

CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agenda

Monday 23rd January 2012, Meeting Room 3, Drummond Gate, London,
(14:30 – 16:00)

Attendees:

Iain Bell	Ministry of Justice
David Blunt	Home Office
Steve Bond	Home Office
Professor Allan Brimicombe	University of East London
Philippa Brimicombe (Secretariat)	National Statistician's Office
Giselle Cory	Victim Support
Tricia Dodd	Office for National Statistics
Professor Mike Hough	Institute for Criminal Policy Research, School of Law, Birkbeck
Christine Lawrie	Former Chief Executive, Probation Association
Professor Michael Levi	Cardiff University
Professor Chris G Lewis	University of Portsmouth
Kieron Mahony (Secretariat)	National Statistician's Office
Jil Matheson	National Statistician
Patricia Mayhew	Independent criminological consultant
Douglas Paxton	Association of Chief Police Officers
Jaee Samant	Home Office
Professor Stephen Shute (Chair)	University of Sussex
Victor Towell (For Sir Denis O'Connor)	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

Apologies:

Kathryn Chamberlain	Welsh Government
Guy Goodwin	Office for National Statistics

Agenda Item No.	Timings	Independent Crime Statistics Advisory Committee		
1.	14:30 – 14:35	Welcome		<i>Welcome</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stephen Shute
2.	14:35 – 15:50	Item for discussion	Paper No CSAC(12)06	<i>Possible Changes to Police Recorded Crime Classifications and Categories</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Blunt
3.	15:50 – 16:00	Any other business		<i>i) Dates for meetings in 2012</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stephen Shute

CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Possible changes to police recorded crime classifications and categories

Purpose

1. The Home Office published a consultation document “Consultation on changes to recorded crime classifications and categories” (Annex A), on 20 October 2011. The consultation period, of twelve weeks, ended on 12 January 2012.
2. At the previous meeting the Committee considered a paper outlining the proposed changes to recorded crime data collection and presentation, along with early responses to the National Statistics consultation. At that meeting the committee concluded that no formal decisions could be reached until the consultation had been concluded and that more detail on impact, costs and benefits was needed.
3. An abstract of responses received is attached at Annex B to this paper. This paper also seeks to outline in more detail the impacts of the various proposed changes to the collection framework within the crime classifications.
4. The committee is now invited to consider the proposals and consultation responses and to make a recommendation to the Home Secretary regarding changes to collection. Police forces must be advised of any changes in February in order that changes can be implemented from April 2012.
5. Decisions around changes to presentation of the statistics can be taken on a slightly slower timescale following further consideration by ONS colleagues given the move of responsibility for presentation and publication of the statistics to them in April 2012.

Action

6. The Committee is invited to:
 - Note the summary of consultation responses at Annex B;
 - Make final recommendations to the Home Secretary about whether or not any changes to the collection of recorded crime statistics should be implemented in April 2012; and,
 - Make any observations regarding the proposals for change to presentation of the statistics, recognising that final recommendations can be made at a future meeting allowing more mature proposals to be developed by ONS.

Discussion

Impetus for changes to collection

7. It is a priority of this Government to reduce the bureaucratic burden falling on the police, to free up resources to tackle crime. The proposals put forward in the consultation paper are intended as a step towards reducing burdens associated with crime recording.

Impact on Overall Police Recorded Crime

8. None of the changes to collection contained in this proposal would have any effect on the total numbers of crimes recorded by the Police. In 2010/11 the Police recorded a total of 4,150,097 crimes and these proposals would not change that total number either now or in the future. Rather there would be some movements between the categories. This is explained in more detail below.

Costs

9. Costs to the Home Office in updating and revising the Counting Rules can be met within existing resources as can IT costs for development to the Home Office Data Hub and other systems. Some forces may incur limited short term costs to effect changes to IT and recording systems. However none of the individual forces that responded to the consultation raised this as a point of concern or indicated that significant costs would result subject to them being notified of any changes promptly.

Feedback from consultation

10. A total of 23 responses were received to this consultation. 20 from individual Police forces and 1 each from ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers), HMIC (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary) and the Professor Lewis from the University of Portsmouth. Whilst the bulk of the proposals received broad support there were a significant number of concerns raised along with a number of suggestions where further work was considered to be needed either before any change is made or part of continuing developments.
11. Responses to the consultation indicated that it would be feasible for forces to implement changes to collection by April 2012 if notified in early February 2012. Data providers advised that the changes, whilst welcomed as a direction of travel, would have only a limited effect in reducing the burden associated with crime recording, with the potential for a small increase in burden in the short term as systems are modified to reflect changes. Notably ACPO in their corporate response commented that:

There is no doubt that these proposals do not offer any reductions in the data burden associated with crime recording. In the short-term they may in fact add to the burden as forces will need to undertake considerable back-office changes to map crime data extracts to the new codes. This is not a reason to reject a change if the other reasons for progressing with the changes are justified.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO COLLECTION (FOR DECISION ON ADVICE TO HOME SECRETARY)

12. The consultation paper outlined six principal changes to the current collection. Together these changes would reduce the overall number of offence classifications within the Home Office Counting Rules from 148 to 123. These changes may be categorised as :-

- i) Other' offences
- ii) Other offences against the State or public order
- iii) Racially and religiously aggravated criminal damage
- iv) Cruelty to children
- v) Assault with injury
- vi) Wounding and endangering life

The Committee may wish to recommend that all, some or none of the six changes are adopted for implementation in April 2012.

'Other' offences

13. The consultation document proposed that twelve existing offence classifications currently presented within the 'other offences' group should be collapsed to a single offence code for data collection purposes:

HOCR code	Description	Offences recorded in 2010/11	% of new code
68	Libel	4	0.1%
75	Betting, gaming and lotteries	13	0.4%
76	Aiding suicide	7	0.2%
78	Immigration offences	444	14.8%
82	Customs and Revenue offences	3	0.1%
84	Trade descriptions, etc.	481	16.1%
85	Health and Safety offences	2	0.1%
87	Protection from eviction	73	2.4%
89	Adulteration of food	8	0.3%
91	Public health offences	397	13.3%
94	Planning laws	1	0.0%
99	Other indictable or triable-either-way offences	1,561	52.1%
NEW	Other Offences	2,994	100.0%

14. This change is unlikely to significantly alleviate burden, as classifications would only change for a relatively small volume of offences (1,433 in 2010/11, less than 0.05% of all recorded crimes). Those crimes which are currently separately recorded under this category are different in nature, and there is no evidence that data providers currently have difficulty in reaching classification decisions for these offences. However, this change will significantly reduce the overall number of offence classifications in the counting rules (removing 11 of 148 offence codes), which could be seen as reducing the overall complexity of the Home Office Counting Rules. No concerns about the loss of detailed reporting in this area were raised during the consultation. The highest volume offences within this group are generally dealt with by agencies other than the police, and so figures are unlikely to reflect the true level of criminality.

Other offences against the State or public order

15. The consultation document proposed that four offence classifications covering a range of serious offences against the state / public order should be combined with an existing offence code that covers less serious offences, such as affray, for data collection purposes:

HOCR code	Description	Offences recorded in 2010/11	% of new code
62	Treason	0	0%
63	Treason Felony	0	0%
64	Riot	1	0%
65	Violent disorder	702	2%
66	Other offences against the State and public order	36,583	98%
NEW	Other offences against the State or public order	37,286	100%

16. This change is unlikely to significantly alleviate burden, as classifications would only change for a relatively small volume of offences (703 in 2010/11, less than 0.02% of all recorded crimes). Riot and Violent Disorder are similar offences, distinguished by the number of individuals involved and the determination of any common purpose amongst the offenders. Distinguishing between such offences for classification purposes does require a level of consideration which could perhaps be alleviated by combining these offence classifications. However, offences of Riot and Treason in particular are of such rarity and seriousness that there may be a public interest in being able to enumerate these offences individually. For example, the National Statistics publication on 19 January 2012 made reference to the number of riot and violent disorder offences recorded by the police as a result of the August disorder. One suggestion from the consultation was that rather than the grouping outlined above, a split of 'serious offences against the state and public order' constituting offences 62 – 65 should be created. Again the proposed change would serve to reduce the overall complexity of the Home Office Counting Rules (removing 4 of 148 classifications).

Racially and religiously aggravated criminal damage

17. The consultation document proposed that four racially/religiously aggravated criminal damage classifications (which currently provide a split by type of damage) should be merged to a single classification for data collection purposes:

	Principle offence		Racially or religiously aggravated offence		As a % of non aggravated offence	As a % of all aggravated damage
	HOCR code	Offences recorded in 2010/11	HOCR code	Offences recorded in 2010/11		
Criminal damage to a dwelling	58A	172,922	58E	640	0.4%	25%
Criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling	58B	75,686	58F	535	0.7%	21%

Criminal damage to a vehicle	58C	289,048	58G	866	0.3%	34%
Other criminal damage	58D	125,743	58H	537	0.4%	21%
	Total	663,399	Total	2,578	0.4%	100%

18. Note that it is **not** proposed that the 'principal' criminal damage offences (58A, 58B, 58C, 58D) should be merged – these would continue to be collected by type of damage. Offence classifications 58E, 58F, 58G, 58H **only** would be merged to create one single classification of racially/religiously aggravated criminal damage.

19. There is currently only a relatively small volume of such offences recorded (2,578 in 2010/11 amounting to 0.06% of total recorded crime). It is also reasonable to assume that where there is any difficulty around classifying these offences this would relate to determining whether the criminality was aggravated by racial/religious hatred, rather than the type of damage that was sustained. This change is unlikely to alleviate significant bureaucratic burden.

20. Users of this data are likely to be primarily concerned with the volume of overall aggravated damage offences, rather than the nature of the damage; no respondents to the consultation raised any concern at this loss of detail. These offences amounted to less than 0.5% of all criminal damage offences in volume terms, so merging these offence codes would not obscure the overall view of the type of damage being caused. The evidence of recent years is that the proportion of racially and religiously aggravated offences targeting different types of offences is broadly similar to that for non-aggravated damage. The proposed change would serve to reduce the overall complexity of the Home Office Counting Rules (removing 3 of 148 classifications).

Cruelty to children

21. The consultation document proposed that two offences involving cruelty to children should be merged to a single classification for data collection purposes:

HOCR code	Description	Offences recorded in 2010/11	% of new code
11	Cruelty to and neglect of children	6,084	99.9%
12	Abandoning a child under the age of two years	6	0.1%
NEW	Cruelty to children	6,090	100.0%

22. The offence of 'Abandoning a child under the age of two years' is rarely recorded, although the 6 recorded in 2010/11 was unusually low – there have been on average 33 such offences recorded each year over the last decade. As this offence is so rarely recorded, changing this classification is unlikely to substantially alleviate any burden of data collection, although there will be a contribution towards reducing the overall complexity of the Counting Rules.

Assault with injury

23. The consultation document proposed that the offences of ABH and GBH without intent should be merged into new 'assault with injury' categories. This change will also affect the offences of racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury:

HOCR code	Description	Offences recorded in 2010/11	% of new code
8F	Inflicting grievous bodily harm (GBH) without intent	15,117	4.4%
8G	Actual bodily harm (ABH) and other injury	328,474	95.6%
8K	Poisoning or female genital mutilation	110	0.0%
NEW	Assault with injury	343,701	100.0%
8H	Racially or religiously aggravated inflicting GBH without intent	188	5.9%
8J	Racially or religiously aggravated ABH or other injury	2,982	94.1%
NEW	Racially or religiously aggravated assault with Injury	3,170	100.0%

24. This proposal does have the potential to alleviate burden, as it will affect a significant number of offences (346,871 in 2010/11 amounting to 8.4% of total recorded crime). The current distinction is based on the severity of injury, which in borderline cases requires careful consideration to arrive at the correct classification. Merging existing classifications could alleviate some burden associated with decision making around crime recording and subsequent audit, and deliver an overarching classification in which users can have greater confidence. This proposal was generally supported in responses to the consultation. However, the point was made that this change does not address the remaining distinction between more serious wounding offences which are currently divided into two classified according to intent, as it is not currently proposed to merge GBH with intent (included within code 5A, 19,474 offences in 2010/11) into the new Assault with injury classification. Some respondents to the consultation argued that revisions to data collection regarding assault should go further – to have two simple categories of violence with and without injury.

Wounding and endangering life

25. The consultation document proposed that the existing offence classification of 'Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life (inflicting GBH with intent)' be split to allow Wounding to be collected as a separate item, and for the endangering life element of this classification to be grouped with other similar offences to create a new 'Endangering life' classification:

HOCR code	Description	Offences recorded in 2010/11
5A	Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life (inflicting GBH with intent)	19,474
NEW	Wounding (i.e. 5A excluding endangering life)	<19,474
5B	Use of substance or object to endanger life	372
5C	Possession of items to endanger life	328
6	Endangering railway passengers	257
7	Endangering life at sea	4
	Other act endangering life (formerly part of 5A)	~
NEW	Endangering life	>961

26. While this proposal will not significantly alleviate burden of data collection, it will reduce the overall complexity of the counting rules (removing 3 of the existing 148 classifications). The change might also permit a more coherent presentation of recorded crime statistics in the future, as all endangering life offences will be presented together, and could potentially be brigaded under the category of 'Violence without injury' which would be a more appropriate description for these crimes. Currently offence code 5A includes a small number of endangering life offences which would not generally involve physical injury.
27. Respondents to the consultation generally supported this change in principle. However, more so than the other changes proposed, this modification of the collection would require revised guidance in the Home Office Counting Rules as it is the only change that amounts to more than a simple merger of existing classifications. This **may raise the risk** of causing discontinuity to time series and different treatment in different forces, and there will be a need to ensure that revised guidance is well tested and communicated.
28. The labelling of these new offence classifications was also commented on, with some suggesting that 'Wounding' was a preferable term to 'GBH', and others believing that terms like 'GBH' and 'ABH' were well recognised by the public (although the detail difference may not be well understood) and should be retained.
29. As mentioned above, the retention of a division between offences on the basis of intent of the offender was raised by some respondents as a risk, given concern over consistency of recording, and burden associated with making classification decisions at the borderline and conducting audit. The ACPO corporate respondent commented:

The police service continues to wrestle with the current recording practices but I think 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.

CHANGES TO PRESENTATION (FOR OBSERVATIONS/COMMENTS AT THIS STAGE)

30. The consultation document also set out proposals for changes to the higher level categories used to present recorded crime data in National Statistics bulletins. These proposals would broadly follow the approach taken on police.uk crime maps and in HMIC presentations of data by introducing a clearer split between 'victim-based' and 'state-based' offences. In general, respondents to the consultation welcomed the changes to presentation.
31. Decisions on presentation can be taken on a slower timetable given that ONS will shortly be assuming responsibility for the compilation and publication of crime statistics and will want to take forward a number of recommendations about improving their presentation that were made in last year's National Statistician's review. The Committee may wish to see more developed proposals from ONS at a future meeting, which could be informed by any observations the Committee wish to make at this stage.

32. The combined effect of implementing proposed changes to both collection and presentation are shown in the table A1 of the consultation document (Annex A). The effect on headline categories is shown in the table below:

Category	Under existing definition	Under new definition	% change	
Violence against the person – with injury	368,647	367,947	-0.2%	Small reduction due to removal of Endangering Life offences
Violence against the person – without injury	453,310	297,652	-34.3%	Significant reduction due to move of Public Order and Possession of Weapons to 'Other offences'
TOTAL VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON OFFENCES	821,957	665,599	-19.0%	
Most serious sexual offences	45,326	45,326	0.0%	No change
Other sexual offences	9,656	8,677	-10.1%	Reduction due to move of prostitution related offences to 'Other'
TOTAL SEXUAL OFFENCES	54,982	54,003	-1.8%	
TOTAL ROBBERY	76,179	76,179	0.0%	No change
Domestic burglary	258,148	258,148	0.0%	No change
Other burglary	264,492	264,492	0.0%	No change
TOTAL BURGLARY	522,640	522,640	0.0%	No change
TOTAL VEHICLE CRIME	449,681	449,681	0.0%	No change
TOTAL OTHER THEFT	1,078,727	1,068,780	-0.9%	Small reduction due to move of 'going equipped' and 'handling' offences to offences to 'Other'
TOTAL CRIMINAL DAMAGE OFFENCES	701,003	695,090	-0.8%	Small reduction due to move of 'threat to commit' offences to offences to 'Other'
TOTAL FRAUD OFFENCES	145,841	145,841	0.0%	No change
TOTAL DRUG OFFENCES	232,216	232,216	0.0%	No change
TOTAL OTHER OFFENCES	66,871	240,068	259.0%	Significant increase due to move of state-based offences listed above into this category. There is potential for subcategories (weapons / public order) to be shown separately.
TOTAL RECORDED CRIME	4,150,097	4,150,097	0.0%	No change

33. The most significant movement relates to overall violence which would see a 19% reduction. However it is important to note that this is almost entirely made up of a larger (34%) reduction in crimes classified currently as “**violence without**

injury". (Violence with Injury sees only a fall of 0.2% as a result of the move of some possession offences which do not actually involve actual injury).

34. The offences that would move from overall violence (violence without injury) are made up of those where there is arguably no violence in the sense of physical assault at all. The most prominent example being offences under sections 4 and 5 of the 1986 Public Order Act (135,000 recorded crimes in 2010-11) where fear, alarm or distress may be caused and includes for example incidents of swearing in a public place where the only other persons directly present are Police officers.

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Organisation: Home Office Statistics

Date: 19 January 2012

Consultation on changes to recorded crime classifications and categories

BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION

Police Recorded Crime is made up of those offences contained on the Notifiable List. These are all offences that must or could be heard in Crown Court (known as 'indictable' or 'triable either way') and a small number of lesser offences heard by Magistrates Courts (known as 'summary'). There are approximately 1,470 offences on the notifiable list (this number is subject to change as new offences come onto the statute book and others are repealed) and these are currently segregated into 148 classifications. The 148 classifications form the basis on which police forces return data to the Home Office and are then reflected in statistical publications.

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*" (National Statistician, 2011). 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 recorded crime statistics. Some steps have already been taken to provide some further detail in National Crime Statistics publications. For example, the Home Office included figures on non-notifiable crimes and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents in their most recent annual crime statistics publication, Crime in England and Wales 2010/11 (Chaplin *et al.*, 2011).

The National Statistician also concluded that any change must be managed and introduced in a controlled and transparent way following consideration by the new Independent Advisory Committee on Crime Statistics that her report also recommended be established. The Home Secretary accepted all the recommendations in the National Statistician's review and the Advisory Committee is currently being constituted¹. In the meantime, to inform the Committee's consideration of the issue, producers and users are invited to comment on the proposals outlined in this paper. This consultation has been initiated ahead of the first meeting of the Independent Advisory Committee in order that the Committee are aware of users' views when they discuss the issues. It is planned to introduce any changes from April 2012.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first considers changes to the classifications used to collect recorded crime data – i.e. the individual offence classifications set out in the Home Office Counting Rules (Home Office, 2011). The second considers changes to the higher level categories used to present crime data within statistical bulletins. The detailed tables at Annex A shows the combined effect of these proposals.

CHANGES TO POLICE RECORDED CRIME COLLECTION

The changes outlined below support the proposals to alter the presentation of recorded crime statistics and to begin to address in part the views expressed by the National Statistician in her report that

Arguments have been made for both reducing and expanding the notifiable list of offences. The principles of the NCRS² remain important, but there may be some scope to rationalise the crime categories within the official statistics, and to consider further whether and how some offences currently excluded from police recorded crime data might be reflected in published crime statistics. While there should be no immediate changes, there is a case for reviewing the notifiable list and categories with a view to simplifying collection and interpretation, and improving quality.

¹ Advertisements to recruit the chair and non-executive members for the new committee were published on 12 October 2011, with a closing date of 1 November 2011: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports-reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reviews/national-statistician-s-review-of-crime-statistics.html>

² National Crime Recording Standard. For more information see section 3.2 of the 'User Guide to Home Office Crime Statistics' (Home Office, 2011)

Similar views have been expressed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) often linked to arguments that the existing classifications are unnecessarily complex and difficult for the non-expert to understand. In addition, it has been argued that such revisions would deliver reductions in the burden and bureaucracy associated with the detailed information captured by current recording.

When responding to the National Statistician's report, the Home Secretary has noted that the new Committee should have due regard to the burdens imposed by the collections of crime data.

In her report, the National Statistician also emphasised the need for any such changes to be carefully considered and managed, particularly regarding any potential disruption of long term measures of crime:

On the other hand, this review has confirmed the importance to users of consistent time series to give an understanding of long term trends in crime. Changes to the notifiable list, or any other changes in definitions, classifications, or methodologies, will impact on the time series. The handling and presentation of any such changes to the published series must be made in an open and transparent way, and managed in a way which enables the impact to be understood, if trust in the statistics is to be maintained. Changes should be considered and managed transparently so they are seen to be free from political interference, take due regard of any impact on quality and continuity and on burden, and do not undermine public trust in the statistics.

The proposals for consideration under this consultation would alter the collection of recorded crime data by changing the framework of crime classifications contained within the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Proposed changes to police recorded crime classifications used for data collection

Current crime classifications		Proposed classification changes	
5A	Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life (wounding offences)	5D	Wounding
5A	Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life (endangering life offences)	5E	Endangering life
5B	Use of substance or object to endanger life		
5C	Possession of items to endanger life		
6	Endangering a railway passenger		
7	Endangering life at sea		
8F	Inflicting grievous bodily harm without intent		
8G	Actual bodily harm and other injury		
8K	Poisoning or female genital mutilation		
8H	Racially or religiously aggravated inflicting GBH without intent	8P	Racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury
8J	Racially or religiously ABH and other injury		
11	Cruelty to and neglect of children	11A	Cruelty to children
12	Abandoning Child under 2 years		
58E	R/R aggravated criminal damage to a dwelling	58J	Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage
58F	R/R aggravated criminal damage to building non dwelling		
58G	R/R aggravated criminal damage to a vehicle		
58H	R/R aggravated other criminal damage		
62	Treason	62A	Other offences against the State or public order
63	Treason felony		
64	Riot		
65	Violent disorder		
66	Other offences against the State or public order		
68	Libel	99	Other offences
75	Betting, gaming and lotteries		
76	Aiding suicide		
78	Immigration offences		
82	Customs and Revenue offences		
84	Trade descriptions etc		
85	Health and Safety Offences		
87	Protection from eviction		
89	Adulteration of food		
91	Public health offences		
94	Planning laws		
99	Other indictable or triable-either-way offences		

None of the above changes would affect the overall coverage of the Notifiable Offences List nor should they result in any change to the overall numbers of recorded crimes. These revisions maintain the existing baseline of notifiable offences but would result in reduced number of higher level classifications with some finer detail lost. The recorded crime data collection has been subject to many changes over time. For example, in the last decade, changes to legislation, introduction of new classifications around particular areas of interest and changes to the principles and practice of crime recording in general have all had an effect. Such changes vary in their impact on the continuity of time series and care is always needed in interpreting long term trends in recorded crime. The detailed tables at annex A show the effect of these proposed changes and also show other main changes to the series since 2001/02.

As part of their remit the Independent Advisory Committee may commission further reviews to consider other changes in the future as well as considerations as to how offences currently outside the Notifiable List might be reflected in crime statistics.

The proposals presented here would see the abolition of 33 existing classifications and the creation of 7 new ones delivering a net reduction of 26. Refer to the detailed tables in annex A for an illustration of how these changes affect existing time series data. The changes proposed consist of 6 core components:

Violence against the Person

In April 2008 the classifications for wounding offences were disaggregated to support the introduction of Public Service Agreement targets on serious violent crime. This disaggregation saw the creation of the classifications *Inflicting grievous bodily harm (GBH) with intent (5A)*³, *GBH without intent (8F)* and *Actual bodily harm (ABH) and other injury (8G)*.

This change had the effect of splitting offences of GBH into two depending on the levels of injury and intent of the offender. Since 2008 the Police have commented that achieving good levels of data quality in this area is challenging and that it involves higher levels of burden than previously. There is a fine line between offences classified as *GBH without intent* (15 thousand offences in 2010/11) and *ABH* (328 thousand offences in 2010/11) and subjective interpretation has resulted in inconsistent recording in the past⁴. Collecting at a more aggregated level will see a higher level of confidence in the data. This proposal would return the recording of assaults largely to the pre-2008 position and 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). It is also proposed that offences amounting to acts endangering life would be amalgamated into one classification. This includes moving a small number of offences in law that should not result in any actual injury out of the Wounding classification.

It is also hoped that moving away from the technical terms of 'GBH' and 'ABH' to the more common language of 'Wounding' and 'Assaults' would aid public understanding of the statistics.

Racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury

To follow the moves outlined above, this proposal would bring the classification of racially or religiously aggravated assaults into line. It would see the merger of two existing classifications for *R/R aggravated GBH without intent* (188 offences in 2010/11) and *ABH* (2,982 offences in 2010/11) into one.

Cruelty to children

This proposal merges two existing classifications (*Cruelty and neglect of children* and *Abandoning a child under 2 years of age*) relating to cruelty and neglect together into one. Whilst around 6,000 such crimes are recorded annually less than 0.25% have related to the abandonment classification in the last two years.

Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage

This proposal would amalgamate the four current racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage classifications (currently disaggregated according to the type of property damaged) and merge them into one. It is proposed that the disaggregation by property type would remain for the principle offence of criminal damage. In 2010/11 2,578 such crimes were recorded separated fairly evenly between the four disaggregated classifications. A total of over 700,000 crimes of criminal damage were recorded with such aggravated offences accounting for less than 0.5%.

Other offences against the State or public order

This looks to merge five existing classifications dealing with state (non-victim) based offences. Two of these (*Treason* and *Treason Felony*) have seen no crimes recorded for several years with another (*Riot*) with only four crimes between 2008/09 and 2010/11. The general *Other offences against the State and public order* classification has seen between 35,000 and 37,000 crimes recorded annually over the last 5 years.

³ This classification is also labelled '*Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life*' and includes a small number of endangering life offences that should not result in any actual injury.

⁴ See discussion in box 2.1 of Crime in England & Wales 2008/09 ([Walker, et. al](#), 2009) and the HMIC report 'Crime Counts' ([HMIC](#), 2009)

Other offences

This proposes merging eleven existing classifications into the overall *Other offences* classification. These offences cover matters now in the main dealt with by agencies other than the Police (for example immigration offences largely dealt with entirely by the UK Border Agency and planning law offences dealt with by Local Authorities). Where offences are dealt with by other agencies they generally do not come to notice of the Police and thus fall outside Police Recorded Crime.

CHANGES TO PRESENTATION OF POLICE RECORDED CRIME STATISTICS

Currently recorded crime statistics are released quarterly alongside findings from the British Crime Survey (BCS). An extensive annual publication in July includes detailed breakdowns at the level of data collection while the quarterly releases present figures for high level categories only. Commentary in the bulletins also focuses on trends in these categories. This section sets out proposals for how the categories might be revised to better suit the needs of a general audience. It is envisioned that lower level data will continue to be made available at least on an annual basis⁵.

The proposals would introduce a clearer split between 'victim-based' and 'state-based' offences. The resulting high-level categories would have greater coherence as collections of offences that are either mainly recorded as a result of a victim report ('victim-based') or mainly recorded as a result of proactive enforcement by the authorities ('state-based'). For violence, in particular, the changes would also more closely align recorded crime definitions with those used for the BCS. These proposals would also bring consistency with other presentations of official statistics on crime, for example for the monitoring of recorded crime trends by the Home Office⁶ and HMIC⁷.

Table 2 shows those offence classifications which would move to different high level categories under these proposals. The detailed tables at Annex A show these changes in the context of the suite of all recorded crime classifications and categories.

⁵ Future publication arrangements are a matter for the Office of National Statistics which will take over responsibility for publication of crime statistics from April 2012.

⁶ The Home Office 'Impact measure' (see the [Home Office business plan](#)) of crime rates is designed to focus on victim-based crimes and conforms to the summation of the violence, sexual offences, burglary, robbery, vehicle crime, other theft and criminal damage categories as proposed here.

⁷ As part of their routine monitoring work HMIC consider victim-based crime categories distinct from state-based categories associated with enforcement activity. A forthcoming public-facing HMIC website will take a similar approach when presenting recorded crime data.

Table 2 Proposed changes to high level categories used for reporting in of police recorded crime figures National Statistics publications

Victim-based offences		
Offence⁸	Moved from	Moved to
Kidnapping (36)	Other miscellaneous	Violence (without injury)
Blackmail (35)		Other theft
State-based offences		
Offence	Moved from	Moved to
Public order offences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public fear, alarm or distress (9A) ▪ Racially or religiously aggravated public fear, alarm or distress (9B) 	Violence against the person (without injury)	Other miscellaneous
Possession of weapons offences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possession of weapons (8B) ▪ Possession of firearms with intent (10A) ▪ Possession of other weapons (10C) ▪ Possession of article with blade or point (10D) 		
Handling stolen goods (54)	Other theft	
Profiting from or concealing knowledge of the proceeds of crime (38)		
Threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage (59)	Criminal damage	
Prostitution related offences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exploitation of prostitution (24) ▪ Soliciting for the purpose of prostitution (27) 	Sexual offences (other)	

Kidnapping (36)

To be moved to *Violence (without injury)* from *Other miscellaneous*.

Kidnapping offences include infringement on the personal liberty of an individual. These offences have a closer fit with other victim-based violent crimes than with the variety of state based offences within 'Other'.

Blackmail (35)

To be moved to *Other theft* from *Other miscellaneous*.

Blackmail is defined in the Theft Act 1968 and involves an individual acting '*with a view to gain for himself or another or with intent to cause loss to another*'. It has a closer fit with other victim-based acquisitive crimes than with the variety of state based offences within 'Other'.

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

To be moved to *Other miscellaneous* from *Violence against the person (without injury)*.

Classifications 9A and 9B include offences under sections 4, 4A and 5 of the Public Order Act 1986. These offences cover circumstances where an offender is behaving in a way that causes or would be likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. These classifications would not be used in any circumstances where physical violence is used (or attempted) against a victim. The classification may include some cases where violence is threatened, but the largest proportion will be accounted for by state based crimes recorded where the police have acted to restore public order where no individual victim has been identified.

⁸ Bracketed numbers indicate Home Office Counting Rules offence classification codes.

These offence classifications were created in 2008/09. Previously these public order offences were included in classifications (8C and 8E) that also included victim-based offences of harassment as set out in the Protection From Harassment Act 1997 (now recorded under classifications 8L and 8M). The public order offences are likely to have made up the majority of the old combined classifications, and it is proposed that these too are moved to *Other miscellaneous*.

Moving these classifications will create a break in the time series at 2008/09 for the offence categories of *Violence (without injury)* and *Other miscellaneous*. However, it will be possible to present uninterrupted time series for these categories excluding the affected classifications and for a proxy measure combining both victim-based and public order offences (see tables at annex A).

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

To be moved to *Other miscellaneous* from *Violence against the person (without injury)*.

These classifications only cover state-based offences. Any circumstances in which a weapon has been used against a victim would be covered by other relevant victim-based offences. Moving these offences to 'Other miscellaneous' will also place them alongside other non-violent weapons offences (i.e. offence classifications 10B, 81 and 90).

Note that historic offence code 8B was discontinued in 2008/09, with the relevant offences now coded under one of the classifications 10A, 10C or 10D.

Handling stolen goods (54)

Profiting from or concealing knowledge of the proceeds of crime (38)

To be moved to *Other miscellaneous* from *Other theft*.

These state-based offences are generally recorded through police activity to disrupt criminality. Where a victim of a precursor crime (for example, theft) is identified, that offence will be separately recorded under a victim-based classification.

Threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage (59)

To be moved to *Other miscellaneous* from *Criminal damage*.

This offence classification will largely be recorded as a result of police activity to disrupt criminality (for example, where an individual is caught with cans of spray paint with intent to spray graffiti). However, the classification will also include some offences where an individual has been threatened that their property would be damaged.

Exploitation of prostitution (24)

Soliciting for the purpose of prostitution (27)

To be moved to *Other miscellaneous* from *Sexual offences*.

These offences are generally recorded as a result of police activity to disrupt criminality. Offences involving exploitation without consent or other more serious sexual offences would continue to be recorded under the relevant victim-based classification (for example, *Trafficking for sexual exploitation* (72) and *Abuse of children through prostitution and pornography* (71) which will remain in the *Most serious sexual offences* category).

Endangering life classifications

If the proposals for changes to data collection set out earlier in this paper are adopted then a range of current endangering life classifications will in future be recorded under a single offence code. Currently some of these are allocated to the *Violence against the person with injury* category while others are within the *without injury* category (see Table 3). A decision needs to be taken as to where the new classification should be allocated. For consistency the historical classifications should also be moved to the same category.

Table 3 Endangering life offence classifications

Further changes within Violence against the person category (to be renamed 'Violence')	
Offence	Current category
Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life (5A) - endangering life offences	Violence against the person (with injury)
Use of substance or object to endanger life (5B)	
Possession of items to endanger life (5C)	
Endangering railway passengers (6)	Violence against the person (without injury)
Endangering life at sea (7)	

Endangering life offences generally do not involve any injury and would not include any incidents where injuries are '*specific and intended*' (offences involving specific and intended injury would be recorded under another relevant classification). As such it's proposed that the new offence classification be allocated to *Violence without injury*.

It will not be possible to recode all historical endangering life offences recorded under the offence classification of *Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life (5A)*. Therefore, these proposals would introduce some discontinuity in the time series for *Violence with/without injury*. In practice the effect of this will be very small, as the endangering life offences will make up only a small minority of the overall classification 5A. It will still be possible to construct an uninterrupted time series for the proxy measure of '*Wounding or endangering life*' (see table at annex A).

Burglary, Robbery, Vehicle crime, Drug offences

No changes are proposed for these categories.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

For Data producers (Police)

1. Do you support these proposals either in whole or in part?
2. Subject to a decision being made by 31st January 2012 could you implement them for April 2012?
3. To what extent do you consider they will contribute to reductions in the burden associated with crime recording?
4. Do you have any further suggestions or proposals for consideration by the Independent Advisory Committee?

For Data Users

5. Do you support these proposals either in whole or in part?
6. Do you agree that these proposals would bring greater coherence to official statistics on crimes?
7. Will these proposals aid public understanding of crime statistics?
8. What if any impact will the loss of detailed collection associated with these proposals have on you or your organisation?
9. Do you have any further suggestions or proposals for consideration by the Independent Advisory Committee?

Responses to this consultation should be sent to the address below (by post or email) by 12 January 2012. A paper summarising early responses will be prepared for the first meeting of the Independent Advisory Committee. All responses will be made available to the Committee and individual responses may be published unless respondents request anonymity.

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Responses to Public Consultation – Changes to Recorded Crime Classifications and Categories

Part 1: For Data producers (Police)

Question 1 - Do you support these proposals either in whole or in part?

A 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 Police).
- 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 Police).
- 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 Police).

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, Dyfed-Powys and Devon and Cornwall Police). 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 and Lancashire Police) The move to the reporting and therefore separation of victim based offences from other offences is particularly welcome (Lancashire Police).

- 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. (Dyfed-Powys Police)

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). (Bedfordshire Police).

B 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. (Met Police). Bedfordshire 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).

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 Police).

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 Police & 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. (Met Police).
- 1.25 The possession of weapons offences could easily fit into this category also. (South Wales).
- 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 in relation to question one

- 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 proposal 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).

Question 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.

Question 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.

**Question 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 Police). Further thought should perhaps be given to 'wounding' as it may not be as clear as is proposed (Cambridgeshire Police).

- 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 Police).
- 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. (Met 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 NPIA 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).
- 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 and Devon and Cornwall Police).

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. (Leicester Police).

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 confirmation aspect and the offences should become state or victim for recording purposes. (Sussex Police).

Other Comments in relation to question four

- 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 eg. 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).
- 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).

- 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).

Part 2: For Data Users

Question 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).

Question 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). 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 Police). 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).

Question 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 (eg HMIC, NPIA, 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 Police).
- 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).

Question 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) Back conversion will be possible, provided the issue around minor wound is properly addressed. (Suffolk) 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: eg 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 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. (HMIC)
- 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.

Question 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 & North Yorkshire).

- 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': for example, 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 (for example. Antisocial behaviour), are not recorded as a crime. (West Mercia Police).

List of Respondents

ACPO
HMIC
University of Portsmouth
South Yorkshire Police
North Yorkshire Police
Cambridgeshire Police
Thames Valley Police
Northumbria Police
West Mercia Police
Lancashire Police
PSNI
Met Police
South Wales Police
Devon and Cornwall Police
Sussex Police
Suffolk Police
Lincolnshire Police
Staffordshire Police
Leicestershire Police
West Mercia Police
Surrey Police
Bedfordshire Police
Dyfed-Powys Police

**MINUTES OF
CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING ON 23 JANUARY 2011**

**BOARDROOM, UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY, DRUMMOND GATE
LONDON, SW1**

PRESENT

Iain Bell	Ministry of Justice
David Blunt	Home Office
Steve Bond	Home Office
Allan Brimicombe	University of East London
Philippa Brimicombe	National Statistician's Office (Secretariat)
Giselle Cory	Victim Support
Tricia Dodd	Office for National Statistics
Mike Hough	Institute for Criminal Policy Research
Christine Lawrie	Former Chief Executive, Probation Association
Mike Levi	Cardiff University
Chris G Lewis	University of Portsmouth
Kieron Mahony	National Statistician's Office (Secretariat)
Jil Matheson	National Statistician
Patricia Mayhew	Independent Criminological Consultant
Jae Samant	Home Office
Stephen Shute	University of Sussex (Chair)
Victor Towell (for Denis O'Connor)	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

1.0 Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed members that apologies had been received from Kathryn Chamberlain, Welsh Government; Guy Goodwin, Office for National Statistics and Douglas Paxton, Association of Chief Police Officers.
- 1.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2011 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 1.3 It was noted that matters arising from the last meeting will be dealt with via correspondence or at the next meeting on 25 May 2012.

2.0 Possible Changes to Police Recorded Crime Classifications and Categories – CSAC (12)06

- 2.1 The Chair explained that today's meeting had been arranged for members to be updated on possible changes to police recorded crime classifications and categories following the end of the Home Office consultation. He added that the committee should come to a view over the proposed changes which would be submitted to the Home Secretary in the form of a letter from him. It was noted

that decisions over collection have to be made today whereas decisions about presentation of the data could be considered at a later meeting.

2.2 David Blunt and Steve Bond introduced the paper, explaining that the objective is to reduce the burden on the police. The chair invited members to comment on any general aspects of the paper and the following points were made in discussion:-

- the proposed changes will not affect the headline categories in publications;
- further clarity is needed for “other” offences and what it covers;
- whether there is value in making small changes now or better to wait and make more substantial changes in the future;
- in order to be transparent the committee must be sure that its judgements are made against a set of criteria that include the public interest, current policy, improvement in public understanding and burden reduction. Members reaffirmed that they wanted a substantial discussion about these criteria at their next meeting;
- the system needs to be stabilised to build trust;
- there is a need to ensure that changes made now will not need to be undone in the future.

2.3 The committee then discussed the proposals for reducing the categories:-

Offences against the state and public order

2.3.1 The following points were made in discussion:-

- the removal of the riot category may be an issue for the public;
- it would be better to create two categories rather than one as proposed.

Members agreed to recommend that there should be two categories, one which covered 62 - 65, with 66 remaining separate.

Racially and religiously aggravated criminal damage

2.3.2 The following points were made in discussion:-

- there maybe an issue of damaging public perception;
- the loss of the split between criminal damage to a dwelling and damage to a building other than a dwelling could be an issue although it was noted that this would still be recorded locally by the police;
- several members supported the view that merging these categories will give the public a clearer view.

Members agreed to recommend that the categories 58 E - H should be merged.

Cruelty to children

2.3.3 No member dissented from the proposal to merge the categories

Members agreed to recommend that the categories should be merged as suggested.

Assault with Injury

2.3.4 It was noted that this area has potential to alleviate burden as it will affect a significant number of offences. The following points were made in discussion:-

- reducing to two categories will lead to simplifying the data for users
- the proposal may impede further changes in the future;
- the loss of information in category 8K (poisoning or female genital mutilation) was a possible concern though this information will still be recorded locally by the police and be available through Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships;
- this area is moving further away from what is happening in the courts and will make modelling with sentencing data more difficult;
- further work in these categories may be needed in the future.

Members agreed to recommend that two new categories, assault with injury and racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury, should be created.

Wounding and endangering life

2.3.5 The following points were made in discussion:-

- the proposal is a first small step towards changing more serious offences;
- the proposed split would be easier for the public to understand and would make further changes in the future easier to contemplate;
- guidance will be needed to explain any discontinuity of data and this should be clear when recommending the change to the Home Secretary.

Members agreed to recommend that two new categories should be created as suggested, along with guidance.

'Other' offences

2.3.6 The following points were made in discussion:-

- there is value in reducing categories but change could be more ambitious in the long term to enable a more accurate picture;
- aiding suicide should be left to stand alone with the remainder collapsed together;
- the title 'other offences' is not an ideal description - ideas for a more meaningful title should be sent to the secretariat.

2.4 The Chair invited any initial comments in relation to the presentation of the statistics. The following comments were made in discussion:-

- it is important that the data is presented with clear narrative and context setting;
- a statement to announce any changes would be a good way forward;
- a joint paper should be prepared for the next meeting by HO/ONS/MoJ to present their proposals for improving presentation.

Action 1: A paper setting out proposals to improve presentation of recorded crime statistics should be prepared jointly by HO/ONS/MoJ for the next meeting.

Action 2: A letter for the Chair to send to the Home Secretary outlining the committee's recommendations for reducing the recorded crime classifications and categories to be drafted by the secretariat for despatch by 27 January 2012.

3.0 Any Other Business

- 3.1 The Chair confirmed the dates for the next two meetings - Friday 25 May and Thursday 27 September.
- 3.2 HMIC announced that on 25 January it will be publishing 'The Crime Scene: A review of police crime and incident reports' which looked at the quality of crime and incident data, and the arrangements in place to ensure standards are maintained and improved across police forces in England and Wales. This is the first phase of a new programme of work by HMIC that is designed to assure the public that they are getting accurate information on crime from the police. The Secretariat will arrange to disseminate the report to members.
- 3.3 It was noted that last week's publication of Crime Statistics was the last by the Home Office before responsibility transferred to ONS in April 2012. The Committee agreed to acknowledge that statisticians in the department have done a sterling job over the years and can be praised for their professionalism and integrity.
- 3.4 The Home Office stated that it was intended to publish a response to the public consultation in due course.

Action 3: CSAC Secretariat to disseminate the HMIC report "The Crime Scene: A review of police crime and incident reports" to members once it is published on 25 January 2012.

**CSAC Secretariat
January 2012**