

**Quarterly recorded crime data – discussion note
22 September 2010**

Background

A need was identified from users of the recorded crime data, for more frequent, quarterly data. A JDIN project has been set up to take this forward and a short email discussion has been held to discuss current policy needs.

Issues

Data on recorded crimes is collected from the police on a cumulative quarterly basis. While we can make an estimate of the crimes which have been recorded in a quarter, this may not be accurate as crimes recorded can change as they progress through the justice system (from police to procurator fiscal etc). Over the course of the year, these will even out but this means we cannot provide accurate quarterly data and therefore we are unable to carry out any seasonal analysis.

To collect true quarterly data, we would have to alter the way we collect data from police forces which would allow us to back revise quarterly data. This would have to be discussed with ACPOS as this would place additional burden on police forces providing the data.

What do our policy colleagues want from the data?

Peter – Main interest is in looking at short term trends in crime, seasonality in crime patterns and the subsequent impact on the prison population. Less interest in clear up rates.

Richard – Quarterly data could be analytically useful but politically more risky. We may find ourselves defending small shifts in small numbers. Better trend analysis highlighting seasonal shifts would be useful.

Mary – May give a heads up to any developing major problem but as our relationships with police forces are reasonably good, we would probably find that information out anyway. This is likely to generate a huge number of PQs and as % change numbers can fluctuate, we may spend a lot of time defending these shifts. Doesn't feel there is a lot to gain from having quarterly data. Could commission a piece of research on seasonality of crime.

Catherine – Instinct is to stick with cumulative data. Working relationship with forces is such that any big issues would be communicated anyway. Collecting true quarters will mean it will take some time before we can build up a true picture of seasonality and we would have to educate the wider political audience to the fact that the shifts in rises and falls is what we were expecting and not a big crisis. Could commission a discrete piece of work to look at seasonality.

Other points for discussion

- ACPOS quarterly reports
- VRU knife crime collection

Conclusions from meeting on 22 September 2010 (attendees: [REDACTED])

Since the quarterly crime project was started, policy colleagues have carefully considered the use for quarterly recorded crime statistics. It is clear that the policy need is not longer as strong as it was initially.

The need for quarterly data for the work on prison population projections has been considered and it has been decided that the data provided by courts and crown office is probably more helpful in this work. While it was agreed that quarterly data would still be considered useful there is a reluctance for these to be published quarterly as this is likely to result in teams defending fluctuations in the data every 3 months – we're not really equipped to deal with this extra workload every three months.

It was agreed that quarterly publication of the statistics was probably not the best way forward, but we could look into producing quarterly data which would be made available in the annual statistical bulletin, or simply for internal use if wider publication was not considered sensible.

A need was identified though for a greater depth of statistics, for example more information on crimes which involve a knife. In January 2010, the VRU began a data collection on knife crime and they were going to be in touch with us (JAS) to discuss the handling of these statistics. As they have not yet done this, it was agreed that we (Sandra/Jan) would make contact with Will Linden at VRU to see how things are progressing and to arrange an update meeting to discuss the details of this collection. .

Actions for JAS:

1. Consider the current JDIN project and amend to take on a new focus. This is likely to have two strands:
 - Quarterly statistics for annual publication or internal use
 - More detailed information for the annual publication (knife crime and use of weapons)
2. Contact Will Linden at the VRU to discuss the work done on knife crimes so far and see how we can get involved.
3. ISD have been doing some work on A&E accident reporting – make contact with ISD re working with them to identify the information available on the use of weapons, for possible inclusion in the evidence base on knife crime.

Crime and Policing Analysis
Safer Communities Analytical Unit
Justice Analytical Services
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