

Title: Minutes of SDSSC Meeting held on 21 July 2010

Confidentiality status: For information

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Authors: Science Secretariat

Action for members: Discussion

Summary of Actions

1. **David Blunt** to circulate to members part of the updated Ministerial Code that includes guidance on statistical propriety, from the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the provisions of the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order. **Action complete.**
2. **John Flatley** to circulate a link to the RDS Crime webpage that includes links to the police recorded crime webpage. **Action Complete.**
3. **Brian Francis** to draft a letter to the Home Office Permanent Secretary regarding the recommendations of the UKSA's report 'Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales'. **To be complete by 1 October.**
4. **Brian Francis** to circulate to members a link to slides by Prof Peter Diggle on the localisation of crime statistics. **To be complete by 20 September.**
5. **Brian Francis** to edit the Committee's report on the localisation of crime statistics, incorporating members' comments and reflecting the recommendation in the UKSA's report 'Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales' to review local data on crime and criminal justice. **To be complete by 5 October**
6. **Secretariat** to circulate to members links to the archived SDSSC webpage that. **Action complete.**

Home Office Surveys, Design and Statistics Sub-Committee

Minutes of the tenth meeting of the Home Office Surveys, Design and Statistics Sub-Committee held on 21 July 2010.

Present - Professor Brian Francis (*Chair, Lancaster University*)
Professor Sheila Bird (*Medical Research Biostatistics Unit, Cambridge University*)
Charles Lound (*Office for National Statistics*)

David Blunt (*Home Office Chief Statistician*)
John Flatley (*Home Office Statistics, Head of Crime Surveys*)

Dr Iain Williams (*Home Office Science Secretariat*)
Smita Kaur (*Secretariat*)

Apologies - Professor Antony Fielding (*Royal Statistical Society*)
Professor Mike Hough (*King's College London*)
Dr Chris Kershaw (*Home Office Statistics, Head of Policing Statistics*)

Welcome and Introductions:

1. Prof Brian Francis opened the meeting and informed members that Sue Brooker has stepped down from the Committee. The chair gave thanks to Sue Brooker for her contributions to the Committee's output since its inception in 2007.
2. Members agreed to the following amendments to the minutes:
 - p. 15, pg 4 to read: David Blunt agreed to draft a paper *summarising Home Office and Ministry of Justice policies for researchers to gain access to respective datasets as outlined by the Code of Practice.*
 - p. 18, pg 5 to read: In addition, in April and following a public consultation last year, the national police recorded crime data *are* now published on a rolling annual basis consistent with the BCS data (quarterly data previously published *have* continued to be made available for users).
 - p. 33, pg 7 to read: Members considered the possible effects of changes that had taken place to the BCS, *such as of the cessation the drugs youth boost* and commented that consideration of the implications of such reductions – including cost saving efficiencies - to the BCS sample may be a topic for future discussion.
3. Members confirmed the minutes of the last meeting.

Update of Actions:

4. David Blunt provided updates on Home Office and Ministry of Justice policies for researchers to gain access to respective datasets (as outlined by the Code of Practice) and on GSS guidance on the presentation of statistics that is being developed.
5. Chris Kershaw circulated a link to the Trends in Crime paper published by the House of Commons library on 13 May 2010.
6. Iain Williams provided David Blunt with Sheila Bird's slides on 'Statistical Lacunae in Press Releases' on 13 May 2010.
7. David Blunt and Home Office colleagues have produced a guide to presenting statistics in Home Office Press Releases. This was circulated with the meeting papers.
8. John Flatley circulated to members NatCen's report on the British Crime Survey Methodology on 2 July.
9. Sheila Bird and Iain Williams drafted an executive summary to the report 'Localisation of analyses in time and place: the where, when and who (how and why) of recorded crimes' on 2 July. This was circulated to members.
10. Members provided comment on the report 'Localisation of analyses in time and place: the where, when and who (how and why) of recorded crimes'. This was discussed as a separate agenda item.
11. Chris Kershaw circulated to members the date of the UK Crime Mapping Conference 2010.

Chief Statistician's Update:

12. David Blunt provided an update of events since the last meeting. In July, the annual crime statistics were published at an independent press conference, chaired by the National Statistician and funded by the UK Statistics Authority.
13. Overall BCS crime decreased by 9% (from 10.5 million crimes to 9.6 million crimes), and police recorded crime by 8% (from 4.7 million to 4.3 million crimes).
14. In June, the Home Office launched its consultation on the extension to the BCS to include under 16-year olds, as recommended by the Crime Statistic Review (Adrian Smith, November 2006). The experimental data used four measures of crime: One measure included every possible act of wrongdoing that could be potentially classed as a crime if recorded by the police. Two of the other measures screened out potential childish behaviour and incidents at school that would be unlikely to overly worry

parents or teachers or concern police. The final measure only counted the child's own subjective perceptions of a crime.

15. Over the summer, a number of statistical reports will be published. This includes the annual drugs misuse publication, the six-monthly police figures, the annual animal scientific procedures publication and the annual and quarterly Control of Immigration publication, which will include improved presentation of the Points Based System data.
16. The Ministerial Code has been updated to include guidance on statistical propriety, emphasising the need for Ministers to remain mindful of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the provisions of the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order.¹

[Action: David Blunt to circulate to members part of the updated Ministerial Code that includes guidance on statistical propriety, from the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the provisions of the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order. **Action complete].**

17. The UKSA published their report 'Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales' in May and the National Centre for Social Research have compiled a revised draft of their report 'British Crime Survey: Methods Review 2009'. These were discussed as separate agenda items.
18. In June, a meeting between the representatives of the British Society of Criminologists' Crime and Criminal Justice Users Group was held. Funded jointly by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, the meeting covered issues including the UKSA's Crime Statistics report, and the NatCen review of BCS methods.
19. Members asked for clarification of the status of the Crime and Criminal Justice Users Group. John Flatley advised members that it was a sub-group of the British Society of Criminology affiliated to the Royal Statistical Society Statistics Users Forum.
20. Members questioned whether there was a central place for aggregated police data. John Flatley advised members that this was available on the RDS website.

[Action: John Flatley to circulate a link to the RDS Crime webpage that includes links to the police recorded crime webpage. **Action Complete].**

21. At the last meeting, members asked to be advised about the criteria the Home Office used for granting access to researchers. David Blunt advised members that the RDS website includes a Home Office statement of compliance with the National Statistics Code of Practice and Protocols which includes a section on confidentiality and access to statistical data. This asserts that the Home Office will adopt standard statistical techniques

¹ <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409215/ministerialcodemay2010.pdf>

for disclosure. In certain circumstances, disclosure of micro-level data will be considered to Home Office or academic researchers but only under strict terms agreed between the organisation who wishes to use the data, the Home Office data manager and the Head of Profession for Statistics. Various stipulations exist for different Home Office datasets.

22. Home Office Statistics are ensuring that the new Coalition Government's policies are reflected in respect to transparency and openness, particularly including the commitments to making public data publicly available.
23. Members also asked for the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) position. David Blunt advised members that any requests for data not contained in existing datasets can be sought under the Freedom of Information Act. The MoJ are currently reviewing how to communicate access arrangements for statistical purposes.

UKSA Report:

24. The chair referred members to the UKSA report 'Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales' (May 2010). Prof. Bird who, along with Prof. Mike Hough, was on the Review Panel, provided some background to the report.
25. The aim of the report was to provide recommendations on ways to enhance public confidence in official crime statistics and to address any inconsistencies between data from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime. The report built on the findings of a number of earlier reviews and built on responses to the interim report that was published in December 2009.
26. Members discussed the report's recommendations. Members considered that some of the report's recommendations were already being performed by bodies such as the SDSSC, citing the committee's work on the localisation of crime statistics as an example.
27. Members questioned who would be responsible for compiling the free-standing guide that explains the strengths and limits of the different types of crime data (rec. 4 ii, p. 12)². David Blunt advised that the guide would be drafted by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.
28. Members broadly agreed with the report's recommendation that the BCS should remain within the remit of the Home Office and that the report's first recommendation of establishing a standing non-executive board to review and report on arrangements for the production of crime statistics was already being undertaken. This may result in duplication of effort as some of these functions are already being carried out.

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/overcoming-barriers-to-trust-in-crime-statistics--england-and-wales.pdf>

29. Members agreed that highlighting areas where the Home Office is already realising the report's recommendations and identifying where the Committee may be able to contribute would assist the department.
30. The chair agreed to draft a letter to the Home Office Permanent Secretary regarding the recommendations of the UKSA's report 'Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales', outlining where the Committee may be able to offer assistance.

[Action: *Brian Francis* to draft a letter to the Home Office Permanent Secretary regarding the recommendations of the UKSA's report 'Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales'. *To be complete by 1 October*].

Crime Statistics:

31. John Flatley presented the revised draft of the report 'British Crime Survey: Methods Review 2009' drafted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).
32. John Flatley thanked members for their comments on the draft, submitted ahead of the meeting. This included comments on sample size and police estimates. These comments were passed on to NatCen to feed into the revised draft.
33. Members agreed that the revised draft of the report was an improvement on the previous draft and that the issue of non response had been well dealt with.
34. Members asked whether the report would undergo formal peer review. John Flatley commented that members comments – including feedback – had provided a review function.
35. John Flatley advised members that a publication date for the report was currently being sought, with the possibility of an October publication, in line with other Home Office statistical publications.

Press Release Study:

36. In March 2010, the Committee's report 'Statistical Lacunae in Press Releases' was published. Following this piece of work, Home Office statisticians worked with Press Office to draft guidance on the presentation of statistics in press releases, taking forward the Committee's recommendations. This was circulated to members ahead of the meeting.
37. Members broadly agreed that adherence to the guidance would improve the clarity of the reporting of numerical information in press releases. Members commented that the advice should cite the inclusion of survey response rates, when quoting percentages changes, what the percentage

has changed from and changed to should be stated, and the actual figures should be stated.

38. David Blunt thanked members for their comments and added that he would discuss the guidance further with Home Office colleagues. On its completion, the guidance may be circulated across the department.

Localisation of Crime Statistics:

39. Members referred to the Committee's report 'Localisation of analyses in time and place: the where, when and who (how and why) of recorded crimes', and agreed that imminent publication of the report would prove timely, as it would tie in with the UKSA's Crime Statistics report.
40. Members agreed that the executive summary provided sufficient background to the issues discussed in the report, but agreed that greater emphasis should be put on the fact that different parts of the report are relevant to different audiences.
41. Members commented that citations of anomalous trends should be investigated to see whether perceived gaps in the analysis of local data can be explained. Members also agreed on the need to anonymise data providers.
42. Members thanked Prof Sheila Bird for compiling an excellent report, capturing the measures others have implemented in their analysis of local crime data as well as providing key tips to assist in this analysis.
43. The chair agreed to develop the Committee's report, incorporating members' comments.

[Action: *Brian Francis* to edit the Committee's report on the localisation of crime statistics, incorporating members' comments *To be complete by 5 October*]

[Action: *Brian Francis* to circulate to members a link to slides by Prof Peter Diggle on the localisation of crime statistics. *To be complete by 20 September.*]

Sample Retention on the DNA Database:

44. Members asked for an update on the issue of the retention of samples on the DNA Database. In December 2008, the European Court of Human Rights' judgment in the case of S and Marper found that the blanket retention of DNA profiles and fingerprints indefinitely where there had been no conviction represented a breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
45. The Coalition Agreement made a commitment to adopt the protections of the Scottish Model of DNA retention. This is likely to involve differentiation by severity of offence for retention on arrest or charge. The ECHR

judgement also found in favour of differential treatment of juveniles compared with adults.

46. Members agreed that this was a more agreeable position and that the tension of first conviction analysis had now been lifted.

AOB:

47. The chair raised the issue of the SDSSC website which was archived following the election. The secretariat is currently liaising with the communications department and will circulate a link to the archived SDSSC website to members.

[Action: Secretariat to circulate to members links to the archived SDSSC webpage. Action complete.]

**Science Secretariat
August 2010.**