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## **Review of Police Crime and Incident Reports**

**Cleveland Police  
January 2012**

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest. We monitor, inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the police service in England and Wales. More information and copies of inspection and review reports are available on our website, [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

## The process for recording crimes and incidents

The crime recording process has three key stages:

- **Recording an incident:** A member of the public calls for police assistance, or a police officer observes or discovers a crime. The police create an incident record.
- **Recording a crime:** If the police decide a crime was committed, they create a crime record (usually straight away).
- **Investigating a crime:** Investigations begin as soon as possible, usually with initial enquiries which look for possible leads and gather evidence (a 'primary investigation'). A more detailed, 'secondary investigation' then takes place to consider the evidence gathered in the initial stages.

## Purpose of the review

The Minister of State for Policing and Criminal Justice, Nick Herbert, asked HMIC to inspect the quality of the crime and incident data collected by police forces across England and Wales.

## Why is it important to have high quality crime and incident data?

High quality data means that:

- The police can establish the extent, location and victims of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB), and so plan their work to achieve the best outcomes for victims and their communities;
- The public, the Government and HMIC can get an accurate picture of crime and ASB in a particular area, and judge whether their force's performance represents value for money.

The Government's commitment to public accountability and transparency adds to this need for accurate and consistent data. This will become increasingly important as oversight of the police service is moved away from Whitehall to local police and crime commissioners (PCCs), who will rely on accurate, local information on how well their force is performing.

## Who sets the standards for crime and incident recording?

The Home Office sets standards for both crime and incident recording. The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) is underpinned by the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR). These aim to provide consistent standards in all forces and an approach to recording crimes that is based on the needs of the victim.

## **Review methodology: a note on data collection**

HMIC checked the accuracy of a small number of the force's crime and incident records. This was used to flag up any potential issues which could usefully be explored during the review.

Although the sample size was not large enough to be statistically significant, it gives some indication of the quality of the data collected by the force, and of the efficiency of its systems and processes. Some findings from the data collection are therefore included below.

## **Findings for Cleveland Police**

### **Does the force record crimes accurately and consistently?**

HMIC looked at 119 incidents logged by Cleveland Police. Six had been wrongly closed without a crime being raised, which indicates that crimes in the Cleveland Police area are generally recorded accurately and in accordance with the NCRS.

We found that Cleveland Police had effective systems and processes in place to ensure incidents and crimes are recorded and investigated in a consistent and accurate manner, with a strong focus on the needs of the victim. The dedicated Crime Management Units and a Crime Recording Bureau have led to improvements in crime recording and investigation. At the time of inspection, however, staffing in the control room (where all reports of crimes and incidents are taken) was being reviewed by the force as it did not match demand.

### **What is the quality of the investigation and service to victims?**

The force made good use of investigation plans to ensure crime investigations were carried out proportionately, efficiently and effectively. This was further supported by the close management of the finalisation of crime records by specialist staff. Cleveland Police's contact with victims was very good, and supported by helpful computer systems. The force was also considering greater use of restorative justice as an alternative to putting the victim through the courts system.

### **How does the force ensure that standards are met?**

Cleveland Police had a well-established and proportionate audit programme for incident and crime data. Findings were reviewed at regular performance meetings, at which actions to address shortcomings were recorded and monitored. The Force Crime and Incident Registrar is the final arbiter for disputes over how the HOCR should be applied. However, the force needs to ensure recent changes to staff roles and responsibilities do not have a detrimental impact on the standards they have established to ensure the good quality of crime and incident data.

## Conclusions

HMIC found that there were strong arrangements at a senior level to secure the quality of incident and crime data, supported by helpful plans, policies and strategies. The force had high standards when recording crimes and incidents, ensuring both consistency and accuracy to reflect the sequence of events described by victims.

Staff's responsibilities and skills were well established to ensure good incident and crime data quality, with audit and quality assurance processes in place to identify any issues and take action to address them.

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