

Increasing value in crime and justice statistics in England and Wales through data sharing and linkage

Round table meeting

What was the aim of the meeting?

Statistics are used a lot inside and outside of government. More could be done to look at crime and justice from the perspective of its effect on people and organisations. Increasing the extent of sharing and linking data enable these perspectives, uncovering new insight and increasing the value of statistics that tell us about crime and justice. This was the focus of the London round table. It brought together attendees from the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and the Office for National Statistics to explore how they might work together to share and link crime and justice data in England and Wales.

How did the meeting address its aim?

Each of the organisations show-cased their work to date and the opportunities they saw from sharing and linking data across crime and justice. We also heard about other areas of statistics where this had happened including in education – uncovering previously unrecognized social disadvantage – and public health – where there is growing interest in examining the impact of early life experiences on a range of outcomes. Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician, counselled against trying to work on every front at once and said from experience that finding the right question to start with was the key to overcoming hurdles and galvanising action. Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation – who chaired the meeting – challenged attendees to think about what might be the galvanising question for crime and justice.

What does this mean for crime and justice statistics?

All three of the producer organisations gave examples of where they had previously linked data and clearly see the benefit of doing more of this work in the future. For example, the [Ministry of Justice Data lab](#) is enabling organisations working to reduce reoffending to evaluate their programmes using linked offence data. However, they recognised that this only covered part of the story, was limited to the standard re-offending measures, and they planned more work to incorporate additional outcomes, including employment and education. Iain Bell emphasised the need to come together as a government statistical service to achieve similar shifts in value to those being achieved in education and health. While he recognised the need to make data linking more efficient, he said it was also important to focus on the analysis and what it might reveal.

The participants had a productive discussion to identify where they could use linkage of data - including linking to data beyond crime and justice – to improving understanding in areas such as:

- the interrelationship between mental health and the crime and justice system
- childhood and early adult pathways to committing crime and serious crime
- the impact of exposure to crime in childhood
- what factors prevent people with a high risk of offending from committing crime

While the ideas generated will require further work and prioritisation, this level of enthusiasm and commitment to joint working is encouraging. It is also timely given the new opportunities presented by the Digital Economy Act.

What does this mean for users?

We know from talking to some of the people who use crime and justice statistics that using linked data to create statistics based on people or organisations would increase their value. For example, by:

- tracing how people move through the justice system (from offence, to court, to prison and beyond)
- understanding more about the long-term impact of crime on victims
- uncovering patterns in criminal behaviour that could help prevent future offending
- revealing inequalities in the treatment of victims and of particular groups in society across the justice system

Experience from education shows the potential for revealing untold stories about disadvantage and inequality in crime and justice. We expect users will welcome these developments and their contribution to the prioritisation process will be valuable.

Next Steps

The three organisations agreed to put together ideas for data sharing and linking over the next few months. They asked us to convene a second meeting in the Autumn to develop their ideas, which we intend to do. Producer organisations will no doubt want to engage with a wide range of users as they undertake this important work, and we will support any efforts to do this.