

Title: Minutes of SDSSC Meeting held on 13 May 2010

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Authors: Science Secretariat

Summary of Actions

1. **David Blunt** to summarise Home Office and Ministry of Justice policies for researchers to gain access to respective datasets (as outlined by the Code of Practice). **To be complete by 10 July.**
2. **Chris Kershaw** to provide a link to Trends in Crime paper published by the House of Commons library. **Action complete.**
3. **Iain Williams** to provide **David Blunt** with Sheila Bird's slides on 'Statistical Lacunae in Press Releases'. **Action complete.**
4. **David Blunt and Home Office colleagues** to produce a simple guide to presenting statistics in Home Office Press Releases.. **To be complete by 21 July.**
5. **David Blunt** to keep SDSSC informed of the GSS guidance on the presentation of statistics that is being developed and to share a copy of the Home Office guide with them once finalised. **To be completed by end- July 2010].**
6. **John Flatley** to circulate to members NatCen's report on the British Crime Survey Methodology. **Action complete.**
7. **Sheila Bird** and **Iain Williams** to draft an executive summary to the report 'Localisation of analyses in time and place: the where, when and who (how and why) of recorded crimes'. **To be complete by 8 July 2010.**
8. **Members** to comment on the report 'Localisation of analyses in time and place: the where, when and who (how and why) of recorded crimes'. **To be complete by 15 July.**
9. **Chris Kershaw** to circulate to members the date of the UK Crime Mapping Conference 2010. **Action complete.**

Home Office Surveys, Design and Statistics Sub-Committee

Minutes of the ninth meeting of the Home Office Surveys, Design and Statistics Sub-Committee held on 13 May 2010

Present - Professor Sheila Bird (*Medical Research Biostatistics Unit, Cambridge University*)
Sue Brooker (*National Centre for Social Research*)
Professor Brian Francis (*Lancaster University*)
Professor Mike Hough (*King's College London*)
Charles Lound (*Office for National Statistics*)

Prof Bernard Silverman (*Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser*)
David Blunt (*Home Office Chief Statistician*)
John Flatley (*Home Office Statistics, Head of Crime Surveys*)
Dr Chris Kershaw (*Home Office Statistics, Head of Policing Statistics*)

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

Welcome and Introductions

1. Prof Bernard Silverman introduced himself as the new Home Office Chief Scientific Advisor and opened the meeting of the Surveys, Design and Statistics Sub-committee (SDSSC) by welcoming those in attendance. Apologies were received from Prof Antony Fielding.
2. In Prof Antony Fielding's absence members agreed that Prof Bernard Silverman and Prof Mike Hough would jointly chair the meeting.
3. Members confirmed the minutes of the last meeting.

Update of Actions

4. Mike Hough drafted a letter for the chair to send to the Drugs and Alcohol Directorate to communicate the Subcommittee's views on the Drug Harm Index, with the offer of a meeting.
5. Publication of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' report on anabolic steroids has been deferred due to other issues taking priority. SDSSC members may be asked to comment on the statistical issues raised by the report once it is drafted.
6. Alison Walker had advised members of the extent to which anabolic steroid use is covered by the British Crime Survey. The figures show that 0.1% of 16-59 year olds reported use of anabolic steroids in the last reporting year (2008-2009). This was circulated to members on 14 October 2009.

7. Sheila Bird drafted a letter on behalf of the SDSSC to Patricia McFarlane and Ian Vincent (Home Office) regarding the retention of samples on the National DNA database. This was circulated and was followed by a meeting with members of the Home Office.
8. The secretariat circulated the 'Keeping the Right People on the DNA Database' consultation to SDSSC members on 27 November 2009.
9. Brian Francis liaised with Professor Peter Diggle to obtain relevant slides to insert into the Committee's report: '*Localisation of analyses in time and place*'.
10. Sheila Bird edited *Paper (01-08): 'Localisation of analyses in time and place'* to reflect members' comments. This will be discussed as a separate agenda item.
11. Chris Kershaw liaised with Rob Street (Crime and Drugs Analysis and Research), Mark Bangs and Larry Sherman (Greater Manchester Police) to identify ways of disseminating the SDSSC's work on the localisation of crime statistics. On completion of the report, further views on dissemination will be sought.
12. David Blunt circulated to members the updated statistical guidance for the GSS on 10 May. This included the National Statistician's four supplementary guides to the Code of Practice on Quality, Methods and Harmonisation, Use of Administrative or Management Information, Confidentiality of Official Statistics and Presentation and Publication of Official Statistics.
13. Members commented that it was good practice for departments to compile policy criteria that informs the conditions under which data can be released to researchers as recommended by the UKSA. The Committee asked whether the Home Office had such a policy.
14. David Blunt advised members that the RDS website does contain some information on the conditions under which Home Office statistical data will be released. Additionally, BCS datasets are routinely sent to the Data Archive for access as public or special license use. David believed the Home Office did not think this information was in one place, but instead placed with respective data. He thought specific rules that govern the release of data for researchers are often determined on a case-by-case basis. David agreed to summarise the situation in the Home Office and he was asked if this could also cover Ministry of Justice datasets.
15. 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.

[David Blunt to summarise Home Office and Ministry of Justice policies for researchers to gain access to respective datasets (as outlined by the Code of Practice). *To be complete by 10 July*].

16. Members provided comment on the Annex to 'Counting Criminal Incidents Experienced by Children' circulated by Bryce Millard on 26 October 2009.

Chief Statistician's Update:

17. David Blunt advised members that since the last SDSSC meeting (October 2009), many sets of Home Office data had been published including quarterly crime statistics, supplementary volumes of crime statistics, quarterly migration statistics, annual citizenship statistics, quarterly and annual terrorist statistics, police strength statistics and police powers and procedures statistics. These can all be found on both the RDS website and the National Statistics publication hub.
18. At the beginning of the year, HMIC published their scorecard and value for money profiles. To enable this to be done without undermining National Statistics principles the Home Office started publishing local police recorded crime data in January on a quarterly rolling annual basis instead of just for financial years. 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).
19. The UKSA published an interim report of the Barriers to Crime Statistics Review in December, with the full report due to be released later in May.
20. David Blunt commented that there has been a continued improvement in the coverage and presentation of migration statistics. Annual migration statistics will be published in the summer as usual and will include an improved presentation of immigration for different entry routes of the points based system.
21. The British Crime Survey was extended to include under-16 year olds. The results of the extended survey will be published at an independent press conference in June.
22. In March, the UKSA published two reports – a review of the statutory arrangements regarding pre-release access to official statistics and an interim report on strengthening user engagement.
23. The UKSA made a number of interventions regarding the use of immigration statistics and violent crime statistics in the run up to the purdah period. One discussion was around a research report to adjust police recorded crime data into a consistent time series, taking account of the National Crime Reporting Standard change, published by the House of Commons library. Both the National Statistician and Home Office Statisticians believe the adjustments were inappropriate since they only adjusted for a single year's discontinuity when it is known the discontinuity actually lasted three years. The National Statistician expressed her view in a letter to the Centre for Crime and Justice published on the UKSA

website. Chris Kershaw agreed to circulate to members a link to the 'Trends in Crime' paper published by the House of Commons library.

[Action: Chris Kershaw to provide a link to Trends in Crime paper published by the House of Commons library. **Action complete].**

Press Release Study:

24. Prof Sheila Bird provided an update of the committee's report on the presentation of statistics in Home Office press releases. The report was published on the Home Office website in March 2010.

25. Prof Bird advised members that she had presented an overview of the report to the Royal Statistical Society and the Chartered Institute for Public Relations meeting in March.

[Action: Iain Williams to provide **David Blunt** with Sheila Bird's slides on 'Statistical Lacunae in Press Releases'. **Action complete].**

26. David Blunt commented that following this piece of work by the Committee the Home Office has drafted guidance on the presentation of statistics in press releases, to take forward the recommendations of the Committee.

[Action: David Blunt and Home Office colleagues to produce a simple guide to presenting statistics in Home Office Press Releases. A draft of this guide will be shared with the Committee at the next meeting. **To be complete by 21 July].**

27. David Blunt added that additional work is currently ongoing in the Government Statistical Service (GSS) to drive up standards in the presentation of statistics. The Home Office has representation on this Group and David Blunt agreed to keep the SDSSC informed of how this work is progressing. The next meeting is in July 2010. David would also share the Home Office's simple guide with that group after the next iteration following SDSSC's comments

[Action: David Blunt to keep SDSSC informed of the GSS guidance on the presentation of statistics that is being developed and to share a copy of the Home Office guide with them once finalised. **To be completed by end-July 2010].**

Crime Statistics

28. Following discussions at previous SDSSC meetings, the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) was commissioned by the Home Office to examine three methodological issues related to the British Crime Survey. These were: to examine whether any changes to the design of the BCS sample over the last ten years have affected the reliability of trend estimates; whether the BCS possibly under-reports the crimes committed against those aged 16-24 living in areas with high levels of crime and social deprivation; and the implications for crime trends of reporting on

data *collected* during a financial year compared to reporting on prevalence or incidence of crime *experienced* during a financial year.

29. John Flatley commented that a considerable amount of work has been involved in compiling and analysing the microdata and a summary of preliminary findings has been compiled which was circulated to members ahead of the meeting. The final report is due in the summer.
30. Members expressed concern that they had not yet received a full draft report and that a publication date had not yet been agreed.
31. Members added that, based on the preliminary findings, value would be added to the report if it provided a greater depth of analysis on bias, as this is the key issue, as opposed to the current focus on precision.
32. John Flatley agreed to confirm with NatCen the report's publication date and to circulate the draft report to members for comment before initial findings are presented at the meeting of the Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics User Network on 15 July.

[Action: John Flatley to circulate to members NatCen's report on the British Crime Survey Methodology. **Action complete].**

33. Members considered the possible effects of changes that had taken place to the BCS, such as 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.

Localisation of Crime Statistics:

34. Prof Silverman thanked Prof Sheila Bird for drafting the report and Prof Brian Francis for arranging the visit to the Multi-Agency Data Exchange, Lancaster, which allowed SDSSC members to view their crime mapping capabilities.
35. Members agreed that the outgoing chair had successfully captured the Committee's views and that the report constituted an excellent piece of work. Members agreed that shortening the report highlighting key messages and simplified recommendations – akin to the committee's report on Home Office press releases - may help the key points be communicated more effectively to the target audience. Members agreed to provide comment on the report via email ahead of the next meeting.

[Action: Members to comment on the report 'Localisation of analyses in time and place: the where, when and who (how and why) of recorded crimes' via email. **To be complete by 15 July.]**

36. Members emphasised the need to anonymise and disaggregate the data to enable analysis to be conducted at force level.

37. Prof Sheila Bird agreed to work with the secretariat to draft an executive summary for the report.

[Action: Sheila Bird and Iain Williams to draft an executive summary to the report 'Localisation of analyses in time and place: the where, when and who (how and why) of recorded crimes'. **To be complete by 8 July 2010]**

38. Chris Kershaw clarified that the NPIA is providing crime mapping facilities but is not conducting the mapping of geo-coded data itself – this is the responsibility of individual forces. The quality assurance of the mapped data is not the responsibility of either the NPIA or Home Office, but individual forces Police Forces themselves who are not covered by the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice.

39. Chris Kershaw added that the UK Crime Mapping Conference 2010 could provide a forum for the dissemination of the report and agreed to circulate details of the conference to members.

[Action: Chris Kershaw to circulate to members the date of the UK Crime Mapping Conference 2010. **Action complete.]**

AOB:

40. Members raised the issue of the retention of samples on the DNA database in cases where an arrest was made but no further action was taken, commenting that adequate survival time analysis on samples has not been carried out.
41. Members asked for this to be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 21 July 2010.