

# **Recorded Crime in Scotland Framework of Assurance**

**Justice Analytical Services, Scottish Government  
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## Executive Summary

### Purpose

The purpose of this Framework of Assurance (called the 'framework' throughout this document) is to provide evidence on:

- the suitability of the administrative data for use in producing official statistics;
- factors that the statistical producer needs to take into account in producing the official statistics;
- the information that users need to know in order to make informed use of the statistics.

### Introduction

In Scotland, Recorded Crime in Scotland<sup>1</sup> figures are published annually. The annual bulletin presents statistics on crimes and offences recorded and cleared up<sup>2</sup> by the police in Scotland, disaggregated by crime/offence group and by local authority.

In this framework we:

- Describe the work that produces the Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics from end-to-end, including the design, the data compilation stages and all quality and scrutiny elements;
- Provide assurance that the data are of sufficient quality to meet the statistics users' needs;
- Demonstrate what we do to deliver the highest quality data for users in the most proportionate way;
- Set out, in a structured and systematic way, the evidence in published audits and how we use that to increase both the quality of, and public confidence in, the underlying data and the Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics;
- Explain the limitations and risks of the underlying data, so that users will appreciate how these will affect their use of the statistics;
- Identify areas for continuous improvement activity.

The framework therefore provides a shared picture of quality assurance among producers, and a shared view of areas for continuous improvement, which is communicated to users.

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<sup>1</sup> Recorded Crime in Scotland <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime>

<sup>2</sup> A crime or offence is regarded as 'cleared up' where there exists a sufficiency of evidence, under Scots law, to justify consideration of criminal proceedings.

The major participants involved in these statistics are:

- Police Service of Scotland (PS) – the data suppliers
- Scottish Government – the data producers
- Scottish Policing Authority (SPA), Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Crime registrar – independent assurers of Recorded Crime.

Recorded Crime in Scotland data is sourced from Police Scotland’s administrative data, which is a by-product of administrative systems developed primarily for operational purposes. By using data which is already available within the existing Police Scotland systems, rather than collecting data afresh, we are able to limit the overall burden placed on them, and also avoid the costs of mounting dedicated data collection exercises.

## Uses of the statistics

The UK Statistics Authority’s Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the primary source of guidance for all Official statistics in the UK, states that “Official statistics are fundamental to good government, to the delivery of public services and to decision-making in all sectors of society. **They provide Parliament and the public with a window on society and the economy, and on the work and performance of government.**”

Recorded crime statistics are a high-profile example of this, with users across the spectrum: providing police with operational information; government with an evidenced overview of society; and other data users with a rich source of data, that can be explored to improve our understanding of current issues and provide robust research-based evidence to build a better future.

This framework is intended to enable the Scottish Government, as statistical producers, to build users’ confidence in the use of administrative data for statistical purposes and to support their correct application in analysis.

We recognise the value and influence of these statistics and have taken this into account when we consider their ‘maturity level’ which is used to determine the level of assurance required for them (for more detail see *Appendix A – Maturity Level*).

## Continuous Improvement

We will continuously reflect on current practice, and with the findings from user feedback and the work of the Scottish Crime Recording Board, we will continue to review and seek improvements to our statistical outputs. This framework sets out how we take forward our regular dialogue with users, to clarify their needs and our response to this.

We will use the framework to identify key risks, gaps etc. where improvement is required as well as to identify good practice that may be applied in other areas of assurance.

This framework is a live document, subject to ongoing change and review in order to ensure it remains both up-to-date and fit for purpose. Changes to this framework have to be approved by the Scottish Crime Recording Board, which was set up during 2015 to support the production of accurate and objective statistics on crime in Scotland.

## **Drivers for the creation of this framework**

The creation of a single police force (Police Scotland) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 represented a significant change in the policing landscape in Scotland.

On 31 July 2014, the UK Statistics Authority published an Exposure Draft Report '*Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Data*'<sup>3</sup>. This report proposed a new conceptual approach which statistical producers are expected to take in using administrative data, and provides a clearer guide to how producers should use them to make related key judgements. This framework adopts that approach.

Recorded Crime in Scotland is produced to robust and stringent quality standards and practices, but we have taken this opportunity to adopt the UKSA guidance, building our existing quality practices and information into this framework and describing how we will maintain and improve our good practice.

In creating this framework we have also taken the UK Statistics Authority Assessment Report on Recorded Crime in Scotland into consideration<sup>4</sup>. This stipulated that the Scottish Government should :

- produce a coherent framework of assurance (this document); and
- publish demonstrable evidence that the outputs from the then forthcoming independent HMICS audit (published in November 2014) have been integrated into the processes and practices for the compilation, analysis and publication of these statistics and of the supporting documentation.

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<sup>3</sup> UKSA - Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Data - Exposure draft - <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, Assessment Report 288 July 2014, Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland - <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/index.html>

## Proportionality of Approach

To ensure that the scale of investigation and documentation for the Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics are proportionate to the statistical output, we used the 'Maturity matrix' proposed in the Exposure Draft. The *initial* assessment was that Recorded Crime in Scotland are **maturity level 3**, i.e. statistics of potentially high data quality concern and high public interest. However, this level is also relevant where the data quality concerns are less but there is a **high public interest** in the statistics.

The reasons for deciding on this level are explained in Appendix A. Whilst UKSA did not express strong concerns around quality problems in Scotland, the high profile nature of these statistics ensures they are likely to remain at M3 for the foreseeable future.<sup>5</sup>

The consequence of the M3 risk level is that, as the statistical producer, the Scottish Government must carry out a comprehensive assurance and audit approach.

## Structure of the framework

The framework is structured according to proposals from the UK Statistics Authority.

### Operational context and administrative data collection

Here we demonstrate and describe for users how we understand the environment and processes in which Recorded Crime in Scotland data are compiled and the factors which might affect the quality of the data.

### Communication with data suppliers

Here we provide evidence of how the Scottish Government maintains and develops strong and effective relationships with Police Scotland and SPA as data suppliers. It provides the clarity and structure to enable us to maintain a good understanding of the approaches adopted by PS and SPA to ensure consistency in recording and quality levels.

### Suppliers' quality assurance principles, standards and quality checks

Here we describe the principles, processes and checks that are conducted by Police Scotland, and how these results are used to ensure continuous improvement of the statistics. The work of other independent auditors, including HMICS and SPA will also be included here.

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<sup>5</sup> Assessment Report page 1, "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."

### The producer's quality assurance investigations and documentation

This section includes the quality assurance conducted by the Scottish Government. We set out how the findings from our own quality assurance checks are supplemented by the knowledge gained through reviewing the other practice areas outlined above, and used to inform a published statement that sets out the basis of the producer's judgment about the quality of the administrative data.

## **Conclusions about the Police Recorded Crime Statistics**

The framework sets out the collection and assurance processes that surround the Police Recorded Crime Statistics as at November 2014 (updated to January 2016) in order to further strengthen users' confidence in the accuracy of the statistics.

Police Scotland has existed for a relatively short time and many systems, processes and relationships are developing with the new service. Therefore the picture provided is a snapshot of a particular time and will be updated as required.

The Scottish Government continues to work to provide users with more information about the statistics that are published, so that users better understand crime trends and have more confidence in the data. As with all official statistics, this is an on-going process. We have engaged with a wider range of users of crime statistics in Scotland (including through a large-scale consultation, published in July 2015) and continue to communicate with our suppliers and users.

HMICS have conducted and, in November 2014, published a thorough audit of police recorded crime data. In this detailed audit, HMICS has confirmed that the quality of crime recording in Scotland is good, supported by a system of checks and balances, though there is scope for improvement in relation to some sexual offences and non-crime related incidents.

The **Crime Audit 2014**<sup>6</sup> is the largest investigation into crime recording undertaken by HMICS and shows that the reform of Scottish policing has provided new opportunities for greater consistency. HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Derek Penman, said of the review:

“It is important that the public can have confidence in crime figures and the scale of this report, which examined five times more records than any previous report, provides that.

“Police Scotland's own auditing of crime recording is good and the fact it broadly mirrors our results should provide assurance as to its accuracy.”

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<sup>6</sup> HMICS - Crime Audit 2014 <http://www.hmics.org/publications/hmics-crime-audit-2014>



HMICS propose to conduct a follow-up audit of Crime Recording in 2016 and will commence the scoping of this, in consultation with key stakeholders, in March 2016. This Framework will be updated to reflect on the outcome of the new audit.

Further, day-to-day assurance processes and systems at all stages of the collection, analysis and publication processes are described in the main part of this framework. While these necessarily evolve over time, and must be taken in context with the information on risks and limitations of the data, **the Scottish Government feels that there is sufficient evidence to provide users with confidence in the Police Recorded Crime Statistics.**

# 1. Operational context and administrative data collection

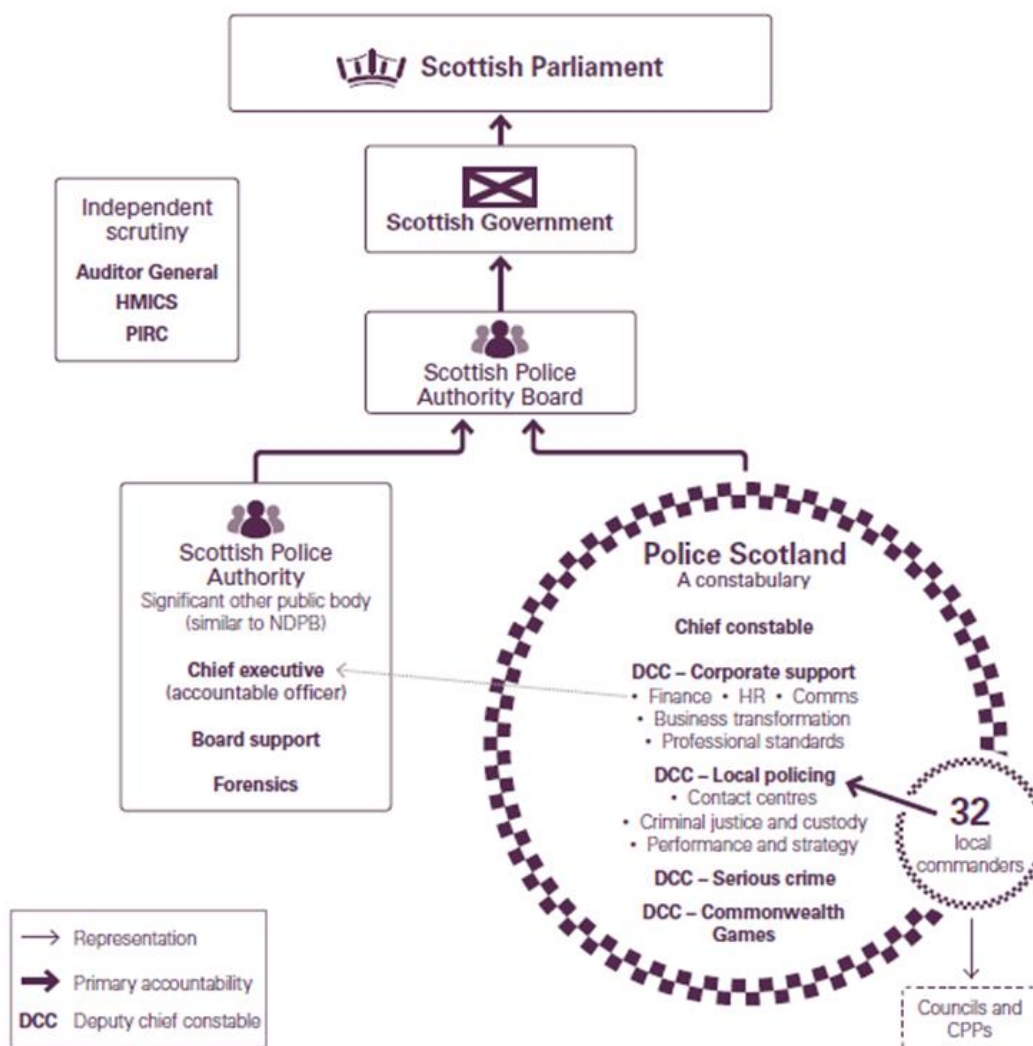
This section focusses on the environment and processes of Police Scotland as the collector of the data used to produce recorded crime statistics.

## 1.1 Background

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) through their Audit and Risk Committee (papers for which are published on the [SPA website](#)). 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.

The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 changed the policing landscape in Scotland, replacing the previous eight police forces, the Scottish Police Services Authority and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency with a single Police Service of Scotland – named Police Scotland – from 1 April 2013 (see Figure 1). Police Scotland is responsible for operational policing in Scotland and is held to account by the Scottish Police Authority. This transition is important to remember throughout this document and the Framework will be updated on an ongoing basis to reflect further developments.

Figure 1 : New arrangements for policing in Scotland



Taken from 'Police reform - Progress update 2013'<sup>7</sup>

**Description:** The Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin presents statistics on crimes and offences recorded and cleared up by the police in Scotland, disaggregated by crime/offence group and by local authority.

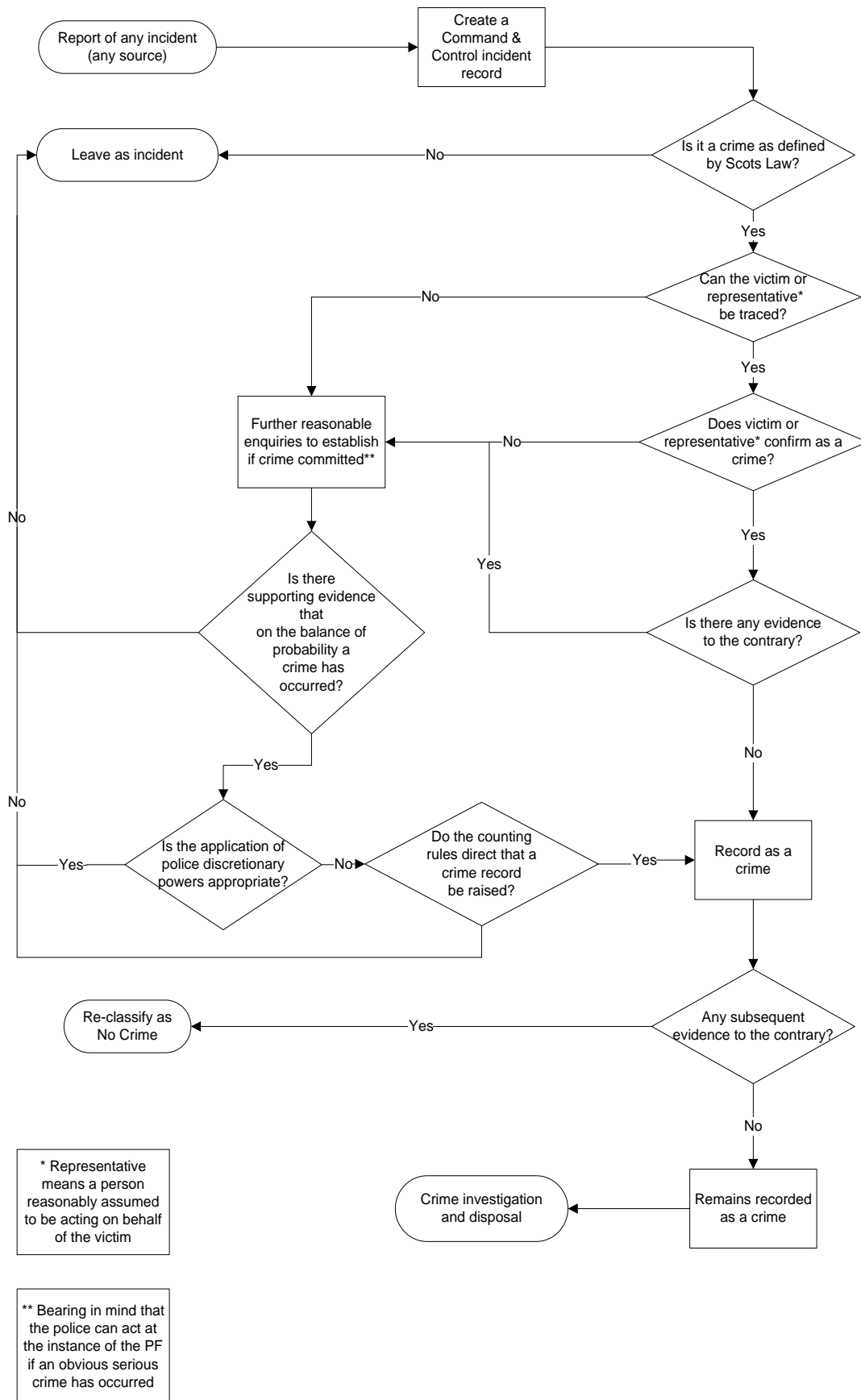
**Scottish Crime Recording Standard (including Counting Rules):** The crimes and offences data included in the Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletins are recorded according to the Scottish Crime Recording Standard<sup>8</sup> (SCRS).

The SCRS flow chart for recording crime is shown as Figure 2.

<sup>7</sup> Police reform - Progress update 2013 – Audit Scotland for the Auditor General - [http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2013/nr\\_131114\\_police\\_reform.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2013/nr_131114_police_reform.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Scottish Crime Recording Standard - <http://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/138327/232757/scottish-crime-recording-standard?view=Standard>

Figure 2 : SCRS flow chart for recording crime



## 1.2 The source administrative system and operational context

In this section we consider the operational context for the administrative data - why and how the data are collected and recorded, whether there are differences across areas in collection and recording of the data, and issues with data items - whether objective or based on subjective recording.

### 1.2.1 Current Collection Activity

Police Scotland collect management information for operational policing purposes. This administrative data source is also used to provide the data return on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police, as well as the number cleared up, in a given financial year to Justice Analytical Services in the Scottish Government.

Police Scotland statistics are managed, collated and analysed by the Police Scotland Analysis and Performance Unit (APU).

When a member of the public contacts the police to report a crime, the information provided is logged on an electronic incident recording system. The police assess the circumstances of the incident and respond accordingly. Depending on the information supplied and on the outcome of additional enquiries, the incident may result in the creation of a crime report, i.e. a recorded crime.

Crime recording practice is governed by the **Scottish Crime Recording Standard**<sup>9</sup> (SCRS) which contains the **Scottish Government's Counting Rules**. The SCRS provides a framework for deciding when an incident should be recorded as a crime, what type of crime should be recorded and how many crimes should be counted. Crime registrars, part of Police Scotland, review the crime records entered into the system to ensure that they are correctly reported and coded.

The SCRS also requires that regular audits of crime recording are carried out to check that incidents are recorded correctly and to check whether recorded crimes have been counted and classified correctly. Audits should be carried out in accordance with an established methodology<sup>10</sup> developed by Police Scotland.

Once a police officer has recorded a crime with an appropriate charge code, the crimes are assigned **Crime Codes**, which are used in the Recorded Crime statistics.

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<sup>9</sup> Scottish Crime Recording Standard  
<http://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/138327/232757/scottish-crime-recording-standard?view=Standard>

<sup>10</sup> Police Scotland, Scottish Crime Recording Standard: Methodology for recorded crime compliance check (September 2013) and Police Scotland, Scottish Crime Recording Standard: Methodology for divisional crime audit (August 2013).

A detailed list of **Charge Codes**<sup>11</sup>, as approved by the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service, is maintained and published on a monthly basis by the Scottish Government and circulated to crime registrars, to individuals within Police Scotland and to those within partner justice organisations.

The recorded crime figures are part of a live administrative system which is continually updated as incidents are logged as crimes by police officers, and then investigated. As a result, some offences may change category, for example from theft to robbery. Other incidents initially recorded as a crime may on further investigation be found not to be a crime—this is referred to as ‘no-criming’.

The rules stipulate that a recorded crime can be retrospectively ‘no-crime’d’ if ‘additional verifiable information’ emerges which demonstrates that no crime was committed.

Recorded crime is one of a range of datasets which is included in Police Scotland’s management information system, ScOMIS. Prior to 1 April 2013, data was provided from each of the eight legacy police forces in Scotland.

A data return, extracted from ScOMIS, is provided to the Scottish Government for publication in the annual statistical bulletin on Recorded Crime in Scotland. Recorded crime data is collected from the police on a cumulative quarterly basis.

### *1.2.2 Current Quality Assurance Activity*

In the schematic below, and the following table, the collection and quality assurance steps, from collection of the data to publication of the statistics, is summarised.

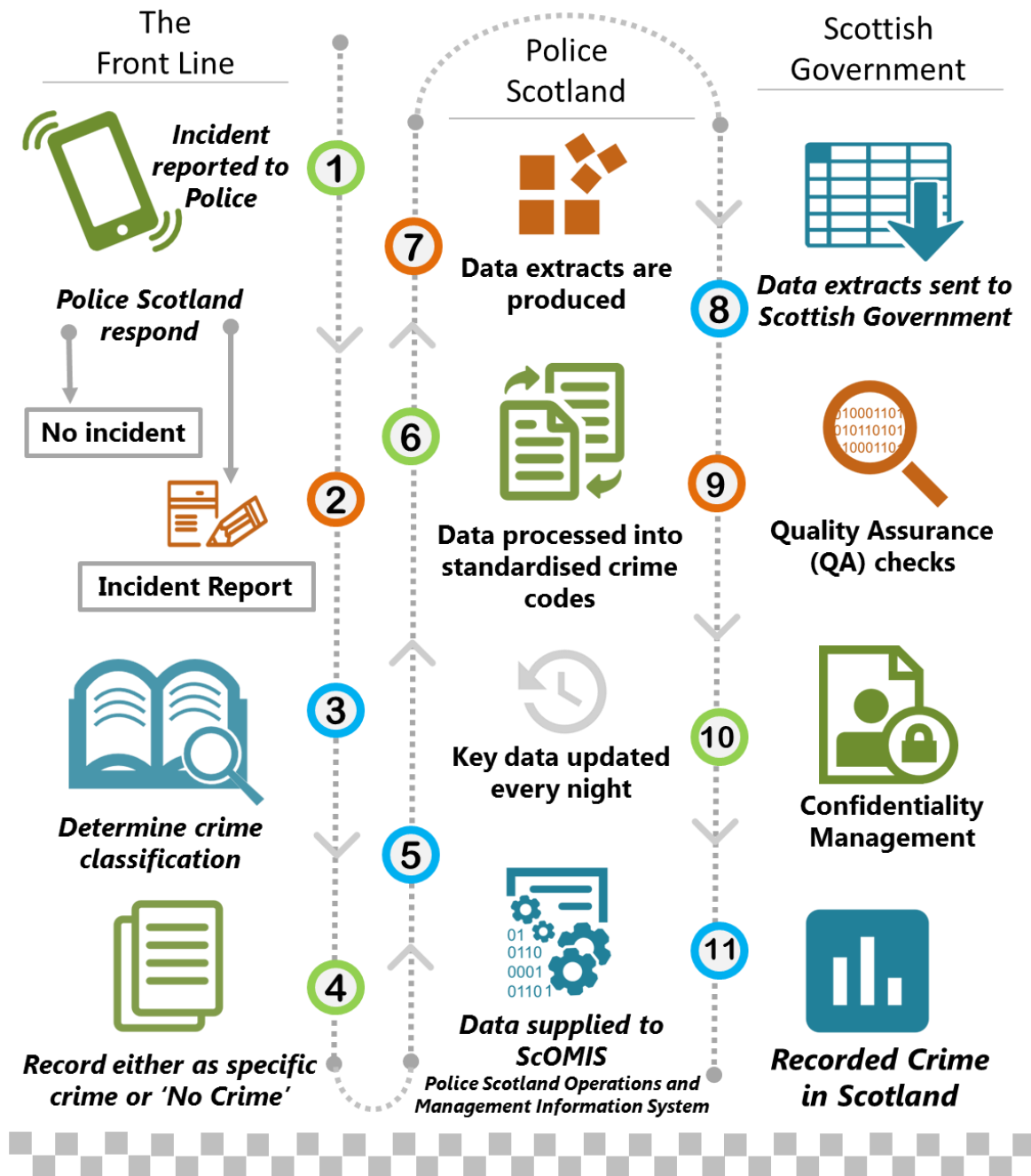
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<sup>11</sup> Updated monthly Charge Codes list: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/DataSource>

Figure 3 : Data collection and quality assurance for Recorded Crime in Scotland

# How do we collect and assure the data for Recorded Crime in Scotland?

*Recorded Crime in Scotland* is produced from data that is collected by police officers across Scotland. This data is then validated and transferred to Police Scotland before being subject to further assurance checks before being sent to The Scottish Government for publication as official statistics.



**Table 1 : Validation checks carried out during collection and publication of police recorded crime in Scotland**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who does it?</b>
<b>1.</b>	Crime recording should be carried out in accordance with the <b>Police Scotland Code of Ethics</b> <sup>12</sup> .	Police Scotland – reporting officer
<b>2.</b>	At the time of writing (January 2016) police officers use legacy systems to record an incident <sup>13</sup> .	Police Scotland– reporting officer
<b>3.</b>	Incident recorded with an appropriate charge code according to SCRS and Crime counting rules	Police Scotland– reporting officer
<b>4.</b>	<b>Crime managers</b> in each police division oversee the first stage of crime records.	Police Scotland – crime manager
<b>5.</b>	Check downloads– daily check to ensure data has been provided from each legacy system	PS – Analysis and Performance Unit
<b>6.</b>	Check compliance with SCRS. <b>Crime registrars</b> provide independent scrutiny to assure the quality of crime records. The national structure and links between crime registrars help to ensure data is consistent. The crime registrars also provide training to improve the consistency of reporting.  A crime with an appropriate charge code is assigned a <b>crime code</b> which is used in the recorded crime statistics.	Crime Registrars
<b>7.</b>	Check extracts are complete and correct – sense check and comparisons on legacy system data	PS – Analysis and Performance Unit
<b>8.</b>	<b>Crime reviews</b> (from point 1 to point 8). HMICS assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of crime recording by Police Scotland and the extent to which recording practice complies with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and the Scottish Government’s Counting Rules.	HMICS

<sup>12</sup> Code of Ethics for policing in Scotland <http://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/code-of-ethics-for-policing-in-scotland/>

<sup>13</sup> Crime Recording In Police Scotland: Approach And Governance Arrangements – Crime Registrar’s Background paper to HMICS (not published)



<b>9.</b>	Carry out checks according to the Scottish Government ‘ <b>Statement of Administrative Sources</b> ’ <sup>14</sup> and <b>Statement of Quality</b> <sup>15</sup> to verify the validity of Police Scotland data. These consider whether the derived aggregated statistics are meaningful, and whether changes in trends and discontinuities can be explained.	Scottish Government, Justice Analytical Services
<b>10.</b>	Check for areas of sensitivity and potential data confidentiality issues.	Scottish Government, Justice Analytical Services
<b>11.</b>	Peer reviews within Justice Analytical Services. Publication according to UKSA Code of Practice <sup>16</sup>	Scottish Government, Justice Analytical Services
<b>Recorded Crime in Scotland published</b>		

The ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with the SCRS and the counting rules lies with the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, discharged on a daily basis by the appointed Crime Registrars.

Additionally, the following steps are taken on collection to maintain and improve the quality of recorded crime data:

1. Police entering the data are trained in recording crime (HMICS check on the adequacy of this training) and have signed up to the police code of ethics which sets out the standards expected of them, including the responsibility to deliver a professional policing service to all people across the country.
2. The Chief Constable of Police Scotland promotes a strong message about ethical crime recording within Police Scotland.
3. Crime managers review their own crime team’s records
4. Data is recorded according to the SCRS and the Scottish Government counting rules
5. SCRS compliance is tested internally by Police Scotland and then externally by HMICS

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government Statement Of Administrative Sources (Our Use of Administrative Sources for Statistical Purposes) [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00457278.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00457278.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Quality - SG Corporate policy statement - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/QualityCPS>

<sup>16</sup> Code of Practice for Official Statistics - <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

### 1.2.3 Regional variations

Strenuous steps are taken to ensure that crime recording is consistent across Scotland. The quality assurance steps shown in Table 1 are structured to support consistency, which is now aided by the single police service in Scotland.

Along with the introduction of the SCRS, the position of crime registrar was created in each former force to act as an arbiter for compliance with the Standard. To complete the arrangements, a national forum for crime registrars was created to maintain consistency in matters of policy and interpretation of the Standard across Scotland. Under Police Scotland, there are now 3 crime registrars and one national crime registrar, working collectively to provide oversight of recorded crime and provide advice and guidance on recording issues.

A Scottish Crime Recording Board<sup>17</sup> was set up in 2015 to support the production of accurate and objective statistics on crime in Scotland (this replaced a previous Scottish Crime Registrar Group). It takes into account the needs of both users and providers in the production of crime statistics and ensures this process is undertaken in a manner consistent with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Board is chaired by the Justice Analytical Services division of the Scottish Government and a wide range of organisations are represented including Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority, HMICS and the Crown and Procurator Fiscal Service. Information on the remit and functions of the Board, its actions and its relationship to other forums is available at the link below. This includes a function to receive reports from the National Crime Registrar on Police Scotland's internal audit programme on police crime and offence data, and progress in meeting recommendations from HMICS and previous internal audits. The Board is also responsible for authorising any proposed changes to the Scottish Crime Recording Standard (which typically happens once a year)

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/SCRB>

Crime Registrars sit within the corporate services business area of Police Scotland, so that they are removed from direct operational activity and investigation, ensuring independence of decision making. Such an approach is consistent with views previously expressed by HMICS.<sup>18</sup>

In the 2014 crime audit, HMICS assessed recorded crime compliance with SCRS and produced the findings in

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<sup>17</sup> Scottish Crime Recording Board

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/SCRB>

<sup>18</sup> HMICS - Crime Audit 2014 "The SCRS notes that the crime registrar should not be placed in a position where he or she is directly responsible for performance or reducing crime or is answerable to a line manager who has such responsibility."

<http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS%20-%20Crime%20Audit%202014%20Report.pdf>

Table 2, showing how compliance rates vary across the country. These findings generated a recommendation that Police Scotland develop plans to address how it will improve general crime recording practices in four divisions.

**Table 2 : HMICS assessment of rates of compliance with SCRS by police division**

<b>Division</b>	<b>Test 1 compliance rate</b>	<b>Test 2 compliance rate</b>	<b>Timeliness</b>	<b>No-crime compliance rate</b>
Aberdeen City	93%	98%	95%	95%
Aberdeenshire and Moray	94%	97%	98%	100%
Tayside	96%	97%	100%	99%
Highlands and Islands	99%	98%	100%	100%
Forth Valley	94%	96%	98%	92%
Edinburgh	89%	93%	94%	92%
Lothians and Scottish Borders	91%	96%	96%	90%
Fife	92%	91%	93%	93%
Greater Glasgow	92%	94%	97%	97%
Ayrshire	86%	88%	97%	89%
Lanarkshire	93%	94%	95%	94%
Argyll and West Dunbartonshire	90%	93%	96%	86%
Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	83%	90%	96%	83%
Dumfries and Galloway	97%	97%	100%	100%

### 1.2.4 Collection of the data

At the time of writing (January 2016) Police Scotland uses legacy systems to collect recorded crime data<sup>19</sup>. The various systems in place across Scotland are outlined in Table 3; however, even when the same system is in place in different areas, their application and set up may be entirely different.

**Table 3 : Crime Recording Systems in use in Police Scotland**

Division	Incident Recording System	Crime Recording System
A	STORM	CRIMEFILE
B	STORM	CRIMEFILE
C	STORM	CRIMEFILE
D	CAPTOR	UNIFY
E	STORM	UNIFY
G	STORM	CRIME MANAGEMENT
J	STORM	UNIFY
K	STORM	CRIME MANAGEMENT
L	STORM	CRIME MANAGEMENT
N	ICAD	IMPACT
P	STORM	CRIMEFILE
Q	STORM	CRIME MANAGEMENT
U	STORM	CRIME MANAGEMENT
V	STORM	IMAGE

Source : Crime Registrars

Police Scotland are planning to move to their new national IT system, i6. The introduction of i6 will be a significant step forward in managing crime records.

The i6 Programme<sup>20</sup> has two broad objectives:

- The development of national common policing processes aligned to operational priorities; and
- The acquisition of a modern, scalable, extensible, national ICT solution which supports those processes and priorities.

One of the six key functions that i6 will provide is covered by the policing area of Crime - from the recording, management and investigation of crime, operational related activity such as stop and search, through to victim support.

<sup>19</sup> Crime Recording In Police Scotland: Approach And Governance Arrangements – Crime Registrar's Background paper to HMICS - unpublished

<sup>20</sup> i6 Programme – Full Business Case Approval Paper  
<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/175734/item-13-i6-business-case>

The full business case for i6 claims many strategic outcomes for Police Scotland. These include:

- National common processes across core 24/7 operational policing activity for all staff;
- A single modern national integrated IT solution designed to meet those processes;
- A strategic enabler providing organisational agility for the re-structuring and ongoing development of Police Scotland as a national police force;
- Full interoperability of processes and technology, at local and national level;
- A common national data set for Police Scotland;
- Improved support for operational analysis and performance reporting;
- Significantly reduced organisational and operational risk;
- Significantly reduced complexity, inefficiency and risks associated with the disparate and ageing legacy ICT estate; and
- Improved information sharing and partnership working.

These outcomes will also support the aims of this framework in improving users' confidence in the Police Recorded Crime data.

#### *1.2.5 Areas For Continuous Improvement*

Police Scotland are planning to move to their new national IT system, i6, described above. The Scottish Government and Police Scotland will need to consider what impact this may have to the provision of data and the subsequent publication of the bulletin. The Scottish Government would want to ensure that any move to i6 did not have an impact on the data required for the publication. Therefore, although the Scottish Government doesn't need to be aware of the full specification for i6, it is valuable to have a process by which we are assured that Police Scotland will identify any issues which may impact on the data returns to the Scottish Government, so that this can be discussed in advance of any changes being implemented.

As Police Scotland moves towards i6, systems and processes will become more consistent nationally without the potential for regional variations that used to exist. Data validation checks may be included at the point of data entry onto the system.

The establishment of Police Scotland and the development of a new IT system provide the opportunity to revisit the data collection method, which may produce more accurate quarterly or six monthly data. Additionally, this could allow the Scottish Government to publish data at some of the lower geographic levels requested by respondents to the consultation. Discussions regarding these issues are on-going and users will be informed when any developments are planned.

Taking into consideration the changed landscape of Scottish policing, it is important to monitor continuously the documents referenced here to ensure that they remain correct. The Scottish Government will keep the published *Statement of Quality* and the *Statement of Administrative Sources* under review to ensure they remain up-to-date and fit for purpose. They will also be brought together into the user guidance to improve users' access to them.

The 2014 HMICS report identified 8 recommendations for actions that should improve crime recording and also proposed 15 improvement actions. The recommendations relevant to this framework are detailed in Section 3.1.3 of this framework. Implementing these should ensure continuous improvement of Police Recorded Crime statistics.

### **1.3 Core uses of recorded crime data**

Ethical recording of crime is integral to modern policing and it is vitally important that crime recording and disposal practices are capable of withstanding rigorous scrutiny.

The HMICS 2014 Crime Audit stated that

“In 2012-13, recorded crime in Scotland was at its lowest since 1974. At a time when the accuracy of statistics on recorded crime is increasingly being challenged in England and Wales, it is essential that the public in Scotland know whether they should have confidence in their own recorded crime statistics. Accurate crime data is also vital for the police service itself: it informs strategic planning and priority setting and allows the service to allocate resources where they are most needed.”

Crime records assist analysis of crime patterns, trends and fluctuations and support the National Intelligence Model. Accurate crime data illustrates to the police service, ministers, Local Government and the public at large how the police are performing and identifies areas, if any, which require greater resourcing.

Analysis of high-quality crime data allows the police to establish where, when, and how often crime is happening. This ensures they are best able to:

- tackle crime and the causes of crime;
- analyse crime patterns, trends and fluctuations;
- plan their work to achieve the best outcomes for victims and communities;
- provide the public, Government, local policing bodies and HMICS with an accurate picture of crime in a particular area;
- illustrate to the service and the public how Police Scotland is performing; and

- provide the victims of crime with appropriate access to victim services.

Performance management and targets are integral to modern policing and it is important that PS's crime recording and disposal practices are capable of supporting analysis and withstanding rigorous scrutiny.

HMICS point out the need for an accurate and ethical police recording process that can give the public greater confidence in the veracity of information about the nature and scale of crime, and the police and partner agencies better intelligence on how to tackle it.

In addition to the police uses of Recorded Crime Statistics, they are also used by the Scottish Government to design and monitor policies and strategies, and by local authorities to gain a regional picture of crime rates and to monitor the impact of policy reforms on council services, service users and the broader community.

The statistics are regularly used by the Scottish Government to inform ministers and to answer Parliamentary Questions about crime. They 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.

The Scottish Government has published a 'Recorded Crime in Scotland User Guide'<sup>21</sup>. In this document there is a chapter setting out the users of Recorded Crime in Scotland. While readers should consult the user guide for the detailed description of users of Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics, some of the regular, published uses of Recorded Crime in Scotland include:

- Scotland Performs
- The Strategy for Justice in Scotland
- Justice Dashboard
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Measuring Deprivation Advisory Group
- Monthly Safer Communities and Justice Brief

### *1.3.1 Potential Risks for Users of Recorded Crime Statistics*

For users of recorded crime statistics, it is important to understand exactly what the data means and what its limitations are. This framework is intended to increase users' understanding of how the data is collected and statistics are developed, which should in turn improve the credibility and trust in the data. The limitations are

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<sup>21</sup> Recorded Crime in Scotland - User guide:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/UserGuide>

included in the Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin and in the associated documents, and are summarised in Section 1.3.2.

The **Scottish Government Statement of Quality** explains many of the risks for users. The document sets out the key aspects for users to consider and what they can expect by way of guidance and information about it.

The **Statement of Administrative Sources**<sup>22</sup> describes the administrative / management sources which the Scottish Government currently uses to produce official statistics.

As previously noted, at this stage of reorganisation of the police in Scotland, and with plans for a new, national IT system, there is a risk that this framework becomes outdated, and so it becomes important to continuously monitor these documents to ensure that they remain correct.

Given the perceived risk of targets introducing bias into crime recording, the independence of **crime registrars** is paramount. They are organisationally external to operational decision-making and therefore can ensure that the data is accurate to enable better, quicker and more consistent decision making on crime recording and interpretation of SCRS.

### 1.3.2 *Limitations of the statistics*

Recorded Crime in Scotland is a statistical report of *Police recorded crime*. It is important to note that this is not *all* crime. Some incidents are not reported to the police and so may not be recorded as crimes and only data from Police Scotland is included in the main findings and tables in the statistical bulletin.

The Recorded Crime in Scotland publication presents crimes that are *recorded* in the year, rather than committed in the year. This is an important distinction. The limitations of the data are discussed in more detail in section 4.4 and in the Recorded Crime In Scotland, 2014-15<sup>23</sup> publication.

Trends in Recorded Crime in Scotland do not always demonstrate the obvious outputs; for example, if Police Scotland were to carry out a campaign on domestic violence, the increased attention and reporting of this type of crime could imply a rise in domestic violence, whereas the reality may be a positive picture of increased police activity, ultimately resulting in less domestic violence.

From the user's point of view, there are some risks and limitations around how they access, understand and use the statistics:

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<sup>22</sup> Scottish Government, Statement of Administrative Sources  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/StatementAdminSources>

<sup>23</sup> Recorded Crime In Scotland, 2014-15  
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/09/5338/0>



- Police Scotland and SPA policies and procedures may not be explicit or understood fully; and
- Information for users of the data can be dispersed and may be seen as difficult to find.

## 1.4 Challenges and Safeguards around Recorded crime statistics

### 1.4.1 Challenges in using administrative data

UKSA encourages data producers to be very clear with users about the issues around the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. There can be limitations arising from differences in definitions preferred in the statistical and operational situations, changes in the operational definitions and circumstances over time, or a lack of standardisation in data collection procedures, IT systems and differing local policies and priorities.

Possible challenges in using administrative data for statistical purposes are shown in Table 4, based on the *UKSA Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Data*<sup>24</sup> with respect to Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics:

**Table 4 : Challenges and mitigations of using administrative data**

Risk	Mitigating action/people
<p>Lack of standardised application of data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inconsistencies in how divisions of Police Scotland interpret guidance</li> <li>• differences in the use of local systems for recording crime</li> <li>• the distortive effects of targets and performance management regimes</li> <li>• differing local priorities, e.g. some police areas might require higher levels of accuracy for certain crime types or information, but less so for other aspects that are important to the Scottish Government</li> </ul>	<p>Data is entered according to the Code of Ethics.</p> <p>Crime managers check their team's data, crime registrars provide consistent advice and next level check, HMICS audit the data and provide feedback.</p> <p>APU provide oversight of collection.</p>

<sup>24</sup> Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Data  
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/quality-assurance-and-audit-arrangements-for-administrative-data.html>

Risk	Mitigating action/people
<p>Variability in data suppliers' procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police Scotland may not have direct control over the development of guidance for data entry</li> <li>• local checking of the data can be variable and might not identify incorrect coding or missing values</li> <li>• local changes in policy could impact on how the data are recorded or on the coverage of the statistics</li> </ul>	<p>Crime registrars advise on SCRS and counting</p> <p>Crime managers provide first level of local checking, with crime registrars providing independent review</p> <p>Focus on certain crime types in certain areas or divisions may be reflected in crime reports. Police Scotland, with a single management structure should reduce the variability.</p>
<p>Quantity of data suppliers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large number of police officers entering the data, spread geographically.</li> <li>• there are many data collectors (police officers in local authorities) providing their data to an intermediary organisation for supply to the Scottish Government via APU.</li> </ul>	<p>The single Police Scotland, with a single management structure should reduce the risk, improving as Police Scotland beds in more.</p>
<p>Complexity and suitability of administrative systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• administrative datasets can be complex containing large numbers of variables; it takes time, and therefore resource, to extract the data required by the Scottish Government</li> <li>• data collation can be hampered by IT changes in Police Scotland</li> <li>• data might need to be manipulated by Police Scotland to meet the structural requirements of the Scottish Government, leading to potential for errors</li> </ul>	<p>Recorded crime has been published for many years and the relationship between the administrative data and the published outputs are well established. However, IT changes need to be carefully managed, particularly with the proposed introduction of a new national IT system for Police Scotland.</p>
<p>Public perceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of knowledge about use of personal data for statistical purposes</li> <li>• concern that personal data should be sufficiently anonymised and secured</li> </ul>	<p>The Scottish Government publication contains advice to data users about the limitations of the data. Police Recorded Crime data is provided at local authority level and contains no personal data.</p>

Broadly these risks to the quality of the Recorded Crime in Scotland data can occur at

- the data collection stage – what is entered into the police recording system and how it is categorised;
- at the transfer into ScOMIS for transmission to the Scottish Government;
- at the statistical analysis and report writing stage; or
- at the interpretation and use stage.

Potential risks in reporting and collecting crime data include under or over reporting, mis-classification, processing errors, IT collation errors, analysis and interpretation errors.

In order to maintain and improve the reliability of the data presented in the Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin the implementation of a new IT system, such as i6, needs to be accompanied by extensive data quality checking exercises. The Scottish Government carried out a similar exercise when SCOMIS was introduced to ascertain whether the data supplied by ScOMIS was comparable with the data previously supplied by the legacy forces.

#### *1.4.2 Influence of Targets*

Police Scotland has developed an operational level performance framework<sup>25</sup> to measure progress against delivery of the policing priorities outlined in the Annual Plan. The performance framework consists of a number of key performance indicators, some of which have targets attached, which are measured for Scotland and for the 14 local policing divisions.

The statistics on crimes and offences are also used to inform **National Outcome 9**<sup>26</sup> 'we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger'.

There is potential for such targets to bias data collection, and targets and inputs may be interpreted differently in different areas. These risks are recognised and acknowledged by those involved in the production of crime statistics and to counter some of the potential biases that could be introduced into the data, there are layers of independent audit of recorded crime data.

Reviews of incident and crime recording have formed a regular part of the HMICS scrutiny programme in recent years, with Recorded Crime in Scotland being reviewed in 2011 and 2013 and the most recent Crime Audit 2014, laid before parliament in November 2014. HMICS propose to conduct a follow-up audit of Crime

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<sup>25</sup> Police Scotland – Our Performance - <http://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/our-performance/>

<sup>26</sup> National outcomes - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome>

Recording in 2016 and will commence the scoping of this, in consultation with key stakeholders, in March 2016.

The **2014 Crime Audit** provides an independent layer of assurance to the data. HMICS tested the accuracy of crime recording through auditing incident and crime records. This was a quantitative rather than qualitative study and this report focuses on the results of the audit, good practice and areas for improvement. However, key messages were also drawn about crime recording against the inspection framework, focusing on the key areas of leadership and governance, and people. These and other aspects of the HMICS inspection framework will be explored in more depth in future reviews of incident and crime recording.

Amongst the key findings of the audit (reported more fully in Section 3.1.3 of this framework), HMICS stated that

“There is a good system of internal auditing of crime recording within Police Scotland. The results of the internal audits are broadly similar to our own which should provide assurance to the Scottish Police Authority, local scrutiny and engagement bodies and the Scottish Government as to their accuracy”.

HMICS also stated that

“We found no overt evidence of performance targets affecting crime recording. If performance targets were driving crime recording practice, we would expect to see crimes featuring in Police Scotland’s internal performance framework being under-recorded or misclassified. For example, the performance framework includes a key performance indicator to reduce the number of serious assaults. If performance pressures were driving recording behaviour, we would expect to see efforts to reduce the number of serious assaults by classifying assaults as less serious (common assaults) or more serious (attempted murders). While we found some evidence of the former, we found no evidence of the latter.”

The **Scottish Police Authority** (SPA) also has a role in mitigating any risks of inconsistency or reporting conflicts through their own independent reviews. The SPA was established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 to maintain policing, promote policing principles and continuous improvement of policing, and to hold the Chief Constable to account.

The **National Crime Registrar** provides independent scrutiny reports to the SPA board through its Audit and Risk Committee

In order to improve the standard of compliance against SCRS, the National Crime Registrar introduced a common audit and review approach to Police Scotland. The audit tested:

## Audit 1 - Crime Related Incidents and Associated Recorded Crime

### Test 1 – Crime Related Incidents

- That 'no crimes' contain a satisfactory narrative to justify a non-crime disposal.
- That each incident clearly indicated a crime or non-crime as a disposal
- Where an incident was closed as a crime, the corresponding crime record was traced.

### Test 2 – Recorded Crime

- The correct application of SCRS on recorded crimes in respect of the Scottish Government Counting Rules and the correct classification of crimes.

## Audit 2 - Recording of Specific Crime Types (Divisional Crime Audit)

To ensure that a number of different areas of crime recording are represented by Audit 2, samples were obtained from 8 categories of crime. The audit tested the correct application of SCRS and the Scottish Government Counting Rules and the correct classification of crimes.

## Audit 3 - Crime Records Reclassified to "No Crime"

The third principle of SCRS states "once recorded, a crime will remain recorded unless there is credible evidence to disprove that a crime had occurred".

The audit tested the correct application of this principle in respect of recorded crime which was reclassified to "No Crime" following Police enquiry into the reported circumstances.

### *1.4.3 Considerations and Risks*

Safeguards are in place throughout the collection and production lifetime of Recorded Crime statistics. These are shown schematically in Figure 3, along with who carries them out in Table 1. The safeguards exist to ensure that the data collection and analysis produce high-quality, complete statistics. This framework also aims to ensure that uses and interpretation of the data is also valid and high-quality. It does this by explaining the potential sources of uncertainty and bias in the data and the limitations of it, including any introduced by the use of administrative data collected by Police Scotland primarily for police use.

## 2. Communication with data suppliers

This section focusses on the relationship between Police Scotland, SPA and the Scottish Government (in terms of statistics production).

### 2.1 Cooperative relationships

This section considers how the Scottish Government establishes and maintains cooperative relationships with data suppliers, such as through a written agreement, identifying roles and responsibilities, understanding the process for data supply, scheduling and content specification, change management processes, and cooperative arrangements such as secondments.

#### 2.1.1 *Current Activity*

With the creation of Police Scotland on 1st April 2013 the policing landscape in Scotland changed. The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and its associated secondary legislation and guidance set out the legislative framework and replaced previous legislation. Chapter 12 of the Act provides information related to co-operation and the exchange of information across the Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority.

Police Scotland and SPA have published a Scheme of Administration<sup>27</sup> setting out the arrangements between them to enable their respective obligations under the Act to be met, and to facilitate the decision-making process.

The scheme recognises the statutory responsibilities of the SPA and the Chief Constable, including the Chief Constable's responsibility for the day to day administration of the Police Service. It describes the approval and decision-making levels across a range of specific areas, including the obligations on Police Scotland to seek approval of, or consult with Scottish Police Authority Members formally, as part of the overall governance arrangements. It also sets out the role of the Scottish Police Authority in scrutiny and critical challenge.

The current working relationship between the Scottish Government, SPA and Police Scotland is broadly informal.

Formal meetings to discuss Recorded Crime in Scotland are discussed in Section 2.3.

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<sup>27</sup> Scheme of Administration between the Scottish Police Authority and the Police Service of Scotland <http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/128635/schemeofadministration>

### 2.1.2 Roles and responsibilities

The requirement to provide suitable statistical information to the Scottish Government is enshrined in the **Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012**<sup>28</sup> mentioned above. Chapter 12 states that:

“(1) The Authority must provide the Scottish Ministers with such reports, statistics or other information relating to the Authority or the Police Service as they may reasonably require.

(2) Such information may, in particular, relate to—

- (a) the Authority or its functions,
- (b) the Police Service or police functions,
- (c) the state of crime.

(3) The chief constable must provide the Authority with such reports, statistics or other information relating to the Police Service, police functions or the state of crime as it may reasonably require.”

This ensures that the supply of data for Recorded Crime in Scotland is set in law. However, there is a place for lower level, more detailed agreements.

Currently the Scottish Government and Police Scotland analysts and statisticians understand and carry out their respective roles, though there are no formal agreements aside from the legislation. While this has worked satisfactorily for many years, the value in formalising the arrangement is nevertheless recognised.

In their assessment of Scottish Government Recorded Crime in Scotland, UKSA pointed out that there is little published information about how the roles and responsibilities relating to the police recorded crime statistics are shared between the different stakeholders. They recommended that the Scottish Government should publish information about the roles and responsibilities of the organisations involved in the production and publication of crime statistics.

In developing new, formal agreements, it is important to ensure that these are beneficial. The current arrangements are functional and efficient, and so the advantages of formalising the working relationships must be greater than the risk of losing the relationships through making them overly restrictive. Regardless of any formal agreements, informal working arrangements will continue to be the first level of contact and should not be diminished through rigid structures.

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<sup>28</sup> Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2012/8/contents>

### *2.1.3 Continuous Improvement – Roles and Responsibilities*

As the landscape becomes clearer, the Scottish Government and other stakeholders in Recorded Crime in Scotland will establish ways to formalise relationships into a written agreement. The relative infancy of Police Scotland means that many of the current structures and processes are still in their early stages. Relationships between all agencies are maturing and it is becoming clearer where strengths exist, so work can be focussed on the less mature aspects of working together.

Working together, the Scottish Government, SPA and Police Scotland will develop an appropriate document (or potentially more than one) to set out formal structures and working arrangements. Aspects of collaborative working, including roles and responsibilities, the timing and quality of data provision and change management processes will be included within this agreement, which may also include a data sharing protocol. The agreement(s) should also include information on the process to be followed, understood and agreed by all stakeholders, if, for example, Police Scotland wanted to make a change to a data set or data variable. Once an agreement is written up and agreed it will be regularly reviewed and updated with any changes.

### *2.1.4 Data supply process*

The process map in Figure 3 shows the overall data supply process for the Recorded Crime in Scotland data, with the Scottish Government specifying the data extract requirements to Police Scotland, and the Police Scotland APU extracting that data from their ScOMIS system.

The arrangements and division of responsibility between SPA, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government are becoming established after the formation of Police Scotland in 2013-14. The arrangements between Police Scotland and the Scottish Government are considerably different post-reform to pre-reform. Formerly, the Scottish Government statisticians would communicate with analysts from each force, dealing with people who were close to the activity that the data reported. Now, all dealings are through the national APU as the single point of contact. Any communication about specific details is achieved through formal routes and the time to find the right person can be extended. However, this drawback is more than outweighed by the convenience of the single point of contact and the consistency that the national APU provides.

The data exchange process between Police Scotland and the Scottish Government changed following police reform; formerly the eight forces' data was provided to the Scottish Government using an Excel based data template, whereas now a data



specification is provided to APU which allows both APU and the Scottish Government to decide the best format for efficient data provision<sup>29</sup>.

This specification reduces the risk of varied interpretation across Scotland, as it is now dealt with entirely by APU, who have already carried out their own QA processes and provide the data from the single ScOMIS source.

### 2.1.5 *Schedule*

The Scottish Government aim to publish Recorded Crime in Scotland in September each year. In compliance with UKSA Code of Practice, the Scottish Government publish a timetable of statistical releases for twelve months ahead<sup>30</sup>. The Scottish Government year-ahead schedule of publications provides information on the type, title, date of publication and contact details

Prior to reform, the Scottish Government worked with the police force contacts within the legacy forces, circulating emails to them to advise them of the timetable (i.e. the Scottish Government sending out the data template, the force providing the data return, the QA stages and the date of final publication). As this had been a long standing, and well known process, the data contacts within forces were very familiar with the timescales.

Since the establishment of Police Scotland, the Scottish Government provides them with the publication plan (and updated versions) in particular stating when the Scottish Government will be sending the data template to Police Scotland, when they should return it by and the planned publication date.

The Scottish Government and Police Scotland agree when Police Scotland will provide the Recorded Crime in Scotland data.

The Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services (JAS) have worked to ensure more timely publication of the annual Analytical Programme<sup>31</sup>, publishing the 2015-16 report in July 2015.

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<sup>29</sup> The basic format requested from Police Scotland was for a comma separated variable (csv) file of the data, but Police Scotland were able to provide the data in a SAS file, compatible with the Scottish Government statistical systems. This SAS file isn't yet perfect, but the Scottish Government and Police Scotland statisticians are in discussions to improve it.

<sup>30</sup> Scottish Government Forthcoming Publications  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/compliance>

<sup>31</sup> Justice Analytical Services Analytical Programme 2015-16  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/JASAP11-12>

### 2.1.6 *Continuous Improvement - scheduling*

The Scottish Government is working with Police Scotland and the SPA to develop a consistent publication plan and will consider the feasibility of producing more accessible and consistent quarterly statistics. In order to communicate this information to the users of these statistics;

- a) Police Scotland, SPA and HMICS were present at the **Crime Statistics user day** to highlight their publication and roles. This information is also in section 5 of the User Guide for “Recorded Crime in Scotland”;
- b) SPA and Police Scotland will be encouraged to publish minutes of their meetings;
- c) Users will continue to be informed about the on-going work with Police Scotland and the SPA to develop a **consistent publication plan**;
- d) The Scottish Government’s on-going comprehensive programme of **user consultation** will be continued; and
- e) The results of all user consultations will be published when analysis of the responses is complete.

### 2.1.7 *Content specification*

Police Scotland are responsible for the content of their data collection and the Scottish Government are responsible for the content of the Recorded Crime in Scotland publication. The content of the publication is retained as far as possible to ensure continuity of data, though when changes are required, they are subject to formal Scottish Government statistical practice. Changes to the data entry and collection do not always take account of the consequences on the data for Recorded Crime in Scotland publication.

In terms of the content of the Recorded Crime, Scotland bulletin, any changes in this publication are the subject of a formal consultation complying with Scottish Government and UKSA rules, the most recent consultation was published in July 2015<sup>32</sup>.

### 2.1.8 *Other Areas For Continuous Improvement*

In addition to the activity described above, the Scottish Government induction programmes for new staff should include introductions to relevant staff in the other organisations to ensure that good working relationships are initiated at an early stage. Police Scotland and SPA can be encouraged to do the same.

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<sup>32</sup> User Consultation on Police Recorded Crime Statistics, JAS, July 2015  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00482029.pdf>

## 2.2 Change management process

Changes related to **data collections and transfer**, including the specification of the data required by the Scottish Government for the Recorded Crime in Scotland publication are discussed in regular meetings and implemented as required.

Changes are currently reported to users through a ScotStat notice and also in the statistical reports.

### 2.2.1 *Crime code reviews*

When an incident is reported it is allocated a charge code. This is converted into a crime code for Recorded Crime in Scotland purposes and these codes are subject to constant review, for example with legislative or definitional changes. There is a well-established process in relation to any changes relating to crime codes e.g. introduction of new crime codes following the introduction of new legislation, including correspondence with Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and discussions at meetings with the crime registrars. All changes to the crime codes must be approved by the Scottish Crime Recording Board referred to in Section 1.2.3 The detailed lists of Charge Codes<sup>33</sup> is published on the Scottish Government website with links to the Recorded Crime in Scotland publication. This file is updated monthly to notify users of any changes.

### 2.2.2 *Publication changes*

If there are any proposals for changes to the publication, the Scottish Government policy<sup>34</sup> states that

- “We will give as much notice as possible of changes to methodology, definitions or any other changes likely to lead to revisions along with an indication of their possible scale and nature.
- As far as possible we will consult users before making changes that affect statistics (for example, to coverage, definitions, or methods) or to publications.
- Revisions will be subject to the same arrangements for publication and pre-announcement as other releases. Notification of forthcoming revisions will be included on the Scottish Government forthcoming publications schedule. We will also notify key users by e-mail.
- We will provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time as they are released.

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<sup>33</sup>ISCJIS Charge Codes <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/DataSource/chargecodes>

<sup>34</sup>Corporate Policies and Procedures for Official Statistics, Policy: Revisions and Corrections <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/CPsonRevisionsCorrections>

- Ideally previous versions of publications and data tables containing unrevised figures will be replaced and archived. This may not always be feasible. As a minimum all unrevised figures will be clearly marked and contain a link to the revised figures.
- We will ensure that where time series are revised, or changes are made to methods or coverage, we produce consistent historical data, wherever possible, and user guidance. If it is not possible to produce consistent historical data then advice on potential effects will be given where possible.”

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.

UKSA recommended that

“Scottish Government should confirm that future changes to methods or classifications will be announced in advance of the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland*”

This work has already started both through the release of emails to the ScotStat users email list (open to all expert and non-expert users who have expressed an interest in being kept informed about crime statistics). There is a significant section in the user guide to recorded crime in Scotland which records such changes.

## 2.3 Regular communications

### 2.3.1 Current Activity

The Scottish Government engages primarily with expert **users** of the statistics through the **Crime and Justice ScotStat group**<sup>35</sup> 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 website.

The Scottish Government uses the **ScotStat mailing list** for contacting and consulting users who have registered an interest in Recorded Crime in Scotland.

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<sup>35</sup> Crime and Justice – ScotStat <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/scotstatcrime>

A report from the most recent **consultation on Recorded Crime in Scotland** was published in July 2015<sup>36</sup>. This gathered a significant amount of evidence around the users of these statistics, their needs and how to improve and develop the publication. In response to this feedback, we will continue to keep the recorded crime statistical bulletins under regular review, to ensure we meet users' needs as best we can.

Prior to publication of the latest user consultation on Recorded Crime in Scotland, the consultation process included the holding of a successful '**user day**'<sup>37</sup> on the 6th October 2014. The user day event was well publicised through SCOTSTAT, AQMEN, and the Knowledge Hub for local government analysts, and through informal networks. The purpose of the event was to give users and producers of crime statistics an opportunity to discuss Recorded Crime in Scotland and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey. There were several presentations and a number of group discussions about the uses, potential uses, quality, comparability, accessibility and presentation of the statistics.

The **Policing Strategy, Planning and Performance Steering Group**, with a rotating chair, includes representatives from the Scottish Government, HMICS, Police Scotland and SPA. Whilst its terms of reference are to be formally agreed, it's proposed role is to support strategic planning, performance management and reporting processes for policing in Scotland, by providing oversight, assurance and direction. Areas of work for the group are likely to include performance reporting (agreeing format and content of draft reports for public reporting) and statistical reporting (including data quality issues). Future versions of this Framework will be updated with new developments on the work of this group.

Scottish Government statisticians also attend the aforementioned Scottish Crime Recording Board<sup>38</sup> (the successor forum to the **Scottish Crime Registrars Group**) This is chaired by the Justice Analytical Services division of the Scottish Government and includes the national and regional Crime Registrars, Police Scotland analysts, representatives from HMICS, COPFS and other stakeholders. 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. The Board is also responsible for overseeing the maintenance and development of the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Counting Rules, and approving any changes to them. Further information on the Board's remit and functions is available for users<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> User Consultation on Police Recorded Crime Statistics, JAS, July 2015

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00482029.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Scottish Government Crime Statistics User Event

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

<sup>38</sup> Scottish Crime Recording Board

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/SCRB>

<sup>39</sup> Scottish Crime Recording Board: Remit and Functions

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00484540.pdf>

**Ad hoc meetings** - Crime and Policing Statisticians maintain contact with data providers through regular communications, including arranging meetings with data providers and visiting data providers within Police Scotland. Such meetings provide a forum for Crime and Policing Statisticians to consult with data providers and bring any changes to data collection requirements to their attention. It also provides a forum for Police Scotland to advise Crime and Policing Statisticians of any forthcoming changes to their administration systems that may affect the data collection.

There are currently **secondments** from the Scottish Government to SPA, and within HMICS both the Assistant Inspector of Constabulary and two Staff Officers are currently seconded from Police Scotland. The specialist nature of Justice Analytical Services, within the Scottish Government, makes inward secondments less feasible, but police policy division often employ police secondees. All of these connections help to ensure understanding across the different sectors of Recorded Crime in Scotland.

### 2.3.2 *Areas For Continuous Improvement - communications*

Although UKSA noted that there is good communication across Police Scotland, SPA and the Scottish Government in the matter of crime recording, they also reported that the Scottish Government engages primarily with expert users of the statistics but has engaged less frequently with a wider range of less expert users. They recommended that 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 consultation.

The Scottish Government therefore wish to ensure that as wide a group of users as possible is engaged in Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics.

Where groups are used to inform decisions, it is important to have this recorded for future reference so that the background and history of decisions are not lost. All relevant parties should aim to publish timely meeting notes and make increased use of ScotStat notices to inform users of updates, changes or points of interest. As an example of this the outcomes of actions undertaken by the Scottish Crime Recording Board are published<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Scottish Crime Recording Board Actions and Outcomes  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/SCRB/SCRBmeet>

The Scottish Government will continue to engage regularly with a wider range of less expert users of these statistics outside of the Scottish Government's key stakeholders; and ensure that both expert and non-expert users are consulted about changes to the statistics through an early and comprehensive consultation. This will be actioned through maintaining and extending the relationships with data users through the existing ScotStat group, and ensuring that the regular meetings reflect their requirements.

Future user day events will be publicised using the existing routes as well as considering new methods of communicating this information,

The agenda and minutes from Crime and Justice ScotStat Committees are made publicly available by publishing on the web. Consideration will be given to publishing such information from other meetings which analysts from JAS attend.

The Scottish Government will strive to increase the information published to ensure that sufficient information is provided 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 undertake to 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. Stakeholders' level of input have on decisions around these statistics will be clarified.

### 3. Suppliers' QA principles, standards and checks

This section focuses on the quality assurance procedures that Police Scotland have in place. It also considers the role of SPA in holding Police Scotland to account, for example by scrutinising their performance data.

#### 3.1 Data suppliers' principles, standards and quality checks

##### 3.1.1 Current Activity

The primary standard for recorded crime data in Scotland is the **Scottish Crime Recording Standard** (SCRS). See also Section 1.2.1. and Figure 3.

The Standard advises on the recording of crime and is supported by the Scottish Government Counting Rules. The Counting Rules provide a national standard for the recording and counting of crimes and offences recorded by Police Scotland, known as 'recorded crime'.

The SCRS also requires that regular audits of crime recording are carried out to check that incidents are recorded correctly and to check whether recorded crimes have been counted and classified correctly. Audits are carried out in accordance with an established methodology<sup>41</sup> developed by Police Scotland.

The ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with the SCRS and the counting rules lies with the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, discharged on a daily basis by the appointed **Crime Registrars**.

The crime registrars within Police Scotland ensure that crimes in Scotland are recorded ethically, overseeing compliance with the SCRS and the Counting Rules. They also undertake internal audits of the crimes which are recorded. Each region has a crime registrar who is responsible for overseeing compliance with the crime recording process. He or she is the final arbiter for the force when deciding whether or not to record a crime or make a no-crime decision. In order to maintain independence, the force crime registrar is outside operational line command and answerable to the Chief Officer, with overall responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of crime recording processes.

Before the creation of Police Scotland, each Scottish legacy police force had its own Force Crime Registrar and their position in the force structure varied between forces.

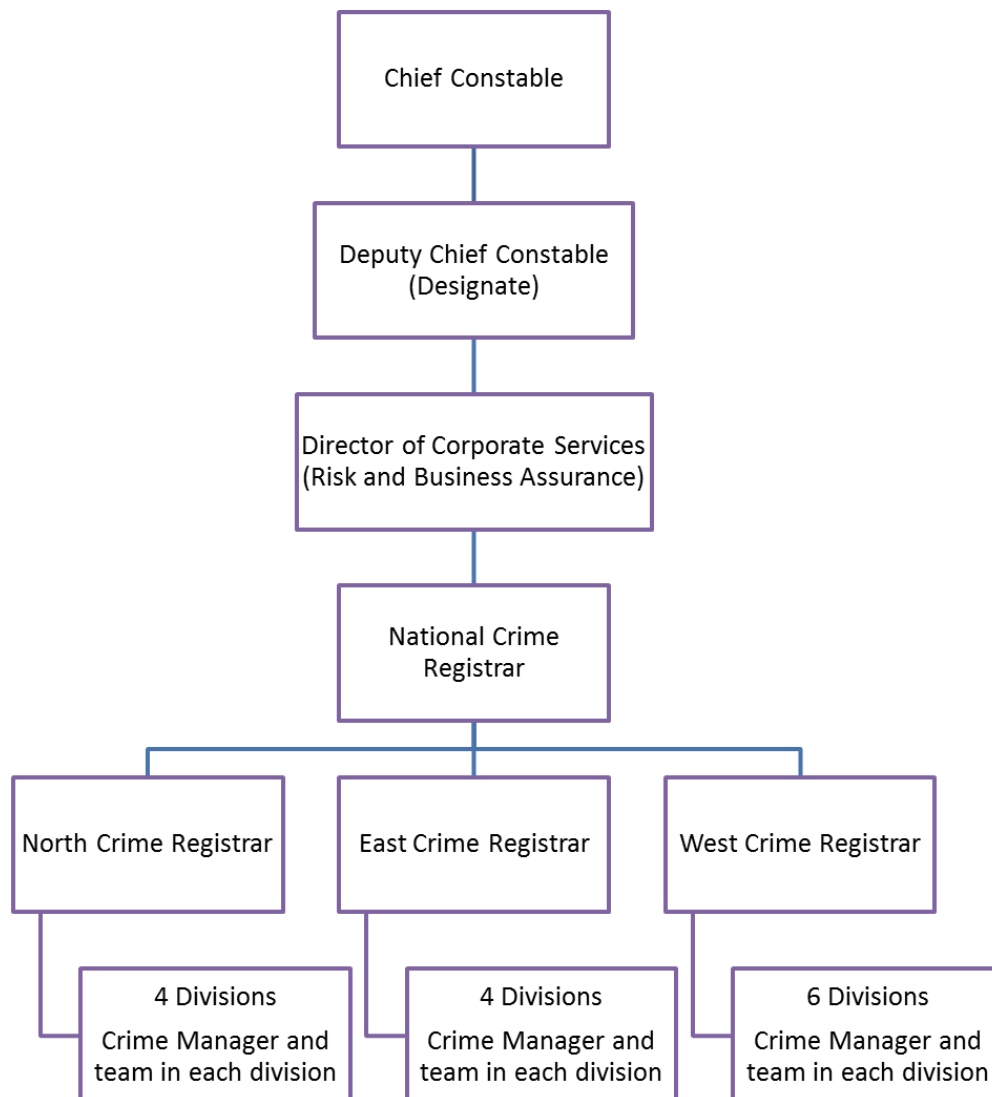
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<sup>41</sup> Police Scotland, Scottish Crime Recording Standard: Methodology for recorded crime compliance check (September 2013) and Police Scotland, Scottish Crime Recording Standard: Methodology for divisional crime audit (August 2013).



Since the creation of Police Scotland, there is now one National Crime Registrar supported by three Crime Registrars each covering a regional area. The Crime Registrars 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, of Inspector or Detective Inspector rank, supported by other staff and officers.

**Figure 4 : Crime registrars' structure**



The National Crime Registrar and Crime Registrars 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 information.

The audits are reported to Police Scotland's Corporate Governance Board quarterly and to the SPA Audit and Risk Committee and can be accessed from the

committee's web pages<sup>42</sup>. The audits do not cover the 'clear-up' (detections) of crimes and offences.

The new structure of crime registrars is already delivering consistency of decision making and the identification of good practices. It is evident from the work undertaken by crime registrars that high levels of service and investigation are being delivered across Police Scotland, despite some recording process errors being identified. Crime registrars are focussed on ensuring that such errors are overcome and that improvement activities will improve SCRS compliance rates moving forward<sup>43</sup>.

The **Scottish Police Authority** (SPA) has a statutory role in scrutinising the performance of Police Scotland. Established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, its main functions are to maintain the police service, promote the policing principles and continuous improvement in the policing of Scotland, and to hold the chief constable to account. SPA also provides independent scrutiny of Police Scotland's Performance by examining statistical information at regular board meetings.

HMICS carry out regular crime audits. In November 2014 HMICS published their **Crime Audit 2014**. This audit provides an independent assessment of the state, efficiency and effectiveness of crime recording by Police Scotland and the extent to which recording practice complies with SCRS and the Scottish Government Counting Rules. It tests the accuracy of incident and crime recording in Scotland and responds to the UK Statistics Authority point that highlighted the importance of a comprehensive and independent audit of crime data. The findings of the Crime Audit 2014 are shown in Section 3.1.3

In December 2013 the **Review of incident and crime recording**<sup>44</sup>, which was conducted shortly after the creation of Police Scotland, provided the opportunity to consider emerging arrangements for the management of crime recording within a national police service and to assess compliance with crime recording standards since 1 April 2013.

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<sup>42</sup> Scottish Police Authority: Audit & Risk Committee

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

<sup>43</sup> Crime Recording in Police Scotland - Approach And Governance Arrangements - HMICS Evidence paper

<sup>44</sup> Review of incident and crime recording

<http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/Review%20of%20Incident%20and%20Crime%20Recording%20-%20December%202013.pdf>

In May 2012, the *Crime Audit 2011: National Overview Report*<sup>45</sup> assessed whether the 8 former Scottish police forces were complying with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard.

These previous HMICS reports were broadly satisfied with the arrangements at the time, while making specific recommendations for improvements, which were followed up on subsequent reviews. A further review will be commenced in March 2016.

Recorded crime data is collated by the Police Scotland in-house Analysis and Performance Unit (APU) which works to strict quality procedures. APU provides data for Police Scotland to assess its own performance and to report to SPA.

### 3.1.2 *Quality assurance safeguards*

Recorded Crime in Scotland data is produced by Police Scotland about Police Scotland. Therefore, strict independence of reporting from core business is required to avoid any undue influence on the data.

Crime managers, who carry out the first level of checking of crime records, have no responsibility to achieve targets and should therefore be free of influence, however their division does aim to achieve the targets.

Crime registrars have no responsibility to achieve targets and are conscious of their role in maintaining an ethical approach to reporting and HMICS provides independent scrutiny of both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.

SPA exists to hold Police Scotland to account. They use Recorded Crime in Scotland to produce a quarterly report on policing performance for scrutiny by the SPA board. Although many relationships and responsibilities are still bedding in, the structure is brings another layer of scrutiny to the Recorded Crime in Scotland data.

The SCRS is generally updated on an annual basis and would be published in April each year. Changes are approved via the Scottish Crime Recording Board (see Section 2.3.1).

Crime registrars have access to a working document “Crime Recording in Police Scotland: Approach and Governance Arrangements” which provides an overview of the current arrangements within Police Scotland which ensure that crime recording is undertaken in a standardised and ethical manner across all of Scotland. One of the

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<sup>45</sup> Crime Audit 2011: National Overview Report - <http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS%20Crime%20Audit%202011%20-%20National%20Overview%20Report.pdf>

advantages of Police Scotland is the opportunity to improve the consistent application of SCRS as only through such an approach can the public have full confidence and understanding as to the true extent of crime taking place. Processes around crime recording and crime management are in their infancy and continue to develop to ensure that crime recording and management operates at an optimum level.

### 3.1.3 *Quality reports for the data*

Crime registrars carry out four structured audits each year, with thematic reviews as required throughout the year. These audits are fed back to divisional commanders, assistant chief commanders in each region and to the Police Scotland performance board. The reports contain detail appropriate to the audience and actions, such as training and guidance, are taken on the basis of them. The results of the audits are also reported to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) through their Audit and Risk Committee (papers for which are published on the SPA website)

The **2014 HMICS Crime Review** was laid before parliament in November 2014. In it their stated aim was to “assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of crime recording by Police Scotland and the extent to which recording practice complies with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and the Scottish Government’s Counting Rules.” Previous reviews are available from the HMICS website<sup>46</sup>.

The findings of tests for compliance against SCRS are shown in Table 2 on page 19 of this framework

The **key findings** taken from the 2014 audit were:

- The quality of most incident and crime recording decisions by Police Scotland is good. 92% of incidents were closed correctly<sup>47</sup> and 94% of crime was counted and classified correctly. There is however scope for improvement, particularly in relation to areas such as sexual offences and non-crime related incidents.
- A few divisions performed very well, achieving high compliance rates in all or most areas. The performance of these divisions demonstrates that compliance with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Counting Rules can be achieved when crime recording is well-managed locally and appropriately scrutinised. Conversely, a few divisions performed poorly.
- There is scope for improvement in the recording of sexual offences. 89% of sexual offence-related incidents were closed correctly and 90% were

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.hmics.org/publications>

<sup>47</sup> Correct closure means either that (a) the incident was closed as non-crime related and contained sufficient information to dispel any inference of criminality; or (b) the incident indicated a crime had occurred and a crime record was traced.

recorded within a reasonable timescale. The referral of incidents to specialist investigation units makes it more likely that recording will be delayed.

- Violent incidents reported to the police are closed correctly in 92% of cases. 94% of resulting crimes are counted and classified correctly. There remain challenges in the classification of violent crime, particularly around serious assaults, robberies and attempted murders.
- Scrutiny of housebreaking by crime management units resulted in good recording practice. 94% of housebreaking-related incidents were closed correctly and 95% of resulting crimes were counted and classified correctly.
- The recording of hate crime was excellent and achieved the highest compliance rate of 97% in our audit. However, a recurring issue with regards to the classification of some hate crime should be addressed.
- Only 87% of the non-crime related incidents we examined were closed correctly. Scrutiny of incidents reported to the police is a weakness in most divisions.
- There remains scope for improvement regarding timely crime recording decisions, particularly in relation to sexual offences. In general however, we felt that timeliness had improved since our previous audit. We found that 97% of crimes were recorded within 72 hours of being reported to the police.
- No-criming practice is generally good but could be improved in some divisions<sup>48</sup>. No-criming practice is best in those divisions where one person, or a small group of people, are tasked with authorising all no-criming decisions, allowing them to develop expertise and ensuring a consistent approach.
- The quality of no-crime decisions in relation to rape is very good. These decisions are subject to significant scrutiny at divisional and national levels giving us confidence they are made correctly and consistently across Scotland.
- Previous recommendations made by HMICS regarding crime recording have been the subject of a Police Scotland action plan. There has been good progress to date and we will follow up on these recommendations in more detail in a future review of crime recording. We have welcomed regular dialogue with Police Scotland about crime recording practice.

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<sup>48</sup> No-crimes are incidents that were originally thought to have been a crime but were later re-designated as not being a crime following additional investigation.

- Day-to-day crime recording decisions are overseen by crime management units and consideration should be given to how best to safeguard the independence of their decision making.
- There is a good system of internal auditing of crime recording within Police Scotland. The results of the internal audits are broadly similar to our own which should provide assurance to the Scottish Police Authority, local scrutiny and engagement bodies and the Scottish Government as to their accuracy.
- There is an opportunity for greater external scrutiny of crime recording by the Scottish Police Authority and local authority scrutiny and engagement bodies. This will broaden and strengthen the existing assurance framework around crime data.
- While there remains variation in crime recording practice across Scotland, Police Scotland is committed to improving consistency and achieving greater compliance with the SCRS. Variations in legacy force practices are being identified and eliminated. We would expect to see steady improvement in compliance rates in internal audits by Police Scotland and in future audits by HMICS.

The HMICS Crime Review 2014 recommendations relevant to this framework are:

### **Recommendation 2**

The Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should engage the Scottish Government and other stakeholders in exploring whether the crime groupings used for statistical purposes remain relevant taking account of the changing nature of crime. This should include consideration of whether the crime groupings reflect the public's perception of crime.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Scottish Police Authority's Audit and Risk Committee should request from Police Scotland the full results of internal crime recording audits and should monitor the implementation of any resulting improvement actions. The Committee should also oversee improvement plans developed by Police Scotland in response to recommendations made about crime recording by HMICS.

### **Recommendation 7**

Police Scotland should provide local scrutiny and engagement bodies with the findings of internal crime recording audits and any resulting improvement plans. This will facilitate the scrutiny of crime data presented to them by local commanders.

**Recommendation 8**

Police Scotland should work with the Scottish Government to clarify ownership of the Counting Rules.

The Scottish Government *Recorded Crime in Scotland* bulletins for 2013-14 and 2014-15 incorporated the findings of the HMICS audit.

The Scottish Government is working with the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland, through the Scottish Crime Recording Board, to investigate whether the crime groupings used for statistical purposes remain relevant. The remit of the Crime Board includes ownership of the counting rules. As the recommendations and key findings are actioned, statistics users will be kept informed through this framework and the user guide.

## 4. Producer's Quality Assurance investigations and documentation

This section looks at the Scottish Government's checks to consider whether the derived aggregated statistics are meaningful and seem correct.

### 4.1 Scottish Government Quality Assurance checks on the admin data

#### 4.1.1 Summary of the policy and guidance

The Scottish Government receives data from Police Scotland, which is subjected to quality assurance checks across the four quarters of the financial year period, and against the previous year. Anything unusual or which requires further explanation is then fed back to the Police for their attention. Any amendments are carried out and the final data is used to produce a set of data tables which can be used to check the final dataset. If the police are content that the figures are an accurate reflection of the dataset, then the data is officially signed off for use in the publication.

Any sources of bias or error in the administrative system and their implications for the accuracy and quality of the data is recorded and acted upon where possible to improve the data.

The Scottish Government publishes quality guidelines, and ensures that staff are suitably trained in quality management. The existing Scottish Government guidance and policies on quality, Recorded Crime in Scotland and administrative data are all published on the Scottish Government websites, accessed either on the *Statistics*<sup>49</sup> page, or the *Crime and Justice*<sup>50</sup> pages.

Recorded crime statistics are also subject to assessment by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA), to ensure that the statistics meet the professional standards set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#)<sup>51</sup>. The code of practice covers a range of criteria, one field being the quality of statistics. The [UKSA](#) is an independent body operating at arm's length from government, as a non-ministerial department. As such, the UKSA provides independent scrutiny of recorded crime and SCJS statistics through monitoring and assessment.

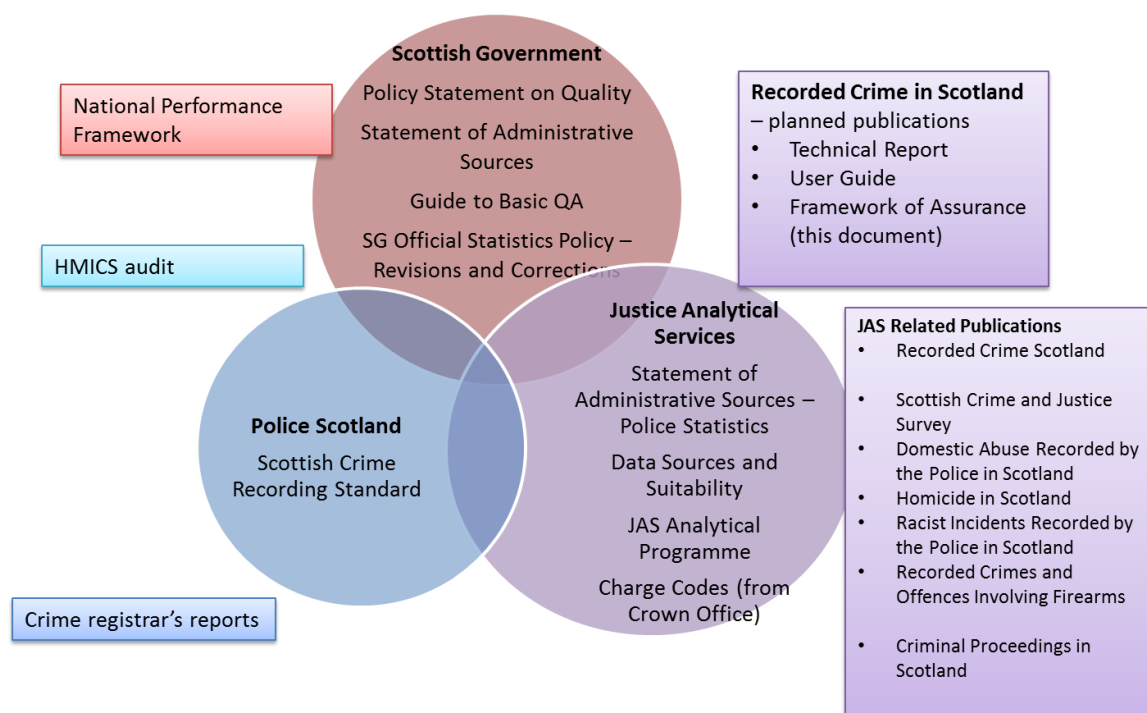
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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/statistics/browse/crime-justice>



**Figure 5 : Schematic of the documents available on the Scottish Government Statistics web pages**



The Scottish Government’s general policies around providing high-quality official statistics are set out in the **Scottish Government Corporate Policy Statement on Quality**<sup>52</sup> and the very practical **Guide to Basic Quality Assurance**<sup>53</sup>.

The Scottish Government provides two relevant **Statements of Administrative Sources**: one is the overall Scottish Government statement, the other is specific to police statistics.

The Scottish Government ‘**Statement of Administrative Sources**’<sup>54</sup> and **Statement of Quality** contain details of the checks carried out by the Scottish Government to verify the validity of Police Scotland data. These consider whether the derived aggregated statistics are meaningful, and whether changes in trends and discontinuities can be explained.

The ‘**Statement Of Administrative Sources, Police Statistics**’<sup>55</sup> provides details on the administrative sources used by the Crime and Policing Statistical Analysis

<sup>52</sup> Official Statistics Policy - Quality - August 2014, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/QualityCPS>

<sup>53</sup> Guide to Basic Quality Assurance in Statistics <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/QAGuide>

<sup>54</sup> Scottish Government Statement Of Administrative Sources (Our Use of Administrative Sources for Statistical Purposes) [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00457278.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00457278.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> Statement of Administrative Sources, Police Statistics, Scottish Government - [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451670.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451670.pdf)

Branch, within Justice Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government to produce Recorded Crime in Scotland.

In addition to the Statements of Administrative Sources, the Scottish Government also publishes **Data Sources and Suitability - Recorded Crime in Scotland**<sup>56</sup>. This details the source of recorded crime data, concepts and definitions, quality assurance / quality considerations, data availability, disaggregation, timeliness of data, accuracy / suitability, comparability and any caveats. It gives users a valuable source of information and draws attention to any interesting aspects or peculiarities it may contain so that future use of the data is well-informed.

The **Statement of Administrative Sources – Police Statistics** covers administrative data sources *post* police reform and *pre* police reform. An outline of the contents is provided below. For full details follow the web links to the document. This summary provides an overview of the contents of the statement.

- i) *Arrangements for providing statistical staff (inside or outside the organisation) with access to administrative data sources for statistical purposes*
- ii) *Arrangements for auditing the quality of the original source data*
- iii) *Procedures for handling changes, and possible discontinuities, in the underlying source data*
- iv) *Procedures for ensuring the security of the statistical processes which use administrative or management sources*

During the QA checks, it is possible for errors to be found in previous years data. While the Scottish Government does not routinely revise figures, errors in the data are corrected and suitable explanations provided for any changes made to previously published data. The process for doing this is set out in the **Scottish Government Official Statistics Policy - Revisions and Corrections**<sup>57</sup>. In their assessment of Recorded Crime in Scotland, UKSA pointed out that in future these corrections should be clearly labelled and this will be actioned in future publications.

**User Consultation**<sup>58</sup>: The results of the latest user consultation, which was published in July 2015 can be accessed [here](#).

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<sup>56</sup> Data Sources and Suitability – Recorded Crime in Scotland  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/DataSource/RecordedCrimeSandS](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/DataSource/RecordedCrimeSandS)

<sup>57</sup> Official Statistics Policy - Revisions and Corrections,  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/CPSONRevisionsCorrections>

<sup>58</sup> Stakeholder Consultation - Recorded Crime in Scotland – 2015  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/scotstatcrime/StakeCon/RCUC2015/RCUC2015Report>

#### 4.1.2 Considerations

On revisions to the data, UKSA noted that the Scottish Government does not reflect the impact of amendments to the data and should provide more information to users about the nature and extent of changes made to police records, and how to interpret changes in the published crime statistics.

On quality assurance, they recommended that 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 source.

This information is now contained in the **User Guide** and also in the **Recorded Crime in Scotland** statistical publication. This framework has also been developed to address these issues, pulling together existing information to provide assurance for users from collection to publication of the statistics.

On the potential high profile of the statistics, UKSA noted that these statistics are of high public interest and so require strong levels of assurance about their quality.

In developing this Framework of Assurance, the Scottish Government started by looking at the 'maturity level' of the statistics (see Appendix A). This took into account both the high public interest and any concerns around the data. The *initial* assessment was that Recorded Crime in Scotland are **maturity level 3**, i.e. statistics of potentially high data quality concern and high public interest. However, this level is also relevant where the data quality concerns are less but there is a **high public interest** in the statistics.

The reasons for deciding on this level are explained in Appendix A. Whilst UKSA did not express strong concerns around quality problems in Scotland, the high profile nature of these statistics ensures they are likely to remain at M3 for the foreseeable future.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Assessment Report page 1, "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."

### 4.1.3 Main Risks

It is essential that the public in Scotland know whether they should have confidence in their own recorded crime statistics. Accurate crime data is also vital for the police service itself: it allows the service to anticipate, prevent and investigate crime by allocating resources where they are most needed. In Section 0 Police Scotland actions to assure the quality of the data provided to the Scottish Government were laid out. In this section, the main risks are around users misunderstanding or misusing the Scottish Government published statistics. However, there are also risks around the collection, collation and presentation of the data in the publications.

The transition from eight legacy police forces to the single Police Scotland has changed the data exchange process between Police Scotland and the Scottish Government. The previous Excel based data template is now a data specification which can be used to provide data in any suitable format for the Scottish Government statisticians (e.g. SAS). This introduced risks of misinterpretation of understanding the specification, errors in the queries that extract the data from ScOMIS, incomplete data. However, working together the Scottish Government and Police Scotland have overcome this risk for the first year of data provision, though there is a risk that it may arise as data systems develop in the new single Police Scotland.

Recorded Crime in Scotland needs to be correctly understood and interpreted to avoid misuse, and there are risks and limitations of the data that could affect their application. Some of the risks associated with users' understanding of the data limitations are laid out in Section 4.4.1.

This framework and the associated user guide are intended to take the first steps towards mitigating the risks set out above. Users will be able to determine what activity has been carried out to assure data quality and what limitations there are on the data.

### 4.1.4 Areas For Continuous Improvement

The transition to the new Police Scotland IT system, i6, will be monitored and future data extracts will be tested to ensure they are consistent with previous data.

UKSA recommended that the Scottish Government should:

- a) Publish the proposed Technical Report<sup>60</sup> as soon as it is finalised ensuring that the language and content of this report is accessible to non-expert users and

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<sup>60</sup> Recorded Crime in Scotland - Technical report: -  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/TechnicalReport/PDF>

- b) Publish detailed information about the methods used to compile the statistics alongside each release of Recorded Crime in Scotland.

The *Technical Report* was published in November 2014 and the information about the methods is contained in the *User Guide*.

The existing Statement of Administrative Sources will be maintained and updated to ensure that it presents sufficient information about the arrangements for auditing the quality of the administrative data and to ensure that it remains up-to-date for example with changes to Police Scotland and associated IT systems.

Responses to the consultation prior to the publication of *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013-14* resulted in the Scottish Government planning to publish web tables to provide information at local authority level for the last ten years. The subsequent consultation in 2015 led to the addition of new infographics and highlighted the broadly positive feedback users had for the current structure of the Bulletin. In addition, the Scottish Government responds to, and keeps a log of, requests received from users for additional data and analysis. This information is used to inform statistical planning and potential changes to statistical outputs.

## 4.2 Comparisons with other relevant data sources

### 4.2.1 Current Activity

The Scottish Government publishes companion statistical bulletins<sup>61</sup> to Recorded Crime in Scotland that are based on individual level crime and offence data on a number of topics:

- Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland
- Homicide in Scotland
- Racist Incidents Recorded by the Police in Scotland
- Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms

Related statistics from a different data source are

- Criminal Proceedings in Scotland

The **Scottish Crime and Justice Survey**<sup>62</sup> (SCJS) provides a complementary measure of crime compared with police recorded crime statistics. The survey provides information on the criminal justice system, on people's experience of civil justice problems and people's perception of crime.

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<sup>61</sup> Crime and Justice Statistics - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

<sup>62</sup> Scottish Crime and Justice Survey - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/crime-and-justice-survey>

One of the key strengths of the SCJS is its ability to capture crimes that are not reported to, and subsequently not recorded by, the police. SCJS provides an estimate of all crimes committed and therefore, can be used in conjunction with Recorded Crime to estimate the proportion of crimes not reported to the police. In 2012-13, it was estimated that 39% of crimes, as defined by the SCJS, were reported to the police.

The survey also captures attitudinal data, such as perceptions of crime rates, fear of crime and attitudes towards the criminal justice system. Therefore, an important role of the SCJS is to provide an alternative and complementary measure of crime to the police recorded crime statistics. Annex 5 of the SCJS compares SCJS and police recorded crime statistics.

It also provides estimates of progress for two of the 50 national indicators in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework<sup>63</sup>:

- Improve people's perceptions about the crime rate in their area, and
- Reduce crime victimisation rates.

**The latest two Recorded Crime in Scotland publications (2013-14 and 2014-15) included a chapter specifically comparing the Police Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey.** The analysis is also threaded throughout the Recorded Crime in Scotland commentary, ensuring that readers are reminded of the scope of the Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics as a sub-set of the full picture of crime in Scotland. Throughout the Recorded Crime in Scotland commentary, the relationship and coherence between the Recorded Crime in Scotland and SCJS is clearly explained and documented.

In addition to this the Scottish Government published their '**Analysis of Scottish Crime and Justice Survey and Police Recorded Crime Comparable Crime Groups**<sup>64</sup> in November 2014.

The dual purpose of the analysis is to present a picture of crime in Scotland informed by both SCJS and Recorded Crime in Scotland (maximising value and minimising risk of misinterpretation), and also to highlight how we can use the two statistical products together as complementary sources i.e. describing the additional analysis that is possible, the results of that analysis and what it means. The next set of statistics for the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (2014-15) will be published in March 2016, at which point the comparisons referred to above can be refreshed.

The **Criminal Proceedings in Scotland** statistical bulletin publishes a summary of crimes and offences dealt with by courts, sentencing outcomes and characteristics of convicted offenders. The bulletin includes additional information on non-court

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<sup>63</sup> Government's National Performance Framework <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms>

<sup>64</sup>Bringing Together Scotland's Crime Statistics: Analysis Using the Comparable Crime Subset <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0046/00463936.pdf>

penalties issued by the Police and by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Statistics dealing with recorded crime and court proceedings are not directly comparable as a person may be proceeded against for more than one crime involving more than one victim and there is the possibility that the crime recorded by the police may be reviewed in the course of judicial proceedings. In addition, a crime may be recorded by the police in one year and court proceedings concluded in a subsequent year. Nonetheless, these statistics provide another source for triangulation of the picture provided by the recorded crime in Scotland statistics.

#### 4.2.2 *Limitations of the comparisons*

The SCJS provides estimates of the level of crime in Scotland. It includes crimes that are not reported to or recorded by the police, but is limited to crimes against adults resident in households, and also does not cover all crime types. Police recorded crime is a measure of those crimes reported to the police and recorded by them as a crime or offence. In order to compare the estimates of crime from the SCJS and police recorded crime statistics, a comparable subset of crime was created for a set of crimes that is covered by both measures.

Police recorded crime statistics used in comparison to SCJR 2012-13 relate to crimes committed in the financial year between April 2012 and March 2013. The figures presented in this volume were published in June 2013.

Recorded Crime in Scotland does not reveal the incidence of all crime committed. Not all incidents are reported to the police. In SCJS, the two reasons most commonly given by victims for not reporting to the police were that the incident was considered by them to be too trivial (40%) or the police would not have been able to do anything (29%).

The statistics for recorded number of crimes in Scotland are not directly comparable with statistics collected in England and Wales for the recorded number of notifiable offences. This is mainly due to differences in the counting rules; for notifiable offences the counting system is, wherever possible, victim based rather than offence based.

There is a risk that the Recorded Crime in Scotland and SCJS 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, there is a risk of user misinterpretation of the statistics, and it requires the public to readily distinguish between *recorded* crime and 'crime experienced' in media reports. For this reason, there is an SCJS annex dedicated to the comparison

of Recorded Crime in Scotland and SCJS, the differences in the statistics are explored and explained, along with details of the methods used to achieve comparability. The *Recorded Crime in Scotland* publication also contains a chapter on SCJS and how it aligns with Recorded Crime in Scotland.

### **4.3 Possible distortive effects of targets**

#### *4.3.1 Current Activity*

The possible influence of targets on recorded crime statistics is a potentially significant issue which was introduced in Section 1.4.2 of this framework.

The Scottish Government carries out comparisons of Recorded Crime in Scotland against other sources, primarily SCJS but expanding into other areas such as Fire and Rescue service statistics, to check for possible distortion effects of targets on Recorded Crime in Scotland, with sense checking underpinning the early checking of Recorded Crime in Scotland data provided from Police Scotland.

The creation of Police Scotland has been noted for their focus on targets across the new force. It has also been recognised, by the police and its many scrutiny agencies, including public scrutiny, that these targets could be a likely source of bias in recording crime. Mitigating action has been introduced to protect the accuracy and quality of the underpinning data. The Police Scotland safeguards that exist are strongly promoted within Police Scotland to protect the data quality regardless of potential pressures are described in Section 1.4.2.

In a report to the SPA Audit & Risk Committee<sup>65</sup>, the Crime registrars group provided evidence of the reinforcement of an ethical culture of reporting to ensure that targets do not influence crime reporting.

#### *4.3.2 Areas for Continuous Improvement*

While the Scottish Government has been aware of possible distortive effects of targets, it could become more specific about the effects by becoming more aware of the campaigns and targets that Police Scotland are carrying out at the time of data collection, and then test for bias caused by those targets. This will be a more feasible exercise with a single Police Scotland and a more consistent approach to campaigns and targets. It will be considered in future data collections, though the attendant risk of police attention resulting in more crime being recorded should also be considered here.

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<sup>65</sup> Business Assurance Report <http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/174772/226283/10.1bar>



## 4.4 The strengths and limitations of the recorded crime data

### 4.4.1 Current Activity

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 detailed classification of crimes and offences used by The Scottish Government to collect criminal statistics contains about 475 codes.

There are limitations to the Recorded Crime in Scotland as published. In the Data Sources and Definition section (Annex 1) of the *Recorded Crime In Scotland, 2014-15*<sup>66</sup> publication, the limitations and risks associated with using Police Scotland administrative data are explained. Included in this statement are the following points:

- The statistical return from which most of the figures in the Recorded Crime bulletin are taken is a simple count of the numbers of crimes and offences recorded and cleared up by Police Scotland.
- Only data from Police Scotland are included in the main findings and tables included in the bulletin.
- One return is made for each local authority in Scotland and these are aggregated to give a national total.
- Data on the total number of crimes and offences recorded and cleared up by the British Transport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police in Scotland are included in the Annex section of the bulletin.
- Amendments (such as the deletion of incidents found on investigation not to be criminal) will always arise after the end of the financial year and submission of data to the Scottish Government. However, new analysis on the extent of further amendment to police crime and offence records following their original submission, confirmed such changes to be minimal at the Scotland level.
- Crimes and offences are included against the year in which they are recorded by the police. This is not necessarily the year in which the crime or offence took place, the year in which the accused is brought to trial for the crime or offence, or the year in which the case is finally disposed of by the courts.

Police Scotland currently provide the data as a simple count of the numbers of crimes and offences recorded and cleared up at **local authority level**, so it is not currently possible to publish recorded crime data at a lower geography than this. The establishment of Police Scotland and the intended implementation of a new national

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<sup>66</sup> Recorded Crime In Scotland, 2014-15 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/09/5338>

IT system for Police Scotland may enable the data to be published at other geographic levels. This won't be possible until the new national IT system is in place. However, information on a subset of crimes and offences are collected at a low area level (data zones) for the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. These include crimes of violence; domestic house breaking; drugs offences; minor assault; and vandalisms.

Collecting aggregated numbers of crimes and offences means there is no information about victims, perpetrators or about the individual crimes or offences and incidents. The implementation of the new Police Scotland IT system could provide the opportunity for us to publish statistics based on individual level data, thus allowing victim and perpetrator data to be published. Until the implementation of the new IT system, it is not feasible to publish recorded crime data with victim or perpetrator data included.

UKSA recommended that the Scottish Government 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: clarifying the strengths and limitations of the statistics and providing further explanatory information about the context. This framework, the User Guide and the Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletins will all be developed further to ensure this recommendation is met.

Where appropriate, we will also review our commentary around any corrections or changes in the data from the crime recording source systems. We will also try to identify the magnitude of these changes and establish how, and if, this could affect the historic trends in crime, by crime type.

#### *4.4.2 Areas For Continuous Improvement*

The Scottish Government had been aware of the possibility of users requesting more detailed, record level data to enhance analysis, though it had not been included in any of the responses to recent consultations. However at the recent User event (October 2014) there did seem to be a desire for individual level data. The Scottish Government will therefore remain engaged with Police Scotland and explore its provision.

Again, at the recent user event, there was little or no requirement for Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics to be made available in fully 'Open Data' formats (even CSV) as most users reported high levels of satisfaction with the excel tables currently provided. Excel files also gives the ability to add notes to cells and charts and users said it would be helpful if this feature was made more use of to give context and explain anomalies in the data caused by significant or one off events. A small number of users thought that open data formats might be useful in the future.

However the subject of open data will remain under consideration in future consultations.

## Appendix A – Maturity Level

1. This section describes the analysis behind the decision to set the maturity level<sup>67</sup> of Recorded Crime in Scotland as M3.
2. The maturity level fundamentally influences the nature of the activities required in the FoA. Generating the maturity level is described in Part 4 of the ED. The level is determined by considering the public interest profile of the statistics and the degree of concern about the data quality.
3. Recorded Crime in Scotland statistics are of high public interest and rank in the “higher” category of the public interest dimension.
4. In terms of the data quality dimension, UKSA have noted that “in Scotland, there is less direct evidence of data problems at the operational level<sup>68</sup>”, and so the *data quality* concerns may be considered to be medium level. Nonetheless, in the current climate of concern around police recorded data throughout the UK, for the purposes of this FoA, they have been rated as the higher level of concern.
5. Taking these rankings for the two dimensions together and applying to the ‘data quality concern and public interest profile matrix’ give an initial suggested maturity level of M3. However, this level is also relevant where the data quality concerns are less but there is a high public interest in the statistics. Furthermore, individual practice areas may have maturity levels at M1, M2 or M3.
6. Whilst the UKSA have lower levels of concern around data quality in Scotland, the high profile of these statistics ensures they are likely to remain at the M3 maturity level for the foreseeable future. Going forward, the Scottish Government will monitor the profile and quality of these statistics, and will inform users of any developments in this area through the Scottish Crime Recording Board.

Level of concern over data quality	Public Interest Profile: importance for informing decisions		
	Lower	Medium	Higher
Lower level ('low')	M1	M1/M2	M1/M2
Medium ('medium')	M2	M2	M2/M3
Higher level ('High')	M3	M3	Recorded crime statistics M3

<sup>67</sup> The three tier system for defining the level of assurance appropriate for a particular set of statistics. The maturity level and associated concepts are explained in Part 4 of the ED.

<sup>68</sup> UKSA AR

## Appendix B - Glossary

APU	Analysis and Performance Unit	
AR	UKSA Recorded Crime in Scotland Assessment Report	<a href="http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/index.html">http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/index.html</a>
CM	Crime manager	
CPP	Community Planning Partnership	
CR	Crime registrar	
ED	Exposure Draft on Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Datasets	<a href="http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/index.html">http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/index.html</a>
ESS Net	Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System	<a href="http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/QAF_2012/EN/QAF_2012-EN.PDF">http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/QAF_2012/EN/QAF_2012-EN.PDF</a>
FoA or 'the framework'	Framework of Assurance	
HMICS	HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	
NCR	National Crime Registrar	
JAS	Justice Analytical Service (of the Scottish Government)	
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding	
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body	
OCSP	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance	
PIRC	Police Investigations & Review Commissioner	
PS	Police Scotland	
RCS	Recorded Crime in Scotland	
SCRS	Scottish Crime Recording Standards	
SCJS	Scottish Crime and Justice Survey	
SG	Scottish Government	
SLA	Service Level Agreement	
SoAS	Statement of Administrative Sources	
SPA	Scottish Police Authority	
UKSA	UK Statistics Authority	<a href="http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/">http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/</a>