

Article

# Improving the quality of fraud and computer misuse statistics in England and Wales: December 2025

Action plan to address Office for Statistics Regulation recommendations for improving the quality of fraud and computer misuse statistics.

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# 1 . Introduction to our action plan

At the Office for National Statistics (ONS), we aim to improve understanding about the extent and nature of fraud and computer misuse in our society by developing our statistics using all available sources. We publish figures on the levels and trends of fraud and computer misuse in England and Wales primarily based on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), and the recorded crime series.

Recorded crime is now collated by Report Fraud Analysis Services, formerly the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB), from three reporting bodies. These are Report Fraud (formerly Action Fraud) and two industry bodies – Cifas and UK Finance. Each source has different strengths and limitations, but together they provide a more comprehensive picture of fraud and computer misuse than could be obtained from either series alone.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) published a [review of fraud and computer misuse statistics](#) in April 2025 to complement their recent [review of the quality of police recorded crime statistics for England and Wales](#). The OSR reviewed the fraud and computer misuse subset of police recorded crime statistics separately, as the processes for recording these crimes are different from those used to record other crime types. The OSR also looked at the value of the fraud and computer misuse estimates from the CSEW. While the CSEW was identified as the most reliable data source on fraud and computer misuse, the OSR suggested several areas for quality improvements for the recorded crime series.

The OSR provided 10 recommendations as part of their framework for quality improvements and requested that the ONS, the Home Office and the City of London Police publish an action plan by the end of 2025.

## 2 . Recommendations and actions

This section outlines our action plan in collaboration with the Home Office, the City of London Police (CoLP) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to address the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR's) recommendations. As we progress through this plan and publish our findings, we will continue to update and provide evidence to users.

### Recommendation 1

#### Recommendation

To strengthen the quality assurance of Report Fraud (formerly Action Fraud) data, the City of London Police (CoLP) should, in conjunction with the Home Office, review its quality assurance arrangements and assure itself that these are consistent with its established practices for assuring police recorded crime data.

#### Response

The Home Office provides a set of recommended audits for Force Crime Registrars, which support quality assurance for police recorded crime (PRC) data. Fraud and cyber crime differ from other crime types in recording complexity; however, the fundamental quality assurance principles and audit approach remain broadly applicable.

The planned introduction of a new fraud and cyber crime reporting system, Report Fraud, will enable existing and additional Report Fraud Analysis Services staff within CoLP to undertake enhanced auditing and quality assurance. Report Fraud will include built-in automated audits, with an effective audit and risk calendar, which will evolve as the new system develops. CoLP will work together with the Home Office to compare Report Fraud quality assurance processes with Home Office recommended audits for PRC and identify gaps and areas of alignment.

### Recommendation 2

#### Recommendation

The Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Home Office and the City of London Police (CoLP) should work together to review the impact of the new fraud and cyber crime reporting system, Report Fraud, on data quality and provide public updates on plans for the system.

## Response

The new fraud and cyber crime reporting system, Report Fraud, was launched on 4 December 2025. The new system represents a major step forward in improving the quality, consistency and transparency of fraud and cyber crime data. A media campaign is scheduled for January 2026 to communicate publicly about the launch of the new service.

The service has a continuous improvement strategy, which will be communicated as part of a public communications plan, including reviews on data quality, victim journeys and an Independent Data Ethics Advisory Council (IDEAC) board.

Fraud and cyber crime partners will have the ability to review the impact of Report Fraud on their organisation and collaborate with CoLP to improve data quality through agreed metrics. Report Fraud will publish regular updates on system capabilities, benefits, and future developments. These improvements will aim to enhance user confidence, support robust statistical outputs, and align fraud and cyber crime recording with established standards for police recorded crime (PRC).

## Recommendation 3

### Recommendation

To inform the public about how well the City of London Police (CoLP) records fraud and computer misuse crimes, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) should consider inspecting the recording of these crime types.

### Response

HMICFRS acknowledges the importance of ensuring transparency and public confidence in how fraud and computer misuse crimes are recorded. As stated in their report, [How effectively do the police record crime?](#), for the public to have trust and confidence in policing, they need to know that when they report a crime, the police will record it accurately and without delay.

For the Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL 2025–27) inspection cycle, HMICFRS will be carrying out a dip sample of incidents and other reports (such as referrals from social services) in each force and assessing whether crimes have been recorded. Forces will no longer receive a graded judgment for crime data integrity (CDI). The findings of the sample audit will contribute to the "characteristics of good" and judgements for other core PEEL questions. If they have concerns about a force's performance in relation to crime recording, it may result in a full CDI audit.

However, because fraud and computer misuse are recorded through a different process to other crime types, they have not been subject to CDI audits previously.

Considering resource implications and alignment with other priorities, there are no plans to extend the crime types covered by crime recording assessment within current inspection activity. HMICFRS will continue to monitor data quality and recording standards through existing mechanisms and will keep under review extending these to cover fraud and computer misuse crimes in future inspection cycles.

## Recommendation 4

### Recommendation

To understand the scale of duplication across the Report Fraud, Cifas and UK Finance datasets, the City of London Police (CoLP) should work with Cifas and UK Finance to investigate overlap in fraud offences.

## **Response**

The previous fraud and cyber crime reporting system did not de-duplicate Report Fraud crime records from Cifas and UK Finance reports. As businesses and organisations can be members of both Cifas and UK Finance, there may be some report duplication. Crimes experienced by these victims may also be reported to Report Fraud directly.

The new system, Report Fraud, will take the same data from Cifas and put them through a conversion process to be accepted as an allegation of crime and recorded in accordance with Home Office Counting Rules. To ensure that Cifas report codes can be transferred to official Home Office fraud or cyber crime codes, a mapping exercise has begun. Once this has been completed, a cross-referencing exercise will then be run automatically against Report Fraud crime records. Any identified duplicates will be investigated with a manual check and, if confirmed, the Cifas report will be cancelled. When this process has been tested and evaluated, it is anticipated that a similar exercise will be carried out with UK Finance data.

Over time, this process will be streamlined for full automation. Working with Cifas and UK Finance, CoLP will use these capabilities to assess overlap and improve fraud data quality. Progress will be shared with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) so that we can update crime statistics users through our quality and methods guides.

## **Recommendation 5**

### **Recommendation**

To enhance the quality of police recorded fraud statistics, the City of London Police (CoLP) should start sending the Home Office record-level Report Fraud data as soon as possible. In the meantime, to support the Home Office's understanding of data quality, CoLP should send the Home Office quality indicators as part of its quarterly data submission.

### **Response**

The new service has been built with an important principle of improving the quality of data that are being collected and reported back to stakeholders. CoLP has also recognised the need for self-service to improve the timeliness and quality of the data being made available. They have prioritised the creation of a search facility focused on management information around all elements of the end-to-end journey for allegations of fraud and cyber crime. The Home Office Insights and Analysis teams will have access to this functionality from launch.

CoLP also plans to provide quality indicators as part of its quarterly data submissions. Longer term, the new system will deliver dashboards for important metrics for both CoLP and the Home Office. CoLP will continue to collaborate with the Home Office to define the required data level (for example, report-level, volumes by force, or crime type) necessary for understanding and assessing quality methodology information.

## **Recommendation 6**

### **Recommendation**

To strengthen its oversight of fraud and computer misuse data quality, the Home Office should work with the City of London Police (CoLP) to gain a better understanding of the force's quality assurance arrangements.

### **Response**

CoLP have created a quality assurance team that will be checking all the processes and systems that have been included within the new Report Fraud service. It is anticipated this team will work with the Home Office to strengthen its understanding of CoLP's comprehensive data and quality assurance processes. This includes training, systems, processes, ownership, roles, and responsibilities, ensuring robust governance and accountability. It forms part of a five-year plan designed to embed best practice and continuous improvement in fraud and computer misuse data quality. Through collaboration, CoLP will provide clarity on its quality assurance arrangements and demonstrate how these align with its end-to-end approach for maintaining data integrity and supporting reliable statistical outputs. In addition, the Home Office will be invited to board meetings for their input, to ensure engagement and awareness of CoLP data quality processes.

## Recommendation 7

### Recommendation

To communicate and assure users about all aspects of the quality of police recorded fraud and computer misuse data, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) should expand its published information on quality to cover:

- the unreliability of the police recorded fraud and computer misuse statistics as a measure of trends in crime, given the low proportion that is referred to Report Fraud
- the quality assurance arrangements of the City of London Police (CoLP), Cifas and UK Finance
- the nature of the UK Finance statistics (they are estimates)
- information on the review of the Counting Rules for Fraud and the rollout of Report Fraud, and their impact on the quality of the police recorded fraud and computer data and statistics

### Response

We plan to fully review how we communicate and present all aspects of the quality of the recorded crime series for fraud and computer misuse in our published information. Many of the changes that we plan to implement before the end of 2026 will be reflected in our updates to our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#) in July 2026. This will include:

- expanding the information we publish on the caveats users need to be aware of when using the recorded crime series for fraud and computer misuse statistics
- administrative bodies quality assurance processes
- information related to the Counting Rules for fraud and the roll out of Report Fraud

## Recommendation 8

### Recommendation

To enhance the coherence of fraud and computer misuse data, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Home Office and the City of London Police (CoLP) should work together to ensure that the Counting Rules for Fraud categories and Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) categories are aligned as closely as possible.

### Response

We have reviewed the information we provide in our publications on definitions and categories of CSEW fraud and computer misuse, as well as the descriptions of fraud and computer misuse offences in the recorded crime series. We have provided more detailed information on where categories across data sources align, and where they differ. This information is now presented in Appendix 3 of our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#). We will ensure that this information is updated if any changes are made to definitions and categories of fraud and computer misuse in the future.

Work is ongoing between the Home Office and CoLP registrars to review and reduce the current volume of codes for classifying cyber crime. This process has paused while the new service is being delivered. However, the design and implementation of the new technology can accommodate any future changes.

## Recommendation 9

### Recommendation

To improve the communication and understanding of fraud statistics, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) should clarify the definition of "police recorded fraud".

## Response

To improve the communication and understanding of fraud statistics, we have worked closely with the Home Office and City of London Police (CoLP) to update and clarify the definition of "police recorded fraud" in our publications. As additional fraud data from industry bodies (Cifas and UK Finance) are not classified by the police, fraud offences referred to Report Fraud are now defined as the recorded crime series, rather than police recorded crime. This is reflected in our [Crime in England and Wales bulletin](#), published on 23 October 2025.

## Recommendation 10

### Recommendation

To continue to add insight on the scale and nature of fraud and computer misuse, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) should add additional commentary to its bulletins on these crime types.

### Response

Our [Nature of fraud and computer misuse in England and Wales article](#) provides additional commentary on the extent and nature of fraud and computer misuse. While accompanying datasets are released annually, this publication was last updated on 26 September 2022. We plan to release the next update on 26 March 2026.

## 3 . Future developments

We expect some of these actions to be implemented for the publication of our Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2026 bulletin and updated user guide, which are scheduled to be published in July 2026. We will provide an update on progress at that time.

## 4 . Related links

### [Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 23 October 2025

Crime against households and people aged 16 years and over, using data from police recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and police recorded crime.

### [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2025](#)

Methodology | Last revised 5 November 2025

Quarterly statistics on crime levels and trends in England and Wales, including detailed information on datasets used to compile our crime statistics.

## 5 . Cite this article

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