



Ministry
of Justice

Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly, England and Wales

January to March 2016

Ministry of Justice
Statistics bulletin

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Introduction

This bulletin presents key statistics describing the trends in both the number of offenders receiving cautions and convictions, and those in prison for knife possession offences in England and Wales. This bulletin does not cover all knife crimes (offences involving a knife) as published by the Office for National Statistics¹.

The publication provides provisional figures for the latest quarter (January to March) with accompanying commentary and analysis. Statistics on adults and juvenile offenders are presented separately to show the effects of different sentencing guidelines.

The information provided is a summary of three types of knife and offensive weapon possession offences:

- Possession offences of having an article with a blade or point in a public place or on school premises,
- Possession of offensive weapon without lawful authority or reasonable excuse in a public place or on school premises,
- Offences involving threatening with a knife or offensive weapon in a public place or on school premises (introduced on 3rd December 2012² – an aggravated form of a possession offence occurs when an offender in possession of a knife or offensive weapon uses it to threaten and endangers others)

On 17 July 2015 Section 28 and Schedule 5 to the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 came into force³. This introduced a minimum custodial sentence for those aged 16 or over who are convicted and sentenced for a second offence of possessing an offensive weapon or bladed article. This publication includes some estimates on these cases

Other key events that might be expected to affect the statistics presented in this bulletin can be found in Annex B.

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www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingeceember2015. Details of other official statistics publications regarding knife related statistics can be found in Annex F.

² www.gov.uk/government/news/new-sentences-and-criminal-offences-come-into-effect.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/part/1/crossheading/repeat-offences-involving-offensive-weapons-etc

Data Sources

This report draws on data from the following sources:

- Data on cautions and convictions are collected from the Police National Computer (PNC) – tables 1-5b. As an administrative system, the PNC is regularly updated as new information about offenders becomes available. As a result there are delays in the database becoming updated with the latest information about an offender's convictions in time for publication. A methodology has therefore been developed to estimate the number and breakdown of disposals given for the possession of a knife or an offensive weapon in the most recent four quarters. Annex D provides further details of this methodology.
- Prison population information is drawn from prison administrative IT systems, see Annex E for more detail.

Feedback requested

The structure and content of this report is continually being reviewed to reflect user requirements. If you have any feedback about these changes, or report more generally, please contact the production team using the contact details at the back of the report.

Current and previous editions of this publication are available for download at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly.

The next publication of the Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly is scheduled to be published on 8th September 2016, covering the period April to June 2016.

Key findings

For the period January to March 2016 (Q1 2016) it is estimated that:

- 4,663 knife possession offences were formally dealt with by the criminal justice system (CJS); 13% more than Q1 2015.

Of those crimes:

- 3,674 (79%) were adult offenders where
 - 39% were given an immediate custodial sentence, an increase of five percentage points from a year ago – a continuation of the general upward trend over the longer term since Q1 2008 when it was 19%.
 - 8% received a caution which has more than halved since the same period 8 years ago where it was 31%. Of the 8% who received a caution, around three quarters of these offenders were first time possession of a knife or offensive weapon offence offenders.
- 989 (21%) were juvenile offenders where
 - 13% received a sentence of immediate custody, up from 6% in Q1 2008.
 - 29% received a youth caution, a decrease when compared with the same quarter in 2008 when 47% of juvenile offenders received a youth caution.
- The average custodial sentence length for offenders sentenced to immediate custody was 8.3 months, the highest it has been in eight years.
- Since the introduction of minimum sentencing for conviction of a second possession offence, it is estimated that 1,793 offenders have been dealt with under this legislation⁴ between 17th July 2015 and 31st March 2016. Of these;
 - 1,661 were adults where 55% received an immediate custodial sentence with an average sentence length of 7 months, and an additional 22% received a suspended sentence.
 - 132 were aged 16 or 17 of whom 45% received a community sentence and 47% received immediate custody with an average sentence length of 6.3 months.

⁴www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/part/1/crossheading/repeat-offences-involving-offensive-weapons-etc

Knife Possession Sentencing

In Q1 2016, 4,663 offences were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) for a knife possession offence, 13% (4,124) higher than in Q1 2015.

Similar to previous quarters offenders committed an average of 1.1 offences per occasion. Threatening with a knife or offensive weapon accounted for 4% of all knife possession offences, one percentage point more than the previous year

In the year ending December 2015, the police recorded¹ 28,008 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, a 9% increase compared with the previous year (25,583). There has been a general downward trend in this series over the longer-term, and the latest figures are 14% lower than in year ending March 2011. However, the majority of police forces (35 of the 44) recorded a rise in these offences compared with the previous year

From the year ending March 2013 to the year ending December 2015, with the exceptions of homicide and robbery offences, there have been increases in the numbers of offences where a knife or sharp instrument was used. These increases broadly reflect increases in the overall level of these offences – for example, the 16% rise in the number of “assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm” offences involving a knife or sharp instrument is similar to the 15% rise seen in all incidents of this offence in the year ending December 2015. However, the increase in attempted murders involving a knife or sharp instrument (45%) is higher than the increase in total attempted murders (31%) in the year ending December 2015.

Other evidence, albeit focused on the most serious knife-related crimes relating to hospital admissions for assault with a sharp instrument, have shown little change over the past year following declines in previous years. For the year ending April 2015 there were 3,614 admissions for assault with a sharp instrument compared with a peak of 5,720 in the year ending March 2007, although such incidents may not be representative of all knife-related crime.

Knife possession figures are affected by police operations and this may be due to police being more proactive and running anti-knife crime operations.

¹<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2015#offences-involving-weapons>

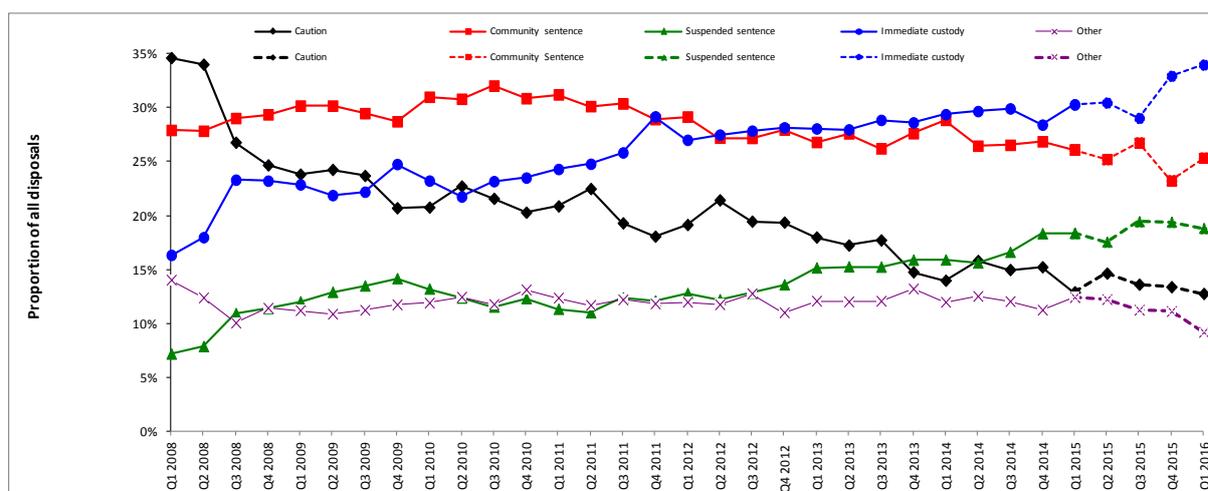
The most common disposal for a knife possession offence continues to be immediate custody (34%) followed by community sentence (25%) and suspended sentence (19%).

Immediate custody has risen to 34%, the highest it has been since Q4 2007. This is four percentage points higher than the previous quarter and a change from the beginning of 2008 when 16% of offenders received this disposal. The further increase over the last two quarters in immediate custody coincides with the introduction of the repeat knife possession legislation on the 17th July 2015.

For those sentenced to immediate custody, the average custodial sentence length [2] was 8.3 months in Q1 2016; an increase of 0.6 months when compared with Q1 2015 but an increase of 3.5 months compared to the same quarter in 2008.

50% of this increase in average custodial sentence length between Q1 2015 and Q1 2016 has come from offenders being convicted of possession of a blade or point offences. 25% of this increase comes from both possession of offensive weapons and threatening offences.

Figure 1: Proportion of type of disposal given for knife possession offences in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q1 2016



Notes:

- 1) Figures for Q2 2015 –Q1 2016 include estimated figures based on historical data changes. Please see Annex D for further details.
- 2) From Q4 2012 offences involving threatening with a knife or offensive weapon have been included.
- 3) Other includes Absolute / Conditional discharge, Fine and Other disposals (cases include where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction).
- 4) Dotted lines indicate where figures have been estimated.

Knife possession offences by age group

Adult offenders were more likely to receive an immediate custodial sentence for knife possession offences than any other disposal. In the latest quarter, 39% received immediate custody, the highest proportion it has been since Q4 2007.

Over time there has been a significant fall in the proportion of adult offenders given a caution. In the latest quarter, only 8% (compared to 31% in Q1 2008) of adult offenders received a caution. Around three quarters of these offenders were first time possession of a knife or offensive weapon offence offenders.

[2] On average knife possession offences take 91 days from the date of being charged to court outcome. This means that average custodial sentence length presented, especially those in Q1 2016, are likely to change when more information becomes available on the PNC as these cases pass through the criminal justice system.

The decline in adults cautions has in part been driven by the revised guidance on cautions that was issued in November 2013. The guidance made it clear that simple cautions should not be given for possession of a knife, and other serious either way offences, unless their issue was signed off by at least an Inspector. Since then statutory restrictions around the use of cautions, including their use for possession of a knife, have also been included in the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 which came into force in April 2015.

Juvenile offenders were more likely to receive a community sentence for a knife possession offence (51%). Cautions proportions have remained relatively stable over the last four years, 29% were given a youth caution⁵ an increase of one percentage point on the previous quarter. This is however, significantly lower than in Q1 2008 where 47% of juvenile offenders received cautions. All juvenile offenders who received a caution in the year ending March 2016 were first time possession of a knife or offensive weapon offence offenders.

Criminal history⁶ of those cautioned or sentenced for knife possession offences

The figures which are presented in this section reflect the criminal history of all offenders who have been cautioned or sentenced for a knife possession offence, for figures on cases where the repeated knife possession legislation can be applied please see the next section.

Offenders with no previous knife possession offences were more likely to receive a community sentence (30%) in the year ending March 2016. This has changed substantially over the last seven years, in the year ending March 2009 offenders with no previous knife possession offences were most likely to receive a caution (36%).

Conversely, offenders with at least one previous knife possession offence in the year ending March 2016 were more likely to receive an immediate custodial sentence (52%) compared to seven years ago (year ending March 2009) when 42% of these offenders received custodial sentences.

The likelihood of a custodial sentence for adult offenders rose in relation to the number of previous knife possession offences; 25% of adult offenders with no previous convictions received an immediate custodial sentence compared to 54% for those with one or more previous offences in the year ending March 2016.

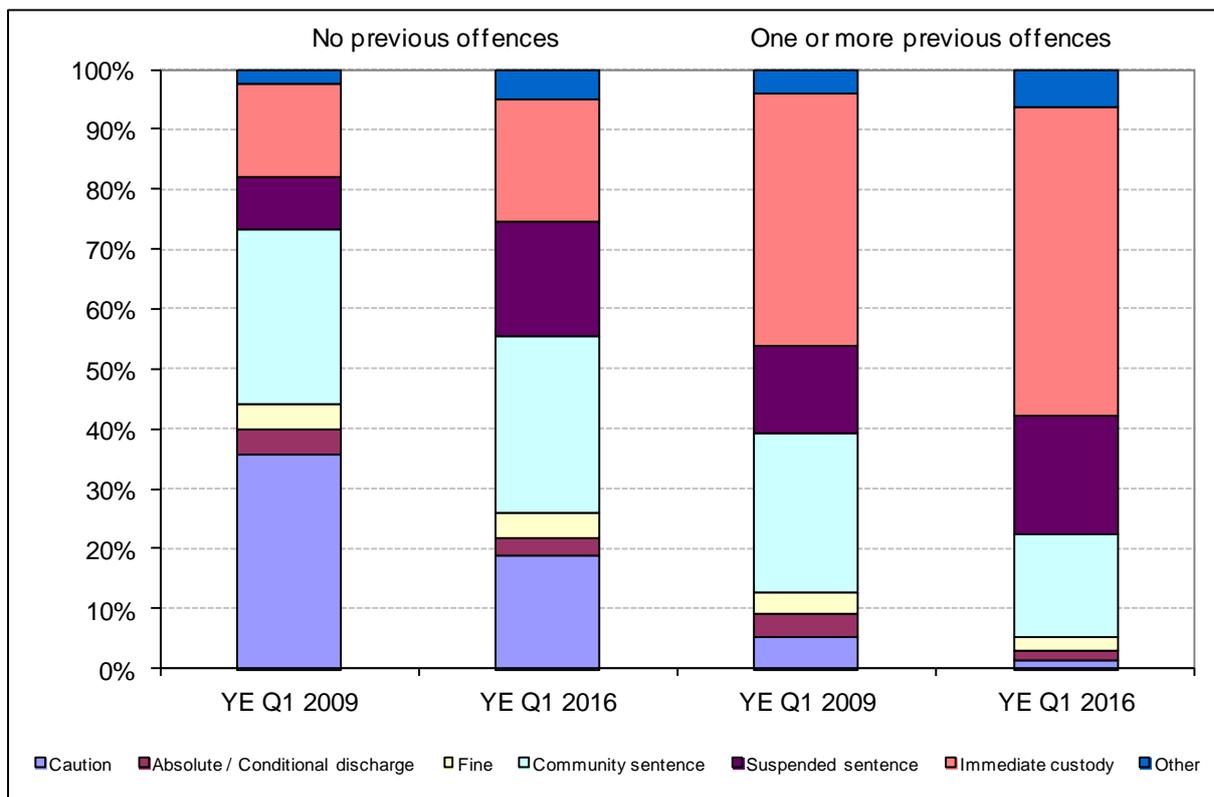
⁵ Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders.

⁶ In this section Criminal History only includes previous cautions and convictions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon offences.

Juvenile offenders were most likely to receive a community sentence whether or not they had a previous knife possession offence; 54% of those with no previous knife possession offences and 56% of those with one or more previous knife possession offences in the year ending March 2016. Courts will decide the appropriate sentence for each cases under the separate sentencing framework for children and young people. Young offenders are dealt with differently to adults, in a way which recognises their relative lack of maturity, greater vulnerability and propensity to change their behaviour.

34% of juvenile offenders received a caution with no previous knife possession offences, while virtually no (0.5%) juvenile offenders received a caution after having a previous knife possession offence in the year ending March 2016.

Figure 2: Disposals received for those convicted of knife possession offences by previous (no previous versus one or more previous) convictions or cautions for the possession of a blade or offensive weapon, in England and Wales



Repeat offences for knife possession

It has been estimated that since 17 July 2015, 1,793 offenders have been convicted and sentenced, having committed at least one previous knife or weapons possession offence.

Of those 1,661 were adults, of which 55% received an immediate custodial sentence with an average sentence length of 7 months, and an additional 22% received a suspended custodial sentence. On average these adult offenders have 1.8 previous

occasions where they were either convicted or cautioned for a knife possession offence. 96% of adult offenders who received an immediate custodial sentence pleaded guilty and received an average sentence length of 6.8 months, this was 11.6 months for those pleading not guilty.

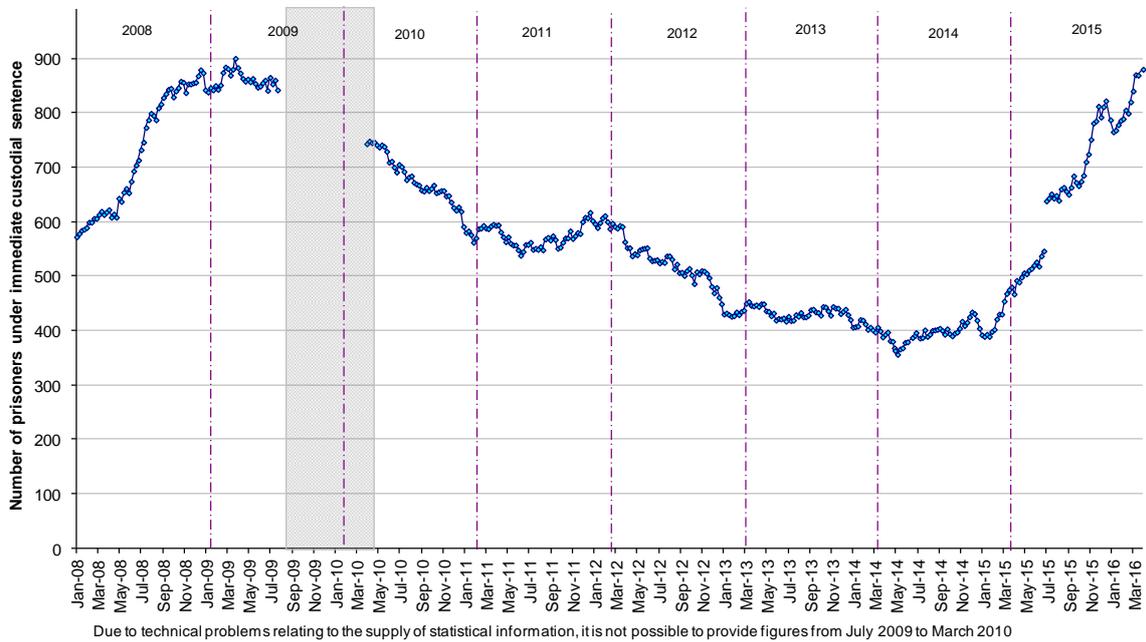
The remaining 132 cases were offenders aged 16 or 17, 45% of these received a community sentence and 47% received an immediate custodial sentence with an average sentence length of 6.3 months. On average these offenders have 1.3 previous occasions where they were either convicted or cautioned for a knife possession offence. The proportion of 16 to 17 year olds getting a community sentence is higher than that of adults, because a non custodial sentence may be given where the offender pleads guilty (96% pleaded guilty in this period, and young offenders cannot receive a custodial sentence of less than four months in the Youth Court).

On average knife possession offences take 91 days from the date of being charged to court outcome, and in some cases this can be much longer. At this stage it is not possible to assess the impact of the legislation introduced on 17th July 2015 based on the 259 days of data which are currently available. For more information about these new sentencing guidelines please see Annex C.

Offenders in prison for knife possession offences

880 offenders were in prison serving a sentence for knife possession offence on April 1st 2016, 12% increase on the previous quarter. This trend has continued to increase after the change in data available on 30th June 2015.

Figure 3: Prison population under sentence for possession of an offensive weapon⁷ (excludes recalls) in England and Wales, between January 2008 and March 2016



⁷ Includes having an article with a blade or a point.

Annex A: List of Accompanying Tables

Accompanying this publication are the following tables

Table 1	Knife possession offences resulting in a caution or sentence, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 and quarterly from Q4 2007
Table 1a	Knife possession offences resulting in a caution or sentence by offence type, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 and quarterly from Q4 2007
Table 2	Knife possession offences resulting in a caution or sentence by age group, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 and quarterly from Q4 2007
Table 2a	Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by age group, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 and quarterly from Q4 2007
Table 2b	Offences involving threatening with a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by age group, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2014 and quarterly from Q4 2012
Table 3	Knife possession offences resulting in an immediate custodial sentence, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 and quarterly from Q4 2007
Table 4	Knife possession offences resulting in a caution or sentence by police force area, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009
Table 5	Number of previous convictions or cautions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon offences for offenders convicted or cautioned for a knife possession offence by disposal category, broken down by age group, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009
Table 5a	Number of previous convictions or cautions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon offences for offenders convicted or cautioned for a possession offence by disposal category, broken down by age group, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009
Table 5b	Number of previous convictions or cautions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon offences for offenders convicted or cautioned for threatening with a knife or offensive weapon offence by disposal category, broken down by age group, in England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2014

Annex B: Key Events

The key events that might be expected to affect the statistics in this bulletin were:

- On 21 May 2008, the Court of Appeal issued the judgment in *Povey*⁸ that said, because of prevalence, magistrates should normally sentence those convicted of knife crime possession offences at the top end of the range.
- The Sentencing Guidelines Council issued an update to the magistrates' courts guidelines, with effect from 4 August 2008, which set out the effect of the Court of Appeal judgment and made it clear that the starting point for the lowest level of knife possession amongst adults should be 12 weeks' custody. This applies in cases where a first time offender pleads not guilty to possession of a knife in non-dangerous circumstances. A guilty plea would attract a discount in the normal way, as would any personal mitigation, and could take the sentence below the custody threshold.
- From 3 December 2012, new offences of aggravated knife possession came into force. Anyone aged 16 or over who uses a knife or offensive weapon to threaten and endanger others in a public place or in a school will face a minimum custodial sentence, unless the court considers there to be particular circumstances which would make it unjust to do so.⁹
- In November 2013 revised guidance on cautions was issued. The guidance made it clear that simple cautions should not be given for possession of a knife, and other serious either way offences, unless their issue was signed off by at least an Inspector.
- In April 2014, the Court of Appeal issued the judgment in *Monterio*¹⁰ that said the Youth Courts should maintain the sharp focus called for in *Povey*⁷ by imposing appropriate sentences that will contribute to preventing further offending and to a reduction in knife crime.
- Statutory restrictions around the use of cautions, including their use for possession of a knife, included in the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015¹¹, came into force in April 2015.

⁸ *Povey & Ors, R. v, Court of Appeal - Criminal Division, May 21, 2008, [2008] EWCA Crim 1261.*

⁹ For legislation, see: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/10/contents/enacted

¹⁰ *Monterio & Others, R. v, Court of Appeal - Criminal Division, April 16, 2014, [2014] EWCA Crim 747.*

¹¹ See section 17 at

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428204/cjc-act-circular.pdf

- On 17 July 2015 Section 28 and Schedule 5 to the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 came into force¹². This introduced a minimum custodial sentence for those aged 16 or over who are convicted of a second offence of possessing an offensive weapon or bladed article. The minimum custodial sentence is six months for those aged 18 or over and a four month detention and training order for 16 and 17 year olds.

¹² www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447961/second-strike-knife-possession.pdf

Annex C: Repeat offences for knife possession

- On 17 July 2015 a new minimum sentence for repeat knife possession came into force.
- Section 28 of, and Schedule 5 to, the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (CJC Act) create a minimum custodial sentence for those aged 16 and over convicted of a second or subsequent offence of possession of a knife or offensive weapon.
- The minimum custodial sentence for second or subsequent conviction is at least six months imprisonment for adults, and at least a four month Detention and Training Order (DTO) for 16 and 17 year olds. Aggravating and mitigating factors are applied subsequently.
- A minimum custodial sentence can only be given on conviction of a second or subsequent offence where that offence is committed on or after the date of the commencement of these provisions.
- Any relevant previous conviction will satisfy the 'previous conviction' condition for the imposition of the minimum sentence, regardless of when that prior offence was committed. (I.e. there is no time limit on when the first offence must have been committed.)
- A previous conviction for threatening with a knife or offensive weapon counts as a 'first strike'.
- A conviction for an equivalent service offence counts as a 'first strike' for the purposes of the minimum sentence.
- The judge must impose the minimum sentence unless there are particular circumstances which relate to the offence, the previous offence(s), or the offender which would make the imposition of the minimum sentence unjust in all the circumstances.

It is possible some youths may not receive a custodial sentence. This is because a 4 month DTO is the minimum custodial sentence available to judges when sentencing youths in any circumstance and if the court applies a reduction in sentence for a guilty plea then a non-custodial sentence will result. In the case of adults, where the court imposes the minimum sentence this can be reduced by up to 20% for an early guilty plea, resulting in a sentence of 4.8 months.

Annex D: Assessing the accuracy of estimation method

During the development of the October to December (Q4) 2013 bulletin, a methodology was introduced to estimate the number and breakdown of disposals given for two types of knife possession offences:

- possession offences of having an article with a blade or point in a public place or on school premises.
- possession of offensive weapon without lawful authority or reasonable excuse in a public place or on school premises.

This annex assesses the accuracy of this methodology.

Whilst developing the bulletin significant changes were seen in the disposal figures from those initially published for each quarter when compared with those released over the following year. The main reason for this change was that the data held on the Police National Computer (PNC) is updated with new information each month for not only the current month, but also for all previous months included in the PNC dataset. This difference was particularly noticeable for the number of immediate custodial sentences and other disposals. Initial investigations showed that the scale of the changes over time was stable, and so a new methodology was introduced to predict these final sentencing figures for the most recent four quarters.

Table 1 below illustrates the accuracy of the estimation process that was used to provide the statistics that were published for Q1 2015 by comparing non-estimated and estimated figures by disposal group with the actual figures published one (Q1 2016) year on.

Table 1: Changes in the number of disposals reported for knife possession offences in Q1 2015 between the non-estimated, estimated and final actual figures

Disposal category	Q1 2015 - non estimated	Q1 2015- estimated	Q1 2015 - actual figures	% change - non estimated to actual figures	% change - estimated to actual figures
Caution	518	535	531	3%	-1%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	124	136	135	9%	-1%
Fine	157	169	178	13%	5%
Community sentence	1,071	1064	1,076	0%	1%
Suspended sentence	758	773	757	0%	-2%
Immediate custody	978	1243	1,248	28%	0%
Other disposal	358	197	199	-44%	1%
All disposals	3,964	4,117	4,124	-4%	0%

As outlined above, figures show that there were large differences between the non-estimated and the actual final figures for those receiving an immediate custodial sentence or other disposal, with differences of 28% and 44% respectively. However,

when the estimated figures are compared with the actual final figures for these two disposal categories there is less change, with difference of 0% and 1% respectively.

The biggest impact/change is seen in an increase in the figures for immediate custody and related decrease in the 'other disposal category'.

This showed that the methodology being used had been successful in predicting the changes seen in disposals over the year and so it was decided that future bulletins would continue to use this methodology for the most recent four quarters.

We continue to review this methodology and provide updates on the accuracy of our estimates. In the future we are going to be looking into extending this estimation methodology for the threatening offences.

Annex E: Explanatory notes

Data quality and sources

Tables 1 to 5b

The statistics presented in tables 1 to 5b in this bulletin are drawn from an extract of data held on the Police National Computer (PNC) as at 6th May 2016.

The PNC is a large administrative database containing information about police cautions and court convictions held by individual offenders in England and Wales. As an administrative system, the PNC is regularly updated as new information about particular individuals becomes available. For example, an offender with previous convictions may have recently been charged with another offence, appeared in court against this charge and then been subsequently convicted of this offence. This information would then be updated accordingly against that individual's record in the PNC.

As these updates involve some element of manual data entry alongside more automated systems, there can be delays in the database becoming updated with the latest information about an offender's convictions. As such, the number of cautions/convictions recorded in the PNC extract for knife possession offences, in particular for the most recent quarter included in this bulletin, is likely to be lower than the actual number of cautions/convictions given in the period.

In addition, the different disposals recorded in the PNC extract for knife possession offences in recent quarters are also subject to some change. This is partly due to the delays in updating recent court outcomes on the PNC, but is also due to the fact that, while some individuals will have been convicted of a knife possession offence in a magistrate's court during the quarter, information about the disposal they received is not yet available as the case has been passed to the Crown Court for sentencing at a later date. These cases will be updated when information about the final sentence given for the offence becomes available.

As a result of these updates, the statistics presented in this bulletin for the most recent four quarters are based on estimates as described in Annex D.

Data for figure 3

Prison population data presented in this bulletin are drawn from the prison administrative IT systems. The figures showing the numbers under sentence refer to the number of offenders serving a custodial sentence. Figures drawn from PNC data refer to the number of offences committed by offenders given particular disposals. Prison establishments routinely provide records of the numbers of persons held in custody at the end of each month, broadly subdivided according to age, sex, custody type and sentence length. The records are collated and processed centrally. However, data recorded by prisons only show the numbers serving a sentence for the general offence of "possession of an offensive weapon" until 30 June 2015. This offence includes the possession of a knife but can also include possession of other dangerous weapons (excluding firearms). After the 30 June 2015 due to improvements in IT more detailed information about the prison population is now

available. This means that records from the prisons now show the numbers serving a sentence for offences relating to the possession of an offensive weapon and bladed or sharply pointed articles.

Due to technical problems relating to the supply of data for statistical purposes it has not been possible to provide data relating to the prison population for specific offence types from July 2009 to March 2010.

Annex F: Other knife and sharp object related statistical released

Other government departments also release statistics relating to knives and sharp objects. Below are some links and brief outlines of other available sources.

- The Home Office provide a guidance document regarding the law for knives and offensive weapons.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/186911/Knives_and_offensive_weapons_information_GDS_FAQ.pdf

www.gov.uk/find-out-if-i-can-buy-or-carry-a-knife

- The Home Office also publish statistics of offences involving knives and sharp instruments. This is contained within the *Crime in England and Wales* statistical bulletin and has a section called *Offences involving knives and sharp instruments*.

- www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2015#offences-involving-weapons

- The MOJ publishes information on criminal court timeliness (Table T6) – statistics relating to the activity or how quickly criminal cases are dealt with in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2015>

- The Department for Health release hospital admission data for assaults on an ad hoc basis. Within this data there is a category for X99 - *Assault by sharp object*. The link for the most recently released publication is listed below and the data can usually be found in the *Monthly HES data – Monthly topic of interest* section of the HES online website.

www.hscic.gov.uk/hes

Additional information:

www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB17966/prov-mont-hes-admi-outp-ae-April%202015-toi-rep.pdf

Annex G: Glossary

Adult: An offender aged 18 and over.

Caution: A warning given to adult offenders who admit guilt and agree to be cautioned. They are issued on the instructions of a senior police officer where there is sufficient evidence for a conviction and it is not considered to be in the public interest to institute criminal proceedings.

Community sentence: An alternate to custodial sentence (sending offenders to prison) which allows offenders to make amends for their crimes. For juveniles the main community sentence used are the referral order and the Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO). With a community sentence there are specific things the offender can, can't and must do while serving their sentence. Elements of a community sentence include: Supervision, Unpaid work, Specified activities, Prohibited activities, Accredited programmes, Curfew, exclusion, Residence, Mental health treatment, Drug rehabilitation, Alcohol treatment and attendance centre requirement for under 25s.

England and Wales – Total figures for England and Wales now include all police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport Police (BTP). The Home Office is responsible for policing the 43 police forces in England and Wales. There are also other authorities who prosecute offenders such as: Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Immediate custody: Unsuspended imprisonment for adults aged 21 or over and detention in a young offender institution for those aged 18 to 20. The maximum sentence available is 4 years. Juveniles aged 12 to 17 may receive a detention and training order of 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 18 or 24 months.

Juvenile: An offender between the ages 10 and 17.

Offensive weapon: Any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person, or intended by the person having it with him for such. Examples includes: a swordstick, a hollow walking-stick or cane containing a blade.

Reprimand and warning: Issued to juvenile first time offenders for minor offences. Reprimand and warning for juveniles are equivalent of cautions for adults. These were replaced by youth cautions on April 8th 2013.

Youth cautions: Introduced on April 8th 2013. They are formal out-of-court disposals for young offenders (aged 10 to 17) and intended to allow a more flexible response to offending than the preceding Final Warning Scheme. These now replace reprimands and warnings.

Suspended Sentence: A custodial sentence of 6 months or less in magistrate's courts and 2 years or less in the Crown Court, suspended for a period ranging from six months to two years available for **adults** only.

Contacts

Press enquiries on the contents of this bulletin should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

Tel: 020 3334 3555

Email: newsdesk@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division of the Ministry of Justice:

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7th Floor

102 Petty France

London

SW1H 9AJ

Email: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General enquiries about the statistical work of the Ministry of Justice can be e-mailed to: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General information about the official statistics system of the United Kingdom is available from www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system

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