

Motoring Offences statistics development plan

As with any organisation, PSNI evolves in terms of its purpose, aims and objectives. While major changes are infrequent, subtle changes come about through changes to legislation, policy directives and implementation of new or more cost effective IT solutions. In addition, Statistics Branch strives for continuous improvement in terms of our processes, products and the value of our statistics, resulting in ongoing development in these areas.

As producers of official statistics we have a responsibility to keep abreast of developments and user requirements, both internal and external, which will impact on the analysis that we carry out and the information we disseminate to our users. To this end, if you have any feedback or ideas in relation to the development of the motoring offences statistics please let us know by emailing statistics@psni.police.uk

Section 1 of this document includes details of our ongoing development of the motoring offences statistics while Section 2 outlines specific upcoming changes we are aware of that will impact on the production and provision of these. This is a live document that will be updated on an ad-hoc basis as we implement improvements and when we become aware of proposed changes to data supply or identify a new source of data.

There are a number of issues that need to be taken into account when developing our products and processes and dealing with changes to our data supply. The list below should not be considered complete but used as a starting point. And not all issues will apply to all changes.

Engagement

- Liaison with PSNIs Information and Communication Services (ICS) and the project team should happen at the earliest opportunity
- Identify and agree Single Point of Contact
- Agree feedback process with ICS
- Agree data specifications and format
- Discuss requirements and expectations with users
- Raise concerns through appropriate channels

Timings

- When will the system or legislative change occur?
- When will this impact on data supply?
- Ensure as far as possible that frequency and timing of supply meets requirements
- Agree supply of test data if appropriate

Data quality

- Assess quality implications for data and outputs
- Document quality improvements or limitations in user guides
- Determine impact in terms of coherence and comparability
- Check new data against other internal and external published data e.g. PSNI, RSP, DoJ
- Update QAAD or equivalent

Continuity

- Will new systems incorporate old data? (Migration of historic records)
- Will old & new sources be merged, appended or analysed separately

Section 1 Continuous development of the motoring offences statistics

The following are examples of current or short-term continuous development and improvement being implemented by Statistics Branch in the production of the motoring offences statistics:

- Information requests are reviewed on an ongoing basis to identify the most frequently used data and increase publication of such data where possible, for example top speeds detected has been added to our monthly reports.
- The quality and consistency of the street level information is being assessed and developed, with assistance of data inputters in the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre (FPPC), with a view to making it more publicly available.
- The presentation of data is being continually reviewed and improved to make it more accessible and user friendly, for example thematic maps have been added to the regular reports, with an interactive map developed in conjunction with NINIS. More medium to longer term areas for development include the introduction of infographics as well as the production of publications in HTML format, which will require further investigation.
- Ongoing liaison with key users and stakeholders including face to face meetings (for example with Roads Policing Inspectors) as well as continuing to keep users informed of developments and proactively seeking feedback, for example using mailing lists and identified contacts.
- Continued development of the reports to provide context around the figures, for example linking to relevant statistics or explaining reasons for changes and trends if possible.

Section 2 Potential specific developments affecting motoring offences data

The major developments expected in terms of motoring offences are outlined below and most will require legislative changes and close collaboration with our partner organisations to implement, particularly the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). As a result it is difficult to quantify when such changes are likely to be implemented however, users will be informed of progress as soon as possible via our website, statistical publications and this development plan.

CURRENT / SHORT-TERM DEVELOPMENTS

1. National Statistics Assessment of motoring offences statistics

The PSNI motoring offences statistics are currently undergoing assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to determine if they fully comply with the Official Statistics Code of Practice and meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. Following an initial assessment and user consultation, OSR have proposed that if specific requirements are met in full by March 2020, the statistics will be awarded National Statistics status.

Implications for Statistics Branch:

As a result of the assessment, Statistics Branch will:

- Review and develop motoring offences outputs with a view to improving and expanding the information currently presented.
- Seek opportunities to increase the current user base and engagement in relation to these statistics.
- Improve coherence of the statistics by analysing and cross-referencing related internal and external information.
- Publish a data development plan covering short, medium and longer term developments.
- Consider how it can be more innovative in the presentation of the statistics.

2. Implementation of the Graduated Driver Licence by Department for Infrastructure (DfI)

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act (NI) 2016 ('the Act') received Royal Assent in March 2016 and makes provision for the introduction of Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) in Northern Ireland. It is planned that GDL will be introduced in late 2020.

GDL will introduce:

- A Programme of Training for learner drivers/riders which must be evidenced in a Logbook;

- A mandatory minimum learning period (MMLP) of 6 months (drivers only);
- Post-test new driver period of 2 years (to align with the New Drivers Order), during which novice drivers/riders will be subject to lower alcohol limits and must display a post-test plate;
- A time bound passenger restriction for those new drivers under 24 years old for the first 6 months after passing their test (drivers only).

Other changes are required to give effect to the Act, namely:

- Removal of the 45mph speed limit for learner and newly qualified drivers;
- Allowing learner drivers and riders to take lessons on motorways, when accompanied by an approved driving / motorcycle instructor (ADI/AMI).

Implications for Statistics Branch:

- Changes to offence codes and associated systems and scripts to extract and categorise data, to include:
 - Changes to existing offences relating to learner / new drivers e.g. restricted period will be extended to two years, lower alcohol limits.
 - Removal of existing offences relating to learner / new drivers e.g. 45mph speed limit will be abolished.
 - Introduction of additional offences for learner / new drivers e.g. passenger restrictions.
- Likely increase in the number of offences related to learner / new drivers.

MEDIUM-TERM DEVELOPMENTS

3. Reduction of drink drive limit

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill was introduced to the NI Assembly in May 2014 and passed in early January 2016. The amendments have not yet been implemented due to the unavailability of a suitably tested and approved device capable of measuring the lower levels of alcohol. A UK national project team has been established and expects to have suitable approved devices available to market by early 2021.

The amendment incorporated changes to current legislation on drink driving including:

- Replacing the current prescribed drink drive limit with two new lower limits, each applicable to different categories of driver licence holder
- The introduction of a roadside evidential breath test

Both these measures are dependent upon the new approved devices; however the following measure could be introduced independently:

- Removal of the statutory option (whereby someone detected with a breath reading which is higher than the prescribed limit but lower than 50mcg/100ml can opt for a blood or urine specimen to replace the breath test).

Implications for Statistics Branch:

- Changes to offence codes and associated systems and scripts to extract and categorise data.
- Changes and additions to how the offender is dealt with to be analysed and reported e.g. new limits, course participation, fixed penalty notices.
- New equipment for preliminary / evidential breath tests could be introduced, which will change the amount and type of information recorded.

LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENTS

4. Creation of a Fixed Penalty for careless driving offence

Contrary to England and Wales which is governed by the Road Traffic Act 1988, there is currently no legislative provision that permits police to issue a Fixed Penalty for the offence of careless driving in Northern Ireland. The composite careless driving category as reported currently in the motoring offences statistics comprises the specific offence of careless driving as well as a range of other offences including breach of a traffic sign, failing to drive in the nearside lane and failing to signal.

PSNI wish to avail of a Fixed penalty option to deal with the careless driving offence in NI however the suspension of the institutions in January 2017 prevented approval of the necessary legislative changes. With the restoration of the NI Assembly on 11th January 2020, it is likely that this will be progressed in due course.

Implications for Statistics Branch:

- Changes to offence codes and associated systems and scripts to extract and categorise data.
- Likely increase in the number of offences in this category.