

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Youth Justice for England and Wales

*(produced by the Youth Justice Board and the
Ministry of Justice)*

© Crown Copyright 2013

The text in this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

For any other use of this material please write to Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU or email: licensing@opsi.gov.uk

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.

Contact us

Tel: 0845 604 1857

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

Website: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 2QQ

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Youth Justice in England and Wales

*(produced by the Youth Justice Board and the Ministry of
Justice)*

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*.

Contents

Section 1: Summary of findings

Section 2: Subject of the assessment

Section 3: Assessment findings

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Releases

Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

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 allows an appropriate authority³ to request an assessment of official statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*⁴ in order for them to gain National Statistics status. This report is in response to such a request. The report covers *Youth Justice Statistics*⁵ (YJS), produced by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
- 1.1.2 Section 3 of this report adopts an ‘exception reporting’ approach – it includes text only to support the Requirements made to strengthen compliance with the *Code* and Suggestions made to improve confidence in the production, management and dissemination of these statistics. This abbreviated style of report reflects the Head of Assessment’s consideration of aspects of risk and materiality⁶. The Assessment team nonetheless assessed compliance with all parts of the *Code of Practice* and has commented on all those in respect of which some remedial action is recommended.
- 1.1.3 Some of the data in YJS have already been published in research, statistics or management information produced by MoJ and other government departments. They are included in the publication with newly released YJB data and secondary analysis of earlier data, in order to provide a more complete overview for users. As well as covering the compendium as a whole, this assessment covers the official statistics that are released for the first time in the compendium. Previously published National Statistics have been the subject of separate assessments.
- 1.1.4 Designation of a compendium publication as National Statistics means that the producer body has, for example: identified and met user needs in terms of the content of the publication; considered the appropriateness of each series for inclusion; and written appropriate commentary.
- 1.1.5 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 <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

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

³ Subsection 12(7) of the Act defines ‘appropriate authority’ as Ministers of the Crown, Scottish Ministers, Welsh Ministers, Northern Ireland departments or the National Statistician

⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁵ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/youth-justice/statistics>

⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/guidance-about-assessment/criteria-for-deciding-upon-the-format-of-an-assessment-report.pdf>

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 published in *YJS* can be designated as a new National Statistics product, subject to YJB and MoJ implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by May 2013.
- 1.2.2 YJB and MoJ have informed the Assessment team that they have started to implement the Requirements listed in section 1.5 and the suggestions for improvement in Annex 1. The Statistics Authority welcomes this.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.3.1 The content of *YJS* has been expanded in recent years and the statistics draw on a wide range of data sources in order to provide a coherent overview of the youth justice system. Each stage of the system is described and the bulletin helps to enhance overall understanding, but more contextual information is needed to assist user interpretation. YJB does not engage sufficiently with users and potential users outside government.
- 1.3.2 Some of the statistics in *YJS* are drawn from YJB's management information systems and YJB has taken some important steps to improve the quality of these data. However, YJB does not publish adequate information about the steps taken to improve the statistics, or about the quality and reliability of the statistics in relation to the range of potential uses.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that the Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice 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 | Investigate and document: the needs of users of <i>YJS</i> ; their experience of the statistical service; the use made of the statistics; and the types of decision they inform. Use the information obtained to develop the statistics (para 3.2). |
| Requirement 2 | Improve the published information about the quality and reliability of the YJB statistics in relation to the range of potential uses (para 3.8). |

Requirement 3

Improve the commentary in the bulletin so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.9).

Requirement 4

Include the name and contact details of the responsible statistician in the statistical bulletin (para 3.11).

2 Subject of the assessment

2.1 The Youth Justice Board (YJB) is an executive non-departmental public body whose board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice. It was established under the *Crime and Disorder Act, 1998*⁷ with a remit to oversee the youth justice system⁸ in England and Wales, prevent offending and ensure that there are safe and secure arrangements when custody is required. YJB began to publish annual statistics on the workload of the youth justice system in 2002. These statistics originally provided information about:

- offences and offenders;
- the use of remand;
- sanctions (for example, community and custodial sentences);
- supervision and surveillance programmes;
- the population of children and young people in custody;
- incidents involving young people in the youth secure estate⁹ - for example assault, self harm, or the use of physical restraint (these are referred to as 'behaviour management' statistics);
- serious incidents involving those under supervision in the community;
- the performance of Youth Offending Teams¹⁰ (YOTs) against standards set by the YJB; and
- trends in YOT funding and workforce.

2.2 *Youth Justice Statistics (YJS) 2008/09* was the first edition produced under the direction of a GSS statistician seconded from MoJ. In May 2010 the Authority's review¹¹ of crime statistics in England and Wales recommended that statistical publications in this area should make it easier for the non-expert to understand the flow of offences and offenders through the criminal justice system. In response, YJB restructured and expanded *YJS* to include additional material – for example on arrests and re-offending. *YJS* also includes new chapters on criminal histories; comparisons with the adult system; and public perceptions of youth crime and the youth justice system.

2.3 To support these changes, *YJS* now draws from a wide range of sources. These include the Youth Justice Management Information System, MoJ's Court Proceedings Database, the Police National Computer (PNC), police data collected by the Home Office, and YJB's Secure Accommodation Clearing House System (SACHS) database, which consists of data from the youth

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/contents>

⁸ The youth justice system deals with 10 to 17 year olds, referred to as 'young persons' in the statistical bulletin

⁹ The youth secure estate comprises 17 secure children's homes (run by local authorities); 4 secure training centres (run by private operators under contract); and 11 youth offender institutions (run by the prison service)

¹⁰ YOTs are multi agency teams made up of representatives from police, probation, education, health and social services. In addition, there may be specialist staff dealing with issues such as accommodation or substance misuse

¹¹ Monitoring Report 5: *Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics*;

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

secure estate. Statistics are also derived from the Crime Survey for England and Wales¹² and the Juvenile Cohort Study¹³. Some of the statistics in *YJS* are published for the first time, some are based on secondary analysis of previously published data, and some are recycled from earlier bulletins (including finalised figures from provisional data). YJB has taken steps in recent years to improve data quality. These include the capture of some data at case level (which also permits more detailed analysis) and the extraction of data on re-offending from the PNC (which has more complete information than YOTs).

- 2.4 The performance indicators reported on in the 2010/11 bulletin have now been replaced by a 'risk based monitoring programme' centred on three key outcomes¹⁴:
- reducing the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system;
 - reducing reoffending; and
 - reducing custody numbers.
- 2.5 The Welsh Government has additional indicators relating to levels of education, training and employment; young people in suitable accommodation; and substance misuse. YJB told us that these will continue to be covered in *YJS*.
- 2.6 YOTs which responded to our consultation (annex 3) told us that they used the statistics to compare their performance with similar areas, regionally and nationally. There is less scope for benchmarking within the youth secure estate, although one establishment told us that it did compare its own figures with the national totals. Respondents from YJB and MoJ use the statistics as an evidence base when dealing with media enquiries, in writing briefs for policy purposes and local visits, and to provide background and context when designing and commissioning research. The statistics are also likely to be of interest to researchers, pressure groups and the media, although we have no direct evidence of this.
- 2.7 YJB estimates that the cost of producing the 2010/11 publication was just over £100,000. This does not include any costs incurred by practitioners in the criminal justice system because the data are required for management purposes. A small additional cost is incurred by the Home Office and MoJ because of their role in drafting or quality assuring some of the text.

¹² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/surveys/list-of-surveys/survey.html?survey=Crime+Survey+for+England+and+Wales> (formerly known as the British Crime Survey)

¹³ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research-and-analysis/yjb/juvenile-cohort>

¹⁴ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/criminal-justice/criminal-justice-statistics>

3 Assessment findings

- 3.1 YJS is published as a joint YJB and MoJ statistical bulletin, with three logos (belonging to YJS, MoJ and the Home Office) on the front cover. Joint publication arrangements give rise to ambiguity about which organisation is ultimately responsible for statistical decisions. In the case of YJS, it is clear that the statistical head of profession in MoJ is exercising oversight of the statistics, which we regard as good practice. We suggest, however, that YJB and MoJ either decide on a single publisher for the statistics, or publish a clear statement of their respective roles.
- 3.2 MoJ carries out an annual consultation¹⁵ on its statistical work plan, which includes the work of its arm's length bodies. This seeks user's views about the quality and presentation of each publication, and about any gaps in coverage. YJB told us that it received little feedback relating to YJS from this consultation process, but that it has received positive, informal feedback on the changes described in paragraph 2.2. There is a steering group for YJS, consisting of analysts from MoJ, Home Office and YJB, but we have seen little evidence of any systematic attempt to engage with external users. As part of the designation as National Statistics, YJB and MoJ should investigate and document: the needs of users of YJS; their experience of the statistical service; the use made of the statistics; and the types of decision they inform. YJB and MoJ should use the information they obtain to develop the statistics¹⁶ (Requirement 1). In documenting use, we suggest that YJB and MoJ refer to the categories put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*¹⁷.
- 3.3 YJS includes a statement that 'Revisions are only made [to the data from YOTs and the secure estate] where there is a significant change or when an error is identified in the original data'. YJB told us that a 'significant change' is one that affects the overall narrative. Rare but high profile incidents on the secure estate can cause late changes to the behaviour management figures, so establishments are asked to check their finalised records for the year before publication. YJB corrects errors after publication by placing a prominent notice on its website and reissuing a corrected version of the statistical bulletin. We suggest that YJB make it possible for users to see or obtain full details of revisions and corrections to YJB data should they wish to do so. Revisions can also affect data that were previously published elsewhere: users of YJS are advised to check the relevant publication for the revisions policy in these circumstances. We suggest that YJB, where data from other statistical series are revised, indicate this in relevant tables of YJS.
- 3.4 The producer team provided us with a table describing each data source and stating where in YJS it is used and whether or not it forms part of designated National Statistics. The table has links to other publications in which statistics from the source are presented. We suggest that YJB include such information in YJS.
- 3.5 The identities of young people involved in the youth justice system must not be disclosed unless the courts make an Order lifting anonymity. YJB told us that

¹⁵ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics>

¹⁶ In relation to Principle 1, Practices 2 and 5 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁷ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/index.html>

there is an Information Sharing Protocol between YJB and YOTs and that the young people are informed about this, in accordance with data protection legislation. YJB takes steps to suppress data in tables where the numbers are low. The producer team informed us that it has experienced some tension between data protection and freedom of information requirements. Information about young people placed in secure accommodation is entered into the SACHS system but documents can be sent to YJB via Connectivity (a separate IT system), secure email, or by fax when secure email is not available. Fax has to be used occasionally when staff cannot access the computer system – for example, when a court is sitting at the weekend. The data published in the statistical bulletin are collected for operational purposes and the statistics are a secondary purpose. YJB told us that it is trying to expand the use of Connectivity in order to eliminate the need for faxes, which it acknowledges are insecure. We suggest that YJB review the arrangements for protecting confidentiality and publish the conclusions.

- 3.6 We sought comments from users and data suppliers as part of this assessment (see annex 3). Through this consultation we learnt that although some suppliers considered that they had good communication links with YJB, others felt that: they had not been sufficiently consulted over changes to data requirements; clarifications given in response to queries had not been more widely communicated; or that they did not understand discrepancies between the data that they supplied and the published statistics. YJB told us that in addition to visiting many suppliers in order to discuss these issues, it has disseminated information at annual supplier meetings. We suggest that YJB ensure that any changes or clarifications to data requirements are cascaded to all suppliers of data for *YJS*.
- 3.7 Much of the data used to produce *YJS* is extracted from the same sources that are used to produce existing National Statistics publications, and it is possible for users to find out about the quality of these statistics and the methods used to produce them by following the links provided in the release. Other data are extracted from YJB case management systems. YJB has experienced some problems with the quality of data from these systems. For example, the publication of local data was delayed in 2012 because 15 per cent of YOTs had not received system upgrades that were designed to rectify quality issues. Late changes to the behaviour management data from the youth secure estate have resulted in discrepancies between the published statistics and the answers given to Parliamentary Questions. In addition, there can be a lack of coherence between different data sources. The explanatory notes which accompany the statistical bulletin point out that the data from YOTs may differ from the police or courts' data presented in other MoJ publications. YJB and the Department for Education are currently looking into discrepancies between their respective statistics on secure children's homes. We suggest that YJB publish information about the work that is being carried out to improve data quality. The producer team has been proactive in seeking solutions and has developed a good understanding of local issues through making numerous site visits. We regard this as good practice.
- 3.8 The bulletin mentions when data problems have occurred but does not provide any detail or discuss the steps being taken to overcome them. It makes the general point that any large administrative database is subject to possible

recording errors, but does not discuss other issues such as completeness, timeliness, or the use of coding. As part of the designation as National Statistics, YJB should improve the published information about the quality and reliability of the YJB statistics in relation to the range of potential uses¹⁸ (Requirement 2).

- 3.9 *YJS 2010/11* shows that the number of first time entrants¹⁹ to the youth justice system fell by 59 per cent between 2006/07 and 2010/11. The number of arrests of young people for notifiable offences and the number of out of court disposals have also declined substantially in recent years. The commentary in the bulletin mentions two factors that may have contributed to this fall: the decision to drop police targets in respect of offences brought to justice (OBTJ); and the possible role of restorative justice²⁰ and triage schemes. However, it does not explain how dropping national OBTJ targets can reduce the number of arrests or the number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time. Nor does it explain what is meant by restorative justice and triage, or point out that young people who are dealt with in this way are not currently included in the statistics on out of court disposals (see next paragraph). The commentary does not state whether young people given penalty notices for disorder (PNDs, often known as ‘on the spot fines’) are included in the arrest statistics. PNDs do not appear to be included in the statistics on first time entrants, but this is not made explicit. As part of the designation as National Statistics, YJB should improve the commentary in the bulletin so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics²¹ (Requirement 3). We suggest that in meeting this requirement, YJB should consider the points detailed in annex 2.
- 3.10 Community resolutions are often used for less serious offences involving young people. YJB told us that not every case is recorded as a crime. There are currently no official statistics on community resolutions, but around half the police forces in England and Wales supply information to the Home Office on a voluntary basis: these data are included with other ‘non sanction detections’ in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin²². The Home Office is consulting²³ on a proposal to revise the recording of crime outcomes, one consequence of which would be the creation of a separate category for community resolutions. We suggest that YJB and MoJ consider how include statistics about community resolutions in *YJS*, so that users can obtain a more complete picture of youth offending and its outcomes.
- 3.11 *YJS* includes an email address for general enquiries, but no contact details for the responsible statistician. As part of the designation as National Statistics, YJB should include the name and contact details of the responsible statistician in the statistical bulletin²⁴ (Requirement 4).

¹⁸ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 1 of the *Code of Practice*

¹⁹ Defined as the number of young people receiving their first reprimand, warning, caution or conviction

²⁰ Restorative justice, triage and other ‘community resolutions’ are sanctions issued by the police for minor offences. Examples include apologising to victims or repairing damage. These sanctions require the agreement of the victim and the cooperation of the offender

²¹ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

²² <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/hosb0812/>

²³ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/consultations/crime-outcomes-cons/crime-outcomes%3Fview%3DBinary>

²⁴ In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to *Youth Justice Statistics*, produced by YJB and MoJ, 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 | Either decide on a single publisher for the statistics, or publish a clear statement of the respective roles of YJB and MoJ (para 3.1). |
| Suggestion 2 | When documenting use, refer to the categories put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> (para 3.2). |
| Suggestion 3 | Make it possible for users to see or obtain full details of revisions and corrections to YJB data should they wish to do so (para 3.3). |
| Suggestion 4 | Where data from other statistical series are revised, indicate this in relevant tables of <i>YJS</i> (para 3.3). |
| Suggestion 5 | Include a table in <i>YJS</i> listing: data sources; where each source is used; and whether it forms part of a designated National Statistic (para 3.4). |
| Suggestion 6 | Review the arrangements for protecting confidentiality and publish the conclusions (para 3.5). |
| Suggestion 7 | Ensure that any changes or clarifications to data requirements are cascaded to all suppliers of data for <i>YJS</i> (para 3.6). |
| Suggestion 8 | Publish information about the work that is being carried out to improve data quality (para 3.7). |
| Suggestion 9 | Consider the points detailed in annex 2, in seeking to improve the statistical release (para 3.9). |
| Suggestion 10 | Consider how to include statistics about community resolutions in <i>YJS</i> , so that users can obtain a more complete picture of youth offending and its outcomes (para 3.10). |

Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Releases

- A2.1 In October 2010, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Releases*²⁵. 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*. This annex comments on the compliance of *YJS* with the statement on standards.
- A2.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical releases, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

Appropriate identification of the statistics being released

- A2.3 The title of the bulletin describes the coverage (England and Wales) and the financial year to which the statistics relate. The bulletin explains that many of the statistics are drawn from data collected by MoJ and Home Office as well as YJB, and that in some cases more up to date information may be available because the statistics concerned are published elsewhere more frequently. However, it is not easy to relate each published statistic to its source or to find out which statistics are updated within the year. It is also quite hard to determine what is being released for the first time, and what results from secondary analysis, from finalising provisional data or is simply reproduced from earlier bulletins. Information describing each data source and its use in *YJS* would make this easier.
- A2.4 The first page of the PDF includes logos for YJB, MoJ and Home Office. YJB and MoJ may wish to consider whether overall responsibility should be indicated on the cover page, with other contributions (text, data or quality assurance) acknowledged inside. The bulletin does not include the National Statistics logo, since *YJS* is currently official statistics.
- A2.5 The bulletin includes an email address for general enquiries but no contact details for the responsible statistician.

Include commentary that is helpful to the non-expert and presents the main messages in plain English

- A2.6 The bulletin includes an executive summary at the start and a key findings section at the beginning of each chapter.
- A2.7 The language in the bulletin is straightforward but includes some technical terms which are not explained in the text. However, most of these are explained in a separate glossary.
- A2.8 The commentary describes the statistics and provides explanations for the most noteworthy features. It makes comparisons over time and there are also some regional comparisons. The bulletin includes charts to present time series and comparisons between categories such as age or type of offence. The choice of start dates for the time series (usually 2000/01 or 2006/07) is not

²⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-releases.html>

explained. The bulletin does not include information about why the statistics are important, to whom and for what they are likely to be used.

- A2.9 The bulletin would benefit from some references to rates and proportions in relation to the population of young people, to reflect the fact that, over time, the size of relevant cohorts will change.

Use language that is impartial, objective and professionally sound

- A2.10 The text in the bulletin is impartial and descriptive statements are consistent with the statistics. Descriptions of proportions, changes, trends and patterns are professionally sound. Non-sampling variability is discussed in the explanatory notes section at the back of the bulletin.

Include information about the context and likely uses

- A2.11 The bulletin includes little information about the policy and operational context in which the statistics have been collected and will be used. The need for more information about the introduction of community resolutions is discussed in paragraph 3.9.
- A2.12 The bulletin includes a chart showing the flow of young people through various stages of the criminal justice system and the numbers involved at each stage. The chart is potentially very useful but there are currently gaps and places where the numbers do not sum as might be expected. If it were expanded and given more prominence within the bulletin, it could be used to explain the basis for counting offences and offenders, and to illustrate the points in the system where attrition occurs.
- A2.13 The bulletin provides insufficient detail about the quality of the YJB statistics in relation to the range of potential uses. It does not explain specific issues associated with each administrative dataset and how these are being addressed.

Include, or link to, appropriate metadata

- A2.14 The bulletin includes some information about data sources but lacks detail about how the data are compiled to produce the statistics. YJB and MoJ publish a separate glossary alongside the bulletin. This provides helpful definitions for many of the terms, but would benefit from updating (for example to include triage schemes and restorative justice). In one or two instances (for example cautions) the glossary refers to aspects of data collection but does not provide an explanation of the underlying term. The bulletin does not contain any links to youth justice statistics in other parts of the UK, or provide information about how the collection of data on youth justice and the concepts used compare with Scotland, Northern Ireland or other parts of the world.

Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A3.1 This assessment was conducted from September to November 2012.

A3.2 The Assessment team – Jill Barelli and Emma Bowditch – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of the Youth Justice Board in September. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 12 October. The Assessment team subsequently met YJB in November 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

A3.3 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. We also approach suppliers of data for the statistics.

A3.4 The Assessment team received 14 responses from the user and supplier consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

	User	Supplier	User & supplier
Central government (YJB and MoJ)	4	-	-
Youth Offending Teams* (YOTs)	-	3	5
Secure estate	-	-	2
Total	4	3	7

* One of these responses summarised the views of information officers from 9 YOTs who meet on a regional basis.

A3.5 Users were generally satisfied with the engagement that they had with the producer team and commented that the team responded efficiently to their requests. One reported having more confidence in the statistics because Youth Offending Teams now have the same approach to recording data. One user said they struggled with the length and complexity of YJS and did not feel clear about the comparability of the statistics, but another said that the bulletin usefully pulls together all the youth justice system data. Requests for improvement included more detailed and timelier statistics.

A3.6 Some data suppliers said they had not been sufficiently consulted about changes to data requirements. One reported a concern that the re-offending and first time entrant statistics published in YSJ vary by 15-20 per cent from YOT data. Another reported problems with the data software used by YOTs to record, check and extract data. One of the secure establishments expressed concern about the lack of clarity in reporting injuries sustained during restraint procedures and suggested that counting rules have changed but not been

formally updated. It was also suggested that this data collection should be amalgamated with another used for contract management purposes, so that there can be one requirement with one set of counting rules/definitions.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

