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Home Office Statistical Bulletin

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Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to September 2007

01/08

24 January 2008

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ISSN 1358-510X



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Main points

- British Crime Survey (BCS) interviews in the year to September 2007 show a statistically significant decrease in the risk of being a victim of crime compared with the year to September 2006 (23% as against 24%). The risk of being a victim has returned to its lowest level since the survey began in 1981.
- The number of crimes recorded by the police fell by nine per cent for the period July to September 2007 compared with the same quarter a year earlier.
- With the exception of all personal acquisitive crime, which decreased by 11 per cent, BCS measures of crime remained stable for interviews in the year ending September 2007 compared with the previous year. This was true for violent crime, burglary, vehicle-related theft and vandalism.
- Recorded violence against the person for July to September 2007 fell by eight per cent compared with the same period in 2006.
- Recorded domestic burglary fell by eight per cent for July to September 2007.
- Recorded crime showed a 12 per cent fall in offences against vehicles for July to September 2007 and an 11 per cent fall in criminal damage.
- In the 12 months to September 2007 there were a provisional 10,182 firearm offences. This was an increase of four per cent, or 427 offences, compared with the 12 months ending September 2006.
- There was a significant decrease in the proportion of people with high levels of worry about car crime and violent crime in the year ending September 2007, compared to the year ending September 2006.
- BCS interviews showed no change in the overall levels of perceived anti-social behaviour.
- The BCS shows confidence in the local police significantly increased in the 12 months to September 2007, compared to the previous year.

This update presents the most recent crime statistics from two different sources: the British Crime Survey (BCS) and police recorded crime. Both data sets represent the most up-to-date information, but they cover different time periods. The BCS results are from interviews conducted in the period October 2006 to September 2007; police recorded crime refers to the July to September 2007 quarter.

Levels of crime

There was no change in all BCS crime, continuing the stable trend seen over the past two years. Based on interviews in the 12 months ending September 2007, the BCS estimates that around 10.7 million crimes were committed against adults living in private households. The apparent decreases in household (2% decrease) and personal crime (6% decrease) were not statistically significant. The overall level of crime recorded by the police in July to September 2007 decreased by nine per cent compared with the same quarter in 2006 (Figure 2).

The BCS shows a statistically significant decrease in the risk of being a victim of crime, from 24 per cent in the year to September 2006 to 23 per cent in the year to September 2007. The risk of being a victim of crime has returned to its lowest level since the survey began in 1981.

Table 1: Number of crimes and risk of being a victim based on BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2007 compared with the previous 12 months

	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	Interviews in Oct 2006 to Sept 2007	% change ⁽¹⁾	BCS Statistically significant change ⁽²⁾
Number of crimes (000s)				
All household crime	6,955	6,794	-2	
Vandalism	2,918	2,810	-4	
Domestic burglary	709	744	5	
All vehicle-related thefts	1,712	1,640	-4	
All household acquisitive ⁽³⁾	4,037	3,984	-1	
All personal crime	4,183	3,941	-6	
Theft from the person	626	560	-11	
BCS violence ⁽⁴⁾	2,370	2,328	-2	
With injury	1,189	1,176	-1	
With no injury	1,181	1,152	-2	
All personal acquisitive ⁽⁵⁾	2,156	1,926	-11	**
All BCS crime	11,138	10,736	-4	N/A
Percentage risk of being a victim once or more⁽⁶⁾				
All household crime	18.7	18.1		*
Vandalism	7.9	7.6		
Domestic burglary	2.4	2.5		
All vehicle-related thefts ⁽⁷⁾	7.5	7.1		*
All personal crime	6.7	6.3		
Theft from the person	1.3	1.2		
BCS violence ⁽⁴⁾	3.4	3.4		
With injury	1.9	1.8		
With no injury	1.7	1.8		
All BCS crime	24.3	23.4		**

1. A percentage change of less than 0.5% is shown as 0.

2. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). Statistical significance cannot be calculated for the change in all BCS crime. See Notes.

3. All household acquisitive comprises: burglary, vehicle theft, bike theft and other household theft.

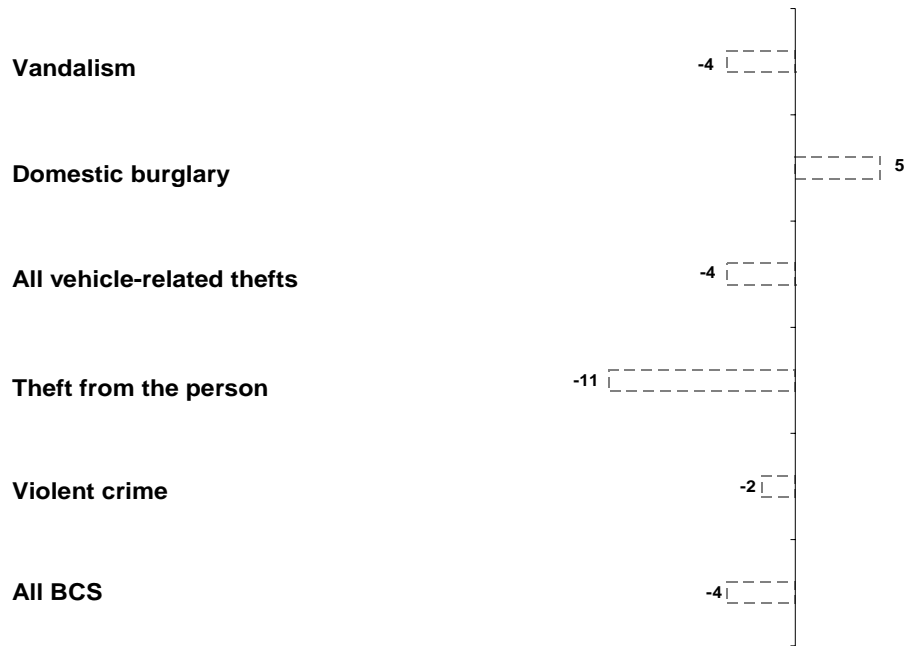
4. All BCS violence includes wounding, robbery, assault with minor injury and assault with no injury categories. Estimates for BCS violence for year to September 2006 may vary from those previously published due to snatch theft being removed from this category since year ending March 2007.

5. All personal acquisitive comprises: robbery, theft from the person and other thefts of personal property.

6. A discrepancy may appear between trends in incidence rates (total numbers of offences) and prevalence rates (the proportion of the population victimised once or more) due to repeat victimisation.

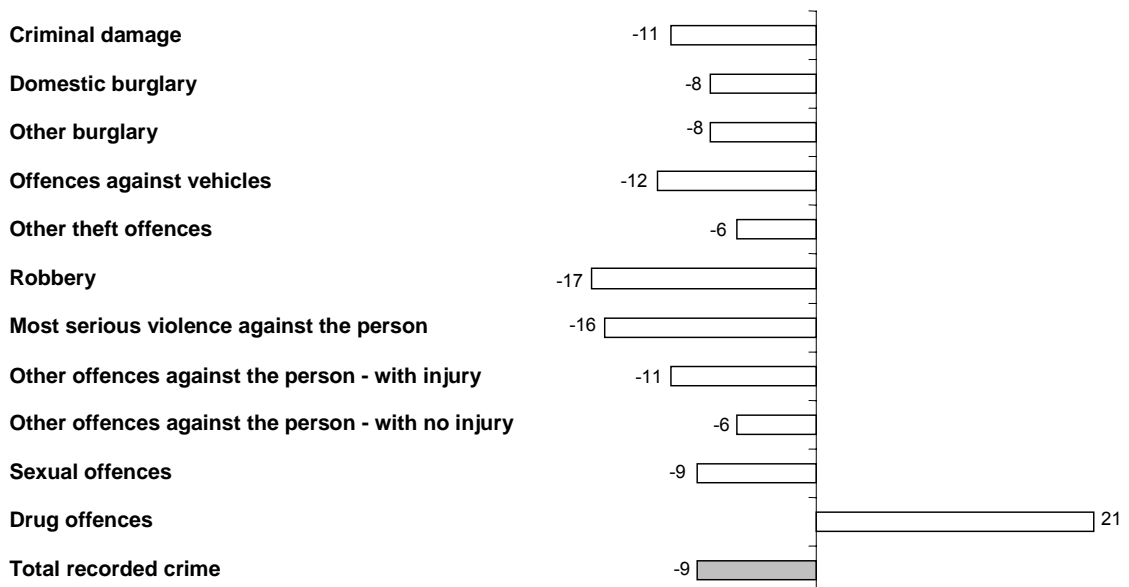
7. Risk for 'All vehicle-related thefts' is based only on households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle. It includes thefts of vehicles, thefts from vehicles and attempts of and from vehicles.

Figure 1: Percentage change in BCS crime based on interviews in the 12 months to September 2007, compared with the previous 12 months



Survey changes which are statistically significant at the 5% level (two tail tests) would be indicated by a fully shaded bar. Other apparent changes, denoted by dotted lines, are not statistically significant at the 5% level.

Figure 2: Percentage change in numbers of recorded crimes, July to September 2007 compared with the same quarter a year earlier



BCS interviews for the year to September 2007 showed levels of violent crime¹ to be stable compared with the year to September 2006; the apparent two per cent decrease was not statistically significant. Nor were the apparent decreases in violence with injury and violence with no injury.

The level of violence against the person² recorded by the police showed an eight per cent fall in July to September 2007. Within this category, most serious violence against the person fell by 16 per cent compared with the same period in 2006. The fall is almost entirely due to a 17 per cent decrease in offences of more serious wounding or other act endangering life (data not shown). Other violence against the person offences with injury fell by 11 per cent and those with no injury³ fell by six per cent over this period.

Recorded robbery figures showed a 17 per cent fall in July to September 2007 compared with the same quarter in 2006. There was a nine per cent fall in recorded sexual offences in July to September 2007 compared with the same quarter in 2006. The number of robberies and sexual offences identified by the BCS are too small to provide reliable estimates of trends.

BCS burglary remained stable based on interviews to September 2007 compared with the previous year; the apparent five per cent increase was not statistically significant. Police recorded crime figures showed continuing falls in recorded domestic burglaries, with a decrease of eight per cent recorded in July to September 2007 compared with the same quarter in 2006.

The BCS showed no statistically significant changes for vehicle-related theft or vandalism. Police recorded criminal damage showed an 11 per cent fall in July to September 2007 compared with the same period a year earlier. There was also a 12 per cent fall in offences against vehicles⁴ in July to September 2007 compared with the same period in 2006.

BCS interviews to September 2007 showed a statistically significant decrease of 11 per cent in all personal acquisitive crime⁵, compared with interviews to September 2006. This fall was largely due to a statistically significant decrease in thefts of other personal property, compared with a year earlier (down 11%, data not shown).

Drug offences recorded by the police rose by 21 per cent in July to September 2007 compared with the same quarter in the previous year. The increases in this and previous quarters coincided with increases in the police use of powers to issue cannabis warnings.

Fraud and forgery offences recorded by the police showed a 29 per cent fall in July to September 2007 compared with the same quarter of the previous year. Changes in the way cheque and plastic card frauds are recorded are thought to have contributed to most of the decline, with figures not being directly comparable over this period (see footnote 8 in Table A). The main reason for this change was to reduce the considerable bureaucracy that had surrounded the recording of

¹ BCS violence no longer includes snatch theft. See footnote 4 in Table 1 for more information.

² This definition does not cover sexual offences or robbery.

³ Other violence against the person without injury includes common assault, harassment and possession of weapons.

⁴ Theft of and from a vehicle, aggravated vehicle taking and interfering with a vehicle

⁵ Personal acquisitive crime comprises theft from person, robbery and other thefts of personal property.

fraud. Figures supplied by the Finance Industry are now used in annual publications to highlight the true scale of plastic card fraud.

Public perceptions

BCS interviews during the 12 months to September 2007 showed that the proportion of adults with a high level of worry about car crime and violent crime had significantly decreased compared with the previous year (car crime decreased from 13.4% to 12.6% and violent crime from 17% to 16%). The reduction in the proportion of adults with a high level of worry about burglary was not statistically significant (Table 2).

Table 2: Fear of crime

<i>Percentage very worried</i>	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	Interviews in Oct 2006 to Sept 2007	BCS Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
High level of worry about ⁽²⁾ :			
Burglary	13	12	
Car crime	13	13	**↓ ⁽³⁾
Violent crime	17	16	**↓

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

2. See Nicholas *et al.* (2007) for more information on the definitions of the fear of crime indicators.

3. The rounded figures for high level of worry about car crime mask a change from 13.4% to 12.6%, which is statistically significant at the 5% level.

The apparent decrease in the proportion of people who perceived a high level of anti-social behaviour in their local area in the year ending September 2007 compared to a year earlier was not statistically significant (at the five per cent level). Perceptions of the indicators that make up the composite measure were stable; with the exception of the proportion who perceived a problem with abandoned or burnt-out cars which decreased (Table 3).

Table 3: Anti-social behaviour indicators

<i>Percentage saying very/fairly big problem in their area</i>	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	Interviews in Oct 2006 to Sept 2007	BCS Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
High level of perceived anti-social behaviour ⁽²⁾	18	17	*
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	9	8	**↓
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	10	10	
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	25	25	
People using or dealing drugs	28	27	
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	33	32	
Rubbish or litter lying around	31	30	
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	29	28	

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

2. This measure is derived from responses to the seven individual anti-social behaviour strands reported in the table.

In the year to September 2007, public confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS) significantly decreased in two of the seven different aspects of the CJS (being effective at reducing crime and in dealing with young people accused of crime), compared with the year ending September 2006. Public confidence in the other five aspects of the CJS remained stable over this period (Table 4).

Table 4: Public confidence in the criminal justice system

<i>Percentage very/fairly confident</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	Interviews in Oct 2006 to Sept 2007	Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
Respects the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treats them fairly	80	80	
Effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice	43	43	
Deals with cases promptly and efficiently	40	41	
Effective at reducing crime	38	37	**↓
Meets the needs of victims of crime	34	35	*
Dealing with young people accused of crime	26	24	**↓
Treats people who come forward as witnesses well	68	68	

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

BCS data for this period for victim and witness satisfaction with the police and CJS can be found at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/hosb0108tab.pdf>

The proportion of people who thought that the police in their area did an excellent or good job significantly increased from 51 per cent in the 12 months to September 2006 to 52 per cent in the 12 months to September 2007 (table not shown).

Firearm offences

Provisional statistics are available for recorded crimes involving firearms other than air weapons for the **12 months** ending September 2007. Firearms are taken to be involved in an offence if they are fired, used as a blunt instrument against a person, or used in a threat.

In the year to September 2007 there were provisionally 10,182 firearm offences. This was an increase of 427 offences or four per cent, compared with the 12 months ending September 2006. Two thirds of firearm offences involve no physical injury.

Table 5 Firearm offences (excluding air weapons) by level of injury: England and Wales

Nature of injury	Year ending Sep 06	Year ending Sep 07	% change
Fatal injuries ¹	55	49	-11
Serious injuries	438	368	-16
Slight injuries	2,614	2,728	+4
Total injuries	3,107	3,145	+1
Threats	5,059	5,357	+6
No injuries	1,589	1,680	+6
Total	9,755	10,182	+4

1. Because of the small number of fatal injuries the percentage change should be treated with caution.

The total number of offences involving firearms resulting in injury increased slightly, by one per cent (38 offences), in the year to September 2007 compared with the previous 12 months. Firearm offences resulting in fatal injury decreased by 11 per cent, from 55 in the year to September 2006 to 49 in the year to September 2007. Serious injuries were down by 16 per cent while slight injuries increased by four per cent.

Table 6 Firearm offences (excluding air weapons) by type of weapon: England and Wales

Weapon type	Year ending Sep 06	Year ending Sep 07	% change
Shotgun	592	641	+8
Handgun	4,248	4,284	+1
Rifle ¹	74	60	-19
Imitation firearm ²	2,607	2,710	+4
Unidentified firearm	1,270	1,317	+4
Other firearm ³	964	1,170	+21
Total	9,755	10,182	+4

1. Because of the small number of offences involving rifles, the percentage change should be treated with caution.

2. Imitation handguns, which are converted to fire bullets like handguns, are counted as handguns.

3. Other firearms include CS gas, disguised firearms, machine guns, pepper spray, stun guns and other specified weapons (majority are paintball guns).

There were 4,284 offences where handguns were used in the year to September 2007, an increase of 36 offences or one per cent compared with the year ending September 2006. Imitation weapons were used in 2,710 offences, up four per cent or 103 offences.

Table A Number of recorded crimes and percentage change compared with the same quarter in the previous year

Offence group	Number of crimes recorded by the police (thousands) ^(1, 2)					Percentage change compared with the same quarter in the previous year ⁽³⁾			
	Jul-Sep 2006	Oct-Dec 2006	Jan-Mar 2007	Apr-Jun 2007	Jul-Sep 2007	Oct-Dec 2006	Jan-Mar 2007	Apr-Jun 2007	Jul-Sep 2007
Violence against the person	276.1	257.1	236.0	256.3	253.1	-2	-2	-8	-8
<i>Most serious violence against the person</i> ⁽⁴⁾	5.3	4.6	4.0	4.4	4.5	-11	-9	-14	-16
<i>Other violence against the person - with injury</i> ⁽⁵⁾	129.0	117.7	108.7	116.6	114.9	-10	-5	-12	-11
<i>Other violence against the person - with no injury</i> ⁽⁶⁾	141.8	134.7	123.3	135.3	133.8	7	1	-3	-6
Sexual offences	15.8	13.2	12.8	14.3	14.4	-12	-7	-9	-9
Robbery	24.2	26.6	25.2	23.0	20.0	8	-1	-9	-17
Domestic burglary	73.1	76.3	73.5	67.1	67.0	-3	-1	-3	-8
Other burglary	79.3	81.6	83.9	81.1	72.9	-4	0	-4	-8
Offences against vehicles ⁽⁷⁾	185.3	196.0	189.8	170.4	163.8	-2	-6	-12	-12
Other theft offences	305.3	293.9	279.6	302.6	288.2	-3	-1	0	-6
Fraud and forgery ⁽⁸⁾	53.0	48.1	44.3	40.3	37.5	-14	-17	-26	-29
Criminal damage	281.3	309.7	292.9	271.3	250.1	1	-2	-10	-11
<i>Total property crime</i>	<i>977.3</i>	<i>1,005.7</i>	<i>964.0</i>	<i>932.7</i>	<i>879.5</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-7</i>	<i>-10</i>
Drug offences	46.2	48.5	51.3	55.0	55.7	4	7	14	21
Other miscellaneous offences	19.5	18.1	17.0	18.1	18.1	-4	-5	-14	-7
Total recorded crime - all offences	1,359.1	1,369.2	1,306.3	1,299.3	1,240.8	-2	-3	-7	-9

1. Police recorded crime statistics based on data from all 44 forces in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police).

2. The figures given in the table are the latest available. They may therefore differ slightly from figures published in previous bulletins.

3. Comparisons are made with the same quarter in the preceding year in order to take into account seasonality. Comparisons with the previous quarter are not shown.

4. Most serious violence against the person includes homicide, attempted murder, intentional destruction of viable unborn child, causing death by dangerous driving/careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs, more serious wounding and other act endangering life and causing death by aggravated vehicle taking.

5. Other violence against the person - with injury comprises less serious wounding offences.

6. Other violence against the person - with no injury includes harassment, possession of weapons, other offences against children and assault without injury (formerly common assault where there is no injury).

7. Includes aggravated vehicle taking, theft of and from a vehicle and interfering with a motor vehicle.

8. The Fraud Act 2006 commenced on 15 January 2007, altering the definition and coverage of fraud and forgery offences. At that time, the counting of cheque and plastic card fraud changed to a 'per account' basis rather than a 'per transaction' basis. From 1 April, account holders who suspect fraud on their account report the matter to their financial institution who will, in most circumstances, then determine whether to report the crime to the police.

Notes

The latest British Crime Survey (BCS) figures are based on interviews with adults aged 16 or over living in private households in England and Wales conducted between October 2006 and September 2007 (BCS year ending September 2007) and incidents experienced by survey respondents in the 12 months prior to their interview. Averaging over the moving reference period generates estimates that are most closely comparable with police recorded crime figures for the 12 months up to the end of March 2006, about six months behind the latest recorded crime figures reported here. BCS results for the year ending September 2007 are compared with the results from the interviews in the year ending September 2006.

The BCS fieldwork was carried out by BMRB Social Research. In the year ending September 2007 the BCS had a nationally representative sample of 47,883 adults with a response rate of 75 per cent.⁶ Further information about the BCS and access to recent publications can be found at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1.html>.

What do we mean by statistical significance?

BCS estimates are based on a representative sample of the population of approximately 47,000 respondents aged 16 or over each year. Any sample survey may produce estimates that differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed. The size of this difference depends on the sample size, the size and variability of the estimate and the design of the survey.

Because of this difference (known as sampling error), changes in estimates between sweeps of the survey may occur by chance. In other words, the difference may be simply due to which adults were randomly selected for interview. We are able to measure whether this is likely to be the case using standard statistical tests. Survey results that are statistically significant at the five per cent or ten per cent level, according to these tests, are identified by asterisks in the tables. Only results that are statistically significant at the five per cent level are commented on within this bulletin.

Recorded crime figures relate to crime recorded by the police in England and Wales in the quarterly period. Unlike the BCS, it does not include crimes that have not been reported to the police, and does not include those that the police decide not to record but does cover crimes against under 16s and businesses.

BCS and recorded crime figures used in this bulletin should be treated as provisional and are subject to revision in future Quarterly Updates. This bulletin has been produced according to the guidance for National Statistics.

Feedback on proposals for change in the presentation of crime statistics

Following two independent reviews of crime statistics the annual bulletin published in July 2007 sought comments on limited changes to offence classifications and also asked questions on proposals for a 'basket of serious crime' and a weighted crime index. Respondents had general support for a 'basket of serious crime' but some felt that this would entail further work; there was little support for a weighted index. The limited changes in offence classifications were viewed favourably but some wanted more extensive change. These responses have been passed to the team conducting the Flanagan Review of Policing (HMIC, 2007) to assist their work, particularly with respect to their interim recommendation for a cross-party debate to inform a revision of recorded crime statistics. Consideration will be given to further change once the full implications of this major independent review of policing are known.

⁶ Based on BCS interviews achieved during the year ending March 2007. The response rate for the year ending September 2007 cannot be calculated as finalised response figures are not yet available.

Bulletin production

This bulletin was produced by Paul Taylor, Alison Patterson and John Flatley in the Crime Statistics area of Research Development and Statistics (Crime Reduction and Community Safety Group). Thanks are also due to Jacqueline Hoare, Penny Babb, Kathryn Coleman, Sarah Kirwan, Paul Robb, Sian Nicholas and Maya Bhudia in the Home Office for their assistance in producing this bulletin.

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Copies of other Home Office publications are available from the RDS Internet pages:
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ISBN 978 1 84726 571 5