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National Statistician publishes independent report on crime statistics for England and Wales

An independent review of official crime statistics for England and Wales by National Statistician, Jil Matheson, reports today. The Home Secretary invited the National Statistician to conduct the review following her decision to move the publication of crime statistics out of the Home Office to demonstrate their political independence.

Key findings are that:

- the Office for National Statistics (ONS) should assume responsibility for the independent reporting and publication of crime statistics;
- the presentation of crime statistics needs further improvement to provide clarity about the coverage of the two sources of crime statistics – the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime – and to maximise the benefits of complementary sources to provide a fuller picture of crime; and
- there should be transparent decision-making on changes that affect the published crime statistics.

Jil Matheson said: "My recommendations are designed to improve the public's understanding of official crime statistics, and their confidence in them. Crime statistics are crucial to inform policy, decision making and public debate. They also allow people to assess the risk of crime in their own neighbourhoods."

The British Crime Survey and police recorded crime measure different although complementary, and often overlapping phenomena. They measure people's experience of crime, and crimes reported to, and recorded by, the police. There are long standing challenges with coverage and presentation of crime statistics, real difficulties in definition and measurement, and concerns about a lack of public trust in the statistics. This review addressed these issues.

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Background Notes:

1. The National Statistician's review of crime statistics began on 7 January 2011. A web based consultation open to the public ran from 10 February to 10 March 2011.
2. The review was commissioned by the Home Secretary in December 2010 to consider gaps, discrepancies and discontinuities within crime statistics; to recommend which body was best placed to assume responsibility for the publication of crime statistics and their associated data collection systems; and to produce an action plan for the implementation of recommendations from the UK Statistics Authority's report *Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales* published in May 2010. Details of the terms of reference for the review can be found on the National Statistician's pages of the UK Statistics Authority website at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reviews/national-statistician-s-review-of-crime-statistics.html>
3. During the review the National Statistician consulted widely with those with an interest in crime statistics including politicians, academia, the media, the police and the public.
4. The British Crime Survey is a sample survey of 46,000 households in England and Wales.
5. The report can be found on the National Statistician's pages of the UK Statistics Authority website at <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-reports/index.html>.

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