

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on the Criminal Justice System

(produced by the Ministry of Justice)

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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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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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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 report covers the statistics presented in the following National Statistics products released by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):

- *Criminal Statistics: Annual Report*³
- *Sentencing Statistics: Annual Report*⁴

1.1.2 The following publications produced by MoJ, but which do not currently hold the National Statistics designation, are also included in this assessment:

- *Sentencing Statistics: Quarterly Brief*⁵
- *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System*⁶
- *Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System*⁷

1.1.3 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics on the criminal justice system (CJS) included in the publications listed at para 1.1.1 are designated as National Statistics, and has determined that those listed in para 1.1.2 can be designated as new National Statistics products, subject to MoJ implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by November 2010.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

1.3.1 MoJ has regular contact with the suppliers of data and the main users of its criminal justice statistics. MoJ responded to users' demands for more timely data by introducing *Sentencing Statistics Quarterly Brief*, and it is now considering the quarterly release of other CJS data. For the two compendia reports, *Race and Women and the Criminal Justice System*, MoJ has established advisory groups that allow the involvement of users in the development of the outputs.

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.justice.gov.uk/publications/criminalannual.htm>

⁴ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/sentencingannual.htm>

⁵ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/sentencingquarterly.htm>

⁶ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/raceandcjs.htm>

⁷ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/womencriminaljusticesystem.htm>

- 1.3.2 MoJ has actively sought to improve the clarity of its publications through the changes made to the structure and content of *Criminal Statistics* and *Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports. The commentary about the statistics and the explanatory material about the CJS publications, should be further strengthened, to help users to interpret the data, and its quality, appropriately.
- 1.3.3 The quality of magistrates' courts data has impacted adversely on some CJS publications. However, the national roll-out of the Libra IT system has already started to improve this. In addition, MoJ is addressing these quality concerns. MoJ is seeking to maximise the utility and quality of its administrative sources, and to minimise the burden on suppliers, through the linking of its data with data held by other government bodies. This project will also provide users with information on cases progressing through the CJS.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that MoJ could strengthen its compliance with the Code. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

Requirement 1	Take steps to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of the statistics, the needs of current and potential users, and user views on the service provided. Publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the beneficial use of the statistics (para 3.2)
Requirement 2	Provide more information about the quality and reliability of CJS statistics (para 3.9)
Requirement 3	Explain the main terms and provide better cross-referencing between the text, tables and explanatory notes in the <i>Criminal Statistics</i> and <i>Sentencing Statistics</i> annual bulletins (para 3.20)
Requirement 4	Improve the commentary in <i>Criminal Statistics</i> and <i>Sentencing Statistics</i> to include more detailed discussion of the context and uses of the statistics (para 3.21)
Requirement 5	Review the commentary and presentation of the <i>Sentencing Statistics Quarterly Brief</i> to ensure that the data can be more easily interpreted (para 3.22)
Requirement 6	Review the balance between data presented in the reports and in spreadsheets, to ensure sufficient

detail is given to enable better interpretation of the data and commentary, and to support the analysis and re-use of statistics by users (para 3.24)

Requirement 7

Publish the name of the responsible statistician or the statistical Head of Profession in *Criminal Statistics* and in the *Sentencing Statistics* annual and quarterly bulletins (para 3.27)

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) produces statistics on the CJS based on data taken directly from the administrative systems for case management within courts in England and Wales. This assessment report does not cover the corresponding statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 2.2 *Criminal Statistics* is an annual publication dating back to the early 19th century. Until 2004 it was a Command Paper⁸ before becoming a National Statistics publication. It provides information about pre-court disposals (cautions and Penalty Notices for Disorder), and court proceedings and final outcomes for criminal offences in courts. It meets the legislative requirements of the *Police Act 1996* placed upon the Secretary of State to publish in aggregate form the outcome of criminal court proceedings.
- 2.3 Responsibility for the collection, validation, production and publication of *Criminal Statistics* moved from the Home Office to the Office for Criminal Justice Reform in 2005 and then to MoJ in 2009.
- 2.4 Until 2002, statistics on sentencing were included in *Criminal Statistics*. From 2003, the statistics were published (in expanded form) as a separate publication, *Sentencing Statistics*. This continued to be produced by the Home Office after *Criminal Statistics* was taken over by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform. Responsibility for publishing *Sentencing Statistics* passed to MoJ on its creation in May 2007.
- 2.5 The *Sentencing Statistics Quarterly Brief* was introduced in 2004. This publication uses provisional data from case management systems to meet user needs for more timely data ahead of the annual *Sentencing Statistics* publication.
- 2.6 *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System* and *Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System* document the representation and experiences of women, and black and minority ethnic groups, as: suspects; defendants; offenders; victims; and, as practitioners within or employees of the criminal justice agencies. Statistics in the two publications are based on data drawn from existing sources, within MoJ and outside, including data collected by the Home Office on topics such as homicides, detections, arrests and stop and search.
- 2.7 *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System* and *Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System* are designed to fulfil the statutory requirement placed on the Secretary of State as specified in Section 95 of the *Criminal Justice Act 1991* to publish information ‘facilitating the performance of persons engaged in the administration of justice in their duty to avoid discriminating against any persons on the ground of race or sex or any other improper ground’.
- 2.8 *Criminal Statistics* provides information which informs the public about the performance and activities of the CJS. These statistics contribute to monitoring the delivery of performance against Public Spending Agreement (PSA) 24 (set by the previous Government following the 2007 Comprehensive Spending

⁸ Command Papers are presented to the UK Parliament nominally by command of the Sovereign, but in practice by a Government Minister. They are papers of interest to Parliament where presentation is not required by statute.

Review): ‘*Deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive criminal justice system for victims and for the public*’⁹. The statistics are also used to develop, monitor and inform the implementation and effectiveness of policy and to assist research in examining ways to improve the effectiveness and resource allocation within the CJS.

- 2.9 The numbers of offences brought to justice (OBTJ) are published in *Criminal Statistics*. The count of OBTJs is used as a proxy measure for PSA 24 Indicator 1: *Effectiveness and efficiency of the CJS in bringing offences to justice*. OBTJs are also a key performance management tool for Local Criminal Justice Boards. OBTJs are counted by adding all offences for which someone is either: convicted; cautioned; has the offence taken into consideration by the courts; receives a penalty notice for disorder (PND); or, receives a formal warning for the possession of cannabis.
- 2.10 Statistics included in *Race and the Criminal Justice System* contribute to monitoring progress against PSA 24 Indicator 4: *Understanding and addressing race disproportionality at key stages in the CJS*.
- 2.11 *Sentencing Statistics* provides information about long-term trends in sentencing. The number, type and length of sentences determine the caseload for prison and probation services. This is important management information for MoJ and the National Offender Management Service. Sentencing statistics also inform decisions about the scenarios modelled in probation and prison population projections¹⁰. The *Sentencing Statistics Quarterly Brief* shows shorter-term trends that are used by the National Probation Sentencing Forum and others as indications of sentencing practice for the more serious offences. Sentencing data are supplied by MoJ to the Sentencing Guidelines Council and Sentencing Advisory Panel to inform the compilation of sentencing guidelines. They are also used to make impact assessments regarding new legislation or increased statutory maximum penalties.

⁹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_psa24.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/prisonpopulation.htm>

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.

- 3.1 MoJ told us that it has regular contact with the main users and suppliers of CJS data. It has established advisory groups for both the *Race and the Criminal Justice System* and *Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports which comprise representatives of data suppliers and main users such as academics and policy makers including: the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Crown Prosecution Service, Local Criminal Justice Boards, Ministry of Justice and the Home Office. It has also conducted some user consultation through the Crime and Justice Statistics Network, in particular about the *Criminal Statistics* publication. MoJ has made changes to its CJS publications following feedback from users, such as including statistics on conviction rates, and mandatory minimum custodial sentences for firearms offences.
- 3.2 MoJ explains the purpose of the *Race and the Criminal Justice System* and *Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports. However, it does not do so in the *Criminal Statistics* and *Sentencing Statistics* publications. Neither has MoJ documented the needs of the range of users nor how the CJS statistics are used. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MoJ should take steps to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of the statistics, the needs of current and potential users, and user views on the service provided. Publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the beneficial use of the statistics¹¹ (Requirement 1).
- 3.3 MoJ consulted in 2008 about proposed changes to the *Sentencing Statistics* annual and quarterly publications with the aim of improving timeliness and quality. It made some changes to their presentation as a result.
- 3.4 The annual *Sentencing Statistics* and *Criminal Statistics* publications for 2008 were published 13 months after the reference year. For the forthcoming publications MoJ is planning to reduce this lag to 10 months. MoJ introduced the *Sentencing Statistics Quarterly Brief* in 2004 to meet users' needs for more timely sentencing data. At the time of the next publication of *Criminal Statistics* MoJ intends to consult about proposals for a quarterly release of these statistics. One option being considered is to present quarterly statistics on criminal statistics alongside the sentencing statistics, in a combined publication.

¹¹ In relation to Principle 1 Practice 2 of the Code of Practice

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

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

- 3.5 MoJ publishes these statistics in an impartial and orderly manner, free of charge to all. The statistics are available on MoJ's website and via the National Statistics Publication Hub.
- 3.6 MoJ announces methodological changes through statistical notices released on its website in advance of the publication of the statistics themselves. MoJ has published its revisions policy¹² on its website, and highlights the specific revisions in annexes to the individual publications.

¹² <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/statistics-revisions-policy.pdf>

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.

- 3.7 No incidents of political pressures, abuse of trust or complaints relating to professional integrity, quality or standards were reported to or identified by the Assessment team.

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.

- 3.8 Data used in the production of *Criminal Statistics* and *Sentencing Statistics* are extracted from the Court Service's administrative sources: CREST for the Crown Court and Libra for the magistrates' courts. The *Race and the Criminal Justice System* and *Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports also present statistics on court proceedings. These are compendium publications which draw on data tables from a variety of (mainly administrative) sources, such as arrests (from the Home Office), youth offending (from the Youth Justice Board), cautions, probation and prisons (from MoJ).
- 3.9 Each report presents relevant background information, including material about the CJS, court proceedings, legislation, and issues affecting coverage and recording. They also include some information about the courts' administrative systems and highlight particular issues regarding the completeness of the data. While MoJ gives a general indication of quality, the information is not sufficiently detailed to make clear the quality of the statistical outputs. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MoJ should provide more information about the quality and reliability of the CJS statistics¹³ (Requirement 2).
- 3.10 Concerns about the quality of data have led to delays in the publication of several reports. These included inconsistencies between data sources for the probation and courts services on the sentencing of offenders, and on the number of summary offences from magistrates' courts. A National Statistics Quality Review¹⁴ identified a range of issues with the data systems used by the courts. These included a need for more frequent, rigorous and comprehensive audits and more data validation. MoJ told us that the Court Service built in more initial validation checks and completed the deployment of the Libra IT system in the magistrates' courts, which has led to improved data quality. The MoJ data linking project (see Protocol 3) will also address data quality issues. The Crown Court has a data quality group to improve recording at the courts and reduce the burden on frontline staff. We suggest that MoJ establish a similar group to examine the quality issues for data from the magistrates' courts.
- 3.11 MoJ has detailed procedures for the production of its statistical outputs, including quality assurance of the data. MoJ has previously established a peer review process for the *Race and the Criminal Justice System* and *Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports, which involved academics from the advisory groups. We suggest that in addition MoJ ensure that data suppliers have an opportunity to quality assure the use of their data in the reports.
- 3.12 MoJ has published quality guidelines¹⁵ on its website.

¹³ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 2 of the Code of Practice

¹⁴ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/quality/nat-stats-qual-revs/qual-revs-by-theme/crime-and-justice/index.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/stats-quality-strategy.pdf>

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.

3.13 MoJ regards the data in the CJS statistics publications as non-disclosive as they relate to matters that are already in the public domain.

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.

- 3.14 MoJ told us that a review of processes by the Crown Court quality group has led to a significant reduction in the administrative burden on frontline court staff.
- 3.15 Each year representatives from the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Home Office review the datasets provided by police forces to the Home Office and to MoJ. They consider the business case for the commencement or continuation of each data collection. In 2009 they agreed that the police would no longer provide data on court proceedings on behalf of the courts; instead MoJ obtain the data from the Libra system.

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.

- 3.16 The producers told the Assessment team that adequate resources are available to deliver the CJS statistical outputs.
- 3.17 MoJ has completed the first phase of a project to review ways of making better use of administrative data through linkage (see Protocol 3). The resources and business case for the second phase have been agreed, and the work is expected to start shortly.
- 3.18 MoJ recruits staff using appropriate recruitment procedures and has adopted the GSS statistical competence framework, together with the MoJ framework for general competences for analytical staff.

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

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

- 3.19 *Criminal Statistics* provides a comprehensive overview of the CJS from the apprehension of the suspected offender, through the subsequent court proceedings. MoJ has revised the sequence of the report to better guide users through the CJS, and the Assessment team felt that this had improved the presentation. MoJ plans to review the content and structure of the *Sentencing Statistics* annual bulletin in 2010/11 in consultation with users.
- 3.20 The *Criminal Statistics* and *Sentencing Statistics* annual bulletins each include an annex giving some background information about the various sources used. However we think that there is insufficient signposting to this information, whilst the annexes do not provide explanations for some of the main terms used. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MoJ should explain the main terms and provide better cross-referencing between the text, tables and explanatory notes in the *Criminal Statistics* and *Sentencing Statistics* annual bulletins¹⁶ (Requirement 3).
- 3.21 These reports contain a substantial amount of data in detailed tables, accompanied by commentary and summary charts and tables. The commentary could go further in presenting the figures in the wider context of the CJS. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MoJ should improve the commentary in *Criminal Statistics* and *Sentencing Statistics* to include more detailed discussion of the context and uses of the statistics¹⁷ (Requirement 4).
- 3.22 The *Sentencing Statistics Quarterly Brief* gives the main changes in sentencing patterns by type of offence and court. MoJ could expand the commentary by setting the statistics in the wider context, such as crime patterns and legislative changes, and presenting the sentences in order of severity. The design of the tables and charts also could be improved. MoJ told us that, as part of its consultation on its Statistical Workplan for 2010/11¹⁸, it has committed to introduce a quarterly publication to provide an overview of the whole of the CJS including sentencing. It expects to consult on its proposals over the autumn and will work in partnership with the Home Office and the National Statistician. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MoJ should review the commentary and presentation of *Sentencing Statistics Quarterly Brief* to ensure that the data can be more easily interpreted¹⁹ (Requirement 5).
- 3.23 MoJ has made substantial changes to the *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System* and *Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports in an attempt to represent better the experiences of women and black and minority ethnic groups. These compendia reports are effective in drawing out the main messages from the data, with well-designed and clear presentation. MoJ includes some information in the *Race* report on the definitions of racist incidents and racially and religiously aggravated offences.

¹⁶ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

¹⁷ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 2 of the Code of Practice

¹⁸ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/statistics-comment.htm>

¹⁹ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 1 and 2 of the Code of Practice

However, it does not define ‘incidents’ or detail the distinction between incidents and offences. The description does not make sufficiently clear that ‘aggravated offences’ reflect a narrow range of offences and do not represent all race or religious hate crime. We suggest that MoJ review the information provided on methods, procedures and classifications within *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System*.

- 3.24 For *Race and the Criminal Justice System* in 2009 MoJ presented data tables only within the pdf and did not make tables available in a format to enable analysis or re-use, such as Excel spreadsheets. Subsequent to the release of this report, MoJ chose to exclude detailed tables that had previously been included in the other CJS annual bulletins, in favour of publication only on its website in Excel files. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MoJ should review the balance between data presented in the reports and in spreadsheets, to ensure sufficient detail is given to enable better interpretation of the data and commentary, and to support the analysis and re-use of statistics by users²⁰ (Requirement 6).

²⁰ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 2 and Practice 6 of the Code of Practice

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.

3.25 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.

- 3.26 MoJ releases a publication schedule for the forthcoming 12 months on its website. It also pre-announces the releases of the CJS reports on the National Statistics Publication Hub.
- 3.27 MoJ gives the name of the responsible statisticians in *Race and Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports but not in *Criminal Statistics* and *Sentencing Statistics* annual and quarterly bulletins. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MoJ should publish the name of the responsible statistician or the statistical Head of Profession in *Criminal Statistics* and in the *Sentencing Statistics* annual and quarterly publications²¹ (Requirement 7).
- 3.28 MoJ publishes the pre-release access circulation lists for the CJS publications on the respective 'product pages' on its website. While the lists for the *Race and Women and the Criminal Justice System* reports are lengthy, they reflect the range of CJS interests in these compendia. MoJ told us that circulation before publication of the reports has been reduced following the introduction of the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008²².

²¹ In relation to Protocol 2 Practice 6 of the Code of Practice

²² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2008/uksi_20082998_en_1

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.

- 3.29 MoJ has published its Statement of Administrative Sources²³ on its website. This includes data from the courts' case management systems. MoJ statisticians told us that they plan to provide further detail, in the Statement, about quality assurance procedures.
- 3.30 Since June 2009 MoJ statisticians have been working on a project to make better use of administrative data to improve the information available to users on cases progressing through the CJS.
- 3.31 Phase 1 of this project has involved linking data from the Crown and magistrates' courts and has achieved a 90% match rate. Phase 2 of the project has now started and will involve linking courts data with data from other parts of government – for example data from the Police National Computer and the Department for Work and Pensions. This work will boost MoJ's analytic capability, particularly in the following areas:
- understanding the efficiency and effectiveness of the CJS;
 - measuring outcomes, through understanding the links between, for example, re-offending and employment, benefits, education, health, and accommodation, as well as the impacts of the different elements of and interventions provided by the CJS; and
 - understanding the interactions between MoJ and citizens – as offenders, witnesses and victims – and how these interactions could be improved to make the CJS more efficient.
- 3.32 This development will address the issue raised in the Authority's report, *Overcoming barriers to trust in crime statistics*²⁴ of making linked information available on crime, offenders and events across the CJS, and providing a more joined up picture. We regard this project as an example of good practice.

²³ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/statistics-policy-procedures.htm>

²⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring-reports/index.html>

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to MoJ's CJS statistics 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.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Suggestion 1 | Establish a quality assurance group to examine the data from magistrates' courts (para 3.10) |
| Suggestion 2 | Ensure that data suppliers have an opportunity to quality assure the use of their data in the statistical publications (para 3.11) |
| Suggestion 3 | Review the information provided on methods, procedures and classifications within <i>Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System</i> (para 3.23) |

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from February 2010 to July 2010.

A2.2 The Assessment team – Penny Babb and Amanda Charles – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of MoJ in February 2010. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 22 March 2010. The Assessment team subsequently met with MoJ during April 2010 to review compliance with the Code of Practice, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

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 10 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

MoJ	1
Other CJS	3
Academic	5
Voluntary sector	1

A2.5 Users we heard from as part of this assessment were generally content with the comprehensiveness of the statistical publications and felt that the published data met their needs. The users were positive about the nature of engagement with the producer teams. Some users said that they sometimes had difficulty finding the data they needed. Several users indicated that they would like to see the more timely release of some of the data.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

