Response to the UK Statistics Authority Questions – "Recorded Crime in Scotland"
Scottish Government – April 2014

Principle 1: Meeting User Needs

Can SG provide an extract of the ScotStat user list for the Crime and Justice group?

> Yes, we are currently in discussions with the administrators of this ScotStat system. We can only provide an extract of those individuals who have agreed to their details being disclosed.

> The ScotStat system allows for users to send emails to other users who have given permission for their details to be used in this way. We understand that the UKSA have sent an email to ScotStat users using this functionality. Do you thus still require names?

Are there plans to produce the Police Recorded Crime publication more frequently in future? Is there user demand for this?

> Police Reform in Scotland has created Police Scotland (a single national police force for Scotland) and the Scottish Police Authority. We are working with Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority to develop a consistent publication plan with these organisations. The first step is the publication of regular performance information by the Scottish Police Authority. Building on this first step, we are working closely with Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority to consider the feasibility of producing accessible and consistent quarterly reports.

How long do SG plan to allow users to feed back when SG consult in April? What will SG do if many users are opposed to the proposals in the consultation?

> The consultation will be live for 5 weeks. We are not predicting users will be opposed to our proposals, due to our experience of how users use this data and how we have been requested to present information in the past. However, should we receive such feedback we will take this on-board. We will actively consider all such requests balancing how to fully meet principles 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Principle 3: Integrity.

Are you satisfied that all those involved in the production of the statistics are not subject to political pressures that might influence the production of the statistics?

> Yes. There are clear messages from Police Scotland senior management about the necessity and importance for ethical and robust data recording procedures. There is a longstanding multi-level and multi-organisation assurances procedures in place to ensure the consistency and robustness of crime data recording. These include (i) the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Counting Rules – provides guidance on the consistent recording of crime; (ii) police crime managers –

provide training, day-to-day assistance and verifying correct recording practices, (iii) Crime Registrars – provide regular internal audits; (iv) HMICS – provide external crime audits on crime recording procedures, and (v) SG statisticians – provide guidance and quality assure data submissions from the police service. HMICS published their most recent Review of Incident and Crime Recording in December 2013. The Scottish Crime Registrars Group provides a vehicle to discuss any issues arising with crime recording practices and to review and keep up-to-date the Scottish Crime Recording Standard. This also provides a vehicle to discuss crime recording with the other Justice organisations (COPFS and SCS).

This provides a robust and dynamic approach to setting a consistent standard for ethical and robust crime recording practices, and necessary audit features to ensure the adherence to the procedure and identify any issues for future action. The system is alert and focussed on the need for continuous improvement.

Scottish Government statisticians operate free of political influence within Analytical Services Division structure in the Scottish Government.

Principle 4: Sounds methods and assured quality

SPA publish performance data in its report to the SPA board. The Audit Scotland report (November 2013) noted in paragraph 114 that "the Scottish Government is concerned that information in performance reports to the Boards may not be consistent with information published in its statistical bulletin. As a result, performance report to the SPA Board is now more selective and has less trend and comparative information than those presented previously to joint boards and police authorities". Can you tell us about the dialogue you have had with SPA and/or Police Scotland about these reports. What changes have been made to these reports compared with previous years? (we would be happy to review documents if they are to hand)

There were no directly comparable reports for previous years, as Police Scotland and the SPA were not in existence in previous years. There was thus no requirement for reporting to the SPA in previous years. I believe that the reference above to previous reports is to reports that the individual 8 police forces submitted to the governance arrangements that existed prior to police reform. At the time of the statements above, the SPA were developing their performance reporting requirements for the police service. These have now been developed by the SPA – see link http://www.spa.police.uk/performancepages/.

I believe the above statement has conflated (i) the issue of SPA developing their performance reporting requirements for the new national police force; and (ii) the fact that Police Scotland has implemented a new system (SCOMIS) to collate police data at a national level. As is detailed elsewhere in this note, the Scottish Government and Police Scotland are working together to investigate the SCOMIS collation tool and its comparability to collation practices prior to police reform (which led to previous "Recorded Crime" publications).

Will the Technical Report include information about the quality of the statistics, such as the strengths and limitations of the stats, the caveats related to the fact the data source is live etc?

> We are not sure as to what you are referring to as the "technical report". The "Recorded Crime in Scotland" publication has and will continue to identify the strengths and limitations of the data presented. The report has always made clear that the recorded crime data is based on a 'frozen' snapshot of a live data set. Should you review the past publications, we would be happy to hear any thoughts on any improvements to such text.

> We believe that the reference above to the "technical report" refers to the output from our investigative work on the SCOMIS system and its comparability to collation practices prior to police reform. This is a separate exercise from the detailed regular quality assurance work that is undertaken on police data submitted to the Scottish Government. The technical report from our investigative work on the SCOMIS system is currently being written, and will fully document the processes followed and results found from this work.

> It may be useful to further discuss this question to ensure that we are talking about the same issue.

Do SG plan to get Police Scotland's approval for the technical report? Will they incorporate Police Scotland comments into the Technical Report?
Can we see a draft contents list for the technical report

> As is consistent with high quality practice for such exercises, we will be ensuring that report reflects an accurate understanding of the SCOMIS system by sharing draft reports with professional analytical staff from Police Scotland. It is perhaps useful to stress that we understand the term "technical report" relates to the investigation of the SCOMIS data collation system, and not in reference to the detailed regular quality assurance work that is undertaken on police data submitted to the Scottish Government.

> It may be useful to further discuss this question to ensure that we are talking about the same issue.

Principle 7: Resources
Do you think that the police recorded crime statistics are sufficiently resourced in SG?

> Yes – based on steady state activity.

Protocols 1-3

When will SG confirm the June 2014 publication date to users? How likely is the risk of non-publication by June, based on the response for Police Scotland on the queries and therefore the outcome of the QA exercise?

> If the bulletin is to be published in mid-June, we will confirm the date to users in the first week of May or earlier. If a June publication date becomes not possible, we will alert users immediately. There are 3 risks/pressures to the non-publication in June, each of which is being actively monitored and managed. These are:
> - Outcome of the investigation in the SCOMIS system – these are currently been written up. Upon completion of this exercise, we will assess the impact of this work on a June publication date.
> - Outcome of the quality assurance work on 2013-14 data submitted by Police Scotland. As we have only past the end of the financial year, this work is currently commencing.
> - Resources required for the UKSA re-assessment of "Recorded Crime in Scotland" .
>
> As can be seen from the above, this is a very resource intensive time for the production team. We are committed to the earliest possible publication of quality information. As can be seen from the above, Police Reform has placed extra demands on the production team this year.

Can we request a copy of your pre-release access list?

> There is no pre-release access list as yet for the publication of Recorded Crime in Scotland under the new policing landscape in existence after police reform. The persons to whom, and circumstances in which, pre-release access may be granted will be considered in advance of the publication of Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2013-14.
>
> We can provide a copy of the pre-release access list after publication of the 2013-14 publication. Would this be sufficient?

When do SG plan to update the Statement of Admin sources to reflect the change to the collection of Recorded Crime data?

> This will be reviewed upon publication of "Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013-14" and will reflect any such new practices. Our initial thoughts are that we will maintain text to help users understand past publications from legacy forces, and provide additional text to allow users to understand changes since the introduction of police reform in Scotland. Any thoughts would be gratefully received.