

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016

Dear Mr Lewis,

We are writing to you to express our concerns about weaknesses in the reporting of road collision and casualty information (STATS19) by some police forces.

Road casualty statistics are National Statistics, collated and published by the Department for Transport, and used for a wide range of purposes. The data come from individual police forces, specified by the Home Office in the Annual Data Requirement. This year, more than ever, it has become apparent that the system is not getting the priority or resources from the police that it requires. As a result, important road safety statistical publications from DfT have been in jeopardy or qualified.

Earlier this year it looked as if the DfT's summary Reported Road Casualties Great Britain for 2015, published in June 2016, would have to appear "without Dorset". It was only after pressure and considerable additional work by DfT that Dorset Police managed to deliver the data. This made it starkly clear that a single police force could disrupt these national statistics.

Although that particular difficulty was overcome, the general problem has not gone away. In August 2016, the DfT was forced to publish estimated rather than actual casualty data for Quarter 1. This was due to seven forces, including the Met and Greater Manchester, providing nil or incomplete data. Although some estimation has been required for some previous periods, the scale was unprecedented and it was the first time that the DfT had felt it necessary to name the forces.

These reports are critically important. They are the statistical foundation upon which billions of pounds worth of investment in national and local highway infrastructure, casualty prevention engineering, road safety and public health education and training work is based. Highways England, Local Highway Authorities and government departments such as Public Health all rely upon this data.

The details about collisions, injuries and attendant circumstances can only be collected by the police, hence the statutory duty for them to provide the data to the DfT and, through them, to all Highway Authorities.

Perhaps a key issue is that the police are not the main end users of this data and, therefore, have less investment in its timely and accurate delivery? This also leads to wide variations in the transfer of the same data to Local Highway Authorities. Some police forces take this very seriously and work closely with their partner agencies to good effect. Others seem unconcerned about the quality and timeliness of sharing this essential data as it is apparently "not a priority". Certainly provision of this data is a statutory duty but it does not appear on the Home Office and Inspector of Constabulary indicators – perhaps it should?

The public, meanwhile, rightly have high and growing expectations that safety on our roads will be improved by government and local highway authorities and public agencies including the police themselves. It is impossible to achieve a safe road system without timely and accurate data, the provision of which is currently deteriorating as so many police forces offer widely differing levels of service on this issue.

You will be aware that a new computerised reporting system, to replace the manual STATS19 forms, has been in development over almost 10 years. CRASH will greatly improve the speed of reporting and accuracy of the data. Development was funded centrally and, if adopted by all forces, it has minimal operational cost for individual police forces.

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About half of police forces have adopted CRASH and are in the process of migrating their data and putting in place the software and other equipment needed. However, many of the remaining forces have decided to develop an adaptation of their Niche crime reporting system to enable it also to provide the same data transfer as CRASH. This development has not yet been completed. There are some key forces, including the Metropolitan and Greater Manchester Police that, as we understand it, have decided to develop a totally new system.

After years of development which involved the police, it is very disappointing that some forces have not adopted CRASH. There does not seem to be an appreciation that so much investment and so many other agencies depend on the data that only the police can provide.

We ask that you use your office and influence to resolve this unsatisfactory situation as quickly as possible so that the delivery by the police of reliable and accurate collision and casualty data can be resumed without further delay.

We have also sent this letter to the Road Safety Minister, Andrew Jones MP, seeking his support on this critical issue.



Honor Byford  
Chair  
Road Safety GB



Mike Ashworth  
Chair, Transport Board  
ADEPT



David Davies  
Executive Director  
PACTS

Road Safety**GB**



Copy to  
CC Suzette Davenport, NPCC Roads Policing lead

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