Crime data integrity

Inspection of Cleveland Police

August 2014

www.hmic.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction

In its 2013/14 inspection programme[1], Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. All 43 forces will be inspected by mid August 2014, with a full thematic report published in autumn 2014. The central question of this inspection programme is:

"To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?"

Accurate crime recording underlines the police service's commitment to public accountability, ensures that local policing bodies[2] can match resources to the risks identified in communities and enables the police to provide a proper service to victims of crime.

Recent HMIC inspections have revealed weaknesses in police crime recording, particularly the under-recording of crimes. In our interim report of 1 May 2014 we said that *"we are seriously concerned at the picture which is emerging"*.[3]

We strongly recommend our findings in this report are read alongside the interim report, *Crime recording: A matter of fact - An interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales*, available at www.hmic.gov.uk.

The interim report sets out the full context of this inspection programme including the rules and standards governing crime data integrity: the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS)[4] and Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR)[5].

---

[1] The 2013/14 inspection programme was approved by the Home Secretary under section 54 of the Police Act 1996.

[2] Police and crime commissioners for police areas outside London: the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime for the Metropolitan Police Service; and the City of London Corporation for the City of London Police.

[3] *Crime recording: A matter of fact – An interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales*, paragraph 1.20.

[4] NCRS is a standard of crime-recording introduced in 2002 and published as part of the Home Office Counting Rules; it has the twin objectives of ensuring the police focus more on victims of crime and ensuring consistency in crime-recording in all police forces.

[5] HOCR are rules in accordance with which crime data – required to be submitted to the Home Secretary under sections 44 and 45 of the Police Act 1996 – must be collected. They set down how the police service in England and Wales must record crime, how crimes must be classified according to crime type and categories, whether and when to record crime, how many crimes to record in respect of a single incident and the regime for the re-classification of crimes as no-crimes.

Methodology

Each force inspection involves:

1. An examination of crime records for the period 1 November 2012 to 31 October 2013;

2. A dip-sample of out-of-court disposals (cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND), cannabis warnings, community resolutions) and no-crime decisions for rape, robbery and violence;

3. Visits to forces where inspectors assess local crime recording arrangements under three headings: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and people and skills; and

4. A peer review of audit findings by an NCRS expert from outside HMIC.

The audit examined for compliance a small sample of crime records from each force. Taken together, these samples are sufficient to provide a reliable national estimate, but are too small to produce a force estimate of compliance. Force compliance rates typically result in a margin of error of around +/- 10 percent and therefore a range of 20 percent. This range of uncertainty means that few, if any, conclusions can be drawn from individual force compliance rates or comparisons of rates between forces based on the data alone. (Samples large enough to make more reliable force judgements, while desirable, were not affordable.) Our conclusions and recommendations are, therefore, based upon the evidence drawn from our inspection of the force's crime-recording arrangements.

The scope and structure of the report

This report is divided into the following sections:

1. Part A: A summary of our findings, and recommendations;

2. Part B: Our findings in numbers;

3. Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings.

This report, undertaken at a force level, allows a qualitative assessment of the force's crime recording arrangements and to make recommendations for improvement.

Part A: Summary of inspection findings and recommendations

Leadership and governance

Chief officers in Cleveland Police promote the importance of data integrity throughout the force. The deputy chief constable is the named officer responsible for crime data integrity.

The force has strong governance arrangements that provide oversight and direction to the business of ensuring crime data integrity. Recently a problem of duplicate data on the crime recording computer system was identified. The force has rightly prioritised this risk and is taking action to address it through training, and by developing a software solution that will weed duplicate data. The software solution is due to be implemented as part of a wider plan in the autumn of 2014.

The force crime recording policy emphasises the requirement for compliance with the NCRS and HOCR, and supports a victim-focused approach to crime recording.

The force has a confidential internal reporting route to the professional standards department that officers can use to raise concerns over unethical practices of whatever kind. Its existence and the fact that it is anonymised needs to be marketed across the force as staff do not have confidence in the process.

> **Recommendation:** Immediately, chief officers should ensure all police officers and police staff have unimpeded access to, and reliable knowledge of, an adequate system for the confidential reporting and effective handling of concerns about crime recording.

The force maintains a comprehensive and robust audit regime to assess crime data integrity. Issues identified from the audit results are addressed through direct feedback to staff and their supervisors with updates routinely presented to the strategic performance group. While senior officers and staff are sighted upon the wider organisational learning from audits, the same is not the case lower down the force.

The force maintains a centralised crime management support bureau whose role it is to control the creation, classification, and finalisation of crime. This unit operates independently of the operational units attending the scenes of crime and has been a success. The unit is to extend its remit to overseeing the management of the new categories for crime outcomes recently introduced by the Home Office.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

We examined 88 incident records[6] and found that 85 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 85 crimes that should have been recorded, 67 were. Of the 67, three were wrongly classified and three were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

We found that there were material issues regarding the overall conversion of incidents to crime. The primary reason for this failure is the lack of sufficient information being added to the incident records to justify a decision not to record a crime; this can be attributed to a combination of insufficient training in the NCRS for force control room operators and frontline officers alongside workload pressures.

We examined 50 reports that had been referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments. Of the 15 crimes that should have been recorded, 6 had been recorded. Of these six, all were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. As some of these records related to offences, including violence, against vulnerable adults, this is a significant cause of concern and is a matter of material and urgent importance.

> **Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should establish and, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of an adequate system for the auditing by the force crime registrar[7] (FCR), of all referrals by other organisations (public sector, voluntary sector and private sector) to the force of incidents and reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those involving vulnerable victims.

We found evidence of officers investigating an incident without recording a crime in an effort to validate or invalidate the information given by the victim; this is known as 'investigating-to-record'.

> **Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should ensure the prompt recording of crimes in compliance with the NCRS and HOCR. Particular

---

[6] An incident in this context is a report of events received by the police and recorded on the electronic incident systems, that requires police attention. Whether or not an incident report becomes a crime record is determined on the balance of probability that a notifiable offence has occurred as set out in the Home Office Counting Rules. If an incident does not turn out to be a crime, it must still be logged in an auditable form on the force's incident-recording system or some other accessible or auditable means.

[7] The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HOCR provide that he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision, as the final arbiter. The force crime registrar's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with all applicable rules.

attention must be paid to the correct recording of sexual offences and the work of the protecting vulnerable people unit.

We found that the professionalism of contact centre staff engaged in the call handling process is excellent. Officers and staff in the contact centre have been trained in the identification of risk and vulnerability. Supervisors routinely conduct live auditing of incidents with 10 calls each day being reviewed against National Call Handling Standard, National Standard of Incident Recording (NSIR), and NCRS standards. Timely feedback is given to staff and their supervisors which promotes a 'right first time' ethos and helps to improve both compliance and quality.

The force has limited policy and procedure for detailing how officers and staff should deal with reports of crime which have occurred in another force area and how they should manage the transfer of documentation. In reality, the force handles these reports in an ad hoc manner with no monitoring of the timeliness of the transfer of the crime or evidence.

> **Recommendation:** The force should immediately review and amend the policy and procedure on reports of crime which have occurred in another force area, to ensure that officers have clear guidance on how to deal with these incidents and the management of any evidence and documents.

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND),[8] cannabis warnings[9] and community resolutions.[10] The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed[11].

---

[8] A form of immediate financial punishment used by police to deal with low-level offending such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft, and minor criminal damage.

[9] A cannabis warning is a non-statutory disposal for cases of possession of cannabis for personal use. It constitutes a warning to the offender and confiscation of the cannabis.

[10] Resolution of a minor offence or anti-social behaviour incident through informal agreement between the parties involved, for example often involving the offender making good the loss or damage caused.

[11] National guidance for the use of out-of-court disposals is detailed in a number of documents:

• *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from www.xact.org.uk

• *Simple Cautions for Adult Offenders*, 14 November 2013. Available from www.justice.gov.uk

• *Code of Practice for Adult Conditional Cautions*, 8 April 2000. Available from www.justice.gov.uk

• *Home Office Police Operational Guidance for Penalty Notices for Disorder*, March 2005. Available from www.justice.gov.uk

• *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from www.acpo.police.uk

Cautions – Out of the 22 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in 21 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 16 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 15 cases where there was a victim to consult, 13 cases showed that the victims' views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 25 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in all 25 cases. In all cases we found evidence that showed the offender had been made aware of the future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 22 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found one where the victim had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive the warning in 13 cases. We found no evidence in any of the samples which showed that the offender had been made aware of the implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 20 community resolutions and found that in all 20 cases, the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender's past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 18 resolutions where there was a victim, 16 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Of the 20 cases, 19 showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate[12].

The force has invested much effort in the development of out-of-court disposals. Our dip-sampling indicates good compliance with national standards; however, it is evident from our inspection that out-of-court disposals are being used too often when the offender is not suitable for cannabis warnings, and in respect of penalty notices for disorder, without due consideration to the views of the victim.

> **Recommendation:** The force should immediately take steps to ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that they are only used in appropriate circumstances; in particular, that they are not used when the offending history of the offender should preclude their use, and that the views of victims are taken into account. This should be supported by the immediate introduction of an effective mechanism for the monitoring of

---

[12] National guidance for community resolution directs that at the point the community resolution is administered, an officer will need to confirm the offender admits the offence and explain the process to the offender – including how the offender will make good the harm caused. The implications of receiving a community resolution need to be explained to the offender – it does not form part of a criminal record but may be disclosed as part of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. The community resolution is to be recorded appropriately, in accordance with the NCRS and HOCR.

the use of out-of-court disposals to ensure the decisions being taken to use the disposals are appropriate.

The professional standards department has developed the use of restorative justice[13] disposals for appropriate misconduct cases. This innovative development is seen as positive by staff and promotes learning; nevertheless care needs to be taken that it is compliant with national guidelines or is declared exempt as a pilot scheme.

No-crime

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We reviewed 84 no-crime records and found 46 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. As the no-crime records we reviewed were for offences of rape, robbery and violence this high error rate is a matter of serious concern.

The force uses designated decision makers (DDM) to make its no-crime decisions. It has reduced recently the number of these officers from 20 to 6, but these 6 are based in local policing commands and are not independent of service delivery and performance accountability and therefore possible peer pressure. Only two of these officers have received training in the HOCR. Force policy is that all no-crimes for indictable offences should be overseen by the FCR but this has not always been taking place.

> **Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should review the current structure for the approval of no-crime decisions including the provision of specific guidance and support on the use of additional verifiable information, ensuring these decisions are made by individuals who are independent of local performance accountability and supported by effective and proportionate oversight by the FCR.

Victim-centred approach

Cleveland Police promotes the victim as its primary focus for the reporting and recording of crime and this is reflected in its policies and procedures. The force has a growing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community and has seen a discernable increase in migrants from the European Union. The force has a range of activities underway to promote the reporting of crime from these communities which includes a new arrivals meeting at which all services are explained, and a route by which crimes can be recorded through a third party.

The force uses a victim call-back process, which is comprehensive, and comprises 100 call-backs each day with 8 main questions posed. The results

---

[13] Restorative justice is a process whereby the key stakeholders in an incident meet to discuss the impact of the incident and seek to agree a method of restitution.

are fed back directly to staff and their supervisors, and team-based information is featured within performance reports circulated around the force.

The force uses the information from the call-back and victim satisfaction surveys to inform the force training requirement.

Rape offences

We found the protecting vulnerable people unit (PVPU) use of electronic mailboxes to be of concern. The mailboxes are used to manage five different themes; child protection, domestic abuse, child exploitation, sex offenders, and vulnerable adults. The system supports the referral of issues to staff for action, is not secure and the emails can, and are, deleted by staff. Our dip-sample of the mailboxes revealed crimes that had not been recorded on the force crime recording computer system, and that the force audit regime would not have identified the issue as the mailboxes do not feature within the regime.

> **Recommendation:** The force must immediately improve the process for dealing with reports of crime received through the system of public protection mailboxes so as to improve the accuracy and timeliness of crime recording and victim service in compliance with the HOCR and NCRS.

Of significant concern is the decision making around no-crime decisions for rape. Of the 29 rape no-crime decisions we reviewed, 17 were correct. The process for authorising a no-crime for rape is not sufficient and requires attention. There is a need to provide a layer of independent scrutiny and increased oversight from the FCR (see recommendation 5).

IT systems

The force enjoys a productive working relationship with its industry partner, Steria. The partnership has brought a sharper focus to productivity, efficiency and customer service within the force control room and crime management area of business.

The force uses a single computer system for each of its incident and crime recording functions. These systems are interfaced which avoids the double-keying of entries, and they are well-managed, with regular system audits and information weeding.

Response and neighbourhood officers make use of handheld mobile data devices that allow direct recording of crime onto the force system, thereby avoiding unnecessary re-keying and saving officer time and cost. However officers reported that the devices are not user-friendly; officers have to log on to three separate systems; the battery life is very limited; crimes transferred are sometime lost in transmission; and the display is small and styluses frequently go missing. The force is acutely aware of these issues, and plans are in place to upgrade the equipment at the earliest opportunity.

The force routinely scans faxed reports of crime and cannabis warnings onto the force crime system. This could usefully be extended to include PND, as this would enable more efficient auditing and, in turn, more transparent decision-making by staff involved.

> **Recommendation:** Within six months, the force should assess the appropriateness and value of extending the process of scanning reports of crime and cannabis warnings to include PND.

People and skills

The level of awareness of the NCRS amongst operational, and particularly specialist staff within the public protection command is limited. Officers and staff understand the broad imperative to record crime but were less confident about specific scenarios raised to them by HMIC inspectors such as self-defence; third party reports; when to record a crime; how to deal with offenders under 10 and other juvenile offenders.

Further training, guidance and support on the NCRS for officers and staff is required, and specifically more detailed training on the NCRS is required for control room staff both in the call-handling, despatch and closure functions.

> **Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should conduct an NCRS and HOCR training needs analysis, and immediately thereafter introduce a tiered, co-ordinated training programme on NCRS and HOCR, prioritising personnel in roles which affect quality, timeliness and victim focus, and particularly for those staff within the force control room and public protection commands.

Force crime registrar

Cleveland Police's FCR enjoys the full support of, and access to, the deputy chief constable with whom he has regular meetings. He has sufficient resources for the role and acts objectively, impartially and with integrity.

The FCR is the final arbiter for all crime-recording decisions and issues are routinely referred to him for advice. He provides clear direction and guidance, and he has an input into the development and drafting of force policy, procedure and guidance for crime recording; his advice invariably is heeded.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. Chief officers should ensure all police officers and police staff have unimpeded access to, and reliable knowledge of, an adequate system for the confidential reporting and effective handling of concerns around crime recording.

2. The force should ensure the prompt recording of crimes in compliance with the NCRS and HOCR. Particular attention must be paid to the correct recording of sexual offences and the work of the protecting vulnerable people unit.

3. The force should review and amend the policy and procedure on reports of crime which have occurred in another force area, to ensure that officers have clear guidance on how to deal with these incidents and the management of any evidence and documents.

4. The force should take steps to ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that they are only used in appropriate circumstances; in particular, that they are not used when the offending history of the offender should preclude their use, and that the views of victims are taken into account. This should be supported by the introduction of an effective mechanism for the monitoring of the use of out-of-court disposals to ensure the decisions being taken to use the disposals are appropriate.

5. The force should review the current structure for the approval of no-crime decisions including the provision of specific guidance and support on the use of additional verifiable information, ensuring these decisions are made by individuals who are independent of local performance accountability and supported by effective and proportionate oversight by the FCR.

6. The force must improve the process for dealing with reports of crime received through the system of public protection mailboxes so as to improve the accuracy and timeliness of crime recording and victim service in compliance with the HOCR and NCRS.

Within three months

7. The force should establish and, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of an adequate system for the auditing by the force crime registrar (FCR), of all referrals by other organisations (public sector, voluntary sector and private sector) to the force of incidents and reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those involving vulnerable victims.

8. The force should conduct an NCRS and HOCR training needs analysis, and immediately thereafter introduce a tiered, co-ordinated training programme on NCRS and HOCR, prioritising personnel in roles which impact on quality, timeliness and victim focus and particularly for those staff within the force control room and public protection commands.

Within six months

9. The force should assess the appropriateness and value of extending the process of scanning reports of crime and cannabis warnings to include PND.

Part B: Audit findings in numbers

Our examination of records will be used as part of a statistically robust national audit to allow HMIC to report a figure for national crime recording accuracy across the 43 Home Office forces within our final report to be published in autumn 2014. The audit undertaken at a force level is not of a sufficient size to be statistically robust and is therefore used alongside our fieldwork interviews to form qualitative judgments only.

Crimes reported as part of an incident record		
Incidents reviewed	**Crimes identified**	**Crimes recorded**
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Cleveland Police. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these incidents HMIC identified the following number of crimes	From these identified crimes Cleveland Police recorded the following number of crimes
88	**85**	**67**
Crimes referred from other agencies directly to Cleveland Police specialist departments		
Referrals	**Crimes identified**	**Crimes recorded**
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Cleveland Police specialist departments from other agencies which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals to specialist departments HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Cleveland Police should have recorded	From these identified crimes Cleveland Police recorded the following number of crimes
50	**15**	**6**
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which Cleveland Police had subsequently recorded as no-crime.		From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.
84		**46**

Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings

Our detailed findings are set out against three headings: leadership and governance, systems and processes, and people and skills.

Leadership and governance

1 Does the force have arrangements at a senior level to ensure there is confidence in recorded crime figures and all aspects of the HOCR?

1.1 How is Cleveland Police ensuring that leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff?

The deputy chief constable has lead responsibility for crime data integrity in Cleveland Police, and there is a clear and unambiguous message from the chief officer team, via personal briefings, video-message and written communication that crime data integrity is non-negotiable. The force is in the midst of significant change in terms of its staff, working environment and leadership, and the force vision is becoming well embedded. There is a discernable cultural shift underway across the force that shows it is open and responsive to change, albeit there remain some pockets of resistance.

The force has strong governance arrangements that provide oversight and direction to the business of ensuring crime data integrity. In particular, the strategic performance group attended by the policing crime commissioner is used to press forward improvements, supported by the data quality groups that manage the tactical delivery of the ethical crime recording message. Recently a problem of duplicate data on the crime recording computer system was identified. The force has rightly prioritised this risk, and is taking action to address it through training, and by developing a software solution that will weed duplicate data. The software solution is due to be implemented as part of a wider plan in the autumn of 2014.

The force crime recording policy emphasises the requirement for compliance with the NCRS and HOCR and supports a victim-focused approach to crime recording. We found no appreciable or overt evidence of performance pressures leading to failures in crime recording; moreover, erroneous decisions not to record crime were more a consequence of workload pressures and/or an inadequate understanding of legislation.

The force has an internal reporting route to the professional standards department that officers can use to raise concerns over unethical practices of

whatever kind. Its existence and the fact that it is anonymised needs to be marketed across the force as staff do not have confidence in the process.

1.2 How does Cleveland Police ensure it has a proportionate approach to managing the strategic and organisational risk of recording crime data?

The force maintains a comprehensive and robust audit regime to assess crime data integrity; this includes a monthly audit of 320 NCRS decisions and 190 HOCR classification decisions. Issues identified from the audit results are addressed through direct feedback to staff and their supervisors with updates routinely presented to the strategic performance group. While senior officers and staff are sighted upon the wider organisational learning from audits, the same is not the case lower down the force.

1.3 How does Cleveland Police use HOCR, NCRS, and NSIR to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately?

The force maintains a centralised crime management support bureau whose role is to control the creation, classification, and finalisation of crime. This unit operates independently of the operational units attending the scenes of crime and has been a success. The unit is to extend its remit to overseeing the management of the new categories for crime outcomes recently introduced by the Home Office.

Systems and processes

2 Does the force have systems and processes in place to ensure that: crime is correctly recorded in accordance with HOCR and NCRS; standards of out-of-court disposals are maintained; and no-crime decisions are correct?

2.1 How does Cleveland Police effectively manage and supervise incidents, other reporting routes and crime records in order to ensure that crimes are correctly recorded?

When it comes to the force's management of reported incidents, these are all calls for service, primarily from the public, that may or may not result in a crime being raised and we found that the force recognises the importance of compliance with the National Standard of Incident Recording (NSIR). To improve compliance, the force recently has reduced the number of staff able to close incidents on the incident recording computer system owing to the differing NSIR interpretation of the 200 individuals who could, at that time, close an incident.

We examined 88 incident records and found that 85 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 85 crimes that should have been recorded, 67 were. Of the 67,

three were wrongly classified and three were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

We examined 50 reports that had been referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments. Of the 15 crimes that should have been recorded, 6 had been recorded. Of these six, all were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. As some of these records related to offences, including violence, against vulnerable adults, this is a significant cause of concern and is a matter of material and urgent importance.

We found that there are material issues regarding the overall conversion of incidents to crime. The primary reason for this failure is the lack of sufficient information being added to the incident records to justify a decision not to raise a crime record; this can be attributed to a combination of insufficient training in NCRS for force control room operators and frontline officers alongside workload pressures.

We found evidence of officers investigating an incident without recording a crime in an effort to validate or invalidate the information given by the victim; this is known as investigating to record.

The quality of call handling is crucial for accurate crime recording; we found that the professionalism of staff engaged in the process is excellent. Officers and staff in the contact centre have been trained in the identification of risk and vulnerability. Supervisors routinely conduct live auditing of incidents with 10 calls each day being reviewed against National Call Handling Standard, NSIR, and NCRS standards. Timely feedback is given to staff and their supervisors which promotes a 'right first time' ethos and helps to improve both compliance and quality.

The force has limited policy and procedure for detailing how officers and staff should deal with reports of crime which have occurred in another force area and how they should manage the transfer of documentation. In reality, the force handles these reports in an ad hoc manner with no monitoring of the timeliness of transfer of the crime or evidence. This is an area of potential risk in terms of crime recording and victim service.

2.2 How does Cleveland Police ensure that out-of-court disposals suit the needs of victims, offenders and the criminal justice system?

When using out-of-court disposals, the force needs to ensure it only uses them in line with appropriate guidance so that only offenders who are entitled to be offered an out-of-court disposal receive them.

Cautions – Out of the 22 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in 21 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 16 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and

future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 15 cases where there was a victim to consult 13 cases showed that the victim's views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 25 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in all 25 cases. In all cases we found evidence that showed the offender had been made aware of the future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 22 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found one where the victim had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive the warning in 13 cases. We found no evidence in any of the samples which showed that the offender had been made aware of the implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 20 community resolutions and found that in all 20 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender's past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 18 resolutions where there was a victim, 16 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Of the 20 cases, 19 showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.

The force has invested much effort in the development of out-of-court disposals. Our dip-sampling indicates good compliance with national standards; however, it is evident from our inspection that out-of-court disposals are being used too often when the offender is not suitable for cannabis warnings, and in respect of penalty notices for disorder, without due consideration to the views of the victim.

The professional standards department has developed the use of restorative justice disposals for appropriate misconduct cases. This innovative development is seen as positive by staff and promotes learning; nevertheless, care needs to be taken that it is compliant with national guidelines.

2.3   Are no-crime decisions for high-risk crime categories correct, and is there robust oversight and quality control in Cleveland Police?

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been reclassified on the basis of additional verifiable information. We reviewed 84 no-crime records and found 46 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. As the no-crime records we reviewed were for offences of rape, robbery and violence, this high error rate is a matter of serious concern.

The forces uses designated decision makers (DDM) to make the no-crime decisions. It has reduced recently the number of these officers from 20 to 6, but these 6 are based in local policing commands and are not independent of service delivery and performance accountability and therefore possible peer

pressure. Only two of these officers have received training in the HOCR. Force policy is that all no-crimes for indictable offences should be overseen by the FCR but this has not always been taking place.

The force is strongly urged to consider repositioning responsibility for all no-crimes away from where such crimes are investigated, and introducing robust force crime registrar oversight.

2.4 How does Cleveland Police promote a victim-centred approach to crime recording and associated outcomes?

Cleveland Police promotes the victim as its primary focus for the reporting and recording of crime and this is reflected in its policies and procedures. The force has a growing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community and has seen a discernable increase in migrants from the European Union brought about by recent changes by housing providers in the region. The force has a range of activities underway to promote the reporting of crime from these communities which includes a new arrivals meeting at which all services are explained, and a route by which crimes can be recorded through a third party.

There is considerable focus on victim satisfaction by the force, with activity being managed by the victim satisfaction group. Of note is the victim call-back process, which is comprehensive, and comprises 100 call-backs each day with 8 main questions posed. The results are fed directly back to staff and their supervisors and team-based information is featured within performance reports circulated around the force.

The force uses the information from the call-back and victim satisfaction surveys to inform the force training requirement.

2.5 How does Cleveland Police ensure systems for receiving, recording and managing reported crimes of rape are robust?

The protecting vulnerable people unit's use of electronic mailboxes is of concern. The mailboxes are used to manage five different themes; child protection, domestic abuse, child exploitation, sex offenders, and vulnerable adults. The system supports the referral of issues to staff for action, is not secure and the emails can, and are, deleted by staff. Our dip-sample of the mailboxes revealed crimes that had not been recorded on the force crime recording computer system, and that the force audit regime would not have identified the issue as the mailboxes do not feature within the regime.

Of significant concern is the decision making around no-crime decisions for rape. Of the 29 rape no-crime decisions we reviewed, 17 were correct. The process for authorising a no-crime for rape is not sufficient and requires attention. There is a need to provide a layer of independent scrutiny and increased oversight from the FCR.

2.6 How do Cleveland Police IT systems allow for efficient and effective management of crime recording?

The force enjoys a productive working relationship with its industry partner, Steria. The partnership has brought a sharper focus to productivity, efficiency and customer service within the force control room and crime management area of business.

The force utilises a single computer system for each of its incident and crime recording functions. These systems are interfaced which avoids the double-keying of entries, and they are well-managed, with regular system audits and information weeding.

Response and neighbourhood officers make use of handheld mobile data devices that allow direct recording of crime onto the force system; 67 percent of crime is recorded by this route, thereby avoiding unnecessary re-keying and saving officer time and cost. However officers reported that the devices are not user-friendly; officers have to log on to three separate systems; the battery life is very limited; crimes transferred are sometime lost in transmission; and the display is small and styluses frequently go missing. The force is acutely aware of these issues, and plans are in place to upgrade the equipment at the earliest opportunity.

The force routinely scans faxed reports of crime and cannabis warnings onto the force crime system. This could usefully be extended to include PND, as this would enable more efficient auditing and, in turn, more transparent decision-making by staff involved.

People and skills

3 Does the force have staff whose conduct and skills ensure accurate crime recording?

3.1 What arrangements does Cleveland Police have in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?

The level of awareness of the NCRS amongst operational, and particularly specialist staff within the public protection command is limited. Officers and staff understand the broad imperative to record crime but were less confident about specific scenarios raised to them by HMIC inspectors such as self-defence; third party reports; when to record a crime; how to deal with offenders under 10 and other juvenile offenders.

3.2 How do the behaviours of Cleveland Police staff reflect a culture of integrity for crime recording practice and decision-making?

Further training, guidance and support on NCRS for officers and staff is required, and specifically more detailed training on NCRS is required for control room staff, in the call-handling, despatch and closure functions

3.3 How is the accuracy of crime recording in Cleveland Police actively overseen and governed by the force crime registrar (FCR)?

The force has a dedicated FCR who enjoys the full support of, and access to, the deputy chief constable with whom he has regular meetings. He has sufficient resources for the role and acts objectively, impartially and with integrity.

The FCR is the final arbiter for all crime-recording decisions and issues are routinely referred to him for advice. He provides clear direction and guidance, and he has an input into the development and drafting of force policy, procedure and guidance for crime recording to ensure that the NCRS and HOCR are considered in policy development.