

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland

(produced by the Scottish Government)

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland

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ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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Statement by the Head of Assessment on the Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland Re-assessment

The Authority initially assessed the Scottish Government's police recorded crime statistics in one of its earliest Assessment reports, in 2009. In January 2014 the Authority cancelled the designation of police recorded crime statistics in England and Wales because of concerns about the assurance over the underlying data. We decided to extend our review to similar statistics in other parts of the United Kingdom. As our assessment of the recorded crime in Scotland statistics progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the creation of a single police force (the Police Service of Scotland (Police Scotland)) represented a significant change in the crime recording landscape and provided a further rationale for a re-assessment.

The report sets out a wide range of Requirements that must be met before the Authority can confirm the National Statistics designation. Amongst these Requirements, a comprehensive independent audit of police recorded crime data integrity, while not the only area for further work, is an essential pre-requisite. In its absence, and on the basis of the evidence currently available, the Authority cannot at present confer National Statistics status on these statistics.

We welcome the commitments by the Justice Analytical Services Division in the Scottish Government to address the Requirements as part of its next planned publication, in October. The Justice Analytical Services Division also approached us as we finalised this Assessment to suggest that an independent audit could be undertaken more quickly than previously planned. It is however in our view not enough for an audit to have been undertaken before the Scottish Government's next publication. Such an audit must also be comprehensive, published, and incorporated into a wider framework of assurance on the underlying data. We are happy to talk to the Justice Analytical Services Division and others involved in the recording of crimes at any time, and are ready to receive any further evidence to demonstrate their work to meet the Requirements.

We conclude that the statistics do not currently comply with several elements of the *Code of Practice*. The report sets out our detailed reasons for reaching this conclusion. But I would also like to make three important contextual observations:

- Firstly, we expect statistical producers to do more than simply check and then reproduce the numbers they have collected. The *Code of Practice* is based on the need for statistics to add value to users – to explain the context, provide assurance about quality, explain limitations and risks, and provide insights. We encourage the Justice Analytical Services Division to ensure that it is adding value in this way
- There are differences between the situation in Scotland and that in England and Wales. In our England and Wales Assessment report, we noted an accumulation of evidence of concerns about underlying data from several sources, and the absence of assurance to the Office for National Statistics (the producer) about the quality of the underlying data. In Scotland, there is less direct evidence of data problems at the operational level, although this view may change depending on the results of the forthcoming Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) report. But we expect the

- Justice Analytical Services Division to articulate publicly its judgements about the limitations of the data, and how it has drawn on both existing evidence, and the forthcoming HMICS work, to support its view on the reliability of the data
- We have been impressed with features of the institutional framework in Scotland. The creation of Police Scotland provides an opportunity to bring consistency and rigour to the recording of crimes, and Police Scotland have emphasised to us that they take these issues seriously. In addition, Police Scotland is surrounded by a strong framework of inspection and regulation, including a National Crime Registrar, the Scottish Police Authority, and HMICS. From a regulatory perspective, the previous audit and assurance work of HMICS is particularly important, and we welcome HMICS's commitment to undertake a further audit of crime data integrity to provide independent assurance to the people of Scotland about crime recording

For these reasons, we think that the Scottish Government should be able, once it has the results of an independent crime recording audit, to combine existing and new evidence into a stronger framework of assurance. This will provide both itself and users of the statistics with confidence in the quality of the underlying data. At the same time the Scottish Government should be able to address other issues set out in this report – and so we look forward to working with the Scottish Government, and with other bodies, like HMICS, as they seek to improve and demonstrate the quality of these statistics in the public interest.

Ed Humpherson
Head of Assessment, UK Statistics Authority

1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act gives the Statistics Authority power to re-assess whether the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*³ continues to be complied with in relation to official statistics already designated as National Statistics. The report covers the set of statistics reported in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*⁴, produced by the Scottish Government.
- 1.1.2 The previous assessment of this set of statistics was reported in Assessment report 2⁵. The Authority has chosen to reassess these statistics partly due to the nature of concerns raised in our recent Assessment report 268 *Statistics on Crime in England and Wales*⁶. As our assessment progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the creation of a single police force (the Police Service of Scotland⁷ (Police Scotland)) represented a significant change in the crime recording landscape and provided a further rationale for a re-assessment.
- 1.1.3 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Assessment Committee on behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, based on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

- 1.2.1 The Statistics Authority notes that the Scottish Government is responsible for the validation of police recorded crime data and the production and publication of police recorded crime statistics. Police Scotland is responsible for providing annual police recorded crime data to the Scottish Government and carries out internal audits of these data, which are reported internally and to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). In addition, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland's (HMICS) independent reviews of Police Scotland can include inspections of police recorded crime data and the practices of recording them.
- 1.2.2 The Authority expects any producer of statistics to consider the limitations and risks of the underlying data, and to seek appropriate assurance that the data are of sufficient quality such that the statistics meet users' needs. In the context of high profile statistics such as police recorded crime, the Authority has been clear that systematic published audit of the underlying data is essential to increase both the quality of, and public confidence in, these statistics. In line with this position, the Authority considers that police recorded crime data in Scotland are of high public interest, that these data should be the subject of

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime>

⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-2---recorded-crime-in-scotland--24-february-2009.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-268---statistics-on-crime-in-england-and-wales.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.scotland.police.uk/>

independent scrutiny and that the Scottish Government should obtain and provide strong levels of assurance about their quality.

- 1.2.3 However, this report concludes that the Scottish Government lacks sufficient evidence to be able to provide such appropriate reassurance. The Authority considers that the Scottish Government has not created, and put into practice, a coherent framework for considering the quality of the underlying data, and does not have sufficient information about the quality of the police recorded crime data. It is therefore unable to make users fully aware of any potential limitations of the recorded crime statistics.
- 1.2.4 The Authority typically allows a three month period for producers to meet Requirements in Assessment reports. On that basis, and given the available evidence, the Authority considers that the Scottish Government will not be able to gather the information it needs to inform these considerations in that time.
- 1.2.5 These statistics were confirmed as National Statistics in a letter to the Scottish Government in March 2010⁸. It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to continue to ensure that it produces the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*⁹. The Authority considers that the Scottish Government has not provided sufficient evidence of ongoing compliance with the majority of the Principles of the *Code of Practice* for these National Statistics since the last Assessment. The Requirements for the Scottish Government contained in this report reflect the extent of *non-compliance* across the breadth of the Principles and Protocols in the *Code of Practice*.
- 1.2.6 The Requirements in this report (listed in section 1.5) cover a wide range of Principles and Practices of the *Code of Practice*. In many cases, these Requirements relate to elements of the *Code* that we find that most statistical producers comply with as a matter of course, such as publishing minutes of key meetings. The Requirements cover four main themes (some Requirements are applicable to more than one theme):
- Failure to meet the required standards for user engagement and documenting the uses of the statistics (Requirements 1, 2, 3, 4 and 18)
 - Failure to meet the required standards for publishing sufficient information about the methods used to compile the statistics and about the quality of the statistics, and for keeping users informed about material changes, or other related work, that could impact on the statistics (Requirements 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 21)
 - Failure to meet the required standards for the presentation and publication of the statistics (Requirements 11, 14, 15, 17, 19 and 20)
 - Failure to meet the required standard for the planning and resourcing of statistical work and promoting transparency in this work (Requirements 3, 7, 8 and 16)
- 1.2.7 Without new evidence of a systematic independent published audit of the integrity of police recorded crime data, and the results of that audit suggesting

⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics---assessment-report-2.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-as-national-statistics.html>

that the data are produced in ways that are reliable and comparable, the Authority cannot, at present, confer the designation of *Recorded Crime in Scotland* as National Statistics.

1.2.8 The Scottish Government should:

- working with HMICS or other appropriate bodies, combine existing and new work into a coherent framework of assurance. Most of this material exists, or will be available once HMICS publish their next report examining the integrity of crime recording in Scotland; but it has not been incorporated into a coherent framework
- publish demonstrable evidence that the outputs from the forthcoming independent HMICS audit have been integrated into the processes and practices for the compilation, analysis and publication of these statistics and of the supporting documentation
- implement all the Requirements covering the wide range of Principles of the *Code of Practice* listed in section 1.5

1.2.9 The Scottish Government informed the Authority on 15 July 2014 that it is investigating whether the HMICS audit can be conducted and published before October 2014. The Authority welcomes efforts by the Scottish Government to improve the trustworthiness and value of these statistics in the public interest. The Authority further anticipates that the Scottish Government will address the Requirements in this report swiftly and that the results of the forthcoming HMICS audit will be appropriately reflected in the Scottish Government's consideration of the reliability of the police recorded crime data. The Authority will welcome the further submission of fuller evidence from the Scottish Government which demonstrates that it has addressed all the Requirements set out in this Assessment report, and remains receptive to consider this matter again with the Scottish Government when such evidence is presented.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

1.3.1 The Scottish Government does not provide sufficient information to users about the quality of the police recorded crime statistics, either within *Recorded Crime in Scotland* or in associated published documentation, especially about the reliability and accuracy of the statistics and the uncertainty surrounding the underlying administrative data; it does not fully explain how these statistics could be subject to inconsistencies; and it has not taken steps to demonstrate that the underlying administrative data are of sufficient quality for these statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

1.3.2 The Scottish Government has made some enhancements to *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, such as the inclusion of additional tables and information about the legislative context. But more generally it has not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate continuous improvements in the analysis, presentation, and communication of these statistics, or the supporting metadata, since they were first assessed in 2009. In addition, the Scottish Government has not implemented a range of suggestions from Assessment report 2.

1.3.3 The Scottish Government engages regularly with its key stakeholders who are directly engaged in the police reform process. However although the

statisticians meet regularly with a small group of expert users, there is a lack of evidence that they engage regularly with less expert groups, particularly over the past 18 months in light of the likely changes to the statistics following the creation of Police Scotland. The Scottish Government has not published sufficiently detailed information about a range of users' needs to be able to provide assurance that the statistics that it publishes within reports about crime meet these needs. It has not documented the full range of uses and has not kept published information about users' views of the statistics up to date.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that the Scottish Government should improve the production and presentation of statistics in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. Those which are essential for the Scottish Government to address in order to strengthen its compliance with the *Code* and to enable designation as National Statistics are listed – as Requirements – in section 1.5, alongside a short summary of the key findings that led to each Requirement being made. Other recommended changes, which the Assessment team considers would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation as National Statistics, are listed – as Suggestions – in section 1.6.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

1.5.1 This section includes those improvements that the Scottish Government is required to make in respect of its statistics on *Recorded Crime on Scotland* in order to fully comply with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, and to enable designation as National Statistics.

Finding	Requirement	
<p>The Scottish Government engages primarily with expert users of the statistics but has engaged less frequently with a wider range of less expert users. The Scottish Government should:</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>a) Engage regularly with a wider range of less expert users of these statistics outside of the Scottish Government's key stakeholders</p> <p>b) Ensure that both expert and non-expert users are consulted about changes to the statistics through an early and comprehensive consultation</p> <p>c) Publish the results of the user consultation (para 3.2).</p>
<p>The Scottish Government does not publish sufficient information</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Publish more detailed information about the uses, users, and users'</p>

about the uses of the statistics, the extent to which the full range of users' needs are met through the published statistics, or users' views of the statistics. The Scottish Government should:		views of the police recorded crime statistics (para 3.3).
The 2013/14 <i>Justice Analytical Services Division Analytical Programme (JASDAP)</i> was approved by the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Justice at the end of June 2013 but was published on the Scottish Government's website in February 2014, close to the end of the period to which it relates. The 2014/15 <i>JASDAP</i> was published on 14 July 2014. The Scottish Government should:	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop a statistical work plan annually b) Consult users on the priorities set out in the plan c) Publish the <i>Justice Analytical Services Division; Analytical Programme</i> as soon as it has been approved by the relevant Minister in the future (para 3.5).
The Scottish Government told us it is working with Police Scotland and the SPA to develop a consistent publication plan and it will consider the feasibility of producing accessible and consistent quarterly statistics. The Scottish Government has not communicated this information to the users of these statistics. The Scottish Government should:	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Inform users about the ongoing work with Police Scotland and the SPA to develop a consistent publication plan b) Consult more widely about users' need for more frequent statistics c) Publish the results of this user consultation (para 3.6).
The Scottish Government did not announce changes in classifications in advance of the publication of <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13</i> . The Scottish Government told us that it plans to include information about changes alongside the release of <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14</i> . The Scottish Government should:	5	Confirm that future changes to methods or classifications will be announced in advance of the publication of <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> (para 3.7).
The Scottish Government receives a 'snapshot' of data from Police Scotland, but	6	Provide more information to users about the nature and extent of changes made to police crime

<p>records on the live database may be amended after that.</p> <p>The Scottish Government does not reflect the impact of amendments to the data. The Scottish Government should:</p>		<p>records (para 3.9).</p>
<p>There is little published information about how the roles and responsibilities relating to the police recorded crime statistics are shared between the different stakeholders. The Scottish Government should:</p>	7	<p>Publish information about the roles and responsibilities of the organisations involved in the production and publication of police recorded crime statistics (para 3.10).</p>
<p>The Scottish Government attends several meetings with key stakeholders where issues pertaining to the police recorded crime statistics are discussed; there are no minutes or actions published from these meetings. The Scottish Government should:</p>	8	<p>Document and publish how those who produce the statistics are protected from any pressures that might influence the methods, content or timing of the police recorded crime statistics (para 3.13).</p>
<p>The Scottish Government does not publish detailed information about the methods used to compile the statistics alongside the annual release of <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i>. It is publishing a one-off report to explain the issues around the collation and compilation of the statistics for 2013/14. The Scottish Government should:</p>	9	<p>a) Publish the proposed <i>Technical Report</i> as soon as it is finalised, ensuring that the language and content of this report is accessible to non-expert users</p> <p>b) Publish detailed information about the methods used to compile the statistics alongside each release of <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> (para 3.18).</p>
<p>The Scottish Government has told us that it plans to publish a document containing analysis comparing the police recorded crime statistics to the results of the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey. The draft document requires more work to fully explain the analysis. The Scottish Government should:</p>	10	<p>a) Publish the analysis comparing the police recorded crime statistics and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, and any other relevant sets of statistics</p> <p>b) Include a clear explanation about how this analysis could assess the scale of any difference between crimes recorded by the police and that experienced by the population resident in households, and</p>

		<p>the resulting impact on how users should interpret crime statistics</p> <p>(para 3.20).</p>
<p>The Scottish Government publishes <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> separately from the <i>Scottish Crime and Justice Survey</i>. The Scottish Government should:</p>	11	<p>Bring the analysis and commentary of the two main sources of crime statistics together into a single published report and present a coherent summary of crime based on both data sources (para 3.21).</p>
<p>The Scottish Government does not publish sufficient information about the range of quality issues identified in this report. The Scottish Government should:</p>	12	<p>Publish information for users, alongside the police recorded crime statistics, about how it assures itself of their quality, including its assessment of any risk and potential source of error associated with the use of the underlying administrative data source (para 3.23).</p>
<p>The Authority considers that these data are of high public interest and that the Scottish Government should provide strong levels of assurance about their quality. The Authority welcomes the forthcoming inspection of crime recording integrity by HMICS and considers that it is in the public interest that a central pre-requisite for the designation of these statistics is: a systematic, independent and published audit of the underlying police recorded crime data; the results of that audit suggesting that the data are produced in ways that are reliable and comparable; and visible evidence that the outputs of such an audit are integrated into the Scottish Government's practices around the production of these statistics. The Scottish Government should:</p>	13	<p>a) Keep users informed about the progress of the HMICS audit</p> <p>b) Publish demonstrable evidence that the findings from the forthcoming HMICS audit have been integrated into the compilation of the statistics presented in <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i></p> <p>c) Update published quality information for police recorded crime statistics in the light of the findings of the forthcoming HMICS audit, making it clear how the outputs from the audit inform the Scottish Government's understanding of the quality of the statistics</p> <p>d) Consider whether statistics based on police recorded crime data can be produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs</p> <p>(para 3.26).</p>
<p>The Scottish Government does not clearly explain the</p>	14	<p>More clearly document the relationship between different</p>

coherence between the range of reports that it publishes based on police recorded crime statistics. The Scottish Government should:		sources of crime statistics across the criminal justice system in Scotland (para 3.27).
The Scottish Government does not provide sufficient information about the comparability of the police recorded crime statistics with similar statistics published in the other UK administrations. The Scottish Government should:	15	Provide information to users about the comparability of the police recorded crime statistics with those published in the other administrations of the UK (para 3.28).
The Assessment team found it difficult to obtain evidence about ongoing <i>Code</i> compliance for these statistics. In addition this Assessment report contains a substantial suite of Requirements that will require ongoing review of resources. The Scottish Government should:	16	Review the staffing profile of the Justice Analytical Services statistics team and provide the Authority with an assurance that the production of police recorded crime statistics is adequately resourced (para 3.31).
The Scottish Government needs to set the statistics in a broader context and provide more information to users about the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics in relation to how they could be used. The Scottish Government should:	17	<p>Improve the commentary for police recorded crime statistics by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clarifying the strengths and limitations of the statistics b) Provide further explanatory information about the context <p>As part of meeting this requirement the Scottish Government should consider the points detailed in annex 1 and annex 2 (para 3.33).</p>
The Scottish Government receives aggregated data from Police Scotland but it does not have access to individual level data on crimes and offences. The Scottish Government should:	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Investigate users' need for more detailed record level data to enhance analysis b) publish the results of this investigation, including how it plans to take the outcome forward when the legacy systems are replaced with the i6 national data collection IT system (para 3.35).
The Scottish Government is	19	Review and update where

considering the suitability of presenting open data tables, and it will consider user feedback to inform its plans. The Scottish Government should:		necessary, the formats in which it publishes police recorded crime statistics in order to meet the needs of users (para 3.36).
The draft pre-release access list for <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14</i> includes the names of 37 individuals, with a further 19 names likely to be confirmed nearer the time of publication. The Scottish Government should:	20	Ensure that pre-release access for <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> is only granted where absolutely necessary (para 3.40).
The Scottish Government has published a Statement of Administrative Sources specifically for police statistics. The SoAS does not present sufficient information about the arrangements for auditing the quality of the administrative data used to compile <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> . The Scottish Government should:	21	Update its Statement of Administrative Sources for police statistics to include full information about the arrangements for auditing the quality of the administrative data used to compile <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> , taking into consideration the recent Authority Statement <i>Administrative Data and Official Statistics</i> , and associated documents, and the National Statistician's <i>Interim Guidance</i> (para 3.41).

1.6 Suggestions for extracting maximum value from the statistics

1.6.1 This section includes some suggestions for improvement to the Scottish Government's statistics on *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

We suggest that the Scottish Government:

1	Refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> (para 3.3).
2	Publish the User Guide on the Scottish Government website as soon as it is finalised (para 3.3).
3	Clearly label corrections when they are included in <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> (para 3.8).
4	Include a prominent link to the Scottish Government's corporate policy statement on its current practice on revisions and corrections on the Crime and Justice landing page of its website and within

	<i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> (para 3.8).
5	Include information about the nature and extent of changes made to police crime records, and how to interpret these changes, in its corporate policy statement on its current practice on revisions and corrections (para 3.9).
6	Publish information about a) the nature of discussions and meetings with key stakeholders about police recorded crime statistics; and b) the decisions that are taken in these meetings that could impact on the police recorded crime statistics (para 3.13).
7	Include in the proposed User Guide a diagrammatic representation showing sources of potential bias and error at each stage of the crime recording process (para 3.23).
8	Review the presentation of the statistics in charts for <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14</i> (para 3.34).
9	Update the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website with the most recent set of police recorded crime statistics at the earliest feasible date (para 3.37).
10	Publish records of those granted pre-release access to the police recorded crime statistics during their development as well as in their final form (para 3.40).
11	Update the document describing the data source for <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> (para 3.41).
12	Provide a link to the 'Data Sources and Suitability' web page from the forthcoming <i>Recorded Crime in Scotland</i> report (para 3.41).

2 Subject of the assessment

Statistical reports about crime

- 2.1 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is an annual statistical report produced by the Justice Analytical Services Division¹⁰ of the Scottish Government. It presents statistics on crimes and offences recorded and cleared-up by the police service in Scotland. The report includes trends over the last decade for Scotland, police force areas (up until the most recent report *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* published in June 2013) and local authority areas. Before 2012, *Recorded Crime in Scotland* was published annually in September. Since 2012, the statistics have been published in June each year, based on data for the preceding financial year; this follows a Requirement in the previous Assessment report 2¹¹.
- 2.2 Contraventions of Scottish criminal law are divided for statistical purposes into crimes and offences. 'Crime' is generally used for the more serious criminal acts; the less serious are termed 'offences', although the term 'offence' may also be used in relation to serious breaches of criminal law. The distinction is made only for working purposes and the 'seriousness' of the offence is generally related to the maximum sentence that can be imposed. The analysis and commentary in *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is presented by five crime groups (non-sexual crimes of violence; sexual offences; crimes of dishonesty; fire-raising, vandalism etc; and other crimes) and two offence groups (miscellaneous offences; and motor vehicle offences). *Recorded Crime in Scotland* also includes statistics on crime and offences 'cleared up'¹² by the police in Scotland. The Scottish Government also collects high level data for Scotland from the British Transport Police, Ministry of Defence Police and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary. In 2012/13, data on 1,454 crimes and offences were collected from these forces; these data are not included with the statistics presented in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, but are referenced in a Notes section of the report. In addition, the report does not present statistics specifically on domestic abuse, since crimes and offences relating to domestic abuse are recorded under different crime types such as 'common assault', 'sexual assault' or 'breach of the peace', for example.
- 2.3 The Scottish Government publishes three other statistical reports based on police recorded crime in Scotland, to complement the summary statistics presented in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*:
- *Homicide in Scotland*¹³ presents statistics about police recorded crimes of murder and culpable homicide, and includes analysis of characteristics of the victim and the accused, longer term trends as well as a comparison of

¹⁰ The Justice Analytical Services Division consists of three cross-professional units: the Criminal and Civil Justice Analytical Unit, the Prisons, Community Justice and Law Reform Analytical Unit; and the Safer Communities Analytical Unit

¹¹ See footnote 5

¹² A crime or offence is regarded as cleared up where there exists a sufficiency of evidence under Scottish law, to justify consideration of criminal proceedings notwithstanding that a report is not submitted to the procurator fiscal because either (i) by standing agreement with the procurator fiscal, the police warn the accused due to the minor nature of the offence, or (ii) reporting is inappropriate due to the non-age of the accused, death of the accused or other similar circumstances

¹³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/10/6416>

homicide rates in other European countries. The Scottish Government publishes these statistics annually, and they were last published in October 2013

- *Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland*¹⁴ presents statistics on the incidence of domestic abuse recorded by the police, and includes detailed analysis of characteristics of the victim and the accused and actions taken by the police, and includes analysis of longer term trends. The Scottish Government publishes these statistics either annually or every other year, and they were last published in October 2013
- *Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland*¹⁵ includes statistics on all recorded offences where a firearm was alleged to have been used or where a firearm was stolen; the report also presents analysis by characteristics of the victim and the accused, as well as longer-term trends. The Scottish Government publishes these statistics annually, and they were last published in November 2013

These reports were the subject of Assessment report 119¹⁶. The Authority chose not to include them within this re-assessment in order to focus on matters germane to police recorded crime statistics overall. The Scottish Government's Justice Analytical Services Division also publishes a range of other statistical reports and research papers about the criminal justice system.

Police Reform in Scotland

- 2.4 The *Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012*¹⁷ established a single police service, the Police Service of Scotland (Police Scotland), on 1 April 2013. Police recorded crime statistics published by the Scottish Government for 2013/14 onwards will be derived from data supplied by Police Scotland.
- 2.5 Before April 2013, the Scottish policing system comprised eight regional police forces, the Scottish Police Services Authority and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency. Each police force was accountable to its own Board, Council or Police Authority. Representatives from each force also sat on the Scottish Policing Board¹⁸. The Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency and the Scottish Police Services Authority were accountable to the Scottish Police Services Authority Board¹⁹, which in turn was accountable to the Scottish Government.
- 2.6 Police Scotland is led by a Chief Constable, who is responsible for the direction and control of the police service. Operational policing is performed by 14 local police divisions and national specialist divisions, such as the Specialist Crime

¹⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/10/2411>

¹⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/11/7608>

¹⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-119---statistics-on-homicide--domestic-abuse--firearm-offences-and-firearm-certificates-recorded-by-the-police-in-scotland.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2012/8/contents>

¹⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/archive/law-order/Police/ScotPolBoard>

¹⁹ There is no published information about this legacy Scottish Police Services Authority Board, although the *Scottish Police Services Authority Annual Report & Accounts 2012/13* is published here: <http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/128635/spsaannualreport2013>

police). The recording of incidents and crimes by the police should follow the Scottish Crime Recording Standards²² (SCRS) and the Scottish Government Counting Rules. The SCRS was introduced in 2004 to encourage a more victim-oriented approach to crime recording and to promote greater consistency in crime recording across the eight legacy police forces. The Scottish Government Counting Rules are included in the SCRS and are used by Police Scotland to provide a national standard for the recording and counting of crimes and offences. The rules and guidance cover how crimes should be categorised, and whether or not a reported incident should be considered a crime, a crime related incident or another type of incident.

- 2.8 There are a number of ways that crimes can be reported to the police, for example: by victims reporting crimes in person at a police station, online or by telephone; by police identifying a crime themselves; or by a report from another agency such as social services. In many cases, but not all, a crime record will start out as an incident record which allows the police to assess the facts around the matter reported to them and determine whether a crime has been committed. However, in some cases the crime record may be created directly, without initially creating an incident report. Furthermore there can be differences in the crime recording systems that are used; a single crime recording system is being developed for Police Scotland; as this system has not yet been implemented, each local police division has continued to use the crime recording systems that were in place for each of the eight legacy police forces. These differences present challenges in providing assurance that the recording processes are audited systematically and consistently, but Police Scotland has established a formal audit of crimes and incidents across all police divisions.
- 2.9 Until the end of the 2012/13 financial year, the eight legacy police forces provided statistical returns to the Scottish Government on a cumulative quarterly basis, with the final submission of quarterly data containing data for the full financial year period. These returns comprised a simple count of the numbers of each type of crime or offence recorded and 'cleared up'²³ by police. At the end of the recording year, Scottish Government checked the returns for quality purposes and aggregated the submissions by each police force to derive a national total. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* presents police recorded crime statistics for Scotland as a whole, with specific commentary and analysis at a police force level. Since June 2013, Police Scotland has submitted police recorded data for all of Scotland to the Scottish Government on a cumulative quarterly basis, with a final submission of data for all four quarters comprising the full 2013-14 financial year. Police Scotland has developed a new performance management system, Scottish Operational and Management Information System (ScOMIS), to extract and collate administrative data from the legacy force source systems. These legacy systems will continue to be used to record crime, until they are replaced by Police Scotland's i6²⁴ policing system that is scheduled to be operational by the end of 2015. In June 2014,

²² <http://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/138327/232757/scottish-crime-recording-standard?view=Standard>

²³ See footnote 12

²⁴ It is envisaged i6 will support the new standardised national policing processes and daily policing operations and investigations. Accenture have been awarded a 10 year contract to develop and maintain the system

Police Scotland published its annual performance data and drew users' attention to the fact that these were not National Statistics.

Governance of the Police and Police Recorded Crime

- 2.10 Before the creation of Police Scotland, each Scottish legacy police force had its own Force Crime Registrar (FCR). They were responsible for overseeing compliance with the SCRS and the Counting Rules. While existence of the FCR roles promoted consistency in auditing and implementation of the SCRS, their views could be overruled by local chief constables. Since the creation of Police Scotland, there is now one National Crime Registrar²⁵ (NCR), supported by three Crime Registrars (CR), each covering a regional area. The CRs each also lead on a specific aspect of crime recording: training; audit; and maintaining the Counting Rules. In addition, each of the 14 police divisions in Scotland has a Crime Manager (CM), of Inspector or Detective Inspector rank, supported by other staff and officers. The NCR and CRs are responsible for conducting three types of audit of recording practices: a biannual audit that looks at the recording of crime related incidents; cross-divisional audits of specific crime areas; and a biannual audit of 'no-crimes'. A 'no-crime' is the reversal of the decision that an incident was a crime, based on additional information²⁶. The audits are reported to Police Scotland's Corporate Governance Board quarterly and to the SPA Audit and Risk Committee²⁷. SPA published a high level summary²⁸ of the results from the audits carried out in the first two quarters of 2013/14. The audits do not cover the 'clear-up' (detections) of crimes and offences, which are reported in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*.
- 2.11 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) has been established for around 150 years. Under the *Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012*, HMICS's powers were refreshed to reflect the creation of a new single police service and it is responsible for overseeing the effectiveness and efficiency of both Police Scotland and the SPA. HMICS also has a statutory duty to ensure that Police Scotland's Chief Constable and the SPA meet their obligations in terms of best value and continuous improvement. HMICS have scrutinised and audited the compliance processes and structures within the legacy forces and the SCRS since 2004. In December 2013, HMICS published a report *Review of Incident and Crime Recording*²⁹, which included a review of 1,501 incident records recorded by Police Scotland. HMICS plans³⁰ to undertake a more

²⁵ The National Crime Registrar for Police Scotland has the overall responsibility for maintaining the SCRS, is the final arbiter for crime recording decisions and the interpretation of counting rules and is responsible for implementing an internal audit process across the service

²⁶ A crime, once recorded, is classified as a 'no-crime' where: (i) additional credible information becomes available that determines that no crime took place, (ii) the crime was committed outside the Police Scotland jurisdiction, (iii) the crime was committed in another division and is transferred to that division for recording, (iv) a procedural error has been made for a non-victim based crime/offence. Incidents that are 'no-crimes' are removed from the recorded crime statistics

²⁷ <http://www.spa.police.uk/meetings-events/audit-and-risk-committee/>

²⁸ <http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/174772/226283/10.1bar>

²⁹ <http://www.hmics.org/publications/hm-inspectorate-constabulary-scotland-review-incident-and-crime-recording-december-2013>

³⁰ <http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/SCRUTINY%20PLAN%202014-15%201.0%20FINAL.pdf>

comprehensive Audit and Assurance Review of crime recording from October to December 2014, and expects to publish its findings in early 2015.

- 2.12 The SPA³¹ was also established under the *Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012* with the responsibility of maintaining policing, promoting policing principles and continuous improvement of policing, and holding the Chief Constable to account of the policing in Scotland. The SPA Board was established on October 2012 and currently meets every two months. The SPA independently scrutinises the management and performance of Police Scotland through evidence-led reporting; Police Scotland submits quarterly management information to the SPA for this purpose. The SPA's Board scrutinises Police Scotland's performance based on four Strategic Policing Priorities, which are determined by Scottish Ministers: Making Communities Safer; Readiness to Respond to Natural Hazards and Major Events; Delivering an Efficient and Effective Service, including Reform Benefits; and Increasing Public Confidence and Reducing the Fear of Crime.
- 2.13 Audit Scotland provides services to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission and helps them ensure that organisations that spend public money in Scotland do so properly, efficiently and effectively. It conducted a performance audit from April 2013 on police reform on behalf of the Auditor General. The report, *Police Reform; Progress update 2013*³², was published in November 2013 and concluded that 'much was achieved during the transition period' and 'progress has been made towards achieving the objectives of reform' but that the planning for the move to a single police service was 'hampered by poor baseline information, a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, and difficult relationships between the Scottish Government, the SPA and Police Scotland'. The report also recognised that there had been significant changes to governance arrangements and that some important strategies and plans were still under development. Audit Scotland made several recommendations, including that the Scottish Government, SPA and Police Scotland should continue to work together to agree how police performance will be reported to support effective scrutiny, and that the SPA should develop a performance framework by the end of March 2014. This framework should include, but also go beyond, recorded crime to look at the wider policing picture. Audit Scotland plans to follow up on whether the recommendations from its report have been implemented as part of its annual audit of the SPA, due to be published in late 2014.

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS)

- 2.14 The Scottish Government publishes a statistical report, *Results from the 2012/13 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*³³ (RSCJS), which it last published in March 2014. The responsibility for the publication sits within the Justice Analytical Services Division, in a team distinct from the team responsible for publishing *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey³⁴ (SCJS) measures individuals' experience of crime – victimisation – and attitudes to a range of crime and justice related issues in the previous

³¹ See footnote 20

³² http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2013/nr_131114_police_reform.pdf

³³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/03/9823/0>

³⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/crime-and-justice-survey>

twelve months. The survey provides the opportunity to collect information about crime independently of whether it has been reported to, or recorded by, the police. The survey has been operational since 2008, replacing the Scottish Crime and Victimisation Survey which ran from 2004. The survey was conducted annually up until 2010/11, after which it moved to being conducted every other year following a Scottish Government survey rationalisation project, therefore no survey ran in 2011/12. The SCJS excludes persons under the age of 16 and crimes against businesses. Other crimes outside the survey's coverage include those that are 'victimless', such as speeding, or where a victim cannot be interviewed, such as homicide. The Scottish Government contract out the SCJS fieldwork and initial data preparation. The contract is currently held by TNS BMRB³⁵. Both *RSCJS* and *Recorded Crime in Scotland* contain some reference to each other but neither report contains detailed analysis of the differences between the statistics, particularly in relation to crime trends over time.

Uses and users of crime statistics

- 2.15 The statistics in *Recorded Crime in Scotland* are used by a wide variety of users and stakeholders to monitor trends, and for policy and research. Audit Scotland uses the statistics, alongside other data from across the criminal justice system, to assess trends that could indicate areas for future audit. The SPA uses the statistics, in addition to management information that it receives directly from Police Scotland, to monitor and scrutinise policing performance. HMICS uses the statistics to inform its own work. Local authorities use the statistics to gain a regional picture of crime rates and to monitor the impact of policy reforms and local strategy on council services, service users and the broader community. The statistics are used within Scottish Government to help assess the effectiveness of justice programmes such as *The Strategy for Justice in Scotland*³⁶ and the Building Safer Communities Programme³⁷, and to assess schemes such as No knives, better lives³⁸. Police recorded crime data are also used within Scotland Performs³⁹ and the Scottish Government use the statistics as a reference to provide context to the National Outcome 9 'We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger'⁴⁰. The Scottish Government also uses the statistics to answer Parliamentary Questions, Ministerial Correspondence and Freedom of Information requests and to provide briefing material to ministers.
- 2.16 The statistics are widely reported in the media, reflecting the public interest in crime and the criminal justice system. Academics use the statistics as part of a wide range of criminal justice research and for teaching purposes. Voluntary organisations use them to assess the risks of victimisation across different groups.

³⁵ <http://www.tns-bmrb.co.uk/home>

³⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/justicestrategy>

³⁷ <http://www.buildingsafercommunities.co.uk/>

³⁸ <http://noknivesbetterlives.com/>

³⁹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms>

⁴⁰ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome/crime>

Report formats

- 2.17 The Scottish Government publishes *Recorded Crime in Scotland* in HTML and PDF, with supplementary tables published in Excel format.

Costs

- 2.18 The Scottish Government reported in *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* that it cost £2,500 to produce the statistics. The Scottish Government is currently unable to confirm the cost of producing *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14*.

3 Assessment findings

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

Requirement from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Identify the earliest feasible date for publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland* statistics after the data are supplied by police forces; and revise the published timetable to bring forward publication to that date

Suggestions from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Make documentation available on how issues identified through user consultation are prioritised and developed
- Increase the frequency of published crime statistics through the release of quarterly statistics

3.1 The Scottish Government engages primarily with expert users of the statistics through the Crime and Justice ScotStat⁴¹ group which meets twice a year. The purpose of the meeting is to identify key user needs across a range of criminal justice statistics and implement a strategy to prioritise and meet these needs. Membership of this group includes statisticians from the Scottish Government, along with representatives from the SPA, Police Scotland, HMICS, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Scottish Legal Aid Board and some academics. The Scottish Government has published minutes and papers from these meetings on the Crime and Justice Statistics section of its website⁴². The group has met twice since police reform on 1 April 2013. The Scottish Government told us that it discussed its proposals to change the presentation of the statistical geographies at the Crime and Justice ScotStat meetings and received positive feedback. The Scottish Government also told us that representatives from Police Scotland and the SPA provided updates at the ScotStat meetings on aspects relating to police reform.

3.2 The Scottish Government held a user event in April 2012 and published a summary⁴³ of the topics covered at the event, such as changes to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) and civil justice statistics, and a general overview of police reform. Copies of the presentations are published on the Scottish Government's website. The Scottish Government did not provide the

⁴¹ ScotStat is a network for users and providers of Scottish Official statistics which aims to improve communication amongst those interested in particular statistics:

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

⁴² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/scotstatcrime/meetings>

⁴³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/scotstatcrime/JASstatsuserday>

Assessment team with evidence to suggest that this wider user engagement has been sustained during 2013/14, to inform users of the potential implications that police reform may have on police recorded crime statistics and any future analysis that users may want to carry out. The Scottish Government did not consult those on the ScotStat mailing list (which includes around 500 users of crime statistics, ranging from expert to casual users) or provide information on the Crime and Justice Statistics section of the Scottish Government's website. In April 2014 the Scottish Government carried out a user consultation⁴⁴ about the format and content of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. The consultation closed in early May 2014 and the Scottish Government told us that it aims to publish a summary of the results of this consultation on its website in July or August 2014. The consultation was for a period of 5 weeks and did not present users with any proposed changes to the presentation of the statistics, except for an option to view the data by each local authority. An open textbox invited comments about the content and frequency of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. The Scottish Government has not published information about police reform and its impact on police recorded crime statistics, or links to such information, on its Crime and Justice Statistics webpages⁴⁵. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should a) engage regularly with a wider range of less expert users of these statistics outside of the Scottish Government's key stakeholders; b) ensure that both expert and non-expert users are consulted about changes to the statistics through an early and comprehensive consultation; and c) publish the results of the user consultation⁴⁶ (Requirement 1).

- 3.3 The Scottish Government does not publish sufficient information about the uses of the statistics, the extent to which the full range of users' needs are met through the published statistics, or users' views of the statistics. The Scottish Government publishes metadata in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, and in a separate document *Recorded Crime in Scotland; Data Sources and Suitability*⁴⁷; these note some uses of the statistics but these do not provide specific examples of how the statistics have been used by different types of users. The Scottish Government told us that it plans to include a section about 'users and uses of data' in the forthcoming publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14*. The statisticians also told us that 'in order to meet the needs of less expert users [they] plan to develop and publish a User Guide which should offer a valuable resource in term of providing background and more detailed information about the collection, quality assurance and publication of statistics on police recorded crime'. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should publish more detailed information about the uses, users, and users' views of the police recorded crime statistics⁴⁸ (Requirement 2). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement the Scottish Government should refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*⁴⁹. We further

⁴⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/scotstatcrime/StakeCon>

⁴⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

⁴⁶ In relation to Principle 1, Practices 1 and 2 of the *Code of Practice*

⁴⁷ [http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/DataSource/Recorded CrimeSandS](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/DataSource/RecordedCrimeSandS)

⁴⁸ In relation to Principle 1, Practices 2 and 5 of the *Code of Practice*

⁴⁹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

suggest that the Scottish Government publish the User Guide on its website as soon as it is finalised.

- 3.4 The Scottish Government responds to, and keeps a log of, requests received from users for additional data and analysis. The Scottish Government told us that it uses such information to inform its statistical planning and potential changes to its statistical outputs. For example, *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* contained an additional table⁵⁰ on ‘crimes of handling offensive weapons recorded by the police’ as a result of demand from users via ad hoc requests. In addition, the consultation on *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14* contains a suggestion to create web tables which will provide information at local authority level for the last ten years; this option was informed by requests from users for trend information about various topics, at local authority level. We consider this a good example of responding to users’ needs in improving the statistics.
- 3.5 The Scottish Government publishes a *Justice Analytical Services Division; Analytical Programme*⁵¹ (JASDAP) annually. The programme is used to plan the analytical workload for the forthcoming year in line with current policy priorities and users’ needs. The 2013/14 JASDAP was approved by the Scottish Government’s Cabinet Secretary for Justice at the end of June 2013 but was only published on the Scottish Government’s website in February 2014, close to the end of the period to which it relates. The 2014/15 JASDAP was published on 14 July 2014. JASDAP notes that the Authority is ‘conducting the re-assessment of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*’. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should a) develop a statistical work plan annually; b) consult users on the priorities set out in the plan and; c) publish the *Justice Analytical Services Division; Analytical Programme* as soon as it has been approved by the relevant Minister in the future⁵² (Requirement 3).
- 3.6 Assessment report 2 included a Suggestion that the Scottish Government ‘increase the frequency of published crime statistics through the release of quarterly statistics’. Some users told us that they would find more frequent quarterly reports more useful than an annual statistical report. During the course of this assessment, the Scottish Government shared with the Assessment team a series of internal unpublished documents about the work they carried out in 2010 to investigate the publication of more frequent statistics. These were an outline of a proposed bulletin, a project plan and a discussion note. The discussion document stated that ‘It is clear that the policy need is no longer as strong as it was initially’. The Scottish Government did not provide the Assessment team with evidence to demonstrate that they had undertaken wider consultation for this proposal. The Scottish Government told us it is working with Police Scotland and the SPA to develop a consistent publication plan with these organisations, and will consider the feasibility of producing accessible and consistent quarterly statistics. As part of designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should a) inform users about the ongoing work with Police Scotland and the SPA to develop a consistent

⁵⁰ Table A6 at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/9697/6>

⁵¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/JAS-Programme-2012-13?refresh=0.3471169044485139>

⁵² In relation to Principle 1, Practice 4 and Principle 7, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

publication plan; b) consult more widely about users' need for more frequent statistics; and c) publish the results of this user consultation⁵³ (Requirement 4).

⁵³ In relation to Principle 1, Practice 5 of the *Code of Practice*

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

Requirements from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Arrange for the UK National Statistics Publication Hub to provide improved access to *Recorded Crime in Scotland* statistics through a more direct link
- The authors of the statistical release should prepare their own impartial and objective commentary on the statistics rather than rely on commentary provided by police forces

3.7 *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* includes descriptions of changes to the classifications included within the tables that accompany the report. These changes relate to the classification of offences of ‘handling an offensive weapon’ and ‘drug crimes in prisons’ from ‘other miscellaneous offences’ to offences of ‘handling an offensive weapon’ and ‘drug crimes’. Another classification change relates to some crimes that would have previously been categorised as either ‘lewd and libidinous practices’, ‘breach of the peace’ and ‘other miscellaneous offences’ being reclassified as ‘sexual assault’ as a result of new legislation, the *Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009*⁵⁴. The Scottish Government did not announce these changes in advance of the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13*. The Scottish Government told us that it plans to include information about changes to classifications in a User Guide it is developing to accompany the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14*, and that the information will be ‘maintained and updated on a regular basis’. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should confirm that future changes to methods or classifications will be announced in advance of the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*⁵⁵ (Requirement 5).

3.8 *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* notes some revisions in the statistics but does not provide further information about the scale of these revisions. The Scottish Government told us that there are no scheduled revisions to the statistics presented in *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* but that there are instances in reports where they have published corrections to the statistics. These corrections are labelled as revisions. The statisticians told us that due to constraints with the legacy police force systems they do not have a revisions policy for police recorded crime data. The Scottish Government also told us that the development of a new internal IT system allows for a more flexible internal management of data within the Scottish Government, and that there is now potential to consider developing a revisions policy in relation to police recorded crime. The Scottish Government has published a corporate policy

⁵⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/9/contents>

⁵⁵ In relation to Principle 2, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

statement⁵⁶ that covers its current practice on revisions and corrections. We suggest that the Scottish Government clearly label corrections when they are included in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. We further suggest that the Scottish Government include a prominent link to the Scottish Government's corporate policy statement on its current practice on revisions and corrections on the Crime and Justice Statistics landing page of its website and within *Recorded Crime in Scotland*.

- 3.9 Before April 2013, the Scottish Government received aggregated data quarterly from the eight individual legacy police forces, representing a 'snapshot' of police recorded crime at a point in time. For the year 2013/14 onwards, the Scottish Government will instead receive the 'snapshot' of data quarterly from Police Scotland, but records on the live database may be amended after the initial crime has been recorded. In July 2014, the Scottish Government told us that 'there are solid analytical reasons as to why a 'snapshot' approach is taken'. Amendments arising after the end of the financial year are not generally incorporated into the police recorded crime statistics; however, where errors are discovered, the Scottish Government told us that steps are taken to correct them. The Scottish Government has not published information about the impact of amendments to the data following publication of the statistics, and whether there are substantial changes to any of the crime categories over the years, for example if certain crime or offences are commonly re-classified or 'no-crimes'⁵⁷. The Scottish Government told us that it will aim to include a reference to the scale of 'no-crimes' in its forthcoming Technical Report (see paragraph 3.18), although it acknowledged that 'it may not be possible to obtain exact figures as an audit trail of changes to a crime record is not kept in this way'. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should provide more information to users about the nature and extent of changes made to police crime records⁵⁸ (Requirement 6). We suggest that the Scottish Government include information about the nature and extent of changes made to police crime records, and how to interpret these changes, in its corporate policy statement on its current practice on revisions and corrections.

⁵⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/CPsonRevisionsCorrections>

⁵⁷ See footnote 26

⁵⁸ In relation to Principle 2, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

- 3.10 Police Scotland is responsible for collating police recorded crime statistics from the 14 police divisions and sending aggregated data to the Scottish Government for validation. Police Scotland is also responsible for the ongoing development of the Scottish Crime Recording Standards (SCRS) (see paragraph 2.7) although the Scottish Government has input into, and is aware of, any changes made. The Scottish Government statisticians are responsible for the quality assurance, analysis and publication of police recorded crime statistics. Policy teams in the Scottish Government are responsible for policy making in this area. The SPA has responsibility for overseeing Police Scotland. There is little published information about how the roles and responsibilities relating to the police recorded crime statistics are shared between the different stakeholders. During the course of this assessment some users told us that they find it difficult to access clear information about the roles of the different stakeholders in the crime recording process. The Scottish Government told us that it 'plans to publish information in the forthcoming publication, and a more detailed section in the User Guide, on roles and responsibilities'. As part of the designation as National Statistics the Scottish Government should publish information about the roles and responsibilities of the organisations involved in the production and publication of police recorded crime statistics⁵⁹ (Requirement 7).
- 3.11 Since the creation of Police Scotland in April 2013, the Scottish Government statisticians have held regular discussions with Police Scotland and the SPA through formal meetings and informal discussions. Each of these parties told us that there is good communication across these different organisations in the matter of crime recording. In addition to the groups noted in paragraph 3.1, the Scottish Government statisticians attend a range of other groups, including the Performance Practitioners Group⁶⁰, chaired by the SPA, which includes representatives from the Scottish Government's Justice and Analytical Services Division, and representatives from Police Scotland and the SPA, among others. The group discuss a range of matters relating to police recorded crime. Representatives from policy areas within the Scottish Government told us that it also attends the Performance Practitioners Group and that the minutes of this meeting are not published. In July 2014, the Scottish Government clarified to the Assessment team that the Performance Practitioners Group 'is a coordination group and is not involved in the production of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*'.
- 3.12 Scottish Government statisticians also attend the Scottish Crime Registrars Group, chaired by the National Crime Registrar⁶¹ (NCR) of Police Scotland; this meeting includes the three regional Crime Registrars, data analysts from Police Scotland, and representatives from the SPA, HMICS and other stakeholders.

⁵⁹ In relation to Principle 3, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶⁰ There is no published information about this group

⁶¹ See footnote 25

The statistics team told us that these meetings are an opportunity to share experiences and discuss emerging issues relating to the police recorded crime statistics and the recording of the underlying administrative data. For example the Scottish Crime Registrars Group covers such topics as changes to the SCRS. The Scottish Government also told us that it brings papers about statistical matters to this meeting for discussion, for example the statisticians told us that they intend to share a draft of the Technical Report (see paragraph 3.18) with this meeting.

- 3.13 The engagement relating to the underlying police recorded crime data is welcomed. However, the minutes of these different meetings or lists of attendees are not published. The Scottish Government told us that it has the final say on the statistics but it does not make it explicit to users of these statistics the nature of the discussions at these meetings or what, if any, decisions are made that could impact on the police recorded crime statistics. It is also unclear what level of input, if any, that stakeholders outside of the Scottish Government's Justice Analytical Services Division could have on these decisions. The Scottish Government could do more to increase the transparency of these discussions and therefore protect the independence of the statistics. Such an approach is standard practice for other producers of National Statistics, because it enhances user confidence in the transparency of the processes followed in the production of statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics the Scottish Government should document and publish how those who produce the statistics are protected from any pressures that might influence the methods, content or timing of the police recorded crime statistics⁶² (Requirement 8). In meeting this requirement, we suggest that the Scottish Government publish information about a) the nature of discussions and meetings with key stakeholders about police recorded crime statistics and b) the decisions that are taken in these meetings that could impact on the police recorded crime statistics.
- 3.14 The Assessment team found some instances over recent months where the police recorded crime statistics were questioned in the media⁶³. The statisticians told us that, in response to this, they provided a contribution to briefing material for First Minister's Questions and corrected a factual inaccuracy in a related article. The policy on media engagement for the statistician group in the Scottish Government is that communication should be carried out via the Communications Directorate, for which the statisticians provide advice. However, where appropriate, the statisticians may speak directly to media on technical matters. A good example of this is the technical briefing held by the statisticians for the media on the morning of the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, where the statisticians provide a summary of the main findings from the statistical publication.

⁶² In relation to Principle 3, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶³ See for example: <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/former-police-officers-crime-figures-are-being-massaged-to-look-better.23512102> and <http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/row-over-massaged-police-scotland-crime-figures-1-3232785>

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

Suggestions from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Strengthen the commentary to analyse statistics from both the SCJS and police recorded crime and to consider their coherence when viewed together
- In collaboration with counterparts in the other Devolved Administrations, the UK Government and the Office for National Statistics, promote work to improve the comparability of recorded crime statistics across each of the 4 countries

- 3.15 Before the creation of Police Scotland in April 2013, the Scottish Government collated police recorded crime data from each of the eight legacy police forces in Scotland. An analyst in each of the police forces ran queries on the local force database, populated spreadsheets with aggregated data and sent these spreadsheets to the Scottish Government. The Assessment team was not provided with any documentation that showed how these queries were developed, or if they were standardised across the eight police forces. *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* contains very little information about the methods used to collate the data or about the quality of these data.
- 3.16 Since April 2013, Police Scotland collates the police recorded crime data from the legacy police force databases into a single performance management system, Scottish Operational and Management Information System (ScOMIS). This database is compiled from over 50 data sources and holds record-level data on crimes, incidents, stops and searches, vulnerable people and fixed penalty notices. The database is updated daily with new data and amendments, such as to crime classifications and the status of crimes. The Scottish Government shared with us an unpublished PowerPoint presentation outlining the development of ScOMIS. The system has been operational since April 2013 and the Scottish Government has received a quarterly 'snapshot' of aggregated data from Police Scotland since June 2013.
- 3.17 The statisticians in the Scottish Government told us that they are keen to provide users with consistent time series data. In January 2014 they established a workstream to check the consistency of a 'snapshot' of the data in the new ScOMIS system against the last five years of data held by the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government told us that this exercise resulted in 2,000 queries. The statisticians verified the resulting discrepancies between the two datasets with Police Scotland. The Scottish Government told us that the majority of these discrepancies were as a result of the data that it holds being static and ScOMIS being a live operational database. This means

that, for example, if a crime recorded five years ago was reclassified at any time since, this would be reflected in ScOMIS but not in the Scottish Government figures of five years ago. At a meeting with the Assessment team in late April the Scottish Government indicated that this work was ongoing. The Scottish Government did not provide us with a more detailed explanation of this comparison work or any examples of the queries that arose from the work until June 2014.

- 3.18 The statisticians told us that they are developing a Technical Report to provide further detail about this workstream and that this report will inform users about the comparability of ScOMIS data with data previously supplied by the legacy police forces and any actions taken by the statisticians as a result. The statisticians shared an early draft of this Technical Report with the Assessment team in June 2014 and told us that the Scottish Government intends to publish the report 'by October 2014'. The proposed report is broadly helpful, given that insufficient information is published about the methods used by the Scottish Government to collate police recorded crime data, both for the current year and for previous years. The statisticians also told us that they intend for the Technical Report to be a one-off publication to reflect the outcomes of the specific workstream for 2013/14, and that they do not intend to provide such a level of detail alongside future annual releases of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should a) publish the proposed Technical Report as soon as it is finalised, ensuring that the language and content of this report is accessible to non-expert users, and b) publish detailed information about the methods used to compile the statistics alongside each release of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*⁶⁴ (Requirement 9).
- 3.19 Assessment report 2 noted that *Recorded Crime in Scotland* refers to the Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey (since 2008/09 the survey has been called the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*⁶⁵ (SCJS)) but that the commentary provided little or no analysis comparing crime statistics provided by these two sources or consideration of their coherence when viewed together. Assessment report 2 included a suggestion to analyse statistics from these two sources and to consider their coherence. The Authority is clear that detailed analysis of these two sources of information is of key importance in considering the quality of the police recorded crime statistics. However, the Scottish Government did not provide us with evidence to demonstrate that such detailed analysis was published in the intervening five years. During the course of this assessment, the Assessment team raised this issue with the Scottish Government and in June 2014 the Scottish Government shared a draft report titled 'Analysis of Scottish Crime and Justice Survey and Police Recorded Crime Comparable Crime Groups' with the Assessment team. The Scottish Government told us that it has not yet finalised a publication date for this report.
- 3.20 The Assessment team considers that this document is a starting point but it needs:
- an improved explanation for users about the quality of both sources

⁶⁴ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶⁵ See footnote 34

- clear information about the external scrutiny of the police recorded crime statistics and about the response rate for the SCJS
- information about the added value that can be achieved by analysing the two separate sets of statistics together
- to be more accessible to a wider range of users with improved use of charts and language

As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should a) publish the analysis comparing the police recorded crime statistics and the SCJS, and any other relevant sets of statistics, and b) include a clear explanation about how this analysis could assess the scale of any difference between crimes recorded by the police and that experienced by the population resident in households, and the resulting impact on how users should interpret crime statistics⁶⁶ (Requirement 10).

3.21 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is published annually; the SCJS estimates are published in a range of reports⁶⁷ every other year. *Results from the 2012/13 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*⁶⁸ was published in March 2014 and *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14* is scheduled to be published in October 2014. There is a risk that these separate publications, containing related statistics and potentially differing messages about crime, are not conducive to informed coverage and debate (for example about the incidence of, and trends in, crime) and could lead to public concern about the trustworthiness of the statistics. By presenting the two complementary sources of crime statistics separately, the Scottish Government risks user misinterpretation of the statistics, and it requires the public to readily distinguish between *recorded* crime and 'crime experienced' in media reports. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should bring the analysis and commentary of the two main sources of crime statistics together into a single published report and present a coherent summary of crime based on both data sources⁶⁹ (Requirement 11).

3.22 The Scottish Government told us that the focus of its quality assurance work is to understand the accuracy of the aggregated data that it receives from Police Scotland (and previously from the eight legacy police forces). The Scottish Government does not publish enough information about other aspects of the quality of the statistics, specifically:

- the potential sources of bias and error associated with the police recorded crime data
- the coherence of the statistics with other criminal justice statistics
- the timeliness of the release of the statistics
- the strengths and limitations of the police recorded crime data to assist users to interpret the statistics appropriately

⁶⁶ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/crime-and-justice-survey/publications>

⁶⁸ See footnote 33

⁶⁹ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 3 and Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

- uncertainty in the administrative data that it uses to compile the police recorded crime statistics or the impact that this uncertainty could have on the use of the statistics
- the impact that receiving an annual aggregated ‘snapshot’ of data has on the presentation of the annual statistics or on the time series
- the magnitude and frequency of legitimate amendments to police records – for example, the reclassification of crime and the impact that this has on the data from year to year

The Scottish Government does not calibrate the data against other supplementary sources of administrative data. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* presents ‘clear up’ rates based on the number of crimes ‘cleared up’ as a proportion of the crimes recorded in that year; it does not fully explain whether this calculation reflects crimes recorded in other years or how this impacts on crime types with smaller numbers recorded.

3.23 The Scottish Government told us that ‘information about quality, including about strengths and limitations of the police recorded crime data and potential bias and error in the recording process, will be included in the next publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*’. It also told us that a section on data quality will be included in the proposed User Guide. The Assessment team considers that this will be helpful but that the Scottish Government also needs to reflect the wider quality concerns outlined in paragraph 3.22. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should publish information for users, alongside the police recorded crime statistics, about how it assures itself of their quality, including its assessment of any risk and potential source of error associated with the use of the underlying administrative data source⁷⁰ (Requirement 12). We suggest that the Scottish Government include in the proposed User Guide a diagrammatic representation showing sources of potential bias and error at each stage of the crime recording process.

3.24 The Scottish Government does not publish information alongside the statistics that provides users with information about internal or external audit, scrutiny or inspections of these data. The NCR⁷¹ of Police Scotland told us that he has implemented a programme of internal audits across Police Scotland since October 2013. He also told us that the Chief Constable of Police Scotland has promoted a strong message about ethical crime recording within Police Scotland. The reports of these audits are discussed internally at different levels at Police Scotland and summaries of the in-year audits and assurance reviews are reported to the Audit and Risk Committee⁷² of the SPA. Police Scotland told us that since the introduction of ScOMIS, it has identified that, in the past, there were inconsistencies in how crimes and offences were recorded across the eight legacy police forces. The Scottish Government told us that it had received sight of some of these internal Police Scotland audit reports and that they are reported at meetings of the Scottish Crime Registrars Group and the Scottish Crime Registrars Technical Working Group, both of which the Scottish Government statisticians attend. The Authority notes the commencement of internal crime recording audits by Police Scotland and considers that the

⁷⁰ In relation to Principle 4, Practices 2 and 3 of the *Code of Practice*

⁷¹ See footnote 25

⁷² For example see footnote 27

Scottish Government should make use of the reports of these audits in producing statistics on police recorded crime, and when providing users with information about the underlying recorded crime data.

3.25 The Authority is clear that regular systematic published audit of the underlying data is essential to increase both the quality of, and public confidence in, these statistics. The Authority further considers that these data are of high public interest, that the Scottish Government should provide strong levels of assurance about their quality, and that these data should be the subject of independent scrutiny. HMICS has been actively engaged in the area of crime recording in terms of the audit and scrutiny of governance and compliance processes for many years. HMICS published a review⁷³ of incident and crime recording in December 2013 (see paragraph 2.11). The Authority notes that HMICS carried out its inspection commendably promptly after the establishment of Police Scotland. The report is published on HMICS's website and is not linked from the Scottish Government Crime and Justice Statistics webpages. This review covered some of the crime groups included in *Recorded Crime in Scotland* and provided the compliance rates⁷⁴ as follows:

- Sexual Offences 89.1 per cent
- Assaults 90.0 per cent
- Robberies 95.6 per cent
- Domestic abuse 98.8 per cent (domestic abuse statistics were assessed in Assessment report 119 and are not specifically covered by this Assessment, see paragraph 2.3)

HMICS told us that the inspection estimates were not statistically significant at a national level and that the overall compliance rate (which included domestic abuse cases) was 93.1 per cent, less than the 95 per cent accepted standard as specified by the SCRS. The report outlined that the crime and offence types were chosen 'either because they reflect the police service's current priorities, they are crimes which are of particular concern to the public or because they are crimes which may be more challenging to record accurately and consistently'.

3.26 HMICS told us that it plans to undertake a more thorough inspection in autumn 2014 which will include further crime groups, 'no crimes' and a review of 'non-crime incidents'. HMICS intends that this inspection will produce results that will be statistically significant at the national level. The Authority welcomes the forthcoming inspection of crime recording integrity by HMICS and considers that it is in the public interest that a central pre-requisite for the designation of these statistics is: a systematic, independent and published audit of the underlying police recorded crime data; the results of that audit suggesting that the data are produced in ways that are reliable and comparable; and visible evidence that the outputs of such an audit are integrated into the Scottish Government's practices around the production of these statistics. In June 2014 the Scottish Government told us that it will include references to the 2013 HMICS review in its forthcoming publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*

⁷³ See footnote 29

⁷⁴ The compliance rate is the proportion of crimes, of those that were checked by HMICS, that were recorded correctly when the circumstances amounted to a crime or offence under Scots law

2013/14 and it will also highlight the forthcoming audit. On 15 July 2014, following sight of the draft Assessment report, the Scottish Government told us that ‘HMICS have informed us that there is a possibility to bring forward this work to report in October 2014 prior to the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*’. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should a) keep users informed about the progress of the HMICS audit; b) publish demonstrable evidence that the findings from the forthcoming HMICS audit have been integrated into the compilation of the statistics presented in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*; c) update published quality information for police recorded crime statistics in the light of the findings of the forthcoming HMICS audit, making it clear how the outputs from the audit inform the Scottish Government’s understanding of the quality of the statistics; and d) consider whether statistics based on police recorded crime data can be produced to a level of quality that meets users’ needs⁷⁵ (Requirement 13).

3.27 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is one of a series of reports on the criminal justice system in Scotland. A set of more detailed publications is produced to complement certain aspects of the statistics presented in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. These include *Homicide in Scotland*, *Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland* and *Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland* which were the subject of Assessment report 119⁷⁶ (see paragraph 2.3). Neither the Scottish Government’s Crime and Justice Statistics webpages nor *Recorded Crime in Scotland* clearly explain the coherence between these publications. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should more clearly document the relationship between different sources of crime statistics across the criminal justice system in Scotland⁷⁷ (Requirement 14).

3.28 The Scottish Government told us that it has worked closely with the crime statisticians in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) during the past year to gather information about the presentation of crime statistics across the devolved administrations and that it contributed to the *Compendium of UK Statistics, Social Indicators*⁷⁸ published by ONS in February 2014. This report concluded that the police recorded crime statistics in Scotland are partially comparable with the other countries in the UK. The Scottish Government also told us that it intends to include a section in *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14* to reflect comparisons with crime statistics recorded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should provide information to users about the comparability of the police recorded crime statistics with those published in the other administrations of the UK⁷⁹ (Requirement 15).

⁷⁵ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 2 and Protocol 1, Practices 3 and 4 of the *Code of Practice*

⁷⁶ See footnote 16

⁷⁷ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 3 and Principle 8, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

⁷⁸ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/regional-analysis/compendium-of-uk-statistics/social-indicators/index.html>

⁷⁹ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.

3.29 The Scottish Government has assured us that it takes all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data it collects. This includes publishing a corporate policy statement *Maintaining Confidentiality*⁸⁰, which outlines how the Scottish Government protects the security of its data.

⁸⁰ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/CPSc Confidentiality>

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

Suggestion from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Report annually on the estimated costs to suppliers

3.30 The statisticians told us that they began the quality assurance workstream in early 2014 although they have received quarterly data from Police Scotland since June 2013. They told us that this was to reduce the burden on Police Scotland, on whom they relied to respond to any queries they had with the data, because the Scottish Government does not have access to the record-level data. Police Scotland told us that the introduction of the i6 crime recording system in 2015 would streamline the crime recording process and lead to a reduced burden on the police.

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

3.31 The Scottish Government told the Assessment team that this assessment occurred at a particularly resource intensive period, as the statisticians were engaged in a detailed and comprehensive quality assurance exercise as a result of new data systems being introduced in Police Scotland following police reform. However, the Assessment team found it difficult to obtain evidence of ongoing *Code* compliance for these National Statistics covering the period from our last assessment in 2009 up until present time, including the period prior to the police reform and the quality assurance exercise. As detailed elsewhere in this report, the Scottish Government has published little evidence that demonstrates ongoing *Code* compliance. The Assessment team was concerned that it took several meetings with the Scottish Government, including a meeting attended by the Head of Assessment and the Chief Statistician for the Scottish Government and the statisticians, and ongoing email correspondence over several months to obtain responses to routine questions about ongoing *Code* compliance. During the latter stages of this assessment the Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government told us that further resources were to be allocated to the statistics team. This Assessment report contains a substantial suite of Requirements that would seem to require an ongoing review of resources. There is also an obligation for the Scottish Government to maintain ongoing *Code* compliance for National Statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should review the staffing profile of the Justice Analytical Services statistics team and provide the Authority with an assurance that the production of police recorded crime statistics is adequately resourced⁸¹ (Requirement 16).

⁸¹ In relation to Principle 7, Practices 1 and 6 of the *Code of Practice*

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.

Suggestions from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

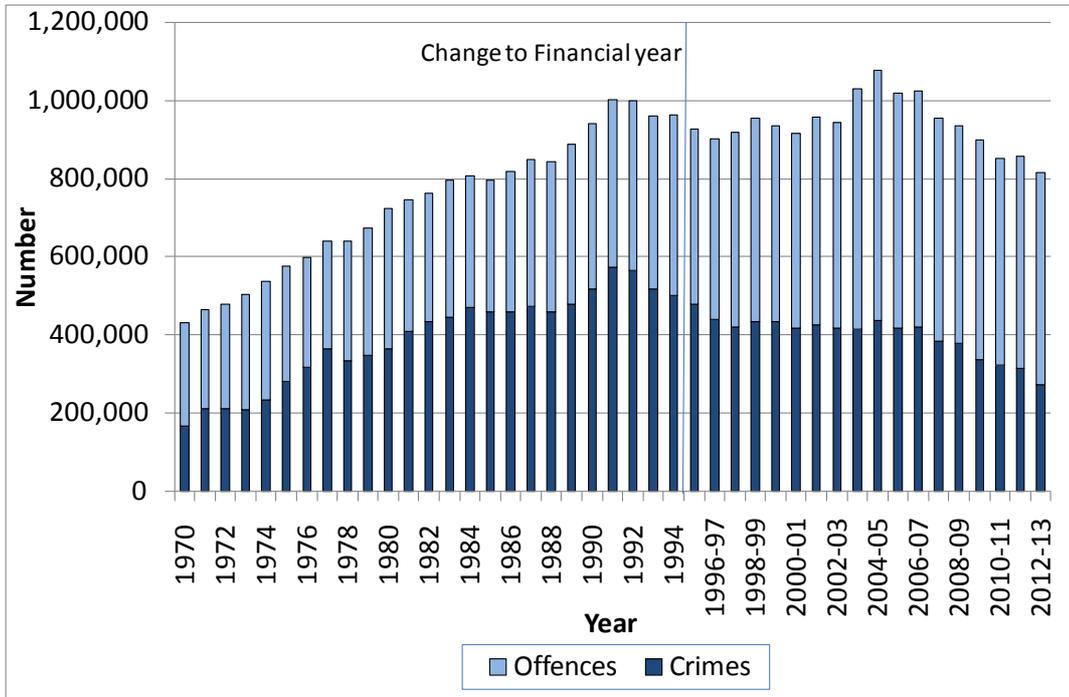
- Prepare additional commentary on the national (Scottish) situation, and on the policy context, in order to help users' interpretation of the statistics - see also the first Suggestion under Principle 4 from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009)
- Make data tables available in other formats, for example downloadable Excel files, to encourage analysis and re-use

- 3.32 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* provides commentary on crimes and offences by crime groups, legacy police forces and local authorities; however it does not include sufficient contextual information about the statistics. It does not explain the impact on the statistics of changes in local policing policies and initiatives, of operations within the criminal justice system, or wider changes in society. It provides little advice about how to interpret the changes in the statistics between reference periods and over the longer term, and does not highlight sufficiently the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to their use and potential use. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* includes some information about changes in definitions and crime categories, mostly due to changes in legislation; however it does not explain the magnitude of these changes or provide advice about how these changes impact on the interpretation of the statistics. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* focuses on the presentation of 'crime' statistics but includes little analysis of 'offences', despite offences accounting for two-thirds of the total in 2012/13. There is also no analysis of the relationship between crimes and offences.
- 3.33 The Scottish Government told us that the commentary in *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14* will include 'more detail at each of the crime groups, top 32 level crimes and local authority level data, along with longer term time trends'. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should improve the commentary for police recorded crime statistics by: a) clarifying the strengths and limitations of the statistics; and b) providing further explanatory information about the context⁸² (Requirement 17). As part of meeting this requirement the Scottish Government should consider the points detailed in annex 1 and annex 2.
- 3.34 'Chart 1: Crimes and offences recorded by the police' in *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* charts crimes and offences in a stacked bar chart (see Figure 3.1 below), which makes it difficult for the user to see the trends in offences and the relationship with crimes over time. Producing this as a line chart, with one line representing police recorded crimes, and a separate line representing police recorded offences, and a line representing total crimes and offences (as

⁸² In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

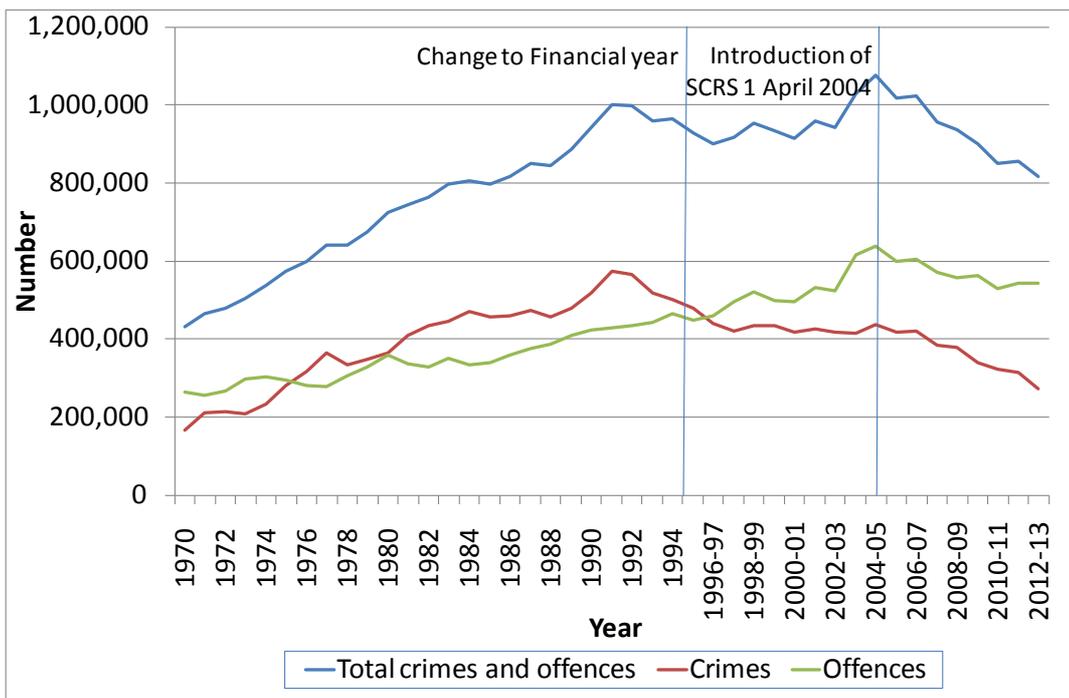
illustrated in Figure 3.2) would enhance the usefulness of this chart. We suggest that the Scottish Government review the presentation of the statistics in charts for *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14*.

Figure 3.1: Crimes and offences recorded by the police, 1970 to 1994 then 1995-96 to 2012-13 Stacked bar chart



Source: Scottish Government

Figure 3.2: Crimes and offences recorded by the police, 1970 to 1994 then 1995-96 to 2012-13 Line chart



Source: Scottish Government

- 3.35 The Scottish Government receives aggregated data from Police Scotland. It does not have access to individual level data on crimes and offences. This limits the level of analysis that can be carried out, both internally by the Scottish Government, and by external stakeholders. Access to individual level data could improve both the analysis that the Scottish Government carries out on the data and also assist with quality assurance processes. For example, the aggregated data does not enable analysis of victims and perpetrators of crime by age and sex, or by certain type of crime, such as the number of knife crimes. The Scottish Government told us that accessing an individual level data source for police recorded crime would not be feasible while the legacy force IT systems are still in use. However, the introduction of the i6 system in 2015, which will be a consistent data collection system for all police divisions in Scotland, may provide an opportunity for Scottish Government to collect individual level data. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should a) investigate users' need for more-detailed record-level data to enhance analysis, and b) publish the results of this investigation, including how it plans to take the outcome forward when the legacy systems are replaced with the i6 national data collection IT system⁸³ (Requirement 18).
- 3.36 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is published in PDF and HTML format and the tables are available in Excel format. The tables are not available in an open, non-proprietary format which would result in at least a three star rating under the Five Star Scheme (adopted by the UK Government but not, the Assessment team was told, by the Scottish Government). The statistics team told us that it is considering the suitability of presenting the data for use in open data tables, and it will consider user feedback as part of the recent user consultation that the Scottish Government conducted about the proposed future presentation of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should review and update where necessary, the formats in which it publishes police recorded crime statistics in order to meet the needs of users⁸⁴ (Requirement 19).
- 3.37 The Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS)⁸⁵ website includes 46 indicators that relate to crimes and offences recorded by the police, and these data are available at local authority level in CSV and XML formats. However, the availability of these data on the SNS website is currently not brought to the attention of users either in *Recorded Crime in Scotland* or on the Crime and Justice Statistics section of the Scottish Government's website. In order to increase awareness of this data resource, the Scottish Government told us that future publications of *Recorded Crime in Scotland* would highlight the additional information available on the SNS website. Due to issues around disclosure, the latest set of data for 2012/13 is not currently available on this website. The Scottish Government told us that these issues were currently being reviewed and it is planning to make more use of the SNS website in the future, including adding more indicators on police recorded crime. We suggest that the Scottish Government update the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website with the most recent set of police recorded crime statistics at the earliest feasible date.

⁸³ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

⁸⁴ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

⁸⁵ <http://www.sns.gov.uk/>

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

3.38 The requirements for this Protocol are covered elsewhere in this report.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

Requirement from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Ensure that government statements on *Recorded Crime in Scotland* statistics are clearly presented as policy statements (or ministerial statements) and can be readily distinguished from statistical releases

Suggestion from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Either amend the pre-release guidance (on the interpretation of the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008) so that pre-release statistics are sent to named individuals only (rather than generic mailboxes); or amend the guidance to cover what is expected of those individuals who have access to mailboxes that receive pre-release statistics but are not on the list of named individuals who have access to pre-release statistics

3.39 Before 2012, *Recorded Crime in Scotland* was published each September. In response to a Requirement in Assessment report 2 (see green box relating to Principle 1: Meeting user needs), the Scottish Government brought the annual publication date forward to June. On 22 May 2014, the Scottish Government announced to its ScotStat group that it was delaying the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14* from June 2014 to October 2014, citing the reason that the delay will ‘allow quality assurance, analysis and report writing to take place over the summer. This will ensure that the analysis and structure of the report reflect the new policing arrangements since the inception of Police Scotland and the report communicates the statistics in a way that is clear, accessible and helpful to all users’. In addition, the Scottish Government noted that Police Scotland expected to publish detailed management information covering its performance in the first year of its existence by 25 June 2014; Police Scotland subsequently published this management information on 20 June 2014⁸⁶.

3.40 During this re-assessment, the Scottish Government told us that it had developed a draft pre-release access list for the forthcoming publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14*, and shared a draft with the Assessment team. The draft list is based on those individuals granted pre-release access of the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* in June 2013, and includes the names of 37 individuals. The Scottish Government anticipates that approximately 15 individuals from Police Scotland and 4 individuals from the SPA will be identified and added to the list ‘nearer the time of publication’. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should

⁸⁶ <http://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/138327/232757/management-information-year-end-2013-14>

ensure that pre-release access for *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is only granted where absolutely necessary⁸⁷ (Requirement 20). We suggest that the Scottish Government publish records of those granted pre-release access to the police recorded crime statistics during their development as well as in their final form.

⁸⁷ In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 7 of the *Code of Practice*

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

Requirement from previous Assessment report 2 (June 2009):

- Publish a Statement of Administrative Sources, once central guidance becomes available

3.41 The Scottish Government last republished its corporate Statement of Administrative Sources⁸⁸ (SoAS) in December 2013, which identifies the source for police recorded crime data as 'Police Force Boards'. During the course of this Assessment, the Scottish Government published a new SoAS specifically for police statistics⁸⁹ which can be accessed from the 'Data Sources and Suitability' section of the Crime and Justice landing page. The statement reflects changes to the data collection practices for police recorded crime following the creation of Police Scotland in 2013, and also maintains information relating to previous data collection practices. The police recorded crime SoAS includes a section titled 'Arrangements for auditing the quality of the original source data', however this only presents a description of the quality assurance checks carried out on the administrative data, which includes trend analysis and checking outliers with the data provider. The SoAS for police statistics does not present sufficient information about the arrangements for auditing the quality of the administrative data used to compile *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should update its Statement of Administrative Sources for police statistics to include full information about the arrangements for auditing the quality of the administrative data used to compile *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, taking into consideration the recent Authority Statement *Administrative Data and Official Statistics*⁹⁰, and associated documents, and the National Statistician's *Interim Guidance*^{91 92} (Requirement 21). The 'Data Sources and Suitability' web page also includes links to documents that describe each data source which are commonly used in the field of Crime and Justice. The document relating to the data source for *Recorded Crime in Scotland* has not been updated to reflect changes to the source since police reform but the Scottish Government told the Assessment team in July 2014 that an updated version has been drafted and is due to be published shortly. We suggest that the Scottish Government update the document describing the data source for *Recorded Crime in Scotland*. We further suggest that the Scottish Government create a link to the 'Data Sources and Suitability' web page from the forthcoming *Recorded Crime in Scotland* report.

⁸⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/StatementAdminSources>

⁸⁹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451670.pdf>

⁹⁰ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/index.html>

⁹¹ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Interim-Admin-Data-guidance.pdf>

⁹² In relation to Protocol 3, Practice 5 (e) of the *Code of Practice*

Annex 1: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Reports

- A1.1 In November 2012, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on Standards for Statistical Reports⁹³. While this is not part of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, the Authority regards it as advice that will promote both understanding and compliance with the *Code*. In relation to the statistical reports associated with police recorded crime in Scotland statistics, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards. The comments included in this annex are based on a review of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13*⁹⁴, as well as a skeleton outline of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14*, which was provided by Scottish Government in advance of its planned publication in October 2014.
- A1.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical reports, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

Include an impartial narrative in plain English that draws out the main messages from the statistics

- A1.3 The commentary in *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is impartial and highlights the key changes in the police recorded crime statistics from the previous year. The commentary describes rises and falls in the statistics but does not provide explanations for these changes. For example, 'Non-sexual crimes of violence' decreased by 21 per cent between 2011/12 and 2012/13, but there is no explanation about the reasons, or possible reasons, for this fall. In addition there is little commentary on the longer term trends or any analysis of the reasons for change, therefore some key messages are not brought to the attention of users. For example, 'Theft from a motor vehicle by opening a locked place' has decreased by 77 per cent in the last 10 years, but *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* does not give any reasons, or possible reasons, to explain this decrease, for example that it could be due to advancements in the security of vehicles. Scottish Government told us that *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14* will include some analysis of long term trends.
- A1.4 The commentary in *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* includes some statements that are not supported by the statistics or the supporting information, for example 'the introduction of the SCRS in 2004-05 helped maintain a consistent approach to recording crime'. The Scottish Government does not provide evidence to support this statement.
- A1.5 *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* presents statistics for each police force. However, some of the text is repetitive, particularly in relation to crimes and offences by police force. It may be more useful to describe the main similarities and differences between forces, rather than quoting very similar figures for each of them in many cases. The Scottish Government told us that *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14* will replace the analysis by police force with more detailed analysis of crime groups and local authority level data.

⁹³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-reports.html>

⁹⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/9697>

A1.6 The use of rates per 10,000 population and the index of rates per 10,000 population in tables 4b, 5, 7 and 8 of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* are useful in enabling comparisons across police forces to be made more easily. For example, the index of rate per 10,000 population for domestic housebreaking highlights the magnitude of the difference between Eilean Siar, which has an index rate of 4, compared to Glasgow City, which has an index rate of 167. However the Scottish Government does not explain to non-technical users how to interpret indices, or what their potential uses are.

Include information about the context and likely uses of the statistics

A1.7 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* does not present sufficient information about the impact on the statistics of changes in local policing policies and initiatives, and operations within the criminal justice system, or any information about the policy context for the statistics.

A1.8 The statistical report states that ‘the statistics on crimes and offences are used to inform National Outcome 9 ‘We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger’⁹⁵, however *Recorded Crime in Scotland* provides no further information about what it means to inform a National Outcome, or any results of this work. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* does not make clear who the intended users are, or if there are users beyond those who follow National Outcome 9. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* would benefit from more detailed information about why the statistics are important and the types of decisions that they inform.

A1.9 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* includes a section about the SCJS, including key findings of the survey. While this is useful background information, it does not explain the relationship between the survey and the police recorded crime statistics in enough detail to allow comparisons to be made, or to highlight where there may be differences. It does not contain sufficient information about the extent of comparable data between the survey results and police recorded crime. In particular, it does not show where there are similarities or differences in trends, and it does not provide users with guidance on the strengths and limitations of each of the sets of statistics and the different purposes that each should be used for.

A1.10 The Scottish Government publishes a range of National Statistics and official statistics about aspects of police recorded crime. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* makes no reference to these related statistics, and does not provide links in the report to where more detailed analysis on specific crime types, such as homicide, can be accessed.

A1.11 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* includes brief information about, and links to, police recorded crime statistics for England and Wales and notes that they are not directly comparable with those presented in *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, ‘mainly due to differences in the counting rules’. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* does not include comparison with, or links to, police recorded crime statistics for Northern Ireland.

⁹⁵ See footnote 40

Include information about the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to their potential use

- A1.12 *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012/13* provides some information about the limitations of the police recorded crime data, such as issues with discontinuities in the data due to the introduction of the SCRS in 2004/05, and changes in legislation. However the commentary does not include a measure of the magnitude of these issues, or advice for users on how to interpret the data with regards to these issues. *Recorded Crime in Scotland* presents insufficient information about the limitations of using administrative data and the sources of potential bias and error introduced during the process of crimes being recorded by the police.
- A1.13 The commentary in the report explains that the statistics presented do not take account of any corrections or changes made by police after the 'snapshot' of data is taken from the crime recording source systems. However *Recorded Crime in Scotland* includes tables with footnotes stating that some of the figures have been revised. It does not identify the magnitude of these changes or how, and if, this could affect the historic trends in crime, by crime type.

Be professionally sound

- A1.14 The commentary provides details of notable changes in legislation or crime category definitions that have occurred, however it presents limited explanation about the impact that these changes have on the statistics, making the findings difficult to interpret. For example, recorded crimes relating to 'Sexual offences' has increased by 41 per cent in the last 10 years, but it is unclear how much of this increase, if any, is due to changes in definitions or the introduction of the *Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009*⁹⁶.
- A1.15 The report includes appropriate tables and charts, however Chart 1 would benefit from being presented as a line chart rather than a stacked bar chart (see paragraph 3.34), since its current format makes it difficult to interpret the trends in the number of 'offences' over time.
- A1.16 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* presents 'clear-up' rates and includes an explanation for this term in the Notes section; but does not include an explanation for how the rate is calculated. This could be confusing for non-expert users.

Include, or link to, appropriate metadata

- A1.17 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* does not include sufficient information about data sources and methodology. The Scottish Government has published a document *Recorded Crime in Scotland: Data Sources and Suitability*⁹⁷ but users may find it difficult to find and is not linked to from the report. This document also provides very little additional information that is not already available within *Recorded Crime in Scotland*.

⁹⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/9/contents>

⁹⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/DataSource/RecordedCrimeSandS>

- A1.18 *Recorded Crime in Scotland* is accompanied by supporting data tables published in proprietary spreadsheet format. This includes an index list and a range of additional useful information, such as population estimates, which are useful to users analysing the data.
- A1.19 The coverage, publication date and name of the producer body are clearly stated on the front of the publication, with contact details for the lead statistician and the Head of Profession presented at the end of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*.

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from February to July 2014.

A2.2 The Assessment team – Emily Gleeson, Donna Hosie and Sara James – began conducting background research in February, and clarified the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of the Scottish Government in March. As the statistics team told us that it was going through a period of increased workload at the same time as the assessment, the Assessment team adopted a more flexible approach to gathering evidence of compliance with the *Code*. The Assessment team carried out its own research to assess *Code* compliance, including web searches and meetings with suppliers and users of the data. The Assessment team supplemented this with additional evidence from the Scottish Government gathered through meetings, over the telephone or from relevant documentation submitted by the Scottish Government.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A2.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare Assessment reports.

A2.4 The Assessment team received 31 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Local government	8
Central government	8
Police	4
Third sector	3
Academia	2
Non-departmental public body	2
Regulatory body	2
Member of the Scottish Parliament	1
NHS	1

A2.5 Some users told us that they were happy with the quality of the statistics and that the strengths and limitations of them were clearly explained. However, others expressed a desire for additional information, such as:

- better explanation of how statistics are recorded, and the quality of the data, to increase transparency
- more clarity in relation to definitions and classifications of crime data
- more detailed analysis of the comparisons between *Recorded Crime in Scotland* and the SCJS

- more reference to changes in legislation or crime counting rules to enhance users' understanding of the statistics and aid interpretation of trends
- better explanation of the effect of target setting by police managers on reporting behaviours, particularly with regard to consistency in data across legacy police forces
- additional context within the commentary, including links to other data sources

A2.6 Although some users were happy with the frequency and level of detail available in the publication, others expressed an interest in increasing the frequency of the publication to quarterly, and in increasing the level of detail that the statistics are made available in. These include:

- further information about victim characteristics, for example age and gender
- more local authority and smaller geography breakdowns
- analysis of longer term trends, including time series data that cover more than 10 years
- quarterly or monthly breakdowns provided in the annual publication to identify any within-year patterns or trends
- time series data for local authorities
- more timely small-area estimates

A2.7 Users were generally happy with how they accessed the statistics, with most using the Scottish Government's website, and email alerts via the ScotStat group. One user suggested improvements to access by making crime data available through the OpenDataScotland⁹⁸ initiative, and another suggested wider use of social media.

A2.8 Most users were content with their engagement with the Scottish Government's statisticians, including the helpfulness of the statisticians, the comprehensive nature of the advice received, and the speed with which queries were responded to.

⁹⁸<http://www.opendatascotland.org/>

