction. A simple distinction between injury and non-injury will likewise have greater relevance (Suffolk Constabulary).
- 7.8 Yes – The distinction between injury and non-injury should help provide a clearer picture of the type of offences being recorded. The other separation between personal and state crime should also enable users to gain a better understanding in a similar vein to the ASB categories (Cambridgeshire Constabulary).
- 8. What if any impact will the loss of detailed collection associated with these proposals have on you or your organisation?**
- 8.1 Mixed responses were received from the seven respondents who answered this question as outlined below.
- 8.2 No impact as the crime categories we require will still be available. (Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Constabulary) Back conversion will be possible, provided the issue around minor wound is properly addressed (Suffolk Constabulary). PSNI collates crimes at the level of the individual offence code and therefore there is no loss of detail associated with these proposals.
- 8.3 There will be very little impact on the use of the data by students at the university. Special interest groups, however, may criticise you for dropping data in their area: e.g. you seem to be dropping the strange grouping of 'Poisoning or female genital mutilation' and you need to have some defensive briefing for this (University of Portsmouth).
- 8.4 It will have an impact on historical data comparison. Ability to measure fluctuations in performance using predetermined parameters and tolerance levels will be skewed. Significant re-configuration to complex queries will need to be developed to ensure comparative data provided in the future is consistent (North Yorkshire Police).
- 8.5 There will always be a need for police forces to collate high levels of detailed information on crimes being committed or alleged. As a consequence of the changes some of the analysis work will move out of the performance community across to the intelligence community (West Mercia Police).
- 8.6 HMIC use a crime tree approach in their monitoring of police in the public interest, including the Crime and Policing Comparator. A key benefit, which HMIC want to retain is the clear distinction the crime tree makes between 'victim based' crime and 'non-victim based' crime. The distinction between 'victim based' and 'non-victim based' crime makes transparent to the public and police forces whether crime is increasing/decreasing as a result of more/less proactive work (such as Section 5 public order, drug offences, crimes disrupted (e.g. going equipped)) as opposed to whether there are more/less victims (HMIC).
- 8.7 HMIC do not support the proposal to subsume possession of item(s) to endanger life into the new endangering life category as: the offence is possession and therefore there is no victim; it reduces transparency and hence the ability to make right decisions by: hindering forces' operational decisions; reducing the public's ability to hold forces/PCCs clearly to account; hampering HMIC's ability to compare forces performance.

8.8 HMIC do support: the proposal to retain 'violence without injury' (or non wounding) and split it into two branches:

- those offences where there is intent to endanger life; from
- those where there is no intent to endanger life.

the proposal to split wounding or carrying out an act endangering life into:

- those offences where there is injury; from
- those where there is no injury, but intent.

9. Do you have any further suggestions or proposals for consideration by the Independent Advisory Committee?

9.1 The difference between under-reported crime (e.g. sexual offences, domestic abuse etc) and crimes where the purpose of the police should be a reduction (e.g. burglary, robbery) should be considered. Measuring a reduction in all crime is a flawed premise as many crime categories should be assessed as "more is better". For example, more reported historic child abuse suggests confidence in the police and other agencies to deal with it (Suffolk Constabulary & North Yorkshire Police).

9.2 Make crime statistics more comparable with international statistics, for example those collected by the UN or by the European Sourcebook on Crime and Criminal Justice. In particular there is little justification for England and Wales to have such a wide definition of violent crime (University of Portsmouth).

9.3 Devise realistic counts for the growing number of 'more modern crimes and attempts': e.g. fraud, computer based crime, identity theft, credit card crime, etc., which exceed the number of crimes reported by the police: as an example, the number of frauds counted by the police has actually decreased since the Fraud Act, whereas, it is universally acknowledged that they continue to increase, as the setting up of the National Fraud Authority signifies (University of Portsmouth).

9.4 Further work needs to be undertaken with the public to ascertain their understanding and their needs. Publications on crime data need to explain to the public the statutory offences included within the notifiable offence list, and why some non crime incidents, which are deemed of most concern to the public (e.g. Antisocial behaviour), are not recorded as a crime (West Mercia Police).

4. Crime Statistics Advisory Committee

The new independent Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC) were asked by the Home Secretary to consider the case for making the changes and CSAC met twice to do so: in December 2011 midway through the consultation, to consider early responses, and in January 2012 after the consultation closed.

The Advisory Committee considered the proposals and the various responses to the consultation in detail and recommended to Ministers that all should be adopted with the exception of two. These were firstly, that the proposal to collapse Aiding Suicide (classification 76) should not be taken forward and secondly, that the proposal to merge Offences Against the State into one classification should, instead, be into two to differentiate between more serious such offences and other less serious ones.

In coming to their judgements the committee was guided both by the responses to the consultation and the findings of the National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics in 2011 and criteria such as balancing the needs of users and the granularity of data required; the ability to and benefits of producing consistent back series; the impact on data quality and the impact on burden placed on the Police in reporting along with risks of discontinuity which might damage public trust¹.

The Home Secretary accepted the recommendations from CSAC and changes to the collection will be made from 1 April 2012. These changes will have implications for the presentation of recorded crime data in the National Statistics on crime but the changes will not feed through until the results due to be published in October 2012. Given the move of responsibility for the compilation and publication of crime statistics for England and Wales to the ONS on 1 April 2012, these issues will be considered further by ONS and advice taken from CSAC.

Home Office Statistics
29 March 2012

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reviews/national-statistician-s-review-of-crime-statistics.html>

Annex A – List of Respondents

Home Office Statistics would like to thank all the organisations and people who responded to the consultation.

Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)
Bedfordshire Police
Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary
Dyfed-Powys Police
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)
Lancashire Constabulary
Leicestershire Constabulary
Lincolnshire Police
London, Metropolitan Police
North Yorkshire Police
Northumbria Police
Northern Ireland, Police Service (PSNI)
South Wales Police
South Yorkshire Police
Staffordshire Police
Suffolk Constabulary
Surrey Police
Sussex Police
Thames Valley Police
University of Portsmouth
West Mercia Police