Crime and Justice Transparency Sector Panel

10:00-11:30, 14 February 2014
Lower Ground 6, Ministry of Justice, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

Chair: Dr Kieron O'Hara

Minutes

Attendees:

Kieron O'Hara	Southampton University
Professor Allan Brimicombe	University of East London
Matthew Brown	Cabinet Office
Michael Cross	Law Society Gazette
Francis Davey	practising barrister
Anthony Green	Ministry of Justice
Jo May	HMCTS
Meagan Mirza	Information Commissioner's Office
Will Perrin	Talk About Local
Jeni Tennison	Open Data Institute
Merilyne Knox	Metropolitan Police
Aileen Almond	Ministry of Justice
Mark Fraser	ACPO
Ed Howlin	Home Office
John Neil	Home Office
Sean Palmer	HMCTS
Claire Steeksma	Ministry of Justice
Claire Smith (Secretariat)	Ministry of Justice
Simon Whitehouse	Open Data Institute
Nick Rossiter	Registry Trust
Alison Cotterill	Home Office
Suzy Jenner	Ministry of Justice
John Moss	Check That Bike
Sophie Riley	Home Office
William Minnett	Ministry of Justice

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Kieron O'Hara (KO) welcomed attendees and highlighted ongoing actions on the action log. It was agreed that Court Outcomes may make a useful future agenda item. Item 9 of the Panel-Action Log from the previous meeting (Kieron O'Hara to canvas ODI interest in publishing court outcomes) was noted. KO will push this forward.

2. Update on the National Information Infrastructure (NII)

2.1 Matthew Brown (MB) explained the background and purpose to the NII and that the current focus was on repairing broken links and data sets that have a low score on the five star scale. Francis Davey (FD) questioned whether the HMCTS data set descriptions had been improved, in particular it would be useful to see; what the databases are, their schema and any internal documents that described the databases. Will Minnett (WM) suggested that a document describing the databases already existed and that he would look to circulate. It was agreed that both the MoJ and the Home Office would check their descriptions and look to update the NII with better range and depth of information by the end of the month.

Action: WM to circulate document describing data sets.

Action: MoJ and HO to produce lists of databases and their schema by 28 February 2014.

2.2 MB suggested that the Panel may play a useful role in evaluating some of the benefit cases describing the value of releasing data sets.

3. Update on the downgrading of police statistics and revisions to the recorded crime outcomes framework.

3.1 Ed Howlin (EH) updated the Panel on the recent announcement that the police recorded crime statistics had lost their national statistics status but that work was being done to reclaim it. EH highlighted that since 2012 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary had been auditing all police forces to see how they verified their stats. It was noted that both the Crime Survey of England and Wales and recorded crime outcomes had still retained their national status. Will Perrin (WP) mooted the possibility of a criminal or managerial offence for statistical manipulation.

3.2 EH introduced the Panel to a piece of work to replace the "undetected" category on the recorded crimes outcome framework with a more detailed description. To prevent privacy concerns when the data was released the detailed description would be replaced with one of three responses which would still provide further detail without revealing identifying information. EH would welcome any comments on the paper at: Edward.howlin@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk. Megan Mirza (MM) asked if it would be possible to see the three condensed responses.

Action: Panel members to submit comments to EH and Claire Smith (CS) claire.smith@justice.gsi.gov.uk so that they can be shared with other Panel members.

Action: EH to provide extra detail on the three condensed responses.

4. Proposal from the Registry Trust

4.1. Nick Rossiter (NR) explained about the background, purpose and function of the Registry Trust and a proposal that they were considering on publishing an aggregated selection of the data that they hold. NR had submitted a paper but this had not been circulated to the panel because it was under consideration by HMCTS. WP asked a question to clarify that it was only anonymous statistical data they were proposing to

disclose and that they were not going to publish the original raw data. WP and FD acknowledged the tension between the need to cover the costs of publishing data and how to make it as widely available as possible. NR extended an invitation to Panel members to visit the Registry Trust. FD said that the Panel should be able to help the Trust but would need a fuller description of the data they were hoping to publish.

4.2 A discussion followed on the type of license that the information will be published under. It was agreed that it would be useful for the Panel to see further details on the proposal and any opinion on licensing asap. WP asked whether the registry of judgements was included in the NII and it was confirmed that it wasn't, but that Adult Sentencing Outcomes were and that there was also a data set on personal consumer debt on data.gov.uk but that this was not part of the NII.

Action: WM to circulate further information on the proposal and the licensing arrangements to the Panel and in particular the paper submitted by NR.

5. Check that Bike and publication of stolen vehicle data.

5.1 John Moss (JM) outlined his idea that had recently won the Open Data Challenge Series around reducing the market for stolen bikes by allowing people to check the serial numbers before purchase. JM outlined some of the benefits of the service, not least the financial savings that had been made by the service already. JM explained that he had so far struggled to get data to populate the service from police forces. Mark Fraser (MF) asked whether police had objections to the principle of the service or whether practical matters were more of an issue. It was explained that resource constraints and multiple requests from a range of sources for the information would cause problems.

5.1 Merilyne Knox (MK) explained that in the Mets case for the data to be released there would have to be a definite policing purpose for the data to be released and that the resources would have to be available to do it. JM explained that via an FOI request he had ascertained that the data was kept and how it was stored and in his opinion it would be simple to be released. MK suggested that she would need to know more details about what data JM would need to explore this.

5.2 WP described his experience of a similar process to target hardening stolen mobile phones. JM and SW explained that there were no costs passed on to users of the site and that it had benefits to the police. MK acknowledged the value in the service and asked for a more detailed proposal. The value of having a senior police sponsor of the project was discussed.

Action: JM to provide more detail on the exact data required.

Action: KO to write to the Home Secretary expressing support for the proposal and asking about a senior sponsor.

5.3 John Neil (JN) then provided an outline of an ongoing proposal to make information on stolen vehicles more widely available. JN described that currently the data was made available to select organisations that in return provided feedback to the police. JN updated that these organisations and others were against the data being made more widely available. One of the reasons they were against wider publication was the possibility that the provision of Vehicle Identification Numbers and Vehicle Registration Numbers together would be of benefit to criminals. FD questioned whether it would be

possible to release the two lists separately. JN explained that they were considering building a portal for the public to access. WP suggested looking for a European country that were already doing this and JN explained that the UK was ahead of the rest of Europe on this.

5.4 Jeni Tennison (JT) asked about interaction with the DVLA and their upcoming consultation on this. JN confirmed that they were speaking to each other. JN said that it would be useful to have the Panel's support for the proposals and that they could write to him in the first instance. JN also offered to attend a future Panel meeting to discuss an initiative on electronic goods.

Action: Panel members/ KO to write to JN expressing support for the project.

Action: JN to attend future panel meeting on electronic goods.

6. Court Listings

6.1 FD explained that there had been a miscommunication between the technical information that the Panel needed and the policy paper that had been circulated. FD commented that the Panel needed to know how the information got from Libra to the mail shot to journalists and also the schema of the data. Sean Palmer (SP) noted that if the Panel wrote to him with a specific request he would try and provide them with the information by the end of the month.

Action: KO will co-ordinate with Panel members a note setting out what specific information they require and what they hope to achieve from through the use of LIBRA and forward to SP.

Action: Upon receipt of note from Panel, SP to provide information on the data schema by the end of the month, or will explain why if it is later than this.

6.2 SP explained that whilst a longer term solution was being built in the form of a new IT system HMCTS could not commit significant resources to modifying the existing system. WP commented that the Panel would like to find a work around to some of the technical limitations of the current system and that this could be done through seeing and experimenting with the data in a secure environment. SP said that he would be happy to talk to ODI or others about how this could be done.

Action: SP to contact ODI to discuss how to ensure open data principles are embedded in the new system and HMCTS to come back to a future meeting, as the system develops, to update on progress.

7. AOB

7.1 No AOB items were raised. The Panel were reminded that the next meeting was scheduled for Friday 2 May 2014.