

## NSPCC response to the UK Statistics Authority assessment of Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland statistics

September 2014

NSPCC welcome the opportunity to respond to the UK Statistics Authority assessment of police recorded crime statistics in Northern Ireland. We routinely access published recorded crime data on the nature and frequency of sexual and physically violent crimes committed against children and young people; and the extent to which such cases are able to proceed within the criminal justice system to assist our policy development and service planning. In 2011, NSPCC accessed PSNI recorded crime data relating to the nature and scale of sexual and physical violence against children in Northern Ireland. We found that sexual offences against children accounted for **56%** of all sexual crime reported in 2008/10 and **16%** of all physically violent offences were committed against children.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, NSPCC publish a report annually called *How Safe Are Our Children*<sup>2</sup> which draws together the most robust and up-to-date child protection data that exists across each of the four nations in the UK. It sets out 20 different indicators and for each indicator we comment on why the measure is important, its limitations and data availability and comparability. The report also includes a section summarising the factors that influence number of recorded sexual offences against children (indicator 4); and the number of recorded cruelty and neglect offences against children (indicator 5).

The research outlined has helped us identify the following limitations of police recorded crime data which we feel should be addressed.

- Valuable data relating to victims who decide not to proceed with a criminal case is no longer routinely recorded in crime statistics. Cases can remain undetected for a variety of reasons; there is no identifiable offender, the victim denies or retracts allegation, refuses to co-operate with the initial investigation or then withdraws at a later stage. Developing recorded crime categories to take account of the key reasons for non detection would provide valuable information on case progression which is currently not available.<sup>3</sup>
- Additionally, as recorded crime data only includes offender age, gender and relationship to the victim in detected cases, essential information on the nature and type of crime against children and young people remains unknown in a vast majority of cases (75–80% of cases in NI).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bunting, L. (2011) *Sexual and Physical Violence against Children in Northern Ireland: A Statistical Overview of Recorded Crime 2008 -10* (London: NSPCC) available at:

[http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/policyandpublicaffairs/northernireland/sexual\\_physical\\_abuse\\_statistics\\_wdf86001.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/policyandpublicaffairs/northernireland/sexual_physical_abuse_statistics_wdf86001.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Jütte, S., Bentley, H., Miller, P. and Jetha, N. (2014) *How safe are our children?* (London: NSPCC). Available at: [www.nspcc.org.uk/howsafe](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/howsafe)

<sup>3</sup> Bunting, L. (2011) *Sexual and Physical Violence against Children in Northern Ireland: A Statistical Overview of Recorded Crime 2008 -10* (London: NSPCC) at 28

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

- For cases that do reach the courts, figures are collected for the number of defendants and convicted offenders. Figures from police and court sources cannot be directly compared as one crime may be committed by more than one offender and one offender may commit more than one crime.
- Consistent recorded crime data set here compared with the rest of the UK would better help us understand the increased vulnerability of child victims; and the nature and frequency of children who offend, who require greater vigilance in terms of their protection.

I hope these comments are useful and please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss in further detail.

Yours faithfully,  
Orla O'Hagan