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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

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19 December 2016

Dear Ian

**ASSESSMENT OF STATISTICS ON CRIME IN ENGLAND AND WALES**

Thank you for the correspondence outlining the actions that have been taken to address the requirements in Assessment Report number 268 on *Statistics on Crime in England and Wales*. On behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, I have reviewed these on the advice of the Assessment team and I am pleased to confirm the continuing National Statistics status of the crime statistics that originate from the Crime Survey for England and Wales<sup>1</sup> (CSEW). I am also pleased to confirm restoration of the National Statistics status of statistics about unlawful deaths based on the Homicide Index<sup>2</sup>.

As you know, following the publication of the Assessment report, we have actively prioritised the improvement of crime statistics, including the Authority hosting a Better Statistics, Better Decisions conference about crime statistics on 9 June 2015. The event attracted over a hundred policy-makers and opinion formers from across the public and private sectors, as well as media commentators, researchers, academics and analysts with an interest in crime statistics. I am pleased that – in response to the issues raised – ONS has engaged with users, developed the statistics and published information about the quality of the crime data released to better meet their needs.

Since that event, after extensive methodological debate and research, on 5 July, ONS launched a public consultation about reviewing the methodology for addressing high frequency, repeat victimisation. The solution that ONS has since proposed appears to be a fair compromise between reflecting the real world and monitoring trends over time and I consider that it is a pragmatic and transparent solution to a difficult issue.

I welcome ONS's publication in October 2016 of its *Improving Crime statistics for England and Wales – Progress update*<sup>3</sup>, detailing plans to expand coverage in the CSEW and improve the quality of its estimates; developing a data tool based on police recorded crime, and further improvements to crime statistics outputs that it publishes. I am pleased that ONS

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/methodologies/crimeandjusticemethodology>

<sup>2</sup> Police forces supply a more detailed statistical return for each homicide (murders, manslaughters and infanticides) recorded in their force area to the Home Office. These returns are used to populate the Home Office database called the Homicide Index.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/methodologies/improvingcrimestatisticsforenglandandwalesprogressupdate>

is acting on users' views and has published statistics about fraud, cyber crime and abuse suffered by people during childhood and has developed and published a crime severity index, about which it is currently engaging users. I welcome ONS's actions and plans and consider that this demonstrates ONS's ongoing commitment to increase the trustworthiness, quality and value of the crime statistics that it produces.

One of the main messages in the Assessment report was that the quality of the administrative data given to ONS for the production of the crime statistics, and therefore, the quality of the crime statistics themselves, was in doubt. For the Homicide Index, we have received evidence from ONS – working with the Home Office which supplies the data – about the quality assurance processes applied, to demonstrate the quality of this administrative data source. Importantly, ONS has shown its trustworthiness by making this information openly available to users. I consider that ONS has demonstrated that users can be sufficiently assured of the quality of the data used in the Homicide Index and reported in Crime in England and Wales. I encourage ONS to continue to urge suppliers of police recorded crime data to persist with their actions to improve quality. I look forward to receiving an update soon on the progress that police forces have made in this regard and to being asked to consider at some point in the future – when ONS judges that users can be sufficiently assured of their quality – whether the National Statistics status of police recorded crime statistics in England and Wales can be restored.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value and is to be celebrated. We invite you to include a statement alongside the statistics that are the subject of this letter which reflects their National Statistics status (and the status of others that are not so designated). We will be happy to advise on your proposed wording.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with us at any time. I am copying this letter to John Pullinger, the National Statistician, to Mark Sedwill, Permanent Secretary to the Home Office, to David Blunt, Head of Profession at the Home Office, and to John Flatley, the responsible statistician.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson