

John Pullinger CB CStat | National Statistician

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE
Chair, UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate,
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20 February 2015

Dear Andrew,

Police recorded crime statistics for England and Wales

I am writing to inform you of progress that has been made in response to the UK Statistics Authority's assessment report on police recorded crime which led to the withdrawal of National Statistics status for police recorded crime in January 2014.

The report placed 16 requirements upon ONS to address in order to restore the National Statistics designation. Working with support from partners in the Home Office, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the police service, I believe ONS has made good progress in responding to the Authority's recommendations. Annex A provides detail of the actions that have been taken to respond to the recommendations.

However, since the decision was taken to remove National Statistics status from the police recorded crime series, the HMIC have completed and published the findings (November 2014) of a large audit of reports of crime covering all 43 police forces in England and Wales. The HMIC concluded that the level of under-recording of reports of crime they found was "unacceptable" and made further recommendations for the Home Office and the police service to address. These findings are to be welcomed considering the overall goal we have of building back users' trust in crime statistics.

The ONS will continue to work with key stakeholders to make improvements in recording but I do not feel now is the time for us to request the Authority carry out a re-assessment. We would like to see some more progress made in the light of the findings from the HMIC. I propose to postpone making the decision to apply for re-designation until such time as ONS can present evidence that the required improvements have been put in place.

I am copying this letter to the Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Thomas Winsor and the Director General for Regulation, Ed Humpherson,

Yours sincerely,



John Pullinger

Annex A - Actions taken to respond to the UK Statistics Authority's requirements on crime statistics

Requirements	Action planned/undertaken
<p>1. Extend the published information about uses of crime statistics and users' needs in relation to the statistics.</p>	<p>Information about the uses of crime statistics has been published in the Quality and Methodology Information report alongside the quarterly crime statistics bulletin on 24 April 2014. This is reviewed every quarter and updated as ONS gathers more information from users about their needs (see 5c and 5d below).</p> <p>In November 2014, ONS launched a user engagement exercise to help expand our knowledge of users' needs in light of concerns raised about the quality of police recorded crime and findings of inspections carried out by HMIC. The results of this exercise are currently being analysed and will be published in due course.</p>
<p>2. Provide more information to users about the nature and extent of changes made to police records, and how to interpret changes in the published crime statistics from one reference period to another.</p>	<p>ONS has worked with the Home Office Statistics Unit to analyse the differences in the volume of offences for previously published periods following routine updates from police forces. A table giving details of updates to police recorded crime data has first been published alongside the quarterly crime statistics bulletin on 24 April 2014, within table QT1a in the Quarterly Data Tables. This was updated for the crime statistics bulletin published on 17 July 2014 to include information on the extent of the change and the number of forces where revisions were made during the most recent quarter. Information about police recorded crime revisions in the Quality and Methodology Information report has also been reviewed and updated.</p> <p>Alongside the latest quarterly release, ONS published analysis showing that the gap between the level of CSEW and police recorded "comparable crime" had reduced, indicating improvements in crime recording by the police.</p>
<p>3. Publish information about the roles and responsibilities of the departments involved in the production and publication of crime statistics.</p>	<p>Information about the roles and responsibilities of the departments involved in the production and publication of crime statistics has been published in the Quality and Methodology Information report alongside the quarterly crime statistics bulletin on 24 April 2014.</p>
<p>4. Explain more fully how all the administrative data sources are used to produce statistics about crime.</p>	<p>ONS have published further information on the homicide index and sources of fraud data in sections 5.1 and 5.4 respectively of the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales, released alongside the quarterly crime statistics bulletin published on 17 July 2014.</p> <p>ONS is working with the Home Office Statistics Unit to provide further information on other sources.</p>
<p>5. a) Publish further detail about the processes used by police forces in updating and submitting data and by the Home Office in validating the</p>	<p>ONS has worked with the Home Office Statistics Unit to publish further information on Home Office quality assurance and validation checks. This can be found in section 3.3 of the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales, released alongside the quarterly crime statistics bulletin published on 17 July 2014. ONS have since extended this published information to include further detail on the submission of data from police</p>

<p>data; b) collect information from the Home Office about the quality of the data received from police forces; c) consider the implications of this information for the production of statistics of a quality that meet users' needs; and d) reflect this within the published quality information for users.</p>	<p>crime recording systems to the Home Office, added in November 2014.</p> <p>In relation to points c) and d), in November 2014 ONS launched a user engagement exercise to help expand our knowledge of users' needs in light of concerns raised about the quality of police recorded crime and findings of inspections carried out by HMIC. The results of this exercise are currently being analysed and will be published shortly.</p>
<p>6. Improve, and make more accessible, information about all aspects of the quality of crime statistics and the impact on their use.</p>	<p>The crime statistics Quality and Methodology Information report was published on the 24 April 2014. This is reviewed every quarter and the most recent update was released alongside the quarterly crime bulletin published on 17 July 2014.</p>
<p>7. a) Keep users informed about the progress of the HMIC audit; b) review published quality information in the light of the findings of the audit; and c) consider whether statistics based on police recorded crime data can be produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs, taking into account information gathered in the course of meeting this report's Requirements.</p>	<p>ONS first included an update on the progress of HMIC inspections in the quarterly crime statistics release published on 24 April 2014 and this is being updated each quarter. The latest bulletin includes an update and a summary of the findings from the HMIC final report.</p> <p>In relation to points b) and c), in November 2014 ONS launched a user engagement exercise to help expand our knowledge of users' needs in light of concerns raised about the quality of police recorded crime and findings of inspections carried out by HMIC. The results of this exercise are currently being analysed and will be published in due course.</p>
<p>8. Publish, or clearly link to, information about the changes in the CSEW sample size and response rate over time and the impact of these changes on the quality of the statistics.</p>	<p>ONS have published further information on changes in the CSEW sample sizes in section 2.2 of the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales. This was released alongside the quarterly crime statistics release published on 24 April 2014.</p>
<p>9. Work with the Home Office to publish information for users about police forces' progress in switching to</p>	<p>The Home Office Statistics Unit will supply quarterly updates to ONS which will be published in section 3.1 of the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales. The first update was released alongside the quarterly crime statistics release published on 24 April 2014.</p>

<p>use of the Data Hub, and the reason why this has taken so long.</p>	
<p>10. Review the staffing profile of the crime statistics team with a view to providing assurance that it remains sufficiently resourced.</p>	<p>ONS has carried out a review of resources in the crime statistics team and allocated additional resource to respond to the Authority's requirements from mid-March 2014 onwards.</p>
<p>11. Review the content of statistical reports about crime, taking into account the information gathered in the course of addressing this report's recommendations. In doing this, consider: (a) whether the differences in recording practices across police forces are such that they have an impact on the suitability of presenting statistics at a national level for recorded crime; and (b) the extent of user demand for a measure of reported crime derived from police administrative systems.</p>	<p>ONS is reviewing the evidence from the HMIC Crime Data Integrity inspection which reported in November 2014. Following this, ONS launched a user engagement exercise to help expand our knowledge of users' needs in light of concerns raised about the quality of police recorded crime and findings of inspections carried out by HMIC. ONS has sought users' views on both points and expect to publish its findings by March 2015.</p>
<p>12. Publish more detailed contextual information to explain the impact on the published statistics of the full range of possible actions that can be taken by members of the public, police and other organisations following either being a victim of a crime, observing a crime or receiving a report of a crime.</p>	<p>ONS have published further information on the journey taken from a crime first coming to the attention of the police to it being included in police recorded crime statistics. This was published in section 3.2 of the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales on 17 July 2014.</p> <p>More explanation of the crime recording process based on extracts from the HMIC interim report have also been published in section 3.2 of the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales on 17 July 2014.</p>
<p>13. Improve the accessibility of the crime statistics on the ONS website and</p>	<p>ONS have improved the accessibility of the crime statistics on the ONS website, for example adding more signposting and links to key outputs on the Crime and Justice theme page.</p>

<p>publish information about the relationship between the crime statistics and other related statistics produced across the criminal justice system.</p>	<p>ONS has also produced the 'Guide to Finding Crime Statistics', a tool to help guide users through the range of crime and criminal justice statistics produced by ONS and other government departments. This was published in March 2014 on the ONS website.</p> <p>ONS will continue to monitor use of the website and have sought users' views on possible future enhancements through the user engagement exercise launched in November 2014.</p>
<p>14. Provide guidance about the uses and purposes of the various statistics available about crime based on police data, and explain the distinct purpose of ONS statistics based on police recorded crime data.</p>	<p>ONS have published further information on the published sources of police recorded crime in section 3.7 of the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales alongside the quarterly crime statistics release on 17 July 2014.</p>
<p>15. Ensure that pre-release access for Crime is only granted where absolutely necessary.</p>	<p>The ONS has carried out a corporate review to minimise pre-release access. As a result there has been a substantial reduction in the number of people granted pre-release access to ONS crime statistics with effect from the quarterly crime statistics bulletin published on 17 July 2014.</p>
<p>16. Add the Homicide Index dataset to the Statement of Administrative Sources and include in the Statement information about the arrangements for auditing the quality of all the administrative data used to produce statistics about crime.</p>	<p>ONS has made arrangements for the Homicide Index dataset to be added to the Statement of Administrative Sources. The update will take effect when the Statement of Administrative Sources is updated again in September 2014.</p> <p>The second part of the requirement will be addressed through work being carried out on requirement 4.</p>