



Deaths of Offenders in the Community, England and Wales, 2017/18

Main Points

Deaths in the community rose by 17%



In 2017/18, there were 955 deaths of offenders in the community, up 17% from 819 deaths in 2016/17.

Deaths during court order supervision rose by 40%



Deaths of offenders serving court orders in the community increased from 380 in 2016/17 to 533 in 2017/18 (56% of all deaths).

Deaths during post release supervision dropped by 8%



Deaths of offenders on post release supervision decreased from 401 in 2016/17 to 367 in 2017/18 (38% of all deaths).

The type of supervision the offender was under was unknown in 6% of deaths.

Natural causes remains the biggest cause of death, followed by self-inflicted

In 2017/18, 31% of deaths were the result of natural causes, while 30% were self-inflicted. 26% of deaths remained unclassified.

Deaths under CRC supervision rose by 24%



Deaths of offenders supervised by CRCs increased from 533 deaths in 2016/17 to 659 deaths in 2017/18 (69% of all deaths).

Deaths under NPS supervision rose by 3%

Deaths of offenders supervised by the NPS increased marginally from 286 deaths in 2016/17 to 296 deaths in 2017/18 (31% of all deaths).

Death of offenders in the community covers deaths of offenders supervised in the community by the probation service in England and Wales. Presented alongside figures in annual summary tables on a financial year basis over an 8-year time series. The tables, along with previous editions of the publication series, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/death-of-offenders-in-the-community>

Introduction

The Deaths of Offenders in the Community statistics bulletin covers the deaths of offenders in England and Wales that occurred while they were under probation supervision because they were:

- serving their court order sentences in the community (including community orders, suspended sentence orders); or
- on post-release supervision after completing a custodial sentence.

These figures refer to deaths of offenders occurring in the general public, with the exception of the small number of cases occurring to those residing in approved premises, which are also included in this publication.

Offenders under supervision in the community (other than, to an extent, those occurring in approved premises) are not in the care of HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) in the way they are when in custody. The main responsibilities of offender managers in the community are to assess, supervise and rehabilitate offenders. While they can encourage offenders to address issues affecting the offenders' health and wellbeing, their ability to manage these issues is limited. As a result, the level of responsibility and accountability of the probation service for the health and well-being of offenders is substantially different from that of the prison service in relation to deaths in custody.

Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014

The introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA)¹ in 2014/15 increased the number of offenders supervised by probation services. The Act created 23 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), a series of organisations established on 1 June 2014, responsible for the delivery of offender management to medium and lower-risk offenders in the community. The National Probation Service (NPS) was also established on 1 June 2014, and is responsible for the delivery of offender management to higher risk offenders in the community.

Statistics on deaths occurring in custody are published separately in the Safety in Custody Bulletin². These two sets of figures cannot be compared meaningfully.

Release Schedule

This bulletin was published on 25 October 2018, and includes statistics covering financial year periods from 2010/11 to 2017/18. The earliest period for which data are held across probation is 2010/11. As such, the data presented in this publication represent the complete available time series.

Financial year figures are collected on an annual basis during August and September of each year, and collated for publication during October.

The next release of Deaths of Offenders in the Community statistics, to include figures for the financial year 2018/19, is scheduled for 31 October 2019.

¹ Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 (ORA): <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/11/contents>

² Safety in Custody Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics>

Commentary

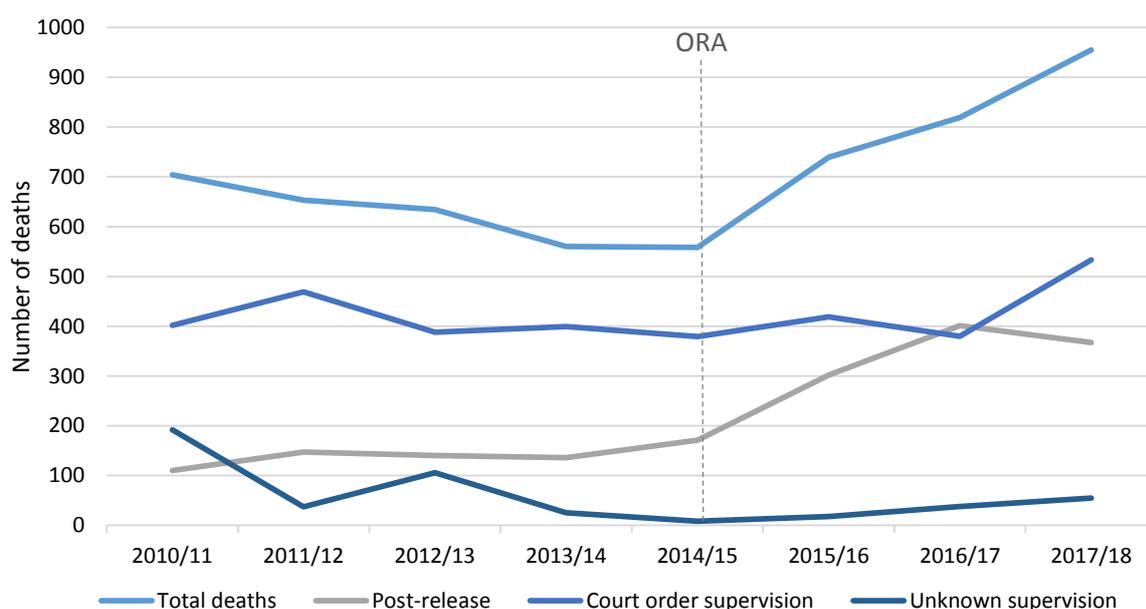
There were 955 deaths of offenders in the community in England and Wales in 2017/18, up 17% from 819 deaths in 2016/17. This is the highest number of reported deaths since the time series began in 2010/11. Of these, 659 (69%) were deaths of offenders supervised by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), an increase of 126 deaths from 2016/17 (24%). 296 (31%) were deaths of offenders supervised by the National Probation Service (NPS), an increase of 10 deaths (3%) compared to 2016/17.

The Offender Rehabilitation Act in 2014/15 increased the number of offenders supervised by probation services as all offenders given custodial sentences became subject to a minimum of 12 months' supervision in the community upon release from prison. This consists of a period spent on licence, and, depending on the length of custodial sentence, a period on post-sentence supervision. Previously, only adults sentenced to over 12 months in custody and all young offenders were subject to statutory supervision.

Following the Act, there was a year on year rise in the number of offenders who died under post-release supervision until 2016/17, while the number of offenders who died serving court orders in the community remained relatively stable over this period. However the number of deaths of offenders serving court orders in the community has increased from 380 in 2016/17 to 533 in 2017/18, an increase of 40%. In contrast, the number of deaths of offenders who died under post release supervision decreased by 8% compared to the same period the previous year, a decrease from 401 in 2016/17 to 367 in 2017/18 (see Figure 1).

Across the time series, the proportion of offender deaths in the community that occurred during post-release supervision increased from 16% in 2010/11 to a high of 49% in 2016/17. This proportion decreased to 38% in 2017/18, with deaths of offenders serving court orders in the community accounting for 56% of deaths in the community in 2017/18, up from 40% in 2016/17.

Figure 1: Total death of offenders in the community, by type of supervision, England and Wales

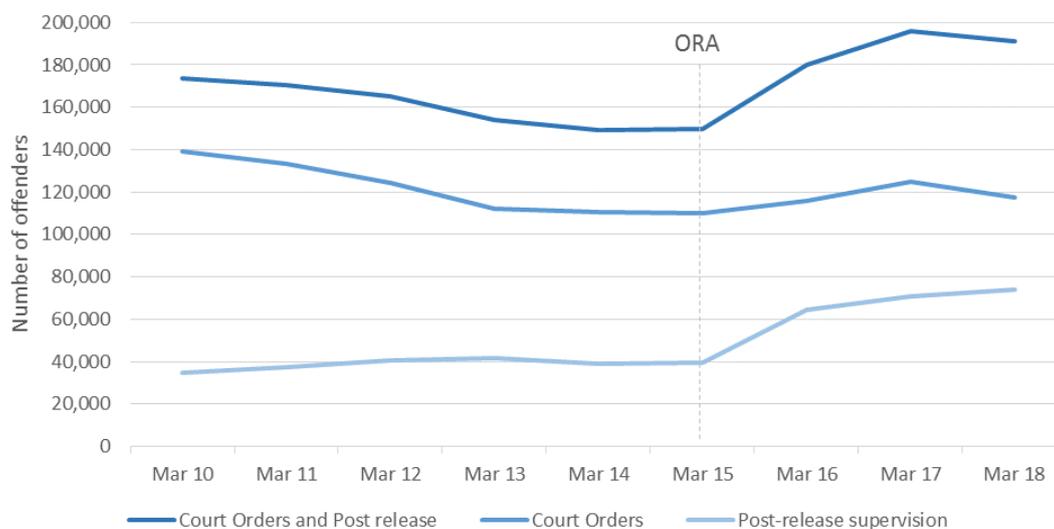


As seen in Figures 1 and 2, the trend in the deaths of offenders in the community followed a similar pattern to the total caseload of offenders supervised in the community at the end of each financial year, as published in the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly³. The combined caseload court orders (including community orders and suspended sentence orders) and post-release supervision, showed a small decrease of 2% from 195,695 as at March 2017 to 191,267 as at March 2018. This change was driven by a 6% decrease in court orders and a slight increase in post-release supervision of 4%.

This is in contrast to the number of deaths of offenders in the community. Where the number of deaths of offenders during post-release supervision in 2017/18 fell by 8% compared to the same period in the previous year, the number of deaths of offenders under court order supervision in 2017/18 increased by 40% compared to 2016/17.

Some caution should be used when considering caseload figures in conjunction with deaths. Offenders may appear both within the caseload figures of court orders (including community orders and suspended sentence orders) and post-release supervision. Accordingly, rates of deaths have not been calculated, and comparisons of trends in caseload to trends in deaths of offenders in the community should be seen as indicative.

Figure 2: Number of offenders supervised by the probation service at the end period by type, England Wales



Some caution should be used when considering caseload figures, as offenders may appear both within the caseload figures of court orders and post-release supervision, resulting in potential double-counting. The introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) on 1 February 2015 caused an increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision. Caution should be used when comparing periods prior to and after the introduction of ORA.

³ Probation caseload statistics are published in the Offender Management statistics quarterly at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>

Apparent cause of death

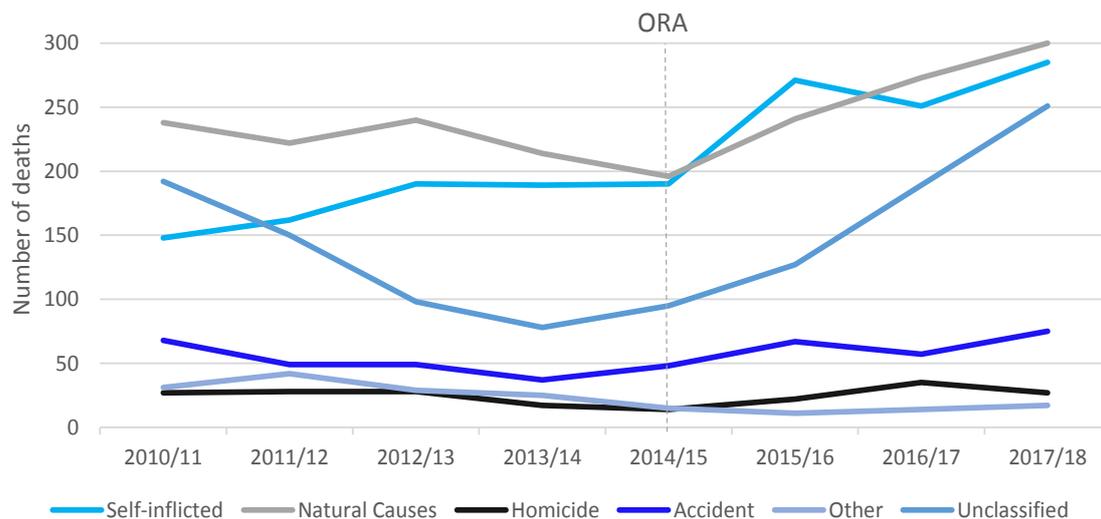
There were 300 natural-cause deaths in 2017/18, an increase of 10% from 2016/17. Deaths due to natural causes account for around a third (31%) of all deaths in the community across the time series.

There were 285 self-inflicted deaths in 2017/18, an increase of 14% from 2016/17, and this accounted for 30% of all deaths. This is a similar proportion to 2016/17 but a slight decrease from 2014/15 and 2015/16 (34% and 37% respectively).

The number of deaths by natural causes has historically been higher than self-inflicted deaths, but the difference has narrowed since 2010/11. In 2015/16, self-inflicted deaths surpassed natural causes, the only year this occurred.

There has been an increase in the proportion of deaths where the apparent cause was reported as unclassified in the last 2 years.

Figure 3: Death of offenders in the community by apparent cause, England and Wales¹



The introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) on 1 February 2015 caused an increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision. Caution should be used when comparing periods prior to and after the introduction of ORA.

Gender and Age

In 2017/18 there were 836 male deaths, accounting for 88% of all deaths, with 31% due to natural causes and 31% self-inflicted. For males, 2015/16 was the only year in the time series to have higher numbers of self-inflicted deaths than natural causes.

There were 119 female deaths and this year the main cause of death was natural causes (33%) with self-inflicted accounting for 25% of female deaths. This is in contrast to the previous two years, where a higher proportion of female deaths were self-inflicted.

At the time of death, 28% of males were aged 50 or over compared to 20% for females. For offenders supervised by the NPS 40% were aged 50 years and over at the time of death,

compared to 21% of deaths in CRCs. Almost half (46%) of offenders who died under the supervision of a CRC were aged between 36-49, compared to 30% in the NPS.

Deaths under post-release supervision in the community

In 2017/18 there has been an 8% decrease in the deaths of offenders under post-release supervision in the community compared to 2016/17. Most of these offenders were supervised by the NPS, where the deaths of offenders under post-release supervision dropped from 183 deaths in 2016/17 to 149 deaths in 2017/18. The number of deaths of offenders under post-release supervision in CRCs remained the same from the previous year (218). Deaths under post-release supervision represented 33% of all deaths in the community while supervised by CRCs, and 50% of all deaths while supervised by the NPS. The sizeable increase in deaths since 2014/15 corresponds with the introduction of ORA.

The classification of deaths under post-release supervision in CRCs are of a broadly similar proportion to those seen in deaths of offenders in the community in 2017/18. Deaths under post-release supervision in the NPS saw a higher proportion of deaths due to natural causes (39%), and a lower proportion of self-inflicted deaths (24%).

Approved Premises

Approved Premises (formerly known as probation/bail hostels) provide accommodation for offenders on post-release supervision (released from prison on licence) and those directed by the courts to live there as a condition of their court order. Staff provide supervision, support and ensure that residents comply with conditions of their licence or court order. Some of the deaths while resident in Approved Premises occurred away from the premises. We do not know of offenders in Approved Premises are on post-release supervision or on a court order.

There were 11 deaths of offenders with residence in Approved Premises in 2017/18. Deaths of offenders residing in Approved Premises accounted for 2% of all deaths of offenders in the community in the past four years, ranging from 9 to 13 deaths a year. The majority of deaths of offenders residing in Approved Premises across the time series were male. Due to the greater volatility due to low numbers, comparisons across time would not be meaningful.

National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC)

CRC's supervise more offenders in the community (59%) and are more likely to supervise offenders under a court order sentence (82% of those under a court order). The NPS supervises 45% of offenders under post-release supervision.

In 2017/18, 69% (659) of deaths of offenders in the community were under the supervision of CRCs and 31% (296) of deaths of offenders in the community were under the supervision of the NPS.

Offenders under the supervision of the NPS

For offenders under the supervision of the NPS, 50% (149) of deaths were offenders under post release supervision in 2017/18, down from 64% (183 deaths) in 2016/17. There was an increase in the number of deaths of offenders serving their court order in the community, up from 82 deaths in 2016/17 to 112 deaths in 2017/18.

Looking at apparent cause, there has been a large decrease in the proportion of deaths by natural cause with 45% classified this way in 2016/17 compared to 33% in 2017/18. This likely due to the large number of unclassified deaths (32% are currently unclassified).

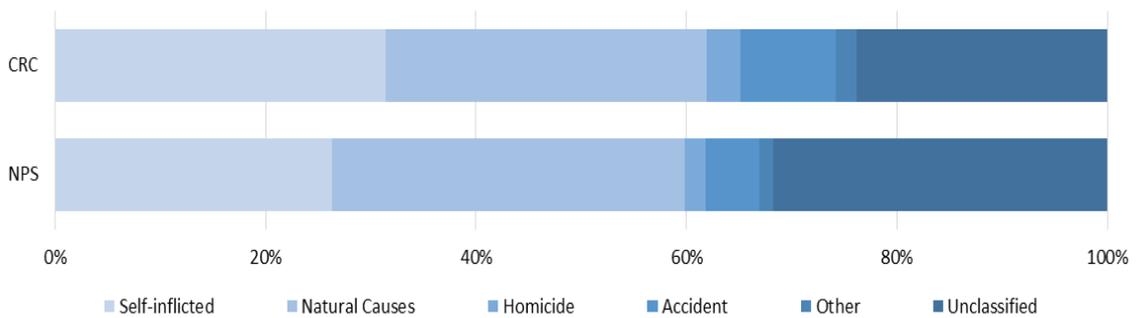
The proportion of self-inflicted deaths has remained unchanged from 2016/17 (26%).

Offenders under the supervision of the CRCs

For offenders under the supervision of CRCs, most of the deaths were of offenders serving a court order in the community. There were 421 deaths of offenders serving a court order, an increase of 41% from the 298 deaths in 2016/17. The number of post release deaths under the supervision of CRCs remained the same as 2016/17 (218 deaths).

The proportion of deaths of offenders supervised by CRC's by natural causes increased from 27% (145 deaths) in 2016/17 to 31% (201 deaths) in 2017/18. The proportion of self-inflicted deaths of offenders supervised by CRCs in 2017/18 decreased slightly to 31% (207 deaths), from 33% in 2016/17 (178 deaths).

Figure 4: Relative distribution of deaths by classification in NPS and CRCs, 2017/18



Caution should be used when comparing percentages of apparent cause of death for CRCs and NPS due to the high proportion of deaths that are as yet unclassified.

List of tables and figures

This is a list of annual Deaths of Offenders in the Community Statistics tables and figures. Figures 1 to 4 are included in this document. The summary tables are available from the website⁴. All tables refer to incidents occurring to offenders in the community in England and Wales and for 2010/11 to 2017/18 unless stated otherwise.

Table description	
Deaths of Offenders in the Community – Summary tables	
Table 1	Deaths of offenders in the community by gender and apparent cause
Table 2	Deaths of offenders in the community by gender and age band
Table 3	Deaths of offenders in the community by gender and ethnic group
Table 4	Deaths of offenders during post-release supervision in the community after a custodial sentence, by gender and apparent cause
Table 5	Deaths of offenders during court order supervision by apparent cause
Table 6	Deaths of offenders in the community residing in Approved premises by apparent cause
Table 7	Deaths of offenders in the community by CRC, 2014/15 and 2017/18
Table 8	Deaths of offenders in the community by NPS Division, 2014/15 and 2017/18
Table 9	Deaths of offenders in the community by Probation Trust, 2010/11 to 2013/14
Deaths of Offenders in the Community – Figures	
Figure 1	Death of offenders in the community, by type of supervision
Figure 2	Number of offenders supervised by the probation service at the end period by type
Figure 3	Death of offenders in the community by apparent cause
Figure 4	Relative distribution of deaths by classification in NPS and CRCs, 2017/18

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/death-of-offenders-in-the-community>

Glossary

Approved premises	Approved premises (formerly known as probation and bail hostels) accommodate offenders released from prison on licence, offenders directed to live there as part of their sentence (such as a requirement of a community order) and those directed to live there by the courts as a condition of bail. Their purpose is to provide an enhanced level of residential supervision in the community, as well as a supportive and structured environment.
Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)	A series of organisations established on 1 June 2014, responsible for the delivery of offender management to medium and lower-risk offenders in the community.
Community order	Replaced all pre-Criminal Justice Act community sentences for adults. Under this order, a number of possible requirements must be added, such as supervision, unpaid work and drug treatment.
Community sentence	This places the offender under the supervision of the probation service and there will be a range of requirements that must be completed.
Licence	The period in which a prisoner is released from prison to serve the remainder of their sentence in the community. Offenders subject to post-release licence are required to adhere to specific conditions as part of their licence. Conditions for offenders released from determinate sentences are set by the governor/controller (on behalf of the Secretary of State) from the releasing prison for determinate sentences. Where the sentence is indeterminate, licence conditions are set by the Parole Board.
National Probation Service (NPS)	An organisation established on 1 June 2014, responsible for the delivery of offender management to higher risk offenders in the community.
Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 (ORA)	An Act passed by parliament that made changes to the legislative framework to support various reforms including ensuring offenders released from custodial sentences of over 1 day will be subject to a minimum of 12 months' supervision in the community, and making available a new 'Rehabilitation Activity Requirement' as part of a community order or suspended sentence order.
Post-release supervision	Offenders released from prisons after completing their custodial sentence are subject to supervision in the community. This consists of a period spent on licence, and, depending on the length of custodial sentence, a period on post-sentence supervision. Prior to the Offender Rehabilitation Act, the supervision period comprised only the licence period.

Post-sentence supervision

Provisions in the Offender Rehabilitation Act created a new supervision period to be served by offenders released from custodial sentences of more than 1 day but less than 2 years. The supervision period follows the licence period, and tops up the licence so that the total period under supervision in the community is 12 months. For example, an offender subject to a licence period of 4 months would then be subject to a supervision period of 8 months. The purpose of the post-sentence supervision period is the rehabilitation of the offender. As with licence conditions, requirements under the supervision period are imposed by the Secretary of State.

Probation trusts

Probation trusts were organisations who managed the delivery of probation services to offenders prior to implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation Act. Probation trusts ceased to exist on 31 May 2014.

Suspended sentence order

A court may give an offender a 'suspended' prison sentence if it believes the offence merits a custodial sentence of between 14 days and 2 years (or 6 months in the magistrates' court. The offender then serves their sentence in the community and must comply with conditions set out in the order made by the court. These conditions can last for up to two years. If the offender breaks these conditions, or commits another offence, they will usually have to serve the original sentence in prison in addition to the sentence they get for any new offence.

Categorisation of deaths

Each death has been classified as one of the following apparent causes, as allocated at the time of reporting based on information held and reported by the probation provider (NPS, CRC or Probation Trust) to HMPPS:

Accident	Any death of a person arising from external causes, accidental overdose/poisoning and deaths where taking a drug contributed to a death but not in fatal amounts.
Homicide	Any death of a person at the hands of another (includes murder and manslaughter).
Natural causes	Any death of a person as a result of a naturally occurring disease process.
Other	Any death of a person whose death cannot easily be classified as natural causes, self-inflicted, accident or homicide. The cause of death may never be known even after all of the necessary investigations have taken place.
Self-inflicted	Any death of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life irrespective of intent.
Unclassified	Any death where there is insufficient information to make a judgement about the cause at the time of reporting.

Data sources and data quality

The data presented in this publication are drawn from manual returns collected annually from each National Probation Service (NPS) Division and each Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), and each Probation Trust prior to 2014/15. These returns may not capture all offenders that died during supervision in the community. The death of an offender may only come to light when they are informed by third parties such as the police, the medical profession or friends and family of the deceased.

Death classification figures in this bulletin are based on reports received by probation staff and their interpretation of these reports. These, in many cases, may not be the confirmed cause of death, but represent the apparent cause of death at the time deaths were reported to HMPPS. Because HMPPS' responsibility for the majority of these figures is predominantly in relation to the termination of the court order or post-release supervision, further information pertaining to the death that may influence subjective assessments of the apparent cause of death may not be subsequently reported to HMPPS. Therefore, while apparent cause of deaths in this bulletin reflects the classification made at the time of reporting, it may not reflect the final classification of deaths after inquest. Such reclassifications would not be expected to have a notable effect on reported trends.

Furthermore, at the time of reporting, probation staff may not have sufficient information regarding the circumstances of the death to assign an apparent cause. The results of any investigations or inquests following the death are not always circulated back to the probation providers. As such, a number of deaths remain unclassified each year, and many of these are unlikely to be subsequently updated. Accordingly, caution is advised when comparing deaths in individual categories across time.

As part of the Transforming Rehabilitation reform programme, [Probation Trusts](#) were replaced in June 2014 by the National Probation Service (NPS), which manages the most high-risk offenders across seven divisions; and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), who manage medium and low-risk offenders. There may be possible underreporting from the period during the transition. Figures for 2014/15 would include some deaths that occurred when the Probation Trusts existed but were reported by the NPS or CRCs that had been allocated responsibility for these offenders prior to their deaths.

Data on deaths of residents staying in Approved Premises may include those directed to reside there as part of their bail conditions. Where known, deaths of residents released on bail have been removed from the figures. Some deaths in Approved Premises occur away from the premises, as such it should not be inferred that all of such deaths were either directly supervised or occurring on the premises themselves.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the information collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. While the figures shown have been checked as far as possible, they should be regarded as approximate and not necessarily accurate to the last whole number shown in the tables.

Data for missing returns in 2016/17, from Humberside, Lincolnshire & North Yorkshire CRC and Norfolk & Suffolk CRC, are now updated in this publication, and the numbers in tables and graphs are revised for the period 2016/17.

Users and uses of these statistics

The statistics included in this publication have a wide range of uses, and this report adds to the body of learning in this area. It supports work to help identify possible means to reduce the risk of such tragedies occurring in future, meeting a broad spectrum of user needs as shown below:

User	Summary of main statistical needs
MOJ Ministers	Use the statistics to monitor the safety and wellbeing of the offenders in the community; and to assess policy impacts (e.g. changes to managing vulnerable offenders)
MPs and House of Lords	Statistics may be used to answer parliamentary questions
Monitoring and Accountability	E.g. Justice Select Committee. Deaths of Offenders in the Community may be used as a primary data source for monitoring and for public accountability.
Policy teams	Statistics are used to inform policy development, to monitor impact of changes over time and to consider future changes and their impact on the system
Agencies responsible for offender management	Current and historical administrative data are used to support performance management information at national and local levels to complement their understanding of the current picture and trends over time
Academia, students and businesses	Used as a source of statistics for research purposes and to support lectures, presentations and conferences
Trade Unions	Used as a source of statistics to inform the work of the unions in relation to the probation service.
Journalists	Used as a compendium of data on deaths of offenders in the community so that an accurate and coherent story can be told on rehabilitation and events occurring to offenders in the community
Voluntary sector	Data may be used to monitor trends of the safety and wellbeing of offenders, to reuse the data in their own briefing and research papers and to inform policy work and responses to consultations.
General public	Data may be used to respond to ad-hoc requests made under the Freedom of Information Act.

HMPPS regularly receives requests for statistics for more recent date periods than those covered in published statistics. In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, HMPPS is unable to release figures for periods in advance of those published in Official Statistics publications. Furthermore, the figures appearing in this publication are received by HMPPS in annual returns during August and September of each year, meaning the publication date is the earliest that collated figures for the financial year are held and available for internal use also, meaning these figures are the most timely available held data.

Related publications

This bulletin is published alongside other inter-related bulletins:

*Safety in Custody Statistics Quarterly Bulletin*⁵: This covers deaths, assaults and self-harm occurring in prison custody. Although death in custody statistics are published on the same day as deaths of offenders in the community, attempts to compare these figures would not be meaningful and such comparisons should not be made.

*Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin*⁶: This provides key statistics relating to offenders who are in prison or under Probation Service supervision. It covers flows into these services (receptions into prison or probation starts) and flows out (discharges from prison or probation terminations) as well as the caseload of both services at specific points in time.

*Proven Re-offending Statistics Quarterly*⁷: This provides proven re-offending figures for offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, received a caution or received a reprimand or warning.

*Community Performance Management Information release*⁸: A quarterly release of performance management information for the National Probation Service (NPS), Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs).

*Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) annual report*⁹: Presents statistics on the number of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) eligible offenders in England and Wales, and information related to these offenders.

Taken together, these publications present users with a more coherent overview of offender management, re-offending among both adults and young people and the safety of offenders whilst in prison custody.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-performance-quarterly-management-information-release>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-annual-reports>

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General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from <http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system>

The Ministry of Justice publishes data relating to offender management in England and Wales. Equivalent statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

<http://www.sps.gov.uk/FreedomofInformation/PrisonerDeaths.aspx>

<http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications.htm>

Alternative formats are available on request from statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

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