

CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Meeting Room 3, Drummond Gate, London
Wednesday 21st May, 2014 - 14:00 – 16:30
Attendees:

David Blunt	Home Office
Steve Bond	Home Office
Professor Allan J Brimicombe	University of East London
Philippa Brimicombe (Secretariat)	National Statistician's Office
Roma Chappell	Office for National Statistics
Mike Elkins	Ministry of Justice
John Flatley	Office for National Statistics
Junaid Gharda	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire
Mike Hough	Institute for Criminal Policy Research, School of Law, Birbeck
Glyn Jones	Welsh Government
Michael Levi	Cardiff University
Professor Chris G Lewis	University of Portsmouth
Kieron Mahony (Secretariat)	National Statistician's Office
Inspector Nick McLain	Staff Officer to the Chief Constable of Gwent
Jil Matheson	National Statistician
Patricia Mayhew	Independent Criminological consultant
Professor Stephen Shute (Chair)	University of Sussex
Peter Spindler	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
Mike Warren	Home Office

Apologies

Jeff Farrer	National Policing Lead for statistics
Diana Luchford	Home Office
Tom Winsor	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

Agenda Item No.	Timings	Order of Business		
1.	14:00 – 14:10	Welcome	CSAC(14)02 CSAC(14)03	Welcome, announcements and matters arising from the meetings held on 3 rd December 2013 and the Extraordinary meeting held on 13 th March 2014 Stephen Shute (Chair)
2.	14:10 – 14:30			Discussion on the pre meeting workshop Stephen Shute
3.	14:30 – 15:00		CSAC(14)04	<i>"Caught red-handed: Why we can't count on Police Recorded Crime statistics"</i> (PASC Report) Mike Hough
4.	15:00 – 15:15		CSAC(14)05	Report from the RSS Divergence workshop David Blunt, Home Office
5.	15:15 – 15:30		CSAC(14)06	Update on the Police Record Crime Project Roma Chappell, ONS

6.	15:30 – 16:00		CSAC(14)07	“ <i>Crime recording: A matter of fact</i> ” – Interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales Peter Spindler, HMIC
7.	16:00 – 16:15		CSAC(14)08	Improving Official Statistics on Domestic Abuse John Flatley, ONS
8.	16:15 – 16:30	Any other business		Stephen Shute
Papers to be provided for information:				
			CSAC(14)09	National Crime Registrar’s Report Steve Bond, Home Office

Dates of the future meeting:

- **24th September 2014**
- **28th January 2015**

**MINUTES OF
THE CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING ON 21 MAY 2014**

Meeting room 3, 1 Drummond Gate, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2QQ

CHAIR

Stephen Shute University of Sussex

MEMBERS PRESENT

David Blunt	Home Office
Steve Bond	Home Office
Allan Brimicombe	University of East London
Roma Chappell	Office for National Statistics
Junaid Gharda	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire
Mike Hough	Institute for Criminal Policy Research, School of Law, Birkbeck
Chris G Lewis	University of Portsmouth
Mike Levi	Cardiff University
Jil Matheson	National Statistician

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES

John Flatley	Office for National Statistics
Johnny Hughes	Ministry of Justice (for Mike Elkins)
Peter Spindler	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (for Tom Winsor)
Kim Swain	Welsh Government (for Glyn Jones)
Nick McLain	Staff Officer to the Chief Constable for Gwent (for Jeff Farrar)
Mike Warren	Home Office (for Diana Luchford)

SECRETARIAT

Philippa Brimicombe	National Statistician's Office
Kieron Mahony	National Statistician's Office

APOLOGIES

Mike Elkins	Ministry of Justice
Jeff Farrar	National Policing Lead for statistics
Glyn Jones	Welsh Government
Diana Luchford	Home Office
Patricia Mayhew	Independent Criminological Consultant
Tom Winsor	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

1. Chair's announcements and matters arising – CSAC(14)02 & CSAC(14)03

1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and made the following announcements:

- it was noted that this will be Jil Matheson's last meeting as she retires from her role as National Statistician at the beginning of June 2014. The Committee offered their warm thanks to Jil for her contribution over the past two years, acknowledging that the Committee was established following the National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics;
- it was also noted that Mike Elkins, Ministry of Justice, is moving to a new post and will be replaced on the Committee by his successor in due course. The Chair offered his thanks to Mike for his contributions to the Committee;
- members were informed that interviews are to be conducted shortly for the current non-executive vacancy. The post will be re-advertised if a successful candidate is not found;
- the Chair informed the Committee of his attendance at the Police and Crime Commissioners meeting in March 2014. It was noted that his appearance was well received and it would hopefully be repeated in the near future.

1.2. The Chair informed members that the minutes from the meeting held on 3 December 2013 had been approved via correspondence and are available on the CSAC webpage, along with the papers from that meeting.

1.3. Comments were invited on the draft minutes from the extraordinary meeting held on 13 March 2014. There were amendments to paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3. CSAC secretariat will amend the minutes accordingly and publish on the CSAC webpages, along with the agenda and papers from that meeting.

1.4. It was noted that the minutes of the extraordinary meeting did not accurately record a key role that CSAC should be playing in providing guidance on using crime statistics, including police recorded crime statistics, in the year running up to the next election.

1.5. It was agreed that the National Crime Registrar's Report would be discussed under any other business.

Action 1: CSAC Secretariat to update the draft minutes of 13 March 2014 and publish them on the CSAC webpage, along with the agenda and papers from the meeting.

2. Pre-meeting workshop

2.1. Members agreed that the earlier discussions at the pre-meeting workshop had provided a steer on current and forthcoming issues that required further consideration by the Committee. There was agreement that the visit from Norman Baker, Home Office Minister of State for crime prevention, had been helpful. The Committee agreed that it would invite the Home Office Minister to its September meeting on an annual basis, starting in 2015.

Action 2: CSAC Secretariat to ensure that the Home Office Minister with responsibility for crime statistics is invited to attend the CSAC September meeting annually, commencing in September 2015.

3. PASC Report – “*Caught red-handed: Why we can’t count on Police Recorded Crime*” – CSAC(14)04

- 3.1. Members discussed the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) report “*Caught red-handed: Why we can’t count on Police Recorded Crime*”, noting that reference was made to the Committee in paragraphs 53, 61 and 62 of the report.
- 3.2. It was noted that there were no recommendations in the report that required the Committee to respond formally but following discussion members reached agreement that a response would be submitted before the July recess.
- 3.3. The Committee was disappointed that the report did not recognise the work of CSAC to date but there was agreement that the Committee would consider focusing some of its discussion at a planned workshop in September 2014 to reviewing its current structure and terms of reference.

<p>Action 3: CSAC to formally respond to the PASC report, giving consideration to other responses, before parliamentary recess in mid-July 2014.</p>

4. Report from the RSS Divergence Workshop – CSAC(14)05

- 4.1. David Blunt provided members with an overview of the divergence workshop that was held at the Royal Statistical Society on 27 January 2014. It was noted that the information provided in the CSAC paper were statements, observations or paraphrasing of points raised by the range of delegates and noted by the observers during the workshop table discussions. It was agreed that many of the observations made in relation to recorded crime are included in the HMIC crime data integrity inspection interim report. The following points were made in discussion:
 - the changes to the “outcomes framework” to include less formal crime outcomes will assist with crime recording;
 - suggestions and ideas from the workshop, where appropriate, need to feed into the police recorded crime re-designation project strategic work plan, with an update being provided to the Committee at its next meeting in September 2014;
 - the idea of a central recording centre is already present in some forces. Further ways of identifying best practice should be considered through the work of the National Crime Recording Strategic Steering Group (NCRSSG);
 - the CSAC representatives that sit on HMIC’s Crime Data Integrity Inspection external reference group can ensure that ideas from the workshop are fed into the group;
 - it would be helpful to consider any international evidence in relation to divergence with it agreed that Chris Lewis will produce a summary of main points from the 5th edition of the EU Source Book;
 - the Committee should give further consideration to the variance of divergence by crime type. Areas of concern are likely to be highlighted by the final HMIC report, along with individual force reports. This should be included in the Committee’s agenda for the first meeting in 2015.

Action 4: The Police Recorded Crime Re-designation Project update to the Committee in September 2014 will include information on suggestions from the divergence workshop included in the project's work programme.

Action 5: Chris Lewis to provide a short note on the 5th edition of the EU Source Book.

5. Update on the Police Recorded Crime Re-designation Project – CSAC(14)06

5.1. Roma Chappell provided the Committee with an overview of the work to date of the police recorded crime re-designation project. She informed members that the project's action plan was published alongside the quarterly release of crime statistics on 24 April 2014.

5.2. Roma explained that the NCRSSG, which is overseen by the Home Office, will work with the project with issues relating to police recorded crime. It has been agreed that the group will be chaired by the Home Office Chief Statistician for the next 18 months. Members were also informed that the project is in regular contact with the UK Statistics Authority's monitoring and assessment team. The Chair invited comments from members and the following points were made in discussion:

- it is important to learn from others to ensure quality with administrative data, with it agreed that a framework for what good looks like is key;
- the framework should contain a list of points to consider such as clear standards, well trained staff, quality assurance at each stage of a process and external audit;
- the Committee agreed that a list of what good looks like should be constructed and made available on the CSAC webpage.

5.3. The Chair thanked Roma for the update.

Action 6: CSAC to produce a list of points covering what good looks like when using data from administrative systems and share wider via its webpage.

6. HMIC Crime Data Integrity Inspection of England and Wales Interim Report – “Crime Recording: A matter of fact” – CSAC(14)07

6.1. The Committee noted the interim report published by HMIC. Peter Spindler thanked members for their on-going support with regards to HMIC's Crime Data Integrity Inspection.

7. Improving Official Statistics on Domestic Abuse – CSAC(14)08

7.1. John Flatley presented the paper to the Committee which provided members with an update on the recent recommendation from HMIC that the coverage of official statistics on domestic abuse need to be improved. The following points were made in discussion:

- the Committee welcomed the HMIC recommendation;
- it was noted that the Home Office already have a work programme to improve data relating to domestic abuse and were content to work with ONS to improve official statistics in this area;

- it was acknowledged that the issue of repeat victimisation is challenging but is important not just for statistical purposes but also for operational purposes;
- it was also acknowledged that there are definitional issues that the Committee will consider further at its meeting in September 2014, along with an update from the Home Office on the progress of the work to improve domestic abuse data;
- CSAC member, Allan Brimicombe, agreed to become a member of the Home Office group;
- The Chair will write to the Home Secretary offering the Committee's support for this initiative.

Action 7: The Chair to write to the Home Secretary to inform her of the Committee's support for the work on improving statistics on domestic abuse.

Action 8: Home Office to provide an update at the September meeting of CSAC on the progress of the work on improving data on domestic abuse.

Action 9: The Committee to consider further, at its meeting in September 2014, the definitional issues around domestic abuse with Allan Brimicombe agreeing to provide a paper.

8. National Crime Registrar's Report – CSAC(14)09

8.1. Steve Bond provided an overview of the latest National Crime Registrar's Report, drawing member's attention to paragraph 6 which provides an update on the proposed weeding of the Notifiable Offences List (NOL). It was agreed that the Committee would consider this issue either at its meeting in January 2015 or via correspondence.

Action 10: Members agreed that the issue of the weeding of the Notifiable Offence List would be included on the agenda for the January 2015 meeting.

9. Any other business

9.1. The chair thanked members for attending with it noted that the next meeting is to be held on 24 September 2014. This is to be a full day event with a workshop format in the morning followed by the formal meeting in the afternoon.

**CSAC Secretariat
May 2014**

ACTIONS FROM CSAC MEETING OF 21 MAY 2014

No	ACTION	ACTIONEE	PROGRESS
1.	CSAC Secretariat to update the draft minutes of 13 March 2014 and publish them on the CSAC webpage, along with the agenda and papers from the meeting.	CSAC Secretariat	Actioned. Minutes and papers for 13 March 2014 and 21 May 2014 are available on the CSAC webpage.
2.	CSAC Secretariat to ensure that the Home Office Minister with responsibility for crime statistics is invited to attend the CSAC September meeting annually, commencing in September 2015.	CSAC Secretariat	Actioned. Included in the CSAC forward agenda.
3.	CSAC to formally respond to the PASC report, giving consideration to other responses, before parliamentary recess in mid-July 2014.	CSAC Secretariat	In progress. As agreed with the Chair, a response will be sent to PASC after the Committee has completed a self review at the workshop being held on 4 November 2014.
4.	The Police Recorded Crime Re-designation Project update to the Committee in September 2014 will include information on suggestions from the divergence workshop included in the project's work programme.	Roma Chappell	Actioned. An update on the progress of the Police Recorded Crime Re-designation project will be given at the CSAC meeting on 6 October 2014
5.	Chris Lewis to provide a short note on the 5 th edition of the EU Source Book.	Chris Lewis	Actioned. Chris Lewis has provided a short note, see annex one

6.	CSAC to produce a list of points covering what good looks like when using data from administrative systems and share wider via its webpage.	CSAC Secretariat	In progress. In July the UK Statistics Authority published an Exposure Draft Report " <i>Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Data</i> ". The Authority is currently seeking views on this report. CSAC will revisit the need to include any information on what good looks like when using administrative data on its webpages after the work from the Authority has been completed.
7.	The Chair to write to the Home Secretary to inform her of the Committee's support for the work on improving statistics on domestic abuse.	Stephen Shute	It was agreed by the Chair that it was not appropriate at this stage to write to the Home Secretary.
8.	Home Office to provide an update at the September meeting of CSAC on the progress of the work on improving data on domestic abuse.	David Blunt	Actioned. Included on the agenda for the meeting being held on 6 October 2014.
9.	CSAC Secretariat to include on the agenda for the September 2014 meeting the definitional issues around domestic abuse, with Allan Brimicombe to provide a paper.	CSAC Secretariat / Allan Brimicombe	Actioned. Included on the agenda for the meeting being held on 6 October 2014.
10.	The issue of the weeding of the Notifiable Offence List would be included on the agenda for the January 2015 meeting.	CSAC Secretariat	Actioned. Included in the CSAC forward agenda.

CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
POLICE RECORDED CRIME AND CRIME SURVEYS
INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. This information paper for the Police Recorded Crime Re-designation project strategic board summarises international aspects of police crime statistics and crime surveys.
2. The international position on crime statistics is complex and constantly changing. A detailed summary of the situation in 2011 can be found in (Lewis, 2012)¹ and this paper notes main changes up to the middle of 2014. England and Wales plays a full part in international collaboration and the Home Office is aware of all important initiatives in crime measurement from other countries and international agencies. However, nowadays it is more common for other countries to copy our methods than for E & W to learn from abroad. Most countries look with envy at the improvements we have made over the last few years and wish they were as well organised and open with our methodology as we are.
3. There is no generally accepted international authority for setting standards for police crime data or for carrying out crime surveys. As a result crime measurement across different countries is uncoordinated and there are enormous variations in practice. International guidelines for collection systems are published: attempts are made to coordinate crime victimization surveys: and collections of data for many different countries are produced: but such publications can be out of date and full of caveats because of the difficulties of making comparisons across countries.
4. Although agencies such as EUROSTAT, the UN and the World Bank concern themselves in different ways with crime statistics, some of the most successful organisations are unofficial ones. These are groups of experts, mainly from European countries, who have set up mechanisms for data collection of crime statistics and obtained funding from various sources. This paper examines, in particular, the results of the work of two such groups: The European Sourcebook of Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice and The International Crime Victimization Survey. It also covers briefly the crime statistics work of EUROSTAT, The UN and the World Bank.

The European Sourcebook of Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice

5. The European Sourcebook is a data collection initiative that started in 1993 under the Council of Europe. The 5th edition is about to be published and includes data to 2011. It is prepared by an international group of experts, who collate police crime data from a network of 41 national correspondents. In the 5th edition there is a chapter on national victimization surveys. Raw data and the full sourcebook is published on the web site www.europeansourcebook.org along with data from previous editions and more detailed technical information.
6. National offence definitions of crimes are often incompatible. The Sourcebook has no authority to impose standards and has adopted the following procedure: for each offence it includes a

¹ Lewis, C. (2012) **Crime and Justice Statistics collected by International Agencies:** European Journal of Criminal Justice Policy, 2012

standard definition and countries are invited to follow this standard definition where possible. Offence definitions and commentaries are given in an appendix, showing which countries fully conform to the definitions and which deviate from them.

7. Two chapters of the Sourcebook are relevant to the board: Chapter 1 provides information on offences and suspected offenders known to the police in each country, for the years 2007-11. Most offence types are the same as in the 4th edition but the definition of sexual assault was completely revised, resulting in a break in the time series. Results on offences committed with a firearm were introduced for homicide and robbery. As there is no recent International Crime Victimization Survey to refer to, Chapter 6 presents data on national victimization surveys carried out by the responding countries between 1990 and 2010. The chapter talks about the methodology used in these surveys and presents some selected results.
8. The basic aim of the Sourcebook is to present comparable information on crime in Europe. However, the issue of whether or not it is feasible to use official criminal justice statistics for decision-making in crime policy or for conducting scientific studies is a classic debate of criminology. With international comparisons, nations differ widely in the way they organise their justice systems, define their legal concepts, and collect and present their statistics. The lack of uniform definitions of offences, of common measuring instruments or a common methodology makes comparisons between countries extremely hazardous. This is why criminologists have developed alternatives to complement official statistics: international comparative *victimisation* studies on the one hand and international comparative *self-report* studies on the other.
9. To facilitate the use of the data contained in the Sourcebook, comprehensive additional information on the definition of offences, data collection and processing rules is collected and included in the chapter. However, it is not possible to quantify the extent to which over- or under-reporting occurs.

The International Crime Victimization Survey

10. England and Wales is one of the few countries that have a second count of crime levels, those reported direct by the general population through surveys: surveys of households, commercial properties, tourists, etc. The advantages of having more than one source of crime data are clear but England and Wales is the only country to integrate the data sources on a continuing basis and to publish material drawing on them in an integrated way.
11. However, crime surveys tend to vary considerably from country to country and comparative data is generally not available. A methodology, called the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), has been developed to enable collection of comparable data. ICVS has a common questionnaire used for several different countries, translated as necessary, with similar sampling and analytical procedures in each country. Such a methodology has been shown to give good comparative data.
12. However, such an international survey is very difficult to organise or fund. Although earlier sweeps covered a dozen or more countries, the 2009 sweep collected only from The Netherlands, UK, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Canada. Key results are at <http://rechten.uvt.nl/icvs/>. The possibility of collecting survey data on pan-European scale has fallen due to the economic situation and there are no current plans for a further sweep of the ICVS.

Other International Agencies concerned with Crime Statistics

13. EUROSTAT is the Statistical Office of the European Union. It has limited resources, particularly for social statistics. Currently crime data is collected on an annual basis (mainly from National Statistical Offices of the 28 member states) on a small number of types of crime recorded by the police. Data are published annually in the EuroStat **Statistics in Focus** series and can be found at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-10-058/EN/KS-SF-10-058-EN.PDF

14. The United Nations has collected some statistics on crime for many years. The first UN Crime Trends Survey covered 1970-80 and since then there have been 12 surveys which now take place annually. Data is collected on crime and on the operations of criminal justice systems. Every country in the world is targeted by a questionnaire sent to their National Statistics Office. A considerable amount of detail is requested on crime. The data are used by the UN to compare policies ; by donors to assess need and by countries to allocate resources, to assist with legal reform and to press for more statistical resources. The data bases are also available more generally for research institutes and universities. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/United-Nations-Surveys-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html>

15. The data is collected through an annual questionnaire: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/crime_survey_twelfth.html . The survey is the only world-wide one with such a breadth of data collection and a consistent run of data back nearly 30 years. It is also flexible and arranged so that data is collected on up to date problems, such as the measurement of and reaction to human trafficking or bribery. However, the data is generally regarded as of poor quality: only around 50% of all member states actually complete the survey and many of those do not complete it all. Its use as a source of comparative data is limited, mainly because of its lack of a critical approach to data provided.

16. Results are published widely. Cross-national crime statistics for over 120 countries can be accessed through <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/crimedata.html> covering 2003 to 2008. These include statistics on police-recorded offences but nothing on victim surveys. There is an extensive commentary, particularly through collaboration between the UN and HEUNI, the Helsinki-based European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control affiliated with the UN. Their latest publication **International Statistics on crime and justice** can be found at <http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis> and pulls together global responses to the UNCTS questionnaires up to 2006.

17. From 2004 - 2010 the World Bank ran a programme of assistance to English-speaking countries in Africa. Its broadly achieved aim was to improve the collection, presentation and use of statistics on crime and justice. A virtual statistical system was developed to make them useful to all developing countries for statisticians to use without having to wait for technical assistance to be made available through international donors: see https://www.virtualstatisticalsystem.org/themes/theme/18-justice-crime/?no_cache=1&cHash=f96004ab12beaf137b9900bd69a042fb

Conclusion

18. England and Wales plays its full part in international discussions on the measurement of crime statistics. However, there is enormous variation in practice of recording across countries and there are no known exemplar countries or standards set by international bodies whose

example could be followed to improve on our own efficiencies. Most countries are envious of our competence and openness in this field.

Chris Lewis, University of Portsmouth
June 2014

CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE***“Caught red-handed: Why we can’t count on Police Recorded Crime statistics”*****The Public Administration Select Committee’s Report on the Crime Statistics Inquiry****Purpose**

1. This paper provides the Committee with an overview of the contents of the Public Administration Select Committee’s (PASC) Report on the Crime Statistics Inquiry, *“Caught red-handed: Why we can’t count on Police Recorded Crime statistics”*.

Action

2. Crime Statistics Advisory Committee members are requested to:
 - i. note the paragraphs from the PASC report that specifically reference CSAC (annex 1), along with the full PASC report (annex 2);
 - ii. offer their views on its content and agree any actions for the committee.

Background

3. The inquiry into crime statistics was announced on 16 October 2013 as part of a wider programme being carried out by PASC on statistics and their use in government.
4. The purpose of the crime statistics inquiry was to examine whether crimes were being recorded by the police appropriately, to look at the factors which might influence police misrecording of crime and to assess whether enough is being done to ensure the integrity of crime data.
5. PASC called for written evidence and received correspondence from a wide audience, see [Crime Statistics Written Evidence](#)
6. In addition, PASC held four oral evidence sessions hearing from current and former police officers including senior police officers, Police and Crime Commissioners, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, the UK Statistics Authority, the Office for National Statistics, the National Statistician and the Home Office including the minister, Norman Baker. CSAC also gave evidence through its chair, Stephen Shute and committee non-executive member, Mike Hough.
7. PASC published its report on the outcomes of the inquiry on 9 April 2014, see annex 1.

Discussion

8. Based on the evidence received PASC has issued a report that includes a number of recommendations. Members attention is drawn to paragraph 53 of the report which sets out PASC’s concerns in relation to CSAC as follows:

- reference to CSAC correspondence relating to divergence between Police Recorded Crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales;
 - reference to CSAC's annual report for 2012-13 which quotes CSAC as considering the issues arising from the divergence.
9. Members attention is also drawn to paragraphs 61 and 62 where PASC has criticised the Committee and has indicated that in its view the CSAC has failed to demonstrate sufficient independence and objectivity in carrying out its role to ensure recorded crime statistics are "accurate, clearly presented, comprehensive, transparent and trustworthy".
10. PASC has stated the following recommendation in relation to its concerns around CSAC:

"PASC recommend that the UK Statistics Authority should review the role and composition of CSAC and the structures supporting the production of crime statistics, just as it has recently with a similar committee advising on inflation figures, to ensure that CSAC is independent and rigorous and that these statistics best meet users needs in the future".

11. Members will wish to note that the report does not contain any other specific references to the Committee although does focus on many aspects of crime statistics that consider the quality and trustworthiness of the data. This is clearly of interest to the Committee as one of its key aim is to:

"advise the Home Secretary, the Office for National Statistics and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary on how best to ensure that official statistics on crime for England and Wales are accurate, clearly presented, comprehensive, transparent and trustworthy taking account of the needs of users and providers".

Mike Hough
Crime Statistics Advisory Committee
May 2014

Paragraphs 53, 61 and 62 of the PASC Report “Caught red-handed: Why we can’t count on Police Recorded Crime Statistics”

Paragraph 53

The Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC)

The Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC) is a non-statutory body established in 2011 by the National Statistician. It has seven permanent members, from the Home Office, ONS and other government bodies working on crime statistics, and eight non-executive members who are mostly academics. The National Statistician is an ex-officio member. Its terms of reference state that it:

advises the Home Secretary, the Office for National Statistics and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary on how best to ensure that official statistics on crime for England and Wales are accurate, clearly presented, comprehensive, transparent and trustworthy taking account of the needs of users and providers.

It is clear from the CSAC’s correspondence and its latest Annual Report (for 2012-13) that it has done little on the issue of the divergence in trends between CSEW and PRC. This is despite the National Statistician saying in her report that established CSAC that it should advise “on any changes to the data requirements from the police needed for crime statistics and any changes to Home Office Counting Rules”. The Annual Report states only that it “has been considering issues arising from the divergence of data between the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Police Recorded Crime (PRC)”, with a view to having a meeting at the end of 2011. It is clear that the Committee’s power is limited. Professor Hough, member of CSAC, told us “We can only really operate at arm’s length and look at the governance structures that affect local crime recording. [...] We do not have larger, more direct levers.” Professor Shute, the Chair of CSAC, added:

[...] we do not have an executive function. We have done a number of things to try to bolster confidence in crime data. We can analyse trends and we can look to see if those disclose worrying aspects of the current system. [...] We can and have offered advice on how the data ought to be presented in a way that is comprehensible to users and to the public more generally, and we have done. There are a number of things we can do, but there are obviously limitations on what we can do. We are an advice body [...]

Paragraphs 61 and 62

The Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC), which contains representation of all of the main stakeholders in the crime statistics production process as well as the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, has failed. It has not demonstrated sufficient independence and objectivity in carrying out its role to ensure recorded crime statistics are “accurate, clearly presented, comprehensive, transparent and trustworthy” as set out in its terms of reference. CSAC has a vital role in leading the efforts to provide that the system guarantees the reliability and integrity of all crime statistics emerge strengthened from this episode.

“ We recommend that UKSA should review the role and composition of CSAC and the structures supporting the production of crime statistics, just as it has recently with a similar committee advising on inflation figures, to ensure that CSAC is independent and rigorous and that these statistics best meet user needs in future”.



House of Commons
Public Administration Select
Committee (PASC)

**Caught red-handed:
Why we can't count on
Police Recorded Crime
statistics**

Thirteenth Report of Session 2013–14

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons to
be printed 1 April 2014*

The Public Administration Select Committee (PASC)

The Public Administration Select Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner for England, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith, and to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service.

Current membership

Mr Bernard Jenkin MP (*Conservative, Harwich and North Essex*) (*Chair*)
Alun Cairns MP (*Conservative, Vale of Glamorgan*)
Paul Flynn MP (*Labour, Newport West*)
Sheila Gilmore MP (*Labour, Edinburgh East*)
Robert Halfon MP (*Conservative, Harlow*)
David Heyes MP (*Labour, Ashton under Lyne*)
Kelvin Hopkins MP (*Labour, Luton North*)
Greg Mulholland MP (*Liberal Democrat, Leeds North West*)
Priti Patel MP (*Conservative, Witham*)
Lindsay Roy MP (*Labour, Glenrothes*)
Mr Andrew Turner MP (*Conservative, Isle of Wight*)

The following Members were also Members of the Committee during part of the inquiry:

Charlie Elphicke MP (*Conservative, Dover*)
Mr Steve Reed MP (*Labour, Croydon North*)

Powers

The powers of the Committee are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 146. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at www.parliament.uk/pasc

Committee staff

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Summary

Crime statistics published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are central to our understanding of the nature and prevalence of crime in England and Wales. They provide crucial information for the police which helps them to decide how to deploy their manpower resources. Lax supervision of recorded crime data risks reducing the police's effectiveness in their core role of protecting the public and preventing crime.

Measurement of crime is based on two main statistical sources: (i) the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW, formerly the British Crime Survey) and (ii) Police Recorded Crime (PRC). The CSEW and PRC provide strong evidence that the overall volume of crime has been falling. However, there is an accumulation of substantial and credible evidence indicating that the PRC data do not represent a full and accurate account of crime in England and Wales. Of most importance, we have strong evidence that PRC under-records crime, and therefore the rate of decrease in crime may be exaggerated, and this is due to lax police compliance with the agreed national standard of victim-focussed crime recording.

As a result of PASC's inquiry and the evidence we have exposed, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) decided in January 2014 to strip PRC data of its designation as National Statistics. We conclude that the Home Office, ONS and UKSA have been far too passive in the face of concerns raised about PRC; they have repeatedly missed opportunities to ensure the integrity and quality of PRC data.

The cessation of regular external audit of police force crime recording in 2007 was a mistake. We recommend the re-instatement of annual audits of crime recording practices.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary's inspection in 2013 into the Kent Police found clear evidence that targets are detrimental to the integrity of crime data. Numerical targets for individual police officers and police forces as a whole, based on PRC data, and set by senior police officers or Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), drive perverse incentives to misrecord crime, tend to affect attitudes and erode data quality. Some PCCs consider the perverse incentives created by targets to be so serious that they have dropped all targets. We applaud them. The attitudes and behaviour which lead to the misrecording of crime have become ingrained, including within senior leadership. This leads to the subordination of data integrity to target-chasing. This can present officers with a conflict between achievement of targets and core policing values.

We deprecate the use of targets in the strongest possible terms. The Home Office, which claims credit for abolishing national numerical targets, should also be discouraging the use of such targets. The Home Office must also take responsibility and accept accountability for the quality of PRC statistics. Senior police leaders must ensure that emphasis is placed on data integrity and accuracy, not on the achievement of targets. We regard such practice as a flawed leadership model, contrary to the policing Code of Ethics. The quality of leadership within the police, and its compliance with the core values of policing, including

accountability, honesty and integrity, will determine whether the proper quality of PRC data can be restored. We are convinced that this requires leadership in many police forces to place new emphasis on values and ethics, especially in the Metropolitan Police Service. We recommend that the Committee on Standards in Public Life conducts a wide-ranging inquiry into the police's compliance with the new Code of Ethics; in particular the role of leadership in promoting and sustaining these values in the face of all the other pressures on the force.

1 Introduction

1. Crime statistics published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are central to our understanding of the nature and prevalence of crime in England and Wales. The statistics are based on two main sources: (i) the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW, formerly the British Crime Survey) and (ii) Police Recorded Crime (PRC). The CSEW provides strong evidence that the overall volume of crime has been falling for up to two decades. PRC since the current series began in 2002/03 also shows that crime overall has been falling. There is no evidence to contradict this trend, though some types of crime have fallen much faster than others. However, there is an accumulation of substantial and credible evidence indicating that crime as recorded by the PRC data does not represent a full and accurate account of crime in England and Wales. There is strong evidence that PRC is under-recording, and therefore exaggerating the rate of decrease in crime, primarily due to lax police compliance with the agreed national standard of victim-focussed crime recording. As a result of this inquiry and the evidence we have exposed, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) decided in January 2014 to strip PRC data of its designation as National Statistics.

2. The Chair of PASC was contacted by a serving police officer, PC James Patrick, acting as a whistleblower, who had serious concerns about the validity of crime statistics. We are indebted to PC Patrick for his courage in speaking out, in fulfilment of his duty to the highest standards of public service, despite intense pressures to the contrary. The purpose of our inquiry was to examine whether crimes were being recorded by the police appropriately, to look at the factors which can influence police misrecording of crime, and to assess whether enough has been done to ensure the integrity of crime data. Ultimately, we wanted to know whether policy makers and the public can have confidence in the statistics which result from the recording of crime by police forces. We called for written evidence, and held four oral evidence sessions, hearing from current and former police officers, academics, senior police officers, Police and Crime Commissioners, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, UKSA, the ONS and the Home Office minister, Norman Baker MP. Prompted by PASC's inquiry, the Home Affairs Committee also took evidence on this issue, during their current inquiry into Police and Crime Commissioners.¹

3. This study on crime statistics is part of a wider programme of work we are carrying out on statistics and their use in Government. A full description of the studies is set out on our website at www.parliament.uk/pasc. We are grateful to our Specialist Adviser on statistics, Simon Briscoe, for his help with this inquiry.

1 Home Affairs Select Committee, inquiry into [Police and Crime Commissioners](#).

2 Police Recorded Crime (PRC)

Background

4. Crime statistics published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are central to the understanding of the nature and prevalence of crime in England and Wales. The statistics are based on two main sources:

- The PRC series: the number of 'notifiable offences' recorded by the police (notifiable offences comprise all offences that could be tried by jury, plus a few additional closely-related offences);
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW; known until April 2012 as the British Crime Survey)—a large scale population survey conducted since 1982, which captures crimes experienced by adults, whether or not these crimes were reported to the police, as well as gauging public perceptions of the police.

Each of these sources has its own inherent strengths and limitations but together they should provide a more comprehensive picture of crime than could be obtained from either series alone.

5. Our inquiry examined crime recording practices in England and Wales. Police crime recording arrangements in Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the devolved administrations; although the UKSA's jurisdiction is UK-wide. The Police Service of Northern Ireland records crime using the same National Crime Recording Standard as in England and Wales, while Scottish PRC is compiled in accordance with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard, introduced in April 2004. Both jurisdictions also conduct what are known as household victimisation surveys; the equivalent of the CSEW.

6. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland published their "review of incident and crime recording" in December 2013.² This looked at compliance with crime recording standards since 1 April 2013. It found that 93% of the records examined complied with the standards, stating "Compliance rates varied according to crime type, ranging from 99% for domestic abuse to 89% for sexual offences. We were disappointed that the total proportion of compliant incidents fell below the accepted standard of 95%."³ The review notes that "the very high compliance rates for domestic abuse illustrates what can be achieved when a focussed and robust approach is taken to attending, investigating and recording a particular crime type".⁴

7. Our inquiry covered crime statistics in England and Wales. However, it would be surprising if similar issues to do with the quality of the statistics did not exist in Northern Ireland and Scotland. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland's recent

2 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland, [Review of incident and crime recording](#), December 2013

3 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland, [Review of incident and crime recording](#), December 2013, p1

4 As above, p1

review into compliance of police recording with the expected standards gives cause for concern—the recording of some crime types falls well below the expected standard.

8. We recommend that UKSA urgently investigate the quality of crime statistics in Scotland and Northern Ireland and their compliance with the Code of Practice, in the light of the findings of this inquiry, and UKSA's decision to remove the 'National Statistics' kitemark from crime statistics in England and Wales.

9. The collection and publication of data on crimes recorded by police forces in England and Wales began in 1857, making it one of the longest-running administrative datasets in the country. The main technical guidance document which informs police recording decisions, the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), has existed in one form or another since the 1920s.

10. The recorded crime figures are a by-product of a live administrative system which is continually updated as incidents are logged as crimes by police forces, and then investigated. As a result, some offences may change category, for example from theft to robbery. Other incidents initially recorded as crime may on further investigation be found not to be a crime—this is referred to as 'no-criming' (as distinct from 'not-criming', whereby an incident is not recorded as a crime in the first place). The rules stipulate that a recorded crime can be retrospectively 'no-crime' if 'additional verifiable information' emerges which demonstrates that no crime was committed. Another relevant non-crime incident type is 'crime-related incident' (CRI), used when the balance of probabilities suggest that a crime was committed, but no victim (or representative) can be found to confirm this.

11. Currently, the Home Office is responsible for collating raw data from police forces each month, performing some validation checks and querying outliers with forces, who may then re-submit data. The Home Office statisticians then supply a snapshot of the data each quarter to the ONS for further analysis and then publication.

12. The PRC dataset serves several vital purposes within the landscape of criminal justice statistics. It:

- indicates trends in overall crime levels (in conjunction with the CSEW);
- includes offences (and victims) falling outside the scope of the CSEW, for example, offences such as possession of weapons and drugs, and potential victims such as those living in communal establishments;
- enables detailed analysis of crime incidence at a local level (the CSEW cannot do this, due to sample-size constraints);
- provides detail on the incidence of individual offences and offence types;
- underpins the data on crime detection rates and criminal justice outcomes; and

- gives forces an account of what crimes are happening and where, and provides an important indicator of the size and distribution of police workloads, and so is a crucial factor which determines how police forces identify priorities and deploy resources.

13. Accurate Police Recorded Crime data is essential if Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables are to know what crimes are being committed in their area and therefore how to respond.

14. There have long been concerns about the reliability and consistency of police recording practices. Debates about whether changes in PRC reflected actual changes in crime rather than changes in reporting and recording practices were part of the reason for the introduction of the British Crime Survey in 1982. The last fifteen years have seen a succession of reports examining PRC as part of broader reviews of crime statistics, detailed in the table below.

Previous reports since 2000 documenting concerns about crime statistics

- HMIC, Povey, K, [On the record: Thematic Inspection Report on Police Crime Recording, the Police National Computer and Phoenix Intelligence](#), 2000
- Home Office, [Review of Crime Statistics](#), 2000
- Lynn P and Elliot D, [The British Crime Survey: a review of methodology](#) (2000)
Simmons J, Legg C and Hosking R, [National Crime Recording Standard: an Analysis of the Impact on Recorded Crime](#) (2003)
- Statistics Commission, Crime Statistics: User Perspectives—[interim report](#) and [final report](#), 2006
- Smith, A, [Crime Statistics: An independent review](#), carried out for the Home Secretary, 2006
- Audit Commission, [Police Data Quality 2006–07](#), 2007
- Casey L, [Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime](#), Cabinet Office, 2008
- Sir Ronnie Flanagan, [Independent Review of Policing](#), 2008
- UKSA, [Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics England and Wales](#) Monitoring report 5, 2010
- ONS, [National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics for England and Wales](#), 2011

15. In the wake of a critical inspection of police recording practices published by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in 2000, the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was

developed and introduced in 2002/03, with the aim of standardising crime recording practices across forces and establishing a more victim-oriented *prima facie* model of crime recording whereby the police are required to record a victim's report if it amounts to a crime in law and there is no credible evidence to the contrary.

16. The introduction of the NCRS led to an immediate structural increase in the number of crimes recorded in the first two years of its implementation (2002–03 and 2003–04). Since this initial bedding-in phase, overall recorded crime levels have fallen in every subsequent year, at a faster rate that the CSEW suggests is credible.

17. In January 2011 the Home Secretary announced an independent review into the collection and publication of crime statistics, to be led by the National Statistician.⁵ In order to address concerns that the Home Office's involvement in publishing crime statistics was undermining public confidence in the political independence of the figures, the review was tasked with identifying an independent body which would take over responsibility for publication. The review, published in June 2011, recommended that responsibility for publishing the main crime statistics (PRC and the British Crime Survey, now the CSEW) be transferred from the Home Office to the ONS; this took effect from April 2012.⁶ The review also led to the creation of a Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC) to provide expert advice on methodological issues.

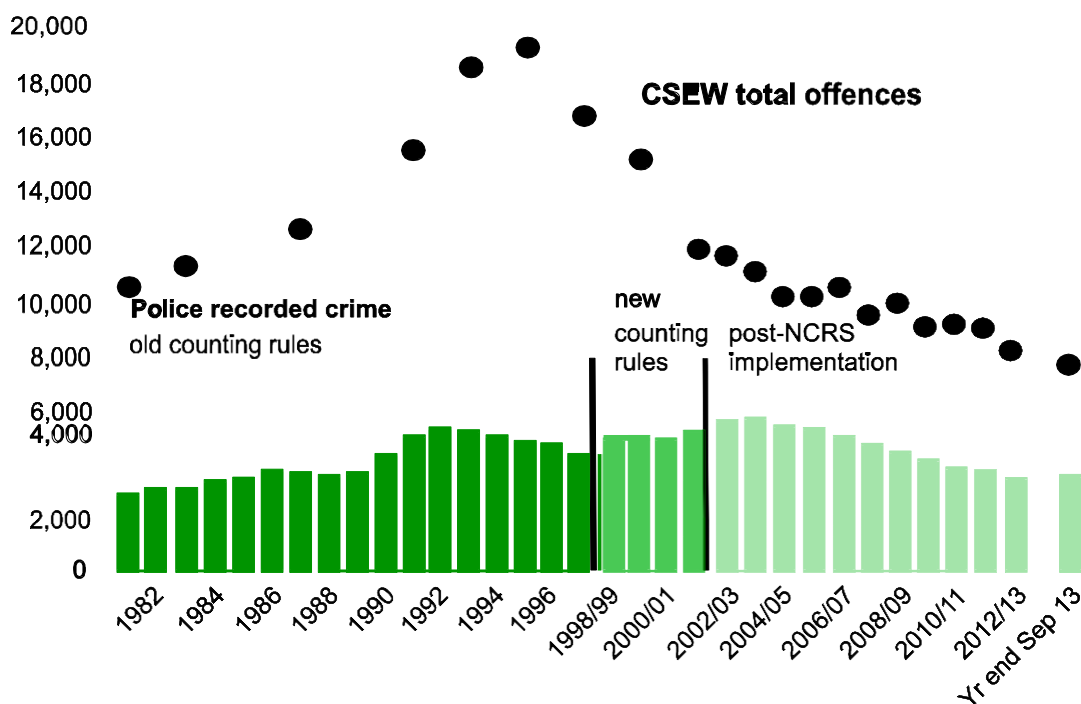
Concerns about data quality

18. The CSEW provides strong evidence that the overall volume of crime has been falling over the past twenty years. The findings of the CSEW broadly parallel the overall trend indicated by the PRC data since 2002–03 (the first year of NCRS implementation)—the overall volume of crime recorded by both measures has fallen by 38% (from 2002/03 to year end September 2013), as illustrated by the chart below.

5 HC Deb, 20 Jan 2011, [col 49WS](#)

6 Office for National Statistics, [National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics: England and Wales](#), June 2011

Chart 1: Trends in police recorded crime (vertical bars) and Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW - dots), 1981 to year ending September 2013



Source: ONS Crime Statistics, year ending Sept 2013

19. There will be inevitable changes over time in how people report crime—what an independent review of crime statistics, written for the Home Secretary in 2006, called “unknown and uncontrollable variability in the public’s reporting of crime to the police”.⁷ However, we have seen an accumulation of substantial and credible evidence—based on statistical analysis and on authoritative testimony from current and former police officers—indicating that:

- the PRC data does not correctly represent the rate of decrease in crime or the composition of crime;
- that the erosion of police compliance with the agreed national standards of victim-focussed crime recording has contributed to this; and
- that monitoring and audit arrangements have been insufficient to ensure acceptable standards of data quality and integrity.

As a result of this evidence, UKSA decided in January 2014 to strip the PRC data of their designation as National Statistics, discussed later in this report.

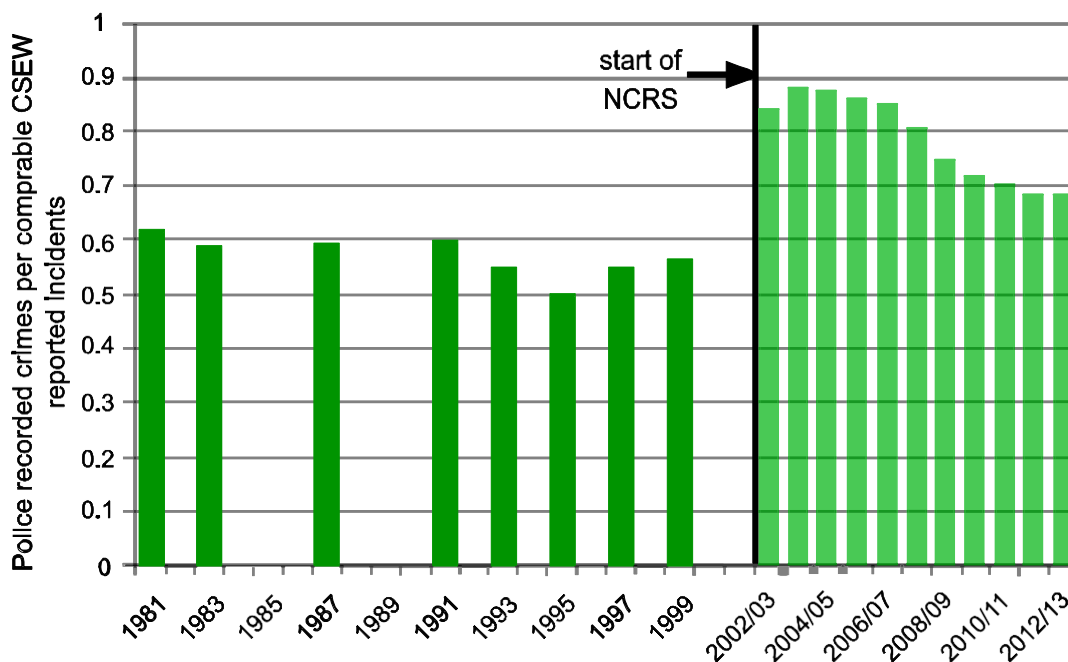
20. In January 2013 the ONS published an analysis of crime trends which identified a divergence between the PRC data and the CSEW.⁸ While both datasets show a clear downward trend over the last decade, the PRC dataset has in recent years shown a faster

7 Professor Adrian Smith, [Crime statistics: an independent review](#), carried out for the Home Secretary, 2006

8 ONS, [Methodological note: analysis of variation in crime trends](#), 24 January 2013

decline than the CSEW for comparable offences, resulting in a smaller ratio of recorded crimes to CSEW crimes within the comparable subset, shown in the chart below.

Chart 2: Ratio of police recorded crimes to CS EW reported incidents



21. While the ONS analysis has said that “the data can’t tell us why the police appear to be recording a lower proportion of crime reported to them than in previous years”, it did suggest that declining standards of compliance with the established recording rules may have contributed to this divergence:

Given the consistent pattern, one possible hypothesis is that there has been a gradual erosion of compliance with the NCRS such that a growing number of crimes reported to the police are not being captured in crime recording systems.⁹

Among the possible drivers for this divergence, the ONS suggested the following:

- lack of awareness or adequate understanding of the NCRS as time passes from its launch leading to some officers recording ‘as charged’ or ‘if detected’ which might result from staff turnover and lack of sufficient on-going training;
- performance pressures associated with targets (for example, to reduce crime or increase detection rates) acting as perverse incentives for some crimes to be downgraded from notifiable into non-notifiable categories or as anti-social behaviour or as crime-related incidents (which are not captured in data returned to the Home Office);

- though forces have continued with their own internal audits, the cessation of independent audits from 2006-07 onwards may have reduced the focus on addressing non-compliance;
- the move to Neighbourhood Policing in recent years may also have led to more low-level crimes being dealt with informally and outside the formal crime recording system; and
- in the context of pressure on police budgets and a general policy shift to promote greater officer discretion, a return to a more evidential recording model.¹⁰

22. The ONS's analysis was one of the most recent to signal a problem with the PRC data. However, as the ONS report concedes, such high-level analysis:

cannot provide a definitive answer to these points or confirm or disprove these hypotheses. Nor, in the absence of regular independent audits since 2006–07 is it possible to draw on evidence to assess whether or not compliance with the NCRS has indeed changed over time.¹¹

23. To gain a deeper insight into the reality of police forces' recording practices, we are heavily reliant on the testimony of concerned officers and staff working on the 'frontline' of the crime recording system. This inquiry was prompted by the concerns expressed by PC James Patrick, a serving officer in the Metropolitan Police with involvement in data analysis. PC Patrick is also a constituent of the Chair of PASC, Bernard Jenkin MP.

24. In his written and oral evidence to this inquiry, PC Patrick raised a number of specific and serious concerns relating to crime recording practices in the Metropolitan Police—such as the downgrading of offences to a less serious offence category (for example, from robbery to theft from the person) and also particularly troubling evidence in relation to the potential misrecording of sexual offences, which we consider later in this Report.¹²

25. Such concerns have been reinforced by an array of evidence and comments from serving and former officers, including those who have served at the most senior levels. For instance, Lord Stevens, former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, told the Home Affairs Committee in January 2014 that “ever since I have been in the police service, there has been a fiddling of figures” and that it was still going on.¹³ Evidence from Dr Rodger Patrick (no relation of PC James Patrick), former Chief Inspector at West Midlands Police, sets out his research showing how the perverse incentives embedded in quantitative performance management regimes encourage a range of ‘gaming’ behaviours that result in under-recording of crime.¹⁴ We discuss the issue of performance culture and gaming later in this Report.

10 As above, p10

11 As above, p11

12 CST02, CST34, CST73, Q6-64

13 Oral evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on [7 January 2014](#), HC (2013-14) 757-ii, Q343-350

14 CST05, Q2-61

26. It is suggested that deliberate misrecording of crime is one source of under-recording. However, under-recording of crime can of course come about as a result of police officers' misunderstanding or ignorance of the established rules and principles of crime recording, which would be a particular problem in forces where crime recording training is inadequate or where there is insufficient communication of the core principles of crime recording to officers. For example, officers may erroneously set the evidential bar too high when making a recording decision, based on their perception of the likelihood of a Crown Prosecution Service charge, rather than using the victim-focussed standard prescribed by the NCRS.¹⁵ Witnesses have also pointed out that lack of understanding of the counting rules can in some instances lead to over-counting of crime.¹⁶

27. Gwent Chief Constable Jeff Farrar, in his capacity as National Policing Lead for Crime Statistics, also raised the possibility of tension between compliance with official rules and the common-sense exercise of professional discretion in the public interest:

The majority of audits and inspections over the past ten years have been based on the hypothesis that administrative accuracy supports the highest quality of service for victims. However, it is not necessarily the case that such accuracy equates to the most victim-focussed response. This often brings Crime Registrars and their staff into direct confrontation with police officers who perceive them to be prioritising compliance with the rules over the needs of victims and the wider public. [...]This professional judgement arguably cannot currently be applied to crime recording and this repeatedly causes tension across the Service.¹⁷

To illustrate this point, Chief Constable Farrar used the example of a parent contacting the police for help in disciplining an 11-year-old son who had stolen money from her purse:

That is a crime and in the Home Office counting rules should be recorded as a crime, and there should be a crime outcome. That crime outcome could be a caution; it could be prosecution; it could be community resolution, but there should be a crime outcome. That then goes into the system. The reality is: would that member of the public have phoned us if they thought that was the approach we were going to take?¹⁸

28. Olivia Pinkney, then Assistant Inspector of Constabulary at HMIC (now Deputy Chief Constable at Sussex Police), explained to us that the new revised framework for recorded crime outcomes gives officers scope to apply a non-punitive outcome to a recorded crime where a prosecution or other criminalising sanction-detection outcome may not be in the victim's or the public's interest. She added that there will be "a much greater breadth of explanation for the public" about this.¹⁹ The revised framework aims to ensure that police

15 Q433 [Tom Winsor]

16 Q425 [Olivia Pinkney] and CST10 [Insp. Michael White]

17 CST24

18 Q211

19 Q432

officers know, and the public understand, that the police have the discretion to take a victim-focussed, common-sense approach, within the standards for recording crime.²⁰

29. It is not credible to suggest that sensible resolution of the tensions between a rigid compliance with the recording rules and a common-sense approach can explain the exaggerated decline of Police Recorded Crime. Our witnesses provided a wealth of insight into the various ways in which crime data accuracy and integrity can be and have been compromised. However, the lack of regular and rigorous audit of crime recording practices in recent years makes it impossible to assess the extent of any compromise and the relative importance of these factors. The re-establishment of regular annual external audit of forces from this year onwards, which we discuss later in this Report, provides a vital opportunity to fill this gap in the understanding of the problem and to contribute towards a durable solution.

30. It is vital that the Government ensures the accuracy and reliability of Police Recorded Crime. Police Recorded Crime provides a crucial intelligence resource for the police and informs the operational deployment of police resources. Lax supervision of recorded crime data risks reducing the police's effectiveness in their core role of protecting the public and preventing crime because they cannot deploy resource effectively if they are not aware of the true level and nature of crime.

31. Under-recording or miscategorising crime erodes public trust in the police and undermines the trust and confidence of frontline police officers in police leadership: it creates doubt that the public will be taken seriously when they report a crime.

Misrecording of sexual offences

32. A particular troubling aspect of the evidence heard by the Committee related to the misrecording of sexual offences by means of excessive recourse to 'no-criming' decisions and classifying cases as 'crime-related incidents' (CRI), rather than recorded crimes. The IPCC's critical report on the Southwark police's Sapphire Unit's recording of sexual offences in 2008-09, found "officers of all ranks [...] felt under pressure to improve performance and meet targets".²¹ It stated that no-criming "benefited the unit's performance statistics" and "the number of serious sexual offences classified as a 'no crime' or as a 'crime related incident' was consistently higher than the MPS [Metropolitan Police Service] average".²² PC Patrick described to us a more recent analysis of sexual offence recording decisions he conducted in 2013. He suggested that his findings indicated continuing excessive 'no-criming' and CRI-ing of sexual offences.²³

33. Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, the Metropolitan Police Service Commissioner, gave oral evidence to the Home Affairs Committee two weeks after our session with PC Patrick

20 Q432

21 Independent Police Complaints Commission, [Southwark Sapphire Unit's local practice for the reporting and investigation of sexual offences, July 2008 - September 2009](#)

22 As above

23 Q7-11, CST02

(largely in connection with their inquiry into counter-terrorism). He said then that “[HMIC] inspected our systems in 2012 and found them to be competent and reliable” and “we think that some of the comments that this officer made to the Public Affairs Committee relate to a period of over two years ago when the no crime issue was around 25%”.²⁴ However, when he gave oral evidence to us in January 2014, he added that “some of the concerns that were expressed—for example about the no-criming of rape—are things that for police, and for others, have been a real issue over many years”.²⁵ PC Patrick submitted further evidence, which argued that the concerns were recent, not historic, giving data up to 2012-13.²⁶

34. Data subsequently obtained from the Metropolitan Police under Freedom of Information by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and included in PC Patrick’s evidence, show the ‘no-crime’ and CRI rates in relation to alleged rapes reported to the Metropolitan Police in 2008–09 to 2012–13. The figures show that a decline in the ‘no-crime’ rate after 2008-09 was accompanied by an offsetting increase in the CRI rate in the same period, leaving the overall no-crime-and-CRI rate within the range of 25%-30% over the five years in question. This gives rise to the suspicion that even though police forces may have succeeded in reducing instances of unjustified ‘no criming’, any gain in overall accuracy of the recording was offset by an increase in those reported crimes which were categorised as CRIs. PC Patrick pointed out in his written evidence that during the period in question “significant efforts were made to specifically reduce ‘no-criming’—the central issue raised by the IPCC in the Southwark report”.²⁷

35. We heard evidence that the desire to avoid unsolved reported sexual offences remaining on the system can go as far as trying to justify ‘no-crime’ on the basis of “mental health or similar issues of vulnerability” and that “what happened in Southwark is still happening.”²⁸ In the wake of these allegations, the Metropolitan Police Service Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe announced before the Home Affairs Committee on 3 December that the Metropolitan Police had commissioned a piece of academic research examining the force’s no-criming decisions in respect of sexual offences, in order to investigate whether police officers put pressure on women to withdraw their allegations.²⁹

36. There remain wide disparities in the no-crime rates for reports of rape crime. In January 2014, HMIC, on behalf of the Rape Monitoring Group, released a compendium of statistics on recorded rapes in each force over the previous five years. This revealed wide disparities between forces in the no-crime rate for reported rapes and in the rates of recorded rapes per 100,000 adults. According to these figures, in Lincolnshire, for example,

24 Oral evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on [3 December 2013](#), HC (2013-14) 231-iv, Q336 [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe]

25 Q300

26 CST34, CST73

27 CST34

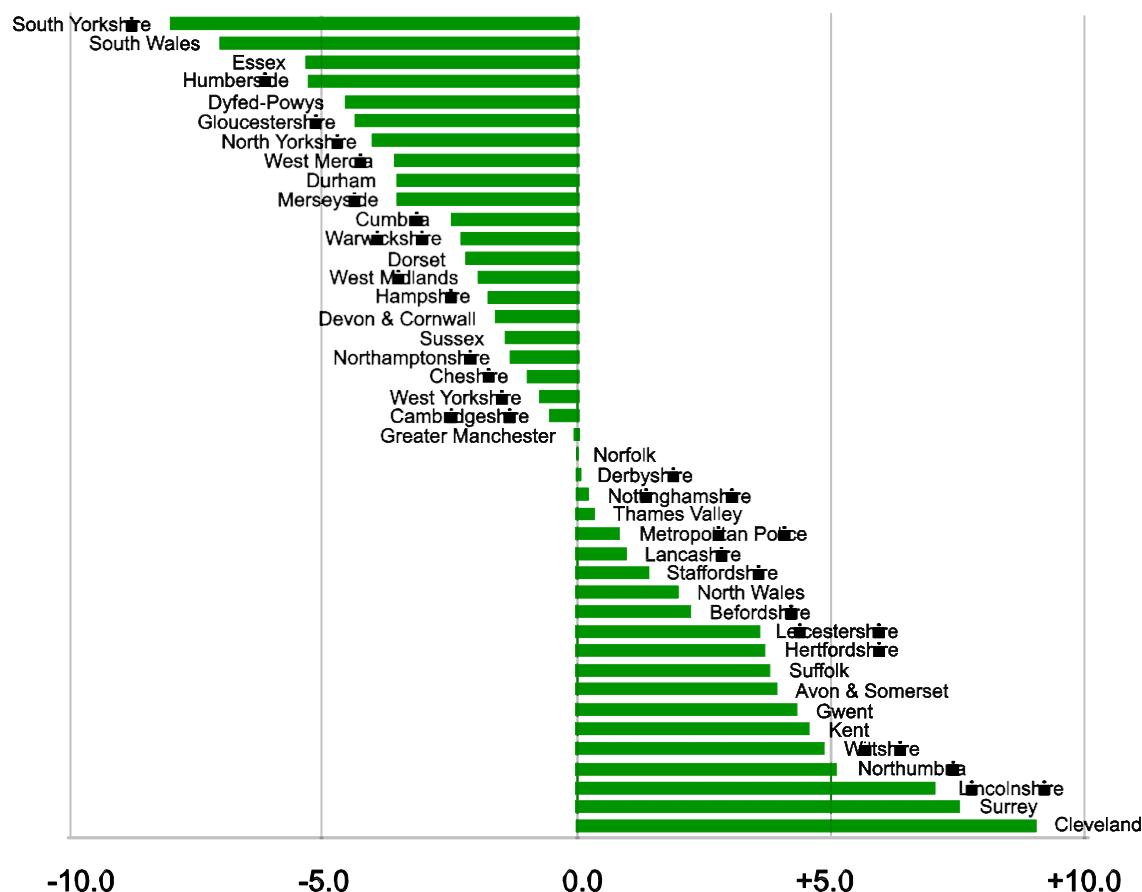
28 Q8-12 and CST02

29 Oral evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on [3 December 2013](#), HC (2013-14) 231-iv, Q336-7

26% of all reported rapes were no-crimed in 2012–13 and 20% were no-crimed in 2011–12. This contrasts with Merseyside, where 4% reported rape crimes were no-crimed in 2012–13 and 9% were no-crimed in 2011–12.³⁰

37. In the chart below shows how far the no-crime rate for reported rape incidents differs from the average no-crime rate for England and Wales, aggregating the data from April 2008 to March 2013.³¹ The national average no-crime rate for that period was 11.9% - that is, an average of 11.9% of reported rape incidents were no-crimed over that five year period. The chart shows that some forces, such as Cleveland, Surrey and Lincolnshire, had a far higher no-crime rate than the national average, while others, such as South Yorkshire, South Wales and Essex, had far lower no-crime rates than the national average.

Chart 3: Divergence from the average no -crime rate for reported rape incidents, five year total



38. When we asked him about these issues, Sir Bernard told us that the data accuracy for rape and sexual offences was “a lot better than it was, if we took it back five to 10 years” but did not think that it was entirely reliable.³² He agreed that there was a “cause for concern”

30 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [Rape Monitoring Group - adult and child rape data 2012-13](#)

31 As above. House of Commons Library analysis of data. City of London omitted due to small number of recorded rapes.

32 Q329

and told us that “there is clearly something that PC Patrick raises that we need to get to the bottom of.”³³ He said he was taking three actions to address these issues: (1) invite academics to review quarterly the Metropolitan Police’s no-crime reports (2), invite a public figure to look at how the Metropolitan Police looks at sexual offences generally; and (3) change the standard for no-criming sexual offences to “beyond reasonable doubt”.³⁴

39. Any instance of deliberate misrecording of sexual offences is deplorable, but especially so if this has been brought about by means of improperly persuading or pressurising victims into withdrawing or downgrading their report.

40. The disparities between different police forces in the ‘no-crime rates’ for rapes and sexual offences are sufficient in our view to raise serious concerns about the varying approaches taken by police forces to recording and investigating these horrendous crimes. We look forward to the outcome of the research commissioned by the Metropolitan Police examining the force’s ‘no crime’ decisions in respect of sexual offences.

41. The fact that this research is necessary, following the 2008 Independent Police Complaints Commission report into the Sapphire Unit is a damning indictment of police complacency, inertia and lack of leadership. However, the data indicates that the Metropolitan Police Service is unlikely to be the only force of concern.

42. The Home Office must undertake a comprehensive analysis in order to explain the extraordinary disparities in no-crime rates for sexual offences across all police forces. We expect this to be completed within two months and included with the response to this Report. We also recommend that the devolved administrations undertake analogous work. This should lead to work to improve the accuracy transparency and reliability of police recorded sexual offences so that a table of no crime rates does not suggest systemic inconsistency in recording practices.

The role of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

43. The CSEW is a crucially important counterpart to PRC—not least as a benchmark against which the PRC trends can be compared. It is vital therefore that UKSA and the ONS ensure that the CSEW continues to meet the National Statistics standard. However, as it stands, the CSEW cannot give a detailed indication of crime trends at a local level. Although it is a substantial survey, we understand that the sample size is still too small in each force area for the local area survey statistics to give meaningful results for most crimes.

44. We heard that the CSEW could only replace PRC at police force, let alone local or neighbourhood, level at significant cost: an additional £13.7 million would be required in

33 Q333

34 Q329

order to increase the sample, on top of the existing annual cost of CSEW of £3.8million.³⁵ From 2004-05 to 2011-12 the CSEW's core sample size was 46,000 adults; as of 2012-13 this has been reduced to 35,000.³⁶ In respect of interviews with children, the sample has been reduced from 4,000 to 3,000. According to the Home Office, the reduction in the core adult sample resulted from the scrapping of a target in the old Police Performance and Assessment framework, which had required a boosted sample size to achieve 1,000 interviews in each police force area.³⁷ The Technical Report to the CSEW does no more than state that there has now been a reduction in sample size; it does not give contextual information as to the impact of the sample size on the reliability of the statistics relating from the survey.³⁸

45. We note the reduction in the sample size of the Crime Survey for England and Wales. Police Recorded Crime is the only detailed indicator of crime trends at local level, enabling police forces, Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities, the public and the Home Office to keep track of crime in different force area. The Crime Survey for England and Wales is no substitute for Police Recorded Crime in respect of monitoring crime trends in local areas.

46. We recommend that the ONS review and then publish, alongside the Crime Survey for England and Wales, information about the nature of the sample, including the impact of the reduction in sample size on the reliability of the statistics, its cost over time, and an explanation of what statistics might be published at a sub-national level, for example for the larger police forces.

35 UK Statistics Authority, [Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Statistics on crime in England and Wales](#), January 2013

36 ONS/TNS BMRB, [The 2012/13 Crime Survey for England and Wales Technical report Volume One](#), 2012, pp3, 6-7

37 Home Office, [Changes to British Crime Survey \(BCS\) sample design from April 2012](#) and TNS BMRB / Office for National Statistics, [The 2012/13 Crime Survey for England and Wales Technical report Volume One](#)

38 TNS BMRB / Office for National Statistics, [The 2012/13 Crime Survey for England and Wales Technical report Volume One](#)

3 Removal of National Statistics status

47. 'National Statistics' is the quality mark for official statistics and, in the words of UKSA, it "requires the statistics to be produced, managed and disseminated to high professional standards. The statistics must be well-explained and meet users needs."³⁹ The Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 stipulates that an official statistical series must adhere to the statutory Code of Practice for Official Statistics (the Code) in order for it to be designated as a National Statistic. The Code enshrines the principle of "sound methods and assured quality" and requires producers of official statistics to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".⁴⁰ The Code also requires that official statistics be well-explained and accessible, and managed impartially in the public interest, "to serve the public good".⁴¹ Since it was established in April 2008, UKSA has performed the role of conducting assessment reviews of each set of official statistics to determine the extent of their compliance with the Code of Practice.

48. The initial UKSA assessment of PRC, published in April 2011, confirmed the National Statistics designation, judging that it complied with the statutory Code of Practice. The 2011 UKSA assessment, like the National Statistician's review of crime statistics published later that year, focussed on presentational aspects of the statistics and the provision by the Home Office of explanatory and methodological material to users. It paid less attention to the quality of the statistics and issues surrounding the creation and handling of the raw data at force level, although it did observe that "there is scope for more discussion about quality, including the accuracy and extent of crime recording by different police forces."⁴²

49. The Home Office asked the National Statistician to carry out a review into crime statistics, which reported in 2011. The terms of reference for the review, set by the Home Office, asked ONS to "consider which body outside the Home Office is best placed to have future formal responsibility for the publication of crime statistics" due to concerns about the trustworthiness of crime statistics published by the Home Office.⁴³ After the initial UKSA assessment report, and in accordance with a recommendation in the National Statistician's 2011 review, the ONS took over the role of producer of the quarterly crime statistics outputs. This included taking over, from the Home Office, the responsibility to provide reassurance to the UKSA assessment team as to the quality of the data collection processes and methodology. However, it was also decided that the Home Office should retain its role in the initial collection and validation of forces' monthly data returns, on the basis of "existing relationships between the Home Office and the police service" and in

39 [UK Statistics Authority website](#)

40 UK Statistics Authority, [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), January 2009

41 As above

42 UK Statistics Authority, Assessment Report 102, [Crime Statistics in England and Wales](#), April 2011, para 3.16

43 [National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics: England and Wales](#), June 2011, Annex A: Terms of reference

order to “avoid an increase in bureaucracy in the police supply of data to both ONS (for crime statistics purposes) and to the Home Office (for other purposes).”⁴⁴

50. ONS’s statisticians do not, in any case, have direct access to the locations at which these data are generated: inside police forces. To a large extent they have been and remain external observers, reliant on the data submissions and reassurances from the Home Office. They do not have an audit function and are reliant on any audits performed internally within forces or externally by other organisations.

51. Professor Stephen Shute, the Chair of the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee, told us that it would be “a very sad state of affairs” were such a de-designation to occur, while his colleague on CSAC Professor Mike Hough expressed the concern that “if they were downgraded, the system would collapse.”⁴⁵ Nevertheless, following evidence exposed by this PASC inquiry, UKSA made a second assessment of crime statistics, published in January 2014. They removed the designation ‘National Statistics’ from PRC data. The separate CSEW retained its National Statistics status.⁴⁶ In its assessment report, UKSA noted:

- accumulating evidence that suggests the underlying data on crimes recorded by the police may not be reliable. This evidence includes HMIC assessments of data recording practices;
- ONS's own report, in January 2013, which raised concerns that the degree of compliance with the standards for police crime recording may be falling; and
- high profile concerns raised at the Public Administration Select Committee and the Home Affairs Select Committee.⁴⁷

52. This assessment, unlike the one in 2011, also concluded that ONS did not have sufficient knowledge of (and therefore did not publish enough information about) the processes involved in the recording of crime by police forces and the checks carried out on the data received from police forces, to be assured that they are accurately recorded. It did not provide enough information to users about the quality of the statistics—most importantly the accuracy and reliability of the statistics. The assessment report also referred to an unpublished memorandum of understanding between the ONS and the Home Office which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each department in the production of crime statistics, and recommended that the ONS should publish this information.

44 CST17

45 Q205 and Q206

46 Police Recorded Crime data continues to be published as usual in the ONS's quarterly Crime Statistics bulletin, but with the loss of National Statistics status signposted where these data appear.

47 UK Statistics Authority, Assessment Report 268, [Statistics on Crime in England and Wales](#), 15 January 2014

The Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC)

53. The Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC) is a non-statutory body established in 2011 by the National Statistician. It has seven permanent members, from the Home Office, ONS and other government bodies working on crime statistics, and eight non-executive members who are mostly academics. The National Statistician is an ex-officio member. Its terms of reference state that it:

advises the Home Secretary, the Office for National Statistics and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary on how best to ensure that official statistics on crime for England and Wales are accurate, clearly presented, comprehensive, transparent and trustworthy taking account of the needs of users and providers.⁴⁸

It is clear from the CSAC's correspondence and its latest Annual Report (for 2012-13) that it has done little on the issue of the divergence in trends between CSEW and PRC. This is despite the National Statistician saying in her report that established CSAC that it should advise "on any changes to the data requirements from the police needed for crime statistics and any changes to Home Office Counting Rules".⁴⁹ The Annual Report states only that it "has been considering issues arising from the divergence of data between the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Police Recorded Crime (PRC)", with a view to having a meeting at the end of 2011.⁵⁰ It is clear that the Committee's power is limited. Professor Hough, member of CSAC, told us "We can only really operate at arm's length and look at the governance structures that affect local crime recording. [...] We do not have larger, more direct levers."⁵¹ Professor Shute, the Chair of CSAC, added:

[...] we do not have an executive function. We have done a number of things to try to bolster confidence in crime data. We can analyse trends and we can look to see if those disclose worrying aspects of the current system. [...] We can and have offered advice on how the data ought to be presented in a way that is comprehensible to users and to the public more generally, and we have done. There are a number of things we can do, but there are obviously limitations on what we can do. We are an advice body [...]

54. We commend UKSA for acting in response to the evidence exposed by PASC's inquiry, to strip Police Recorded Crime statistics of the quality designation 'National Statistics'. However, the fact that it took our inquiry, and a whistleblower from the Metropolitan Police Service, to expose sufficient evidence suggests serious shortcomings in UKSA's ability and capacity in their assessment function. We acknowledge their recent decision to remove the designation 'National Statistics', but this cannot mitigate what amounts to a long-standing failure of a number of bodies to address the thoroughness of the assessment of Police Recorded Crime, despite a series of previous reviews which identified shortcomings.

48 UK Statistics Authority, [Crime Statistics Advisory Committee terms of reference](#), August 2013

49 [National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics: England and Wales](#), 2011

50 Crime Statistics Advisory Committee, [Annual Report 2012-13](#)

51 Q146

55. This raises serious concerns around the decision to designate Police Recorded Crime as National Statistics in 2011. It has been quoted by ministers that the ONS described the system for recording crime in England and Wales as “one of the best in the world” in 2012.⁵² This was after the cessation of regular external audit of force crime recording in 2007. All can see now that this reflected a lamentable complacency. The then National Statistician took no action at that time. This was wrong—the then National Statistician, or UKSA, once established, should have pressed for other process to be put in place to ensure the integrity of crime data.

56. The reviews of crime statistics by UKSA and the ONS in 2011 failed to expose the unreliability of recording practices within police forces themselves. An opportunity was therefore missed to gather evidence and identify issues which could have called into question the designation of Police Recorded Crime as ‘National Statistics’ at a much earlier stage.

57. It is deplorable that ONS can have overseen the production of crime statistics, which were a set of National Statistics, with what appears to have been very limited knowledge of the ‘quality assurance’ steps that the data went through before being sent to the ONS. The ONS has been too reliant on too little information about the audits performed within police forces or by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. Overall, the ONS has been too passive in carrying out their duties in relation to crime statistics. This cannot continue.

58. The fragmentation of responsibility between individual forces, Home Office and the ONS was not satisfactory and contributed to the failure of the Police Recorded Crime series to meet the standards of the Code of Practice with which official statistics must comply. No single organisation has taken overall responsibility or accountability for ensuring an acceptable quality of crime statistics, which has led to their inadequate quality.

59. *We endorse UKSA’s recommendation that the ONS should publish a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Home Office and the ONS in the production of Police Recorded Crime statistics.*

60. *We recommend UKSA works closely with the Home Office in its role as the first recipient of raw data from forces, and ensures the Home Office takes active primary operational responsibility and accepts accountability for ensuring the integrity of the data which it collates, validates and submits to the ONS for publication. UKSA should hold the Home Office directly accountable for its role in the recorded crime statistics process, including its validation and quality assurance processes as well as its policy guidance to forces and Police and Crime Commissioners, and should in future examine the Home Office’s processes and procedures directly rather than at one remove.*

52 Decision to designate as National Statistics: see UK Statistics Authority, [Crime Statistics in England and Wales: Assessment with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), April 2011 and [Letter of confirmation as National Statistics](#), January 2012. Quotation from ONS: [Methodological note: Analysis of variation in crime trends](#), January 2013. Quoted by Norman Baker MP, Q531

61. **The Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC), which contains representation of all of the main stakeholders in the crime statistics production process as well as the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, has failed. It has not demonstrated sufficient independence and objectivity in carrying out its role to ensure recorded crime statistics are “accurate, clearly presented, comprehensive, transparent and trustworthy” as set out in its terms of reference. CSAC has a vital role in leading the efforts to provide that the system guarantees the reliability and integrity of all crime statistics emerge strengthened from this episode.**

62. *We recommend that UKSA should review the role and composition of CSAC and the structures supporting the production of crime statistics, just as it has recently with a similar committee advising on inflation figures, to ensure that CSAC is independent and rigorous and that these statistics best meet user needs in future.*

Implications for other public sector administrative statistics

63. The de-designation of PRC potentially raises concerns about data quality and integrity elsewhere in the public sector, where personal and organisational performance is measured against data which those same organisations are responsible for generating, as acknowledged by UKSA. As Ed Humpherson, Head of Assessment at UKSA, told us: “We need to be clear in the way we prioritise the reassessments of official statistics that we place those statistics that are drawn from administrative data high up our list so we get to them first.”⁵³ UKSA have subsequently published more information on the work which they will be doing to look at statistics produced in areas where targets exist.⁵⁴

64. **We welcome UKSA’s comments that it intends to prioritise in its workplan the reassessment of National Statistics based on administrative datasets, taking on board the lessons learned from the declassification of Police Recorded Crime.**

65. *UKSA must not in future grant to, or maintain, the kitemark of ‘National Statistics’ on any set of statistics where it has failed to verify whether the underlying data meets the standard required. They should, as a matter of urgency, review all other similar statistics where collection processes are beyond the control of the ONS. UKSA should review the Code of Practice for Official Statistics to determine whether it needs to be revised to allow for the new emphasis on administrative data.*

53 Q475

54 UK Statistics Authority, [Administrative data and Official Statistics](#) press statement, 7 February 2014 and UK Statistics Authority website, [Administrative data and Official Statistics](#) webpage giving more detail on the programme of work.

4 Police leadership, values and culture

The College of Policing Code of Ethics

66. The College of Policing was recently established as the professional body for the police in England and Wales. It has assumed strategic responsibility for development of policy and practice, including PRC statistics. It has developed a new Code of Ethics for the police in England and Wales, based on the seven core principles developed by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) (accountability; honesty; integrity; leadership; objectivity; openness; selflessness), with the additional principles of fairness and respect. It articulates the standards of professional behaviour expected of police officers, including a requirement to ensure accurate and honest record-keeping:

- Under the heading 'Honesty and Integrity': "do not knowingly make false, misleading or inaccurate entries in any record or document kept or made in connection with any police activity"
- Under the heading 'Work and responsibilities': "ensure that accurate records are kept as required by relevant legislation and force policies and procedures."

It also establishes "challenging and reporting improper conduct" as a core principle, placing on police officers "a positive obligation to report, challenge or take action against the conduct of colleagues which I believe has fallen below the Standard of Professional Behaviour set out in this Code."⁵⁵

67. The College of Policing's Chief Executive, Chief Constable Alex Marshall, reacted to the testimony heard at PASC's first evidence session by pointing to the draft code of ethics as part of the solution:

The College of Policing's draft code of ethics, which reflects established standards in the service, is very clear that to knowingly make false, misleading or inaccurate entries in records damages our integrity. Where it has been shown that figures have been deliberately misreported, this should be looked into.

The service has come through a period where targets were more important than outcomes and the College is working to ensure greater accuracy and consistency in recorded crime. Modern policing relies on the integrity and robustness of our data, which has huge potential to help us to cut crime further, and I am confident that better recording will benefit police officers, staff and ultimately the public.⁵⁶

68. In its written evidence to this Committee, CSPL welcomed the publication of the draft Code of Ethics and its adoption of the CSPL's Seven Principles of Public Life, and observed

55 College of Policing, [Draft Code of Ethics: public consultation](#), October 2013

56 College of Policing press release, [College of Police comments on recording of crime figures](#), 20 Nov 2013

that the “Seven Principles, especially those of leadership, accountability and integrity apply to the production of crime statistics as well as to other areas of policing.”⁵⁷ In a House of Lords debate in November 2013 on public trust in the police, the CSPL’s chairman Lord Bew reiterated his warm welcome for the draft Code, but called for a clearer articulation of the “relationship between not living up to the code of conduct and possible issues of misconduct.” He added that “the great danger is that the College of Policing statement of principles just becomes abstract and out there and is not fully operationalised in the conduct of police officers.”⁵⁸

69. The Chief Inspector of Constabulary in his first Annual Assessment of policing, published in March 2014 while we were completing this Report, emphasised the importance of “the requirement of scrupulous honesty and integrity required of all police officers” as restated in the College of Policing’s Code of Ethics.⁵⁹ He added that “in every organisation, the conduct as well as the quality of leadership is a material determining factor in relation to its culture, principles and performance”.⁶⁰

70. We welcome the adoption of the new statutory Code of Ethics setting out the principles and standards of professional behaviour expected of the police in England and Wales. This is most important in respect of the training of police leadership.

71. We recommend that the Home Office and College of Policing make a more explicit statement of how the Code of Ethics’ enforcement framework will impose a duty of data integrity on police officers in respect of crime recording practices, and that penalties will apply in the event of deliberate non-compliance. They must also ensure that officers are familiar with the victim-focussed principles of the National Crime Recording Standard and the distinction between recording standards and charging standards.

Target-chasing versus data integrity

72. Accurate crime recording is not merely a technical matter. Effective police recording processes require a professional ethos of data integrity, reinforced by the right set of incentives and messages from senior leadership. This in turn reflects the importance leadership attaches to the values of policing, such as openness, transparency, integrity, which are values at the core of standards in public life.

73. Data integrity in any organisation is at risk of being compromised if the people responsible for generating data are subject to performance appraisal and political pressure based on the trends shown by that data. The natural tendency is for the organisation to prioritise cosmetic improvements in the statistical indicator over the accurate measurement of the real underlying trends. This tendency can only be exacerbated if the

57 CST06

58 HL Deb, 28 November 2013, [col 1593](#)

59 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, [State of policing: the annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2012/13](#), March 2014, para 83

60 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [State of policing: the annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2012/13](#), March 2014, para 89

organisation in question is required to achieve specific quantitative targets based on its own data. Even without any targets, there is a general expectation that the police should aim to cut crime. The Committee has also heard evidence that the legacy of centrally-imposed performance targets has played an unhelpful role in helping to entrench a 'target culture' within forces—and that the problem of target culture persists to this day.

74. Senior leadership is influential in shaping the institutional attitudes and behaviour of the people they lead. In the opinion of Tom Winsor, Chief Inspector of Constabulary:

The quality of leadership in policing, as in so many other organisations, is absolutely critical. The behaviour of the man and woman, and men and women, at the very top of a police force affects the whole culture, the whole approach, and the integrity and the honesty of their operations. If they believe their leaders are misbehaving in some way, that will affect the whole performance and culture of the organisation.⁶¹

75. Remarks to the Association of Chief Police Officers conference by Derbyshire's Chief Constable Mick Creedon in November 2013, made immediately following this inquiry's first oral evidence session, acknowledged the responsibility of senior police leadership for reinforcing the culture of performance, with the emphasis on targets more than principles:

My fear is that inadvertently we are all still putting pressure on officers to do all they can to manipulate and create crime reductions. [...] It is whether we have the nerve to step away from crime reductions and the obsession with crime figures and move to a real environment where we do properly record. [...] It is sadly what is told to me by many forces still is that everything people do everything they can to make sure crime is not going up. [...] The consequence is another threat to integrity. This is inadvertently caused by what we have done over the past decade. I don't think they do it because they are inherently corrupt, they are doing it because the pressure is on to reduce crime.⁶²

The move away from national targets

76. In 1999, HMIC reported into Police Integrity. They identified crime recording as "perhaps the major area of malpractice connected with the performance culture".⁶³ Nevertheless, in the mid-2000s, police forces became subject to a centralised assessment regime based on a range of statutory numerical performance targets, of which the PRC data formed a key part. In recent years, central Government has sought to shift the emphasis away from the use of centrally-imposed targets as a means of assessing police performance, but this is not reflected in the attitudes, systems and processes of individual police forces and their governing authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners.

61 Q420

62 As reported by [BBC](#), [Telegraph](#), [Daily Mail](#), 20 November 2013

63 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Police Integrity England, Wales and Northern Ireland: securing and maintaining public confidence, June 1999

77. The Police Act 1996 gave the Home Secretary the power to direct police authorities to establish performance targets.⁶⁴ The Policing Act 2002 inserted a requirement for the Home Secretary to publish an annual National Policing Plan setting out strategic policing priorities and specifying the performance indicators (that is, targets) to be used for assessing each force's performance.

78. Between 2004–05 and 2007–08, police performance was assessed using the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF). Under PPAF, the Home Office graded each force's performance against a range of Statutory Performance Indicators, including crime incidence rates, detection rates and public satisfaction. PRC statistics were central to the calculation of a number of these statutory targets. At the time, concerns were expressed that the importance attached to crude detection rates were leading officers to concentrate on 'low-hanging fruit', focusing unduly on offences that were easier to clear up.⁶⁵

79. Following the Flanagan review of policing, in July 2008 the Home Office's Policing Green Paper "From the neighbourhood to the national: policing our communities together" announced that the Home Office would no longer set or maintain any statutory top-down numerical targets for individual police forces, apart from a target to increase the level of public confidence in the police. The current Government announced in July 2010 that it was scrapping the remaining Government-set target on police forces to improve public confidence, stating that "from now on it will be for communities to decide how well their force is doing".⁶⁶ As the Home Secretary remarked in March 2011: "I've scrapped the last remaining national police targets, and replaced them with a single objective: to cut crime."⁶⁷

80. Despite this declared intention to relieve police forces of target-related burdens, the 'target culture' has remained a concern among producers and users of crime statistics. The UKSA's 2010 monitoring report "Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics" noted:

In setting performance targets, much harm can be done if statistics are chosen or used inappropriately. The aspects of a service that matter most to people may not lend themselves to numerical measurement and what can be measured may be a poor substitute. The existence of a target may change the behaviour of service providers in ways that have unexpected and unwanted side effects. There may be scope for manipulation or gaming.⁶⁸

The pernicious effects of target cultures were a recurrent theme in the evidence received by this inquiry. Notwithstanding the widespread awareness of the issue within the policing world, Paul Ford, the Secretary of the National Detectives' Forum at the Police Federation, told us that the target culture is alive and well:

64 Police Act 1996, sections 36A -38

65 See, for example, [Police 'target culture' hurting crime victims](#), Daily Mail, 19 September 2006 and [Police criminalising young to hit targets, says charity](#), Guardian, 3 April 2008, and [Police condemn 'target culture'](#) BBC, 15 May 2007

66 Home Office, Cm 7925, [Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people](#), July 2010, para 3.5

67 Home Secretary, [Speech on police reform](#), 2 March 2011

68 UK Statistics Authority, [Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales](#), May 2010

We have Police and Crime Commissioners demanding reductions in crime, and again that explanation is placing pressure on people. I think it is really important to understand. I do not think [...] that there are memos and diktats from on high, in my experience, in the organisation I represent. But there is a culture within policing of success and 'We have to do this to be successful'. It pervades every level, unfortunately.⁶⁹

81. The second report of the Winsor Review of Policing in 2012 took on board the problem of perverse incentives and gaming in making its recommendations for police officer pay and progression. The review recommended a qualitative assessment of officers based on values and competencies rather than a quantitative performance measure, noting that:

There is widespread concern that crude performance measures will be inappropriate, creating perverse incentives and promoting the pursuit of short-term, simple, quantitative targets. There is a lack of trust in the ability of the police service to operate a robust performance appraisal system on which to base decisions about individual officers' performance.

82. A particularly disturbing example of how target-chasing can distort the policing of serious crime and harm victims was revealed by the Independent Police Complaints Commission's February 2013 report into Southwark Sapphire Unit's handling of sexual offence investigations in 2008 and 2009, referred to earlier in this Report. The report found that the Sapphire Unit had been "under pressure to improve performance and meet targets" rather than focus on the outcome for the victim and resorted to gaming the figures by inappropriately encouraging victims to retract allegations (so that a 'no-crime', rather than an unsolved crime, was recorded), in clear defiance of the NCRS principles.⁷⁰

83. HMIC's June 2013 inspection report on crime recording in Kent, commissioned at the initiative of Kent's Police and Crime Commissioner Ann Barnes, provided a further illuminating case study into how ingrained target cultures have continued to influence recording practices. Although HMIC found "no evidence of corrupt activity in the way in which the crimes that we looked at had been recorded or resolved", it nevertheless concluded that:

a target-driven culture had, until recently, led to some officers in Kent pursuing crimes on the basis of how easy they were to solve, rather than on their seriousness, or their impact on victims or communities. [...] While such an approach is not unlawful, and does not contravene the letter of the HOCR, it is against the spirit of the rules, which place the needs of victims—not of meeting particular performance targets—at the centre of the crime-recording process. HMIC therefore concludes that there has, in the past, been an institutional bias in Kent towards chasing numerical targets for solving

69 Q24

70 Independent Police Complaints Commission, [Southwark Sapphire Unit's local practices for the reporting and investigation of sexual offences July 2008-September 2009, Independent Investigation Learning Report](#), February 2013

crime. This has led to some officers focusing on those categories of crime which have the best chance of a quick and easy resolution.⁷¹

HMIC published an interim progress report on Kent Police in January 2014 which found that the force had “responded positively” to the 2013 inspection and that there had been “considerable improvements to crime recording processes made by the force, and inspectors found substantially greater accuracy in crime recording—although HMIC found that more needs to be done on training and raising awareness of the force’s new approach to managing performance.”⁷²

84. In his first Annual Assessment of the state of policing, published in March 2014, the Chief Inspector of Constabulary referred to the “widespread use” of performance targets, stating that “Regrettably, performance targets of this kind have in some instances become so ingrained for so long that difficulties are found in getting people to do things in a more rational and intelligent way”.⁷³ He also highlighted the importance of strong leadership in ensuring the police do act in a “more intelligent way”, stating that “it is the responsibility of police leaders to ensure that their officers and staff concentrate on what matters most, not what scores highest in the partial and impact, discredited performance measurement systems of the past.”⁷⁴

85. In relation to the legacy of the target-driven culture, HMIC found that the force had “recognised the critical importance of ensuring that its culture is consistent with working in a different way, where activity is not driven primarily by numerical targets” and that “none of the staff we spoke to had any individual numerical performance targets, nor did they feel under any pressure to concentrate on numerical performance at the expense of quality and victim care.”⁷⁵

86. The vast majority of police officers joined the police in order to serve as dedicated and courageous professionals, motivated by their vocation to protect the public. However, targets, based either on Police Recorded Crime data or on other internally-generated administrative data, set by senior police officers or Police and Crime Commissioners, tend to affect attitudes, erode data quality and to distort individual and institutional behaviour and priorities.

87. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary’s inspection in 2013 into the Kent Police found clear evidence that targets are detrimental to the integrity of crime data. We are pleased to note that when they returned to Kent in January 2014, they found that good progress had been made in tackling this issue. HMIC’s findings in Kent are a promising indication of how a rigorous and sustained audit regime, combined with a clear

71 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [Crime recording in Kent](#), 2013, p22

72 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [Crime recording in Kent – An interim progress report](#), 31 January 2014, p10

73 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [State of policing: the annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2012/13](#), March 2014, para 95

74 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [State of policing: the annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2012/13](#), March 2014, para 97

75 As above, p8

prioritisation of data integrity by senior leadership, can contribute to bringing about positive change.

88. The attitudes and behaviours which lead to the misrecording of crime have become ingrained, including within senior leadership, leading to the subordination of data integrity to target-chasing. This can present officers with a conflict between achievement of targets and core policing values. HMIC recognises this in their first Annual Assessment of the state of policing, but we are disappointed that this vital issue received only cursory attention in over 200 pages.

89. Senior police leaders and HMIC must ensure that emphasis is placed on data integrity and accuracy, not on the direction of recorded crime trends. Formal performance appraisal should be based upon these core policing values and not based on targets derived from Police Recorded Crime data or other administrative data on their own. We are convinced that this requires leadership in many police forces to place new emphasis on values and ethics, especially in the Metropolitan Police Service. We expect HMIC to lay much stronger emphasis on this aspect of police behaviour in future Annual Assessments.

Broader concerns about police values

90. The doubts relating to police recording practices are just one of a range of serious concerns about values and ethical standards within the police. The Home Affairs Committee's 2013 report on Leadership and standards in the police highlighted how a "concatenation of crises risks damaging the quality of law enforcement: public faith in policing has been tested by episodes such as the findings of the Hillsborough Panel Report, the 'plebgate' incident, and the first dismissal of a chief constable in 30 years."⁷⁶ More recently, there have been the Operation Elveden investigation into allegations that police officers accepted money for supplying information to journalists, and the recent revelations about undercover policing in the Stephen Lawrence case.⁷⁷

91. The issues raised in this Report concerning the integrity of Police Recorded Crime statistics demonstrate the subordination of core policing values to the 'target culture'. This reflects broader concerns about policing values. We recommend that the Committee of Standards in Public Life conducts a wide-ranging inquiry into the police's compliance with the new Code of Ethics; in particular the role of leadership in promoting and sustaining these values in the face of all the other pressures on the force.

Whistleblowing

92. We are grateful to PC James Patrick, a serving police officer with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), for his courage in coming forward to voice his concerns. This was instrumental in prompting this inquiry. PC Patrick became a police officer in 2004, joining

⁷⁶ Home Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2013-14, [Leadership and standards in the police](#), HC 67-I, para 4

⁷⁷ [Stephen Lawrence Independent Review](#), HC 1094, March 2014

Derbyshire Police, and moved to the MPS in 2009. At the MPS, he had a growing number of concerns, some of which related to the manipulating of crime data by police officers in order to improve the crime statistics. For example, he told us that robbery offences were sometimes downgraded to 'theft-snatch' and burglaries to 'criminal damage', or that incidents were logged as 'crime-related incidents' until there was a detection, in which case the incident would then be logged as a crime.⁷⁸ He also believes that the misrecording of crime led to the misallocation of resources in the MPS, which in turn helped to leave the MPC ill-prepared for the summer riots in London in 2012.⁷⁹ PC Patrick's evidence stated that he went public with his concerns as a 'whistleblower' only after encountering resistance and obstructiveness within his force.⁸⁰ In 2012, he started to blog and tweet about some of his concerns (which were wider than the issue of crime statistics). Many of his blog posts were self-published in a book, "The Rest is Silence", in 2013.⁸¹ In November 2012, the Metropolitan Police started to investigate him for alleged gross misconduct and he was placed on restricted duties. According to his solicitors, this was in relation to the publication of his book.⁸² In February 2014, following a "management review" of the case by another force, at the invitation of the MPS, the charges of "gross misconduct" were dropped. Nevertheless, the MPS continued to pursue charges of "misconduct".⁸³ In March 2014, PC Patrick resigned with effect from June 2014, stating that "this resignation arises directly from my treatment [by the Metropolitan Police Service] as a result of making disclosures in good faith and in the public interest".⁸⁴ PC Patrick claims that he has been subject to bullying and intimidation over a long period, which has affected his physical and mental wellbeing and his family life.⁸⁵

93. It would not be appropriate for us to comment on PC Patrick's disciplinary proceedings in any detail. However, there are some wider lessons to be learnt from PC Patrick's experiences. The new police code of ethics places a duty on officers to report misconduct among their peers. Norman Baker MP, Minister of State at the Home Office, also expressed his desire that officers "exercise their duty and report any conduct they believe to be inappropriate."⁸⁶ However, officers need to feel safe and confident that they can raise their genuine concerns without adverse repercussions. Paul Ford of the Police Federation told us that his organisation was "dealing with a lot of stifled whistleblowers", and added:

We have lots of anecdotal information but, unfortunately, people are fearful of coming forward and raising concerns. That comes down to the

78 Q6, Q9, Q10

79 CST02, CST34

80 CST02

81 James Patrick, [The Police Debating Directive](#) blog and James Patrick, *The Rest is Silence*, published April 2013

82 Kaim Todner solicitors, [Media statement - PC James Patrick](#), 4 December 2012

83 Kaim Todner solicitors, [Media statement - PC James Patrick](#), 11 February 2014

84 James Patrick, [Statement on resignation](#), blog post on [The Candle Legacy](#) blog, 24 March 2014

85 As above

86 Q595

whistleblowing aspect of the lack of protection for people, the peer pressure and the fear factor in terms of their future.⁸⁷

94. The National Audit Office recently looked at whistleblowing in their report “Making a whistleblowing policy work”.⁸⁸ In that report, they found that:

The departments we examined are effective at promoting internal routes to blow the whistle, but external routes for employees are less clear. We found departments offer a range of appropriate contacts internal to an organisation, but were less consistent in explaining how an individual could raise their concerns externally, and still be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.⁸⁹

95. During the course of our inquiry we encountered some uncertainty as to which external avenues a police officer may use to make a complaint, if dissatisfied with the response after raising his or her concerns within his or her force. In particular, it is unclear whether an officer may approach the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPPC). The Police Reform Act 2002 states that police officers cannot make a complaint to the IPPC, but IPPC’s guidance adds that:

This does not mean that a person serving with the police cannot raise concerns about the conduct of other people serving within their own force. However, the person serving with the police who raises the concern does not have any of the statutory rights of a complainant. Police forces and local policing bodies should ensure that there are adequate systems in place to support and protect people serving with the police who want to raise concerns about the conduct of their colleagues. This might include extending confidentiality to anyone raising such a concern, as far as this is possible and appropriate.⁹⁰

96. We wrote on 27 January 2014 to the Home Office Minister, Norman Baker MP, to ask for further clarity on the avenues open to police whistleblowers who are not satisfied with the response received if they raise their concerns within their forces. Despite our chasing the minister and his private office, we have still not received a reply.

97. We recommend that the Home Office clarify the current position about the external bodies a police officer may approach once internal procedures have been exhausted. We deplore the failure of the Home Office to send us a reply in time for this Report. As soon as we receive a reply, we will publish it on our website.

87 Q47

88 National Audit Office, [Making a whistleblowing policy work](#), March 2014

89 As above, para 8

90 Independent Police Complaints Commission, [Statutory Guidance to the police service on the handling of complaints](#), 2013

98. We recommend that the Home Office clarifies the route open to police whistleblowers who have exhausted internal channels within their police forces. Police whistleblowers should be free to refer their allegations to the IPCC, and should, while those concerns are pending formal investigation, enjoy immunity from disciplinary proceedings in relation to actions taken in order to raise those concerns.

99. We recommend that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary should investigate the Metropolitan Police Service in respect of the treatment of PC Patrick and review the internal processes and procedures of the police for dealing with whistleblowers, in order to ensure that they are treated fairly and compassionately. We further recommend that the Home Affairs Committee should inquire into these matters to ensure that whistleblowers in any police force are treated fairly and with respect and care. We have grave doubts that the Metropolitan Police Service has treated PC Patrick fairly or with respect and care.

5 Monitoring and audit

Monitoring of crime recording since 2002

100. The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), introduced across England and Wales in 2002, makes clear that “an essential element of the National Standard is the need for regular and on-going local and national scrutinisation at all stages of the process.”⁹¹

101. Primary responsibility for the maintenance of crime data quality lies with each force’s nominated Chief Officer. They are responsible for the accuracy and integrity of crime recording processes. In their leadership role, Chief Officers are encouraged to make an “unequivocal statement and clear commitment” to the maintenance of consistent and victim-oriented crime recording standard, and to ensure “on an ongoing basis that each force’s position on crime recording [is] clearly articulated throughout the organisation”.⁹²

102. Each Chief Officer appoints a Force Crime Registrar (FCR) to have day-to-day responsibility for accurate and consistent implementation of the NCRS. The FCR is an NCRS specialist and acts as the final arbiter of the force’s internal audit process, the interpretation of the counting rules and assigning outcomes. The FCR also acts as the Force representative and Home Office contact on the subject of crime recording. The FCR is answerable to the relevant Chief Officer, but must be outside operational line command, to ensure that NCRS implementation is not subject to operational or managerial pressures that may compromise data integrity.

103. The Force Crime Registrar position is not defined consistently across police forces and the people holding that position vary in rank. For example, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe told us that the Metropolitan Police FCR is a Chief Superintendent, a senior middle manager. However, Chief Constable Farrar observed in his evidence that at present FCRs “vary greatly in their status and grade across the country and their engagement levels with Chief Officers is also inconsistent.”⁹³

104. In respect of external monitoring, there has not been the same imperative. There has not been a consistent ‘regular and on-going [...] national scrutinisation’ of crime recording practices across forces since 2007. During the first few years of NCRS implementation, the Audit Commission conducted a series of annual reviews of police data quality, to monitor and assess each force’s progress towards compliance with the new standard. Their findings were published in three reports (for 2004, 2005 and 2006–07). By the time of the final report, the Audit Commission concluded that good progress had been made in improving the quality of recorded crime data and in increasing user satisfaction:

Thirty-eight police authorities and forces (88 per cent) have good or excellent crime data quality. This is a significant improvement from 12 (28 per cent) in

91 Home Office, [National Crime Recording Standard](#)

92 As above, para 4.1

93 Q310, CST24, CST36

2003–04. Since 2005–06, no police authority or force has poor crime data quality. There has been a sustained improvement in crime data quality. Compliance with national standards is now built into the activity and processes of most police authorities and forces.⁹⁴

105. The Audit Commission ceased its annual monitoring work on the implementation of NCRS in 2006/07. As we have discussed in this report, witnesses and the ONS have identified the discontinuation of regular annual audit as a possible contributor to the subsequent faster fall in recorded crime compared with the trend indicated by the CSEW.

106. In 2009, following the discovery of inconsistencies in the way the police were recording grievous bodily harm with intent, HMIC conducted a one-off quality review into the way in which police forces record most serious violence (which at the time was part of a central Government target). The resultant report found some variation in recording which they partly attributed to the lack of independent monitoring of crime records, following the cessation of the Audit Commission's regular reviews.⁹⁵

107. Prompted by the cessation of the Audit Commission's involvement, and informed by the findings of HMIC's 2009 inspection, UKSA noted its concern over the cessation of periodic external audit in its 2010 monitoring report, "Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics":

There seems to be broad agreement that inspections by the Audit Commission over several years contributed to improvements in police crime recording, but these inspections have now ceased. [...] The more recent HMIC review of the way police forces record most serious violence considered that the current lack of independent monitoring was a possible contributory factor to the error rate, and concluded that there is a need for better quality assurance.⁹⁶

108. In January 2011, HMIC was commissioned by the Home Office to examine how the police record, investigate and resolve crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour.⁹⁷ This review looked at a small sample of crimes and incident records across all English and Welsh forces (fewer than 6,000 records in total) and found:

- Three-quarters of forces made correct crime recording decisions from incidents 90 per cent or more of the time—an average of 92 per cent of incidents correctly finalised, indicating a good overall national standard;
- Whilst the majority of police forces performed well, there remained a wide variation in the quality of decision making associated with the recording of crime (a range of

94 Audit Commission, [Police data quality 2006/07](#), p2

95 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [Crime counts: A Review of Data Quality For Offences of the Most Serious Violence](#), October 2009

96 UK Statistics Authority [Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics](#), Monitoring Report, May 2010, para 38 and 79

97 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [The Crime Scene - a review of police crime and incident reports](#), January 2012

between 86 and 100 per cent from the lowest to the highest performing force) which was a cause for concern;

Limited evidence of forces directly assessing whether their own crime quality audits provided confidence that their crime figures gave an accurate account of their performance, and few forces compare crime audits with crime performance in any meaningful way.⁹⁸

109. HMIC's inspection work on crime recording during 2009–2013 found that forces which demonstrated high standards of data quality possessed the following key attributes:

- A clearly identified chief officer lead acting as the force champion for data quality and sending consistent and unequivocal messages to officers about the importance of maintaining high standards in crime and incident recording;
- A strong, independent Force Crime Registrar, enjoying unequivocal chief officer support and with a reporting line not subject to operational pressures.

Chief Constable Farrar noted in his evidence that “regular, clear and consistent Chief Officer engagement with FCRs is believed to be important in providing FCRs with independence from target cultures and so enabling them to ensure crime is accurately recorded.”⁹⁹

HMIC's 2014 Crime Data integrity inspection

110. In April 2013 HMIC announced plans to conduct a crime data integrity inspection in all 43 forces as part of its 2013-14 inspection programme, and confirmed this commitment to the Home Affairs Committee in May 2013.¹⁰⁰ The inspection was prompted by the HMIC's findings in Kent, which we consider earlier in this report.¹⁰¹ The Home Secretary wrote to HMIC in June 2013 to approve of the HMIC's initiative, remarking that “it is vital that the public have access to transparent and trustworthy statistics on recorded crime [...]. It is clearly critical a report on this is published within the new inspection period.”¹⁰² Initial findings will be provided in an interim report (as requested by the Home Secretary) in April 2014, with a final report to follow later in the year.¹⁰³

111. The HMIC's previous inspections of data quality across forces were limited in scope—both Crime Counts (2009) and The Crime Scene (2012) only considered crime and incident records resulting from telephone calls to force crime centres, and examined only a small sample of such records. HMIC has assured us that the current inspection will encompass the various routes by which crimes can be reported to the police. It will address

98 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, [The Crime Scene - a review of police crime and incident reports](#), January 2012

99 CST24

100 Home Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2013-14, [Leadership and standards in the police](#), HC 67-I, Q602-603

101 Q411 and Q416 [Tom Winsor]

102 Letter from Home Secretary Rt Hon Theresa May MP to Chief Inspector of Constabulary Tom Winsor, 10 June 2013

103 Q21 [Tom Winsor]

key issues such as the quality of leadership and governance, the quality of internal audit processes and the role of the Force Crime Registrar, how effectively victims are placed at the centre of crime recording decisions, and the extent to which no-crime decisions correctly adhere to the NCRS.

112. In December 2013, the Home Office announced £9.4 million funding for regular annual all-force audit by HMIC.¹⁰⁴ Tom Winsor told us that “I have every expectation, although we are still doing the planning on this, that the integrity of crime recording will be part of [the annual audit]”.¹⁰⁵ Although HMIC were unable to confirm for us how much of the £9.4 million would be devoted to crime data integrity, they did tell us that “this year’s crime data inspection is costing just over £1 million, to give you an order of magnitude.”¹⁰⁶

113. This intensified scrutiny of police recording practices and the focus on compliance with prescribed procedures may lead to concerns that the police are being burdened with additional red-tape and distracted from their core role of fighting crime. However, reliable crime recording is a bedrock of core policing work and of the service provided to the public, a point emphasised by several witnesses. Sir Andrew Dilnot, Chair of UKSA, told us:

My own view is that the imposition of rigorous external independent audit should not be a red-tape exercise. That is not what it is. Internal audit can be a red-tape exercise, but external audit is something coming in that should not take very large and significant resources from the police.¹⁰⁷

Ed Humpherson, head of assessment at UKSA, stressed that:

the systems of assurance that we have been describing—such as the regular auditing—are not add-ons simply for the purpose of satisfying the Authority for designation as an official statistic; they are operational needs to support decision making in every police force.¹⁰⁸

While Peter Barron [retired Detective Chief Superintendent,]at the Metropolitan Police Service, considered that:

those that describe HOCR [Home Office Counting Rules], NCRS [the National Crime Recording Standard] and NSIR [the National Standard of Incident Recording] as unnecessary bureaucracies do so because they provide a level of accuracy and consistency that challenge unsustainable claims of enhanced performance.¹⁰⁹

104 HC Deb, 18 Dec 2013, [col 111-118WS](#)

105 Q416

106 Q439 and Q445

107 Q509

108 Q509

109 CST03

114. We welcome HM Inspectorate of Constabulary's decision to undertake a data integrity inspection in 2014, and its commitment to reinstating an annual external audit programme. We welcome the extra funding provided by the Home Office for regular annual audit of all forces.

115. We recommend that HMIC confirm that a rigorous audit of crime recording integrity will form a permanent part of these audits. Audits should ensure that the senior leadership within each force articulates the importance of data integrity to its officers. It is therefore essential that the Force Crime Registrar has not only had the requisite training but the necessary authority within the force to do their job. HMIC should identify a minimum suitable rank for FCRs, such as Deputy Chief Constable or equivalent, and FCRs should report directly to the force Commander.

116. We recommend that the current audit should examine the reasons for misrecording, such as the effect of performance culture (identifying instances where targets drive perverse incentives), poor understanding of counting rules, inadequate training and deliberate malpractice.

117. The Chief Inspector of Constabulary assured us that HMIC is “completely independent” in its judgements and has “no allegiance, other than to the public interest and to the law.” This is not self-evident, given the numerous instances of HMIC inspectors moving from and into senior positions within police forces. It is therefore vital to the credibility of HMIC's annual audit of crime recording that this independence of judgement be maintained and be seen to be maintained.

6 Police and Crime Commissioners

118. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are elected, and have assumed responsibility for setting policing priorities and the power to hire and fire the Chief Constable. They are accountable to the local electorate for the performance of the local police force in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. There is therefore a danger that central Government's efforts to remove targets will be undermined by locally-set targets and electoral pressures.

119. A number of PCCs have refused to set numerical targets, mindful of their distorting effects. For example, Nick Alston, PCC in Essex, told us:

reducing numerical targets seemed to be absolutely key, so I took away the numerical targets from Essex policing. [...] I am very aware of the susceptibility of crime statistics to be worked in all sorts of different ways.¹¹⁰

120. During the course of this inquiry, we wrote, on 6 December 2013, to all 43 Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales to ask them:

- What, if any, targets they set for their police force and what impact they think this has on police recording crime practices.
- How they assure themselves that the recorded crime figures for their area are correct and to what extent can they trust the crime statistics for their area.

121. The replies are published on our website as evidence to this inquiry, along with evidence submitted by some PCCs to our original call for evidence. Three PCCs gave oral evidence to PASC on 19 November 2013, the Deputy Mayor of London, who acts as PCC for London gave oral evidence on 8 January 2014, and three different PCCs gave oral evidence to the Home Affairs Committee on 26 November 2013.¹¹¹ (Some of those PCCs who gave oral evidence also submitted written evidence.)

122. Out of the 42 pieces of written and oral evidence from PCCs, 16 PCCs told us they have set specific numerical targets in their local Police and Crime Plans, such as “to achieve a 12% reduction in overall crime” (Hampshire) or “to reduce burglary by 2%” (Thames Valley). A notable example of this is the Metropolitan Police: the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has set a range of targets under the heading ‘MOPAC 20/20/20’—including a target to reduce the ‘MOPAC 7’ group of offences by 20%. The Deputy Mayor of London for Policing told the Committee that the target was designed to mitigate risks (sexual offences are excluded from the target, while acquisitive crimes cannot easily be reclassified/downgraded out of the scope of MOPAC 7 as the relevant categories are included).¹¹²

110 Q92

111 Oral evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee, [26 November 2013](#), HC (2013-14) 757-i

112 Q367 [Stephen Greenhalgh]

123. The definition of 'target' is a grey area however. The Wiltshire PCC has "thresholds" which are numerical and indicate the upper and lower boundaries between which he would expect his own force's performance to sit. Most of the other PCCs have some kind of "performance measures" or "ambitions", which, whilst not being numerical, are in place in order for the PCC to indicate expected performance from the local force. For example, the Avon and Somerset PCC has set the ambition for the burglary crime rate to be in the "top 10" performing forces.

124. A number of PCCs, such as the PCC for Essex, stated they were concerned about the perverse incentives targets can introduce, leading to misrecording of crime. Several stated that, on becoming the PCC, they had explicitly done away with targets. However, others stated that it was important to have at least some performance measures as part of their role in holding the local police force to account, setting expectations and meeting the wishes of the public. Most stated that performance measures were only part of the way in which they monitored the performance of the police and that they had measures in place to mitigate the risks that targets might introduce.

125. Several PCCs mentioned that in some areas they would welcome an *increase* in the recorded incidence of some types of crime, if this was because more victims were coming forward, for example, in reporting rapes.

126. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) role, and the political and electoral pressures that PCCs are subject to, has the potential to foster target cultures within forces, with consequent perverse incentives and detrimental impact on data quality. There is considerable variance across the country in the use of targets by PCCs.

127. Some PCCs consider the perverse incentives created by targets to be so serious that they have dropped all targets. Others believe the risk is manageable. As part of its annual audit programme, HMIC should examine the effect of PCC target-setting on crime recording practices and culture, and should in due course look back at the first PCC period in office to assess the impact on data integrity of locally-set targets.

128. The Home Office, which claims credit for abolishing national numerical targets, should make clear in its guidance to PCCs that they should not set performance targets based on Police Recorded Crime data as this tends to distort recording practices and to create perverse incentives to misrecord crime. The evidence for this is incontrovertible. In the meantime, we deprecate such target setting in the strongest possible terms. Police Recorded Crime data should not be used as the basis for personal performance appraisal or for making decisions about remuneration or promotion. We regard such practice as a flawed leadership model, contrary to the policing Code of Ethics.

Conclusions and recommendations

Police Recorded Crime (PRC)

1. Our inquiry covered crime statistics in England and Wales. However, it would be surprising if similar issues to do with the quality of the statistics did not exist in Northern Ireland and Scotland. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland's recent review into compliance of police recording with the expected standards gives cause for concern—the recording of some crime types falls well below the expected standard. (Paragraph 7)
2. We recommend that UKSA urgently investigate the quality of crime statistics in Scotland and Northern Ireland and their compliance with the Code of Practice, in the light of the findings of this inquiry, and UKSA's decision to remove the 'National Statistics' kitemark from crime statistics in England and Wales. (Paragraph 8)
3. Accurate Police Recorded Crime data is essential if Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables are to know what crimes are being committed in their area and therefore how to respond. (Paragraph 13)
4. It is not credible to suggest that sensible resolution of the tensions between a rigid compliance with the recording rules and a common-sense approach can explain the exaggerated decline of Police Recorded Crime. Our witnesses provided a wealth of insight into the various ways in which crime data accuracy and integrity can be and have been compromised. However, the lack of regular and rigorous audit of crime recording practices in recent years makes it impossible to assess the extent of any compromise and the relative importance of these factors. The re-establishment of regular annual external audit of forces from this year onwards, which we discuss later in this Report, provides a vital opportunity to fill this gap in the understanding of the problem and to contribute towards a durable solution. (Paragraph 29)
5. It is vital that the Government ensures the accuracy and reliability of Police Recorded Crime. Police Recorded Crime provides a crucial intelligence resource for the police and informs the operational deployment of police resources. Lax supervision of recorded crime data risks reducing the police's effectiveness in their core role of protecting the public and preventing crime because they cannot deploy resource effectively if they are not aware of the true level and nature of crime. (Paragraph 30)
6. Under-recording or miscategorising crime erodes public trust in the police and undermines the trust and confidence of frontline police officers in police leadership: it creates doubt that the public will be taken seriously when they report a crime. (Paragraph 31)
7. Any instance of deliberate misrecording of sexual offences is deplorable, but especially so if this has been brought about by means of improperly persuading or pressurising victims into withdrawing or downgrading their report. (Paragraph 39)
8. The disparities between different police forces in the 'no-crime rates' for rapes and sexual offences are sufficient in our view to raise serious concerns about the varying

approaches taken by police forces to recording and investigating these horrendous crimes. We look forward to the outcome of the research commissioned by the Metropolitan Police examining the force's 'no crime' decisions in respect of sexual offences. (Paragraph 40)

9. The fact that this research is necessary, following the 2008 Independent Police Complaints Commission report into the Sapphire Unit is a damning indictment of police complacency, inertia and lack of leadership. However, the data indicates that the Metropolitan Police Service is unlikely to be the only force of concern. (Paragraph 41)
10. *The Home Office must undertake a comprehensive analysis in order to explain the extraordinary disparities in no-crime rates for sexual offences across all police forces. We expect this to be completed within two months and included with the response to this Report. We also recommend that the devolved administrations undertake analogous work. This should lead to work to improve the accuracy transparency and reliability of police recorded sexual offences so that a table of no crime rates does not suggest systemic inconsistency in recording practices.* (Paragraph 42)
11. We note the reduction in the sample size of the Crime Survey for England and Wales. Police Recorded Crime is the only detailed indicator of crime trends at local level, enabling police forces, Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities, the public and the Home Office to keep track of crime in different force area. The Crime Survey for England and Wales is no substitute for Police Recorded Crime in respect of monitoring crime trends in local areas. (Paragraph 45)
12. We recommend that the ONS review and then publish, alongside the Crime Survey for England and Wales, information about the nature of the sample, including the impact of the reduction in sample size on the reliability of the statistics, its cost over time, and an explanation of what statistics might be published at a sub-national level, for example for the larger police forces. (Paragraph 46)

Removal of National Statistics status

13. We commend UKSA for acting in response to the evidence exposed by PASC's inquiry, to strip Police Recorded Crime statistics of the quality designation 'National Statistics'. However, the fact that it took our inquiry, and a whistleblower from the Metropolitan Police Service, to expose sufficient evidence suggests serious shortcomings in UKSA's ability and capacity in their assessment function. We acknowledge their recent decision to remove the designation 'National Statistics', but this cannot mitigate what amounts to a long-standing failure of a number of bodies to address the thoroughness of the assessment of Police Recorded Crime, despite a series of previous reviews which identified shortcomings. (Paragraph 54)
14. This raises serious concerns around the decision to designate Police Recorded Crime as National Statistics in 2011. It has been quoted by ministers that the ONS described the system for recording crime in England and Wales as "one of the best in the world" in 2012. This was after the cessation of regular external audit of force crime recording in 2007. All can see now that this reflected a lamentable complacency. The then National Statistician took no action at that time. This was wrong—the then

National Statistician, or UKSA, once established, should have pressed for other process to be put in place to ensure the integrity of crime data. (Paragraph 55)

15. The reviews of crime statistics by UKSA and the ONS in 2011 failed to expose the unreliability of recording practices within police forces themselves. An opportunity was therefore missed to gather evidence and identify issues which could have called into question the designation of Police Recorded Crime as 'National Statistics' at a much earlier stage. (Paragraph 56)
16. It is deplorable that ONS can have overseen the production of crime statistics, which were a set of National Statistics, with what appears to have been very limited knowledge of the 'quality assurance' steps that the data went through before being sent to the ONS. The ONS has been too reliant on too little information about the audits performed within police forces or by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. Overall, the ONS has been too passive in carrying out their duties in relation to crime statistics. This cannot continue. (Paragraph 57)
17. The fragmentation of responsibility between individual forces, Home Office and the ONS was not satisfactory and contributed to the failure of the Police Recorded Crime series to meet the standards of the Code of Practice with which official statistics must comply. No single organisation has taken overall responsibility or accountability for ensuring an acceptable quality of crime statistics, which has led to their inadequate quality. (Paragraph 58)
18. *We endorse UKSA's recommendation that the ONS should publish a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Home Office and the ONS in the production of Police Recorded Crime statistics.* (Paragraph 59)
19. *We recommend UKSA works closely with the Home Office in its role as the first recipient of raw data from forces, and ensures the Home Office takes active primary operational responsibility and accepts accountability for ensuring the integrity of the data which it collates, validates and submits to the ONS for publication. UKSA should hold the Home Office directly accountable for its role in the recorded crime statistics process, including its validation and quality assurance processes as well as its policy guidance to forces and Police and Crime Commissioners, and should in future examine the Home Office's processes and procedures directly rather than at one remove.* (Paragraph 60)

20. The Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC), which contains representation of all of the main stakeholders in the crime statistics production process as well as the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, has failed. It has not demonstrated sufficient independence and objectivity in carrying out its role to ensure recorded crime statistics are “accurate, clearly presented, comprehensive, transparent and trustworthy” as set out in its terms of reference. CSAC has a vital role in leading the efforts to provide that the system guarantees the reliability and integrity of all crime statistics emerge strengthened from this episode. (Paragraph 61)
21. *We recommend that UKSA should review the role and composition of CSAC and the structures supporting the production of crime statistics, just as it has recently with a similar committee advising on inflation figures, to ensure that CSAC is independent and rigorous and that these statistics best meet user needs in future.* (Paragraph 62)
22. We welcome UKSA’s comments that it intends to prioritise in its workplan the reassessment of National Statistics based on administrative datasets, taking on board the lessons learned from the declassification of Police Recorded Crime. (Paragraph 64)
23. *UKSA must not in future grant to, or maintain, the kitemark of ‘National Statistics’ on any set of statistics where it has failed to verify whether the underlying data meets the standard required. They should, as a matter of urgency, review all other similar statistics where collection processes are beyond the control of the ONS. UKSA should review the Code of Practice for Official Statistics to determine whether it needs to be revised to allow for the new emphasis on administrative data.* (Paragraph 65)

Police leadership, values and culture

24. We welcome the adoption of the new statutory Code of Ethics setting out the principles and standards of professional behaviour expected of the police in England and Wales. This is most important in respect of the training of police leadership. (Paragraph 70)
25. *We recommend that the Home Office and College of Policing make a more explicit statement of how the Code of Ethics’ enforcement framework will impose a duty of data integrity on police officers in respect of crime recording practices, and that penalties will apply in the event of deliberate non-compliance. They must also ensure that officers are familiar with the victim-focussed principles of the National Crime Recording Standard and the distinction between recording standards and charging standards.* (Paragraph 71)
26. The vast majority of police officers joined the police in order to serve as dedicated and courageous professionals, motivated by their vocation to protect the public. However, targets, based either on Police Recorded Crime data or on other internally-generated administrative data, set by senior police officers or Police and Crime Commissioners, tend to affect attitudes, erode data quality and to distort individual and institutional behaviour and priorities. (Paragraph 86)
27. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary’s inspection in 2013 into the Kent Police found clear evidence that targets are detrimental to the integrity of crime data. We are

pleased to note that when they returned to Kent in January 2014, they found that good progress had been made in tackling this issue. HMIC's findings in Kent are a promising indication of how a rigorous and sustained audit regime, combined with a clear prioritisation of data integrity by senior leadership, can contribute to bringing about positive change. (Paragraph 87)

28. The attitudes and behaviours which lead to the misrecording of crime have become ingrained, including within senior leadership, leading to the subordination of data integrity to target-chasing. This can present officers with a conflict between achievement of targets and core policing values. HMIC recognises this in their first Annual Assessment of the state of policing, but we are disappointed that this vital issue received only cursory attention in over 200 pages. (Paragraph 88)
29. *Senior police leaders and HMIC must ensure that emphasis is placed on data integrity and accuracy, not on the direction of recorded crime trends. Formal performance appraisal should be based upon these core policing values and not based on targets derived from Police Recorded Crime data or other administrative data on their own. We are convinced that this requires leadership in many police forces to place new emphasis on values and ethics, especially in the Metropolitan Police Service. We expect HMIC to lay much stronger emphasis on this aspect of police behaviour in future Annual Assessments.* (Paragraph 89)
30. *The issues raised in this Report concerning the integrity of Police Recorded Crime statistics demonstrate the subordination of core policing values to the 'target culture'. This reflects broader concerns about policing values. We recommend that the Committee of Standards in Public Life conducts a wide-ranging inquiry into the police's compliance with the new Code of Ethics; in particular the role of leadership in promoting and sustaining these values in the face of all the other pressures on the force.* (Paragraph 91)
31. *We recommend that the Home Office clarify the current position about the external bodies a police officer may approach once internal procedures have been exhausted. We deplore the failure of the Home Office to send us a reply in time for this Report. As soon as we receive a reply, we will publish it on our website.* (Paragraph 97)
32. *We recommend that the Home Office clarifies the route open to police whistleblowers who have exhausted internal channels within their police forces. Police whistleblowers should be free to refer their allegations to the IPCC, and should, while those concerns are pending formal investigation, enjoy immunity from disciplinary proceedings in relation to actions taken in order to raise those concerns.* (Paragraph 98)

33. *We recommend that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary should investigate the Metropolitan Police Service in respect of the treatment of PC Patrick and review the internal processes and procedures of the police for dealing with whistleblowers, in order to ensure that they are treated fairly and compassionately. We further recommend that the Home Affairs Committee should inquire into these matters to ensure that whistleblowers in any police force are treated fairly and with respect and care. We have grave doubts that the Metropolitan Police Service has treated PC Patrick fairly or with respect and care. (Paragraph 99)*

Monitoring and audit

34. We welcome HM Inspectorate of Constabulary's decision to undertake a data integrity inspection in 2014, and its commitment to reinstating an annual external audit programme. We welcome the extra funding provided by the Home Office for regular annual audit of all forces. (Paragraph 114)
35. *We recommend that HMIC confirm that a rigorous audit of crime recording integrity will form a permanent part of these audits. Audits should ensure that the senior leadership within each force articulates the importance of data integrity to its officers. It is therefore essential that the Force Crime Registrar has not only had the requisite training but the necessary authority within the force to do their job. HMIC should identify a minimum suitable rank for FCRs, such as Deputy Chief Constable or equivalent, and FCRs should report directly to the force Commander. (Paragraph 115)*
36. *We recommend that the current audit should examine the reasons for misrecording, such as the effect of performance culture (identifying instances where targets drive perverse incentives), poor understanding of counting rules, inadequate training and deliberate malpractice. (Paragraph 116)*
37. The Chief Inspector of Constabulary assured us that HMIC is “completely independent” in its judgements and has “no allegiance, other than to the public interest and to the law.” This is not self-evident, given the numerous instances of HMIC inspectors moving from and into senior positions within police forces. It is therefore vital to the credibility of HMIC's annual audit of crime recording that this independence of judgement be maintained and be seen to be maintained. (Paragraph 117)

Police and Crime Commissioners

38. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) role, and the political and electoral pressures that PCCs are subject to, has the potential to foster target cultures within forces, with consequent perverse incentives and detrimental impact on data quality. There is considerable variance across the country in the use of targets by PCCs. (Paragraph 126)

39. *Some PCCs consider the perverse incentives created by targets to be so serious that they have dropped all targets. Others believe the risk is manageable. As part of its annual audit programme, HMIC should examine the effect of PCC target-setting on crime recording practices and culture, and should in due course look back at the first PCC period in office to assess the impact on data integrity of locally-set targets. (Paragraph 127)*

40. *The Home Office, which claims credit for abolishing national numerical targets, should make clear in its guidance to PCCs that they should not set performance targets based on Police Recorded Crime data as this tends to distort recording practices and to create perverse incentives to misrecord crime. The evidence for this is incontrovertible. In the meantime, we deprecate such target setting in the strongest possible terms. Police Recorded Crime data should not be used as the basis for personal performance appraisal or for making decisions about remuneration or promotion. We regard such practice as a flawed leadership model, contrary to the policing Code of Ethics. (Paragraph 128))*

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 1 April 2014

Members present:

Mr Bernard Jenkin, in the Chair

Sheila Gilmore

Lindsay Roy

Kelvin Hopkins

Mr Andrew Turner

Greg Mulholland

Draft Report (*Caught red-handed: Why we can't count on Police Recorded Crime statistics*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 128 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Thirteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned till Tuesday 8 April at 9:15am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/pasc.

Tuesday 19 November 2013

Question number

James Patrick, Police Constable, Metropolitan Police, **Paul Ford**, Secretary, National Detectives' Forum, Police Federation, **Dr Rodger Patrick**, former Chief Inspector, West Midlands Police and **Peter Barron**, former Detective Chief Superintendent, Metropolitan Police

Ann Barnes, Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent, **Alan Pughsley**, Deputy Chief Constable, Kent Police, **Nick Alston**, Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex, and **Paddy Tipping**, Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire

[Q1–135](#)

Wednesday 11 December 2013

Professor Stephen Shute, Chair and **Professor Mike Hough**, Member, Crime, Statistics Advisory Committee

Chief Constable Jeff Farrar, National Lead on Crime Statistics, acting on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers

[Q136–283](#)

Wednesday 8 January 2014

Stephen Greenhalgh, Deputy Mayor of London and **Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe**, Commissioner, Metropolitan Police

Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, and **Olivia Pinkney**, Assistant Inspector of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary

[Q284–462](#)

Tuesday 21 February 2014

Sir Andrew Dilnot, Chair, UK Statistics Authority, **Ed Humpherson**, Head of Assessment, UK Statistics Authority, **Jil Matheson**, National Statistician, Office for National Statistics, and **John Flatley**, Head of Crime Statistics

Norman Baker MP, Minister of State for Crime Prevention, and **Professor Bernard Silverman**, Chief Scientific Adviser, Home Office

[Q463–603](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/pasc. CST numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Anonymous ([CST0028](#))
- 2 Association of Police and Crime Commissioners ([CST0016](#))
- 3 Barron, Peter ([CST0003](#))
- 4 Bennett, Steve ([CST0013](#))
- 5 Bligh, Professor Donald ([CST0059](#))
- 6 Brimicombe, Professor Allan ([CST0008](#))
- 7 Cavendish, Edmund ([CST0032](#))
- 8 City of London Corporation ([CST0052](#))
- 9 Committee on Standards in Public Life ([CST0006](#))
- 10 Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime ([CST0019](#))
- 11 Farrar, Jeff ([CST0024](#), [CST0035](#))
- 12 Ford, Michael ([CST0027](#))
- 13 Gilbertson, David ([CST0001](#))
- 14 Grove, Matthew ([CST0009](#))
- 15 Guilfoyle, Simon ([CST0026](#))
- 16 Guy, Stephen ([CST0029](#))
- 17 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary ([CST0015](#))
- 18 Hobbs, Chris ([CST0018](#), [CST0043](#))
- 19 Home Office ([CST0021](#))
- 20 Hope, Professor Tim ([CST0004](#))
- 21 Local Government Association ([CST0012](#))
- 22 Patrick, Dr Rodger ([CST0005](#))
- 23 Patrick, James ([CST0002](#), [CST0034](#), [CST0073](#))
- 24 Police and Crime Commissioner, Avon and Somerset ([CST0053](#))
- 25 Police and Crime Commissioner, Bedfordshire ([CST0071](#))
- 26 Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridgeshire ([CST0060](#))
- 27 Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire ([CST0040](#))
- 28 Police and Crime Commissioner, Cleveland ([CST0067](#))
- 29 Police and Crime Commissioner, Cumbria ([CST0055](#))
- 30 Police and Crime Commissioner, Derbyshire ([CST0063](#))
- 31 Police and Crime Commissioner, Devon and Cornwall ([CST0047](#))
- 32 Police and Crime Commissioner, Dorset ([CST0056](#))
- 33 Police and Crime Commissioner, Durham ([CST0039](#))
- 34 Police and Crime Commissioner, Dyfed-Powys ([CST0057](#))
- 35 Police and Crime Commissioner, Gloucestershire ([CST0044](#))
- 36 Police and Crime Commissioner, Greater Manchester ([CST0061](#))
- 37 Police and Crime Commissioner, Gwent ([CST0062](#))
- 38 Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle Of Wight ([CST0069](#))
- 39 Police and Crime Commissioner, Herts ([CST0078](#))

- 40 Police and Crime Commissioner, Lancashire ([CST0058](#))
- 41 Police and Crime Commissioner, Leicestershire ([CST0076](#))
- 42 Police and Crime Commissioner, Lincolnshire ([CST0064](#))
- 43 Police and Crime Commissioner, Norfolk ([CST0066](#))
- 44 Police and Crime Commissioner, North Wales ([CST0050](#))
- 45 Police and Crime Commissioner, North Yorkshire ([CST0070](#))
- 46 Police and Crime Commissioner, Northamptonshire ([CST0075](#))
- 47 Police and Crime Commissioner, Northumbria ([CST0072](#))
- 48 Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottingham ([CST0054](#))
- 49 Police and Crime Commissioner, South Wales ([CST0045](#))
- 50 Police and Crime Commissioner, South Yorkshire ([CST0068](#))
- 51 Police and Crime Commissioner, Suffolk ([CST0048](#))
- 52 Police and Crime Commissioner, Surrey ([CST0037](#))
- 53 Police and Crime Commissioner, Sussex ([CST0051](#))
- 54 Police and Crime Commissioner, Warwickshire ([CST0065](#))
- 55 Police and Crime Commissioner, West Mercia ([CST0074](#))
- 56 Police and Crime Commissioner, West Yorkshire ([CST0046](#))
- 57 Police and Crime Commissioner, Wiltshire and Swindon ([CST0049](#))
- 58 Secretariat for the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee ([CST0007](#))
- 59 Simon, Jonathan ([CST0030](#))
- 60 Stubbs, Edward ([CST0023](#))
- 61 Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner ([CST0014](#))
- 62 Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner ([CST0038](#))
- 63 UK Statistics Authority ([CST0017](#))
- 64 West Midlands Police ([CST0036](#))
- 65 White, Michael ([CST0010](#))
- 66 Wilce, Ra ([CST0031](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/pasc. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2013–14

First Special Report	Public Trust in Government Statistics: A review of the operation of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007: Government and UK Statistics Authority Responses to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2012–13	HC 77
Second Special Report	Special advisers in the thick of it: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2012–13	HC 515
First Report	Communicating statistics: not just true but also fair	HC 190 (HC 573)
Second Report	Public engagement in policy-making	HC 75 (HC 986)
Third Report	The role of the Charity Commission and "public benefit": Post-Legislative scrutiny of the Charities Act 2006	HC 76 (HC 927)
Fourth Report	Engaging the public in National Strategy	HC 435
Fifth Report	Appointment of the Chair of the Committee on Standards in PublicLife	HC 516
Sixth Report	Government Procurement	HC 123 (HC 105)
Seventh Report	Migration Statistics	HC 523
Eighth Report	Truth to Power: how Civil Service reform can succeed	HC 74 (HC 955)
Ninth Report	Latest proposals for ministerial involvement in permanent secretary appointments: PASC's recommendations	HC 1041
Tenth Report	Statistics and Open Data: Harvesting unused knowledge, empowering citizens and improving public services	HC 564
Eleventh Report	The failure of the Cabinet Office to respond to our Report on the Business Appointment Rules	HC 1156
Twelfth Report	More complaints please!	HC 229

Session 2012–13

First Special Report	Public Appointments: regulation, recruitment and pay: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2010–12	HC 18
Second Special Report	Leadership of change: new arrangements for the roles of the Head of the Civil Service and the Cabinet Secretary: Further Report: Government Response to the Committee's Twenty Third Report of Session 2010–12	HC 313
Third Special Report	Strategic thinking in Government: without National Strategy, can viable Government strategy emerge? Government Response to the Committee's Twenty Fourth Report of Session 2010–12	HC 573
Fifth Special Report	The Prime Minister's Adviser on Ministers' Interests: independent or not? Government Response to the Committee's Twenty Second Report of Session 2010–12	HC 976
First Report	The Big Society: Further Report with the Government Response to the Committee's Seventeenth Report of Session 2010–12	HC 98
Second Report	The Honours System	HC 19
Third Report	Business Appointment Rules	HC 404
Fourth Report	Appointment of the Chair of the Charity Commission	HC 315-I
Fifth Report	End of term report: 2011–12	HC 316
Sixth Report	Special advisers in the thick of it	HC 134
Seventh Report	The Honours System: Further Report with the Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2012–13	HC 728
Eighth Report	The Role of the Cabinet Secretary and the Resignation of the Chief Whip	HC 864 (HC 968)
Ninth Report	Public Trust in Government Statistics, A review of the operation of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007	HC 406

Session 2010–12

First Report	Who does UK National Strategy?	HC 435 (HC 713)
Second Report	Government Responses to the Committee's Eighth and Ninth Reports of Session 2009–10: Goats and Tsars: Ministerial and other appointments from outside Parliament and Too Many Ministers?	HC 150
Third Report	Equitable Life	HC 485 (Cm 7960)
Fourth Report	Pre-appointment hearing for the dual post of First Civil Service Commissioner and Commissioner for Public Appointments	HC 601
Fifth Report	Smaller Government: Shrinking the Quango State	HC 537 (Cm 8044)
Sixth Report	Who Does UK National Strategy? Further Report with the Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2010–11	HC 713
Seventh Report	Smaller Government: What do Ministers do?	HC 530 (HC 1540)
Eighth Report	Cabinet Manual	HC 900 (HC 1127, Cm 8213)

Ninth Report	Pre-appointment hearing for the post of Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman	HC 1220-I
Tenth Report	Remuneration of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman	HC 1350
Eleventh Report	Good Governance and Civil Service Reform: 'End of Term' report on Whitehall plans for structural reform	HC 901 (<i>HC 1746</i>)
Twelfth Report	Government and IT—"a recipe for rip-offs": time for a new approach	HC 715-I (<i>HC 1724</i>)
Thirteenth Report	Change in Government: the agenda for leadership	HC 714 (<i>HC 1746</i>)
Fourteenth Report	Public Appointments: regulation, recruitment and pay	HC 1389
Fifteenth Report	Smaller Government: What do Ministers do? Further Report with the Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2010–12	HC 1540 (<i>HC 1746</i>)
Sixteenth Report	Appointment of the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority	HC 910
Seventeenth Report	The Big Society	HC 902
Eighteenth Report	Change in Government: the agenda for leadership: Further Report, with the Government Responses to the Committee's Eleventh, Thirteenth and Fifteenth Reports of Session 2010–12	HC 1746
Nineteenth Report	Leadership of change: new arrangements for the roles of the Head of the Civil Service and the Cabinet Secretary	HC 1582
Twentieth Report	Government and IT—"a recipe for rip-offs": time for a new approach: Further Report, with the Government response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2010–12	HC 1724
Twenty First Report	Future oversight of administrative justice: the proposed abolition of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council	HC 1621
Twenty Second Report	The Prime Minister's adviser on Ministers' interests: independent or not?	HC 1761
Twenty Third Report	Leadership of change: new arrangements for the roles of the Head of the Civil Service and the Cabinet Secretary, Further Report, with the Government Response to the Committee's Nineteenth Report of Session 2010–12	HC 1914
Twenty Fourth Report	Strategic thinking in Government: without National Strategy, can viable Government strategy emerge?	HC 1625

Crime Statistics Advisory Committee
Report from the RSS Divergence Workshop

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee (CSAC) with an update on the workshop held at the RSS meeting on 27 January 2014.

Action

2. CSAC members are asked to note the summary and discussions raised at the workshop attached at Annex 1.

Background

3. The “Analysis of Crime Trends” paper was presented to CSAC in September 2013. At that meeting the Committee requested that the Home Office commission further work to consider the subject and the possible reasons for the divergent trends between Police Recorded Crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales.
4. Home Office Statisticians arranged a meeting at the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) to highlight the findings of the analyses, invite speakers to discuss the view from the “front line” and to consider further possible reasons behind the divergent trends. The meeting was held in January 2014, and this note summarises the discussion, including ideas raised and potential areas of further work considered by the round table session.

Home Office
May 2014

RSS meeting – to discuss ONS publication of “An Analysis of Crime Trends from the Crime survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Police Recorded Crime (PRC)” - held on January 27, 2014.

Summary of event

- Michael Baxter (chair of the RSS group) opened the event by introducing the main objectives for the day
 - John Flatley (Head of Crime statistics, ONS) provided an overview of the CSEW and PRC, including their scope and coverage. He highlighted the faster decline in the PRC series between 2007/8 and 2011/12 and presented a number of potential reasons that might have contributed to this, including compliance with and awareness of NCRS, auditing of crime recording and survey recall error (telescoping).
 - Pete Warner (Force Crime and Incident Registrar (FCIR), Thames Valley Police) and Adrian Harper (FCIR, Kent) provided a perspective from the point of view of crime recording. They highlighted some other factors that should be considered, including prioritisation of police time, improved satisfaction with the service provided to victims and different roles/experiences of officers in crime recording. Both said that they had never been over-ruled in any decision making process and their decision, as final arbiter, always stood. They will not tolerate deliberate mis-recording of crime.
 - An open Q&A session with speakers took place. This tended to focus on crime recording procedures and practices.
 - Professor Shute highlighted the importance of trust in the statistics and the need to get a better understanding of the divergence, noting that we couldn't rely solely on the CSEW for all our data needs. He said the evidence that crime is falling is clear, but recording issues need addressing.
 - Round table discussions were held amongst attendees, considering three main questions:
 - 1) Was the apparent divergence a concern?
 - 2) What might be contributing to the divergence?
 - 3) What additional evidence should be considered?
- Groups fed back on a number of potential issues that will formulate a note for CSAC.

Topics raised during the round table discussion and those highlighted in the wider Q&A are summarised below for further consideration by the committee. These are broadly split into issues with police recorded crime, issues with the crime survey, and general 'divergence' issues.

Suggestions and ideas raised during discussions for further consideration

Recorded crime

- There was a tendency to simplify all recording issues to “fiddling” the figures. But this was unfair on the police and an over-simplification of potential mis-recording and other factors that could influence divergence.
- The vast majority of what the police do is correct.
- Was trust in crime statistics in 2007/8 (during the audits) higher? It was pointed out that victim satisfaction is now higher than in 2007/8.
- There is a difficult moral decision involved with criminalising children and teenagers – can this influence a tendency to under record?
- Linked to the above, some people felt police are more likely to record a crime where it is clearly chargeable (or detectable) – it was acknowledged that the new “outcomes” framework may help to address this.
- While specialist crime recorders should be able to classify crimes quickly, it can be difficult to find guidance in the counting rules for ‘novices’. Is this likely to have any impact, particularly at individual force level?
- The new outcomes framework could remove some of the pressure on forces and give greater credit for recording crime, due to the broader options available of recording an outcome.
- Could forces have a central recording centre?
- A number of individuals observed that we were now in a period where it was acceptable to report increases in crimes, for example the experience of historical sexual offences, which has largely been seen as positive, with more people coming forward to the police.
- Performance culture within forces could still be an issue
- Turnover and staff reductions in police forces leading to a lack of training and experience in HOCA and NCRS could be a potential contributing factor
- Need to consider the role of incentives and behaviours for the police

Crime survey

- Could major changes in survey in late 1990s contribute to the difference?
- What is considered in the ‘comparable basket’ of crimes between the two sources?
- Is there a difference in reporting behaviour – for example, are people who say they reported crimes to the police those that are most satisfied with the police in their area? Are there any other demographic factors that influence whether people say they reported a crime to the police?
- Can you follow CSEW respondents through into PRC?
- Is the divergence similar across different forces? If we can’t compare in one year of the survey, could we merge or 3 years of survey data to compare with?
- CSEW has a largely prima-facie method of recording so may lead to a natural gap between the sources – for example, it is easier to determine a burglary is a crime, but less so for assault without injury.
- How accurately do respondents recall the time they were a victim of a crime? While crime has been falling, has there been a tendency to recall “older” offences that happened outside the reference period – eg. Longer recall periods?
- ASB is not a crime, but many perceive it to be – is there a risk that victims of ASB have presented this as a crime in the CSEW? Should there be further audit of certain CSEW crime types?

- How does repeat victimisation (and the fall in it) affect the 'divergence' – given the CSEW only records a fixed number of events.
- A number of individuals felt that boosting the CSEW sample – ie. to get robust sample sizes by PFA – would be poor value and unnecessary unless the CSEW was identified as the route of the problem.
- CSEW – how accurately are crime types recorded there – how subjective is it to the account given by the respondent?
- We should highlight the reasons for not reporting crimes (as featured in the CSEW questionnaire)

General

- Is the divergence driven by certain crime types? ie. is it stronger one group of crimes than another.
- Divergence should be considered by crime type – the impact of under-recording violent and sexual crime is far greater than the impact of under-recording vandalism – and we should acknowledge this.
- We should never expect the two series to be the same – in part as they have different reference periods (CSEW lags over two years). Is the story being confused by the different periods?
- The "correct" level of difference between the series is probably not in 2007/8 when audits were happening and may have encouraged 'over-compliance' but maybe in 2008 or 2009.
- ONS should look at international evidence, particularly from Scotland where the issue has been simplified by having one force.
- Government targets (such as OBTJ) may have skewed recording historically. The chart highlighting the CSEW and PRC series that ONS present should have events and relevant milestones overlaid (eg. OBTJ).
- What other evidence is available where survey and admin data do not track each other well? Is there a similar gap for health statistics?
- A number of individual requested more frequent updates for the divergence table to the latest time period – CSEW has fallen by far more than PRC recently.
- Why were previously published comparisons of recorded crime and the survey were stopped around 2006/7?
- The previous Government focused closely on ASB – did that lead to increased (mis-recording of crimes and hence greater non-compliance with NCRS/HOCR(eg. Recording an incident of ASB as a crime)?
- How have crime figures varied by proportion of householders with insurance?
- Has the introduction of PCSOs contributed to the divergence? Eg. Less compliance due to action being taken "on the spot" and not recorded.
- Changing nature of crime may mean people have not reported a serious crime but may report in the CSEW that they did as they are embarrassed to say otherwise.

Crime Statistics Advisory Committee
Update on the Police Recorded Crime Re-designation Project

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of progress with the project which aims to achieve the re-designation of the police recorded crime series as National Statistics.

Action

2. The Committee is invited to note progress with the project since the last meeting.

Background

3. A paper was presented to the Committee on 13 March 2014 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which set out joint plans to establish a project which aims to make improvements to the police recorded crime series. The aim is to be in a position to apply for a re-assessment of the status of the statistics by the UK Statistics Authority in early 2015.
4. It was noted that the project's success should be measured by:
 - improvements in data transparency;
 - better understanding of data quality;
 - improving the range of information made available to users; and,
 - increased producer and user engagement.
5. All of the above can help address the requirements of the Authority's assessment report and contribute towards the potential re-badging of recorded crime as National Statistics.
6. At its meeting on 13 March 2014, the Committee were supportive of the draft Action Plan prepared by ONS. However, the view of the Committee was that simply responding to the initial requirements set out by the UK Statistics Authority in their assessment report would not be sufficient on its own to secure the National Statistics re-designation.
7. The Committee proposed that a parallel group should be set up to lead on broader issues such as the need for regular external scrutiny of crime recording by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), strengthening of the Home Office Counting Rules and better training of police staff and officers involved in crime recording. It was the Committee's view that such a group should be led by the Home Office.

Progress since the last meeting

8. Significant progress with the project has been made since the last meeting:
 - the first meeting of the Re-designation Project's Strategic Board and Working Groups have been held with terms of reference discussed and clarified (see Annex 1);
 - the ONS published its Action Plan to respond to the requirements set out in the UK Statistics Authority report, alongside its quarterly release of crime statistics on 24 April;
 - discussions have been held between ONS and the Home Office about taking forward work outside the remit of the ONS Action Plan but considered essential by the Committee for successful re-designation.
9. Rather than establish a new group, it is expected that the Home Office's existing National Crime Recording Strategic Steering Group (NCRSSG) will refocus their work for the coming year to look at some of the actions associated with being able to apply for re-designation. This group will feed back into ONS' project board via the Home Office Chief Statistician who will additionally chair NCRSSG on a temporary basis.
10. The Chief Statistician will be writing to the membership before the next NCRSSG meeting in June 2014 to advise them that the group will focus over the coming year on providing national leadership in driving forward improvements in data quality and transparency whilst giving due consideration to bureaucracy and burden. Some of the activities that the NCRSSG are expected to lead include:
 - commission work to understand the role and responsibilities of Force Crime Registrars (FCRs) in each police force;
 - develop best practice for the roles and responsibilities of a FCR;
 - oversee the development of training and accreditation of FCRs;
 - improve the communication of tailored HOCR guidance to staff in forces at different levels;
 - interpret the results of the HMIC audits and turn these into improved guidance and best practice;
 - lead work to revise and improve the existing Police Recorded Crime data quality audit manual (used by forces to inform internal audits).
11. There are some key actions that fall outside the remit of the NCRSSG. Specifically, the Committee, and the UK Statistics Authority, have both argued that external independent audit of crime recording is essential. HMIC is currently undertaking both a national inspection of crime data integrity and consulting on the format of the new annual inspection regime which will apply to all police forces and begin in 2015. The HM Chief Inspector has said that its present expectation is that crime data integrity will be part of this new regime. The ONS PRC Re-designation Project Board intends to feed into this consultation and the HMIC will want to hear the Committee's views in due course.

12. The ONS will be producing quarterly updates for users on progress with the re-designation project and the next one will be released alongside the quarterly crime statistics being published on 17 July 2014.

Roma Chappell
Divisional Director Crime, Regional and Data Access Division
Analysis & Dissemination Directorate
Office for National Statistics

Terms of reference for PRC Re-designation project strategic board

Introduction

In January 2014, the UK Statistics Authority withdrew the National Statistics designation from police recorded crime statistics following a re-assessment of the crime statistics published by the ONS. The Authority considered that ONS did not have sufficient information about the quality of police recorded crime data to provide assurance that the statistics based on these data meet users' needs. The Authority also stated that ONS does not have sufficient information about the quality of these data to ensure that users are made fully aware of the limitations of such data and the resulting impact on their use of these statistics.

In a letter to the Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC), Sir Andrew Dilnot also highlighted a concern that the Authority's earlier requirements, notably around the need for a rigorous audit of the quality of the data, had not been fully addressed to date.

The Authority removed the National Statistics designation from statistics based on recorded crime data until such time as ONS, working with the Home Office, HMIC, or other appropriate bodies, is able to demonstrate that the quality of the underlying data, and the robustness of the ongoing audit and quality assurance procedures, are sufficient to support the production of police recorded crime statistics to a level of quality that meets users' needs.

Once ONS believes that this has happened, as producers of the statistics, they may request that the Authority undertake a further re-assessment to determine whether or not police recorded crime data should then be re-designated as National Statistics.

The Authority set out 16 Requirements for ONS to respond to and a further eight Suggestions for Improvement. The ONS has established a project with the objective of ensuring all the recommendations are suitably implemented to enable ONS to re-apply for the National Statistics designation for police recorded crime. ONS will publish an action plan on 24 April 2014.

Both the PASC and the Home Affairs Select Committee have taken an interest in crime recording and this Board will need to be cognisant of their work.

Purpose

This group will oversee and steer the work of the re-designation project for police recorded crime statistics. This group will receive reports from the ONS led working group overseeing the project action plan and the Home Office's National Crime Recording Strategic Steering Group (NCRSSG) which, if agreed by that group, will take forward other work to improve the consistency of crime recording.

Responsibilities/Objectives

- Ensure that ONS has the information they need about the users of the statistics and their requirements
- Advise on whether proposed changes resulting from the Action Plan will better meet the user need
- Identify and report on the impacts of proposed changes including the burden of reporting for police officers
- Monitor progress against the re-designation Action Plan and related activities that will seek to address the Authority's recommendations

- Receive regular updates from HMIC audits and consider implications for the statistics
- Tackle obstacles to progress, resolving conflict where necessary
- Oversee the management of project risks and issues
- Make regular reports to the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee and to the ONS Board and ensure there are clear reporting lines in place across the various stakeholder groups.

Membership

Chair: Roma Chappell (ONS Director for Crime, Analysis and Data Access)

David Blunt (Home Office Chief Statistician)
Mike Warren (Home Office crime policy)
Damon Wingfield (Home Office, Crime Statistics)
Jeff Farrar (National Policing lead crime statistics)
Peter Spindler (HMIC lead on crime data integrity)
Professor Stephen Shute (Chair of CSAC)
Peter Warner (Thames Valley Police, expert in NCRS)
Glyn Jones (Welsh Government)
Gavin Hales (Police Foundation)
Rod McInnes (House of Commons Library)
Representative of victims of crime (to be confirmed)
John Flatley (ONS, Crime Statistics)
Mark Bangs (ONS, Crime Statistics).

Approach

We propose that the Board meets quarterly during the first year.

Measure of Success

Improved reporting, metadata and transparency of Police Recorded Crime Statistics

ONS is able to report on actions taken in response to the UK Statistics Authority requirements.

CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE***Crime Recording: A matter of fact*****HMIC's interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales****Purpose**

1. This paper provides information on the methodology used in the current crime data inspection being carried out by HMIC, along with a copy of the interim report published on 1 May 2014.

Action

2. Crime Statistics Advisory members are requested to:
 - i. note the content of the interim report (annex 1) and offer their views on its content;
 - ii. note the methodology used in the current inspection programme (annex 2).

Background

3. The inspection involves an audit of the compliance with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and is based on a nationally representative sample of crime records across all 43 forces in England and Wales.
4. As well as a formal audit, HMIC are carrying out fieldwork in each force area which will test the quality of force systems and processes, leadership and culture with respect to crime recording. This element involves unannounced visits to police stations and interviews with officers on the ground.

Interim Findings

5. The emerging findings have identified potential serious concerns as follows:
 - **under recording of crime** ,which included serious sexual offences (14 rapes) - factors mentioned are lack of training, poor leadership and supervision , confusion over distinction between recording and charging standards and simple human error;
 - a lack of victim focus by the police when making crime-recording decisions (and no-crime decisions);
 - offenders being issued with out-of-court disposals when their offending history could not justify it. This has resulted in them not being prosecuted.



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

CSAC(07)14

Annex 1

Crime recording: A matter of fact

An interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales

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Glossary

accuracy	in the context of HMIC's audit of crime records for this inspection, the number of crimes that are correctly recorded as a crime, as a proportion of the total that should be recorded; accuracy also refers to the correct classification of crime
accurate crime record	a crime record that has been correctly recorded according to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS); this means it must be recorded as a crime, classified according to the correct crime type for the offence, and assigned the correct category according to the counting rules
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
additional verifiable information	information which can be verified by the police to show that a recorded crime did not occur, thereby enabling the police to reclassify a recorded crime as a no-crime (HOCR, General Rules Section C, No Crimes)
Association of Chief Police Officers	a professional association of police officers of Assistant Chief Constable rank and above, and their police staff equivalents, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; leads and coordinates operational policing nationally; a company limited by guarantee and a statutory consultee; its president is a full-time post under the Police Reform Act 2002
audit	the means of checking upon and monitoring the accuracy of recorded data in order to oversee the effectiveness and efficiency of the recording system and the accuracy of the records it contains; HMIC audits incident reports to check whether they should have been reported as crimes, crime records to check whether they have been recorded accurately in accordance with the

	rules and standards, and no-crime records to ensure that they have been reclassified correctly
auditable route	the route by which a crime is reported and subsequently logged into the system to create a crime record that can be checked by internal police force auditors and also by HMIC auditors. Predominantly, the auditable route in police forces is through the IT systems in force crime bureaux and call-handling centres where crimes are initially recorded and where each record is opened and closed at the start and end of an investigation
Audit Commission	a statutory body established first under the Local Government Finance Act 1982 and latterly maintained under the consolidating Audit Commission Act 1998; responsible for auditing a range of local public bodies with the objective of ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve high quality local and national services for the public. Its work covers housing, health, criminal justice and fire and rescue services. Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, it is to be disbanded during 2015
balance of probability	the test applied to determine whether an event occurred according to whether, on the evidence, the occurrence of the event was more likely than not; the HOOCR state that: <i>“An incident will be recorded as a crime (notifiable to the Home Secretary) for offences against an identified victim if, on the balance of probability (a) the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law (the police will determine this, based on their knowledge of the law and counting rules), and (b) there is no credible evidence to the contrary”</i>
call-handling centre	a facility in each police force where call-handlers answer telephone calls from the public, determine the circumstances of the incident, decide what

	needs to be done by the police, and initiate or implement that response
Code of Practice for Victims of Crime	a code, established under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, which places obligations on organisations providing services within the criminal justice system (including the police) to provide a minimum level of service to victims of criminal conduct
College of Policing	a professional body for policing in England and Wales, established to set standards of professional practice, accredit training providers, promote good practice based on evidence, provide support to police forces and others in connection with the protection of the public and the prevention of crime, and promote ethics, values and standards of integrity in policing; its powers to set standards have been conferred by the Police Act 1996 as amended by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
crime categories	specific groups which bring together crimes of a similar nature; for example, there are a number of different crimes of violence which depend on the severity of the violence used; these all fall within one general crime category of violence
crime classification	categorisation of crimes by the police based on their understanding of the applicable law and of what has been reported; the Home Office Counting Rules require the police to classify the crime at the time the crime is recorded
crime record	record that must be made under the Home Office Counting Rules in the case of a report of a crime
crime-recording centre	a facility in a police force dedicated to taking in reports of crime and recording them in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules
Criminal Records Bureau	a public body established under Part V of the Police Act 1997 to conduct criminal background

	<p>checks of people working with children or vulnerable adults in schools, voluntary organisations or professional bodies;</p> <p>it merged with the Independent Safeguarding Authority on 1 December 2012 to form the Disclosure and Barring Service under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006</p>
CRDMP	crime-recording decision-making process
crime-recording decision-making process	the process within police force crime-recording bureaux, or equivalent facilities, of making final decisions about the classification and correct recording of a crime
crime-related incident	a record of an incident reported to the police which would ordinarily amount to a notifiable crime, but is not recorded as a crime. This can happen for the following reasons: when the incident is reported by a third party (not on behalf of the victim) and the victim declines to confirm a crime occurred; where the victim cannot be traced; when the incident is being dealt with and recorded by another police force; or where the NCRS or HOCCR direct that a crime should not be recorded (e.g. certain offences which occur in schools which are required to be dealt with by the school and not recorded by the police)
Crime Statistics Advisory Committee	a non-statutory body which functions as an advisory body providing independent advice to the Home Secretary, the Office for National Statistics and HMIC on matters relating to the measurement of crime, and the collection and presentation of crime data for England and Wales
Crime Survey for England and Wales	a quarterly independent survey of crime commissioned by the Office for National Statistics, involving the collection of information about people's experience of crime from several thousand households in England and Wales; formerly known as the British Crime Survey
CSAC	Crime Statistics Advisory Committee

CSEW	Crime Survey for England and Wales
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
dip-sample	a small, non-random sample of information; as such it is not statistically robust but is used as an information-gathering tool by inspectors
Disclosure and Barring Service	a public body established in 2012 under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 in the merger of the functions of the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority; responsible for processing requests for criminal records checks; deciding whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on or removed from a barred list; placing or removing people from the DBS children's barred list and adults' barred list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
evidence-gathering	in the context of this inspection, the process at the core of the work of HMIC inspectors who use templates to record specific and detailed information about crime data integrity. Inspectors work in pairs during the main interviews, asking questions and taking notes in order to complete the templates and assemble substantial and accurate evidence to support their findings
FCR	force crime registrar
force crime bureau	a centralised facility, generally at a police force's headquarters, which receives crime reports directly from the public and makes a record of the crime immediately, providing the victim with a crime reference number
force crime registrar	the person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HOCCR provide that he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision, as the final arbiter. The force crime registrar's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and

	carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with all applicable rules
he/him/his/she/her	the use of the masculine gender includes the feminine, and vice versa, unless the context otherwise requires
HOCR	Home Office Counting Rules
Home Office Counting Rules	rules in accordance with which crime data – required to be submitted to the Home Secretary under sections 44 and 45 of the Police Act 1996 – must be collected. They set down how the police service in England and Wales must record crime, how crimes must be classified according to crime type and categories, whether and when to record crime, how many crimes to record in respect of a single incident and the regime for the re-classification of crimes as no-crimes. The HOCR specify all crime categories for each crime type including the main ones of homicide, violence, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, vehicle offences, theft, arson and criminal damage, drug offences, possession of weapons, public order offences, miscellaneous crimes against society, and fraud; the NCRS is part of the HOCR
Home Office Statistics Unit	unit of the Home Office responsible for managing Home Office statistics
HOSU	Home Office Statistics Unit
incident reports	reports of events received by the police that require police attention. Whether or not an incident report becomes a crime record is determined on the balance of probability that a notifiable offence has occurred as set out in the Home Office Counting Rules. If an incident does not turn out to be a crime, it must still be logged on the force’s incident-recording system
Independent Safeguarding Authority	a public body established in 2006 under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 to

	<p>oversee a vetting and barring scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which requires all those working with vulnerable groups to undergo an enhanced vetting procedure before being allowed to commence any relevant duties. The ISA existed until 1 December 2012, when it merged with the Criminal Records Bureau to form the Disclosure and Barring Service</p>
National Crime Recording Standard	<p>a standard of crime-recording introduced in 2002 and published as part of the Home Office Counting Rules; it has the twin objectives of ensuring the police focus more on victims of crime and ensuring consistency in crime-recording in all police forces</p>
National Crime Recording Steering Group	<p>a group of institutions and office-holders which meets regularly to review the HOCR and make recommendations for change; its members include the Home Office Statistics Unit, force crime registrars and representatives of ACPO, HMIC and the ONS; its recommendations for change are considered by the Home Secretary and CSAC; the HOCR are updated with approved changes each April; updates include changes which reflect changes in legislation and case law, and adjustments to improve clarity and consistency in recording by police forces</p>
national policing lead	<p>senior police officer with responsibility in England and Wales for leading the development of a particular area of policing</p>
NCRS	<p>National Crime Recording Standard</p>
NCRSG	<p>National Crime Recording Steering Group</p>
no-crime	<p>an incident which was initially recorded as a crime and has subsequently been established not to have been a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information; no-criming is the act of removing a crime classification for this reason</p>
ONS	<p>Office for National Statistics</p>

Office for National Statistics	the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and the recognised national statistical institute for the UK; it is the executive body of the UK Statistics Authority, established by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007
opening and closing codes	codes or descriptions for recorded incidents reported to the police. An opening code is used so that the police can easily see the nature of the incident. A closing code may be the same as an opening code but if, once the police have attended the incident, the information changes, then the closing code will describe what the incident actually was
out-of-court disposal	one of several methods of concluding the action of the criminal justice system in respect of a crime without proceeding to a prosecution; they are administered and effected by the police, and enable them to deal quickly and proportionately with low-level, often first-time offences; they include cautions, cannabis warnings, penalty notices for disorder, and community resolutions; some have a statutory basis, and some do not; they are explained more fully in paragraphs 3.53–3.55 of this report
PASC	Public Administration Select Committee
Penalty Notice for Disorder	a form of immediate financial punishment used by police to deal with low-level offending, such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft and minor criminal damage
PND	Penalty Notice for Disorder
police community support officer	a uniformed non-warranted officer employed by a territorial police force or the British Transport Police in England and Wales; established by the Police Reform Act 2002
police officer	an individual with warranted powers of arrest, search and detention who, under the direction of

	his chief constable, is deployed to uphold the law, protect life and property, maintain and restore the Queen's peace, and pursue and bring offenders to justice
Protecting Vulnerable People Unit	a specialist unit in a police force responsible for incidents and crimes involving vulnerable people, including children, mentally ill and infirm people; these units may also have responsibilities for dealing with victims of sexual offences, including rape, where the force does not have a dedicated rape investigation unit
Public Administration Select Committee	a select committee of the House of Commons which considers matters relating to the quality and standards of administration within the civil service
Public Protection Unit	a specialist unit in a police force which deals with the protection of vulnerable people (see also Protecting Vulnerable People Unit)
UKSA	United Kingdom Statistics Authority
UK Statistics Authority	an independent body established under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, operating at arm's length from government and which has the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good; the Authority's main functions are the monitoring of the production and publication of official statistics, the provision of independent scrutiny of all official statistics produced in the UK, and the oversight of the ONS, which is its executive body
Victim Support	an independent charity supporting victims and witnesses of crime committed in England and Wales; it was set up almost 40 years ago and has grown to become the oldest and largest victims' organisation in the world; Victim Support offers assistance to more than a million victims of crime each year and works closely with the police and other institutions and entities in the criminal justice system.

1. Summary

- 1.1 In its 2013/14 inspection programme, approved by the Home Secretary under section 54 of the Police Act 1996, HMIC is committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. This inspection, carried out between February and August 2014, is the most extensive of its kind that HMIC has ever undertaken into crime data integrity.
- 1.2 This is an interim report of that inspection. It explains the purposes and methods of the inspection and the criteria that govern crime-recording practice in the police. So far, we have completed the inspection of 13 forces. As two of the largest metropolitan forces (the Metropolitan Police and Greater Manchester Police) have been inspected, the inspection has already covered approximately 60 percent of the reviews to be done. Whilst the inspection has yet to be completed in the remaining 30 forces, we can report on a number of emerging themes.
- 1.3 The inspection provides for the auditing of a sample of reports of crime to check whether or not they have been correctly recorded as crimes. By listening to around 8,000 telephone calls which resulted in the creation of incident reports, we will be able to produce a nationally representative sample of approximately 5,500 reported crimes. From these data, our final report in October 2014 will include an assessment of the accuracy of crime-recording in England and Wales. (Annex C sets out the statistical method in more detail.)
- 1.4 Sampling data from each force is being used only as indicative of the accuracy of force crime-recording; it is not of a size to be of statistical significance in any one or group of forces other than all 43. To have taken statistically significant samples of crime-recording data from every force would have necessitated an inspection so large as to be impractical, untimely and unaffordable. Each force sample does, however, contribute to the overall national sample from which we will be able to report a statistically robust figure for the accuracy of crime-recording within England and Wales as a whole.
- 1.5 Good quality crime-recording is materially reliant upon sound management. Our experience shows that the proper management of crime-recording critically depends on three interlocking factors: leadership and governance, systems and processes, and the knowledge and skills of the people involved. Our inspection tests these areas.

- 1.6 Police force crime data are reported to the Home Office and published by the Office for National Statistics with other independent data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales to provide as clear as possible a picture of the levels of crime. For 20 years, these national data have shown what amounts to dramatic reductions in crime, during a time when the rules and standards governing crime-recording practice have been tightened significantly.¹
- 1.7 These statistics are evidence of a general downward trend in crime, which is of course very welcome, but there remains appreciable public concern that real crime levels are not truly represented in the statistics, particularly those recorded by police forces.² A factor in public concern, and a probable cause for scepticism about national crime figures, is the culture in the police – as in other major government organisations – of pursuing targets and being under pressure to demonstrate good performance. One of the concerns of this inspection is to find any instances where crimes are not recorded or are classified inappropriately. It is essential that crime recording is done honestly and within the rules. Police officers need to understand and properly apply the rules, and appropriate mechanisms must be in place to ensure due compliance, so that the users of crime statistics can rely upon them with confidence.
- 1.8 Previous and recent HMIC inspections into crime and incident recording practices – inspections which did not have as broad a scope as this one³ – have shown crime was under-recorded to varying extents in a sample of police forces. These inspections also revealed a lack of accuracy in crime-recording practice in areas such as rape and other sexual violence, which is of particular public concern.
- 1.9 The purpose of the current inspection⁴ is to provide the answer to the question:

“To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?”

¹ The introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in 2002 and its place in the Home Office Counting Rules are detailed in the section ‘How do the police record crime’, on page 28 of this report.

² See page 21 of this report, particularly in relation to the issues raised by the Public Administration Select Committee in April 2014.

³ See ‘Previous HMIC inspections’ on page 24 of this report.

⁴ The HMIC 2013/14 inspection programme (available at www.hmic.gov.uk) provides the basis for this inspection.

- 1.10 To achieve this, the integrity of crime data in each force is being examined and assessed in terms of leadership and governance, systems and processes, and the people and skills involved. The scope of the inspection is necessarily broad. HMIC is examining how each force applies the standards and rules for crime-recording laid down by the Home Office; how police culture and behaviours affect recording; how victims of crime are being served by police crime-recording practices; and how the police use out-of-court disposals when dealing with offenders, such as cautions, cannabis warnings, community resolutions and penalty notices for disorder.
- 1.11 This inspection considers particularly closely allegations of rape and other sexual offences and how these are recorded. We also examine how the police are recording crimes that cause general harm in the community, such as criminal damage and other crimes related to anti-social behaviour.
- 1.12 The inspection also looks closely at the sometimes complex issue of no-criming, which is when police reclassify a recorded crime as a no-crime. This is supposed to happen when the police have additional information which they can verify showing that in reality no crime was committed.
- 1.13 This inspection was designed with the benefit of advice and assistance from several authoritative sources. They include the national crime registrar, the national policing lead on crime statistics and the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee. The inspection is being conducted by means of a national audit of crime records and force inspection visits. This enables us to build substantial evidence at a national level to establish what are the strengths in crime-recording practice, and to reveal areas of weakness.
- 1.14 In this report, we explain the rules and standards that govern crime-recording practice, why the National Crime Recording Standard was introduced in 2002, and what this standard aims to achieve (see paragraphs 3.20–3.26). On the issue of the police duty to record crime, we describe the principles behind such decisions, including whether or not to record an incident as a crime and when to reclassify a recorded crime as a no-crime. We then explain our methodology and provide an update on the progress of the inspection, as well as present our emerging findings.
- 1.15 We are grateful to all police forces in England and Wales for their time and support in the inspection process.

Emerging themes

- 1.16 The HOCR were established in their current form in 1998 and the NCRS was implemented in 2002. Together they provide a clear and simple framework and set of rules for the sound and consistent recording of crime by the police. They are not especially complicated; nor are they optional. Every police officer should be able to understand and properly apply them. Every police force should adhere to them.
- 1.17 This inspection is concerned with how the HOCR and NCRS are applied. It is an inspection of the integrity of police-recorded crime data. It is not an inspection or inquiry into the integrity of the police.
- 1.18 As explained, this is an interim report. So far, 13 forces of the 43 Home Office forces have been inspected, but since two of the largest – the Metropolitan Police and Greater Manchester Police – are among them, the number of incidents and crimes examined is over 60 per cent of the total which will have been done by the end of the inspection. It is therefore timely that we report now on what we have found.
- 1.19 Before doing so, it is appropriate to remind readers that the only statistically significant figures in this inspection are those which will be published in our final report in October 2014. However, we can – and do – report on the cases which we have examined.
- 1.20 We are seriously concerned at the picture which is emerging. It is one of weak or absent management and supervision of crime-recording, significant under-recording of crime, and serious sexual offences not being recorded (14 rapes). Some offenders have been issued with out-of-court disposals when their offending history could not justify it, and in some cases they should have been prosecuted.
- 1.21 If the findings for the first set of forces are representative across all forces and all crime types, this implies that 20 percent of crimes may be going unrecorded. Some forces have of course performed better than others. The figures for the forces inspected so far are given in the table at paragraph 6.19.
- 1.22 The reasons for these failures will sometimes be a combination of factors, and sometimes one or two. In some cases, it is simply poor knowledge of the rules and inadequate or absent training in their content and application. In others, poor supervision or management of police officers will be responsible. Pressure of workload, where police officers have been managed in such a way as to overload them with cases, is also a likely factor.

- 1.23 An inspection of this nature is not a criminal investigation⁵. We cannot establish in every case what were the motives – if any – of a police officer who has wrongly failed to record a crime. However, in the light of what we have so far found – which could conceptually be contradicted by later results – it is difficult to conclude that none of these failures was the result of discreditable or unethical behaviour. The failure rate is too high. What is not possible is any measurement of this factor; that is beyond the scope of this work.
- 1.24 The consequences of under-recording of crime are serious and may be severe:
- (a) victims are failed because the crimes against them are not investigated, they have no hope of justice according to law, and they will not receive the services to which they are entitled and which they need;
 - (b) the community is failed because our system of public justice requires offenders to face the law and its sanctions, and if they escape justice not only is it denied, but more victims may be created, increasing the harm done to the community and its safety and security;
 - (c) the levels of crime will be wrongly under-stated, and so detection rates may as a consequence be artificially high, presenting a misleading picture of crime and disorder to the community, police and crime commissioners and senior police management;
 - (d) police chiefs will lack the reliable information which they need to make sound decisions on the deployment of their resources in order to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of their assets; this in turn jeopardises public safety and security.
- 1.25 The picture is of course not all bad. Later in this report (see section 6), we explain strengths in the system of police-recorded crime as we have observed it. We then proceed to describe and evaluate the weaknesses we have found.
- 1.26 Further work in the remaining forces will enable us to provide a fuller picture of crime data integrity in our final report for this inspection, to be published in October 2014.

⁵ If HMIC were to find evidence of any criminal activity, we would provide it to the professional standards department of the police force in question or the Independent Police Complaints Commission, as appropriate.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The duty of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is to inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces in England and Wales.⁶
- 2.2 This is the interim report of an HMIC inspection into the accuracy and integrity of crime-recording in all 43 Home Office-funded police forces in England and Wales.
- 2.3 This inspection provides for the audit of a sample of reports of crime to check whether they are correctly recorded as a crime. Taken together, the samples from each force are designed to produce a nationally representative sample of 5,500 reported crimes. From these data, our final report in October 2014 will include an assessment of the accuracy of crime-recording by the police in England and Wales. (Annex C sets out the statistical method in more detail.)
- 2.4 Good quality crime-recording is materially reliant upon sound management. Our experience shows that the proper management of crime-recording critically depends on three interlocking factors: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and the knowledge and skills of the people involved. Our inspection tests these areas.
- 2.5 In this report, we explain the standards and rules that are laid down by the Home Office which apply to crime-recording by the police service. We also describe emerging themes but do not present conclusive findings at this stage.
- 2.6 Our in-force audit and inspection work started in February 2014. We have so far completed our inspections in 13 of the 43 Home Office police forces. By August 2014, we will have completed sample checks of incident and crime records and extensive fieldwork visits in all 43 forces. In October 2014, we will publish our full report and recommendations.
- 2.7 This is the most thorough inspection into crime-recording integrity that HMIC has carried out to date. In this report, we explain: why such a review is needed to protect the public and serve the victims of crime; how we carry out the inspection; and what are the main rules and standards

⁶ Section 54(2), Police Act 1996.

that govern police-recorded crime. We provide examples to illustrate some of the important characteristics of crime-recording as a day-to-day policing function and as a highly-regulated process that is influenced by different systems and procedures.

- 2.8 We are grateful to all police officers and staff who have provided or are providing time, assistance and co-operation to facilitate our inspections. Each force inspection makes a material contribution to the assembly of a full and clear picture. It is the means of building a substantial and valid base of evidence about the accuracy of crime-recording across England and Wales. This evidence is measured against standards laid down by the Home Office for crime-recording and is gathered by HMIC to fulfil particular aims, which we explain in the next section.
- 2.9 Our inspectors are producing individual force reports with our inspection findings and recommendations where appropriate. These reports are intended to underpin and, where necessary, assist each force in the discharge of its duty to record crime accurately and consistently.
- 2.10 The force reports will describe the audit findings for the force, as well as our findings in respect of the effectiveness of the leadership and governance of the force and the systems and processes that are in place to secure accurate crime-recording. We will also provide our findings about the level of knowledge and skills of the people involved. The first group of force reports are presently scheduled to be published in June 2014. They will also form the basis of our full report in October 2014.

Terms of reference

- 2.11 HMIC's 2013/14 inspection programme, approved by the Home Secretary under section 54 of the Police Act 1996, provides for HMIC to carry out inspections in all Home Office police forces to answer the question:

"To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?"

Scope

- 2.12 The inspection has been designed to assess:
- how well each force applies the standards for crime-recording laid down by the Home Office and known as the Home Office Counting Rules;
 - the culture and behaviours surrounding crime-recording, and the service the police provide to victims;

- the accuracy of police recording of reported crimes which cause significant harm, such as crimes of violence, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, criminal damage and other crimes relating to anti-social behaviour;
- police decisions about out-of-court disposals, such as police cautions, penalty notices for disorder, cannabis warnings and community resolutions; and
- police decisions to no-crime (not to count as a crime) a report of an incident that has already been recorded as a crime.

Aims

2.13 The objective of the inspection is to provide to the public, police and crime commissioners and chief constables information, assessments and recommendations which, if implemented, will be used to improve the ways in which the police record crimes, leading to increased public trust in those data.

2.14 HMIC's inspection sets out to establish:

- how confident the public can be in the accuracy of police-recorded crime data;
- how effective police leaders are in their oversight and assurance of crime data integrity in each force;
- how well victims are served by the police when crime-recording decisions are made;
- whether the results of out-of-court disposals are the right ones for victims, offenders and the wider public, and are in accordance with national guidelines; and
- whether decisions to change a recorded crime into a non-crime (commonly called a no-crime) keep to the relevant rules.

2.15 The full terms of reference for the inspection are contained in Annex A.

Why accurate crime-recording matters

2.16 In the 12 months to December 2013, over 3.7 million crimes⁷ were recorded by police forces in England and Wales. HMIC understands that reporting rates vary for different types of crime and that forces can only record what is reported to them, although of course they should work actively to encourage the reporting of crime. By recording crime data accurately, victims of crime can be looked after and attended to properly. Crime problems in local force areas can be identified so the police's efficiency and effectiveness are strengthened, and police performance can be properly understood and accordingly the police can be held properly to account both locally and nationally.

- **Help which is available to victims of crime is dependent upon accurate crime records.** For example, when a crime is recorded, the victim is entitled to a minimum level of service as set out in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. In some cases, a clear and correct record of the crime also means that victims have support from other organisations such as the national charity, Victim Support.⁸ The statutory provisions by virtue of which victims are granted rights to the services of Victim Support only extend to cases where a crime has been recorded properly under the National Crime Recording Standard (explained in section 3).⁹
- **Accurate crime records provide vital information.** Police forces use the data in crime records to analyse the numbers, types and locations of crimes in their areas. While the overall picture of crime is more complex, the actual recorded crime data contribute to an understanding of the risk, threat and harm that the public face. This helps the police make decisions about where to send police resources to counter crime effectively and to protect the public.
- **Police-recorded crime data are widely accessed and used.** Crime data are made available on a street-by-street basis on

⁷ Recorded crime rates for police forces in England and Wales, including the British Transport Police, as reported by the Office for National Statistics for the 12-month period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013.

⁸ Victim Support provides free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their families, friends and anyone else affected by crime across England and Wales (www.victimsupport.org.uk).

⁹ Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.

www.police.uk¹⁰ so that members of the public can establish the levels of crime in their own neighbourhoods. Records of crime are also widely used by third parties; for example, Victim Support, local authorities and health authorities use police-recorded crime data to allocate resources. Incorrect data can therefore adversely affect the way third parties target their support, potentially reducing the availability of help for victims.

- **Crime data are regularly published.** This makes it possible for the public and their elected representatives¹¹ to hold their forces to account for their performance in preventing and tackling crime. This can only be effective if the data are accurate.

Public trust in crime data

- 2.17 There is significant local and national interest in crime levels and the accuracy of police-recorded crime data. When there are doubts about the integrity of crime data recorded by the police, this can have an adverse effect on the public's trust and confidence in the police service.
- 2.18 Doubts have been intensified recently in several ways. Recent HMIC inspections, which we describe below, have identified distinct weaknesses in crime-recording processes. In January 2014, due to concerns about the accuracy of the data, the UK Statistics Authority removed the designation of police-recorded crime as a National Statistic under section 12 of the Statistics and Registration Act 2007, and set specific conditions for returning this data to its former place.¹² The Authority said that there is accumulating evidence that suggests the underlying data on crimes recorded by the police may not be reliable.
- 2.19 In April 2014, the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee published a report¹³ of its own investigation into police-

¹⁰ Crime data are published at street level (www.police.uk), police-force-area level (www.hmic.gov.uk) and national level (www.ons.gov.uk).

¹¹ Police and crime commissioners for police areas outside London; the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime for the Metropolitan Police Service; and the City of London Corporation for the City of London Police.

¹² See the section on 'Assembling crime data statistics' on page 28 of this report.

¹³ House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC), *Caught red-handed: Why we can't count on Police Recorded Crime statistics*, Thirteenth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 760, 9 April 2014

recorded crime data. PASC identified under-recording of crime by police forces as an issue of serious public concern, and made particular reference to the detrimental effects of performance targets on police crime-recording practices.

2.20 The report criticised the use of targets based upon police-recorded crime data and stated that this tended to distort recording practices and created perverse incentives to misrecord crime. It said that the evidence for this is incontrovertible.

2.21 The report made twelve specific recommendations for the UKSA, Home Office, ONS, College of Policing, HMIC and the Committee of Standards in Public Life, to improve the quality of police-recorded crime data.

2.22 Those recommendations include the following:

- the Home Office should undertake a comprehensive analysis of no-crime rates for sexual offences across all police forces within two months of the PASC report;
- the Home Office and the College of Policing should make an explicit statement of how the Code of Ethics' enforcement will impose a duty of data integrity on police officers in respect of crime recording practices, and that penalties will apply in the event of deliberate non-compliance;
- officers must be familiar with the victim-focused principles of the NCRS and the distinction between recording standards and charging standards;
- senior police leaders and HMIC must ensure that emphasis is placed on data integrity and accuracy, not on the direction of recorded crime trends;
- formal performance appraisals should be based upon data integrity and accuracy and not on targets derived from police-recorded crime data or other administrative data on their own;
- HMIC should confirm that a rigorous external audit of crime recording integrity will form a permanent part of its annual audit of forces, and the current audit of data integrity by HMIC should examine the reasons for misrecording crime;
- the force crime registrar should be suitably trained and have the necessary authority, HMIC should identify a minimum rank for the

role, and the force crime registrar should report directly to the force commander;

- HMIC should examine the effect of PCCs' target-setting on crime recording practices and culture; and
- the Home Office should make it clear in its guidance to PCCs that they should not set performance targets based on police-recorded crime data.

- 2.23 PASC concluded that police-recorded crime data should not be used as the basis for personal performance appraisals, or decisions about remuneration or promotion. PASC regarded such a practice as a flawed leadership model, contrary to the policing Code of Ethics.
- 2.24 The findings in the PASC report are not entirely consistent with our findings to date; however, HMIC will take into consideration its recommendations as part of this inspection. The HMIC response to the PASC report will be included in the response provided by the Home Office.
- 2.25 The police's duty to the victims of crime may be neglected or stand undischarged when a crime is improperly recorded, leading to a lack of investigation or poor quality service. As we emphasise in this report, this inspection has placed victims of crime, and how they are served by the police, at its heart.
- 2.26 There are therefore clear links between accurate crime data, police effectiveness, and public confidence in policing.
- 2.27 At this stage of the inspection, we can already provide some indications of both positive and negative aspects of crime data integrity, as set out in section 6 of this report: 'Emerging themes'. The full picture will be reported in the final report in October 2014. This will contain our definitive conclusions on the strengths and weaknesses of the operation of the existing system, and will make recommendations for improvements. Until all 43 forces have been inspected in this respect, it would be premature for HMIC to come to final conclusions or make recommendations.

Previous HMIC inspections

- 2.28 In October 2009, we published our first report on crime data integrity, *Crime Counts – A review of data quality for offences of the most serious violence*.¹⁴ This was followed in January 2012 by our publication, *The Crime Scene – A review of police crime and incident reports*.¹⁵
- 2.29 The first report focused on data recorded on serious violence; the second was much wider in scope. Both reports examined how effective forces were in ensuring that incident records, which included details of recordable crimes, resulted in correct crime data recording.
- 2.30 *The Crime Scene* considered the quality of crime and incident data, and the arrangements in place to ensure they are recorded and managed correctly (i.e. in a way that complies with HOCR). The inspection focused on whether crimes were correctly recorded from incident records, and the standards used to close a reported incident.
- 2.31 The samples used in *The Crime Scene* inspection were, on their own, too small to provide a definitive assessment of the accuracy of crime-recording nationally. At force level, however, we found that the arrangements most forces had in place were sufficient to make correct crime-recording decisions from reports of incidents, given the information available within an incident record. It established that there were variations in crime-recording practices which could have a corresponding detrimental effect on the accuracy of published crime statistics.

Crime-recording in Kent in 2013

- 2.32 In February 2013, the police and crime commissioner for Kent commissioned HMIC to conduct an inspection to determine whether the people of Kent could have confidence in the force's crime figures. In June 2013, HMIC published *Crime-recording in Kent – A report commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Crime Counts: A review of data quality for offences of the most serious violence*, HMIC, London, 2009. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

¹⁵ *The Crime Scene – A review of police crime and incident reports*, HMIC, London, January 2012. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

¹⁶ *Crime Recording in Kent – A report commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*, HMIC, London, June 2013. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

- 2.33 This inspection found that appreciably more needed to be done before the people of Kent could be confident that the crime figures published by the force were as accurate as they should be. HMIC found that the force had under-recorded approximately one in every ten crimes (+ / - 5 percent), and that it did not interpret the HOCR correctly. This meant crime was not correctly recorded. We explain the central role of the HOCR and NCRS later in this report.¹⁷
- 2.34 It is important to note that the findings for Kent cannot be extrapolated to make judgments about the accuracy of crime-recording in other forces.
- 2.35 The 2013 report found that Kent Police had made improvements to the way in which it dealt with the declassification of recorded crimes (no-crime) since 2012, and had reduced the total number of occasions where this occurred. However, we found that the decision to no-crime was still incorrect in more than 25 percent of the cases we reviewed. It was of particular concern – and unacceptable – that this inaccuracy was evident in serious crimes such as rape, robbery and violence.
- 2.36 In January 2014, HMIC published an interim progress report reviewing the improvements that had been made by Kent Police since publication of the 2013 report.¹⁸ Kent Police was found to have responded positively to the concerns raised in HMIC’s 2013 report. The force had developed a comprehensive action plan, against which good progress had been made, and there was substantially greater accuracy in crime-recording, including in no-crime decisions.
- 2.37 It is important to note that the sample for the Kent inspection was of a sufficient size that we could form statistically reliable judgments. We are not able to replicate this sample size for each of the 43 forces, due to the resourcing this would require. The statistics in this current audit are only statistically reliable at a national level.
- 2.38 Kent Police will be visited again as part of this 43-force inspection to assess whether the people of Kent can have a lasting confidence in the force’s crime figures.

¹⁷ The central role of the Home Office Counting Rules and National Crime Recording Standard is detailed in the section ‘Crime-recording counting rules and standards’, on page 32 of this report.

¹⁸ *Crime Recording in Kent – An interim progress report, commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*, HMIC, London, January 2014. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Other considerations

- 2.39 This inspection is not only a test of national compliance with crime-recording rules. It also examines police crime-recording culture in all 43 forces. Fundamentally, this is a test of the way victims of crime are served by the police in England and Wales, focusing more on accurate crime-recording, i.e. recording a crime when a crime has been committed, rather than the broader assessment of whether incident reports have been correctly completed, as was considered in *The Crime Scene 2012*.
- 2.40 As we explain in the main body of this report, our task has required a consistently applied and methodical approach to produce a valid picture of crime-recording in England and Wales.
- 2.41 Our inspectors are particularly aware of the pressure placed on police to prevent, tackle and try to reduce crime, and to demonstrate they are doing so. Over approximately three decades, and in common with other major public organisations, the police have been subject to a performance and target-driven culture which stems from the policies of successive governments. HMIC was itself an instrument in a government-led programme to secure improvements in police performance and was, in those times, a strong promoter of the target culture within the police service. This culture led to successes in performance terms but also had detrimental effects. In 2010, the Home Secretary made a clear statement to the police service that she was removing nationally-established targets to reduce particular types of crime, and told police forces:

*“I couldn’t be any clearer about your mission: it isn’t a thirty-point plan; it is to cut crime. No more, and no less”.*¹⁹

- 2.42 Much of our review of crime records is an assessment of accurate crime classification according to the rules and standards, including the under-recording of crime that should be logged from incident records.
- 2.43 We take note of any instances where we find that performance pressures appear to affect the accuracy of crime-recording. We will note, for

¹⁹ Speech by the Home Secretary to the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Police Authorities national conference, 29 June 2010, Manchester.

example, wherever we identify crimes that may not have been accurately recorded because of pressures to downgrade a crime to a less serious classification, or to reclassify a recorded crime as a no-crime to present a better picture of a force's performance; or indeed not to record a crime at all.

- 2.44 It should be understood that police forces can only record what is reported to them by victims and by police officers carrying out their duties. Reporting rates vary for each crime type. There are hidden and under-reported crime types, including domestic violence, sexual offences and child abuse. New types of crime are currently emerging and placing added pressure on police crime-fighting resources. They include, for example, people-trafficking and modern-day slavery, and the evolving threat from cybercrime.²⁰
- 2.45 The focus of this inspection is on the crimes that are reported and should be recorded, how this is done and the culture that surrounds crime-recording practice.

²⁰ The police response to these crimes will be inspected as part of the HMIC 2014/15 inspection programme.

3. How do the police record crime?

- 3.1 This section explains how crime statistics are assembled, how police forces record crime data and the rules that govern the process. We provide case examples and other illustrations to set the scene as clearly as possible.
- 3.2 We describe:
- the roles of the Home Office and government statistical bodies governing crime data recording in England and Wales;
 - the Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime and the National Crime Recording Standard: rules to ensure consistent and effective crime-recording and that take a more victim-focused approach to crime-recording;
 - how the rules are interpreted: when and what is a crime and how police receive reports of crime; and
 - the use of out-of-court disposals.
- 3.3 These elements are the context for understanding the complexities of crime data recording and show that there is room for error even when police force crime-recording is internally monitored and strictly controlled. This background also underpins the requirement for applying rigour and consistency in our inspection approach, described in the next part of this report.

Assembling crime data statistics

- 3.4 The Home Secretary requires chief constables in England and Wales to provide statistical data, and specifies the form in which they must provide these data.²¹
- 3.5 The Home Office collates crime statistics based on data returns submitted by police forces. It then carries out extensive checks for anomalies before supplying the data for publication by the Office for National Statistics. While the ONS will also look for obvious anomalies in

²¹ These powers are contained in section 44, Police Act 1996.

the data, it accepts the data as given and they are published quarterly on behalf of the ONS's Chief Statistician.

3.6 In a separate, overseeing role, is the UK Statistics Authority. As an independent body operating at arm's length from government, the UK Statistics Authority's main objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. The main functions of the Authority are the provision of independent scrutiny of all official statistics produced in the UK and the oversight of the Office for National Statistics, which is its executive body.

3.7 In January 2014, the UK Statistics Authority removed police-recorded crime data from official national statistics records because of their concerns about its accuracy. The Authority stated it would only restore this data to its place when:

*"...the Office for National Statistics (ONS), working with the Home Office, HMIC or other appropriate bodies, is able to demonstrate that the quality of the underlying data, and the robustness of the ongoing audit and quality assurance procedures, are sufficient to support its production of statistics based on recorded crime data to a level of quality that meets users' needs."*²²

3.8 In 2012, the independent Crime Statistics Advisory Committee was established following a recommendation from the National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics.²³ CSAC is a high-level advisory body offering advice to the Home Secretary, the ONS and HMIC on matters relating to the measurement of crime and the collection and presentation of crime data for England and Wales.

3.9 Alongside statistics compiled from police-recorded data, the ONS completes a separate statistical report, the Crime Survey of England and Wales. The CSEW measures the extent of crime by asking people whether they have, in the past year, had experience of crime, such as burglary and assaults, crimes against society such as drug offences and public order matters, and other non-notifiable crimes including those dealt with by other agencies. The survey is a valuable source of

²² *Assessment Report 268: Statistics on Crime in England and Wales*, UK Statistics Authority, London, January 2014. Available from www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

²³ *National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics: England and Wales*, UK Statistics Authority, London, June 2011. Available from www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

information. It has measured the extent and nature of crime in England and Wales in this way since 1982.

- 3.10 The CSEW includes both crimes reported to the police and those that go unreported, and is therefore used alongside the police-recorded crime figures to show a more complete picture. However, while it is an extensive survey which is important in estimating unreported crimes, the CSEW does not provide a complete or perfect count of crime.²⁴
- 3.11 CSEW is a face-to-face survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to the interview. 50,000 households are asked to participate in the survey, with around 70% of households engaging. This equates to around 35,000 adults and 3,500 children (10-15 years). The box and graph below show the latest figures for police-recorded and CSEW-recorded crime. Notably, it reveals a divergence between the overall levels of police-recorded crime and crime as reported in the CSEW for comparable crimes.
- 3.12 Last year, the ONS published a report on this divergence and stated that there could be a number of reasons for it, one of which was recording practice in the police service. The ONS's hypothesis was that the growing gap between the CSEW and police-recorded crime series could be due to:

“a gradual erosion of compliance with the NCRS such that a growing number of crimes reported to the police are not being captured in crime-recording systems.”²⁵

- 3.13 Closer to home, the majority of police and crime commissioners' police and crime plans contain commitments to reduce crime. Therefore, the data to support success of these plans must be trustworthy.
- 3.14 The emphasis on recording accurate crime data is therefore a major concern of government. It is the reason for the extent and rigour of this

²⁴ The CSEW excludes fraud and those crimes often termed as victimless (for example, possession of drugs). As a survey that asks people whether they have experienced victimisation, homicides cannot be included. The CSEW does not cover the population living in group residences (for example, care homes or halls of residence) or other institutions, nor does it cover crime against commercial or public-sector bodies.

²⁵ *Analysis of variation in crime trends: A study of trends in 'comparable crime' categories between the Crime Survey of England and Wales and the police recorded crime series between 1981 and 2011/12.* Available from www.ons.gov.uk

inspection, which focuses on the way police forces comply with rules and standards for crime-recording laid down by the Home Office.

Police-recorded crime and the Crime Survey of England and Wales

In the latest available data for the 12 months to the end of December 2013, the police recorded 3.7 million offences, a decrease of two percent from the previous year.

Police-recorded crime figures continue to show year-on-year reductions, with the latest figures showing a 38 percent overall reduction from the 12 months to the end of March 2003 (the first full year of data since the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard).

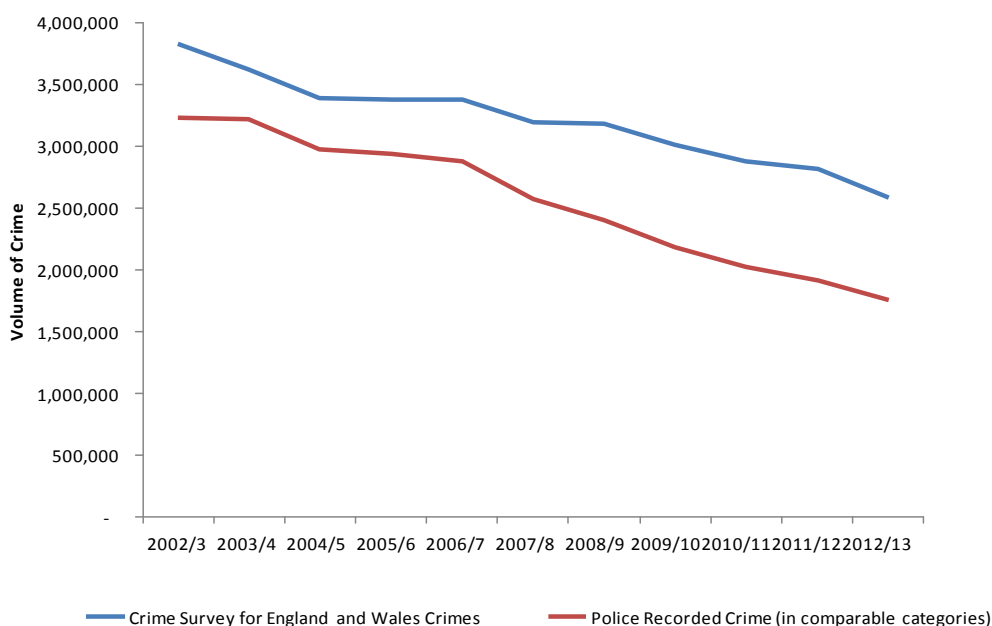
As long as questions remain about the accuracy of police-recorded crime data, these reductions will be called into question. However, further estimates for the level of crime are published through the Crime Survey of England and Wales (previously known as the British Crime Survey). This is based on face-to-face interviews conducted on behalf of the ONS. Rather than relying on crime reported to the police, the survey reports on offences experienced by those interviewed.

The survey shows a higher overall crime level, with 7.5 million crimes against households and resident adults in the 12 months to the end of December 2013. But it has also shown substantial reductions. In particular, the CSEW data shows a 15 percent crime reduction compared with the previous year and, notably, this is the lowest estimate since the survey began in 1981.²⁶

This suggests that, while police crime-recording accuracy needs to be strengthened, the pattern of crime reduction is substantiated.

²⁶ Statistical Bulletin: *Crime in England and Wales, year ending December 2013 (released 24 April 2014)*. Available from www.ons.gov.uk

The volume of crime as recorded by the CSEW and by the police



Source: Office for National Statistics.

Crime-recording counting rules and standards

- 3.15 In this section, we describe the rules and standards that govern crime-recording practice in the police forces of England and Wales, namely, the HOCR and the NCRS. We explain the principles that all police forces must follow to comply with both the HOCR and the NCRS, and illustrate when and why the police should record crime. We also explain and illustrate the different routes by which police forces receive reports of crime.
- 3.16 The crime data recorded by the police and submitted to the Home Office under section 44 of the Police Act 1996 must comply with the HOCR.²⁷ This is known as notifiable crime.
- 3.17 The HOCR are specific about what amounts to a notifiable crime of a particular type, including sexual violence, robbery, burglary, theft and handling of stolen goods, fraud and forgery, criminal damage and drug offences. They also specify *whether* an incident should be recorded as a crime, *when* a crime should be recorded and *how many* crimes should be

²⁷ Home Office (2012) *Home Office Counting Rules*. Available from www.gov.uk

recorded in respect of any particular single incident (which may involve the commission of a number of crimes) and then placed on record to be notified to the Home Office.

- 3.18 The counting rules provide a definite framework for interpreting and classifying crime, and this framework has been tightened up in recent years. As a means of governing police practice, the counting rules have evolved over more than 90 years. The general rules for the recording of crime now extend to 24 pages which are supported by a further 10 pages of guidance detailing how and when the outcomes of crimes are recorded, such as when a person is prosecuted or given a Penalty Notice for Disorder. Annexes covering particular crime types extend to over 400 pages. While this level of guidance is significant, it should be considered alongside the 1,500 different types of criminal offence which must be notified to the Home Office.
- 3.19 The rules standardise how, and if, crimes are recorded. For instance, they set out different ways of recording crimes when there is a specific or intended victim, or when the victim is unwilling to be identified. After the election of the Labour government in 1997, there was an attempt to tighten and standardise the existing counting rules, but of course, like any rules, they remain susceptible to interpretation.
- 3.20 In the light of these concerns, the Home Office commissioned a research paper into crime-recording practice in ten police forces. It revealed poor recording and inappropriate practices.²⁸ Following this study, HMIC was commissioned to conduct a further review of crime-recording in 11 forces while taking data from all 43. The report,²⁹ published in 2000 alongside the Home Office Research Study, was also highly critical. It found that the forces inspected had only correctly recorded between 55 and 85 percent of the crimes that should have been recorded.
- 3.21 Following these reviews, the Association of Chief Police Officers, with the Home Office, developed the NCRS, which was introduced in 2002.
- 3.22 While the HOCR are 'what must be done' in police crime-recording, the NCRS is 'why it must be done'. The NCRS has the twin aims of ensuring proper focus on the victims of crime and consistency in crime-recording

²⁸ *Review of police forces' crime-recording practices*, Home Office Research Study 204, 2000.

²⁹ *On the Record*, HMIC, July 2000. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

in all 43 police forces. It is based on applying legal definitions of crime to victim reports.

Who ensures compliance with the crime-recording rules?

- 3.23 The NCRS state that each force must appoint a force crime registrar who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the crime-recording process. As the final arbiter he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision. The FCR's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with the rules.³⁰
- 3.24 All forces must designate a police officer of chief officer rank who has responsibility for overseeing the force approach to crime-recording. The relationship between these two central roles is clear. The NCRS states that the FCR must be answerable to the chief officer with overall responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of crime-recording processes.
- 3.25 At national level, the national crime registrar manages the counting rules on behalf of the Home Office. He is the source of expertise on the rules but has no authority to change crime-recording decisions made at force level.
- 3.26 Since the introduction of the NCRS, the National Crime Recording Steering Group has met regularly to review the counting rules. The steering group includes members of the Home Office Statistics Unit, FCRs, the national policing lead for crime statistics, HMIC and the ONS. Recommendations for change are considered by the Home Secretary and CSAC, and the HOCR are updated each April. Updates include amendments to reflect changes in legislation and adjustments to improve clarity and consistency in recording by police forces.

When is an 'incident' a crime?

- 3.27 The first principle the police must follow is that all reports of incidents, whether from victims, witnesses or third parties and whether crime-related or not, must result in the registration of an incident report by the police. It is important to note that an incident report can take any form as long as it is auditable and accessible. For example, a report made directly to an officer on the street may be recorded in his pocket book.

³⁰ HOCR Annex A, National Crime Recording Standard, paragraph 4.2.

3.28 From the moment a victim of crime calls the police, the requirement to record a crime is based on the victim's statement to the police. The allegations about a crime are recorded on the basis of the victim's own account. The correct approach by staff receiving reports of crime is to ask some initial questions to establish the facts, but they do not conduct an investigation.

3.29 To determine whether an incident is a crime, the HOCR state that:

"An incident will be recorded as a crime (notifiable to the Home Secretary) for offences against an identified victim if, on the balance of probability:

A. The circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law (the police will determine this, based on their knowledge of the law and counting rules), and

B. There is no credible evidence to the contrary."³¹

3.30 This is followed by rule 2:

"For offences against the state the points to prove to evidence the offence must clearly be made out, before a crime is recorded."

3.31 So there are two primary types of crime: the first aimed at identified victims; the second against the state, for example the possession of drugs, carrying a weapon, and public order offences that have no victim.

3.32 Because these rules place an obligation on the police to accept what the victim says unless there is *"credible evidence to the contrary"*, a crime should still be recorded where:

- the victim declines to provide personal details;
- the victim does not want to take the matter further; and
- the allegation cannot be proved.

3.33 The balance of probability test is detailed in the NCRS. It provides that:

"In most cases, a belief by the victim (or person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim) that a crime has occurred is sufficient to justify its recording as a crime, although this will not be

³¹ HOCR, General Rules Section A.

*the case in all circumstances. Effectively, a more victim-orientated approach is advocated.*³²

“An allegation should be considered as made, at the first point of contact, i.e. the stage at which the victim or a person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim first makes contact with the police, be that by phone, etc. or in person. If an alleged or possible victim cannot be contacted or later refuses to provide further detail, the Crime Recording Decision Making Process (CRDMP) should be based on all available first contact information.”

- 3.34 The HOCR describe when a crime need not be recorded; if a victim does not confirm a crime, then it is not recorded. For instance, if someone other than the victim reports an apparent street robbery, but police cannot find the victim, then a crime is not recorded, but the incident must be recorded.
- 3.35 Also, the HOCR do not require a force to record a crime if it happens in another force area or in another country but is reported in England or Wales.

³² HOCR, General Rules, Annex A.

One or more crimes?

Once the police have decided to record a crime, they then need to determine how many crimes to record, as well as which offences have been committed. This is sometimes where the police make errors.

Consider, for example, a burglary where car keys are taken from a house and the car has been stolen:

- This may involve two offences: a burglary (entering the house and stealing the keys); and the theft of a motor vehicle.
- If there is only one victim and one offender (or group of offenders acting together), then only one crime should be recorded, although the offender(s) may be charged and convicted of both offences.
- If there are two or more victims in the same incident (such as two people assaulted by a gang), a crime should be recorded in relation to each victim.

How soon should police record a crime?

3.36 The HOCR state that:

“...a crime should be recorded as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed”.

3.37 The police must record the crime at the earliest opportunity that the system allows. This is traditionally three 24-hour periods (72 hours) from the time the incident is first logged. However, a maximum of seven days is allowed to cater for situations outside the control of the police, such as where victims cannot be contacted or are not available despite police efforts to make contact with them.

3.38 It is important that crimes are recorded in a timely way. This is for a number of reasons. Officers use crime information when responding to incidents and events to help them assess risks to officers and the public, and the information is disseminated on the Police National Database (PND). Police forces use this in the investigation of serious crimes, and when checking the backgrounds of individuals, so any delays can affect the quality of the information available.

3.39 In the case of reports of sexual violence, the findings from *The Crime Scene*,³³ published in 2012, indicated that almost one-fifth of forces did not report some sexual offences in a timely way. These forces delayed the classification of such crimes until the primary investigation was complete and then decided, sometimes weeks later, what classification to apply in the crime record. This is a clear breach of the HOCR. The current inspection is revisiting this issue and is in particular looking closely at how allegations of rape are recorded.

How do forces receive reports of crime?

3.40 Police forces receive reports of crime from the public through a number of routes. The two main ones are by telephone:

- directly to a force control room, where an incident record is created and, when it is considered appropriate – sometimes some time later – a crime record is made;
- directly from a victim of a crime to a call-handler where a crime record is made immediately and the victim receives a crime reference number.

3.41 Most other crime is reported to the police through a specialist department, such as through referrals from other statutory bodies and charities, or to officers on the street or at the front counters of police stations.

3.42 Police forces use opening and closing codes to log and classify reported incidents and to check on the investigation and outcomes of each reported incident or crime. The number of opening and closing codes varies in different police forces, depending on each force's incident recording systems and processes. But the purpose of these codes – to identify and record each incident or crime – remains the same.

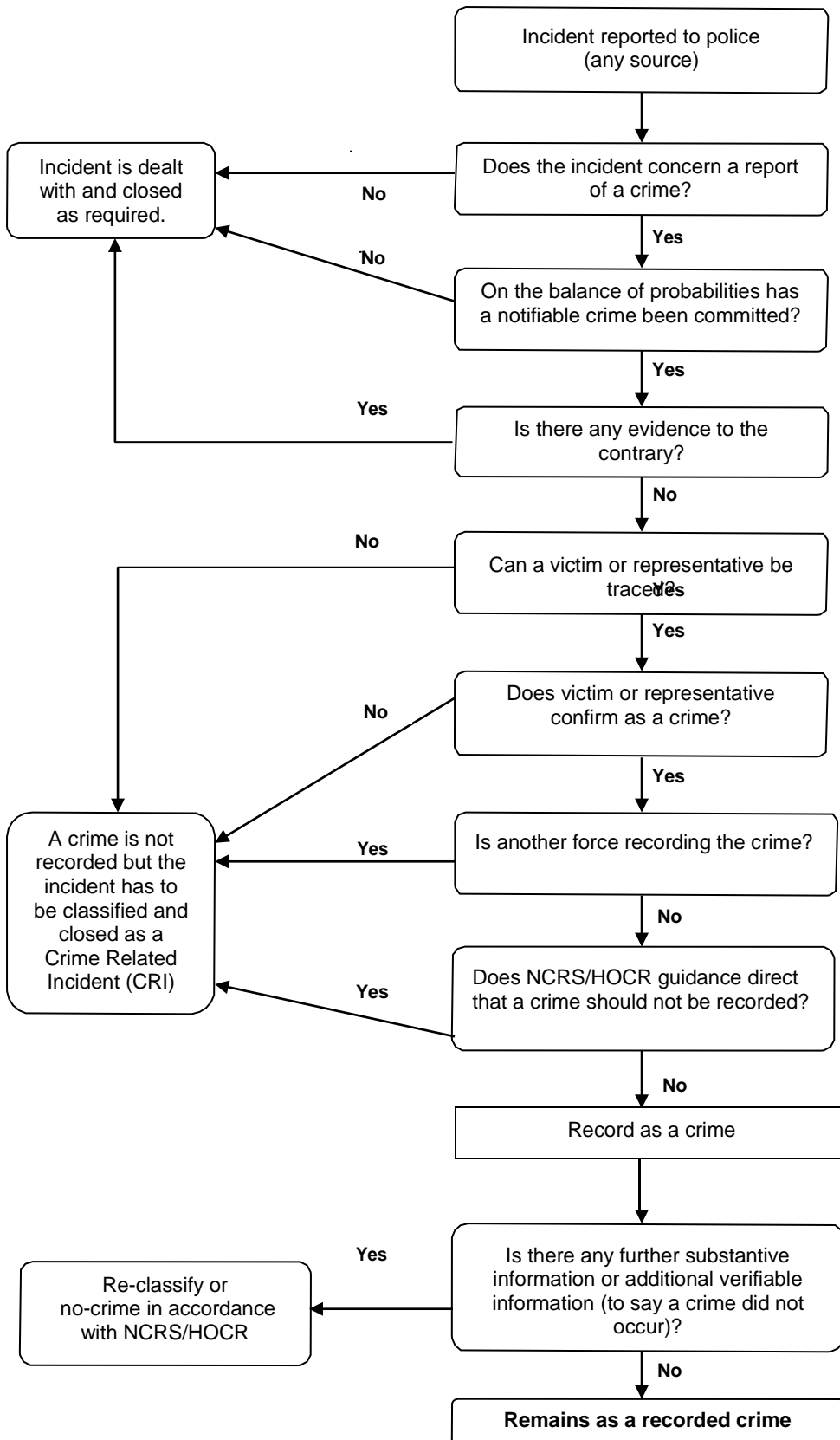
3.43 Importantly, reports of crime received through the two main routes (as described in paragraph 3.40) are recorded on force IT systems. This means there are records that can be checked for accuracy. Checking (auditing or dip-sampling) is an essential part of both the internal and external review of police procedures. Forces use a variety of IT systems for recording incidents and crimes, while specialist departments, including those investigating rape and other serious sexual offences, and

³³ *The Crime Scene*, HMIC, January 2012.

dealing with the protection of vulnerable people, often have their own separate IT systems. There are, in fact, numerous different IT systems used in specialist departments in the 43 police forces. On these, the police record referrals concerning rape and other crimes from organisations such as health and social services. There are also instances where police officers in specialist departments make records on separate areas of the force's standard crime-recording system; however, these are not recorded crimes until they are recorded in the main crime-recording database.

- 3.44 The other, non-direct routes for reporting crime (such as those recorded in minutes of meetings with external organisations, on separate IT systems in a specialist department, or in officers' pocket books) are inherently difficult to audit because they do not automatically result in an easily auditable record on force IT systems.
- 3.45 Figure 1 below illustrates the various routes for recording crime and the process required by the counting rules.

Figure 1: The national crime-recording process



When is an incident not a crime?

- 3.46 Many incidents reported to the police turn out not to be crimes. For example, someone reports a man on a ladder breaking the first floor window of a house and climbing in. A police patrol immediately goes to the house and finds the man who is inside is the owner and had forgotten his key. When there is such an incident, or when the police have clear evidence to believe that a crime has not been committed, this is not a crime and not recorded as such.
- 3.47 It should be emphasised that the HOCR do not expect police to record reports of crimes made by a third person (unless that person is reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim) if the victim cannot be found to verify that a crime has occurred. So, if someone witnesses an assault in the street and reports it to the police, but the victim of the assault is unknown to the witness and cannot be traced, the police are not required to record the incident as a crime. The incident itself must be recorded but, under this rule, the police are actively prevented from recording all the crimes that come to their attention.

When does a crime get re-classified to a no-crime?

- 3.48 There are occasions when it becomes apparent that a recorded crime is not in fact a crime. In these circumstances, the police reclassify the crime as a no-crime. This will not therefore be counted in the number of crimes reported to the Home Secretary.
- 3.49 The HOCR have criteria that must be met when deciding whether a recorded crime should be shown as a no-crime. One of the following criteria must be satisfied to record a no-crime:
- (a) the crime is outside the jurisdiction of the police force in which it was first recorded (e.g. if it happens at a railway station, then it is transferred to the British Transport Police to make the record);
 - (b) additional verifiable information is available which determines that no notifiable crime has been committed;³⁴
 - (c) the alleged crime is part of another crime already recorded;
 - (d) the crime is recorded in error (e.g. a road collision is recorded as criminal damage); or

³⁴ HOCR, General Rules, Section C, No Crimes (1 of 2).

(e) the recorded crime is one of less serious assault and there is clear additional verifiable information that shows that the offender acted in self-defence.

3.50 The main requirement here is the need to show additional verifiable information – often referred to as AVI – to reclassify a crime as a no-crime.

3.51 If, for example, an item which is first recorded as stolen is afterwards found and had been misplaced by the person who reported it as stolen, then it would be correct to show the crime record as a no-crime.

3.52 However, if following an investigation of a reported rape the police are unclear as to whether an offence has taken place then the crime record must remain open. Being unclear does not amount to additional verifiable information demonstrating that the crime did not take place.

No-criming decisions require close checking

Consider these examples from previous HMIC audits of no-crime records:

A man reports the theft of cash from an upstairs room and it was recorded as a crime of burglary. There were two points of entry into the room. One was covered by CCTV, which did not show any offender. The other was through the back door, where there was a large puddle of water which could have caused muddy boot prints but there was no sign of them. The victim could not explain this but still stated that the money had been stolen. The crime was no-crimed on the assumption that the victim was not telling the truth and that boot prints would probably have been left, rather than on the basis of additional verifiable information which would have determined (proved) that a crime was not committed. This should therefore have remained a recorded crime.

And this example:

A woman alleges rape by a man in a car after she changed her mind about having sex following a discussion about the use of a condom. The rape was recorded as a crime. She reports that she did not run away because she was scared of being beaten up. There had been no violence or pinning down although the woman said her chest was sore and she had felt intimidated. The incident was no-crimed in this case because the man said he did not know that she did not consent to having sex. But there is no additional verifiable information to show that the victim had in fact given consent. This should have remained recorded as a crime of rape.

What are out-of-court disposals?

3.53 In this inspection, we also look at out-of-court disposals.³⁵ These allow the police to deal quickly and proportionately with low-level, often first-time offences³⁶ which can be resolved satisfactorily and in the public interest without going to court.

3.54 They include:

- **Caution:** This is a non-statutory disposal used for people when the offender’s behaviour requires no more than a formal warning. A caution may be offered when the offender admits the offence and there is enough evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute. The offender must also agree to accept the caution, and in doing so must understand the implications (see paragraph 6.43).
- **Adult cannabis warning:** This is a non-statutory disposal introduced in 2004 for people aged 18 and older. It is a formal warning given by a police officer to deal with an adult caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis consistent with personal use.
- **Penalty notice for disorder (PND):** PNDs were established by the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 and are available only for offenders aged 18 and over. The PND scheme provides police with a swift punishment to deal with low-level offending. A PND can be given at a police station, or on the spot, and allows the person receiving the PND 21 days either to pay a penalty or to choose to go to court. The penalty is increased if the person fails to do either – and the amount charged is registered in a magistrate’s court for enforcement. PNDs are available for certain offences including being drunk and disorderly in a public place, retail theft under £100 (shoplifting), criminal damage under £300 and behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress.
- **Community resolution:** This is a way of dealing with an offender which is proportionate to lower-level crime. The resolution is

³⁵ Our inspection of out-of-court disposals does not form part of the national audit figure for crime-recording compliance. However, as the recording of the disposal (or outcome) of a recorded crime forms part of the NCRS, we will report on the appropriateness of their use, and therefore the validity of the data reporting their use, both at force and national level.

³⁶ *Quick Reference Guides to Out-of-Court Disposals*, Ministry of Justice, April 2013.

dependent on the offence that has been committed; it may include, for example, simply apologising to the victim or making good damage caused. Community resolutions can be offered when the offender admits the offence and are mainly used in cases where the victim has agreed that he does not want formal action to be taken.

- 3.55 These disposals – or outcomes of crime – are important to crime reduction. They are intended to allow the police to deal with often first-time offenders with a view to discouraging them from committing further crime. Where they are used, the NCRS requires forces to record the fact as part of the relevant crime record. This data is then used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the force in dealing with reported crime.
- 3.56 This inspection is concerned to establish whether these methods of crime disposal are being used appropriately by forces and whether, when deciding to use these disposals, the views of the victim or any threat to the wider community are being properly considered. For example, police officers should explain their decision to use an out-of-court disposal to the victim of the crime.
- 3.57 The service provided to victims is of central importance. By complying with the HOCR and NCRS in recording crimes accurately, and by discussing out-of-court disposals with victims, the police are demonstrating that their work is focused on the interests of the victims of crime. Accurate crime-recording at the outset of each incident makes it possible for the police to involve and work with victims, discuss crime investigation progress and outcomes, and ensure victims have information about victim support services.

4. The method of inspection

- 4.1 HMIC has worked with a number of parties to design its methodology for this inspection. These include the national policing lead for crime statistics, Chief Constable Jeff Farrar; the Office for National Statistics; the Police Federation of England and Wales; the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales; the Home Office; the national crime registrar; and the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee. In addition, HMIC has consulted a working group of practitioners, including performance managers and force crime registrars from several forces.
- 4.2 The inspection not only tests compliance with crime-recording rules but also assesses the culture and systems surrounding crime-recording, as well as the service the police provide to victims. The interests of victims of crime and the effect of crime-recording on the community are at the heart of this inspection. Inspectors are making sample follow-up calls to victims to determine the effect the decision to record or not record a crime has had. The inspection also considers crimes which, when repeated, cause significant harm to the community, such as criminal damage and other crimes related to anti-social behaviour. The inspection is also reviewing crime outcomes, including cautions and community resolutions, from the viewpoint of a victim.
- 4.3 We are inspecting the following in each force in relation to crime data recording:
- leadership and governance;
 - systems and processes; and
 - people and skills.

The three inspection stages

- 4.4 The inspection is carried out in three stages:
1. During the first stage, in December 2013, HMIC inspectors made one-day visits to each of the 43 forces to gain a clear understanding of the ways in which members of the public report crime to each force. All forces have call-handling centres receiving incident information and data; some have specialist crime-recording bureaux. Force specialist departments also receive some reports of serious crimes directly from other organisations, such as health or social

services. HMIC has assessed the proportion of crimes reported by each route.

2. Once HMIC inspectors have identified the various crime-reporting routes for each force – and where the various force systems allow for reports to be audited – we ask each force to provide a specific number of records for auditing purposes. A sample of these records are then selected by HMIC and audited. We explain the audit sampling approach in more detail in Annex C.
3. Informed by the audit findings and our understanding of the crime reporting routes, HMIC inspection teams visit each police force to interview senior managers and staff directly involved with crime-recording, visit control rooms and crime-recording centres, and meet a focus group of practitioners. We also carry out ‘reality testing’ in the form of unannounced visits to police stations to interview frontline staff who have day-to-day responsibility – as constables, sergeants and inspectors – for dealing with incidents and victims of crime. In this way, we check how top-level decisions and strategies affect the way crime is recorded at police stations. We explain the field visits in more detail below.

Additional surveys

4.5 While the auditing and field inspection programme is central to the inspection approach, we have also commissioned surveys to assist us:

- The first survey, which is being carried out in two parts, is aimed at the public.³⁷ It is gauging the trust the public has in police crime data and establishing the aspects of crime-recording which matter most to people.
- The second survey, to be completed during the summer of 2014, will be directed at police officers and police staff across England and Wales, and will build on our evidence from the field inspections. From this survey, we will establish: what officers and staff think about crime-recording; what training they get; what messages they take in from senior and middle managers about crime-recording integrity;

³⁷ The public survey is being conducted in two parts. The first part, with small groups of people who are provided with the background detail to crime-recording, was completed during February 2014; the second part, a number of specific questions included within the CSEW, will be completed between April and June 2014.

and whether they are under any undue pressure to record or not to record crimes.

The approach to auditing crime records

- 4.6 The most efficient method of making an assessment of compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules is to take a representative sample of records that appear to be crimes. HMIC auditors are checking this sample of records to understand:
- the proportion of reported crime that is correctly recorded as a crime;
 - whether reports of crime correctly recorded as crimes are correctly classified; and
 - the time taken to record a crime from the earliest point at which it should have been recorded.
- 4.7 The accuracy of the recording of specific crime types can differ. Therefore, it should be noted that the degree of under-recording of crime that is found may not be the same for all crime types. This is explained in more detail in Annex C.
- 4.8 The audit will report on crime-recording accuracy at a national level, and not at force level, as the sample sizes required to report with a reasonable level of precision (+/- 5%) at force level are beyond available resources.³⁸
- 4.9 Sampling data for each force are only being used as indicative of the accuracy of force crime-recording; they are not of a size to be of statistical significance. Each force sample does, however, contribute to the overall national sample from which we will be able to report a statistically sound figure for the accuracy of crime-recording within England and Wales as a whole.
- 4.10 The audit results for each force are discussed with the force crime registrar and any differences in opinion on the findings are reviewed by advisers working with HMIC. The national crime registrar is also taking

³⁸ For example, the CSEW, which is recognised as being the gold standard in terms of survey collection, does not report at force level, even though its annual sample is as large as 35,000 households.

an active part in this inspection, providing advice when required to the HMIC auditors, as well as dip-sampling their work to check for accuracy.

The routes for reporting crimes

4.11 The results of the crime route analysis, described in more detail at paragraph 4.4 of this report, indicated that 92 percent³⁹ of crime that is recorded (excluding fraud) came through a route that can be audited.⁴⁰ These are crimes reported through police control rooms, directly to crime-recording bureaux, or both.

4.12 Of the remainder, one percent came through specialist routes, which included public protection and rape counselling units. The other seven percent came through a variety of routes, such as reports by a member of the public to an officer on foot patrol or at the front desk of a police station. As far as is practical, these other routes are being assessed through local inspection.

4.13 A full description of our audit methodology is in Annex C.

The field inspection visits

4.14 Audit sampling is only one part of the evidence-gathering process. The field inspection visits which follow soon after each audit sampling period are used to complete the picture. Each field inspection visit involves up to six HMIC inspectors spending three days with each force to gain a thorough understanding of:

- (a) **Governance and leadership** in crime data integrity by establishing whether the force has arrangements at senior level to ensure there is confidence in recorded crime figures and all aspects of HO CR;
- (b) **Systems and processes** in crime data integrity by establishing whether there are systems and processes in place to ensure that crime is correctly recorded according to HO CR and NCRS; and if standards are maintained and no-crime decisions are correct; and
- (c) **People and skills** in crime data integrity by establishing whether the force has staff whose conduct and skills ensure accurate recording.

³⁹ These figures are for all recorded crime (excluding fraud). In respect of particular crime types, these figures varied from 86 percent for robbery and sexual offences, to 97 percent for burglary.

⁴⁰ This does not mean that 92 percent of crime reported to the police comes in via this route; it is the proportion of crime that gets recorded through this route.

- 4.15 Inspectors complete templates to record evidence gathered by each field inspection team. The evidence is built up under the direction of an inspection leader who is responsible for co-ordinating the inspection, as well as taking part in a range of interviews and facility visits. Interviewees include the chief officer lead for crime data integrity, the FCR, the head of crime investigation, the local policing area manager, the head of force IT, the crime bureau manager, the head of the control room and call-handling and the head of rape investigations (or the head of the unit responsible for protecting vulnerable people).
- 4.16 As well as the individual interviews, inspectors also run a focus group with officers and staff who have oversight of crime-recording in different areas of the force.
- 4.17 Finally, they carry out reality-testing (unannounced visits to police stations) to see how strategy, vision and operational directions surrounding crime-recording affect day-to-day practice at the front line. They also visit the control room and crime bureau (or its equivalent) to speak to staff who receive calls from the public.
- 4.18 Inspectors can complete in-depth interviews with 30 or more officers and staff on each force visit.

Developing a clear picture

- 4.19 All these methods ensure HMIC can build as accurate as possible a picture of crime data integrity in England and Wales. They allow us to find answers to the following questions:
- **Is there good leadership in crime data recording?** We inspect the effectiveness of leadership and governance, systems and processes and the people and skills in place to support accurate crime-recording.
 - **How accurately are crimes recorded?** We look at the accuracy of the recording of the types of crimes which cause significant harm to individuals and the community. We also look closely at out-of-court disposals and whether these are used appropriately. We review the standards that forces apply when decisions are made to change a recorded crime to a no-crime.
 - **What investment do forces make in crime data integrity?** Police forces vary in the resources they commit to ensure crime data integrity. Maintaining high standards in crime data requires investment in systems to support efficient crime-recording, and also

in people. We look at the level of investment in the training of officers and staff to help them record crime accurately and the investment in the staff who monitor and audit standards.

- **Are victims of crime being well served?** At the core of the inspection we establish whether victims of crime are being served correctly by the police when it comes to recording crimes. This means not only checking on the service received by victims who have had a crime recorded, but making follow-up telephone calls to some people whose crimes were not recorded to establish whether they understood the decision.

5. The inspection to date

- 5.1 HMIC has completed all three stages of the inspection explained above in 13 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales. Annex B specifies the forces we have visited so far. It also shows the schedule of visits to the remaining 30 forces, to be completed by August 2014.
- 5.2 The general surveys of the public and of police officers will be assessed separately and added to the evidence to be used for our final report in October 2014.
- 5.3 In support of our findings from the first set of field inspections, we have reviewed documentation from forces, including policies, procedures and guidance provided to officers, which set the standard for accurate crime-recording. We have also reviewed the audits provided to us by the forces themselves to assess their crime data accuracy. Our one-day visits to all 43 forces in December 2013 provided important information about the ways in which each force receives reports of crime.
- 5.4 In relation to the 13 police force inspections carried out so far, our inspectors have reviewed:
- 3,955 reports of crime; 3,100 of these came from reported incidents, 305 were directly recorded either at the point of report by the victim over the telephone or through force crime bureaux, and 550 were recorded by other systems;
 - 972 no-crime decisions;
 - 978 crime records in which the offender was dealt with by way of an out-of-court disposal, such as a caution, penalty notice for disorder or cannabis warning; and
 - 308 crime records in which the offender was dealt with by way of a community resolution.
- 5.5 The evidence gathered to date from the audit and field inspection visits – the second and third stages of the inspection approach – enables us to report on the emerging themes below. Our inspectors are already identifying some worrying weaknesses in current police crime-recording practice.
- 5.6 Our final report in October 2014 will contain statistically sound data supported by the evidence from all 43 police force inspections.

6. Emerging themes

- 6.1 The HOCR were established in their current form in 1998 and the NCRS was introduced in 2002. Together they provide a clear and simple framework and set of rules for the sound and consistent recording of crime by the police. They are not especially complicated; nor are they optional. Every police officer should be able to understand and properly apply them. Every police force must adhere to them.
- 6.2 This inspection is concerned with how the HOCR and NCRS are applied. It is an inspection of the integrity of police-recorded crime data. It is not an inspection or inquiry into the integrity of the police.
- 6.3 As explained, this is an interim report. This section contains a report of the themes which are emerging as the inspection continues. So far, 13 forces of the 43 Home Office forces have been inspected, but since two of the largest – the Metropolitan Police and Greater Manchester Police – are among them, the number of incidents and crimes examined is over 60 per cent of the total which will have been done by the end of the inspection. It is therefore timely that we report now on what we have found.
- 6.4 Before doing so, it is appropriate to remind readers that the only statistically significant figures in this inspection are those which will be published in our final report in October 2014. However, we can – and do – report on the cases which we have examined.
- 6.5 We are seriously concerned at the picture which is emerging. It is one of weak or absent management and supervision of crime-recording, significant under-recording of crime, and serious sexual offences not being recorded (14 rapes). Some offenders have been issued with out-of-court disposals when their offending history could not justify it, and in some cases they should have been prosecuted.
- 6.6 If the findings for the first set of forces are representative across all forces and all crime types, this implies that 20 percent of crimes may be going unrecorded. Some forces have of course performed better than others. The figures for the forces inspected so far are given in the table at paragraph 6.19.
- 6.7 The reasons for these failures will sometimes be a combination of factors, and sometimes one or two. In some cases, it is simply poor knowledge of the rules and inadequate or absent training in their content and application. In others, poor supervision or management of police

officers will be responsible. Pressure of workload, where police officers have been managed in such a way as to overload them with cases, is also a likely factor.

- 6.8 An inspection of this nature is not a criminal investigation⁴¹. We cannot establish in every case what were the motives – if any – of a police officer who has wrongly failed to record a crime. However, in the light of what we have so far found – which could conceptually be contradicted by later results – it is difficult to conclude that none of these failures was the result of discreditable or unethical behaviour. The failure rate is too high. What is not possible is any measurement of this factor; that is beyond the scope of this work.
- 6.9 The consequences of under-recording of crime are serious and may be severe:
- (a) victims are failed because the crimes against them are not investigated, they have no hope of justice according to law, and they will not receive the services to which they are entitled and which they need;
 - (b) the community is failed because our system of public justice requires offenders to face the law and its sanctions, and if they escape justice not only is it denied, but more victims may be created, increasing the harm done to the community and its safety and security;
 - (c) the levels of crime will be wrongly under-stated, and so detection rates may as a consequence be artificially high, presenting a misleading picture of crime and disorder to the community, police and crime commissioners and senior police management;
 - (d) police chiefs will lack the reliable information which they need to make sound decisions on the deployment of their resources in order to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of their assets; this in turn jeopardises public safety and security.
- 6.10 The picture is of course not all bad. In the paragraphs below, we explain strengths in the system of police-recorded crime as we have observed it.

⁴¹ If HMIC were to find evidence of any criminal activity, we would provide it to the professional standards department of the police force in question or the Independent Police Complaints Commission, as appropriate.

We then proceed to describe and evaluate the weaknesses we have found.

- 6.11 At the end of each field visit by inspectors, senior police officers and staff in each force receive debriefing on what has been found. This means that each inspected force is already aware of HMIC's findings in that force. It is HMIC's intention that individual inspection reports – one for each inspected force – will begin to be published in June 2014.

Strengths

- 6.12 Two strengths in crime-recording practice stand out from the inspection of the 13 forces:

1. **Classification decisions** – We have found little evidence of the misclassification of crime. Our audits show that of the 2,214 crime records reviewed, 2,142⁴² were classified correctly either at the time of initial recording or subsequently.

We have found that these classification decisions are best made by a centralised bureau that is independent of the investigation of the crime, and where a smaller cohort of dedicated staff have been trained in crime-recording. However, in times of great pressure on police budgets, the more expedient and efficient approach is to ensure that attending officers are competent to make sound crime-recording decisions themselves. Understanding the crime-recording regime, including the nature and therefore correct classification of the crime, should be part of the basic competences of every police officer.

2. **Calling the police** – We have found that when victims contact the police through their call centres on both 999 and 101, they are provided with a professional service. So far, we have listened to 3,069 telephone calls from the public of which 3,014 were judged by our inspectors to have been handled well.

⁴² Our methodology for assessing the correct classifications of recorded crimes means that auditors only look at the first three crimes in respect of any one incident. This means that if more than three crimes are reported as having occurred in a single incident, the remaining crimes are not considered. Therefore, the total of crimes classified (either correctly or incorrectly) will, in such cases, not match our finding in relation to the total number of crimes recorded.

Our inspectors are finding that during that important first contact with police call-handlers, they are usually polite, helpful, demonstrate empathy for the concerns of the caller and ask meaningful questions to understand the caller's concerns. This reflects the finding that staff within call-handling centres are specialists who receive considerable training, mentoring and support to be able to do their jobs. It also clearly illustrates a commendable public-focused approach.

This is an improvement on what we found in our 2012 report on anti-social behaviour.⁴³ In that report, we found three forces in which the standard of call-handling in control rooms was not consistently acceptable. This inspection has found that these forces now have good standards of call-handling.

Weaknesses

6.13 This inspection – which has adopted a more rigorous methodology than any earlier HMIC inspection – has so far identified the following six areas of concern in respect of crime-recording practices by police forces:

- Crimes are not always recorded when they should be;
- Specialist departments do not always record crimes;
- Crimes being inappropriately recorded as no-crimes;
- Out-of-court disposals not effected in accordance with national guidelines;
- Lack of adequate training; and
- Failures in quality of supervision.

6.14 Taken together, these weaknesses suggest that there is an overall lack of victim-focus in the police recording of crime. Whilst the first contact victims of crime have with police call-handlers is usually good, our inspection found the following: reports from victims are not always being believed; the oversight of crime-recording could be improved; and when officers are using out-of-court disposals to deal with offenders, victims are not always informed.

⁴³ *A step in the right direction, the policing of anti-social behaviour*, HMIC, 2012.

- 6.15 A failure to engage fully with victims in cases of no-crime decisions or to consider victims' views in cases of out-of-court disposals is not in keeping with the victim-orientated approach advocated in the HOOCR, and means that there is insufficient consideration of their needs and views.

Crimes are not always recorded when they should be

- 6.16 As stated in paragraph 6.6, far too many crimes that should be recorded are going unrecorded.
- 6.17 Our audit thus far indicates that of the 3,102 incidents we scrutinised, 2,551 crimes should have been recorded. Our inspectors found that 2,028 were recorded correctly in accordance with the HOOCR. Among those crimes not recorded when they should have been were sexual offences (including 11 rapes) and crimes of violence, robbery and burglary. We discuss these findings (see paragraph 6.26) and the contributing factors (see paragraphs 6.29–6.33) in more detail later in this report.
- 6.18 As explained earlier in this report, sampling data from each force is being used only as indicative of the accuracy of force crime-recording; it is not of a size to be of statistical significance. Each force sample does, however, contribute to the overall national sample from which we will be able to arrive at a statistically sound assessment for the overall accuracy of crime-recording within England and Wales in our October 2014 report.
- 6.19 As part of the inspection, we carried out an audit on a sample of incident reports in each force. We assessed these incidents to determine if the matter reported required the recording of a crime and, if so, whether a crime was recorded. The results of those audits are summarised in the table below:⁴⁴

⁴⁴ These numbers are not final and may be subject to change as part of the inspection programme. Therefore the data presented here should be treated as a snapshot of what has been seen to date. The data are drawn from a dip-sample of records and as such are not statistically significant or representative for each force but will be used in time to give an indication of performance across England and Wales.

	Number of crimes that should have been recorded	Number of crimes that were recorded
Cheshire	85	58
City of London	59	54
Devon and Cornwall	113	94
Essex	120	110
Gloucestershire	85	76
Greater Manchester	388	265
Gwent	60	52
Hertfordshire	181	130
Metropolitan Police	1126	908
Norfolk	74	63
North Wales	78	73
North Yorkshire	64	56
South Yorkshire	118	89

- 6.20 In paragraph 3.40 we explain how police forces receive reports of crime from the public. Eight of the 13 forces inspected record crime directly from a victim by telephone. The amount of crimes directly recorded in this way varies considerably from force to force; in one force as much as 40 percent of crime was recorded directly in this way. Therefore, it is important to note that the table above contains the data that relate only to the primary recording route used by all forces: that is where a force control room creates an incident record and a crime record is completed, where appropriate, at a later stage. Our final report will contain data from both recording routes.
- 6.21 Although this is an initial finding from inspections of 13 forces out of 43, we have identified the following issues concerning the failure correctly to record crime:
- **Investigating to record** – For eight of the 13 forces inspected, a number of reports of crime have been identified that could have been directly recorded as a crime at the time of first contact with police but were not. Instead, staff attended the scene, awaited specialist support or conducted a telephone investigation some time later, resulting in an investigate-to-record approach to crime-recording. This means that the police do not record the incident as a crime at first, but instead investigate the matter in order to establish whether a crime has been committed. This delay in recording could

result in the degradation of information, the victim having to repeat information already provided, and some crimes not being recorded at all.

It is a clear requirement of HOCR that a crime should be recorded as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that the circumstances reported by or on behalf of the victim amount to a crime. The HOCR provide: “A crime should be recorded as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed ... recording of the crime should not be delayed in order to wait for further details.”

- **Insufficient justification not to record a crime** – In all forces audited, the decision not to record a crime was too often not fully justified in sufficient detail in the incident log. Some entries revealed a lack of understanding of the HOCR and/or the criminal law.

Evidence from interviews also indicated that workload pressures and a lack of knowledge were factors contributing to the decision not to record a crime. It is also possible that the reasons for not recording a crime were poorly communicated between the investigator and the individual responsible for closing the incident log.

- **Poor decision-making** – We have found that where responsibility for the decision not to record a crime rests with the investigator, the quality of decision-making is weaker than where responsibility rests with staff in a crime-recording bureau. This reflects the greater experience of the staff working in the bureau who make regular decisions in accordance with the HOCR and are directly responsible for deciding on the final classification of crimes.
- **Poorly integrated IT systems** – Forces use various IT systems for recording incidents and crimes. Our work so far has established that there are 14 different incident-recording IT systems in use by the 43 police forces of England and Wales and 18 different crime-recording systems. In addition, specialist departments, including those investigating serious sexual offences and dealing with the protection of vulnerable people, often have separate IT systems which are primarily used for case management and information-sharing.

Inadequate crime-recording on IT systems directly affects a force's knowledge about crime. Without an accurate picture, there can be no proper analysis or a full understanding of the threat, risk and possible harm to the public. This knowledge is needed to decide where and how best to deploy police resources. The ability to audit systems

properly is impeded by the number of incompatible IT systems in use and also because some of these systems have not been designed with an effective audit capability.

- 6.22 The following case study illustrates where crime records should have been recorded but were not.

Unrecorded physical assaults

A report of several assaults by a member of staff on a teenage victim within a care home. This is not recorded as a crime with the reason recorded as: *"no violence - (neighbourhood team) dealing"*. Officers attend and state: *"attended location and informant is not on scene - this is an argument which has been recorded on housemates' phones; no violence seen, we will re-attend later"*.

There are no details of any re-visit and officers appear not to have spoken to the victim. The initial report details what happened and this made it clear that the assault occurred before the housemate started recording the crime on her telephone. As there is no evidence that this and the previous assaults did not occur, the crimes should have been recorded, but were not.

Specialist departments do not always record crimes

- 6.23 Inspectors are finding that the more serious crimes reported through specialist investigation departments, such as those involved in the investigation of rape and other sexual offences, are frequently not being recorded on force crime systems. In some instances, they are not being recorded at all.
- 6.24 If a rape, other sexual offence or crime is reported direct to a specialist department, it should be recorded as such in exactly the same way as if the report came in to a call-handling centre.
- 6.25 The work which specialist departments do is recognised as being highly complex for both the police and their partner agencies. In these cases, there are several routes by which reports of crime are received, for example by email or at case conferences, rather than directly from victims or persons acting on behalf of victims. The nature of the crimes with which these departments deal, and the vulnerability of the victims in question, make the accurate recording of crime even more important. Victims cannot be sure to receive the assistance and support they need if a crime has not been recorded.

- 6.26 Through the main audit of reported incidents, we found 11 reports of rape that had not been recorded as a crime when they should have been. We have also found allegations of crime being held on a specialist department's email account which had not been recorded as crimes. The failure by police to record these crimes – committed against the most vulnerable of victims – is of very considerable concern. Forces in which this has occurred were immediately informed of these findings to enable them to take action to review these crimes, ensure they are recorded, and complete any remaining investigation.
- 6.27 The IT systems used by these specialist departments are often separate from the force crime-recording system. This can obstruct the accurate recording of crime. Of the 13 forces we have visited so far, there are seven different types of these separate systems in use. On these, the staff in specialist departments record referrals concerning rape and other crimes, from such organisations such as health and social services. A dip-sample of these specialist systems by our inspectors found three crimes of rape which had not been recorded.
- 6.28 The following are two examples which have been found during our inspection:

Example 1 – Unrecorded rape allegation

A 13-year-old child with autism told his parents that he had been sexually assaulted by a 15-year-old male friend. Police were contacted as it was apparent that an allegation of rape had been made. No crime was recorded on the grounds that to do so would have a negative effect on the victim. The incident was wrongly written off as sexual experimentation. A crime should have been recorded.

Example 2 – Unrecorded rape allegation

A report of rape was made by a doctor on behalf of a female patient. The victim had consented to sex with a male. When it began to hurt and she told him to stop, he continued. This incident was reviewed by a supervisory officer who incorrectly concluded that on the balance of probabilities no crime had occurred. This decision was incorrect because she withdrew her consent when she told him to stop. A crime should have been recorded.

- 6.29 In an effort to understand why some reports of serious sexual offences are not being properly recorded, inspectors are completing detailed audits, reviews of internal policy and procedure, and unannounced visits

to the relevant specialist departments. They are interviewing officers and staff and reviewing the separate IT systems used by them.

- 6.30 In a number of forces, officers were found to be investigating the crime for too long without completing a crime record. This practice is known as investigate-to-record and is contrary to the requirements of the HOCR. In particular, some forces were incorrectly found to be using the maximum period provided by the HOCR to record a crime (see paragraph 3.37), to investigate whether or not a rape had actually occurred, rather than recording the crime from the outset. This can have a significant adverse effect on victims of these types of crime, where being believed from the outset is crucial. If an investigating officer fails to operate on the presumption that the victim is telling the truth, he may put insufficient effort into the investigation, thus compromising its quality and therefore its prospects of success.
- 6.31 Police investigators were also found on occasions to be more focused on carrying out their investigations of these serious offences and as a result had lost sight of the need to ensure that the crimes were recorded correctly and on a timely basis. They need to do both.
- 6.32 We have found that where other organisations such as social services take the lead in public protection cases, police officers sometimes fail to record the fact that a crime occurred. Investigators have told us that colleagues in health and social services have, on occasions, advised them that a crime record is inappropriate for, or unwanted by, the victim. For example, they may not wish to criminalise the suspect. This is incorrect. The act of recording a crime does not criminalise anyone; that only happens when the investigation is finalised and the offender is convicted or admits the offence and agrees to an out-of-court disposal, such as a caution or PND. Although concerns expressed by victims about the potential effect on suspects are understandable in many situations, the HOCR are designed to ensure that crimes are accurately recorded so that decisions can be made by the police about investigations, prosecutions and crime prevention activity.
- 6.33 One example, where workload pressure was given as the basis for not recording a crime, was a report of rape. In this example, it was considered that recording the crime would entail too much work, as the officer made a judgment that the circumstances of the complaint made it unlikely that the case would be prosecuted. This demonstrates a serious failure of duty to that victim and was brought to the immediate attention of the force concerned.

Crimes being inappropriately recorded as no-crimes

- 6.34 On occasions, recorded crimes are found not to have occurred. Where there is additional verifiable information to show this to be the case, the record of the crime can be reclassified and is then recorded as a no-crime. This may occur, for example, where an item that was reported stolen is subsequently found to have been lost, or where it can be shown that a false allegation of crime has been made (see paragraph 3.48 above).
- 6.35 The proportion of recorded crime that is no-crime is approximately three percent. In the 13 forces inspected so far, we have audited 972 reports of robbery, rape and violence that were classified as no-crimes. The correct decision had been made, in accordance with the HOCR, in 796 of these 972 cases. This gives us material concern about the quality of decision-making when reclassifying a crime as a no-crime, thus removing it from police-recorded crime altogether.
- 6.36 Our audit found the following for individual forces:⁴⁵

	Number of incorrect no-crime decisions	Number of correct no-crime decisions	Total number of no-crimes reviewed
Cheshire	29	42	71
City of London	7	34	41
Devon and Cornwall	10	94	104
Essex	5	68	73
Gloucestershire	7	46	53
Greater Manchester	26	65	91
Gwent	0	63	63
Hertfordshire	4	71	75
Metropolitan Police	21	69	90
Norfolk	6	58	64
North Wales	16	60	76
North Yorkshire	34	71	105
South Yorkshire	11	55	66

⁴⁵ These numbers are not final and may be subject to change as part of the inspection programme. Therefore, the data presented here should be treated as a snapshot of what has been seen to date. The data are drawn from a dip-sample of records and as such are not statistically significant or representative for each force, but will be used in time to give an indication of performance across England and Wales.

- 6.37 Our present view is that the principal reasons for these failures include poor knowledge in the application of the HOCR when considering the additional verifiable information that is required to show that a crime has not been committed, and weak or absent supervision.
- 6.38 We also found that the quality of decision-making in respect of no-crime decisions was best when the individual decision-maker was separate from service delivery and subject to oversight by the force crime registrar. This enables a smaller cohort of individuals to develop the necessary expertise to make these decisions. Conversely, when responsibility was not completely separate, we found a corresponding reduction in compliance with the HOCR.
- 6.39 The following case studies illustrate typical errors in no-crime decisions:

Example 1 – Victim not believed

A young man reported he had been grabbed by the throat by a woman at a party. The woman was interviewed and denied assault, claiming the contact was accidental. No further action was therefore taken. However, it was no-crimed on the basis of additional verifiable information after a review of photographs of the victim's neck. The victim did not, however, withdraw the complaint. The decision to no-crime was incorrectly made on the basis that the victim was not believed.

Example 2 – Victim not believed

A male reported that whilst in nightclub toilets, another male held a knife to his neck and demanded his watch, wallet and telephone. The wallet was later found in a car park. CCTV showed the victim entering and leaving the toilets. The victim was very drunk and subsequently ejected from the club by door staff. The victim was challenged about the robbery and confirmed that he was drunk but he said he was certain he had been robbed. The crime report was updated: "*There is no evidence to support the fact that he was robbed and his account of what happened is not credible*". This does not constitute additional verifiable information; the crime should have remained as a recorded crime. The absence of corroborating information and the opinion of the investigating officer as to the complainant's credibility do not negate the need to record the crime.

Out-of-court disposals not effected in accordance with national guidelines⁴⁶

- 6.40 As discussed earlier (see paragraph 3.53), our inspection considered whether out-of-court disposals were being used in accordance with national policy guidance, and in particular whether victims' views were being taken into account before the imposition of an out-of-court disposal, and whether they were given a proper explanation of the decision to effect an out-of-court disposal.
- 6.41 The degree of compliance with the national guidelines is of concern.⁴⁷ We found that in 422 of the 952 cautions, PNDs and community resolutions that we reviewed, there was no record that victims were consulted before the out-of-court disposal was effected. In addition, we found that in 171 of the 1,286 cautions, PNDs, cannabis warnings and community resolutions we reviewed, offenders were given out-of-court disposals when their offending histories ought to have precluded the imposition of such a disposal. In some of these cases, the offender ought to have been charged or summonsed and taken to court.
- 6.42 In too many cases, we found that records kept by police of out-of-court disposals were inadequate. In one force, different forms were in use to record the same type of out-of-court disposal. In other forces, the forms did not contain sufficient detail of what had taken place, and it was therefore impossible to tell whether the offender had been fully informed about the nature and implications of the out-of-court disposal in question.

⁴⁶ HMIC are examining a dip-sample of out-of-court disposals from each force including examples of community resolutions, PNDs, cautions and cannabis cautions. The figures published here are not representative of England and Wales, nor are they indicative of what the findings will be once all inspections are completed. This is a statement of our findings to date from the partially completed programme.

⁴⁷ National guidance for the use of out-of-court disposals is detailed in a number of documents:

- *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from www.xact.org.uk
- *Simple Cautions For Adult Offenders*, 14 November 2013. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *Code of Practice for Adult Conditional Cautions*, 8 April 2000. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *Home Office Police Operational Guidance for penalty Notices for Disorder*, March 2005. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from www.acpo.police.uk

- **Community resolutions** – Our inspectors took a dip-sample of 308 community resolutions and found that in 57 cases the offender’s previous criminal history should have precluded the use of the disposal. In 72 of these cases, we found no record that the wishes of the victim had been considered, and in 43 cases the crime itself was not one for which a community resolution was appropriate.
- **Penalty notices for disorder** – We dip-sampled 328 PND disposals, and found that in 24 cases the offender’s previous criminal history should have precluded the imposition of an out-of-court disposal. In 195 cases, we could find no record that victims’ views had been considered when issuing the PND, and in 173 cases we found nothing recorded to confirm that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of the PND.
- **Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 334 cannabis warnings. In 134 cases, we were unable to find any record of whether the offender had been told about the nature and implications of the warning.
- **Cautions** – Of the 316 cautions – simple cautions and conditional ones – we dip-sampled, we found 13 cases where the offender’s previous criminal history should have precluded the use of a caution. In 155 cases, we could find no record that victims’ views were considered when issuing the caution.

6.43 In 26 of the 316 cautions we sampled, we found nothing recorded to confirm that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of the caution. Where the police issue a caution, the implications for the offender may be any or all of the following:

- The caution will be recorded on the police national computer.
- Where a subsequent Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is carried out on that person, the caution will normally be disclosed. This will depend on a number of factors, including the nature of the offence committed and the length of time that has elapsed since the caution was issued; some older and more minor offences are not disclosed.
- DBS checks may be carried out by an employer if the person applies for certain types of work, including voluntary work, in sensitive areas such as work with children or vulnerable adults. Enhanced DBS checks in these areas may include other information held locally by the police, if the information is considered relevant to the application.
- When a person is found guilty of an offence by a court, the police will inform the court of the previous caution.

- If the caution is for certain sexual offences, the offender's name will be placed on the register of sex offenders.

PNDs, cannabis warnings and community resolutions may also be disclosed in future enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks⁴⁸, and this may affect employment in sensitive jobs.

Lack of adequate training

6.44 Where the level of under-recording of crime or the inappropriate use of the no-crime option are most evident, our inspectors are finding frontline staff are not well-trained in crime-recording procedures and do not fully understand the NCRS or the HOCR.

6.45 There are many classifications of crime within the HOCR and, in some cases, the legal characteristics of the offences have a high degree of similarity. For instance, in the case of being drunk and disorderly, or exhibiting disorderly behaviour causing harassment, alarm or distress, the law's distinctions are difficult, and there may be a valid choice for an officer to make. Police officers need good training to support the judgments they are expected to make.

6.46 Training that is being provided is often focused on those officers and staff who are based within crime bureaux. Whilst this is expedient, and there are examples of force-wide training and training for newly-appointed officers in crime-data recording, police frontline staff are often left with only limited training in this area. Where training was made available, police frontline staff generally welcomed it and considered themselves better equipped to record crimes accurately as a result.

Failures in quality of supervision

6.47 The inspection team has been accumulating evidence that where there is less supervision and oversight of crime-recording, accuracy in crime-recording is poorer.

6.48 Linked to the need for training, there is evidence that some supervisors, including those working in specialist departments, who are expected to make decisions based on the NCRS and the HOCR, have not received

⁴⁸ Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks are used when the individual is applying for employment (paid or otherwise) which may involve contact with children or vulnerable adults. The enhancement of the check includes disclosure not only of previous convictions but also of police intelligence which may be relevant.

any training, and do not know the required crime-recording standard themselves.

- 6.49 In some instances, our inspectors have noted that the gaps in supervision are caused by reductions, or under-staffing, in quality assurance teams whose responsibilities include ensuring the accuracy of crime-recording. These shortfalls in assurance staff are often the result of austerity measures, and are exposing forces to risk in terms of the integrity of their recorded crime data and could, as a consequence, reduce the quality of service to the victims of crime.
- 6.50 Evidence of strong governance was found in some forces, with explicit messages to secure accurate crime-recording data. Where this was supported by well-trained, centralised units responsible for supervision and oversight of crime-recording, accuracy was generally of a higher standard than elsewhere. Instances of officers being disciplined for failures in respect of crime data integrity were few, but were found where there was a clear message from the leadership of the force about the importance of compliance with the NCRS and the HOCR.

Performance pressures

- 6.51 Much has been said and written recently about performance pressures on police officers, including in the context of the under-recording or misclassification of crime in official records.
- 6.52 It is sometimes asserted that performance pressures on police officers create perverse incentives, and lead to failures to record crime in the first place, to delays in the due recording of crime until an assessment has been made of the complaint and its prospects of successful detection, or the downgrading of the classification of an offence to one of a nature less serious than is correct.
- 6.53 No enterprise can be successful without sound information about the condition, capacity, capability, performance and security of supply of its assets. In policing, those assets are predominantly people – police officers and police staff. It is not only legitimate but necessary for the performance of the police to be measured using appropriate instruments.
- 6.54 It is the responsibility of police leaders to ensure that their officers and staff concentrate on what matters most, not what scores highest in the partial and imperfect, discredited performance measurement systems of the past. And whilst a proper qualitative assessment of the relative importance and public good of policing activity is always necessary, police leaders who abandon all means of measuring performance –

appropriately valued – run material risks that the pendulum swings too far the other way, and that their assets will under-perform. The removal or reduction of targets does not and should not lead to the abandonment of any performance measurement.

- 6.55 The quality of the crime data which the police collect and record has material importance in informing the public about their level of safety and security, the police and crime commissioner about the force's performance in the categories of crime in question, and police leaders about the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations and how their assets should best be deployed. No system is likely to be operated consistently with perfection, and there will always be rational and defensible differences in professional judgment about the compliant classification of offences. However, it is essential that crime recording is done honestly and within the rules. Police officers need to understand and properly apply the rules, and appropriate mechanisms must be in place to ensure due compliance, so that the users of crime statistics can rely upon them with confidence.
- 6.56 In this inspection, we have so far found no appreciable and overt evidence of performance pressures leading to failures in crime-recording, whether under-recording or misclassification of crimes. That is perhaps unsurprising, and would only be apparent if either a police officer were to admit to it, or we were to find written evidence of it. We do not rule it out, and in the remainder of the inspection we will remain alert and receptive to any evidence of its existence. The next stage of the inspection includes a survey of police officers and one of its objectives is the obtaining of evidence of this nature.

7. Next steps

- 7.1 Our definitive findings in October 2014 will be based on the most extensive national audit and inspection ever undertaken by HMIC into crime-recording integrity.
- 7.2 Forces visited are already responding to our findings and are adapting their practices as feedback is provided.
- 7.3 We will complete the remainder of our in-force audits and inspections during the next few months. Our final report will be published in October 2014.

Annex A – Terms of reference

Background

As part of our 2013/14 inspection programme, HMIC was commissioned by the Home Secretary to undertake inspections within all Home Office police forces to answer the question:

“To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?”

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary has confirmed this commitment to the Home Affairs Select Committee.⁴⁹

HMIC understands that forces can only record what is reported to them, although they should actively work to encourage reporting of crime, and that reporting rates vary for crime types. We also know that new crime types emerge. However, reported crime is an important part of the overall picture and sound recording ensures:

- the police can plan their work to achieve the best outcomes for victims and communities;
- the public, government, local policing bodies and HMIC have an accurate picture of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in a particular area; and
- the victims of crime and ASB are provided with appropriate access to victim services.

Scope

The desired outcome of the inspection is an improvement in police-recording of crime data, leading to increased public trust in police-recorded crime information.

This inspection will examine not only how well the HOCR are applied by forces, but also the culture and behaviours around crime-recording, and the service the police provide to victims. At the heart of the inspection will be the interests of victims, which will be explored through follow-up telephone calls to some victims where crimes were not recorded.

⁴⁹ Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) meeting 14 May 2013.

The inspection will look at crimes which, when repeated, cause significant harm to the community, such as criminal damage or other crimes relating to anti-social behaviour and will also consider the appropriateness of crime outcomes, including cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder, cannabis warnings and community resolutions. This inspection will also review standards around decisions taken to no-crime (not count) a crime that has already been recorded.

The scope of this inspection includes all 43 Home Office forces. The British Transport Police (BTP) and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) will be asked if they wish to be included within the programme. It does not include the National Crime Agency, any other non-Home Office forces, or forces of Crown Dependencies or UK overseas territories.

Aims and objectives

The specific objective of the inspection is to establish in each force;

- how confident the public can be in the effectiveness of police crime-recording;
- how effective the leadership and governance of crime data integrity is;
- how effectively victims are placed at the centre of crime-recording decisions;
- whether crime outcomes (detections) suit the needs of victims, offenders, the criminal justice system and the wider public interest; and
- if no-crime decisions adhere to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).

Methodology

The objectives will be achieved via:

- the requisition, examination and assessment of key documents from forces, including (but not exclusively) policy and guidance in respect of the forces' approach to receiving reports of crime and of crime-recording;
- an assessment of the crime reporting routes used and the proportion of crime recorded through each route;
- an audit of a representative sample of reports of crime for each of the reporting routes that can be audited;
- interviews with key interested parties and senior police officers and staff;
- an in-force reality-testing programme to examine, check and validate documentation, procedures and practices;
- liaison with the police professional lead, local governance bodies for policing, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)

and Home Office reference group to ensure effective liaison with the service during the conduct of the review;

- liaison with relevant professionals and specialists in these areas;
- liaison with police and police staff associations;
- a representative survey of the public to gauge the level of trust the public have in police crime data and to understand the aspects of crime-recording which really matter to them; and
- a representative survey of police officers to identify what officers think about crime-recording, to understand what training they get, what messages they receive from senior and middle managers regarding crime-recording integrity and whether there is any pressure placed on them to record or not to record crimes.

The methodology has been devised with the advice of the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee.

Timeframe

The timescales below give an indication of when it is anticipated key stages of the work will be completed.

- Stage 1 assessment of the crime-reporting routes used by each force – by 1 January 2014.
- Confirm inspection schedule and resource requirements for the auditing and fieldwork stages – by 1 January 2014.
- In-force auditing and fieldwork – 1 February to 15 August 2014.
- Provision of an interim report to the Home Secretary – April 2014.
- Publication of individual force reports – June to October 2014.
- Publication of a national report – October 2014.

Product

This interim report will be provided to the Home Secretary to provide an update on the initial inspection findings. As the programme progresses, individual force reports will be published for each force. This will ensure information is available promptly and will be most useful to all interested parties. These reports will not report a statistically robust estimate of the accuracy of crime-recording at a force level but will report on the quality of the force crime-recording and crime outcome arrangements.

A national thematic report covering the main points and themes will be published once all forces have been inspected. This report will provide a

statistically robust estimate of crime-recording accuracy at a national level for reports of crime which are primarily routed through incident records or a centralised crime-recording bureau. It will also include a judgment as to the level of confidence the public can have in the other routes by which crimes can be reported.

Annex B – Force inspection dates

CRIME DATA INTEGRITY - FORCE INSPECTION DATES		
Month 2014	Forces	Dates (week commencing)
February	North Yorkshire; Devon and Cornwall	10
	Essex; Gwent	17
	South Yorkshire	24
March	Norfolk; Gloucestershire; MPS	3
	North Wales	10
	Cheshire; Hertfordshire	17
	GMP; City of London	24
	Cleveland; Wiltshire	31
April	Humberside	7
May	Leicestershire	12
	Suffolk; Northamptonshire; West Yorkshire	19
	West Midlands	26
June	Cambridgeshire; Dorset	2
	Lincolnshire; Durham	9
	Sussex; Lancashire	16
	Hampshire; Staffordshire	23
	Dyfed Powys; Kent	30
July	Nottinghamshire; Merseyside	7
	Avon and Somerset; Surrey	14
	Cumbria; Bedfordshire	21
	Warwickshire; West Mercia; Derbyshire	28
August	South Wales; Northumbria; Thames Valley	4

Annex C – Methodology for the national audit

The Home Office provides national standards for the recording and counting of notifiable offences by police forces in England and Wales (referred to as 'police-recorded crime' or PRC). These standards are known as the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime (commonly referred to as HOCR). The rules were complemented in April 2002 by the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). And this additional standard received the full support of chief constables.

One of the main purposes of the NCRS is to improve the consistency of recording of an allegation of a crime made by a victim or his representative. Once an allegation is confirmed, forces must record the crime formally by applying the NCRS balance of probability test unless there is credible evidence to the contrary. Clearly, a force's ability to record these details properly makes for a system that can be audited more easily, whether the system is audited by HMIC or the force.

Aim of the audit

The CDI audit aims to measure the national rate of compliance of police-recorded crime against these national standards (HOCR and NCRS). Based on a representative sample of records as reported by the victim that appear to be crimes, the compliance rate is calculated as the proportion of crimes that were correctly recorded as a crime, compared with the total that should have been recorded as a crime. Crimes correctly identified as such but assigned to the wrong offence classification will also be audited.

Alongside our calculation of the national average compliance rate, we will also calculate the compliance rate of specific crime types at a national level.⁵⁰ These figures will show how rates vary by these crime types and help to avoid any misinterpretation that the same compliance rate applies to different crime types.

We do not intend to make judgments about individual forces' crime-recording arrangements based on compliance rates alone because the sample sizes are too small to achieve an acceptable level of precision

⁵⁰ Covers the 43 police forces in England and Wales, but excludes the British Transport Police.

(within +/-5%). The cost of obtaining sufficient sample sizes at force level is unaffordable.

At force level, our inspections will be based upon a qualitative assessment of local recording arrangements. This will cover:

- leadership and governance
- systems and processes
- people and skills
- quality of service provided to the victim.

We may use the national sampling data as part of a force inspection, but only if this is supported by other qualitative assessments of the force's crime-recording arrangements.

The national audit will not examine:

- **Non-crimes** that were wrongly recorded as crimes. These make up a small percentage of cases.⁵¹
- **Fraud offences.** Action Fraud (a public body) has taken responsibility for recording fraud reported by victims in all police force areas, although the transfer of when this took place varied between forces.
- **Out-of-court disposals** which will be examined as part of the local force inspections.

Time period the sample will cover

The sample will be drawn from the same 12-month period for all forces and will provide a long enough period to measure accuracy of recording. The 12 months to 31 October 2013 were chosen as this accommodated HMIC's crime record route analysis in December 2013 (described in more detail below), required before the audit. However, the force-level inspections will take account of changes in arrangements by the force since the samples were taken.

⁵¹ From over 300 incidents examined as part of an inspection into Kent (2013) crime-recording, only one crime was recorded when it should not have been. This case was a technical failure, where a victim-based crime had been recorded, but there was no victim confirmation, so it should have remained a crime-related incident (CRI). Further work by HMIC found that from a sample of almost 3,000 incidents from eight forces, there were no cases of over-recorded crime.

Population to be examined

Our aim is to draw as representative a sample as possible, irrespective of the ways in which different forces record different crimes. However, the routes by which different crimes come into forces' recording systems vary. The majority enter via the incident IT system, but many come by other routes such as reporting at a front desk in a police station or to specialist units (e.g. the reporting of a rape). The possibility of bias would arise if, in drawing our samples, we were to fail to take sufficient account of differences in recording arrangements in individual forces.

To test for this risk, workshops were held with each force to identify the proportions of different crimes notified by different reporting routes. The results were validated by crime type against the force's recorded crime figures uploaded onto the Home Office database.⁵² Validation identified that of the 43 forces, 40 provided figures which were broadly in line with those on the Home Office database. The remaining forces provided snapshots of data covering part of the 12-month period. This was mainly due to changes in these forces' IT systems, which made it difficult to provide a full set of data. The figures from these forces were scaled up to estimate 12-month outputs, and were accepted as similar to those figures on the Home Office database.

The results of the crime record route analysis indicated that 92 percent⁵³ of crime that is recorded (excluding fraud) came from a route that can be audited across all forces (these were crimes reported through police control rooms, directly to crime-recording centres, or both). The sample population of the audit was therefore based on incidents drawn from these auditable routes.

Of the remainder, one percent came from specialist routes, which included public protection and rape counselling units. The other seven percent came from a variety of routes, such as reports by a member of the public to an officer on foot patrol or at the front desk of a police station. As far as is practical, these other routes will be assessed through local inspection.

⁵² The Annual Data Requirement 111-114 (a statutory requirement of forces to provide this data to the Home Secretary under the Police Act 1996) covers the provisions of aggregated monthly data on police-recorded crime.

⁵³ These figures are for all recorded crime (excluding fraud); for the crime types these figures varied from 86% for robbery and sexual offences, to 97% for burglary.

Selection of crime types

To establish a comparable set of crime types to be audited, a review was conducted of each force's opening incident codes. As we expected, some forces could provide more detail than others. The Metropolitan Police Service, for instance, has 16 opening incident codes, whereas Essex has more than 200 opening codes. However, we were able to identify a number of common opening codes sharing the same crime classifications:

- violence (with or without injury)
- sexual offences (including rape)
- robbery
- burglary
- criminal damage
- other offences (excluding fraud) – this is a residual category of everything except the previous five categories and fraud.

Rape cases will be separately audited via a dip-sample,⁵⁴ as the numbers are too small to form part of a separate sub-group to produce robust statistical outputs: based on the 12 months ending 31 October 2013, they made up less than one percent of all recorded crime, excluding fraud. Forces adopt different approaches to receiving reports of rape, which include specialist units, and therefore the standard audit approach will not be sufficient to provide a full picture of rape recording accuracy.

Sampling technique

Our sampling technique is designed to provide auditors with sufficient records to test the accuracy of the individual crime types (listed above) with a similar level of confidence. We decided that the most efficient way to achieve this was to take a disproportionate stratified sample.⁵⁵ There were two reasons for our decision:

- The six crime types (violence, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, criminal damage and other offences) varied in size. Robbery and sexual offences each account for about two percent of recorded crime, whereas

⁵⁴ A dip-sample is a selection of records chosen to provide indicative rather than statistically robust evidence.

⁵⁵ A sampling method in which the sample size for a particular group is not proportional to the relative size of the total.

violence accounts for about 17 percent. The smaller sub-groups will be selected with a higher sampling fraction than the rest of the other sub-groups to ensure a larger number of them are in the final sample. This allows a better statistical comparison to be made.

- Part of the audit aims to look at a dip-sample of rape records, to provide indicative results. By having a disproportionate sample of sexual offences (i.e. the sample is larger than if a proportionate approach had been taken) it is more likely that these will include more rape offences.

The samples of the six crime types will be weighted to ensure that the 'all crime' estimate is a reflection of the crime type proportions.

Sample size and confidence interval

We apply the 95 percent confidence level as the generally accepted level of certainty used in statistical tests. Any sample may produce estimates that differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been examined. At the 95 percent confidence level, with many repeats of an audit under the same conditions, we expect the confidence interval would contain the true population value 95 times out of 100.

The audit aims to select a random sample size necessary to yield confidence intervals⁵⁶ of no more than +/- three percentage points for all crimes and +/- five percentage points for individual crime types (at the 95 percent confidence level) at the national level. To achieve the appropriate sample size of incidents requires a prior estimate of the accuracy of force's recording.

Our prior estimate is based upon HMIC's 2012 inspection of 12 forces' recorded crime figures, together with results from a similar inspection of Kent⁵⁷ in April 2013. From this evidence, we have adopted an assumption that 75 percent of classifications were correct and this suggests a sample of around 5,500

⁵⁶ The confidence interval provides an estimated range of values that the given population being examined is likely to fall within. For example, if an audit found that 85 percent of crimes were correctly recorded with a confidence interval of +/- three percent, then we could be confident that between 82 percent and 88 percent of crimes were correctly recorded of the population for the period being examined.

⁵⁷ *Crime recording in Kent - A report commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*, HMIC, June 2013.

crimes⁵⁸ across the six crime types (at the 95 percent confidence level) will be examined.

Sample selection

Not all incidents generate a crime. Evidence from previous HMIC crime-recording audits suggests the ratio between incidents opened with the 'all crime' crime code is 1.5 incidents to each crime. For example, if there were 300 incidents opened with a crime opening code, this may yield 200 notifiable crimes. This ratio varies by the type of crime (it may be higher or lower) and risks some under- or over-sampling. To reduce this risk, a ratio of 1.5 will be applied to all crime types, with an additional ten percent of records being chosen to guard against crime types which may have a higher ratio. However, we will review the outputs after the first group of forces has been audited, and where necessary adjust the sampling fractions.

A sample will be taken from the list of records that each force provides to HMIC for the 12-month period to 31 October 2013. These lists will contain entries such as the unique reference ID, the date the record was raised and the crime type opening and closing code. Duplicate records will be removed along with other ineligible records (e.g. fraud offences).

The sample will use the opening codes as they will include incidents⁵⁹ which are closed incorrectly but may contain crimes. Take, for example, a call from a victim of burglary which is opened on the incident system as a burglary, the incident record contains enough information to record a burglary, but is then closed *incorrectly* as a suspicious incident. Were we to draw our sample on closing crime codes (rather than opening incident codes), this burglary would have been missed because it was not closed as a crime. Of course, if the situation were reversed – opening incident code 'suspicious incident' and closing code 'burglary' – then the nature of the risk is similar, but we judge that the scale of the risk is less.

To allow an equal probability of selection across the 12-month reference period, the selected sample from each force will be grouped into the month the record

⁵⁸ This figure is the number of crimes that should have been recorded based on HMIC's auditors' assessment in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules.

⁵⁹ Assigning incidents to crime may be done on incomplete or uncertain information. Therefore the accuracy rate must be viewed as an estimate.

was raised, and a random record will be selected from each month. Therefore, the first 12 records will contain a randomised record from each month.

Audit quality and validation

The quality of audit decisions depends on the knowledge, experience and skills of the auditors. All auditors are required to attend a three-day Home Office Counting Rules and Crime Data Integrity course provided by HMIC's specialist staff. The training was overseen by the national crime registrar who attended some of the courses and validated the course content.

Monitoring quality during the audit program

To ensure consistency, the results of each audit will be subject to peer review by an expert outside the audit team. In addition, forces will have the opportunity to review our decisions. We aim to resolve any issues with the force in the first instance, but if no agreement can be reached, then the matter will be passed to the CDI NCRS expert at HMIC for consideration in consultation with the national crime registrar. The ultimate decision on reconciliation of any disputed cases will rest with HMIC's senior reporting officer (SRO) for the CDI inspection.

Gaps in knowledge

The methodology for the crime data audit has been designed to provide the best evidence in the time and resources available. However, there are some gaps which are likely to account for a small proportion of crimes and which are more difficult to audit. One issue in particular attracted our attention: whether some anti-social behaviour incidents are miscoded crime incidents.

To estimate the probability of such an occurrence, we analysed the relevant data from our 2012 audit. This rough estimate suggested that only about three percent of ASB incidents should have been recorded as crimes. While we would have preferred to review this issue in more depth this year, the larger samples involved for these apparently rare occurrences could not be accommodated. Instead, we intend to review this issue further as part of next year's audit.

Crime Statistics Advisory Committee

HMIC's Crime Data Integrity Inspection

Methodology for the national audit

1. The Home Office provides national standards for the recording and counting of notifiable offences by police forces in England and Wales (referred to as 'police-recorded crime' or PRC). These standards are known as the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime (commonly referred to as HOCR). The rules were complemented in April 2002 by the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). And this additional standard received the full support of chief constables.
2. One of the main purposes of the NCRS is to improve the consistency of recording of an allegation of a crime made by a victim or his representative. Once an allegation is confirmed, forces must record the crime formally by applying the NCRS balance of probability test unless there is credible evidence to the contrary. Clearly, a force's ability to record these details properly makes for a system that can be audited more easily, whether the system is audited by HMIC or the force.

Aim of the audit

3. The CDI audit aims to measure the national rate of compliance of police-recorded crime against these national standards (HOCR and NCRS). Based on a representative sample of records as reported by the victim that appear to be crimes, the compliance rate is calculated as the proportion of crimes that were correctly recorded as a crime, compared with the total that should have been recorded as a crime. Crimes correctly identified as such but assigned to the wrong offence classification will also be audited.
4. Alongside our calculation of the national average compliance rate, we will also calculate the compliance rate of specific crime types at a national level.¹ These figures will show how rates vary by these crime types and help to avoid any misinterpretation that the same compliance rate applies to different crime types.

We do not intend to make judgments about individual forces' crime-recording arrangements based on compliance rates alone because the sample sizes are too small to achieve an acceptable level of precision (within +/-5%). The cost of obtaining sufficient sample sizes at force level is unaffordable.

5. At force level, our inspections will be based upon a qualitative assessment of local recording arrangements. This will cover:
 - leadership and governance
 - systems and processes
 - people and skills
 - quality of service provided to the victim.

¹ Covers the 43 police forces in England and Wales, but excludes the British Transport Police.

We may use the national sampling data as part of a force inspection, but only if this is supported by other qualitative assessments of the force's crime-recording arrangements.

6. The national audit will not examine:

- **Non-crimes** that were wrongly recorded as crimes. These make up a small percentage of cases.²
- **Fraud offences.** Action Fraud (a public body) has taken responsibility for recording fraud reported by victims in all police force areas, although the transfer of when this took place varied between forces.
- **Out-of-court disposals** which will be examined as part of the local force inspections.

Time period the sample will cover

7. The sample will be drawn from the same 12-month period for all forces and will provide a long enough period to measure accuracy of recording. The 12 months to 31 October 2013 were chosen as this accommodated HMIC's crime record route analysis in December 2013 (described in more detail below), required before the audit. However, the force-level inspections will take account of changes in arrangements by the force since the samples were taken.

Population to be examined

8. Our aim is to draw as representative a sample as possible, irrespective of the ways in which different forces record different crimes. However, the routes by which different crimes come into forces' recording systems vary. The majority enter via the incident IT system, but many come by other routes such as reporting at a front desk in a police station or to specialist units (e.g. the reporting of a rape). The possibility of bias would arise if, in drawing our samples, we were to fail to take sufficient account of differences in recording arrangements in individual forces.
9. To test for this risk, workshops were held with each force to identify the proportions of different crimes notified by different reporting routes. The results were validated by crime type against the force's recorded crime figures uploaded onto the Home Office database.³ Validation identified that of the 43 forces, 40 provided figures which were broadly in line with those on the Home Office database. The remaining forces provided snapshots of data covering part of the 12-month period. This was mainly due to changes in these forces' IT systems, which made it difficult to provide a full set of data. The

² From over 300 incidents examined as part of an inspection into Kent (2013) crime-recording, only one crime was recorded when it should not have been. This case was a technical failure, where a victim-based crime had been recorded, but there was no victim confirmation, so it should have remained a crime-related incident (CRI). Further work by HMIC found that from a sample of almost 3,000 incidents from eight forces, there were no cases of over-recorded crime.

³ The Annual Data Requirement 111-114 (a statutory requirement of forces to provide this data to the Home Secretary under the Police Act 1996) covers the provisions of aggregated monthly data on police-recorded crime.

figures from these forces were scaled up to estimate 12-month outputs, and were accepted as similar to those figures on the Home Office database.

10. The results of the crime record route analysis indicated that 92 percent⁴ of crime that is recorded (excluding fraud) came from a route that can be audited across all forces (these were crimes reported through police control rooms, directly to crime-recording centres, or both). The sample population of the audit was therefore based on incidents drawn from these auditable routes.
11. Of the remainder, one percent came from specialist routes, which included public protection and rape counselling units. The other seven percent came from a variety of routes, such as reports by a member of the public to an officer on foot patrol or at the front desk of a police station. As far as is practical, these other routes will be assessed through local inspection.

Selection of crime types

12. To establish a comparable set of crime types to be audited, a review was conducted of each force's opening incident codes. As we expected, some forces could provide more detail than others. The Metropolitan Police Service, for instance, has 16 opening incident codes, whereas Essex has more than 200 opening codes. However, we were able to identify a number of common opening codes sharing the same crime classifications:

- violence (with or without injury)
- sexual offences (including rape)
- robbery
- burglary
- criminal damage
- other offences (excluding fraud) – this is a residual category of everything except the previous five categories and fraud.

13. Rape cases will be separately audited via a dip-sample,⁵ as the numbers are too small to form part of a separate sub-group to produce robust statistical outputs: based on the 12 months ending 31 October 2013, they made up less than one percent of all recorded crime, excluding fraud. Forces adopt different approaches to receiving reports of rape, which include specialist units, and therefore the standard audit approach will not be sufficient to provide a full picture of rape recording accuracy.

Sampling technique

14. Our sampling technique is designed to provide auditors with sufficient records to test the accuracy of the individual crime types (listed above) with a similar level of confidence. We decided that the most efficient way to achieve this was to take a disproportionate stratified sample.⁶ There were two reasons for our decision:

⁴ These figures are for all recorded crime (excluding fraud); for the crime types these figures varied from 86% for robbery and sexual offences, to 97% for burglary.

⁵ A dip-sample is a selection of records chosen to provide indicative rather than statistically robust evidence.

⁶ A sampling method in which the sample size for a particular group is not proportional to the relative size of the total.

- The six crime types (violence, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, criminal damage and other offences) varied in size. Robbery and sexual offences each account for about two percent of recorded crime, whereas violence accounts for about 17 percent. The smaller sub-groups will be selected with a higher sampling fraction than the rest of the other sub-groups to ensure a larger number of them are in the final sample. This allows a better statistical comparison to be made.
- Part of the audit aims to look at a dip-sample of rape records, to provide indicative results. By having a disproportionate sample of sexual offences (i.e. the sample is larger than if a proportionate approach had been taken) it is more likely that these will include more rape offences.

The samples of the six crime types will be weighted to ensure that the 'all crime' estimate is a reflection of the crime type proportions.

Sample size and confidence interval

15. We apply the 95 percent confidence level as the generally accepted level of certainty used in statistical tests. Any sample may produce estimates that differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been examined. At the 95 percent confidence level, with many repeats of an audit under the same conditions, we expect the confidence interval would contain the true population value 95 times out of 100.
16. The audit aims to select a random sample size necessary to yield confidence intervals⁷ of no more than +/- three percentage points for all crimes and +/- five percentage points for individual crime types (at the 95 percent confidence level) at the national level. To achieve the appropriate sample size of incidents requires a prior estimate of the accuracy of force's recording.
17. Our prior estimate is based upon HMIC's 2012 inspection of 12 forces' recorded crime figures, together with results from a similar inspection of Kent⁸ in April 2013. From this evidence, we have adopted an assumption that 75 percent of classifications were correct and this suggests a sample of around 5,500 crimes⁹ across the six crime types (at the 95 percent confidence level) will be examined.

⁷ The confidence interval provides an estimated range of values that the given population being examined is likely to fall within. For example, if an audit found that 85 percent of crimes were correctly recorded with a confidence interval of +/- three percent, then we could be confident that between 82 percent and 88 percent of crimes were correctly recorded of the population for the period being examined.

⁸ *Crime recording in Kent - A report commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*, HMIC, June 2013.

⁹ This figure is the number of crimes that should have been recorded based on HMIC's auditors' assessment in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules.

Sample selection

18. Not all incidents generate a crime. Evidence from previous HMIC crime-recording audits suggests the ratio between incidents opened with the 'all crime' crime code is 1.5 incidents to each crime. For example, if there were 300 incidents opened with a crime opening code, this may yield 200 notifiable crimes. This ratio varies by the type of crime (it may be higher or lower) and risks some under- or over-sampling. To reduce this risk, a ratio of 1.5 will be applied to all crime types, with an additional ten percent of records being chosen to guard against crime types which may have a higher ratio. However, we will review the outputs after the first group of forces has been audited, and where necessary adjust the sampling fractions.
19. A sample will be taken from the list of records that each force provides to HMIC for the 12-month period to 31 October 2013. These lists will contain entries such as the unique reference ID, the date the record was raised and the crime type opening and closing code. Duplicate records will be removed along with other ineligible records (e.g. fraud offences).
20. The sample will use the opening codes as they will include incidents¹⁰ which are closed incorrectly but may contain crimes. Take, for example, a call from a victim of burglary which is opened on the incident system as a burglary, the incident record contains enough information to record a burglary, but is then closed *incorrectly* as a suspicious incident. Were we to draw our sample on closing crime codes (rather than opening incident codes), this burglary would have been missed because it was not closed as a crime. Of course, if the situation were reversed – opening incident code 'suspicious incident' and closing code 'burglary' – then the nature of the risk is similar, but we judge that the scale of the risk is less.
21. To allow an equal probability of selection across the 12-month reference period, the selected sample from each force will be grouped into the month the record was raised, and a random record will be selected from each month. Therefore, the first 12 records will contain a randomised record from each month.

Audit quality and validation

22. The quality of audit decisions depends on the knowledge, experience and skills of the auditors. All auditors are required to attend a three-day Home Office Counting Rules and Crime Data Integrity course provided by HMIC's specialist staff. The training was overseen by the national crime registrar who attended some of the courses and validated the course content.

Monitoring quality during the audit program

23. To ensure consistency, the results of each audit will be subject to peer review by an expert outside the audit team. In addition, forces will have the opportunity to review our decisions. We aim to resolve any issues with the force in the first instance, but if no agreement can be reached, then the matter will be passed to the CDI NCRS expert at HMIC for consideration in consultation with the national crime registrar. The ultimate

¹⁰ Assigning incidents to crime may be done on incomplete or uncertain information. Therefore the accuracy rate must be viewed as an estimate.

decision on reconciliation of any disputed cases will rest with HMIC's senior reporting officer (SRO) for the CDI inspection.

Gaps in knowledge

24. The methodology for the crime data audit has been designed to provide the best evidence in the time and resources available. However, there are some gaps which are likely to account for a small proportion of crimes and which are more difficult to audit. One issue in particular attracted our attention: whether some anti-social behaviour incidents are miscoded crime incidents.
25. To estimate the probability of such an occurrence, we analysed the relevant data from our 2012 audit. This rough estimate suggested that only about three percent of ASB incidents should have been recorded as crimes. While we would have preferred to review this issue in more depth this year, the larger samples involved for these apparently rare occurrences could not be accommodated. Instead, we intend to review this issue further as part of next year's audit.

Crime Statistics Advisory Committee
Improving official statistics on domestic abuse

Purpose

1. To inform and seek the Committee's views of an HMIC recommendation to improve the coverage of official statistics on domestic abuse.

Action

2. The Committee are invited to comment on the paper and agree its response to the HMIC recommendation.

Background

3. The official definition of domestic abuse and violence shared across-government, the police service and partner agencies refers to:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- *Psychological*
- *Physical*
- *Sexual*
- *Financial*
- *Emotional*

4. Controlling behaviour is defined as: "a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour" and coercive behaviour as: "an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim." The definition also includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.
5. This is not a legal definition as there is not specific legal offence of domestic abuse or violence. In the police recorded crime series, which is an offence-based collection, the level of domestic abuse is hidden as incidents will be recorded under the relevant offence, such as homicide; sexual or physical assault; harassment, or stalking.
6. There are questions within the Crime Survey for England and Wales which tap into the different elements of domestic abuse covered by the official definition and estimates of domestic abuse are published from the survey. However, the sample size is not sufficient to produce such estimates at police force area level.

7. There is significant user demand for official statistics on the number of offences with a domestic abuse component recorded by the police.

HMIC inspection of the police response to domestic abuse

8. The HMIC recently reported on a thematic inspection of the police response to domestic abuse¹. The inspection was commissioned by the Home Secretary in 2013 and focuses on the quality of investigation and the priority given to this type of crime.
9. While recognising improvements since the previous review, ten years ago, the HMIC's report was critical of the police response to domestic abuse. The report made 11 recommendations for improvement. One of the recommendation was about improving data and stated:

"Data collected on domestic abuse needs to be consistent, comparable, accessible and accurate so that it can be used to monitor progress. This requires the Home Office to develop national data standards in relation to domestic abuse data. The data should be collected by police forces and provided to the Home Office, for example as part of the annual data return. These should include data standards for both crimes and incidents, and clear and unambiguous definitions of important terms such as 'repeat victim', to ensure like-for-like comparisons can be made. In addition, the views of victims are an essential element in monitoring police effectiveness. The Home Office should ensure that the views of victims of domestic abuse are incorporated routinely and consistently into national monitoring arrangements. The new national arrangements for collecting data and capturing the views of victims should be in place by the start of the 2015/16 financial year."

10. Any new data collection on offences that are related to domestic abuse would be welcomed by users of official statistics on crime.

Next steps

11. The Home Office have not yet responded to the HMIC recommendations but the Committee may wish to consider whether or not it wishes to give advice to the Home Secretary on the possible collection of such data.
12. If the HMIC recommendation is accepted by Government, the ONS intend to work with Home Office colleagues to bring forward proposals for the collection and presentation of such data for consideration by the Committee in due course.

John Flatley
Crime Statistics & Analysis team
Analysis and Data Access, Office for National Statistics

¹ <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/news/news-feed/police-response-to-domestic-abuse/>

CRIME STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Report of National Crime Registrar

CSAC(14)09

Purpose/Issue

1. This paper is the regular report to the Committee from the National Crime Registrar. In accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, these reports are intended to either outline any proposed changes to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) in detail or, where there is no need to do so, to advise accordingly.

Action

2. The Committee is invited to note the contents of this paper

Background

3. As set out in the Committee's terms of reference, the National Crime Registrar (NCR) has delegated authority to determine as an ex officio member whether changes proposed to the HOCR or the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) require referral to it for consideration prior to implementation.

Crime Recording Strategic Steering Group

4. The National Crime Recording Strategic Steering group (NCRSSG) has not met since the last CSAC meeting of the committee. The meeting scheduled for March was postponed to a new date in June. In the main this was to allow time for the PASC and HMIC interim reports to be published so that the SSG would be better placed to consider recommendations and next steps. The SSG will also be taking forward oversight of the Home Office lead elements of the project for the re-designation of police recorded crime data as national statistics. As such, the SSG membership may change temporarily to reflect this additional work.

2014/15 Home Office Counting Rules

5. The HOCR for 2014/15 were published on 1st April following final agreement by Ministers. All changes agreed during the year have been incorporated.

Update on the Weeding of Never or Rarely Recorded Crimes

6. At the committee's September 2013 meeting a paper was presented to consider a revision to the threshold by which crimes are added to the notifiable list (and are

therefore included in crime statistics) and a proposal to weed from the list certain offences which are rarely recorded. The committee's advice was that they had no objection to those proposals. The committee was subsequently given sight (by correspondence) of the precise list of offences proposed for weeding and had no comments or objections. This list was then presented to Ministers with a note of the committee's advice. After consideration of the proposal and examination of the list of offences suggested for weeding Ministers have concluded that this should not be taken forward at this stage preferring to wait until HMIC have reported in the autumn and then to re-consider this alongside any other recommended changes that may result from that report.

Steve Bond
National Crime Registrar
30 April 2014