Extending the British Crime Survey to children: a report on the methodological and development work

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TNS-BMRB and the Home Office
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1 Introduction

In 2006, the then Home Secretary Charles Clarke invited Professor Adrian Smith (a former president of the Royal Statistical Society) to chair an independent cross-party review of Home Office crime statistics (The Smith Review). The purpose of the review was to consider the findings of an interim report on a review of crime statistics carried out by the Statistics Commission and advise on what changes could be made to the production and release of crime statistics to increase public trust in the figures.

Both reviews broadly endorsed the quality of Home Office crime statistics, including the British Crime Survey (BCS). However, they also highlighted concerns about the coverage of the BCS because it was restricted to measuring crimes experienced by adults resident in households. The Statistics Commission’s interim report called for the exclusion of those aged under 16 years to be re-examined and the Smith Review went on to recommend the survey should be extended to cover those aged under 16.

The Smith Review highlighted a number of issues requiring further consideration before an extension of the BCS to children could be incorporated into the main survey, these were the:

- handling of parental consent;
- effect on the main survey;
- age of the youngest children interviewed (the review suggested that the survey should be extended as far below 16 as practical); and,
- handling of different conceptions of crime victimisation amongst children of different ages.

As part of its response to the two reviews, the Home Office commissioned an independent methodological study to examine the feasibility of covering children (under 16) as part of the BCS and to outline different options for obtaining
nationally representative estimates of crimes against this group as well as estimates of crime-related perceptions\textsuperscript{1}.

This methodological study made the following recommendations:

- the sample of children should be obtained from households already participating in the main BCS sample;
- a sample of between 2,000 and 6,000 children would be sufficient to obtain robust national estimates;
- questionnaire modules containing questions which children might not be comfortable answering in the presence of an interviewer or parent should be administered using Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI);
- children from the age of 10 years old could be included in the survey;
- there should be a ‘core’ interview where the same questions are asked of all children;
- the interview should be no longer than 20 minutes in length;
- screening for children in households selected for the main BCS sample should be carried out in the same way as screening adults in the main survey; and,
- children could either be interviewed using computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) or a paper questionnaire. CAI should employ a combination of computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI) and audio-CASI.

In addition to these methodological recommendations the study also highlighted a number of practical and ethical issues to be considered when implementing the survey among children. These are described briefly below.

\textit{Parental role in the consent process:} Consideration on how best to approach parents, to ensure they would be content for their child to take part in the survey while at the same time obtaining their support to uphold their child’s right to privacy and confidentiality.

\textit{Ensuring that children are active in the consent process:} Procedures should be put in place to ensure children give informed consent on whether or not to participate in the survey.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1} ‘British Crime Survey: options for extending the coverage to children and people living in communal establishments’, \url{http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/horr06c.pdf}}
**Presence of the parent during the interview:** Thought would need to be given to discussing with the parent and the child the appropriateness of the parent being in the same room (as opposed to in the house but not in the same room).

**Interviewer and respondent dynamics:** Careful briefing of interviewers would be required to ensure that children felt comfortable communicating with the interviewer. For example, children should not feel obligated or uncomfortable if they wished to end the interview early or did not want to answer a particular question.

**Confidentiality and disclosure of harm:** Given the topics expected to be covered in the children’s survey, careful consideration should be given to how children are briefed about confidentiality and organisational policy with regard to disclosure of harm in extreme circumstances i.e. if a respondent reveals that they are, or are in danger of, being at serious risk of harm.

On the basis of the recommendations from the methodological study the Home Office decided that:

- the under 16s survey should adopt the same broad ‘model’ as the main BCS with regard to measuring victimisation experience;
- a total of around 4,000 interviews with children should be conducted each year as part of the main BCS;
- the survey would be conducted using a mix of CAPI, CASI and audio-CASI;
- only one 10 to 15 year old would be interviewed in each household;
- a comprehensive programme of research, development and testing should be undertaken to:
  A. develop a core questionnaire suitable to be used with children
  B. develop and test survey fieldwork procedures, data collection and interview materials
  C. assess the impact of the children’s survey on the main BCS response rates
  D. consult potential users of the data from the children’s survey on the proposals to extend the BCS to children and other critical issues.

Agencies tendering for the 2008/09 to 2010/11 BCS fieldwork contract were asked to submit their proposals for extending the BCS to children on the basis of the above requirements. In 2007 the selected bidder, BMRB Social Research commenced an extensive process of development work, which included the following:
• in-depth qualitative research with 10 to 15 year olds to explore children’s understanding of crime and the vocabulary they used to describe their experience of victimisation;

• cognitive testing and developing draft questions to develop a question-set that collected comparable information on victimisation as the adult survey but used questions and language that was adapted for children in this age-range;

• in-home piloting where the questionnaire was administered by interviewers and observed by researchers who explored respondent’s understanding of survey items;

• a small scale field-trial of the survey in a real fieldwork context; and,

• a large scale file-trial, primarily to assess the impact on response rates to the main adult survey of extending the survey to children.

As part of this development work the Home Office also carried out a National Statistics consultation in May 2008 on its proposal to extend the BCS to cover children. The consultation invited users of the BCS to submit their views and comments on extending the survey to children².

The programme of research, development and testing for the BCS extension to children was successfully completed in December 2008 with the under 16s survey then included within the BCS main survey from January 2009.

The primary aim of the BCS under 16 extension is to provide nationally representative estimates of personal victimisation among children aged 10-15 years resident in households in England and Wales. Secondary aims include gathering information on a number of crime-related topics including anti-social behaviour, street gangs, drinking behaviour, drug taking and bullying. As with the adult survey, the BCS under 16s extension will provide a rich source of data to inform policy development and allow criminological research about the experiences and perceptions of children and crime.

2 Review of literature and implications for question design

2.1 Introduction

A review of the existing research literature on children participating in surveys was conducted to consider the issues raised and implications for question design. A short review was also conducted of existing and previous surveys of children and young people. This review assisted in designing the overall structure of the BCS under-16 questionnaire, identifying draft survey items and providing guidance for the wording.

Examples of surveys reviewed included:

- 1992 British Crime Survey
- 1998 Youth Lifestyles Survey
- Young People’s Social Attitudes Survey
- Offending, Crime and Justice Survey
- Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People

2.2 Differential cognitive ability

In a review of the available literature on children as respondents to surveys and the influence of cognitive development on response quality, Borgers et al (2000) concluded that children’s cognitive ability develops over a series of stages increasing in complexity with age.

Thus, even within the relatively narrow age band of 10 to 15 year olds chosen for the BCS extension, a range of cognitive levels and ability among child respondents would be expected. This might suggest the need for different questions or questionnaires for different age groups as a single questionnaire might not entirely embrace the cognitive abilities encountered across the selected age range. However, the disadvantage of having different questionnaires is that it would be problematic with regard to questionnaire maintenance and data analyses. It was therefore decided to develop a single questionnaire that could be comprehended by the vast majority of children in the whole age-range.

The questionnaire development process was therefore designed to include children of different ages and of different backgrounds. For example, this included interviewing children at primary school (year 5 and 6, ages 10 and 11) as well as older children at secondary school (14 and 15 year olds).

However, outside of the core questions on victimisation asked of everyone it was decided to adopt a modular approach. Modules are assigned at random, with the
exception of personal safety module, which is only asked of older age-groups (children aged 13 to 15).

Borgers et al. also noted that children’s understanding is significantly different from that of adults, in that children are inclined to be much more literal in their interpretation of words and questions. This led them to recommend that both survey questions and instruction remain simple; that wording remain unambiguous; and that visual stimuli and response cards be used to make survey tasks more concrete and interesting for children. These approaches were adopted throughout the development of the questionnaire used to extend the BCS to children.

2.3 Children’s ability to recall events accurately

However in relation to memory and recall, Marin et al (1979) found that in some respects children performed as well as adults. They gave a recall task to six year olds, nine year olds, thirteen year olds and adults. They were asked to recall as much as they could about an incident, answer 20 objective questions and pick out a photograph. They found an age related increase in the number of items of information recalled during free recall, however the youngest participants made fewer errors compared with the adults. They also found no age related difference in the accuracy of answers to the 20 objective questions, with all age groups answering three-quarters of objective questions correctly. The finding that children report answers as accurately as adults has been replicated in other studies (e.g. Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2003).

The results of research highlighting the similarity in the quality of data for adults and children collected through free recall is of special significance to the BCS where respondents are asked to recall experiences of possibly criminal incidents over the past 12 months.

2.4 Overcoming issues of suggestibility in children

Previous research suggests that while children are able to remember and recall events they have witnessed accurately, the ways in which they are questioned may need to be adapted in order to ensure the veracity of what is reported. Goodman and Reed (1986) found that using objective questioning with children as young as six was just as effective as it was with adults, however children were more likely than adults to give incorrect answers when presented with a misleading or suggestive question.

Lyon (2005) examined the effects of different styles of questioning on suggestibility in children. He was specifically interested in extreme cases where information needed to be accurately obtained from child victims of abuse. Lyon suggests that a middle ground needs to be found between a ‘hands off’ (free
recall) and a highly coercive approach. Lyon suggested using who, what, where, when, why and how questions that focus on different aspects of an event. This is good with respondents who have difficulty generating details on their own through free recall. For example, ‘what was the man wearing?’ is not as hands off as a free recall question like ‘what happened?’, but is not too specific like ‘what colour were the man’s shoes?’ Furthermore a question like ‘can you tell me very briefly about the incident?’ may not elicit as much information in a child as it does in an adult so needs to be followed up with more specific questions such as ‘did it happen in this area?’.

Lyon found ‘what’ questions to be better than yes/no questions as they allow the child to tell the details rather than the interviewer thinking up the details and eliciting whether or not they are correct.

Lyon recommended three rules to follow when interviewing children:

- keep questions as general as possible;
- use who, what, where, when, why and how questions and avoid recognition questions (those starting with did, was, and were); and
- Let the child supply the details.

The National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) also developed guidance on the use of non-leading prompts in order to reduce suggestion when interviewing children. The NICHD protocol suggests two types of prompts that can be used with children to elicit information without suggestion. These are time segmentation prompts e.g. ‘what happened next’ and cue questions e.g. ‘You said you..., tell me more about that’.

This suggested that interviewers be given specific guidance on how to record the open ended descriptions of victimisation incidents provided by BCS respondents and the need to use additional prompts to illicit further information from children in a non-directive or coercive way.

2.5 Respondent – interviewer relationship

Children are encouraged from a very young age to listen to, comply with and respect adults and are surrounded by adults such as parents and teachers who have the power to command their actions. In the context of the survey interview situation children may view an adult interviewer as someone who can order and control and themselves as having lower status and lacking power. According to Eder and Fingerson (2002) because of their age and relative position in society children always take the role of the researched and never the researcher. In the interview situation children may feel themselves obliged to provide answers to questions when in fact they do not know the answer.
It is important that an interviewer establishes a collaborative, non-directive and non-judgemental relationship when interviewing respondents who are children. Research with children should be conducted in a way that makes them feel comfortable expressing their own opinions and not obligated to answer questions. Clear procedures should be established with respondents so that they feel empowered not to answer specific questions if they do not wish to, or to terminate the interview should they choose to.

This pointed to the need for BCS Interviewers to be given training on how to establish a constructive rapport with children and for procedures to be incorporated into the interview situation, which would give children control over how and if they provided responses.

2.6 Victimisation and bullying

Previous research has demonstrated that children are at a higher risk of victimisation than adults. When the BCS ran a self-completion survey of children aged 12-15 in 1992 (based on a sub-set of six incident types experienced when the child was away from the home) it found 60 per cent of the sample recalled an incident in the previous 6-8 months. While not directly comparable with the adult estimates, these were substantially higher than victimisation rates found for adults. More recently, a bespoke module of questions on the core BCS asking about theft of mobile phones has shown that children had higher rates of victimisation than adults (Flatley and Moon, eds, 2009).

The 2006 Offending Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) also found those aged 10 to 15 were more likely to have been a victim of either personal theft or of assault than 16 to 25 year-olds in the 12 months prior to interview (30% versus 24%, Roe and Ashe, 2006). However, the authors noted that incidents reported to the survey included a significant number of minor transgressions which while technically illegal would be unlikely to have come to the attention of the police (Roe and Ashe, 2006).

Conversely, research has shown that children can also be involved in serious incidents of violence, theft and damage to personal property that go beyond simple play and squabbles. These can result in serious injury, theft and damage which are never reported to the police because they involve siblings or fellow pupils. Finklehor and Dzuiba-Leatherman (1994) conclude that children suffer from extreme types of violence that are traditionally excluded from criminological concern, for example physical attacks by siblings.

Distinguishing between incidents reported by children that can be classified as crimes and those that appear to be non-criminal is a serious challenge to producing any credible estimate of child victimisation. Applying accepted standards of behaviour among adults to children is highly problematic given the
differences in normal behaviour in adult and childhood. For example, applying existing legal definitions of offences to those incidents reported by children can result in minor incidents, common in the context of childhood behaviour, being categorised as criminal. Research which has adopted this approach has reported very high levels of victimisation amongst children. For example, a survey conducted by the Howard League for Penal Reform (2007) estimated that 95% of 10 to 15 year olds had been a victim of crime over a 12 month period.

The complexities of producing credible counts of crime using crime surveys were highlighted very early on by Hough and Mayhew (1983) in the first ever BCS report on the 1981 survey.

What is it that crime surveys are counting - crimes defined by criminal law? Or as defined by the police? Or as properly defined - however that may be? Deciding whether an incident is a crime can be far from straightforward. The dividing line between 'borrowing' and theft is a fine one. And when does an assault count as an offence? If a person punches a stranger in the face, this smacks of criminal aggression - unless we are told, for example, that the two are on a rugby pitch, or are school children. Pinpointing the total volume of crime is as problematic as, say, estimating the total volume of 'illness' in the country: what counts as crime, or as illness, depends on the reason for counting.

Differences in victimisation rates across different surveys highlight the need for a consistent set of criteria for categorising incidents into those which are included into a total count of BCS crime experienced by children and those that are not.

The core BCS survey currently uses a detailed offence coding system, which approximates to the way in which the police record offences. The benefit of this system means each offence reported is reviewed on an individual basis and is coded systematically after the interview takes place. A description of the coding and classification procedures that were devised following the large scale field trial for the incidents reported by children appears in Section Seven of this report.
3 Qualitative research

3.1 Introduction

Drawing on the results from the literature review, BMRB’s Qualitative Research Unit undertook a programme of qualitative research to inform the development of the under 16s questionnaire and other fieldwork documents and materials.

3.2 Aims

The purpose of the qualitative research was to build up a better understanding of how children understand crime and the vocabulary surrounding it, and how their experiences of crime may differ from that of adults. This was designed to inform the development of specific survey questions.

The research was divided into two stages. The aim of Stage One was to explore children’s understanding and experience of victimisation with a particular emphasis on low-level incidents as this would inform where to set the boundaries between criminal and non-criminal incidents.

Specifically Stage One research explored:

- children’s understanding of crime and what constitutes a crime;
- the context in which children are victims of crime e.g. at school, at home, in after school clubs and the extent to which the context shapes their experiences;
- the nature of crimes committed against children and relationships with perpetrators;
- who children turn to if they are a victim of crime. In particular to understand how willing children were discussing their experiences with other adults or with their parents present as this may have implications for data collection;
- the vocabulary and language used by children to refer to incidents that happen to them;
- how the above issues vary for children of different ages; and,
• how well young people recall incidents, and the likely issues that might arise from having a set reference period e.g. the twelve months prior to interview.

The objectives of Stage Two of the qualitative work was to explore understanding around a broader range of crime-related issues (mainly attitudinal in nature):

• experiences of and attitudes towards the police;
• feelings of safety;
• crime prevention and personal security;
• perceptions of street gangs;
• experience of bullying;
• perception of issues around anti-social behaviour; and,
• lifestyle and risky behaviours.

3.3 Research design and achieved sample

Research design

Both stages of the qualitative research employed focus group discussions.

Each focus group discussion was composed of six young people made up of three friendship pairs – children who attended the focus groups brought along one of their friends to the same group. Friendship pairs were chosen to help create an environment where children felt more comfortable sharing ideas, experiences and opinions with other members of the group.

The groups were designed to be exploratory and interactive in form. The structure and flow of the discussion were controlled using a topic guide, which allowed questioning that was responsive to the issues which arose during the course of the groups.

The groups lasted up to 90 minutes. They were digitally recorded, with permission (given by all participants), transcribed and then subjected to a content analysis (using Matrix Mapping), which involved systematically sifting, summarising and sorting the verbatim material according to key issues and themes within a thematic framework. Further details of the research process used may be found in Appendix I.
### Achieved sample

Stage One was made up of nine qualitative focus group discussions each with six children aged 10 to 15 giving a total of 54 participants.

The focus groups took place in London, Coventry and Leeds, and included one inner-city location in London and one rural area (outside of Leeds).

The groups were divided according to age, gender and social economic grade (SEG), and were organised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>1 MIXED SEG</td>
<td>1 MIXED SEG</td>
<td>1 C2DE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>1 MIXED SEG</td>
<td>1 MIXED SEG</td>
<td>1 ABC1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>1 MIXED SEG</td>
<td>1 MIXED SEG</td>
<td>1 C2DE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
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Stage Two was made up of six qualitative focus group discussions each with six children aged 10 to 15 giving a total of 36 participants. The discussions were held in Ealing, West London, with children being recruited from the Pinner, Uxbridge and Harrow areas of North and West London.

All groups were divided according to age and social economic grade (SEG) and were organised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>SEG</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>1 ABC1, 1 C2DE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>1 ABC1, 1 C2DE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>1 ABC1, 1 C2DE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
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### 3.4 Findings

#### 3.4.1 Understanding of crime

Participants’ understanding of what constitutes a crime was explored and participants in all age groups often referred to the law, spontaneously using the terms ‘breaking the law’ or ‘against the law’. Linked with this was a more general awareness of what was right and wrong, where crime was understood to be doing something that was ‘wrong’ or that ‘you’re not supposed to do’. Legal repercussions and punishments were seen to indicate whether or not something
was a crime, and crimes were described as ‘something you can get arrested for’, or ‘something which you get a criminal record from’. A number of participants sought to explain that a crime ‘hurts someone’, is ‘not nice’ or ‘affects other people’ in a negative way.

When asked to provide examples of crimes, more serious and violent crimes were mentioned first, such as murder, robbery, mugging and kidnapping. However on probing a further range of crimes were mentioned, including stealing, burglary, vandalism, drug dealing, trespassing, speeding, and driving a vehicle without a licence. Some children also spontaneously referred to bullying as possibly being in scope.

3.4.2 Sources of information about crime

A variety of sources were quoted when participants explained how they gained their understanding of crime.

Knowledge of local crime came from word of mouth through friends, family and neighbours and from seeing police incident signs describing recent crimes committed in the local area. The national media, including news programmes, newspapers and the internet provided information on crimes that took place outside the local area. Television soaps were also frequently mentioned as providing young people with an understanding of crime, for example including episodes of crime in *EastEnders* and programmes such as *The Bill*. Finally, participants had been educated on issues around drug crime and racism at school, in Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) and Religious Education (RE) lessons, school assemblies and through educational visits by local police officers to the school.

3.4.3 Perceived level of seriousness of incidents

A number of different factors were considered in order to determine the seriousness of an incident and to decide whether or not it constituted a crime. These included:

- **Location of the incident** - Generally the young people considered an incident to be less serious if it took place in school or in the home than if it occurred outside of school grounds or in cyberspace. The reasoning behind this was that the presence of teachers and family members were perceived as systems of jurisdiction, whereby adults had the authority to punish perpetrators and protect victims without incidents becoming serious enough to be considered ‘crimes’. In contrast, in locations outside of school and in cyberspace, it was less likely that adults in authority would be present, rendering victims more vulnerable and incidents more serious. For this reason incidents in school playgrounds were generally considered...
by the young people to be wrong but not crimes. However, in contrast, there were some of the view that hitting someone else was a crime, regardless of where the incident takes place;

- **Who the perpetrator was** – If the perpetrator was a friend or family member an incident was deemed less serious, particularly if they were of the same age as the victim. Reference was made to children and young people ‘messing about’ with their peers as a ‘joke’, and such incidents were not considered crimes. For example, when presented with the scenario of a young person damaging a classmate’s bike it was argued ‘that’s not a crime, that’s just stupid’. Conversely, if the perpetrator was a stranger, older than the victim or in another way more powerful, they were considered to be a greater threat to the victim and an incident was more likely to be classified as a ‘crime’. The exception to this was the example of adults harassing a group of young people in public by shouting at them. Younger participants were less confident defining this scenario as a crime and speculated that the young people might deserve to be told off by the adults.

- **Motivation** – Incidents carried out in self-defence, or physical fights between equal opponents where the roles of ‘perpetrator’ and ‘victim’ were unclear, were generally considered to be less serious. Views on whether a crime carried out in retaliation was any less serious were mixed. While some felt that retaliation made an incident more just and therefore acceptable, there were others that thought it did not excuse the crime or make it any less serious. If an incident was intended to be a ‘joke’, it was argued that it would not be a crime.

“It depends what you mean by ‘steal’ because you could take something and then give it back just for a joke” (Boys, 12-13, Mixed social grade, Coventry)

- **Impact on victim** – It was generally felt to be important to consider the impact of the incident on the victim. In situations where damage could be repaired or the loss to the victim was minimal, an incident was considered to be less serious. For example, if offensive writing on a book could be crossed out, or a stolen bag contained no items of value, the incidents were considered less serious. However, there were opposing views that theft was a crime regardless of the value of the item stolen. Seriousness of physical injury caused to the victim was also taken in to account when assessing the impact of an incident. For example, violence was considered to be particularly serious ‘if they hit you hard and they knock out your front teeth or something’.
‘[for me to think something was a crime someone would have to] steal from me or try and hurt me very badly... Try and stab me or whatever.’ (Female, 10-11, mixed social class, London)

- **Frequency of incidents** – Repeated incidents were deemed more serious and more likely to be considered a ‘crime’ even if they were restricted to name-calling.

  ‘Say somebody called you a name just once you could shake it off, but if it’s every day then that turns it in to a crime because it’s more severe’ (Female, 12-13, mixed social grade, Leeds)

- **Use of weapons** – An incident was deemed more serious if a weapon was used because of the increased risk of harm to the victim.

- **Legal punishment** – The legal consequences of an incident would be considered in order to determine whether or not it was a crime. If a person could go to jail or be fined for doing something then it was understood to be a crime.

  ‘A crime is where like something is really wrong, but doing something wrong is a lot more minor than a crime. A crime you get bigger punishment for it’ (Female, 12-13, mixed social grade, Leeds)

### 3.4.4 Children’s concerns around crime

Participants’ own concerns about things that could happen to themselves or other young people their age, centred on bullying, threats and intimidation from other young people, including those in ‘gangs’. These issues were of concern to young people across all groups, and included verbal bullying such as name-calling or spreading malicious gossip about a person, cyber-bullying (involving the use of electronic communication e.g. the internet, SMS or mobile phones) and physical bullying. Children in the focus groups also highlighted the potential for minor arguments between children to escalate into more serious disputes.

‘It just starts off as a petty argument and then they want to fight and then once they’ve not won the fight they come back and they come back for more until they’ve won’ (Mixed gender group, 14-15, C2DE, Leeds)

Younger participants mentioned kidnapping and ‘stranger danger’ as being of particular concern, prompted by their awareness of high-profile cases in the media such as that of Madeleine McCann. However, bullying was considered more likely to happen and therefore a more realistic concern of participants, particularly among the younger participants.
There were some variations according to area and age regarding personal concerns about crime. Participants who lived in inner-city areas were more concerned about violent crime and this awareness appeared to be based on their own experiences and those of other young people they knew.

3.4.5 Experience of victimisation

In a number of discussion groups, participants initially found it hard to recall any experiences of being a victim of crime, and required specific probing. Children were asked widely about incidents that had caused them worry, distress or harm. Thus many of the incidents that they reported would not have been crimes in Law.

Participants’ personal experiences of victimisation corresponded with the ‘crimes’, which they felt themselves to be more at risk from, and were centred around bullying, threatened violence, intimidation and spreading malicious gossip.

‘I was in the alley way with friends, but there was a group of boys walking down the alleyway with balaclavas and I must have got to the top of the hill and ran but they came chasing us’ (Mixed gender, 12-13, C2DE, London)

Some participants from inner-city areas reported experiences of more serious or violent threats, such as being threatened that they would be stabbed or knowing a friend who was mugged in school. Some older children had witnessed violent incidents, such as “happy slapping” incidents in the playground.

3.4.6 Reporting crime

Once recalled, participants appeared to be able to describe experiences of victimisation clearly and seemed to feel comfortable doing so. On the whole, if they had been a victim of any incident they considered themselves most likely to tell a friend, parent or teacher. However, rarely were the incidents experienced considered to have been ‘crimes’ that should have been reported to parents, teachers or the police.

When asked when they would report an incident to the police, most young people thought they would do so only if it was particularly violent, such as a stabbing, or if it affected their parents’ property. Further, there were participants who considered themselves more likely to tell their parents and leave it to them to decide whether to contact the police. Various reasons were provided to explain why in certain scenarios participants would not consider reporting an incident to anyone, some of which related to whether the incident was perceived as a crime as discussed in the previous section. These included:
No physical harm was caused to the victim – Generally, incidents of verbal bullying, threats and intimidation would not be reported to the police because it was considered that ‘nothing had happened’. It was argued that there would be nothing to report as no physical harm had come to the victim.

The incident was isolated – An incident was not considered worth reporting if it happened only once and the threat of it re-occurring was perceived to be low. However, this did depend on the seriousness of the incident, and incidents that resulted in a serious injury to the victim would be reported.

‘I’d have been a bit embarrassed [reporting the incident], if it happened again another time I wouldn’t have thought twice, I would have definitely told somebody’ (Female, 12-13, Mixed social grade, Leeds)

Reporting a crime was seen to be ineffectual – Reporting incidents to the police was not seen to be the most effective way of addressing a victim’s needs in all cases. In the case of bullying, a victim’s priority was generally seen to be to protect themselves and receive emotional support, and in the case of theft, to redeem stolen goods. There was a perception that the police would be unable to meet these needs of the victim and ‘wouldn’t do anything about it anyway’. Instead, a parent or friend was considered better able to protect the victim, such as by accompanying them on the walk home from school, or helping them to recover stolen property if the thief was known to the victim.

‘I wouldn’t tell the police because they probably won’t do anything about it...And it takes ages...you report something yes and then they take like years, months, weeks, years...my friend got [my stolen bike] back for me.’ (Mixed gender group, 14-15, C2DE, Leeds)

Concern that parents would be angry with a young person for being victimised – Concerns were raised by participants of all ages that they might be blamed by teachers or parents for being a victim of crime, particularly if they felt that it could be in some way seen to be their own fault. For example, if a child had been told not to take their mobile phone to school, or not to use it when out on the street, it was expected that they could get in to trouble if they went against this advice and their phone was stolen.

The risk of being labelled a ‘grass’ - Participants of all ages were aware of the risks involved in reporting a crime to a person in authority. This was
thought to deter people from reporting a crime because they could be labelled ‘a grass’, become unpopular and motivate the perpetrator to punish them for reporting the incident. These concerns were considered to apply particularly to cases of bullying.

‘She might be scared, thinking ‘oh my god, now my parents know the person’s going to come back to me ten times more’ (Mixed gender group, 14-15, C2DE, Leeds)

Further, the police were considered more likely to aid situations that involved adults than those involving young people and were perceived to take the view that disturbances involving young people were not so important.

‘Sometimes I think if something happens to an adult they will do it, respond quicker, but if it is kids they think they’re just mucking around and not being serious’ (Mixed gender group, 14-15, ABC1, Ealing)

There was an overall concern among participants of all ages that children would not be listened to or taken seriously if they reported a crime to the police. Younger participants in particular expected that they would feel nervous and shy about reporting a crime to the police. Reporting a crime was considered likely to lead to further questioning by the police and concerns were expressed that as a witness they would not be able to provide satisfactory answers.

‘If [the police] want to find out something then that gets a bit scary’ [As one participant in the 10-11 year-old group explained].

The perception of the participants was that the police would not take children and young people seriously and, because of this, participants would only report a crime to the police if it was ‘serious’. ‘Serious’ crimes were seen to include burglary, fights resulting in a serious injury, shootings and muggings. In contrast, incidents such as graffiti, name-calling and minor fights were not expected to prompt any action from the police and therefore would not be reported by participants.

3.4.7 Use and interpretation of language to describe experiences of crime

As highlighted in the review of existing research literature, participants often displayed a very literal understanding of terms, and required further definition to clarify meaning. For example, when asked about experience of being sold drugs, clarification was required as to whether they were illegal or prescription drugs. Similarly, if a person was physically hurt, this was argued to not necessarily be a crime, for example if a medic was administering treatment to a patient but rendering some pain (e.g. via an injection) in doing so. It was also suggested by one participant who when asked to define anti-social behaviour, referred to
someone who sat up in their bedroom on their own while other family members were downstairs.

In the older age groups participants sometimes used technical terms when describing incidents, defining scenarios as ‘harassment’, ‘assault’, ‘GBH’, ‘child abuse’, ‘vandalism’ or ‘criminal damage’ though it was not always clear that they fully understood these terms and appeared to be often quoting phrases that they had heard elsewhere. All of this reinforced the point about the need to take care when drafting survey questions as many children take a literal interpretation and do not place them into context.

3.4.8 Reference points used to recall incidents

As the BCS relies upon a crime reference period (i.e. the 12 months prior to interview) there was interest in what aides would help children recall their experiences. To recall when past incidents had taken place, participants used various reference points to jog their memory. For most of the children a particularly useful framework to recall incidents was the school calendar. Other reference points were similar to those used by adults to recall incidents, such as other events that had occurred in their personal lives. To recall when an event had occurred participants referred to:

- **School holidays** - For example: ‘a few weeks into the summer holidays’. Events which occurred during school term time were generally referenced by the holidays that preceded or followed the term, rather than the term itself. For example, rather than referring to ‘spring term’, participants would talk about ‘when we’d come back to school after Easter’.

- **School year** – For example: ‘last September because I had just started Year 9’, ‘end of Year 6’ or ‘I had just started Year 8’.

- **School timetable** – Referencing the school timetable helped participants to pinpoint with particular accuracy exactly when an incident had occurred, for example: ‘Tuesday fourth period, half past one, going into English’, or ‘on the bus, after school about quarter past four just before I usually get off’.

- **Other events in personal lives** – As adults would refer to other incidents that had occurred around the same time, young people used reference points such as: ‘my sister had just had a baby’, ‘it was my mum’s birthday in two days’ or ‘we went to France on 24th June, because it was three days before my birthday’.
Participants were shown a ‘Life Events Calendar’, which displayed the months of the previous year with school terms and holidays such as Christmas and Easter. There were mixed views as to whether this visual prompt aided recall of previous events. While there were those who did not feel the calendar helped recall, others felt that having a visual stimulus prompted them to remember other events, such as Easter, which triggered recall of events that they were trying to remember. Some suggested that the addition of further memorable highlights of children’s life, such as Halloween, Fireworks Night, Valentines Day and even the football season, would make the calendar more helpful in aiding recall.

3.4.9 Risk of crime and feelings of personal safety

While participants generally reported feeling safe, they were aware of crime happening around them, particularly those crimes of which they felt they were most at risk. Feelings of safety varied by age, with younger children on the whole less exposed to dangers as they did not go out on their own or stay out late. Consequently they were less sensitive to dangers. The overall view was that feelings of safety depended on contextual factors which included:

- **Time of day or week** - Night time was generally considered to be a less safe time of day because it was dark and there were fewer people out in the streets and town centres. Friday and Saturday evenings were perceived to be particularly problematic with older teenagers getting drunk and aggressive.

- **Who they were with** - Participants of all age groups feeling safer when in the company of friends and deliberately stayed in a group in order to protect themselves

- **Where they were** – Views on where participants felt the safest were mixed, and it was recognised that different locations posed different risks. For example, city centres were considered dangerous because it was where groups of young people were more likely to congregate in gangs and intimidate people. Generally, feelings of safety were higher in local neighbourhoods where participants were more familiar with their surroundings. However, in local residential streets it was argued that there were fewer people around to protect or help them. Participants could identify certain geographical areas in their own localities that were perceived to be particularly dangerous, such as certain areas of a city or public parks.

If authority figures were present, public transport was viewed as ‘quite safe’ particularly trains and (for those living in London) the underground. In contrast, the risk of harassment or violence towards other young people
on buses was seen to be much higher because large groups of school children and young people travelled on them and because there tended to be more spatial segregation between children and adults (e.g. young people gathering upstairs/back of the bus). Finally, participants felt there was a danger of incidents occurring once they had got off a bus, as other passengers could follow them to where they were alone and more vulnerable.

• **Where they were supervised** - Locations where young people were likely to spend time in groups without supervision were considered to be particularly risky. These included outside a local shop after school, parks, alley ways and the route home from school.

‘You’re walking home by yourself, sometimes you feel a bit scared because there’s like groups of hoodies round there and I don’t feel that safe’ (Mixed gender group, 12-13, ABC1, London)

Cyberspace was also considered to be potentially an unsafe place for children because adults were unaware of the communication that children were having and therefore would be unable to monitor and protect the children.

### 3.4.10 Crime prevention and personal security

Overall, participants of all ages appeared knowledgeable and experienced in taking various precautions in order to protect themselves from crime.

A common strategy used was staying in the company of their peers, particularly when walking around the streets. Participants of all ages mentioned their belief in ‘safety in numbers’. By thus strengthening their defence they felt less likely to be attacked if they were with other people.

Avoidance methods were also used to keep safe, whereby children took precautions to avoid becoming involved in a dangerous situation. These included: waiting for the next bus if they saw young people on a bus who were likely to be aggressive; sitting downstairs on a bus so that they were in the company of adults; not taking short cuts so that they remained visible to the general public at all points of a journey; and avoiding groups of older teenagers.

‘Sometimes when I see big groups of older boys, like 18 year olds, like walking towards me...I just get out of the way’ (Mixed gender group, 12-13 years, ABC1, London)

In addition to these methods, older children reported taking a more confrontational approach in order to protect themselves. Rather than travelling...
with friends to deter potential attackers, they claimed to do so in order to fight back if they were attacked.

‘if I know I am going to be going through like a rough area then I won’t go out alone, I’ll go with someone else...because you are more likely to fight them back if they did anything.’ (Mixed gender group, 14-15 years, ABC1, London)

Specific measures were taken to avoid being mugged or attacked on the street. These included making valuable property less conspicuous, such as by hiding MP3 player wires in jackets so that they were not visible, and only taking a mobile phone out if it was needed.

‘I put my MP3 player in my pocket and zip up my coat so they can’t see the wire connecting with my pocket’ (Mixed gender group, 10-11, C2DE, London)

There was a high level of awareness of the dangers of using the internet and the precautions that could be taken to protect against these. For example, participants were aware that people in chat rooms might not be who they say they are.

‘Always make sure who they are because they could be an adult and then disguise themselves as a child’ (Mixed gender group, 10-11, C2DE, London)

Other precautions taken included blocking particular individuals’ e-mails, not meeting up with people met on-line and not giving out personal details over the internet.

3.4.11 Experience of the police

Views towards the police were generally positive, as they were perceived to be helpful in carrying out their role of maintaining the peace and keeping people safe.

‘If people have done wrong they put them in jail or something like that...so they don’t rob us’ (Mixed gender group, 10-11, C2DE, London)

Positive experiences were reported of the police being helpful, such as when one participant’s house was burgled and the police attended the scene.

Nevertheless, levels of trust in the police did vary with age and appeared to be dependent on personal experience. Younger participants’ contact with the police was typically positive especially if they had experience of contact in an educational or informal context. Thus, the younger age groups generally viewed the police as approachable and helpful. However, they did perceive that the police might be less helpful to older children, as this age group were considered more likely to ‘make trouble’ and therefore not be trusted by the police.
In contrast, older participants reported contact with the police in their law-enforcement capacity. For example, they had witnessed police breaking up a fight and a few had themselves been stopped and searched. The police were seen as less helpful among this older age group. Most of the participants were aware of the distinction between police officers and Police Community Support Officers, with the latter perceived to have less power to enforce the law.

Views on whether visibility of police in their local area made participants feel safer were mixed. On the one hand, there was the view that seeing police raised concerns about the reason why they were there, and encouraged the perception that crime was happening in their local area. Older participants reported that they would feel under suspicion by the police, and would be concerned that they would be stopped and searched. The contrasting view was also expressed that seeing police made participants feel protected in situations where young people were more likely to be victimised, such as outside school gates at the end of school. It was suggested that greater police presence in other locations, such as train stations, would be reassuring.

### 3.4.12 Street gangs

The term ‘gang’ was understood to have multiple definitions. ‘Street gangs’ were recognised as groups of young people who spent time on the streets (although initially the term was spontaneously associated with friendship groups that children formed, particularly by younger participants). ‘Gangs’ were also understood in terms of organised criminal gangs such as the Mafia.

The difference between a street gang involved in violent crime and a group of young people hanging around together as friends was considered to be clear. It was felt that the distinction could be drawn according to the way the group behaved and dressed. Older participants also claimed to know the names of local street gangs, their territories and pupils at their schools who were thought to be gang members. However, participants themselves had no direct involvement with such gangs and generally took a negative view towards gangs and their intimidating behaviour.

When probed on the typical characteristics of a street gang member, views were highly consistent across the groups, albeit a little stereotypical. The common description of a gang member was usually a male, of secondary school age, who wore tracksuits or baggy clothes and ‘hoodies’, smoked, drank and took drugs, used slang words, spent time on street corners being aggressive and abusive, and would identify themselves by a particular graffiti tag. The description of typical gang members provided by the participants must however be viewed with a certain amount of caution as the extent to which such stereotyping was based on personal experience or subject to the influence of media and popular culture was not clear.
3.4.13 Lifestyle and risky behaviour

Participants were asked about a series of lifestyle and risky behaviours to explore their understanding of certain terms and their willingness to disclose information about their own experiences. The age at which young people started to drink alcohol was considered to be around fourteen or fifteen by the focus group participants.

’Where I live, Ruislip, there’s mostly people aged 14 that I see out drinking and they go to my school’ (Mixed gender group, 12-13, C2DE, London)

However, perhaps due to their lack of personal experience with alcohol, younger participants (10-11 years old) were less certain about this, suggesting only that young people drank alcohol ‘younger then they are supposed to and probably more than they are supposed to’.

Personal alcohol consumption varied by age. Younger participants reported having previously drunk alcohol, but only in small quantities, such as the occasional sip of their parents’ drinks on a special occasion or celebration. The type of alcohol they had tried were drinks such as bucks fizz. This age group had drunk alcohol very infrequently and only at special occasions such as at Christmas and New Years Eve. This was another example of literal interpretation and the need to be careful when drafting questions to be able to identify genuine problem drinking.

’Maybe when like at Christmas or something you might have a little drink or something’ (Mixed gender group, 10-11, C2DE, London)

In contrast, older participants reported drinking more often especially at weekends with their friends and without their parents knowing. In contrast, younger participants drank very occasionally and in social contexts involving their parents and other adults.

Fourteen and fifteen were also the ages at which it was thought young people generally started to experiment with drugs. Awareness and knowledge of drugs varied by age. Younger participants showed limited knowledge about the type of drugs that young people try and the context in which they are taken. In contrast, older participants named cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy as the drugs most commonly used by young people. Further, they commented on the factors that influenced young people to taking drugs, such as where they lived.

’It’s like where you live isn’t it? Like if you live in a small village it’s not likely to get it, but if you live in like the centre of like a low low house quality area it’s more likely to happen’ (Mixed gender group, 12-13, C2DE, London)

Based on the information disclosed in the focus groups, few participants reported ever having used drugs but many were aware that people they knew in school
had tried drugs, in particular cannabis. Attitudes towards taking drugs were similar among participants of all ages, who in the main claimed that they would not take drugs. Those who said they would consider taking drugs were among the older age group (14-15 years) and suggested that they might try cannabis but not Class A drugs such as LSD, ecstasy or cocaine.

### 3.4.14 Bullying

Participants defined bullying as something that happens more than once and on a frequent basis, or ‘something that goes on and on’. The overall view was that if an incident happened only once it was not perceived to be bullying but repeated occurrences of the incident would constitute bullying behaviour. However ‘happy slapping’ was seen as the exception to this, and was considered serious enough to constitute bullying even if it only happened once.

It was widely understood that bullying could be physical, verbal or emotional in nature. Examples mentioned included pinching, hitting, name-calling, teasing, threatening behaviour, spreading rumours, prank calling and cyber bullying.

Views on what constituted ‘serious’ bullying and would amount to being criminal differed according to age. Younger participants felt that serious bullying could include both physical and emotional bullying such as threatening or teasing. In contrast, there were older participants who took the view that only physical bullying could be considered serious. They did not consider teasing or threatening behaviour to be serious as nothing ‘actually happened’ and claimed that it could be ignored by the victim. During the discussion groups some stories of bullying incidents recounted by participants were regarded by some children as humorous and entertaining, such as the story of a child’s bags being thrown down the stairs at school.

Views on how best to deal with bullying also varied according to the age of participants. Younger children thought that telling an adult was the best way to handle the situation, whereas older participants suggested that retaliation was the most effective way to deal with the problem. However it was recognised that the victim of bullying risked getting in to trouble themselves through both of these strategies, either by being labelled a ‘grass’ by telling someone, or by getting in to trouble with parents and teachers for retaliating.

### 3.4.15 Anti-social behaviour

Understanding of anti-social behaviour differed according to the age of participants, with younger children less able to pinpoint which particular acts the term referred to. Broad descriptions such as ‘doing things to old people’ and more generally ‘stuff you shouldn’t be doing’ were used by younger participants to describe anti-social behaviour. Although aware of the term ‘ASBO’ (Anti Social
In contrast, older participants had a more detailed understanding of the term. Anti-social behaviour was considered by this age group to cover incidents which demonstrated ‘no respect’ and had a negative effect on others. Vandalism, harassment and defacement of property of the council were provided as examples of such behaviour. Older participants were also able to make the distinction between something that was illegal and that which was anti-social.

There was a general view that adults perceived certain behaviour to be ‘anti-social’ that young people did not. Practical jokes and pranks were considered to be an example of such behaviour.

3.5 Summary

Participants understood crime as something that was ‘wrong’, that ‘hurt people’ or that was against the law. The perceived seriousness of an incident depended on various factors including where it took place, the motivation, how serious the impact on the victim was and how frequently the incident occurred. The use of weapons was another factor mentioned.

Participants’ own concerns centred around lower level bullying and threats or intimidation from other young people, and many had personal experiences of these types of incidents. While younger participants felt that serious bullying could include both physical and emotional bullying, there were older participants who took the view that only physical bullying could be considered serious. While participants generally reported feeling safe, feelings of safety depended on contextual factors, such as the time of day or week, who they were with and where they were. Participants of all ages were knowledgeable and experienced in taking various precautions in order to protect themselves from crime, such as staying in the company of their peers.

If a victim of a crime, participants felt they were likely to tell a friend, parent or teacher. Certain factors were deemed to make a young person less likely to report an incident, such as if the victim was not physically harmed, the incident was isolated, they feared being labelled a ‘grass’ or thought reporting would be ineffectual.

Younger participants displayed a very literal understanding of language used to describe crimes, and required further definition in order to clarify meaning. To recall when past incidents had taken place, participants found various reference points useful to jog their memory, many of which were related to the school calendar.
Views towards the police were generally positive, as they were perceived to be helpful in carrying out their role of maintaining the peace and keeping people safe. Nevertheless, levels of trust in the police did vary with age, with police seen as less helpful among the older age group. There was an overall concern among participants of all ages that children and young people would not be listened to or taken seriously if they reported a crime to the police, and it was suggested that they would be more likely to tell a parent who could then decide whether the police should be contacted.

The greater understanding of children’s perception of crime provided by the qualitative research was used to inform the development of the questions for the children’s questionnaire.
4 Questionnaire development

The following section describes the process by which draft survey questions were developed, tested and adapted in order to produce the final children’s questionnaire.

4.1 Design of the children’s questionnaire

The design of the children’s questionnaire was based on the requirement that incidents reported by children could be assigned a criminal offence code in a broadly similar way to that used in the adult survey.

The adult BCS questionnaire was therefore used as the starting point for constructing the new children’s questionnaire and the questions and structure of the questionnaire revised in order that they would be suitable for use with children.

Once initial questionnaire topics were agreed with the Home Office, draft questions were developed around these to create a skeleton questionnaire that could then be tested. Question wording was informed by the results of the qualitative research outlined in the previous section.

4.2 Structure of the draft questionnaire

The pilot questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

- Section A – Background
- Section B – Screener questionnaire
- Section C – Second stage of screening
- Section D – Victimisation module (the victim form)
- Section E – Follow up modules
- Section F – Self-completion
- Section G – Demographics

Section A - Background

This section of the questionnaire was mainly designed as a ‘warm-up’ to the rest of questionnaire to help the respondent to become accustomed to the interview situation. The questions were designed to be easy for the child to answer and none of the topics covered were sensitive in nature. Survey items included questions about the child’s school and their local area. Despite the fact that the questions in this section were relatively simple in nature and were not expected to be used to produce estimates they still underwent cognitive testing.
Section B – The screener

The screener section of the questionnaire included key questions to establish whether or not the respondent had personally been a victim of any of the following incidents:

- Theft
- Damage
- Violence
- Threat of or use of a weapon
- Threats
- Household violence

The screener section only included personal crimes as household incidents (such as burglary) are already covered by the adult interview.

Although the structure of the screener questions was similar to the core BCS, the wording and presentation of response categories for each of the questions were simplified to make them appropriate for children.

For example the adult screener question on violence was amended as follows:

**Core BCS violence screener question**

[Aside from anything you have already mentioned], since the first of [^DATE^] has anyone, including people you know well, DELIBERATELY hit you with their fists or with a weapon of any sort or kicked you or used force or violence in any other way?

1. Yes
2. No

**Under 16s violence screener question**

SHOWCARD V1

[Aside from anything you have already told me about] in the last 12 months (since the 1st of ^DATE^) has anyone done any of these things to you ON PURPOSE with the intention of hurting you?

1. Kicked you
2. Hit you
3. Pushed or shoved you
4. Been physically violent towards you in some other way
5. None of these
6. Don’t know (not on showcard)
7. Refused (not on showcard)

In this question the language was simplified and respondents were provided with a showcard which provided a number of options from which the respondent could choose responses. Given the literal understanding of children, to ensure the later
victimisation section of the questionnaire captured only intentional acts of victimisation the screener questions for the children’s survey were amended to include specific reference to the intention of the perpetrator. This was achieved by including phrases such as ‘on purpose’ and ‘with the intention of hurting you’.

**Section C - The second stage of screening**

Desk and qualitative research had highlighted that while children were at higher risk of victimisation compared with adults, that they are frequently the victim of relatively minor incidents such as playground scuffles, sibling fights etc. While they may technically be considered as offences such incidents were not necessarily considered so by children, parents or teachers.

In order to reduce the burden on respondents during the interview it was decided to ask only basic details about more minor incidents. This means that the detailed offence codes used on the adult survey cannot be assigned to such incidents (see section 8).

**Section D – The victimisation module**

The victimisation module consisted of a set of questions adapted from the adult survey which took into account the primary objective of this section which was to collect the necessary information to facilitate the assignment of a standard offence code.

**Sections E, F and G - Part sample modules, self-completion and demographics sections**

The part sample modules, self-completion and demographics sections were also developed based on the findings that came out of the qualitative research.

Part sample modules included questions on perceptions and attitudes to the police, anti-social behaviour, crime prevention and security. Each of these modules were designed to be randomly assigned to a third of the sample, thus avoiding long interviews and adding to respondent burden.

The self-completion module covered more sensitive topics that children may feel uncomfortable discussing with an interviewer, or in front of their parents. The self-completion topics included:

- Internet usage
- Personal security (including carrying knives)
- Truanting and exclusion from school
- Experiences of bullying
• Street gangs
• Drinking behaviour
• Use of cannabis
• Verification questions (violence and use of weapon)

The personal security section of the self completion module was designed to be completed only by children aged 13 to 15 as the qualitative work had shown the issues covered not to be as pertinent to younger children.

The demographic section collected demographic information about the respondent including disability, ethnic origin and religious affiliation.
5 Questionnaire testing

After a draft version of the questionnaire had been created two main procedures were then used to test the questionnaire with children:

- a first pilot of the questionnaire using cognitive interviewing carried out by researchers; and
- a second pilot of the same questionnaire using cognitive piloting where the survey was administered by interviewers in the presence of a researcher.

5.1 Cognitive testing

Once the survey questions had been drafted they were then subjected to cognitive testing using a paper questionnaire.

The cognitive testing had the following objectives:

- to assess what questions should be asked of children in each of the different age groups;
- to test and develop question wording among different age groups;
- to assess alternative methods of administering the questionnaire, including whether it was appropriate to adopt a full self-completion method or whether the personal victimisation section should be interviewer-administered; and
- to test the initial drafts of the fieldwork documents.

5.2 Sample

BMRB researchers conducted a total of 34 face-to-face interviews with children aged 10 to 15 in primary schools, secondary schools and pupil referral units. In addition a number of face-to-face interviews with children were conducted in the BMRB offices in both London and Manchester. Children from a range of backgrounds were included in the testing.

After approaching schools and pupil referral units to request their help, children were pre-recruited to take part in the survey. Participants were offered a £10 gift voucher as a ‘thank you’ for taking part in the research, or schools were given the incentive directly if staff felt it was not suitable to offer a direct incentive to the pupils.

In all cases parental permission was obtained before interviewing took place.
5.3 Methodology

Cognitive interviewing is a technique regularly used in questionnaire development to draw out in-depth understanding of the thought processes a respondent goes through when trying to answer survey questions. Various techniques are used to obtain further information from respondents about the thinking they carry out when formulating answers. Examples include asking the respondent to ‘think out loud’ and further interjections asking the respondent to explain or describe their thinking or what they understand by key terms. Researchers are also able to note and react to respondent’s reactions which may not always be verbal.

Cognitive piloting took place to understand how respondents interpreted and answered survey questions so that any issues with the draft questionnaire items could be addressed and solved prior to the interviewer administered piloting. Another issue explored in the cognitive piloting was how comfortable 10-15 year olds were in answering the questions and giving information about crimes that they had experienced. It was possible that children would not disclose certain information in front of their parents so interviews were arranged in BMRB’s offices and in schools without the parents present in the room the interview was taking place in, to explore this issue in more detail.

5.4 Key findings

The main findings from the cognitive testing were related to the wording of specific questions. A number of other issues were also highlighted as outlined in the following sections.

5.4.1 Age ranges

As might be expected, older children (i.e. 12-15) were observed to be more confident and forthcoming than the younger children (i.e. 10 and 11) in the age groups selected during the interview. In comparison with the oldest children, when answering the questions the youngest children required more probing and encouragement to avoid providing very short answers or ‘don’t know’ responses.

There was also marked difference between younger children attending primary school and those at secondary school. The children from primary school were less self-assured than those who had made the transition to secondary school even though there was little difference in their ages. In some cases the primary school children appeared uncomfortable discussing their experiences during the testing.

5.4.2 Disclosure of information

The children had different opinions about whether they would be happy to speak in front of their family about the experiences they discussed in the interview. Most children did not have an issue with disclosing their experience of
victimisation but others felt that their parents would prevent them going out or would worry about them. In some cases children said they would not want their parents to know the details of the incident because they may have been in an area they had been told not to go to or they may have provoked the situation in some way. Discussing personal experiences of crime in front of family members was a particular concern for a couple of male respondents, mainly when speaking about robbery and the use of weapons. On the other hand one child actually told their parents that their mobile had been stolen when in actual fact they had lost it as they felt their parents would be less likely to tell them off.

5.4.3 Domestic abuse

When referring to questions that would not be suitable to ask in front of parents some children referred specifically to a question related to household violence. If questions on domestic abuse were to be included in the survey they would need to be covered in a self-completion section to produce credible estimates of victimisation. Their inclusion would necessitate the further development of ethical guidelines and procedures with regard to confidentiality and disclosure of harm.

In addition, the current survey design adopted for the BCS children’s survey might not be the most appropriate design to produce robust estimates of domestic abuse among children. Incidents of this nature need to be collected in a specific way to ensure the necessary checks are in place within the questionnaire to flag up any cases where the child is at risk of harm and has not already told a responsible adult (such as a teacher) about the incident. The survey was not set up to record such incidents and does not have such checks in place.

To investigate the feasibility of including questions about domestic abuse in the children’s survey in the future, a question about abuse was piloted with children at this stage of the questionnaire development. Following piloting it was recommended that this question would not be asked as part of the screener section of the survey. This was because the distinction between parental discipline and abuse was not always clear, it was difficult for children to separate cases of sibling play from those that were criminal and the presence of someone else in the room during the children’s interview would inhibit their capacity to answer truthfully or openly to the question.

5.4.4 The interview situation

Questions on victimisation could potentially be stressful for children to answer. According to the Code of Conduct for interviewing children produced by the Market Research Society (MRS), with which all of its members must comply, ‘steps must be taken to ensure that the child is not worried, confused or misled by the questioning’. It is also important that children feel able to say when they do not wish to answer a question.
When asked afterwards, some of the younger children who took part in the cognitive testing said they found completing the interview an unsettling experience. Following the interview a researcher explored these children’s feelings about the survey and provided further information and context relating to the research. Children who found completing the interview worrying reported that: they did not like being asked a lot of questions; they felt as if they had to give an answer to all the questions; not answering the questions might be seen as unhelpful or disrespectful to the adult interviewer; or they thought their friends would get into trouble as a result of what they had said.

Following this feedback, the materials supporting the survey (e.g. advance letters, information leaflets) were reviewed taking into consideration the concerns raised by the children. A child-friendly leaflet was produced describing the nature of the survey, why it was being carried out, how the information collected was to be used and giving assurances about the confidentiality of the information provided. This leaflet was designed to be given out to children before completing the interview. Another leaflet was designed to be given to participants at the end of the interview to thank them for taking part and providing contact details for further information.

The piloting also highlighted that young children in particular struggled to tell an adult interviewer that they did not want to answer a particular question. As part of the interview procedure a ‘red card’ system was developed to help children when they wished to refuse to answer a question. A card with one side red and the other green was given to the respondent at the beginning of the interview. It was explained to the child that the card would be placed green side up and they could turn it to the red side (or hold up the red side) to indicate they did not wish to respond to the question they were being asked. Having the red card meant that children were empowered to refuse to answer questions without fear of perceived censure or judgement.

5.4.5 Focusing on one incident in the victim form

Some of the respondents found it difficult to focus on one incident at a time during the completion of the Victimisation module especially if they had been a victim of multiple incidents. Some respondents answered the questions in relation to a number of different incidents some of which happened outside the reference period. Where this was the case respondents had to be frequently reminded about which incident was being asked about by the interviewers.

A short one sentence summary of each incident reported by the respondent using the respondent’s own words was used throughout each set of victimisation questions to remind the respondent which incident was being referred to.
5.4.6 Question wording

There were a number of words and terms used in the questionnaire that were not uniformly understood by all children and which affected their ability to answer questions e.g. victim, personal property, theft, ethnicity, personally, offender. Wherever possible use of the terms was limited in the questionnaire and replaced with words that were easier for respondents to understand. Where no alternative could be found, terms were explained to help children to be able to answer the questions.

The cognitive piloting highlighted that some key specific terms and concepts appeared to be problematic and were prone to be misunderstood by the children interviewed. These included for example:-

The term 'local area': Some questions in the survey referred to the respondent’s local area. In the core BCS survey this is defined as a 15 minutes walk from the respondent’s house. It was felt appropriate to explore children’s definitions of their local area, using the standard definition as a starting point and so respondents were asked to explain what they considered to be their local area. Answers varied considerably with some children giving very specific answers such as the estate they lived on or their specific street and other children feeling their local area was a lot larger and included the town centre or their local school. With this in mind the definition used in the adult survey was replaced with the definition of local area as ‘the area where you spend your time, such as where you live and go to school’.

The term ‘attitude’: The term ‘attitude’ had different connotations for children than adults. Some of the respondents were more familiar with the behaviour of ‘giving attitude to people’, consequently questions referring to their attitude to certain aspects of the CJS were confusing. The term attitude was therefore replaced with the word ‘opinion’ in the survey to avoid such confusion.

The term ‘street gangs’: There was some differences between the children in their understanding of what was meant by the term ‘street gangs’. Although most seemed to understand the term others described a street gang as a group of people hanging around together and not necessarily doing anything wrong. The definition of a street gang was amended as follows to clarify this:

By a street gang we mean, groups of young people who (do all of these things)³:

- Commit crimes or anti-social behaviour together;
- Spend a lot of time in public places; and
- Usually have a name, an area or territory, a leader, or rules

³ The definition of street gang has been revised further since the survey went live in 2009.
5.5 Cognitive piloting

While the cognitive testing allowed for in depth testing of the questions with respondents it did not afford the opportunity to test the questionnaire in a realistic situation.

In next stage of questionnaire development the survey was administered by an interviewer, to participants in their own home, in the presence of a BMRB researcher who observed what took place. In addition to testing the questionnaire this stage of piloting was designed to test the fieldwork documents further to ensure that letters, leaflets, show cards and any other prompt materials were appropriate for use with children.

5.5.1 Sample and methodology

Areas that were likely to have a higher proportion of families with children were selected by ACORN (‘A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods’) types to ensure a range of different areas were included. ACORN is a categorisation scheme that classifies households into one of 56 types according to demographic, employment and housing characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood. Participants who were selected from these areas according to age and gender quotas were pre-recruited by interviewers who then made appointments to conduct interviews.

In total 24 interviews took place and an incentive of £10 per child was provided in the form of a voucher for use in high street shops. All interviews were conducted in the child’s home. This gave researchers observing the interviews the opportunity to explore the impact of a parent or guardian in the room on a child’s responses. Due to the age of the respondents interviewing generally took place between 4.00pm and 7.00pm. Parental consent was obtained before all interviews.

In each interview the interviewer administered the questionnaire as if it was a standard interview and a BMRB researcher observed. However, the observer could interject with probing questions where appropriate. In this stage of piloting only the child interview was conducted. In the live survey a child would be interviewed after the core interview had taken place.

5.6 Key findings

5.6.1 Presence of others in the room or vicinity

Interviewers who administered the children’s survey were expected to adhere to a strict set of guidelines when interviewing children. One of these guidelines was that a child’s guardian or parent must always be present in the household when an interview with a child was taking place.
During the child interview it was common for a parent to be present in the same room when the child completed the interview and this impacted on the quality of the information collected in both positive and negative ways. A positive impact of a parent’s presence was that in some cases the children looked to the parent for reassurance and clarification and occasionally the parent reminded the child of incidents that they had missed out or forgotten. Parents could also help make the child feel at ease in the interview situation as well as explain the survey questions. Under these circumstances children tended to be better at verbalising the nature of the incidents of which they had been a victim. A possible negative impact of the presence of someone else in the room was that children were less able to freely describe their experiences, which could have a detrimental impact on the quality of the data collected.

While interviewer guidelines stipulated the presence of a parent or guardian in the home at the time of the interview, interviewers sought to promote the circumstances where the child was able to provide responses to the questionnaire without being inhibited by the presence of someone else.

5.6.2 Computer Aided Self Interviewing (CASI) and Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)

As it was not possible to control who was present during the interview, consideration was given as to whether the screener (whether or not the respondent had actually been a victim of crime) and victimisation (victim module) sections of the children’s questionnaire should be administered by the interviewer or by the respondent completing the items themselves.

However, it was decided to maintain consistency with the adult BCS survey and to maximise the quality of the data collected about each victimisation experience, the victimisation section of the questionnaire was administered by an interviewer. Self-completion of this section of the questionnaire is likely to have reduced the quality of data captured, because each victim module contains complex routing and required detailed probing on the part of the interviewer to obtain the necessary information to code incidents correctly.

Questions relating to sensitive issues, which children might feel uncomfortable answering in the presence of another household member, were included in a self-completion section of the survey. Some screener questions covering whether or not anyone has been a victim of a violent offence or any offence involving a weapon were repeated in the self-completion section to gain an indication of the level of misreporting. In some cases children claimed they had not included an offence at the interviewer administered screening stage because they had forgotten about the incident rather than purposely trying to avoid disclosing it. Rather than an unwillingness to disclose certain types of information in the
presence of another household member it was clear that some under-reporting could be attributed to genuine error on the part of respondents.

Other techniques used by interviewers to help give respondents more privacy included showing them the laptop screen for particularly sensitive questions if someone else was present rather than reading the question aloud; or by positioning the laptop computer in such a way that no-one else in the room could see the screen during the interviewer-administered and self completion sections of the survey.

5.6.3 Repetition of questions in the victim module

The questions in the victim module in the main adult survey could be repetitive, and this became even more pronounced in the child interviews due to the questions that appeared in the second stage of screening. In some cases the same question could be asked up to three times which caused confusion for some of the children. Repetition of questions led some children to think about other incidents they could remember or gave others the impression that their initial responses to questions were incorrect. It was decided that these questions were only to be asked a maximum of twice, once in the second stage of screening and once in the victimisation section for each incident. Where these questions were repeated in the victimisation module they were designed to be ‘ask or record questions’ which allowed interviewers to code the answers by confirming previous information supplied by the respondent, rather than having to repeat the question. Having these survey items completed in this way had the added advantage of improving the momentum and flow through the survey.

5.6.4 Length of interview

Previous research had highlighted that compared to adults, children are more likely to be victims of crime. The evidence from previous research suggested that approximately a third of young people taking part in the under 16s BCS interview would be likely to report having been a victim of crime in the last 12 months and would therefore be required to complete one or more victimisation modules.

In those cases where the respondent had been a victim of multiple incidents it took a very long time to complete the interview. In some cases victimisation modules could not be completed because the interview length had already exceeded an hour.

The piloting also revealed that children required significantly more probing questions than adults when completing the questionnaire - this was particularly true when completing open-ended questions. This again increased the length of time it took for interviewers to complete interviews with children.
As a consequence of these findings, the questionnaire was shortened so that on average it would take 20 minutes to complete. This was achieved by the removal of some non-core modules that had been included in the pilot testing.

5.6.5 CASI section of the questionnaire

The self completion (CASI) section of the questionnaire covered more sensitive topics addressed in the survey and involved the respondent entering their own answers using the laptop. For ease of use all of the questions asked in the self-completion section were closed, pre-coded questions.

Children felt comfortable using the computer and seemed to prefer entering their own answers rather than being asked the questions. It was concluded that the use of CASI worked with children during the interview and this was incorporated into the questionnaire design. An option for Audio-CASI was introduced to help respondents who might otherwise have found the self-completion module problematic due to reading difficulties. Audio-CASI is another form of self-completion that involves respondents listening to the questions and answers being read out through a set of headphones, so they do not need to read these on screen.

Audio CASI interview procedures had previously been tested successfully with other large scale household surveys. Consequently the audio-CASI option was introduced into the questionnaire during the later split-sample field trail and acted as a test with children before the survey finally went live in January 2009.

5.6.6 Difference between ages

Interviewers mentioned that there were some problems recruiting 10 year olds to take part in the pilot interviews and once they were recruited there were problems keeping to appointments. It appeared that in some cases this was because they were anxious about doing the interview and in others because they were generally quite shy and did not feel comfortable speaking to an adult interviewer. There also seemed to be a difference in their responses, the younger respondents were a lot quieter and tended to give shorter answers. They were also more likely to say they did not know or to just give the middle answer in answer scales. Older children appeared to be more willing to talk but they were less likely to find the interview interesting. It was important therefore that interviewers encouraged children to elaborate on their answers where necessary, ensuring as much information was collected as possible, particularly when asking open ended questions.

It was important that interviewers adopted a flexible approach to the way they built rapport with children of different ages. Adopting an appropriate tone and point of view when interviewing children assisted the children to complete the
survey and to overcome issues related to confidence, interest and engagement rather than cognitive ability.

Following the small scale piloting the questionnaire was amended for use in the small-scale interview administered field trial.
6 Small-Scale Field trial

As a further stage of the development process a month-long field trial was carried out. The main purpose of this field trial was to test the survey procedures and to gain a more accurate idea of interview length in the context of normal interviewing conditions.

6.1 Sample

Twenty sampling points in July 2009 were selected to take part in the small scale field trial. Interviewers working on the trial were asked to carry out screening for 10 to 15 year olds at all addresses within their assignment.

Interviewers were selected on the basis that they could start work on their assignments as early as possible in July. Interviewers with different levels of experience were chosen with a number of assignments being run in London and the South East to enable some of the interviews to be observed.

6.2 Method

Twenty interviewers were asked to feed back their experiences of administering the children’s survey. A web log (‘blog’) was set up so that interviewers could feed back their experiences, observations and suggestions about fieldwork procedures and the survey itself.

Initially broad topics were posted on the blog which gave interviewers an initial thematic framework within which to organise their feedback. The blog was also interactive and allowed interviewers to add their comments and to respond to comments made by other interviewers. The interviewers were also given the opportunity to suggest any other topics or themes they thought were relevant for inclusion in the blog.

A de-brief with interviewers was also carried out to obtain further feedback.

6.3 Key findings

This section summarises the interviewer feedback collected in the blog.

6.3.1 Survey materials

Interviewers were asked to comment on respondents’ reactions to the survey documents (e.g. leaflets, life events calendar, showcards) as well as give their comments about how the documents were received by respondents. Inevitably some of the interviewer feedback was contradictory and so not all suggestions listed were acted on – only those experienced by the majority of interviewers or
those that appeared sensible to implement. Comments from the blog have been summarised below.

Feedback about the survey materials was on the whole positive with the majority stating they were ‘very child-friendly’. Although viewed positively some interviewers felt that the new materials were not always appropriate for the whole age range that the survey covers. It was observed that for teenagers the red card, the showcard with smiley faces and the font used on the showcards might seem a bit childish.

Interviewers suggested that there could be two sets of showcards – one for the younger children and another for older children.

While it was not considered practical to have two sets of showcards the size and style of characters that appeared on the showcards changed.

The observations made by interviewers highlighted the requirement for interviewers to adopt a flexible and receptive approach when using the survey materials with children – for example while the red card should be given to all children its use is entirely down to the respondent and this is explained in the child consent screen. This issue was incorporated into the training interviewers received in Interviewer Briefings, which the interviewers who administered the BCS regularly attended.

6.3.2 Achieving the interview with 10-15 year olds

Interviewers had mixed experiences making appointments with 10-15 year olds.

Most felt that their interviewer skills of building up a rapport with the household and using their discretion were crucial to introducing and gaining the additional interview, ‘when you have built good rapport or found commonality there is no problem’.

While some interviewers reported that there was no objection on the part of parents or children to the children’s survey e.g. ‘there has been no objection or refusal from the parents of any of these children’, others met more opposition. Several interviewers experienced refusals from the parents without being able to talk directly to the under 16 year old, ‘I discussed the child interview and showed the leaflets but the parent said he would not want to be involved and he was not willing for me to return and speak directly with the child at another time’. Similarly, one parent refused because they felt that they could give all the information required, ‘any issues her son has will be known to her and therefore it is not necessary to interview him’. A parent of a child refused consent because the length of the main survey discouraged her from investing any more time in the survey - ‘with the main interview taking almost an hour the mother felt she
had spent enough time on the subject and was not willing for her 15 year old son to be interviewed’.

In some cases the respondent under 16 refused to take part. According to the feedback from one interviewer who received a refusal to complete the children’s survey from a child ‘the son overheard the discussion and expressed in no uncertain terms that he was not interested’. Another found that ‘the mother gave her daughter the literature I left but said that they (twins) both read it and said they are not interested. So that’s end of the line without even getting to speak to the child’.

The survey self-completion section also raised some concerns among some parents about their children completing the survey. Some parents also had concerns about leaving their child alone to complete the self-completion section of the questionnaire and watched them completing this section of the questionnaire.

In the large-scale trial of the survey, interviewers conducted a core adult survey before interviewing any eligible child in the same household. In the adult survey the self-completion section of the survey came at the end of the interview. Similarly to the children’s survey the self completion section of the adult survey covered sensitive issues which it was expected that respondents would not feel comfortable disclosing information about in face-to-face interviews e.g. domestic abuse. Some parents were particularly concerned about their children completing the children’s survey because of the content of the adult self-completion section which they had just completed themselves having completed the adult interview. This then was an issue which had not been highlighted earlier because prior to the large-scale field trial the children’s survey had been piloted independently of the adult survey.

To address the issues highlighted by the interviewers a parental information card was developed which outlined the reasons and value of interviewing children as part of the survey. The parental information card highlighted the different topics that were covered in the children’s survey as well as the length of the survey interview. In addition, the Interviewer Briefing for the children’s survey was developed further to incorporate refusal avoidance training orientated to both parents and children.

6.3.3 The interview situation itself

Interviewers encountered a number of different situations when actually carrying out the interview.

Some parents were happy to let the interview take place with the child completing the interview allowed a degree of privacy. In other cases the parents wished to maintain a supervisory role with regard to the child completing the survey e.g. the ‘Father was happy but clearly wanted to be around when the
survey was being completed’. In some cases the entire family took interest in the survey and the respondent was unable to complete the interview in private. Another interviewer reported that in their curiosity about the survey the family crowded around the respondent as they completed the questionnaire.

Feedback from interviewers about the circumstances under which respondents completed the questionnaire highlighted the vital role interviewers had to play in fostering respondent confidentiality. Interviewers had to arrange the best physical situation for respondents to complete the survey in order that they could respond to questions as confidentially as possible given the physical surroundings they encountered in each household.

6.3.4 The questionnaire

Interviewers highlighted that there were some difficulties with the younger children understanding some of the topics covered in the survey. One interviewer reported that an eleven year-old respondent had to ask for explanations about some of the self-completion questions. Another interviewer commented that an eleven year-old respondent had some difficulties understanding the questions about contact with the police and internet security.

After the field test the questions relating to internet security which had been found to be problematic were removed from the survey, as were some further questions about this topic. In addition the questions relating to contact with the police were simplified so they were more suitable for younger children.

Similarly some interviewers had some concerns about some of the topic areas included; one interviewer commented that a respondent whom they had interviewed did not know what cannabis was. Following further investigation it was decided that because it was important to obtain a measure of the use of the drug across the entire selected age group the question on cannabis use would continue to be asked of all of the children. However the response categories relating to familiarity and use of cannabis were amended to include the categories for those who had no familiarity with the drug.

A few interviewers noted problems with the comprehension of ‘street gang’ despite the read-out definition. ‘I’m not sure his understanding of street gangs was how I understand it - by the description he gave they were just a group of rowdy 11/13 year olds as opposed to those associated with gang culture’.

The biggest concern raised by interviewers regarding the questionnaire was that it was taking too long to complete the interview. As a result of this the questionnaire was again shortened further by the removal of specific questions e.g. internet security, before the next stage of development.
7 Large-scale field trial

7.1 Introduction

Following the completion of the cognitive testing and small-scale piloting phases of the development of the children’s survey an extensive field trial was carried out prior to the launch of the survey in January 2009.

The field trail had multiple objectives. The two main purposes of the trial were to act as a Dress Rehearsal for the children’s survey prior to its launch and also to test the possible impact of the children’s survey on the response rates to the existing adult survey.

While the screening and interviewing procedures for 10 to 15 year olds were designed to minimise any likely impact, the chance of unintended consequences to the core survey could not be ruled out entirely. Consequently, the field trial was designed as an experiment specifically to test whether the introduction of screening for and interviewing children had any impact on the core survey.

The objectives of this large-scale field trial were as follows:

- To obtain an accurate estimate of interview length and to make adjustments to the questionnaire if the survey was considered too long
- To obtain better estimates about the number of crimes that 10 to 15 year olds reported and to make adjustments to the capping of victimisation modules if necessary
- To obtain accurate figures on achieved identification rates for 10 to 15 year olds and for likely response rate to the survey since initial estimates of likely response were based on limited sources
- To test general reaction to all aspects of the survey including field documents, screening and consent procedures through interviewer feedback
- To obtain a robust sample of data on which the offence coding system could be developed and tested
- To ensure that the introduction of the additional element of the survey had no negative impact on the core survey, particularly the headline response rate.

7.2 Design of the field experiment

All addresses issued in the field as part of the core sample between August and December 2008 were randomly allocated to one of two groups. At all addresses in the intervention group interviewers were required to screen for 10 to 15 year
olds and, where one or more eligible children were identified, to interview one randomly selected child. All addresses in the control group did not require the interviewer to screen for or interview 10 to 15 year olds. The control group represented the existing conditions on the core survey.

Allocation of addresses to each group was done within each field assignment, meaning that half of the addresses were allocated to the intervention group and half to the control group. In this way the potential effect of both area and interviewers were controlled for.

One factor that had to be taken into account when designing the experiment was the screening of 16 to 24 year olds at a proportion of addresses, which was an existing component of the survey. The implications of screening for two different age groups over and above the core interview were that an interviewer could conduct up to three interviews in a single household - a core adult interview, an interview with a 16 to 24 year old, and an interview with a 10 to 15 year old. In practice the likelihood of this arising was extremely small but it was decided to design the experiment in a way which would minimise the interview burden on any individual household.

In order to do this all issued addresses within each assignment were randomly allocated for either 10 to 15 year old screening or 16 to 24 year old screening. However, since screening for 16 to 24 year olds was required at 68.75% of addresses and screening for 10 to 15 year olds was required at 50% of addresses this meant that screening for both age groups was unavoidable at some addresses.

Thus, in average assignment of 32 addresses, the profile of screening during the experiment was as follows:

- 16 addresses where the interviewer was required to screen for 16 to 24 year olds only (the control group)
- 10 addresses where the interviewer was required to screen for 10 to 15 year olds only (the intervention group)
- 6 addresses where the interviewer was required to screen for both 10 to 15 year olds and 16 to 24 year olds (the intervention group)

The above design meant that there were essentially two different sub-groups within the intervention sample. Thus, in carrying out the analysis it was important not only to compare the intervention and control groups, but also to compare the sample that had both 10 to 15 year old and 16 to 24 year old screening separately from the sample that had only 10 to 15 year old screening.
7.3 Results

7.3.1 Core survey response rate

The main analysis undertaken was to look at the response rates and pattern of non-response achieved during the field test between the intervention and control samples. Apart from looking at just the overall response rates achieved in the two samples, respondent contact and co-operation rates were also examined. The contact rate is the proportion of eligible addresses where contact is made with someone in the household, while the co-operation rate is the proportion of respondents who are contacted who are actually interviewed.

Due to the nature of the BCS field procedures, whereby a proportion of addresses that are unproductive are re-issued to another interviewer, comparison was also made between the original response rate and pattern of non-response and the final response rates (that is after re-issues). Since re-issues are generally done by more senior and experienced interviewers compared with original assignments, the impact of different interviewers could potentially confound the results.

Table 7.1 shows the initial contact, co-operation and response rates for the intervention and control groups based on original assignments. Screening for 10 to 15 year olds had no effect on the contact, co-operation, or response rates for original assignments. Overall, the original response rate at addresses where screening was carried out for 10 to 15 year olds was identical to those addresses where no screening took place (71%).

When the two-subgroups within the intervention sample were compared there was no difference between the two groups. The response rate at addresses where there was both child and youth screening was 71.2% compared with 71.3% at addresses where there was only child screening.
Table 7.1  Original contact, co-operation and response rates for core BCS survey by whether household screened for children aged 10 to 15

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<th>No child screening</th>
<th>Child screening</th>
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<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact rate</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation rate</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base (n)</td>
<td>13,233</td>
<td>13,208</td>
<td>26,441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 shows a similar comparison for the final response rates, following the re-issue process for the core BCS survey. The final response rate for both the groups where screening for children did and did not take place in the household was 76%. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Again, there was no difference between the sub-groups within the intervention sample where the estimates for both youth and child screening and child screening only were 75.4% and 75.7% respectively.

Table 7.2  Final response rate for core BCS survey by whether household screened for children aged 10 to 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No child screening</th>
<th>Child screening</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact rate</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation rate</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base (n)</td>
<td>13,233</td>
<td>13,208</td>
<td>26,441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the original and final outcomes also suggests that the child screening had no impact on the way in which fieldwork was conducted. Thus, in both the control and intervention groups, 17% of addresses were re-issued during fieldwork and the conversion rate of addresses that were re-issued was the same in both groups.

Table 7.3 shows the final response rates broken down by Government Office Region (GOR). The introduction of child screening does not appear to have had any impact on final response rates for the core survey across GOR in any one region. Final response rates between the control and intervention group within each region showed no clear differences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No child screening</th>
<th>Child screening</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results provide robust evidence that the introduction of the children’s extension to the BCS appeared to have no impact on contact, co-operation and response rates for the main BCS adult survey.

### 7.3.2 Response rate for the children’s survey

A secondary objective of the field trial was to establish accurate estimates for both the penetration rate (i.e. the number of households containing a 10 to 15 year old) and the response rate to the child survey. Obtaining accurate estimates before the launch of the live survey was important to ensure that the volume of screening could be set at a level to achieve a target of 4,000 interviews per year.

Since details about all children in households are collected on the core BCS survey extremely accurate estimates for proportion of households with at least one eligible 10 to 15 year old were available from previous BCS time periods.

Table 7.4 shows the proportion of households with 10 to 15 year old children based on the 2007-8 core BCS survey. This shows that 14% of all households interviewed a 10 to 15 year old, with 10% containing one child in this age range and 4% containing more than one.
Table 7.4  Proportion of households with children aged 10 to 15, BCS 2007-08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children aged 10-15</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base (n)</td>
<td>46,983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information on the likely response rate on the survey was less certain. The BCS methodological review had used a response rate of 80% to base its estimate of sample size, while BMRB had suggested a response rate of 75% when tendering for the survey. Both these response rates are based on an adult having already taken part in the core BCS, meaning that the composite response rate is lower.

Evidence on response rates for the 10 to 15 year old age group is relatively difficult to find. Although there are several surveys that interview children using the same basic design that the BCS planned to adopt none of these surveys represented a reasonable comparison. Differences included the exact age range of children being interviewed, the subject matter and how the survey is administered, all of which influence response rates. It is for this reason that the field test was an important part of establishing a realistic response rate to the new survey.

Table 7.5 shows the response rate and reason for non-response for the children’s survey between August and December 2008. The overall response rate achieved was 71%, which was slightly lower than the initial estimate of 75%. When non-response to the core BCS survey is taken into account the outcome of this response rate is a composite response rate of approximately 54%.
Table 7.5  Response rate and reasons for non-response for 10 to 15 year olds, BCS August 2008 – December 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of issued eligible addresses</th>
<th>% of screened households</th>
<th>% of eligible households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ADDRESSES ISSUED FOR SCREENING</td>
<td>13,208</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core deadwood addresses</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ELIGIBLE ADDRESSES FOR SCREENING</td>
<td>11,943</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No screening attempted (eligibility unknown)</td>
<td>1,880</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total households screened for 10-15 year olds</td>
<td>10,063</td>
<td>84.3 100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 10-15 year old at address</td>
<td>8,769</td>
<td>73.4 87.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information for screening refused</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.4 0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ineligible addresses</td>
<td>8,818</td>
<td>73.8 87.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total eligible households</td>
<td>1,245</td>
<td>10.4 12.4 100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with selected respondent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with parent/guardian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total non-contact</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office refusal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/guardian permission refusal</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal refusal</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxy refusal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact made, no specific appointment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total refusal</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken appointment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily ill/incapacitated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically or mentally unable</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away/in hospital</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unsuccessful</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total other unsuccessful</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL UNPRODUCTIVE</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL INTERVIEWS</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewers were unable to carry out screening at about 15% of issued addresses where they were asked to do so. This was either because they failed to make contact with anyone at the address or because the person at the address refused to give them any information about the ages of children in the household. Interviewers were given strict instructions about not allowing the screening process to jeopardise their chances of achieving a core interview.

An eligible 10 to 15 year old was identified at just over 12% of all households that were screened.\(^4\)

In terms of reasons for non-response, the non-contact rate was extremely low (1.5%). A low non-contact rate would be expected since in order to carry out the screening and interview a 10 to 15 year old the interviewer has to make contact with an adult in the household.

The refusal rate was broadly in line with the refusal rate on the adult survey (17%). Parental refusal was most common (11%), with personal refusal by the selected child being much lower (4%). The relatively high parental refusal rate may reflect genuine concerns that parents have about their children taking part in the survey or about the content of the survey. Alternatively, it may actually reflect parents acting as gatekeepers for their children, either because they believe their child won’t want to do the interview or because the selected child has asked their parent to say ‘no’ on their behalf.

A further 8% of addresses were coded as ‘other unsuccessful’. A large part of these cases were actually inconsistencies in the field data – that is situations where the core interview data showed a 10 to 15 year old in the household, but the interviewer had reported that there were no eligible children in the household or had not carried out the screening. On the basis that an eligible child was in the household, but no interview had been achieved these cases were set to ‘other unsuccessful’ in the absence of any other valid outcome code.

Such inconsistencies are probably partly explained by interviewers being new to the screening process and partly by a lack of clarity in the field procedures about whether screening for 10 to 15 year olds should be re-done at the re-issue stage, when an outcome had already been returned at the original fieldwork stage. As a result of interviewers gaining more experience of the screening process, feedback given in annual interviewer Review Meetings and some slight modification to the fieldwork instructions, it is anticipated that both these issues will be resolved once the survey moves to live data collection.

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\(^4\) This figure is different from the 14% figure quoted earlier because it includes addresses where the interviewer was able to carry out the screening but did not complete a core interview. The identification rate based only on addresses where a core adult interview was achieved was 13.8%, which is in line with expectations.
7.4 Further non-response analysis

To try and better understand non-response to the survey further analysis of the field trial data was carried out.

7.4.1 Comparison of the children’s sample with the population

Table 7.6 shows a comparison of age and sex sub-groups within the achieved sample for children from the field trial with the same sub-groups in the population.

**Table 7.6 Comparison of sub-groups within achieved children’s sample compared with population sub-groups, BCS August-December 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Achieved Sample (unweighted)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>+2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>+1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>+2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>+0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age within sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>+0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>+2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base (N)</strong></td>
<td>3,974,500</td>
<td>884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This suggests that while the profile of achieved children’s interviews is broadly in line with the population profile of the age group, there are some differences. These are:

- The sample slightly under represents boys and over represents girls – although this is perhaps simply a reflection of the pattern seen on the adult survey, where men are under represented and women are over represented

- Although the pattern by individual year of age is not entirely straightforward, 10 year olds are clearly the most under represented in the sample

- When looking at age within sex, the group most under represented are 10 year old boys

The under representation of 10 year olds might be explained by the fact that parents are more likely to refuse permission when a younger child is selected, rather than an older child.

### 7.5 Basic non-response analysis

It is possible to carry out some basic non-response analysis by combining the core data from the adult survey with the data obtained from the children’s survey.

At every household where a core adult interview was carried out data about the full composition of the household, including the number of 10 to 15 year olds is collected. In 71% of these households an interview was also achieved with a 10 to 15 year old, while in 29% of cases no interview was achieved. However, even although no interview was achieved, information is available for the age and sex of the children in the household (from the core adult interview) and so it is possible to compare responding and non-responding children. In total 1,245 households interviewed as part of the core survey between August and December 2008 contained a 10 to 15 year old. In households where there was more than one eligible 10 to 15 year old, information on which child was selected for interview was not recorded electronically. Consequently the analysis is restricted to households where only one 10 to 15 year old was identified (838 households).

Table 7.7 shows the response to the survey according to the known age of the selected respondent. Although there is no clear association between age and response to the survey, response rates are clearly lower where the selected respondent was aged 10 compared to any other age (59%).
Table 7.7 highlights the following issues with regard to non-response:

- Levels of non-contact are broadly similar across all ages. It might be anticipated that non-contact would be higher amongst older children (14 and 15 year olds) but this was not the case.

- Levels of parental refusal were highest where the selected respondent was aged 10.

- Levels of personal refusal are slightly higher among older children, although the difference is not great.

### Table 7.7  10 to 15 year old response rate and reason for non-response, BCS August 2008 – December 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of selected respondent</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with selected respondent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with parent/guardian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All non-contact</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office refusal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/guardian permission refusal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal refusal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxy refusal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact made, no specific appointment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All refusal</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken appointment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily ill/incapacitated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically or mentally unable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away/in hospital</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unsuccessful</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All other unsuccessful</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All unproductive</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response rate</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The methodological and development work conducted showed that the core BCS questionnaire could be successfully adapted to suit children aged 10 to 15 and could be introduced without jeopardising the core BCS.
8 Counting criminal incidents experienced by children

8.1 Introduction

With the collection of a robust sample of data from the large-scale field-trial in August to December 2008, the testing of the BCS Offence Coding System with the incidents reported by children could begin.

Offence coding is the procedure by which incidents reported in the victimisation module section of the BCS questionnaire are allocated criminal offence codes. In the BCS adult survey all victim forms are reviewed by specially trained coders who determine whether the reported incidents represent crimes or not, and if so, the offence code that should then be assigned for each crime. The BCS Offence Coding System was developed to approximate the way in which incidents reported to the police are classified.

8.2 Testing the offence coding system with incidents reported by children

The first step in the testing of the Offence Coding System was that all of the incidents reported by children during the field trial were coded and allocated standard offence codes.

Reviewing the results of coding it was clear that classifying all of the incidents as offences produced considerable inconsistency and incongruity with regard to the severity and type of incidents that children reported. This was most apparent with the allocation of offence codes to relatively minor incidents of assault, theft and damage between friends and siblings. Whilst it was perfectly possible to allocate offence codes to these types of incidents using the same criteria applied to incidents reported in the adult survey, designating relatively minor incidents as offences proved problematic.
It was clear that relatively minor incidents reported by children presented a conceptual challenge to the existing Offence Coding System. To produce estimates of victimisation that would be useful to those with a vested interest in the welfare of children whilst at the same time represented normative expectations of what were criminal acts the approach to counting crime reported by children would require further consideration.

**8.3 Dealing with relatively minor incidents**

In order to understand better the incidents reported by children, all of the incidents reported during the large-scale field trial were reviewed individually and categorised. This review highlighted the wide variety, range of severity and types of incidents reported by children.

Categorisation of the incidents showed that they corresponded closely with the results of previous research into victimisation amongst children (Roe and Ashe, 2006). Approximately a third of the incidents reported appeared to be relatively minor incidents (such as playground scuffles, sibling play and aggression or taking low value items) sometimes with no intention to hurt, steal or damage the victim's property. Those with lack of intent were clearly not criminal. However, it was clear that some of these types of incidents (even where there was intent) would not normally be deemed serious enough to be considered crimes by parents, adults or children themselves. According to Aye Maung’s (1995) analysis of the 1992 BCS survey of children, 60% of 12 to 15 year olds recalled at least one incident of victimisation in the previous 6 to 8 months, however on the basis only of those incidents which children themselves considered a ‘crime’ the level of victimisation was much lower - just 18%.

The main aim of extending the BCS to children was to provide robust estimates of victimisation amongst children. However, precisely how incidents reported by children are incorporated into a total BCS count of ‘crime’ has important consequences for the kind of estimates that would be produced. It also has a critical bearing on the value and potential application of these estimates with reference to the purpose for which they are required. For example, previous research that has adopted the approach of applying legal definitions to incidents reported by children has reported very high levels of victimisation. From the perspective of those who are concerned with the application and administration of the legal definitions of crime, these estimates are entirely credible. However from
the perspective of those with an interest in children’s rights and liberties, classifying all the incidents that are reported by children as crimes could lead to the stigmatisation and criminalisation of perfectly acceptable behaviour within the context of childhood development. In support of this Aye Maung (1995) suggests that the view that defining a crime is straightforward ignores the normative value-laden aspects of criminal definition.

As the earlier quote from Hough (see section 2.6) illustrates the question of what is a crime is a complex one and arguably the concept is more of a normative, rather than, a descriptive one. It became clear that applying the existing offence coding procedures to the incidents reported by children would produce counts of crime risks confounding normative expectations of what was and was not a crime.

**8.4 Alternative approaches to the classification of incidents reported by children**

To attempt to reconcile the coding and classification of incidents reported by children the Home Office undertook a process of consultation with those with experience of classifying, collecting and producing crime statistics in conjunction with a further review of approaches to dealing with minor incidents in previous research into levels of child victimisation.

A number of options were developed for classifying incidents as crimes as follows:

- **All in law**
  Include all incidents reported by children that are in law a crime, that is where the victim perceived intent on part of the perpetrator to inflict hurt or damage or to steal property.

- **Norms-based**
  Apply an explicit set of normative rules to exclude relatively minor incidents. These rules were developed from the findings of qualitative research with children that informed the development of the survey.

- **All in law outside school**
  Include all incidents reported by children that are in law a crime except those occurring in school. This approach is a rough approximation of the guidance jointly issued by the (then) Department for Children, Schools and
Families, Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers in July 2007 which provides that unless the child or the parent/guardian asks for the police to record these crimes (or if the crime is deemed to be more serious) then the matter remains within the schools internal disciplinary processes. This is likely to result in most low-level incidents being dealt with by school authorities and not recorded as crimes by the police.

**Victim perceived**
Include all incidents in law a crime that are thought by victims themselves to be crimes. This is a wholly subjective measure based on the perceptions of the individual victim.

It must be acknowledged that given the constraints regarding the length of the children’s questionnaire (20 minutes) and the level of detail that can be obtained in this time, it is unlikely that any approach would fully capture in its entirety the extent, subtlety and ambiguity of the experience of children and crime without the deployment of a survey instrument, the complexity and length of which, would make it impractical to administer in the form of a household survey.

The information already collected in the children’s survey made it possible to produce counts of crime using the ‘All in law’, ‘All in law outside school’ and ‘Victim perceived’ approaches. The ‘All in law’ approach entailed coding all of the incidents with a standard offence code as had been done previously. Respondents to the survey provided information on where incidents took place and also whether they believed the incidents of which they had been a victim were crimes or not. From this information it was possible to produce counts of crime using the ‘All in law outside school’ and ‘Victim perceived’ approaches.

The following section describes the development of a set of rules to produce consistent estimates of victimisation amongst children by systematically excluding relatively minor incidents from the total count of crime (the ‘Norms based’ approach described above).

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5 This policy acknowledged that police officers attending school premises may become aware of incidents that would amount to a minor crime in law. The guidance allows for an officer not to record a crime provided it is not serious and the school, child and parent/responsible adult agrees to this; and that it should be dealt with via the school's disciplinary procedure. See Home Office Counting Rules For Recorded Crime, Annex E, April 2009, [http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html)
Under everyday circumstances representatives of the adult world interpret the victimisation experiences of children to whom they are frequently referred. Parents, adults and those in positions of power over children are invested with the authority to operate a system of jurisdiction over children whereby they can punish perpetrators, protect victims, escalate serious incidents up to higher powers and reinterpret incidents back to children when they are not considered serious.

With this in mind it was decided that given the information collected in the children’s questionnaire to develop a set of rules that as far as was reasonably possible expressed the normative criteria applied to children’s victimisation experiences.

The earlier qualitative and previous research with children showed that the location, identity of the perpetrator, impact on the victim, frequency of occurrence, motivation of the perpetrator, legal punishment and use of weapons were important in determining the seriousness of an incident and in deciding whether or not the incident constituted a crime or not. Of these factors the following could be described using existing items on the children’s questionnaire and were relevant to the types of victimisation experiences for which information was collected:-

- The relationship of the victim to the offender
- Level of injury inflicted upon the victim by the offender
- Cost of the personal property stolen or damaged
- Presence of a weapon

The qualitative research with children had also highlighted that different ‘levels’ within each of these factors influenced the perceived severity of incidents. To identify these different levels each of the factors were considered with reference to the types of incidents reported in the field-trial and the results from the qualitative research.

### 8.5 Victim/offender relationships

According to the results of the earlier qualitative research children considered incidents perpetrated by friends, family or classmate’s to be less serious than those committed by strangers.
In order to differentiate between different types of relationship, relationships were divided into the two broad categories - 'known' and 'unknown'. Relationships categorised as 'known' were considered to imply a higher degree of intimacy and trust than those designated as 'unknown'. Table 8.1 below, shows the classification scheme for known and unknown relationships from the children’s questionnaire.

**Table 8.1: Classification of 'known’ and 'unknown’ relationships between victims and offenders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>Relationship as described by victim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Known</strong></td>
<td>Parent including step / adopted / foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brother / sister including step / adopted / foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupil at school / place of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy / girl-friend / partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
<td>Stranger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupil at another school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young people from local area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young people from a different area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Someone you worked with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Someone you’ve seen around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tradesman / builder / contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Offender/victim relationships are defined here only in terms of the role the offender assumes with reference to the victim. These roles incorporate expectations with regard to the level of trust between victim and offender.

The methodological, theoretical and conceptual challenges of precisely measuring the degree or quality of trust invested in the relationship between children and offender and licence thereof for offenders to perpetrate ‘acceptable’ detrimental events against the victim lay beyond the scope of the BCS questionnaire.

**8.6 Cost of items stolen or damaged**

On the basis of the possible response categories in the questionnaire for items stolen or damaged and a review of all of items actually reported stolen or damaged, these items were divided into two levels – high and low cost. Incidents
involving theft or damage to high cost items would be included in a total count of crime while those of relatively low cost would be excluded. Table 8.2 below, shows the classification scheme for cost of items stolen or damaged.

**Table 8.2: Classification scheme for cost of items stolen or damage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Included** | Mobile phone/iphone  
                          Calculator  
                          Bag (including handbag/shopping bag)  
                          Purse/wallet  
                          Cash, Cash cards  
                          MP3 player (e.g. iPod), Portable games consoles (e.g. PSP, DX), Games consoles/play stations and games (not portable)  
                          Jewellery/watches  
                          Camera  
                          Clothes/shoes  
                          Documents (e.g. savings account book, passport)  
                          Video equipment/camcorder, Television, Stereo/Hi-fi equipment, DVD player  
                          Computer, computer equipment including laptops  
                          CDs/videos/DVDs/MiniDiscs  
                          Bicycle, Bicycle parts  
                          Glasses/sunglasses  
                          Various items/gadgets (e.g. torch, penknife)  
                          Sports equipment (e.g. golf clubs, football, etc)  
                          Toiletries/make up/perfume/medication  
                          Animals/pets/fish/birds  
                          Personal organiser (e.g. Palm Pilot, Blackberry)  
                          Books  
                          Dongle/pen drives  
                          House keys |
| **Excluded** | Pens, Rulers, Pencils, Rubbers, Pencil case  
                          Stationery  
                          Food/lunch, Sweets  
                          Keyrings  
                          Toys, Cards  
                          Year planners  
                          Cigarettes / tobacco / lighters |

### 8.7 Level of injury

In the qualitative research children had highlighted that the level of impact on the victim in terms of degree of physical injury, degree of loss to the victim and the extent to which any damage could be repaired influenced the severity of an incident.
Taking this into consideration and the way that incidents of assault were allocated
offence codes on the adult survey, it was decided to classify violent incidents
reported by children on the basis of the degree of physical injury inflicted on the
victim. Level of injury was divided into those injuries that would mean an incident
would be included or excluded from a total count of crime. Table 8.3 shows the
classification scheme for types of injury received by a victim.

Table 8.3: Classification scheme for injuries received by victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Included</strong></td>
<td>Minor bruising or black eye, Severe bruising Scratches, Cuts Broken bones, Broken nose Broken/lost teeth, Chipped teeth Concussion or loss of consciousness Facial/head injuries (no mention of bruising) Eye/facial injuries caused by acid, paint, sand, etc. thrown in face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excluded</strong></td>
<td>Hurt but no marks on skin Marks on skin (e.g. slap marks, redness, dead arm or leg)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.8 Presence and type of weapon used

According to the BCS offence coding manual a weapon is defined as ‘...anything
that is used to threaten the victim e.g. a brick, a dog, a bag of shopping etc. It is
not the object, but what the offender does with it that makes it a weapon’.

In order to be consistent with these criteria by which weapons are identified the
same approach was adopted for the children’s survey. Any item would be
understood to be a weapon in the circumstances that the victim perceived
themselves to be threatened by the use of that item.

Any incident that involved the use of a threatening weapon would be included into
a total count of crime.

8.9 Components of personal incidents

Having selected factors that influenced the perceived severity of an incident and
different levels within these factors, the different offence groups for which
information was collected were broken down into the three components -
violence, theft and damage. It was then possible to describe each of the offence groups for which information was collected within the survey using these components individually or in combination e.g. incidents of robbery are composed of the components theft and violence. Using these three components in combination with the factors and their different levels it was then possible to construct incident classification matrices.

These matrices were then used to classify all of the incidents reported by children during the large-scale field. Using this approach it was now possible to systematically categorise incidents that would and would not be included in a ‘Norms based’ count of crime for children and furthermore describe the reasons for their inclusion or exclusion.

The decision matrices were then transposed into flowcharts, which could be used by the trained offence coders.

**8.10 Testing of the classification flowcharts**

In order to test the differential power of the decision flowcharts, all of the incidents reported during the large-scale field trial were classified using the decision flowcharts and the results of the classifications examined.

In reviewing the results of this first classification test it became clear that incidents of accidental assault and criminal damage had been included in the final count of crime for children. These results contrasted with the previous qualitative research with children that had highlighted that the intention of the perpetrator influenced the perceived severity and possible criminal status of an incident.

Intention on the part of the offender towards the victim had not been included as a factor in the classification procedure because it had been designed to replicate as far as possible the approach adopted in the existing Offence Coding System. However, because of the important role that play assumes and the higher tolerance of physical contact within children’s culture, intention on the part of an offender needed to be taken into account in order to weigh the severity of any one incident. Intention on the part of the offender towards the victim was therefore incorporated into the final decision flowcharts such that accidental or un-intentional incidents were excluded from a total count of crime using a normative approach.
Diagram 8.1 shows the final decision flowcharts used for the ‘Norms based’ approach to producing a total count of crime from the incidents reported by children.
Diagram 8.1: Final flowchart used for norms based approach to counting crime
Appendix I: Qualitative Research Design and Conduct

A brief outline of the qualitative research design and conduct is given in chapter 3 of this report. This appendix provides further details of the research methods used in this study.

Research Design

The research was qualitative in design, adopting a group approach in order to understand young people’s views and experiences. A qualitative approach to the research enabled participants to raise issues of importance in their own words and vocabulary, in the context of their own circumstance and, with probing by the moderator, ensured issues were explored and examined in full. As qualitative methods permit researchers to adapt their approach during the sessions, they are able to be sensitive to the needs and circumstances of the people taking part.

Sample design and selection

As is usual in qualitative research, the sample was designed to ensure full coverage of the key sub-groups within the target population, in order to identify and explain variations in views and experiences between them. As noted in the introduction, purposive sampling was used to structure the sample of young people around their age, gender, social grade and area.

The recruitment was managed by the BMRB Qualitative Research field team who used their network of recruiters to select the participant sample. The field managers were fully briefed on the project and provided with detailed recruitment instructions and a screening questionnaire in order for recruiters to assess participants’ eligibility to participate in the research. Participants were recruited using a mix of face to face and telephone recruitment. All recruiters are members of the IQCS (Interviewers Quality Control Scheme).

Conduct of the mini groups

The mini groups were moderated by experienced qualitative researchers who have extensive experience and have been trained in the techniques of non-directive interviewing. Each group was exploratory and interactive in form so that questioning could be responsive to the experiences and circumstances of the
individuals involved. The discussion was structured using a topic guide (see below), which listed the key themes and sub topics to be addressed and the specific issues for coverage within each. Although topic guides help to ensure systematic coverage of key points across interviews, they are used flexibly to allow issues of relevance for individual participants to be covered through detailed follow up questioning.

The wording of the questions and the conduct of groups were designed to be appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the people being interviewed. All members of the research team took part in a briefing to ensure the interviewing approach was consistent across the mini-group sessions.

The mini-groups were convened either in the recruiter’s home or at BMRB’s offices at Ealing Gateway, with refreshments being provided. All the mini-group sessions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim; participants were notified of this at the time of their recruitment and again at the start of each session.

It is customary practice to use participant payments when carrying out most qualitative general population research and as such the participants were all given a £10 high-street voucher as a ‘thank you’ for giving up their time to take part in the research.

**Analysis**

Material collected through qualitative methods is invariably unstructured and unwieldy. Much of it is text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews. Moreover, the internal content of the material is usually in detailed and micro form (for example, accounts of experiences and inarticulate explanations). The primary aim of any analytical method is to provide a means of exploring coherence and structure within a cumbersome data set whilst retaining a hold on the original accounts and observations from which it is derived.

The analysis of the mini-group sessions was undertaken using a qualitative content analytic method called ‘Matrix Mapping’ which involves a systematic process of sifting, summarising and sorting the material according to key issues and themes.
The first stage of ‘Matrix-Mapping’ involves familiarisation with the data (in the form of verbatim transcripts) and identification of emerging issues. Based on this preliminary review of the data as well as the coverage of the topic guide and the researchers’ experiences of conducting the fieldwork, a thematic framework is constructed. The analysis then proceeds by summarising and synthesising the data according to this thematic framework that comprises a series of subject charts displayed in Excel. Material from each transcript was summarised and transposed under the appropriate subject heading of the thematic matrix. The context of the information was retained and the page of the transcript from which it came noted, so that it is possible to return to a transcript to explore a point in more detail or to extract text for verbatim quotation. Once the data had been sifted a map was produced which identified the range and nature of views and experiences.

The mapping process is similar regardless of the topic being considered. The analyst reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts, or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing together the overall picture is not simply aggregating patterns, but weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues, and searching for structures within the data that have explanatory power, rather than simply seeking a multiplicity of evidence.
Appendix II: Topic Guides

BCS Young People

Topic Guide – Stage One

Aims of the research

The main aim of this research is to explore how young people understand crime and victimisation, with a particular focus on low level crime. More specifically, it will consider:

− Young people’s understanding of crime and the nature of crimes committed against young people;
− Perceptions of the context in which children are victims of crime and who they report victimisation to;
− The language used by children to recall incidents and report crime;
− The reference period in which children can accurately recall events, especially victimisation, and
− How comfortable young people feel discussing issues relating to crime.

1. INTRODUCTION (5min)

• About BMRB – independent research company
• Project for Home Office to inform the British Crime Survey - a survey to measure the level of crime, including crime that is not reported to the police)
• Overall aim/objectives of the research
• Length of group discussion (approx. 60 minutes)
• Confidentiality
  − Children and young people cannot be identified in findings we report
  − Limitation of disclosure
• Recording
  − Only available to research team
2. BACKGROUND (5min)

- Provide background
  - Age
  - Who they live with; family
  - What they like doing at school / hobbies

3. UNDERSTANDING OF CRIME (10-15 min)

- Spontaneously explore understanding of term ‘crime’; what does the word ‘crime’ mean to them; probe for examples of crimes

- Explore views on what makes something a crime; how do they know something is a crime
  - How do they know this - probe: parents; teachers; friends; television; other

**Exercise A: Defining a crime**

- Explain to participants that you are going to show them different things that could happen and you want them to tell you whether each one is a crime or not
- Go through each showcard one at a time and ask them which ‘pile’ it should be put in – crime or not a crime
- Explore reasons for views; why do they perceive each event to be a crime/not a crime
- Explore reasons behind any difference in views among participants

- Explore views on whether some crimes are more serious than others; reflect back and probe on crimes already mentioned
  - Probe for examples of more serious and less serious crimes

**Exercise B: Recognising different levels of crime**

- Explain to participants that you are going to show them examples of different things happening, and you want them to put them in order of seriousness, with the most serious incidents at the top of the list, and the least serious incidents at the bottom
- Go through each showcard one at a time and rank each incident with participants
- Explore reasons for views; why do they rank each incident in particular way
- Explore reasons behind any difference in views among participants
• Explore understanding of things that people do that causes respondents problems/annoys/upsets them but is **not a crime** - **probe** for examples
• Explore views on the difference between a less serious crime and something that is annoying/upsetting but not a crime

**Probe** whether it depends on:

- Effect of incident on victim - how seriously injured they are; how the incident makes the victim feel
- Who the perpetrator was - **probe**: whether a child or an adult
- Whether perpetrator intended to do what they did - **probe**: if someone accidentally hit you would this be a crime
- Whether the perpetrator carried out the action in retaliation - **probe**: if someone hits you because you hit them would it be a crime

4. YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCES OF CRIME (20-25 min)

• Explore which crimes/incidents that affect young people particularly concern respondents – **probe**: on crimes/incidents already mentioned; explore reasons why

**Note to researcher: rank crimes in order of concern**

• Explore views on:
  - Where crimes against children are most likely to take place - **probe**: in school; on way home from school; when out at weekends/at home; other
  - Point at which playground incidents e.g. pushing/shoving and playground fights becomes a crime; how serious does the incident have to become before it could be considered a crime
  - Who is most likely to commit crimes against children and young people - **probe**: adults; parents; teachers; other children and young people; people that the victim knows; other
  - What children and young people can do to protect themselves against crime; how easy/difficult it is for children and young people to protect themselves against crime; reasons for views
  - Explore views on whether some crimes are more likely to happen to children and young people than to adults; explore reasons for views

**Exercise C: Describing crime**

• Show participants picture A and explore their views on:
  - What is taking place in the picture
  - How they think the people in the picture might know each other
  - Who else might be involved
  - Whether this is a crime being committed
  - What the outcome of this incident might be
• Explore participants’ own experiences, or those of other young people they know of, of being a victim of crime

*Note to researcher: please prompt respondents to include small incidents as well as more serious crimes; ask them to describe (if they feel comfortable)*

• Explore details of the incident:
  − What happened to the victim
  − Who was involved – probe: victim/s; perpetrator/s; and witnesses
  − When/where it happened – probe: year, month, time of day
  − How it made the victim feel; whether the victim thought that they were a victim of crime

• Whether the victim told anyone about the incident; reasons why they did/did not
  − Who the victim told about the incident; reasons why chose to tell that person/those people
  − How the victim felt about telling this person/people; whether felt uncomfortable talking about it; reasons for this
  − Whether there was anyone the victim would have felt uncomfortable talking about it to; reasons for views
  − What happened after the victim had reported it; whether they were glad they had reported it; reasons for views

• Explore vignettes relating to reporting crime

**Interviewer:** • Hand participants vignette to read through in pairs
  
  • Read through vignette aloud with participants
  
  • Discuss points below
  
  • Repeat with other vignette

**Vignette 1:**

“Tom is walking home from school, writing a text on his mobile phone. An older boy who goes to Tom’s school runs up, snatches Tom’s phone out of his hand and runs away”

**Vignette 2:**

“Katie is being bullied at school. One day she is walking home from school when the person who is bullying her comes up and starts threatening to hurt her. At one point, the bully reaches out and pushes Katie so that she falls over. Katie is left with bruises on her arm.”
• Explore in detail views on:
  − Whether Tom/Katie should tell someone about what happened to them; explore reasons for views
  − Who should they tell - probe: teacher; parents; other family; friends; police; other - explore reasons for views
  − How Tom/Katie might feel talking to someone about what happened to them; whether it would make them feel good/bad; reasons for views
  − Whether there might be anyone they would not feel comfortable talking about it to; who this might be; reasons for views
  − What might happen as a result of telling someone about what happened to them; how would they feel about this

5. RECALL OF PAST EVENTS (10 min)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise D: Recalling past events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ask participants whether in the last 12 months they have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Moved house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gone on holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Been a victim of crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask participants to recall when the event/s took place; encourage them to be as specific as possible; include how events relate to each other in time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show participants life events calendar and explore whether this helps them to recall when events took place more accurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explore what aspects of calendar helps them to remember more accurately; e.g. school terms, school holidays etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHECK WHETHER ANY OTHER COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE RESEARCHER

Thank respondent and close
Aims of the research

This research aims to explore young people’s experiences and views of key issues relating to crime and victimisation. Specifically, this will include an exploration of:

- Feelings of personal safety
- Crime prevention and personal security
- Experiences of and attitudes to the police
- Street gangs
- Lifestyle and risky behaviours
- Bullying
- Anti-social behaviour

1. **INTRODUCTION (5 mins)**

- About BMRB – independent research company
- Project for Home Office to inform the British Crime Survey – a survey to measure the level of crime, including crime that is not reported to the police
- Overall aim/objectives of the research
- Length of group discussion (approx. 90 minutes)
- Confidentiality
  - Children and young people cannot be identified in findings we report
  - Limitation of disclosure
- Recording
  - Only available to research team

2. **BACKGROUND (5 mins)**

- Provide background
  - Age
  - Who they live with; family
  - What they like doing / hobbies
3. RISK OF CRIME AND FEELINGS OF SAFETY (10 mins)

- Spontaneously explore views on how ‘safe’ they feel in relation to crime/victimisation
  - How likely are they to become a victim of crime in the next year - explore reasons for views

- Explore whether views on safety differ according to location – reasons for this
- Explore how ‘safe’ they feel in particular locations:
  Probe:
  - Local neighbourhood
  - City centre
  - Travelling to/from school/at school; explore reasons for views
  - Using various modes of public transport - probe: bus, train, underground, other - explore reasons for views

Note to researcher: rank locations and modes of transport in order of where they feel the safest

4. CRIME PREVENTION AND PERSONAL SECURITY (10 mins)

- Spontaneously explore details of what young people do to protect themselves against crime and victimisation
  - Probe: Securing bikes; follow advice on mobile phones and MP3 players; avoid particular areas; avoid particular groups of people; carry weapons (explore type of weapon); others

Note to researcher: write examples on a flip chart

- Explore how safe respondents feel using the internet/social networking sites; reasons for this
- Explore awareness of how people can become victims of crime when using internet/social networking sites
- Explore what do to protect themselves from crime when using internet/social networking sites; how regularly they do this; what sites this applies to

Note to researcher: write examples on a flip chart

5. EXPERIENCE OF POLICE (10 mins)

- Explore experiences of contact with the police; explore nature of contact; reason for contact

- Explore general views towards the police; whether they are considered to be helpful or not; whether trust police; perceptions of how police view young people; reasons for views

- Explore how participants would feel about talking to the police if they were a victim of a crime; probe for:
− Type of crimes would report to police if they were a victim
− Less serious things that might happen to them which they would not report to the police; probe for examples
− Expectations of how police would deal with matter; confidence that police could solve crime reported

• Explore any other views about the police

6. STREET GANGS (15 mins)

• Spontaneously explore awareness of street gangs; what do they think of when hear word ‘gang’; Researcher: probe whether think of organised criminal gangs but otherwise focus on street gangs

Note to researcher: ask young people to briefly discuss in pairs and decide on five key words to describe gangs and write these on the flip chart

• Explore views on difference between a ‘gang’ and a group of young people hanging around; how can they identify each
• Explore awareness of any street gangs in local area
• Explore details of what they know about these gangs

Probe:

− What activities they engage in
− Where they spend time/territory
− Who are members of gangs; what type of person joins a gang
− Whether carry any weapons – prompt knives
− Why would a young person belong to a gang
− Anything else they know about gangs
Exercise: body map exercise

Ask young people to consider what a gang member looks like and using a drawing of a ‘stick person’ make notes about their characteristics, for example their age, gender, personality, clothes, how they speak, what they say, for example:

- Male
- 17-19 years
- Latest fashion
- Tall
- Unhappy

- Explore any contact with street gangs – directly or indirectly through friends
  - Whether they are or have ever been a member; whether know anyone who is or has been a member
- Outline details of any contact – probe: how became involved; when were involved; what it involved; where spent time; who else was in gang; any other details

7. LIFESTYLE AND RISKY BEHAVIOURS (10 mins)

- Explore what age participants think young people start drinking

- How common is drinking at a young age – probe: rare, variable, very common, other
  - Explore how common it is for friends their age to drink; if so explore how much they drink

- Explore whether participants drink alcohol; explore when they started; what they drink; how much they drink– volume/ frequency; who they drink alcohol with

- Explore what age participants think young people start taking drugs; explore if it is common for friends their age to take drugs

- How common is taking drugs at a young age – probe: rare, variable, very common, other
  - Explore how common it is for friends their age to take drugs; if so explore what drugs they take and regularity of this
8. BULLYING (10 mins)

- Explore understanding of term ‘bullying’; what is bullying; how would they describe it
  - Explore how can be sure that something is bullying

- Explore whether there are different types of bullying; provide details of these – prompt: verbal; physical; other
  - Explore reasons for their views
- Explore the environments/ places in which bullying can occur - probe: mobile phone harassment, cyber-bullying, school bullying; other

Note to researcher: write examples on a flip chart of the types of bullying and environments

9. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (15 mins)

- Explore understanding of the term ‘anti-social behaviour’; how would they describe it
- Explore details of what is considered to be ‘anti-social behaviour’ – provide examples of this
  - What makes an incident a form of anti-social behaviour; outline reasons for this
  - Whether views of young people differ to adults; reasons for this
- Explore how they formed these perceptions/ views; whether direct or indirectly – probe: parents; teachers; friends; media; personal experience; other

Exercise: Anti-social behaviour

- Ask which of these activities could be considered to be anti-social using showcards
- Go through each showcard one at a time and ask them which ‘pile’ it should be put in – anti-social behaviour or not
- Explore reasons for views; explore reasons behind any difference in views among participants

- Who are the main perpetrators of anti-social behaviour – probe: young people; adults; those in gangs; individuals; other

- Explore any incidents they have been involved in that could be described as anti-social behaviour by adults - include direct and indirect involvement
• Outline details of incident/s:
  − Nature/ form of activity
  − When/where occurred
  − Frequency/ duration
  − Whether alone or with others
  − Reasons for behaviour; whether own choice; peer pressure; other
  − Explore views on behaviour on reflection – positive/ negative views
    ▪ Whether would do again; reasons for this

CHECK WHETHER ANY OTHER COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE RESEARCHER

Thank respondent and close