



Home Office

ADR 160 – Offences involving knives or sharp instruments

Guidance notes 2023/24

Introduction

The guidance in this document relate to the collection as amended following the implementation of the National Data Quality Improvement Service (NDQIS). At time of writing, only four forces have not transferred to the new process.

The previous rules are covered in **Non-NDQIS forces guidance** on page 14.

This collection covers **offences involving knives or sharp instruments** for selected Home Office classification codes.

The current codes for which figures are published are shown in Table 1.

The collection is wider than ‘knife crime’ and includes sharp instruments that are capable of piercing or cutting the skin if used as a weapon.

Table 1: Offence categories covered by ADR 160

Offence code	Offence description
2	Attempted murder
17A, 17B, 20A, 20B	Sexual assault
19C-H	Rape
34A, 34B	Robbery
3B	Threats to kill
5D, 8N, 8P, 8S, 8T	Assault with injury, racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury, assault with injury on a constable and assaults on emergency workers (other than constables)

Please note that assault without injury offences are not covered by this collection.

In addition, the NDQIS process includes the following offence codes:

- 10C Possession of Other Weapons
- 10D Possession of Article with Blade or Point

These were not previously included in the collection. They have been added to the NDQIS process on an experimental basis but are not currently used in the published figures. These codes have been added as they include offences where a knife or sharp instrument has been used to threaten. For example:

- 8/64 Threaten with a blade or sharply pointed article in a public place.

A methodological paper on NDQIS can be found here >>

[Police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments: methodology changes - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/methodology/data-collections/police-recorded-offences-involving-knives-or-sharp-instruments-methodology-changes)

General rules

The following rules should be used to determine whether an offence is within scope of the collection.

This collection covers offences where a knife or sharp instrument has been involved during the act of committing an offence listed in Table 1. This includes:

- Offences where the sharp instrument has been physically used, whether the weapon has made contact with the victim or not.
- Threats where the victim believes the threat to be genuine (see further guidance below).
- Offences where the sharp instrument has been used as a blunt instrument. **This is a change to the previous guidance where these offences were excluded.**

For an offence to be recorded, a knife or sharp instrument must be present (or believed to be present) during the course of the offence

- This includes cases where the sharp instrument is not seen, but the victim is threatened in a way that implies the offender has a sharp instrument and the threat is believed to be genuine (e.g. "I have a knife, give me your wallet or I will use it"). Threats should be counted only if the potential victim(s) believe the knife might or sharp instrument might be used.
- This includes cases where only the weapon handle is seen but shown in order to create fear or a threat (e.g. top pulled up to show handle of a knife).

Offences recorded as part of this collection must be face-to-face

- Remote threats such as pictures of knives being sent over social media should not be included in this collection.
- Offences where the offender says to the victim that they will get or use a knife or sharp instrument in the future should not be included.

Idle threats should not be included

- Idle threats include where someone says they will stab someone (or other throwaway threat) in passing but there is no evidence that a knife was present.
- We recognise that offences where a threat is made but a sharp instrument is not seen by a victim or third party will be harder to assess and may depend on the victims' perception. Under NDQIS, these are likely to be categorised as **low confidence – manual review** and may require the police force to make a best judgement on the available information.
- If a sharp instrument is seen during the course of the offence, we would expect the vast majority to be recorded as an offence involving a knife or a sharp instrument. The presence of a weapon which is seen by the victim will create an implicit threat.

What weapons should be included?

As stated above, this collection covers offences where knives or sharp instruments capable of being used as a weapon that can pierce or cut the skin are involved, if used in the circumstances listed above.

There were two main changes to the list of weapons when the NDQIS was implemented. These are:

- **The inclusion of screwdrivers and other sharp tools such as chisels.** Work with police forces has shown that the use of these tools as substitutes for knives is not uncommon. The motivation of the offender being equipped with these tools is similar to carrying a knife.
- **The exclusion of broken bottles and glass.** While these are sharp instruments, they tend to be used as improvised weapons in fight situations. This is a different scenario from 'going equipped' with a sharp instrument with the intention to use or threaten to use during the course of an offence. Some police forces have also reported difficulty in determining whether a bottle was broken prior to use, or during use.

Spiking by needle offences

Offences where someone has been spiked by a needle **should be** included in the returns for this collection. Many of these records will be categorised as High Confidence by NDQIS, but where a record is Low Confidence they should be accepted during the manual review stage.

List of weapons covered by the collection

The following list is provided of weapons covered by the collection – but it is not an exhaustive list. Police forces should use their judgement whether a weapon should be included in the collection given the above rules. These weapons are included in the NDQIS ruleset.

Axe	Bayonet	Bow & arrow	Chisel
Chopper	Crossbow / bolts	Dagger	Dart
Flick-knife	Fork (cutlery)	Kitchen Knife	Knife
Machete	Pen knife	Razor / razorblade	Saw
Scalpel	Scissors	Screwdriver	Sharpened object (to make weapon)
Sharp tools	Stanley knife / blade	Syringe needle	Sword

Items such as broken bottles, glass, crockery or broken plastic utensils that could stab or pierce the skin **should not be** included.

Please note: there may be rare occasions where an object has been sharpened in order to create a sharp instrument. For example, a piece of wood might have been carved to create a 'stake' for use within a crime. Forces should use their judgment and evidence available to decide whether an offence should be included in the ADR160 return if a manual review is required.

Examples of offences involving knives or sharp instruments

These examples are provided to support forces in applying the guidance. Examples can never provide an exhaustive list of circumstances and forces should always apply suitable discretion when determining if the crime should be included. We appreciate that the exact details of an offence will not always be known. Police forces should use their best judgement given the available information.

Examples which should be included in ADR 160

Example 1:

A man is stopped on the street. An offender states he has a knife and will stab the victim unless he hands over his wallet and mobile phone. No knife is actually seen by the victim. However, the victim believed the threat and hands over his possessions.

This offence **should** be included in the ADR 160 return. The threat is believed and the victim hands over his wallet and phone. In the case of a robbery, the handing over of property is a good indication that the threat has been believed.

Example 2:

A gang of youths surround a man. One of the youths raises his top to show the handle of a knife. A second youth then assaults the victim by punching the victim several times.

This offence **should** be included in the ADR 160 return. The knife has been used as a threat as part of the assault (irrespective of which member of the group attacked the victim). The victim may not have fought back due to the threat that he would be stabbed if he did so.

Example 3:

A man runs up to a woman, with a knife in his hand, and punches her twice before running off. The blade of the knife does not touch the skin of the victim.

This offence **should** be included in the ADR 160 return. The knife was involved in the assault by being in the hand – the victim would not know whether the attacker would use the knife to stab or pierce the skin during the course of the assault.

Example 4:

During the course of an argument in a kitchen, a man picks up a kitchen knife and hits the victim on the head with the handle.

This offence **should** be included in the ADR 160 return. The knife was involved in the assault by being in the hand – the victim would not know whether the attacker would use the knife to stab or pierce the skin during the course of the assault.

Example 5:

A woman is arguing with another woman and loses her temper. She picks up a pair of scissors, grabs the victims' hair and cuts off a huge chunk.

This offence **should** be included in the ADR 160 return. Scissors are a sharp instrument and hair is a body part.

Example 6:

A woman reports feeling unwell on a night out with friends. She believes she has been spiked by a needle. She has a small puncture wound on her right arm.

This offence **should** be included in the ADR 160 return. Spiking by needle offences are covered in this collection.

Examples which should not be included in the ADR 160 return.

Example 7:

A scuffle occurs in the pub between two people who know each other and have a history of violence. One man threatens to kill the other man and says he will stab him before being pulled away by friends. No sharp instrument was seen.

This offence **should not** be included in the ADR 160 return. No knife was seen in the offence.

Example 8:

A man visits the house of his ex-partner. The man forces his way into the house and hits the victim, knocking her to the floor. The offender says he will get a knife and come back to stab her. The victim calls the police who is apprehended before returning to the house.

This offence **should not** be included in the ADR 160 return. No knife was involved in the assault.

Example 9:

A man has an argument with his partner. He punches her and then says he is going to the kitchen to get a knife and that he will stab her. Before he can get to the kitchen he is wrestled to the floor by others in the house.

This offence **should not** be included in the ADR 160 return. No knife was involved in the assault.

Example 10:

At a house party, a fight occurs between the resident of the house and a guest. After the fight, the guest goes to the kitchen, gets a knife and slashes some furniture before leaving.

This offence **should not** be included in the ADR 160 return. The knife was used for an offence of criminal damage which is not in scope for this collection.

Please contact the Home Office if you need additional information in relation this guidance.

Should homicides involving a knife or sharp instrument be included?

Information on homicides where the method of killing is by sharp instrument have previously been taken from then Home Office Homicide Index. As such, these offences were excluded from the manual ADR 160 return.

As we move to automated data returns (via NDQIS / Home Office Data Hub) these offences will be in scope to provide us with more timely information on homicide than the Homicide Index.

It is still important that the returns for homicide under ADR 102 (CrimSec7 forms) are completed and sent to DCGHomicide as soon as possible after recording an offence (and within the 30 days allowed after the recording of a homicide). This will ensure that the knife or sharp instrument statistics published by ONS in their Quarterly crime statistics release are accurate and timely. Please work with your colleagues who complete the homicide returns of the requirement to ensure they return them within 30 days of the homicide being recorded.

The NDQIS process

Prior to submission to the Home Office, forces should use the NDQIS platform to process their data.

For coupled forces, the NDQIS output will be automatically written back the force Record Management System. Data should then be supplied to the Home Office in the normal Home Office Data Hub extract via MOVEit. Forces should also send the Home Office the NDQIS audit logs. This allows Home Office Statisticians to monitor the performance of NDQIS and to ensure records are classified correctly going forward.

For decoupled forces, the NDQIS extract and audit logs should be transferred to the Home Office via MOVEit. Any updates to offences involving knives or sharp instruments should be written back manually to your force's RMS system. Any amendments can be found in the 'Change log' in the NDQIS results.

Data are to be provided monthly within 14 days of the end of the reporting month.

Treatment of Low Confidence records and manual reviews

Police forces will need to manually review Low Confidence records for this collection prior to submitting data to the Home Office. High Confidence and Rejected records do not need further consideration.

Forces will also be asked to manually review any records where NDQIS has recommended the removal of a knife or sharp instrument flag.

The number of records that require a manual review is heavily dependent on the quality of the MO Text records. Tips to reduce the manual review rate are given in the next section.

More detailed information on the HODH extract can be found in the ADR Notice.

Tips to reduce the manual review rate

One of the benefits of the NDQIS process is a reduction in burden on police forces in returning ADR160 data to the Home Office. The resulting burden is heavily influenced by the manual review rate in each force – the lower the rate, the lower the burden.

Guidance is provided below on ways to reduce the manual review rate, using examples of offence details received by the Home Office.

The NDQIS process works best when MO Text fields are clear and concise. On average, longer pieces of text are more likely to be classified as Low Confidence than shorter descriptions.

Common reasons for records being classified as Low Confidence and requiring manual review are outlined below. The most common reason for a record being classified as manual review is lack of weapon detail in the MO Text.

These examples may also provide more information on what NDQIS is 'looking for' in the process. The Home Office recognises that it's far easier to make suggestions than implement the suggestions with officers and call handlers who will be working in time-pressured situations.

The record does not give any details on the weapon involved

These records would be classified as High Confidence if the weapon was stated (assuming it was a knife or sharp instrument). In some cases, the exact nature of the weapon may not be known – but if it is clear (or on the balance of probability) the weapon was a sharp instrument, the inclusion of '**sharp instrument**' or '**unknown sharp instrument**' in the description would ensure the record is classified as High Confidence.

The weapon description is required to ensure the NDQIS process does not include offences where weapons not in scope of the collection are incorrectly recorded, such as offences involving broken glass or pens / pencils.

The lack of information on the type of weapon is the most common reason for a record which appears to be an offence involving a knife or sharp instrument requiring a manual review. These examples would be classified as High Confidence if the weapon was added.

Examples:

IP HAS BEEN STABBED TO THE LEG, INJURIES NOT BELIEVED TO BE LIFE THREATENING.

DURING STREET FIGHT OUTSIDE A NIGHTCLUB AN UNKNOWN OFFENDER APPROACHES VICTIM AND CAUSES STAB INJURY TO BODY. VICTIM FLEES IN A VEHICLE SEEKING MEDICAL TREATMENT.

THE VICTIM'S BIKE WAS STOLEN AND AFTER VIEWING CCTV IDENTIFIED THE OFFENDER AND AFTER A SHORT TIME LOCATED THE OFFENDER, AND AN

ALTERCATION OCCURED WHICH RESULTED IN THE VICTIM BEING STABBED MULTIPLE TIMES TO THE BACK.

The record contains details on a series of crimes, such as historical offences

When there are a series of offences listed in one description, or there are historical offences mentioned, the NDQIS process cannot determine what offence has been recorded and whether that particular offence involved a knife or sharp instrument. The records are therefore classified as Low Confidence. We recognise that the inclusion of historical offences may be an operational necessity.

Examples:

WHILE OFFICER TAKING STATEMENT FOR SEPERATE OFFENCE AP DISCLOSES HISTORICAL OFFENCE AGAINST HIM WHERE THIRTY YEARS AGO HE WAS STABBED BY THE OFFENDER, THIS WAS NOT REPORTED AT THE TIME.

THE IP HAS DISCLOSED TO POLICE THAT HE HAS BEEN ASSAULTED BY THE SUSPECT AND THAT SHE HAS KICKED HIM. HE HAS ALSO DISCLOSED TO BEING KICKED IN THE RIBS BY HER LAST WEEK CAUSING BRUISING. HE HAS FURTHER DISCLOSED THAT HE HAS BEEN STABBED TO THE HAND ALSO WHICH HAPPENED 2 WEEKS AGO.

OFFICERS ATTENDED IN RELATION TO A DOMESTIC ASSAULT AND THE COMPLAINANT HAS THEN DISCLOSED HE WAS STABBED IN THE LEG IN 2018 BY THE SUSPECT WHO WAS HIS PARTNER WHILST THEY WERE IN BED TOGETHER

Sentences that do not make sense / spelling mistakes / missing words / lack of conjunction words

The NDQIS process is partly dependent on correct sentence structures. Missing words, spelling mistakes and sentences that do not make sense may increase the chance of a record requiring manual review. The NDQIS process does account for some common spelling mistakes, but it's not possible to predict all incorrect spellings.

The examples below were classified as Low Confidence. The first example will require a manual review due to a missing word – it's not clear whether the screwdriver was used to stab (although it is likely it was). The second example misses out the key word 'knife', and the third example contains many spelling mistakes, crucially for 'victim'. The last example also has a key spelling mistake.

Examples:

MALE STABBED IN FACE SCREWDRIVER

VICTIM ASSAULTS PARTNER BY CUTTING HIS STOMACH WITH A KITCHEN

VICTIM IS SAITTING ON BENCH. OFFNEDERS UNKNOWN HAVE THEN PULLED UP NEAR THE VICTIM IN A CAR, GOT OUT OF CAR AND THEN STRUCK THE VICXTIM OVER THE HEAD IWTH SWORD/MACHETE. THEY HAVE THEN AMDE OFF IN THE CAR.

APPROACHED THE DRIVER-SIDE WINDOW WITH A LARGE KITCHEN WIFE

Offences where it is unclear who the knife has been used on, or if the knife has been used in another offence

The NDQIS process assesses who the offenders and victims were. If it is not clear who the victim was or who the knife or sharp instrument was used on, a record is likely to be assigned as Low Confidence and require a manual review.

In the first example, it is not clear who was stabbed under her chin (it is likely to be the dog). In the second example, it is not clear whether the knife was used just for the criminal damage or also in the threat to kill. In the third example, the details were too limited to determine what actually happened.

ASSAULT. THROUGHOUT LOCKDOWN WE HAVE SPLIT BUT STAYED IN THE HOUSE. HE LAST HURT ME A WEEK AGO- SLAPPED ME & STRANGLED ME. HES BEATEN THE DOG UP. SHES COVERED IN BRUISES, CUTS & BLOODSHOT EYES- SHE HAS A STAB WOUND UNDER HER CHIN.

OFFENDER WHO IS YOUNGER SISTER OF VICTIM THREATENS TO KILL HER VERBALLY, WHILST USING A KNIFE TO DAMAGE HER BEDROOM DOOR/

KNIFE TO THROAT, THREATS MADE. PUNCHED IN FACE. DAMAGED PHONE.

Offences where knife may only have been in possession and not used / seen

In the following examples, it is not clear whether a knife or sharp instrument was used in the offence, whether the knife was used to threaten or who used the weapon. It is possible the possession was only discovered on arrest or after the actual offence. Records that state that the knife had been used to threaten, rather than simply mentioned as being 'in possession', will be more likely to be classified as High Confidence.

Examples:

MALE MAKES THREATS TO LIFE OF STAFF MEMBERS AT CARE HOME IN POSSESSION OF BLADE

INFT WAS WALKING PAST PARK, A MALE HAS COME OUT OF HIS PROPERTY AND HAS STARTED SHOUTING AT THE INFT AND HIS MOTHER, INFT HAS STARTED TO VIDEO THE MALE AND HE HAS GRABBED THE INFTS PHONE AND HAS THROWN IT ON THE FLOOR, AND HAS PRODUCED A KITCHEN KNIFE. MALE WAS VERY AGGRESSIVE. HE SHOUTED THAT THE INFT HAD MOVED HIS GATE NEAR THE PUBLIC FOOTPATH. NOONE INJURED,

IP STOPPED AND THREATENED BY AN UNKNOWN MALE. MALE IN POSSESSION OF A KNIFE AND DEMANDS MOUNTAIN BIKE FROM IP.

THE AGGRIEVED HAS BEEN ASSAULTED BY TWO MALES FROM HIS SCHOOL (BLOODY NOSE, CUT LIP), ONE OF THE MALES BEING IN POSSESSION OF A KNIFE.

Offences where there is a flag on the offence, but no other supporting information

Records where there is no supporting information of a knife or sharp instrument being present during the offence are likely to be categorised as Low Confidence and need to be manually reviewed. In some forces, there have been records where the MO Text is blank – these records will also require a manual review.

Examples:

MALE IS SPOKEN TO OUTSIDE AN OFF LICENSE BY UNKNOWN MALE, BEFORE BEING PUSHED IN THE BACK, CAUSING HIS WALLET TO FALL ON THE FLOOR, WALLET IS THEN STOLEN FOLLOWING THE PUSH.

VICTIM AND SUSPECTS HAVE BEEN IN A ROAD RAGE INCIDENT. BOTH PARTIES HAVE EXITED VEHICLE WHEREBY FEMALE AND MALE SUSPECT HAVE ATTACKED VICTIM. VICTIM WAS SPAT AT, KICKED AND PUNCHED.

UNKNOWN OFFENDERS HAVE APPROACHED MALE AND HIS MOTHER FROM BEHIND, HE HAS BEEN GRABBED AROUND THE NECK AND PUNCHED TO THE FACE. HE HAS THEN BEEN KICKED WHILST ON THE FLOOR

Non-NDQIS forces guidance

The remaining forces who have yet to switch to the new NDQIS methodology are encouraged to do so as soon as possible. The new method ensures greater comparability between forces and has improved data quality. NDQIS has been welcomed by police forces, the NPCC, HMICFRS and has been praised by statistical regulators.

When NDQIS was implemented, the guidance for ADR160 also changed. To minimise burden on forces, we have asked forces to move to the new rules only when the force has moved to processing data via NDQIS.

Forces who have yet to move to the new process should continue to use guidance issued in previous years.

The main changes to the guidance were:

The removal of broken bottles and glass from the collection. While sharp, these are weapons that are generally used in the heat of the moment and do not tend to have premeditated motives. They are involved in a different type of offence to knives or other sharp instruments.

The inclusion of sharp tools, such as chisels and screwdrivers, which can be used in a similar way to knives.

The inclusion of sharp instruments when used as blunt instruments. This recognises that the use of sharp instruments as blunts carries an implicit threat. This also brings the collection in line with ADR 131 (offences involving firearms), where firearms used as blunt instruments are included. However, we do not expect that there is a high volume of these offences.

Clarification on when a threat should be recorded. It has become clear through NDQIS pilot work that the current guidance is likely to be interpreted in different ways across police forces.

As stated above, forces should continue to use the old guidance until the switch to NDQIS is made.

The Office for National Statistics, who have the responsibility for publishing statistics on crime, highlight those forces who have yet to move to NDQIS.

Submission of data

Frequency of providing data

These data are to be provided on a monthly basis using NDQIS before submitting. Data should be supplied within 14 days after the reference period has ended.

Non-NDQIS forces

Forces still sending manual returns should supply within 30 days following the end of the quarterly period, as follows:

Q1 2022/23	Apr – Jun 23	30 July 2023
Q2 2022/23	Jul – Sep 23	30 Oct 2023
Q3 2022/23	Oct – Dec 23	30 Jan 2024
Q4 2022/23	Jan – Mar 24	30 April 2024
End of year 2023/24	Apr 23 – Mar 24	30 April 2024

Revisions

Police forces are welcome to send revised data for previously submitted periods. Please send resubmissions when data are submitted for a new reporting period.

Data reconciliation

These data will be reconciled quarterly. We will send the data back to forces to check against their source systems. This should help ensure that the data are an accurate representation of incidents and offences in the forces and allow any revisions that have been missed to be included.

Publication of data

Headline findings from the collection will be published in [ONS quarterly crime bulletins](#).

Contact Details

If you have any queries about these data collections, please send these to: CrimeDataDelivery@homeoffice.gov.uk. This mailbox should also be used to submit the data.

Crime Statistics Production and Analysis

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