

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary



On The Record

Thematic Inspection Report on Police Crime
Recording, the Police National Computer and
Phoenix Intelligence System Data Quality

Her Majesty's Inspector Keith Povey QPM BA (Law)

July 2000



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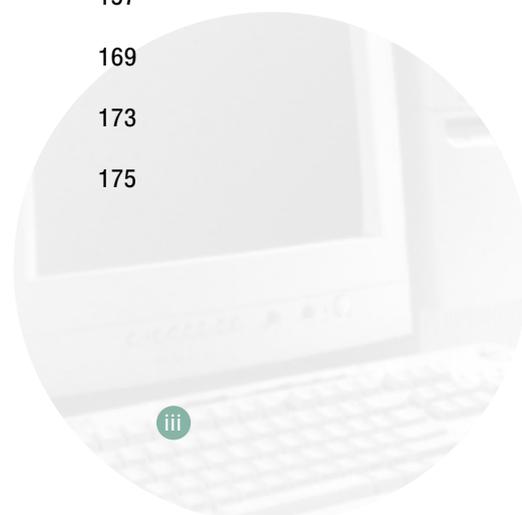
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Acknowledgement is also given for the advice and expertise of staff from the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO), the Police National Computer (PNC) Training Department National Police Training, and the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) National Crime Faculty Bramshill.

Additionally, Her Majesty's Inspector would like to warmly acknowledge the support and commitment of the Inspection Team drawn from HMIC staff, the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate and seconded staff from Staffordshire Police and Bedfordshire Police.



Preface

The Police Service of England and Wales is responsible for recording vast amounts of information concerning crimes and criminals. Whilst such information has always been important, the developments in information technology which have enabled forces to undertake a more rigorous, systematic and scientific analysis of crime and criminal behaviour mean that the need for accurate and consistent data has never been greater.

Additionally, such information is now being used to a greater extent by other agencies, such as those involved with the local crime and disorder partnerships, in the fight against crime and by the Government to assess forces' effectiveness in reducing crime. It is also important to recognise that the Police Service has clear legal obligations under the Data Protection Act to hold data which are accurate and up-to-date.

This thematic Inspection report focuses on two fundamental data systems kept by all forces, namely:

- Crime Recording
- The Police National Computer (PNC) and Phoenix National Intelligence System

In addition, it covers some aspects of the serious crime analysis section concerning murder and rape offence referral.

The content, findings and recommendations within this report provide a great opportunity for all forces to improve their performance in achieving high quality, accurate and consistent data quality. The benefits to all forces and their partners of accurate information concerning the nature of crimes and those responsible for them are obvious. The report identifies many examples of good practice already being undertaken by forces but also identifies a number of areas requiring development. Armed with this information all forces are now expected to respond positively to maximise the crime reduction potential of their data recording systems.

I am grateful for the assistance provided by those chief officers and their staff who were visited as part of this Inspection, and to the members of other organisations and agencies who contributed to this report.

I commend this report to you.

Sir David J O'Dowd CBE QPM BA MSc CIMgt
HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary



Executive Summary

This thematic Inspection is one of a series of HMIC inspections designed to assist and support the Police Service, and their partners in the community, in achieving a long term, sustainable reduction in crime and disorder. Nationally the Service commits substantial resources to collecting and processing vast amounts of data to better inform decision on how best to achieve this result. The quality of that data is crucial to the decision making process. Sophisticated information technology systems are now available to the Police Service to assist in a rigorous and systematic analysis of this data – that analysis is also dependent on good quality inputs. This Inspection examines in detail two fundamental components of the Service's data gathering systems, namely Crime Recording (Part I) and PNC and Phoenix – the National Intelligence System (Part II).

Part I – Crime Recording

Police recorded crime figures are of significant importance to crime reduction efforts because they:

- ❑ inform Government policy
- ❑ identify crime trends
- ❑ help direct police activity
- ❑ underpin crime pattern analysis, intelligence-led policing and problem oriented policing
- ❑ inform target setting and performance measurement and comparison
- ❑ enable the impact of various crime reduction initiatives to be evaluated

Such use requires that crimes are recorded to a common standard and in a nationally consistent way, yet there is substantial evidence that this is not the case. Crime recording is an extremely complex process with the 43 forces in England and Wales currently recording over 5 million offences each year. In an attempt to achieve some degree of consistency the Home Office have issued comprehensive guidance on crime recording – *Counting Rules for Recorded Crime – Instructions for Police Forces*. A problem of differing interpretations of these rules, resulting in inconsistent recording processes across forces, was a major and recurring theme throughout this Inspection. The ambiguity and lack of clarity within the rules is a distinct weakness and unless remedied will continue to undermine the usefulness of recorded crime statistics.

Research undertaken during this Inspection revealed:

- ❑ widespread and varying interpretation of the rules
- ❑ offences wrongly classified
- ❑ the inappropriate 'no criming' of a record subsequent to it being recorded
- ❑ the failure to record the correct number of crimes
- ❑ an error rate of between 15% and 65% of the crime records examined
- ❑ inappropriate reclassifying of recorded crimes.



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Some forces have endeavoured to address these perceived shortcomings by local amendments leading to further inconsistencies. The Home Office Counting Rules are national guidance covering all forces and should not be amended at local level to suit local views. Forces should review all locally produced guidance to ensure that it fully accords with the Counting Rules.

This situation is not helped by the absence of a national forum within which difficulties could be addressed. This used to be the role of the Police Statistics Committee which has not met since 11 May 1999. It is recommended that this group be restructured with a clear remit to bring clarity to the Counting Rules and publish national guidance which is legally binding on forces.

Access to the Counting Rules was also identified as a contributory factor in differing interpretation. They are currently published in hardcopy, with periodic amendments, the circulation being dependent upon force systems. These were not always effective. There was also evidence of inconsistency in responses by the Home Office to enquiries from forces.

Once a greater degree of clarity is brought to the Counting Rules, it is recommended that they be established on an internet site enabling forces to access up to date and consistent guidance.

Force Recording Rates

An exercise was undertaken to determine each force 'recording rate' by determining the number of crimes found on the command and control logs which had been recorded on each force's crime system. It was found that:

- ❑ force recording rates ranged between 55% and 82%
- ❑ ten forces recorded between 70% and 82% of all crime
- ❑ the average non-recording rate was 24%.

If all forces recorded all crimes reported to them, in line with the current Home Office Counting Rules and based on an evidential model of recording¹, nationally, total crime would increase significantly. There could also be an impact on a force's relative league quartile position within the Best Value performance assessment framework.

Recording Practices in Forces and Target Setting

Those forces having an unequivocal message from chief officers regarding the ethical recording of crime, a robust auditing and inspection process to ensure integrity, and a centralised civilian crime reporting unit, were found not only to have the highest crime

¹ See chapter 4

recording rates but also the lowest incidence of misinterpretation and incorrect recording. Although a number of models of good practice were found which are identified within the report the Inspection also found areas of weakness:

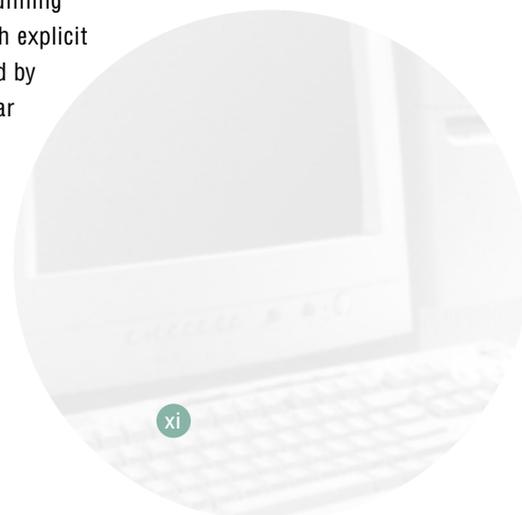
- ❑ crimes not being recorded when they had been reported to the police
- ❑ delaying of recording of reported crimes until they were detected
- ❑ the minimising of certain offences to justify a lesser classification
- ❑ numerous problems with classification of those crimes comprising the national targets, ie vehicle crimes, house burglaries and damage, and assaults and public order offences.

Delivery of service and monitoring of performance against targets generally takes place within forces at basic command unit (BCU) level. Indeed, forces are encouraged to devolve more and more responsibility to this level and greater emphasis is being given to the comparison of BCU performance. In consequence it becomes ever more important that the integrity of that data is beyond question. Where responsibility for crime recording has also been devolved to the BCU there is a need for a robust auditing and inspection process to quality assure those figures. Several models of good practice were found but some forces have a long way to go.

All 43 forces in England and Wales have been set challenging five-year crime reduction targets in relation to burglaries of people's homes, vehicle crime and violent crime. Each force has produced a detailed plan outlining their expectations in terms of year-on-year reductions to achieve their five-year goals. It is vital that the crime figures on which these predictions are made can be relied upon to make judgements about subsequent force performance. The inconsistency in application of the Counting Rules and problems with classifying specific categories of vehicle crime, has serious implications for the national target setting framework and forces' Best Value league quartile position.

Leadership and Accountability

In a number of forces with high recording rates and good quality data the Inspection Team found that at all levels of the organisation staff were clear that their chief officers were committed to open, honest and ethical recording. This principle was a thread running through all interviews and processes. However, in other forces there was no such explicit statement and chief officer commitment to ethical recording was either assumed by staff or implicit in other broader statements about professional standards. A clear statement from chief officers leaves members of staff in no doubt that unethical recording is not supported by the force and that it is in direct contravention of standards set down by chief officers. This statement has even greater impact if reinforced with effective inspectorate and auditing procedures.



Executive Summary

The Inspection found that in many forces there was no identified individual who had responsibility for crime recording for the force. Those forces who had an identified senior officer with clear organisational responsibility together with empowerment to enforce crime recording standards tended to have higher recording rates and better quality crime data. The report recommends that a senior or chief officer is nominated in each force and takes personal responsibility for force crime recording and detection standards and is held accountable for the integrity and accuracy of those figures.

Training

The 1996 HMIC thematic report, *A Review of Crime Recording Procedures*, highlighted the fact that forces did not have structured training programmes for staff in relation to crime recording. Four years later the Inspection found this is still the case in many forces. The Inspection found:

- a general lack of training for staff
- specialist civilian staff had a better level of knowledge than police officers
- staff conducting telephone interviews and investigations with no training.

There were exceptions, such as one force that provided formal structured training for all their crime reception unit staff. Overall, the Inspection found a general lack of structured training within forces and they are reminded of the 1996 HMIC recommendation that '*a training needs analysis be undertaken and suitable training be provided to relevant staff*'. This will include operational officers as well as specialists such as a crime desk personnel and statistical staff (1996).

Crime Management Information

Good quality, detailed and timely crime management information is essential for forces to monitor crime trends and assess the impact of crime reduction initiatives. It also helps to monitor crime recording practices. The Inspection found that all forces produced comprehensive crime information at BCU level. Examples of good practice were found of forces profiling their crime information by offence category and detection type. However, a theme emerged relating to the accountability of BCUs in terms of their crime figures. In a number of forces discernible and significant crime trends were readily apparent to the Inspection Team yet no explanation for the change could be offered by the forces in question. Several, for example, showed an increase in certain vehicle crime categories with a corresponding decrease in other vehicle-related offences.

This report urges chief officers to actively analyse, evaluate and, where appropriate, act upon internal crime management information. Such information is a useful tool for monitoring the effectiveness of crime reduction initiatives and monitoring the quality of

crime recording particularly at BCU level. It should include relevant crime categories grouped together and all detection and disposal methods including a profile of 'no crimes' for each offence.

Centralised or BCU Based Crime Recording Units

The Inspection found that of the 11 forces visited four had centralised force crime reception or data quality units. The benefits of such units are:

- ❑ independence from the performance pressures at BCU level
- ❑ economies of scale for staff and equipment which may lead to an improvement in the hours that such a facility can be offered to the public
- ❑ greater ease in providing training, and implementing Force and Home Office policies
- ❑ less movement of staff in these posts leading to greater specialist knowledge and more consistent advice provided to operational staff
- ❑ often a higher level of keyboard and telephone investigation skills.

Significantly, it was found that the highest recording forces (see next section) all employed centralised force crime recording units or data validation units, using mainly specialist civilian staff. The report argues that there are merits in establishing a centralised civilian crime reception facility for the reasons given above.

The report concludes that the evidence found during the Inspection clearly illustrates:

- ❑ the complexity and difficulties faced by police forces in recording incidents and crimes
- ❑ the need for all forces to have in place accurate and ethical crime recording systems under-pinned by robust auditing systems
- ❑ unless forces take prompt remedial action as set out in this report there will continue to be an adverse impact and undermining of:
 - ❑ performance measurement
 - ❑ crime league tables
 - ❑ quartile league position under the Best Value regime
 - ❑ the target setting process
 - ❑ crime and disorder partnership information sharing protocols
 - ❑ intelligence-led policing
 - ❑ problem oriented policing.

All these areas depend on good quality and accurate crime figures - they are key to achieving a sustained and long term reduction in crime.

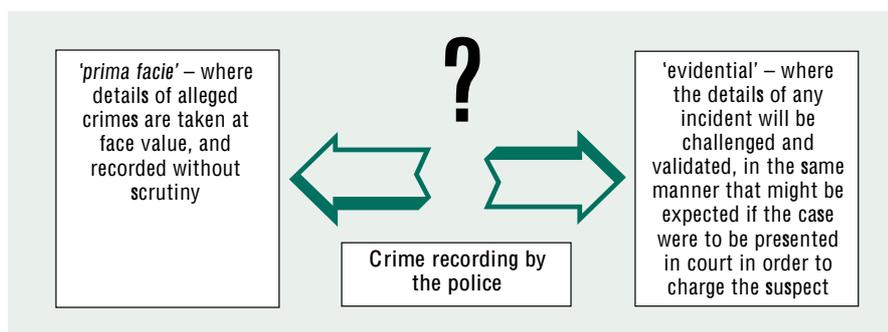


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The Police Approach to Crime Recording

The Home Office commissioned study on crime recording suggested the following model to describe the police approach to crime recording.

Diagram 1: The 'prima facie' versus 'evidential' model



It is important to understand that the model describes two distinct approaches and, as found during the Inspection, they are not mutually exclusive. The recording of crimes involves a complex interaction of the unique circumstances surrounding each crime incident, a force organisational approach and style, and the recording officer's views.

The Inspection found officers tended to use an 'evidential and detection based' rather than a 'prima facie' model of recording and generally applied an evidential test of 'beyond reasonable doubt' to record a crime. It was further identified that officers tend to use a lower standard to classify a crime as detected or 'no-crimes'. The overall effect of this practice:

- ❑ reduces recorded crime levels
- ❑ increases 'no-crimes' thereby further reducing the level of recorded crime
- ❑ increases detection rates.

The police approach goes beyond challenging and validating whether a crime has in fact occurred with officers taking into account a number of other factors before deciding whether to record the crime or not. These include:

- ❑ can the victim be contacted?
- ❑ is the victim co-operative?
- ❑ can the offence be detected?
- ❑ is the Crown Prosecution Service likely to prosecute?

This report suggests that the Police Statistics Committee issue guidance in relation to the evidence required in relation to 'no-crimes' and review the level of evidence required for

'detected – no proceedings' when the victim does not wish to support the police in any further proceedings.

The Way Forward?

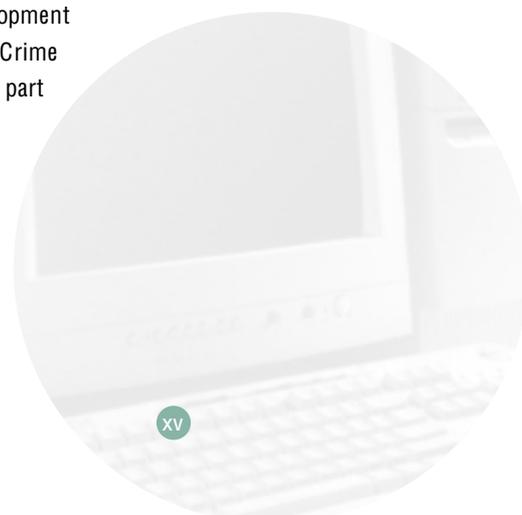
There are merits and demerits to both models of recording and this is an issue which needs to be widely and properly debated and then resolved to bring about nationally consistent and reliable police recorded crime figures. It is concluded that greater clarity must be given to forces concerning the Counting Rules, and they in turn must respond by putting into practice the advice concerning the compliance and integrity given in this report. Whether a "*prima facie*" or evidential model for determining those crimes to be recorded (as notifiable to the Home Office) is to be adopted by the Police Service is a fundamental issue which needs to be negotiated and agreed by the Police Statistics Committee.

This report recommends that the Police Statistics Committee considers these issues and decides on the model of recording to be adopted by the Police Service. This should be agreed by all stakeholders and accompanied by comprehensive, unambiguous and clear advice to all forces to ensure a nationally consistent approach to crime recording.

Part II – The Police National Computer (PNC) and Phoenix Intelligence System and Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS)

The Police Service has a responsibility to record and maintain accurate information in its role within the criminal justice system. The importance of this record keeping function should not be underestimated. Indeed, the majority of information retained by the Police Service is subject to regulation and standards contained within primary legislation such as the Data Protection Act. Accordingly, the Police Service must be able to demonstrate that they undertake their data keeping functions with integrity. Additionally, if the Police Service is to realise the full crime reduction potential of its information systems it is essential that data is accurate and staff are aware of system capabilities.

Since 1974 the Police Service has invested heavily in the PNC and as a result Phoenix intelligence information was introduced in 1995. This coincided with the development outside of PNC of the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) at the National Crime Faculty to assist in the investigation of murder and rape offences. Although not part of the PNC system it has close links with the PNC facility, Comparative Case Analysis (CCA), in that they both record details of certain types of murder and rape offences. Given the importance of the SCAS system to crime reduction and investigation, aspects of forces' compliance were covered during the Inspection. Like SCAS, the strength of PNC is that it is a national system and depends on all forces entering quality, accurate and timely data to common minimum standards.



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In 1998 the Police Research Group (PRG) produced a report “Phoenix Data Quality” which was critical of the quality of data held on Phoenix and of the general level of awareness of its capabilities amongst operational officers. In response the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) produced the ‘ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC’ which was used as the basis for the methodology for the Inspection. The ACPO strategy includes demanding performance indicators covering timeliness, completeness and quality of information and contains key actions for National Police Training, HMIC, the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) and all forces.

Part II of this Inspection report examines forces’ progress towards both the recommendations of the 1998 PRG report and their relative position against the content of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC and identifies areas of good practice.

Overall, the Inspection found:

- ❑ many forces had not addressed recommendations and advice contained within national research documents, HMIC audits and internal research findings
- ❑ staff knowledge of PNC and Phoenix capabilities varied greatly resulting in some applications being underused
- ❑ strategic planning for PNC was not present in all forces
- ❑ numerous examples of good practice
- ❑ deficiencies within force PNC training
- ❑ variable standards in management of PNC and Phoenix processes and subsequent data quality.

This Inspection report examines the above areas in considerable detail and makes recommendations under the following headings:

The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC

The ACPO Compliance Strategy governing PNC and Phoenix is intended to provide a strategic view for the Police Service on the developments necessary to maximise performance benefits from information systems, principally PNC, and to ensure data integrity. It provides a structured framework for forces to revisit the points raised in the 1998 PRG report and incorporates the requirement for all forces to comply with the actions within the strategy. This is considered to be an essential ingredient for its success.

In view of the concerns raised in the 1998 PRG report and the requirements on forces resulting from the ACPO Compliance Strategy this Inspection report recommends that all forces produce position statements and provide action plans to implement their recommendations to Her Majesty’s Inspector by 1 February 2001.

Levels of Awareness and Use of Systems

To ensure maximum use is made of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS, it is essential that staff are fully aware of their capabilities. The Inspection found:

- ❑ most forces did not have a program to assess staff levels of awareness of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS
- ❑ staff knowledge of the system's capabilities varied - one force was exceptionally good
- ❑ with a few exceptions most forces were not routinely using key system features
- ❑ forces were not generally complying with the requirement to update systems with relevant data.

Forces are urged to review their reporting practices to ensure that PNC, Phoenix and associated systems are up-to-date, accurate and fully utilised.

Marketing, Strategy and Training

The ACPO Compliance Strategy identifies the importance of staff being properly trained and aware of system capabilities in order to realise the crime reduction benefits of PNC and its applications. It also recommends that forces include the development of PNC and Phoenix in force strategic planning documents. The Inspection found:

- ❑ a number of innovative marketing methods although most activities were not structured
- ❑ force marketing often omitted key systems or individuals
- ❑ none of the forces had integrated PNC within their major planning documents
- ❑ five of the 11 forces had strategic PNC Groups, some of which had chief officer membership
- ❑ none of the forces had an overall strategic plan for the use, development and marketing of PNC
- ❑ the content of some PNC training courses was satisfactory although a number of key application features were either omitted or not allocated sufficient time; one force caused concern by deviating from national standards.

Forces are recommended to integrate all aspects of PNC into appropriate strategic planning documents and establish PNC Steering Groups. They should also ensure that only nationally accredited PNC training staff are used.

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC requires forces to identify the level of resources required to deliver the performance and data quality standards specified within the strategy. The Inspection examined the resources forces used to enter information onto Phoenix and then analysed each force performance in this respect. The Inspection found:



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- ❑ a wide variance in the numbers of staff involved in Phoenix inputting
- ❑ differing working practices prevented an assessment of whether more staff resulted in better performance
- ❑ no significant difference between the performance of centralised and satellite Phoenix inputting departments
- ❑ some forces which used initial 'skeleton record' inputting were not subsequently updating the full Phoenix record.
- ❑ alarming delays in entering Phoenix Source Document, (PSD) onto the system
- ❑ poor quality records on Phoenix with fields omitted, particularly marks, scars and tattoos
- ❑ none of the forces had a policy on the action to be taken on receipt of a PSD containing an error; some forces who permitted telephone registration of initial Phoenix details were not able to later corroborate the Phoenix entry with a corresponding PSD.

Overall the level and nature of errors, omissions and discrepancies found were unacceptable given that these same issues were raised in the 1998 PRG report. This report urges forces to address the shortfalls identified and increase accountability by integrating staff performance within force personal development review processes.

The Way Forward

The inspection found many forces had not assessed their current performance against Phoenix standards so were unable to identify key action areas. This lack of awareness was often compounded by the absence of a nominated senior officer responsible for information systems and supporting management information. In addition, it was found that staff often did not have access to the full complement of system manuals designed to ensure compliance with standards nor were operational officers accountable for their personal performance relating to PNC and Phoenix data quality. In order for forces to make progress relating to the shortfalls identified in their management, marketing and use of PNC and Phoenix, and reach the standards advocated by the ACPO Compliance Strategy forces should:

- ❑ evaluate their own performance against existing Phoenix standards
- ❑ identify a senior officer responsible for information systems
- ❑ put in place robust internal scrutiny systems
- ❑ ensure relevant staff have access to all system and Data Protection manuals
- ❑ include data quality and compliance issues in force performance reviews and inspection programmes
- ❑ include performance statistics on the completion of Phoenix Source Documents (PSDs) in routine force performance information
- ❑ respond positively to formal recommendations and suggestions for improved data quality.

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Part II of this Inspection report concludes that the effective use of PNC, Phoenix and information systems is essential if all forces are to comply with their data quality obligations and maximise opportunities to reduce crime. Many concerns are raised in this report as to the impact and missed opportunities caused by delayed, inaccurate and poor quality data for key crime reduction and investigative systems. Linked to the lack of use and awareness of some PNC features the full potential of its investigative ability is not being realised. Forces are encouraged to raise their levels of commitment by following the recommendations and action check lists within this report and fulfil their obligations to the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC.



General Introduction

This thematic report sets out the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary on 'Police Data Quality – a detailed Inspection into police crime recording and the Police National Computer and Phoenix system which was conducted by Mr Keith Povey QPM.BA (Law), between January and May 2000. He was assisted by colleagues from the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate, from Staffordshire Police, Bedfordshire Police and staff from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

Her Majesty's Inspector would like to thank the chief constables and staff of all 11 forces visited for their help, assistance and time, which made this report possible.

Police Data Quality

Information and data are the 'life-blood' of the Police Service – they underpin the Service's efforts to bring about a long-term sustained reduction in crime. Nationally, the Police Service records and processes vast amounts of data including approximately 15 million incidents and just over 5 million recorded crimes. The Home Office has issued guidance to try to ensure a nationally consistent approach to this complex crime classification process. It is also important to remember that each crime is unique and requires detailed information concerning the offender, the location and the victim to be recorded; it may also form part of a wider pattern of criminal behaviour. In light of this the Police Service has recognised how rapid developments in information technology can assist in a more rigorous and systematic analysis of such large and complex amounts of information.

In response to this requirement the Police Service has developed a sophisticated national intelligence system within the Police National Computer (PNC) called Phoenix. This is a powerful investigative tool which has the potential to greatly enhance the Service's ability to detect and reduce crime. Its strength lies in the fact that it is a national intelligence facility and is available to all forces.

The recently published HM Inspectorate of Constabulary thematic inspection report "*Calling Time On Crime*" describes the potential for community partnerships to make a real impact on crime. All these partnerships are dependent on good quality and accurate crime information to identify and assess the level of local crime problems, determine the most appropriate response and to evaluate the effectiveness of specific initiatives. Accordingly it is vital that the Police Service, as gatekeepers of much of this data on crime, crime trends and criminal activity in the community, effectively manages its data recording systems.

In addition to the need for good quality and accurate data to help reduce crime there are also legal requirements governing the police recording and retention of data (much of which is personal). In order to maintain public confidence the



General Introduction

Police Service must be able to show that it has in place robust auditing and quality control mechanisms. Indeed, the Data Protection Act demands this of forces and sets out their legal requirements in this respect.

Within this Inspection report it can be seen that there are common 'data quality themes' cutting across both crime recording and the Phoenix intelligence system. Both systems:

- ❑ are only as good as the information entered by forces
- ❑ are dependent on all forces adhering to national guidance to ensure consistency, comparability and accuracy
- ❑ are governed by legal and Police Service rules of operation
- ❑ have been subject to previous research and recommendations
- ❑ demand a great deal of police resources to operate.

This report examines crime recording and Phoenix within the context of previous research which highlighted concerns about the general quality of data held by the police. Unfortunately many of those concerns are still relevant today.

Her Majesty's Inspector recognises the vital role that good quality police data has to play in a partnership approach to crime reduction. The purpose of this thematic Inspection is to provide a detailed examination of how forces are operating crime recording and the Phoenix intelligence system and to what extent they have responded to previous guidance and recommendations. It should be noted that certain sections of this report are detailed and technical in content. This has been necessary to identify all the relevant issues and provide a guide for specialists within forces as to where problem areas might lie.

Part I of the report looks at all aspects of the crime recording process from the guidance issued by the Home Office, interpretation of that guidance, the extent to which forces are recording crimes and ends with a discussion of a model of crime recording.

Part II of the report examines the background development of PNC and Phoenix, discusses a recent Association of Chief Police Officers' (ACPO) strategy for Phoenix within the context of a Home Office Police Research Group report "*Phoenix Data Quality*" produced in 1998 and then examines in detail each stage of the Phoenix process.

In each chapter of this Inspection report Her Majesty's Inspector makes key recommendations for the development of crime recording and Phoenix and to assist forces in this process a checklist for action is provided. The many examples of good practice found in the forces visited are also highlighted. In order to assess the response to this report Her Majesty's Inspector will be contacting all forces 12 months after the date of publication for :

General Introduction

- ❑ a position statement in relation to all the recommendations contained within this report
- ❑ an action plan with timescales detailing how any outstanding recommendations are going to be progressed.



Introduction to Crime Recording

The Importance of Police Recorded Crime Figures

Police recorded crime figures are of significant importance to crime reduction efforts because they:

- ❑ inform Government policy
- ❑ identify crime trends
- ❑ help direct police activity
- ❑ underpin crime pattern analysis, intelligence-led policing and problem oriented policing
- ❑ inform target setting and performance measurement and comparison
- ❑ enable the impact of various crime reduction initiatives to be evaluated.

Accordingly, accurate police recorded crime figures are essential, particularly if judgements are to be made about force relative crime performance. This was recognised by the Home Office who stated that police recorded crime figures should:

- ❑ accurately reflect reported crime from the public
- ❑ be comparable between forces
- ❑ be reliable.

Background

Crime recording is an extremely complex process with some 5.1 million offences being recorded each year by the 43 forces in England and Wales. However, despite the importance of police crime figures there is substantial evidence that forces are not recording crime to a common standard. These differences weaken the ability to measure the success of crime reduction initiatives and make the comparison of force performance even more problematic. It is now time for all forces to record crime in an accurate and nationally consistent way, and to be able to demonstrate that this is the case. The issue of nationally consistent crime recording standards is not a new phenomenon and has dogged the Police Service for a number of years. It has been subject of much comment by Her Majesty's Inspector and others in recent years. It has featured consistently in the annual and thematic Inspection reports of Her Majesty's Inspector since 1993. The key points raised since 1993 (see Appendix A) related to the lack of consistency between forces and the need for forces to have 'regular and independent systems of audit'. In addition individual force crime recording practices have also been identified:



Introduction to Crime Recording

1996/97 Performance Review Inspection – Recommendation for a Provincial Force

'Whilst the force has inspectorate and quality assurance units, both tasked to identify areas where performance can be improved, there are gaps in relation to the audit of crime and the examination of incident records.'

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the force establishes regular and independent audits of crime in line with HMIC's Thematic Inspection "A Review of Crime Recording Procedures (1996)."

More recently, the problems surrounding police crime recording were addressed in the Thematic Inspection 'Police Integrity – Securing and Maintaining Public Confidence' (June 1999). The main points being:

"The increasingly aggressive and demonstrable performance culture has emerged as a major factor affecting integrity, not least because for some years there has been an apparent tendency for forces to 'trawl the margins' for detections and generally use every means to portray their performance in a good light."

Perhaps the major area of malpractice connected with the performance culture is crime recording, and, in particular, efforts to achieve a high detection rate. Traditionally, performance indicators have placed considerable emphasis around detection rates, and there have been many examples where officers have used unethical means to 'improve' their figures. There are three main ways that have in the past been used to make the detection rate look better:

- ❑ not recording reports of crime that are unlikely to result in a detection – for example, a stone through a shop window 'blamed' on a passing lorry
- ❑ inaccurate classification of crimes - for example, recording an attempted burglary as damage to the door lock
- ❑ encouraging a convicted criminal to admit crimes which he did not commit – usually a secondary detection through a prison visit'

In (one force), a separate method of recording those 'difficult to detect' crimes, was discovered. This was known as a 'Miscellaneous Book' and anything recorded therein did not show up in the performance figures, thereby giving the appearance the detection rate was higher. Upon examination, clear examples were found of crimes, which should have been recorded in the official way.

Integrity and leadership - all forces have, for several years, operated under an umbrella of an ethical statement. The ethical vision demanded by a chief constable requires a checking mechanism to ensure it is delivered throughout the organisation. Rarely was evidence found to suggest this had happened. As one ACC acknowledged 'putting integrity into a policy document is not enough.' It is a sad fact that all too often fine words are not translated into positive action by service deliverers in the front line; Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view this is the fault of their leaders at all levels. (page 64)

Of particular relevance to this Inspection was Recommendation 2 within the Police Integrity report which said:

'Her Majesty's Inspector recommends all chief officers should ensure there is in place an adequate monitoring process to maintain a corporate approach to ethical crime recording and investigation'.

The Police Service must take a responsible and intelligent view of its crime recording function so that staff at all levels are aware of its importance and role in contributing to sustainable crime reduction. Such clarity of purpose is essential as it has a profound influence on the culture of crime recording within the Police Service.

The rationale underpinning this Inspection is therefore clear. During recent years problems with police crime recording have been identified and recommendations and advice provided. One of the purposes of this Inspection was to assess the extent to which forces were complying with such guidance.

Terms of reference

- To assess comparison between forces' crime performance data by examining how, and to what extent, forces are recording crimes reported to them by the public against the principles set out in the Home Office Counting Rules.
- To assess what guidance or policies forces issue in relation to 'when to record crimes' and to what extent they suggest a '*prima facie*' or 'evidential' model of crime recording.
- To produce guidance to forces on crime recording which complements the Home Office Counting Rules and encourages integrity, transparency and reliability.

Methodology

A wide range of information sources, semi-structured interviews and systems audits were used during the course of the Inspection including:



Introduction to Crime Recording

- ❑ literature review of previous and current reports into crime recording
- ❑ analysis of 11,000 incident logs from 11 forces
- ❑ analysis of force policies and guidance
- ❑ analysis of force crime information
- ❑ widespread consultation with force practitioners, Home Office staff, HMIC staff officers and academics.

² See Appendix B for list of forces visited

Field visits to 11 forces² to audit:

- ❑ at least 40 specified crime reports and their corresponding command and control logs
- ❑ at least 60 further crime reports including burglary, vehicle crime, sexual offences, cheque and credit card fraud, criminal damage to buildings and vehicles, 'no-crimes', shoplifting and dangerous driving
- ❑ the quality of evidence associated with detected crimes
- ❑ non-crime and crime related incidents such as harassment, racial incidents and domestic disputes.

Interviews with:

- ❑ head of crime policy, BCU crime managers and crime desk staff
- ❑ focus groups with operational detectives and patrol officers
- ❑ written crime recording exercise containing 16 different scenarios
- ❑ force inspectorates and statistics officers.

³ In response to the request for such information, prior to visiting the forces, very little was submitted yet the Inspection process itself revealed that some forces had undertaken significant internal audits of their crime recording processes.

Forces were asked to provide any guidance or policies they had issued in relation to crime recording³. In particular the Inspection sought to identify the existence of any force guidance in relation to the interpretation of the Counting Rules or advice as to when officers should record a crime, and any auditing or compliance systems or strategies that were in place.

⁴ See Morgan, Harris, Burrows, (1999), *Review of Police Forces' Crime Recording Practices*

A research study commissioned by the Home Office⁴ examined the different ways in which crimes come to the notice of the police. By dip-sampling telephone calls made to police control rooms they established there was no significant distortion between the information provided by the public and the subsequent information on the police computerised log. On this basis it was decided that police command and control⁵ printouts were reliable for the purpose of assessing whether the information reported amounted to a notifiable offence (crime).

⁵ These are computer logging systems which forces use to enter details of all incidents (crimes and non-crimes) reported to them. These systems are primarily used for the management and dispatch of resources and provide management information including official Home Office incident returns.

Accordingly, each force was asked to provide a printout of 1000 consecutive and complete incident logs from a date taken at random, namely 1 November 1999. Each of the 11,000 logs was analysed and categorised as follows:

- (a) those which were clearly crimes
- (b) those which were clearly not crimes
- (c) those which may have been crimes.

The main aim of the research was to establish the extent to which each force was recording crimes reported to them by the public and aggregate the results into an overall picture of crime recording. The latest Home Office Counting Rules and schedule of notifiable offences (those offences deemed by the Home Office to be crimes) were used to determine which incidents should have been recorded as crimes.

Those crimes, which fell into category (c)⁶ were subject to a panel assessment set up by the research team to decide whether the incident should have been recorded in accordance with the Counting Rules. Once this assessment had been carried out each force was asked to provide evidence of how many of those reported crimes in-groups (a) and (c) above had actually been recorded. The figures were then adjusted to take account of the responses from each force and a recording rate calculated. The recording rate was expressed as a percentage for each force. So, for example, if a force achieved 100% it was recording totally in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules whereas a force with an 80% rate recording was not recording 20% of crimes reported to them.

⁶ These turned out to be a small proportion of all incidents ie approximately 2%.

An exercise to 'adjust' each force's Home Office crime figures to a 100% recording rate was undertaken to establish the effect on relative crime performance. The results supported findings from studies such as the bi-annual British Crime Survey and the Home Office that forces are under-recording crimes reported to them although not to the extent suggested by those studies. It is important to note that calculating a recording rate for each force visited was not an exact science; the rationale was to establish the approximate under-recording rate of forces and to examine the broader consequences on crime trends of future compliance⁷.

⁷ See Chapter 3 paragraph 3.2.3

Report Structure

Given the importance of police recorded crime figures and the previous advice, which has been given to them, the Inspection report is structured around the key themes of:

- ❑ clarity of guidance provided by the Home Office
- ❑ compliance with the guidance by forces
- ❑ identifying good practice within forces
- ❑ the processes and structures forces have in place to record crimes
- ❑ the extent to which forces are recording crimes reported to them
- ❑ evidence or allegation based crime recording.



Introduction to Crime Recording

Within each chapter recommendations are made which, when adopted by all forces, will help to ensure the Police Service achieves nationally consistent standards in the way it records crimes. To further assist a checklist is included at the end of each chapter to encourage all forces to assess their current position and identify any areas that need addressing. The Inspection revealed that there are some forces that have already responded to guidance and advice and have in place good crime recording and auditing processes. Many of these are highlighted in the report as good practice and are commended by Her Majesty's Inspector. However, there are many forces that have not responded and given the amount of previous advice this cannot be allowed to continue. Police recorded crime figures are too important to the national crime reduction effort.

In addition to the position statement, action plan and follow-up visits to forces mentioned in the general introduction to this report Her Majesty's Inspectors will be including crime recording in the 'risk assessment process' used to determine the nature and extent of individual force inspections. This will include detailed specialist crime recording audits where necessary.

1 Home Office Guidance

Home Office Guidance

1.1 The Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime

1.2 Interpretation of the Counting Rules

1.3 Access to the Counting Rules

1.4 Recording Practices and Target Setting

1.5 Timing of Amendments to the Counting Rules

1.6 Conclusion



1 Home Office Guidance

This chapter examines the rules issued by the Home Office relating to the recording of crimes by the police and how forces access such information. It discusses problems with interpretation of the rules and the importance of accurate recording to crime targets.

1.1 The Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime

- 1.1.1 All forces have a legal duty under the Police Act 1996 to provide the Home Office with crime figures. The Home Office has produced a schedule of 'notifiable offences' specifying which offences should be returned as part of this requirement.
- 1.1.2 Comprehensive guidance on which crime to record; how many crimes to record in a given situation; and the rules for classifying a crime as detected, has also been issued to all forces within Home Office 'Counting Rules for Recorded Crime – *Instructions for Police Forces*'. They were substantially revised in April 1998 and most recently amended in November 1999. The instructions set out recording principles in the form of 'general rules'. For example, Rule A states:

'Except for offences dealt with by other agencies (...), any notifiable offence which comes to the attention of the police should be recorded.'

- 1.1.3 It is important to recognise that the Counting Rules in their present format do not, and were never intended to, offer guidance on how forces should record crime or what audit or compliance strategies they should have in place. More importantly, the Counting Rules do not indicate the level of evidence that is required to establish if a crime has been committed. However, these issues are vital to ensure accurate and consistent crime recording and are addressed within this report.
- 1.1.4 The Counting Rules provide guidance and advice to forces and are the rules against which bodies such as District Audit and Her Majesty's Inspector audit crime figures. Forces also have a legal requirement under the Local Government Act to provide the Audit Commission with crime figures as part of the suite of Citizen's Charter performance indicators.
- 1.1.5 Despite the legal requirement for forces to provide crime figures, the Counting Rules governing them only have an advisory status – they lack legal force. Their constitutional status is therefore rather incongruous given the legal requirement for forces to supply crime figures and the subsequent importance attached to them.

Home Office Guidance

¹ This specific issue is being looked at by the Home Office 'Review of Crime Statistics' being conducted at the same time as this Inspection.

1.1.6 The issue of exactly what the police should record as a crime has been subject of much criminological, police and Home Office research over the years. Throughout the Inspection it was found that there was no consensus as to the primary purpose of crime recording¹. Disappointingly, many operational officers saw crime recording as an administrative burden on behalf of the Home Office rather than as vital operational intelligence. An additional important influence is that the performance of each force is to some extent being assessed and compared on the basis of their crime figures - yet they are asked to collect and present the figures by which they will be judged. This creates tension within the system and may account for the reluctance of some forces to move from their position on crime recording. It is important to understand that any change in crime recording practices which affects a force's relative performance in terms of crimes per head of population could have profound political consequences both at a national and local level.

² See Chapter 4

1.1.7 The problem of differing interpretation of the Counting Rules, resulting in inconsistent recording practices across forces, was a major and recurring theme throughout this Inspection. A further problem is that implicit within the Counting Rules is an expectation that the police will use an evidential model of recording crime², yet no guidance is provided on the level of evidence required.

1.1.8 The ambiguity and lack of clarity within the rules is a distinct weakness and unless remedied will continue to undermine the usefulness of recorded crime statistics. The recommendations within this chapter are designed to bring a greater degree of clarity to the Counting Rules, which should then have a statutory basis.

1.2 Interpretation of the Counting Rules

1.2.1 During interviews with staff the Inspection Team were surprised to find, in many forces, some detective inspectors and detective chief inspectors who lacked a good working knowledge of the Home Office Counting Rules. This was of concern because these are the officers who are responsible for authorising recorded crimes to be categorised as, for example, detected or 'no-crimed'. This lack of knowledge of the Counting Rules meant that a number of crime managers applied their own criteria to crime recording which was often in contravention of the Rules. This confirmed the findings of the audit of crime records in each force.

1.2.2 The Inspection Team were pleased to find that most crime desk staff interviewed were aware of, and had a good knowledge of, the contents of the Counting Rules. They also knew when the Rules had last been updated.

Audit of crime reports

1.2.3 In order to establish the accuracy of forces' interpretation of the Home Office Counting Rules, the Inspection Team audited at least 40 recorded crimes from the 1,000 incident logs supplied by each force and other crime categories. The audit revealed many errors which were defined as at least one of the following features on each record:

- ❑ the wrong classification entered
- ❑ the inappropriate 'no-criming' of a record subsequent to it being recorded
- ❑ the failure to record the correct number of crimes.

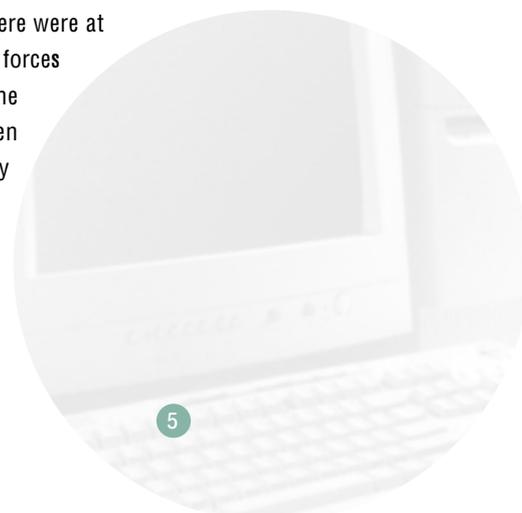
Whilst it is accepted that the sample size used was relatively small compared to the total crimes recorded by each force, Her Majesty's Inspector was concerned to find that the error rate for the 11 forces inspected varied between 15% to 65% of the crime records examined.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Lancashire Constabulary conduct an annual crime audit and produce a detailed, well presented and clear document setting out all the crime recording issues which need to be addressed at BCU level.

West Midlands Police have set up a full-time data quality section which audits approximately 30% of all crimes within certain categories to ensure their accuracy and completeness before they are accepted into the force crime system.

1.2.4 During preparation for the force visits and after completing the analysis of 11,000 incident logs a number of 'types of incidents' were identified as being problematic in terms of recording and classification. This was reinforced by the results from the focus group exercise, comments from interviews with staff and the audit of forces' crime reports. The Inspection Team found that there were at least 11 specific areas within the Home Office Counting Rules which forces found confusing or were subject to widely differing interpretations. The incidents are those which by their nature or complexity are either open to a number of interpretations within the existing guidance or actually lack specific guidance. These areas must be addressed if consistent recording across forces is to be achieved. The specific areas, shown below, are based on the views expressed to the Inspection Team during the visits to forces.



Home Office Guidance

Crime Recording and Classification - Problem Areas Highlighted During the Inspection

Harassment – despite the Counting Rules giving comprehensive guidance in relation to harassment further advice is required to reinforce the requirements for this new piece of legislation. It was found that many forces were not recording the offence when reported to them because of confusion over the requirement for the offender to have harassed a victim on at least two separate occasions before the offence is regarded as complete in law. If a woman, for example, reports to the police that she has been harassed on three separate occasions then this should be recorded as a crime regardless of the fact that this is the first time the incident is reported to the police. The failure of some forces to record and investigate harassment when it is reported to them means that victims are not being provided with the protection the law intended for them.

Malicious phone calls – it was found that the interpretation and recording of telephone offences, particularly when they constitute crimes such as harassment, threats to commit damage or threats to kill, were particularly problematic for forces in terms of knowing the threshold between offences.

Theft of motor vehicle and arson – forces are expected to record two crimes, theft and arson, when a car is reported stolen and then later found destroyed by fire. It is suggested forces should not be required to record the second offence of arson unless it can be proven beyond reasonable doubt that the car was destroyed by a person other than the offender who stole the car. By destroying the car by fire the offender is treating the car as his/her own and therefore completes the offence of theft. Recording an additional offence of arson in such circumstances is misleading and unnecessarily inflates crime figures.

Offenders under the age of criminal responsibility (under 10 years) - the detection of offences committed by those under the age of criminal responsibility is adequately covered by the Counting Rules but the recording of offences is not. Interviews with officers revealed confusion concerning crimes committed by those allegedly under 10 years of age. A crime has a victim regardless of the offender's age and as many are undetected the actual age of the offender cannot be ascertained. Clear advice should be issued that regardless of the age of the offender, either real or perceived, all offences should be recorded by the police as crimes.

Minor criminal damage – this is a particularly problematic area especially where there is no complainant or readily identifiable victim. Good examples are minor damage to a garden fence, graffiti by unknown people or damage to bus shelters or telephone kiosks. A literal interpretation of the current rules that all such incidents coming to their notice should be recorded has little credibility with operational officers. These matters need to be fully debated by the Police Statistics Committee to ensure a standard and operationally credible approach to recording of such offences.

Assaults and public order offences – there was some confusion amongst officers over disorder situations which included assaults. This is compounded by the Counting Rules format perceived as being difficult to navigate. It is suggested that guidance and advice in relation to public order offences and assaults is reviewed and reissued in a format which brings together the different stages and levels of offences relating to public order and assault in an easy to read format - this should include a step by step guide to crime recording issues.

Common assault – similar to the offence of minor damage a literal interpretation of the current rules that all such incidents coming to their notice should be recorded has little credibility with operational officers. A good example is the minor assault which occurs on a Friday night where the victim wants no involvement from the police and refuses to provide details.

Making off without payment from petrol stations (drive-offs) – this involves incidents where a person puts fuel in a car and then leaves without paying. The Inspection found no fewer than 11 different methods of forces responding to such an offence coming to their notice from immediate recording through to non-recording. Many of the variations were connected with local policies concerning garages which were perceived by the local police not to be taking the problem seriously and treating the police as a debt collecting agency. It is suggested that forces are instructed to treat making off without payment, especially from petrol station forecourts, as a crime and in line with the Counting Rules the offence should be recorded when it comes the attention of the police.

Other agencies – evidence was found of differing interpretation of the other agency rule which states that forces need not record offences 'dealt with' by other agencies. Some forces were not recording cheque and credit card offences on the basis that the bank knew about them or criminal damage offences were not being recorded because they had been notified to the local council or bus company. The advice should list the names of the specific agencies included and the term 'dealt with' should be replaced with more specific guidance as to what exactly is intended by this term.

Cheque and credit card fraud – the Counting Rules state that generally the offence recorded should be the offence that an offender would be charged with. In some areas it was stated that Crown Prosecutors asked for offenders to be charged with 'forgery' in relation to many uses of the card therefore only one offence is recorded, whereas other forces recorded a separate crime for each victim. It is suggested that the Counting Rules clarify that when a stolen cheque or credit card is used to obtain goods or services then an offence of deception should be recorded for each victim.

'No-crimes' – see paragraph 1.4.8

Re-classification of crimes - see paragraph 1.4.13

Detected Crime

- 1.2.5 The Home Office Counting Rules specify the circumstances under which the police may regard a crime as detected. This is a complex area following four different forms of action to be taken (see Appendix C for full details):
- i A person has been charged or summonsed for the offence.
 - ii The offender has been cautioned by the police.
 - iii The offence has been taken into consideration by the court³.
 - iv No further action has been taken by the police.
- 1.2.6 The Inspection Team paid particular attention to (Point iv) above because this type of detection does not involve a court prosecution and

³ Offences taken in to consideration by the court (TIC) are additional offences admitted by the offender but with which he or she has not been charged. The offences are taken into consideration by a judge or magistrates during sentencing.

Home Office Guidance

⁴ Sufficient evidence to charge the suspect with crime is dealt with under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The evidence must be such that, if given in court, it is sufficient for a prosecution to succeed. This is more than prima facie or balance of probabilities.

depends on police integrity to ensure that the level of evidence meets the Home Office requirement '*There must be sufficient evidence to charge the suspect with the crime*'. This is a high standard and one which caused a certain amount of frustration amongst officers. For example, with an unco-operative victim it was not always possible to secure the required level of evidence when the identity of the offender was known (this issue is discussed in more depth in Chapter 4).

- 1.2.7 The Inspection Team found that officers interviewed in all forces were generally unclear as to the level of evidence required under (Point iv) above. Evidence was found of one force using the confusion over existing rules to deviate from them thereby undermining their effectiveness. This force had changed the level of evidence required to detect offences contained in the Counting Rules, from '*if given in court would be likely to result in a conviction*' to a lower subjective standard.
- 1.2.8 On a number of occasions senior officers expressed the view that the Counting Rules were either wrong or misguided and that locally developed initiatives offered a solution to the perceived shortcomings. Examples found related to not agreeing with a certain offence category, variations on levels of evidence to detect crime and not being able to reclassify crimes.

Her Majesty's Inspector reminds forces that the Home Office Counting Rules are national guidance covering all forces and should not be amended at a local level to suit local views. He does however accept that the absence of a regular structured group within which these issues can be discussed has not helped in trying to achieve nationally consistent figures.

Recommendation 1

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that steps be taken by the Home Office to bring agreed and negotiated Home Office Counting Rules and guidance onto a more formal legal status binding on all forces.

Police Statistics Committee

- 1.2.9 The most recent major change to the Home Office Counting Rules came into effect on 1 April 1998 and was negotiated by a Police Statistics Committee comprising Home Office representatives, Her Majesty's Inspectorate, and ACPO representation at chief officer and practitioner level. Subsequent amendments covering prison visit detections and interpretation of some of the rules were produced by the Home Office RDS Directorate⁵. For example, advice was issued

⁵ RDS – Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate responsible for receiving, collating and publishing crime figures.

concerning the offence of 'vehicle interference' and the standard of evidence required for police to detect offences under the category 'detected-no proceedings'. However, at the time of this Inspection, the Police Statistics Committee had not met since 11 May 1999.

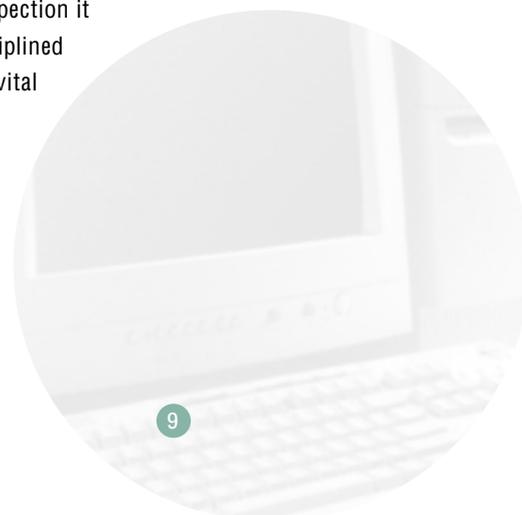
- 1.2.10 The lack of a regular formal structure to resolve disputes and uncertainties over the interpretation of the Counting Rules, such as those identified during this Inspection, and to publish more definitive guidance to forces, is an issue which needs to be addressed as a matter of priority if crime figures are to be comparable between forces.

Recommendation 2

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Home Office establish a regular, formal and properly structured Police Statistics Committee to bring clarity to the Home Office Counting Rules for the recording and detecting of crimes and to publish clear national guidance thereby leading to greater consistency between forces. It should include all relevant stakeholders and include members who have the authority to represent the views of their respective organisations.

1.3 Access to the Counting Rules

- 1.3.1 The Home Office Counting Rules are currently published in hard copy and amendments are sent out periodically with each recipient being responsible for ensuring that all copies are updated.
- 1.3.2 The Inspection Team found that whilst most staff had access to copies of the Home Office Counting Rules some assumed their copies were valid without actually knowing whether they had the latest version. During the Inspection it was found that a number of forces did not have a systematic and disciplined approach to the circulation of the latest Home Office guidance. It is vital that all staff have easy access to the latest guidance.
- 1.3.3 On a day-to-day basis queries are received at the Home Office RDS Directorate from staff in forces seeking clarification or guidance and advice in relation to the rules. The responses given are based upon the expert knowledge of staff within RDS. However, there is no



Home Office Guidance

collective database or structured knowledge base which collates and brings together all the various queries and concerns over the Counting Rules. This means that, with the best intent, conflicting or differing advice can be given to forces for the same query. However, RDS have sought to tackle this problem by requiring forces to complete a Counting Rules inquiry form.

- 1.3.4 Complex Counting Rules used by 43 forces, each containing a number of Basic Command Unit (BCUs), most with their own crime management unit, means it is essential that consistent and up-to-date information is freely available and easily accessible to them all. The internet is now a commonly accepted communication medium so the setting up of a Home Office internet site containing the Counting Rules and associated guidance and advice by offence type seems a sensible solution to getting accurate information to all forces. It would remove the need to print and circulate hard copies and would ensure that all forces and BCUs have access to the very latest advice. In addition, the internet site could provide a help desk facility to be used by forces to post their enquiries and views to RDS, and receive replies.
- 1.3.5 Many people also expressed the view that the current Counting Rules document format was difficult to navigate in terms of finding specific offences. Her Majesty's Inspector agrees with this view: if the group classification of a particular offence is not known it can be very time consuming finding a specific offence. Whilst an on-line version of the rules would enable a quick search facility to be used it is suggested that, in the interim, RDS issue an index listing offences alphabetically which cross references with the Counting Rules.



Recommendation 3

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Home Office RDS Directorate sets up an internet site containing the Counting Rules for the recording and detecting of crime, and guidance, by offence type, as soon as possible. It should include a help desk facility and allow for two-way communication between forces and RDS.

1.4 Recording practices and target setting

- 1.4.1 The importance of consistent recording practices between forces to the setting and evaluation of crime targets cannot be overstated. This section discusses how the problems identified in crime recording and classification have a direct impact on the target setting process (see paragraph 1.2.4).
- 1.4.2 All 43 forces in England and Wales have been set challenging five-year crime reduction targets in relation to burglaries of people's homes and vehicle crime, and local violent crime targets. Each force has produced a detailed plan outlining their expectations in terms of year-on-year reductions to achieve their five-year goals. It is absolutely vital that the basis on which these predictions and subsequent achievements are made is robust and can be relied upon to make judgements concerning force performance.

Violent Crime

- 1.4.3 It was frequently found that where a number of assaults arose from one incident many of the assaults were not recorded. The Counting Rules state that there should be a separate crime recorded for each victim. In other similar scenarios officers had recorded public order offences and not assaults. The Counting Rules state that in such circumstances the assaults should be recorded as the primary offences. It is important to note that, in general, public order offences are easier to prove in court than assaults and as a consequence officers tended to record public order offences rather than assaults particularly for those which were undetected. It may also be in the interests of forces to record public order offences rather than assaults as the former may not be included within violent crime profiles or reduction targets. The effect of this recording practice tends to suppress the level of violent crime recorded by the police.

House Burglaries

- 1.4.4 In relation to the burglary of homes there are several important crime recording issues. The Home Office has a crime category 'burglary dwelling' but there is also a category 'criminal damage to dwelling' - the national target relates to the former offence only. The distinction between an attempted⁶ burglary of someone's house and damage to it is often very fine. For example, a householder returns home to find a rear kitchen window cracked or smashed and does not know how the damage occurred. The offence of burglary requires the ingredient of 'intent' to enter a building as a trespasser to be proved before it can be charged. In the scenario described some officers argued that it was wrong to infer the offence of burglary just from circumstantial evidence whilst others argued that

⁶ for crime recording and counting purposes an 'attempted' offence is recorded as the substantive offence

Home Office Guidance

account should be taken of where the damage occurred. For example, if it was near a window or door lock or in a place where accidental damage was unlikely then an inference could be made that the damage was caused as part of an attempt to gain entry to the house.

1.4.5 This simple example graphically illustrates the difficulties of consistent interpretation and classification of offences by forces. This was confirmed by the fact that the Inspection Team found no consistency in the replies given by patrol officers when given this scenario and examination of crime records revealed, in many forces, 'attempted burglaries' had been classified as 'criminal damage' (but not *vice versa*). Given the pressure on forces to achieve challenging burglary reduction targets it can be seen why it would be in their interests to record 'criminal damage' rather than 'attempted burglary'. Not only does it affect apparent performance against targets but it adversely affects crime pattern analysis. Issuing more comprehensive guidance on the recording of such offences would result in greater consistency between forces.

Vehicle crime

1.4.6 There are four related Home Office classifications.

Home Office vehicle crime categories	National target?
Theft of motor vehicle	Yes
Theft from a motor vehicle	Yes
Vehicle interference ⁷	No
Criminal damage to a vehicle	No

⁷ Recognised as a recordable crime from 1 April 1998

⁸ to reduce vehicle crime by 30% over five years

However, for the purpose of the national vehicle crime reduction target⁸ only theft of motor vehicle and theft from motor vehicle have been included. Again the distinction between crime types and attempts is very fine and there is opportunity for slippage between the categories, dependent on interpretation. In November 1999 the Home Office issued further guidance comprising specific examples of what constituted each of the vehicle crime types. The Inspection found that those officers and members of staff who had read this advice welcomed it as bringing clarity to this area of crime recording. Despite this advice the Inspection Team found numerous examples in many forces of 'theft from motor vehicle' or 'attempts' being recorded as 'vehicle interference' or 'criminal damage to vehicle' and therefore falling outside the Government target measurement group. Another force inspected refused to acknowledge the offence of vehicle interference and used theft from motor vehicle or criminal

damage. Clearly this stance affects this force's vehicle crime figures and any subsequent compliance can have a dramatic effect on their headline crime reduction figures.

- 1.4.7 The Inspection Team found that one force's recorded car crime figures for April 1999 to January 2000 showed a 27% decrease for theft from motor vehicles and a 23% decrease for theft of motor vehicles (both are included in the national target) and showed a 14% increase for criminal damage to vehicles and a 407% increase for vehicle interference (both excluded from the target). Whilst the total numerical sum of all these offences had in fact decreased the exclusion of vehicle interference and damage to vehicles only gave a partial view of the car crime trend. It also demonstrated the impact that crime classification can have on apparent performance against national targets. In this case the force appeared to be achieving a genuine reduction in car crime but due to crime recording classification displacement towards vehicle interference and damage, the reduction was not as great as first appeared.

No crimes

- 1.4.8 Another important area of crime recording practice linked to national targets relates to 'no-crimes'. Clear guidance on this category is contained within the Counting Rules (see Appendix D). It is a facility which allows forces to remove individual recorded crimes from their official returns within strict criteria one of which is when a crime has already been recorded by another force.
- 1.4.8 An examination of the annual statistical return to Her Majesty's Inspector for 1998/99 revealed a huge disparity between all forces in their percentage 'no-crime' rate. The range varied from 0.4% of all crimes in one force to over 7% in others. This means that those forces at the top end of the range were categorising a relatively large proportion (7%) of their total crimes as 'no-crimes' which are then excluded from returns to the Home Office. Given the strict criteria set out in the Counting Rules, such a large variation between forces naturally leads to suspicions about recording practices.
- 1.4.10 Indeed, the Inspection found an inconsistent approach to 'no-crime' between the 11 forces visited which probably accounts for this disparity between forces. In a number there was routine misuse of the 'no-crime' facility across many offence categories resulting in a reduction in the number of crimes and hence undetected crimes recorded by those forces.
- 1.4.11 The Inspection Team also found that forces were 'no-crime' records which had been recorded on the wrong BCU not another force area.



Home Office Guidance

The Home Office should reinforce the current counting rule that 'no-criming' is only allowed when the crime has been recorded on another force area.

- 1.4.12 Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that too many crime records were incorrectly categorised as a 'no-crime' on the basis that there was insufficient evidence to substantiate an offence or that the victim did not wish to pursue the complaint. In some cases it was clear that a decision to 'no-crime' was based on an offender's denial of the incident. The disparity between forces' 'no-crime' rates combined with the evidence of its inappropriate use found in this Inspection is of concern to Her Majesty's Inspector. The implications of this in connection with the pressure on forces to achieve challenging crime targets is obvious. He is also concerned that the Home Office no longer collect recorded 'no-crime' figures as part of the national crime profile. It is an important category and if collected and profiled would ensure transparency and openness concerning the use of this facility.

Recommendation 4

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Home Office include recorded 'no-crimes' in their standard notifiable offence (crime) returns from forces. This information should be routinely profiled as an integral part of the national statistics picture.

Reclassification of crimes

- 1.4.13 The Home Office Counting Rules are explicit regarding reclassification - it should not occur (with one exception relating to homicide). Despite this, the Inspection Team found that in a number of forces it was common practice to reclassify crimes between the time the crime was initially recorded and statistical returns being made to the Home Office - this was either monthly or quarterly. There was evidence in some forces which suggested that reclassification was used by crime management units as a means to actively manage crime figures at the margins.
- 1.4.14 Most of the crime managers interviewed knew that re-classification was not permitted by the Home Office yet some forces still allowed it to occur whilst others strictly enforced the rule. A small number justified its use by arguing that the wording in the Counting Rules was ambiguous. The Inspection Team was concerned to find that in some forces where it did occur there were no monitoring or audit mechanisms in place. This meant that senior management had no idea of the extent of its use.

- 1.4.15 A number of those interviewed stated that crimes needed to be reclassified to the correct offence with a view to improving crime pattern analysis. Whilst Her Majesty's Inspector noted this view the evidence of systematic reclassification in some forces indicated a retrospective review of crimes rather than the correction of genuine classification errors. The current rules are based on the assumption that most crimes are correctly classified when first recorded and should not be subsequently re-classified to ensure data integrity.

Her Majesty's Inspector reminds forces that re-classification of crimes is not permitted under the Counting Rules and all forces should take steps to ensure they are complying with this rule.

1.5 Timing of Amendments to the Counting Rules

- 1.5.1 A number of forces visited stated that receiving amendments in the middle of a financial year¹⁰ caused considerable problems. Changing the way in which certain crimes are classified or detected 'mid-stream' can involve changes to IT systems and amendments to force policies and procedures; it also makes year-on-year crime comparisons difficult. Making an amendment retrospective was felt by those interviewed to be simply unrealistic and unreasonable. Her Majesty's Inspector is sympathetic to this view. It is essential that the Home Office, ACPO and Her Majesty's Inspector consult through the Police Statistics Committee (see Recommendation Two, Page 14) in good time prior to implementing any changes.

¹⁰ 1 April to 31 March

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that any changes or amendments to the Home Office Counting Rules be issued in the January of each year and come into effect on the 1st April of that same year. This will enable forces to properly prepare for any changes and will avoid the problems identified above.

1.6 Conclusion

- 1.6.1 This chapter has identified that interpretation by forces of existing Home Office Counting Rules is inconsistent and has a direct impact on police recorded crime figures especially those relating to national targets. There are many areas within the current guidance which need to be examined by the Police Statistics Committee including:



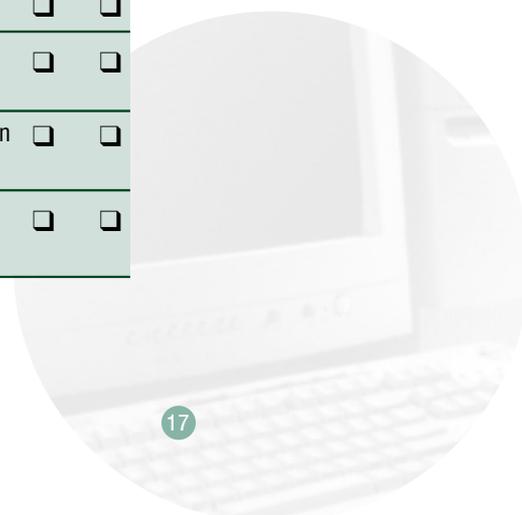
Home Office Guidance

- ❑ clarity of guidance to forces
- ❑ consistent interpretation
- ❑ how forces access guidance
- ❑ the constitutional status of the guidance
- ❑ the potential impact of classification on national crime reduction targets

1.6.2 The Committee should issue properly negotiated and revised guidance for forces in order to achieve the desired outcome of accurate, comparable and reliable police recorded crime figures.

1 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 1

Home Office Guidance	Yes	No
The Counting Rules		
Do all crime managers and crime desk staff have a good working knowledge of the Home Office Counting Rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this verified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In particular are officers that are required to authorise crimes as detected or no crime trained regarding the rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who is responsible within the force for circulating amendments to the Counting Rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system in place for ensuring that all those with copies of the Counting Rules have received and understood the amendments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Force have a system in place which allows all staff access to the latest guidance on the Counting Rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpretation by BCUs		
How does the Force audit the accuracy and quality of crime records, particularly at BCU level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this done on a systematic and structured basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Force validate BCU crime returns in connection with national targets such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> all categories of vehicle crime? <input type="checkbox"/> burglary and damage to dwellings? <input type="checkbox"/> violent crime and public order? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How does the Force ensure consistency between the recording practices of BCUs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Force carry out independent checks on the quality of BCU detections associated with 'no further action taken by the police'?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Force monitor the 'no-criming' rates of BCUs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What audit structures are in place to ensure 'no-crimes' comply with the Counting Rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Counting Rules do not generally allow re-classification. Is Force policy on crime re-classifications clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Force crime IT system allow re-classifications? If so how is compliance with policy checked and monitored?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



2 Force Processes

Force Processes

2.1 Force Policies and Guidance

2.2 The Link Between Crime Recording and BCU Performance

2.3 Leadership

2.4 Training

2.5 Crime Statistics and Management Information



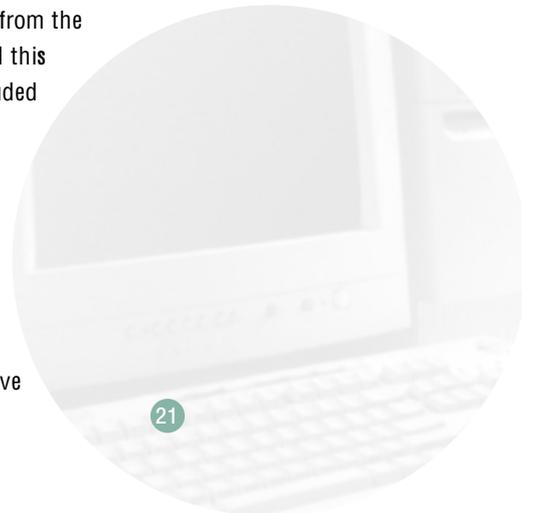
2 Force Processes

This chapter looks at force crime recording policies and guidance and the importance of leadership in ensuring compliance. It identifies the link between effective crime recording and BCU performance and examines how forces profile their crime management information.



2.1 Force Policies and Guidance

- 2.1.1 Whilst the Home Office Counting Rules offer national guidance in relation to crime recording the Inspection Team sought to establish what guidance, if any, forces themselves issued in relation to crime recording. The purpose of this was to identify whether any force guidance supported, assisted or was contrary to or amended the advice given by the Home Office.
- 2.1.2 Prior to the site visits each force was asked to submit any force guidance or policy in relation to crime recording. Of the 11 forces only four responded to this request although the Inspection visits discovered that some internal policy guidance was present in others. As a result of this general lack of force guidance staff interviewed stated they would seek the views of nominated people or departments within force, such as crime management units or centralised crime reception units. As a consequence it was found that crime management units advice and guidance differed between BCUs within the same force whilst centralised crime reception units resulted in more consistent advice being given.
- 2.1.3 Analysis of the policies revealed that most advice provided by forces was in accordance with and complemented the Home Office Counting Rules. There were one or two examples that contradicted advice from the Home Office. In relation to the offence of vehicle interference one force refused to accept the offence existed (see chapter 1 paragraph 1.4.5) and another force gave different advice as to when the offence should be recorded. As discussed in Chapter One because the offence of 'vehicle interference' is excluded from the national vehicle crime reduction target there is a temptation to record this offence rather than 'attempt theft from a motor vehicle' which is included in the target count.
- 2.1.4 The audit of crime records found no evidence of over-recording or that minor crime had been wrongly classified as a serious crime; however the opposite tendency was found. There were particular problems with the classification of car crimes, burglaries and damage, and assaults and public order offences. These are discussed more fully later. Numerous cheque and credit card frauds, were also found to have



Force Processes

¹ See paragraph 3.1.26 on timeliness

not been recorded when they had come to the attention of the police. A number had been delayed until the offence had been detected¹. In a small number of cases, there was evidence that suggested officers were being circumspect in how they worded their crime reports; information recorded on the command and control log had been minimised or left out and the crime report worded to justify a lesser or different classification. This meant that a serious crime downgraded to a more minor crime was easier to file as 'undetected'. A good example related to burglary dwelling. Many forces have in place policies to respond positively to victims of burglary. This may include additional visits from specialist officers, crime prevention packs and repeat victimisation advice. However, some operational officers stated that if in doubt they would record criminal damage rather than an attempt burglary because it involved less effort and was easier to file. Specific examples of the errors found, which are too numerous to mention here, can be found at Appendix E.

2.1.5 **Deviation from national guidance is unacceptable because it:**

- ❑ undermines the integrity of the target setting process
- ❑ gives a false impression of relative crime levels to the public
- ❑ adversely affects the accuracy of crime pattern analysis and intelligence-led policing.

2.1.6 Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to find that one force had responded positively to a previous recommendation in relation to crime recording made as part of a force inspection. This has resulted in the force having better quality recorded crime figures and a relatively high recording rate. He commends this force on the positive and decisive way in which they have responded to the crime recording issues and concerns which gave rise to the recommendation.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

West Midlands Police have issued a clear simple document called 'The Principles of Crime Recording'. It consists of seven easy to understand rules which simplify the Counting Rules and makes clear to all operational officers what is required of them without getting bogged down in the more complex or fine details of the rules. The rules are:

- PRINCIPLE 1 - Any NOTIFIABLE OFFENCE which comes to the attention of the police MUST be recorded
- PRINCIPLE 2 - A crime should be recorded as soon as the decision to record has been made and the record should be made on the crime recording system ie CRIMES. No other systems of recording, sifting or classifying should be operated.
- PRINCIPLE 3 - Recording should not be delayed in order to await further details of the case.

PRINCIPLE 4 - Classification of a recorded crime will be made at the time of recording.

PRINCIPLE 5 - The only recorded crime which can be re-classified to a different category of offence at a later date is homicide (ie murder, manslaughter or infanticide).

PRINCIPLE 6 - A crime once recorded will only be subject to the 'no crime' procedure if the following criteria are satisfied:

- The offence was committed outside the force area
- It has been determined that no offence has been committed
- If the offence constitutes part of an offence already recorded
- If the offence was recorded in error
- A crime can only be 'no crimed' in the same financial year

PRINCIPLE 7 - A 'no crime' can only be authorised by the OCU Crime Manager.

The Inspection Team found a good level of awareness of the principles amongst operational staff with the result that the force has a relatively high recording rate.

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that all forces review all internal guidance relating to crime recording and detections to ensure it is up-to-date and fully accords with the Home Office Counting Rules.

Circulating Information within Forces

- 2.1.7 The Inspection Team found that forces circulated crime recording policy by a variety of means including force-wide intranet systems or distributing paper copies. A number used their BCU crime management units or centralised crime reception units as the centre of expertise to which officers or staff could make enquiries.
- 2.1.8 A number of examples were found where amendments or changes to force policies were notified via Force Orders. However, the Inspection Team found that in a number of forces updates had been circulated via Force Orders but had not been consolidated in one easy reference guide. This made it very difficult for staff to ascertain current force policy.
- 2.1.9 The extent to which guidance and policies relating to crime recording were circulated generally depended on who had the responsibility for classifying crimes. In those forces where the responsibility had been taken away from patrol officers the information was generally kept within a more restricted group within crime management units on a need to know basis. For example, in one force where the BCU crime management sergeants were responsible for checking and



Force Processes

categorising all recorded crimes the information concerning crime policy was kept to this tight group. Forces that allowed patrol officers to classify crimes normally made policy available more widely.

- 2.1.10 The Inspection Team found that where the classification decision was vested in a small group this led to either: greater consistency in terms of accuracy; or inaccuracy if there were local rules which deviated from national guidance. Her Majesty's Inspector will return to the issue of compliance and standards later in this report².

² See section 3.1

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests forces take steps to ensure that consolidated and updated force guidance in relation to crime recording is easily available to all operational staff.

2.2 The Link Between Crime Recording and BCU Performance

- 2.2.1 Her Majesty's Inspector found that the structure of forces had a direct effect on the quality and accuracy of crime recording. To a greater or lesser degree most forces had devolved responsibility for policing and crime performance to BCU level but some had devolved responsibility for crime recording and detection without proper accountability. In at least two forces visited a great deal of responsibility and resources had been devolved to BCU level without a corresponding structure at the centre to ensure that corporate standards were being complied with. This is an area of great concern to Her Majesty's Inspector because other forces visited had devolved similar responsibility yet had robust auditing structures which maintained the integrity of crime recording for the force.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Northumbria Police have a Force Central Input Bureau (CIB) consisting of a crime recording and a crime audit section. The crime audit section checks all crimes and if not recorded in accordance with the Counting Rules they are challenged and corrected. No one outside the section can change a classification. If one of the area crime management units changes a key feature on a crime report then this is automatically electronically referred to the CIB for verification. Additionally the Force Performance Review and Inspectorate Department carries out a comprehensive audit of all crime related incidents on each area.

2.2.2 More and more emphasis is being placed on crime performance at BCU level. Indeed, it is the Government's clear intention to publish comparable performance figures at this level. The more responsibility that forces' devolve to BCUs for recording those figures against which they are to be measured the greater the need for a strong audit and quality assurance function. As highlighted in the introduction to this thematic, previous reports of Her Majesty's Inspectorate contain such recommendations. It can be seen that the difficulty in trying to achieve consistent crime recording between 43 police forces is further complicated in trying to achieve such comparability between several hundred BCUs within those forces.

Compliance Issues

2.2.3 There are many reasons why the recipient of a report of crime (police or support staff) fails to make a proper record. Such an omission may be due to the lack of knowledge, general incompetence, a desire to present crime in a favourable light, or sheer laziness. The organisational response should be tailored accordingly and may include support, advice, training or, in serious cases, discipline.

2.2.4 There were instances where incidents returned by the Inspection Team for verification had been recorded retrospectively (prompted by the Inspection) and not by the officer attending the call. These crimes, identified by a year 2000 crime number (the offences had occurred at the beginning of November 1999) had been recorded subsequent to the letter being received from the Inspection Team. Those forces concerned during the audit process verified this retrospective recording. Whilst the overall number of such crimes retrospectively recorded were small it illustrates the issue of compliance. In none of these cases had the failure to record the crime been identified by the force and brought to the officer's attention.

2.2.5 The Inspection Team asked crime desk staff and those in charge of crime management units (CMUs), usually detective chief inspectors, how they ensured that all crimes that came to the notice of staff on their BCU were recorded. Many acknowledged this as a difficult issue to supervise and monitor because of the problem in tracking the attendance at crime scenes of operational officers and the subsequent submission of a crime record. Most forces lacked the necessary computer systems to link crime-recording systems with incident recording systems to do this and a daily manual check was considered to be unachievable. However whilst improved computer systems may make auditing easier the real issue is around compliance with standards through the whole crime recording process.



Force Processes

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Northumbria Police use heads of departments independent of BCUs to conduct periodic audits of all incident logs within a specified time period. The audit covers the recording of crime incidents and other issues such as disorder, traffic collisions and quality of service matters. The senior officer prepares an audit report which is then given to the relevant BCU commander for the necessary remedial action to be taken. This brings an independent element of audit to crime recording issues and has resulted in the force being a relatively high crime recording force. The auditing of all incident logs within a specified period is the same methodology used by Her Majesty's Inspector and is considered good practice.

Humberside Police have recently introduced an IT system which enables operators in their command and control rooms to tag all crime related incidents as crimes and allocate a crime number. Patrol officers must then complete the crime recording process as the incident has been entered into the crime system and is monitored. This has resulted in strong accountability for patrol officers to record crimes.

- 2.2.6 Whilst the difficulties in tracking incidents to recorded crimes is acknowledged by Her Majesty's Inspector he was concerned that a number of CMU managers were resigned to the fact that some officers do not record all crimes when they should with no consequence for the officer. Many felt that a lack of accountability had permeated through their force relating to crime recording and that this diminution of accountability was a consequence of the devolution of responsibilities from force headquarters to BCUs.
- 2.2.7 Another compliance issue (not covered by the Counting Rules) related to the quality of modus operandi (MO) found on crime records. For each record officers are required to describe the method of operation of the offender so that crime pattern analysis can link offences. Examples include the means used to force a window, the point of approach and any other peculiarities about the commission of that offence, such as wilful damage caused. These details are particularly important for serious offences such as house burglary.
- 2.2.8 The Inspection Team found that the quality of MO entered onto crime records was consistently poor. They lacked basic information about the offence, detail was scant and of little use to crime pattern analysis. For example, the MO given on one crime report for shoplifting stated 'shoplifting'. Many of the forces inspected acknowledged the poor quality of MOs as a continuing problem that was difficult to address.

- 2.2.9 With such poor quality MOs it is difficult to see how forces can develop intelligence-led policing and use problem solving techniques, as details within the MO are the building blocks of such approaches. Consistency in this sort of data will also be vital to the success of the Common Data Model for the future National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS) products. In one force the Inspection Team was told about a serious offence that had been forensically linked to another which had occurred some years before. An earlier check on the force crime system had failed to make the link because the MO for the first offence was lacking in key details.
- 2.2.10 The Inspection process involved the auditing of computerised crime records and not the original paper copy completed by the officer in the case. However, many crime desk staff commented on the variable quality of the crime reports they received from officers. Some were good or adequate whereas others were poor and the modus operandi was inadequate. The quality was not always improved by having a supervisor (sergeant) check the crime report because the existence of a supervisor's signature had no bearing on the quality of the report.

Poor quality MOs particularly for serious offences, are unacceptable. Her Majesty's Inspector urges forces to take steps to ensure that information on crime records is comprehensive and accurate.

Integrity

- 2.2.11 An important element of compliance is the integrity of the overall crime recording process employed by each force. In particular:
- ❑ the levels of authority required to access and amend crime records
 - ❑ the number of staff who have such access.
- 2.2.12 All the forces Inspected had policies in place in relation to the levels of authority required to amend certain types of crime disposal, for example, an inspector's authority to 'no-crime' a record. However, it was often found that the level of authority and the number of staff who had access to the crime system was inconsistent with their policies and many forces simply did not know who or how many staff had access to the system. This resulted in CMU managers not being able to properly monitor force crime recording standards. This problem was further exacerbated by many CMU managers delegating their levels of authority to numerous other staff within their CMUs. However, some forces did have integrity systems in place.



Force Processes

- 2.2.13 Overall, Her Majesty's Inspector was concerned to find that some forces appear to take little or no action against officers who fail to comply with their responsibilities relating to crime recording. There was an exception in one force where officers were clearly of the perception that if they failed to record a crime they would be subject to disciplinary procedures. Whilst Her Majesty's Inspector is not advocating this approach on every occasion he is of the view that officers and staff in all forces must be properly held to account for the accurate recording of crime. He is clear that all supervisors have a responsibility in relation to compliance and accountability for crime recording and this needs to be addressed by all chief officers who are ultimately responsible for their own force's crime figures.

Recommendation 5

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces ensure they have in place an effective monitoring and inspection process to quality assure crime recording practices, particularly at BCU level.

2.3 Leadership

- 2.3.1 In addition to force guidance the Inspection Team sought to establish whether and to what extent chief officers had made clear to staff their commitment to accurate and consistent crime recording. In a number of forces with high recording rates and good quality data the Inspection Team were impressed with the fact that at all levels of the organisation staff were clear that their chief officers were committed to open, honest and ethical recording. This principle was a thread running through all interviews and processes. However, in other forces there was no such explicit statement and chief officer commitment to such recording was either assumed by staff or implicit in other broader statements about professional standards. A clear statement from chief officers would leave members of staff in no doubt that inaccurate and unethical recording is not supported by the force and that it is in direct contravention of standards set down by chief officers.
- 2.3.2 The Inspection Team was pleased to find that in a number of forces internal inspectorate departments had carried out thorough crime audits highlighting many of the issues relating to ethical crime recording raised in this report. Her Majesty's Inspector welcomes such internal scrutiny as it shows a responsible approach to crime recording. However, he was concerned to find that some

internal audit reports, highlighting crime recording issues, had come to the notice of chief officers and appeared not to have been progressed. It is essential that chief officers act upon such reports otherwise inaccurate and unethical crime recording practices can continue unchecked and it also sends the wrong message to those involved.

Her Majesty's Inspector is of the opinion that an unequivocal statement together with clear commitment from chief officers concerning accurate and ethical crime recording are essential prerequisites to good quality figures. This statement has even greater impact if reinforced with effective inspectorate and auditing procedures (see Recommendation 5).

Accountability for Crime Recording

- 2.3.3 The recording and detection of crime involves the creation of tens of thousands of detailed records in each force and it cuts across a number of organisational functions and processes such as call handling, patrol officers, crime management, statistics officers and criminal justice departments. The Inspection Team found that those forces which had an identified senior officer with clear organisational responsibility together with empowerment to enforce crime recording standards tended to have higher recording rates and better quality crime data.
- 2.3.4 Most of the crime policyholders interviewed had overall force responsibility for crime investigation matters but few had direct responsibility for crime recording. This was generally the responsibility of another central unit or had been devolved to BCUs. Many policyholders felt this situation was not consistent with their roles as it reduced their control over the collection of crime data and its subsequent use as intelligence and performance information. A number stated that the devolution of responsibility for crime recording to BCUs had resulted in crime policy holders no longer having the authority to address issues of compliance because it was no longer within their remit. Some also felt that a lack of chief officer involvement in crime recording matters, together with the drive for performance, undermined an ethical crime recording ethos. It was found that those forces without a nominated senior officer often had a fragmented and inconsistent approach, particularly at BCU level.



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- 2.3.5 An individual at senior level in each force should be nominated as being responsible and accountable for the quality of recorded crimes and detections. In effect this person would personally 'sign-off' crime figures as being accurate, ethical and collected in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules, and be responsible for them. Whilst it could be argued that, at present, all chief constables are responsible for their force figures this Inspection has shown that the current system is not as effective as it might be. A named crime recording 'champion' in each force would help to focus accountability and enforce standards. This suggestion would complement a Home Office proposal to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between forces and the Home Office in relation to data standards.

Recommendation 6

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that a senior or chief officer is nominated in each force and takes personal responsibility for force crime recording and detection standards and is held accountable for the integrity and accuracy of those figures.

2.4 Training

- 2.4.1 The absence of training was another important theme which emerged from interviews with operational staff and those working on crime desks despite it being highlighted in the 1996 HMIC Thematic "A Review of Crime Recording Procedures":

'Her Majesty's Inspector was disappointed to find that in none of the forces visited was there a structured training programme for staff at all levels in relation to crime recording. There was evidence of ad-hoc training but in the main staff learn as they go along ie 'on the job'. This is particularly problematic for those forces that use police officers on, for example, crime desks, because these staff move positions relatively frequently.'

- 2.4.2 The Inspection Team was disappointed to find that four years after the 1996 HMIC Thematic training was still ad-hoc in a number of forces and only a few staff interviewed had received comprehensive training on crime recording, telephone crime investigation and the Home Office Counting Rules. Most staff indicated there was still a high incidence of 'on the job' training, an approach which lacks consistency and is dependent on the knowledge of the 'trainer'.

- 2.4.3 In general it was found that support crime reception staff, particularly in centralised crime recording units, had received some training whereas police officers had received none. Support staff were found to have a better level of knowledge of the content and interpretation of the Counting Rules although most said that they had received no updated training subsequent to their initial training.

Telephone Investigations

- 2.4.4 The Inspection Team was also concerned to find that many support and police members of staff were conducting telephone interviews and investigations with little or no training. There were exceptions to this:

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Kent Constabulary has introduced a structured training programme for all centrally based telephone investigators, which not only includes recording of crime but also investigation techniques and public relations.

This contrasted with other forces where staff performed this vital function with no training and neither was there any assessment of the quality of the investigations.

- 2.4.5 The importance of providing structured training for staff conducting telephone investigations cannot be overstated. For example, the Inspection Team found that when staff conducted a telephone interview they often assumed the ethnic origin of a victim or guessed from the surname or accent, in the absence of training and instructions on how to obtain this information. Clearly, this situation is unsatisfactory and needs addressing as many forces use telephone crime recording and investigation for a large number of crimes reported to them.

Her Majesty's Inspector was disappointed to find that this crucial point of first contact with the public had generally been neglected. In addition to the quality of service aspect, many forces may be losing vital intelligence and investigative opportunities through poor telephone investigations.

- 2.4.6 A senior officer in one force suggested that the issue of 'ethical crime recording' should be included in initial training for probationers at regional training schools. This would mean that all officers in the Service were aware of the importance of ethical crime recording and



Force Processes

its relevance to crime reduction and intelligence-led policing. An input tailored to suit probationary officers, covering integrity and the basic principles, would mean that all officers joining the service would be in an informed position as to the content of the Counting Rules.

Her Majesty's Inspector supports the suggestion that ethical crime recording is included in the initial probationary training phase at regional training schools.

- 2.4.7 Overall, Her Majesty's Inspector was disappointed by the lack of structured training provided by forces. He would like to remind all chief constables of the recommendation made in the 1996 Crime Recording Thematic as it appears that in some forces little action has been taken.

'It is recommended that a training needs analysis be undertaken and suitable training be provided to relevant staff. This will include operational officers as well as specialists such as crime desk personnel and statistical staff' (1996).

2.5 Crime Statistics and Management Information

- 2.5.1 The 1994/95 HMCIC Annual Report said:

'At present, the extent to which forces use performance information varies considerably. Not all forces produce information in a format that is readily accessible to force managers although the better forces deploy analysts right down to BCU level to enable local commanders to derive maximum benefit from available data. As performance data become more readily available much more emphasis needs to be placed on training managers at all levels to make best use of the data.' (page 68)

- 2.5.2 Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to find that in all the forces visited crime information was being analysed at BCU level. Many forces have employed crime analysts who produce very detailed specific crime information and he is encouraged at the developments in this field. Good quality, accurate and detailed force and BCU crime management information is essential to maintaining the integrity of crime recording systems. It makes any patterns or trends in relation to criminal activity in the community or local recording procedures transparent and identifiable and builds in an element of accountability for those responsible for crime recording. The Inspection Team examined force crime information packs and found that all produced quite comprehensive statistical packs on a monthly basis. The style and content did vary enormously especially in relation to crime categories and detection types.

- 2.5.3 Despite most forces visited producing comprehensive statistical packages an important theme emerged from the Inspection relating to the accountability of BCUs in terms of their crime management information. In a number of forces discernible and significant crime trends were readily apparent to the Inspection Team yet no explanation for the change could be offered by the forces in question. Several, for example, showed an increase in certain vehicle crime categories with a corresponding decrease in other vehicle-related offences. Others showed substantial differences in certain detection types between BCUs yet could offer no explanation. In one force monthly crime information was available on an intranet system but was not routinely discussed at senior management policy meetings.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Bedfordshire Police produce monthly crime management information in a format which lists all the crime types and profiles the number recorded under each crime type and the different method of detections and number of 'no-crimes' for each. This enables managers to quickly identify any change in crime trends which may indicate a successful initiative on a BCU or a change in recording practice or detection method.

- 2.5.4 In chapter one of this report the difficulties with interpretation of the Home Office Counting Rules were discussed. In particular, it highlighted problems with the classification of burglaries of people's homes, vehicle related crimes, the 'no-criming' facility and how this could affect the crime target setting process. In most forces visited the profile of monthly crime management information was restricted to the main crime categories such as burglaries of people's homes and the two main vehicle crime categories theft of and from motor vehicles. Information concerning the other related categories of damage to homes and damage to vehicles and vehicle interference, were either profiled in a separate crime pack or not at all.

Her Majesty's Inspector is of the opinion that forces should profile related crime categories together so that a complete picture of criminal activity can be analysed and better understood, together with any changes in crime classifications.

Force Processes

Suggested format for profiling vehicle crime management information

Vehicle Crime		Recorded 2000	+/- Recorded	% Change	Detected 2000									
Class	Description				Chg	Sum	Cau	Oth	Juv	Tic	Total dets	No crimes	% No crimes	
37.2	Aggravated vehicle taking													
48	Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle													
130.1	Unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle													
131.1	Aggravated vehicle taking causing damage under £5000													
	Total theft of a motor vehicle													
45	Theft from a motor vehicle													
	Total car crime for national target													
126	Interference with a motor vehicle													
825.90	Tampering with a motor vehicle													
58C	Criminal damage to a vehicle (57/98,58/98)													

- 2.5.5 The effective use of good quality crime management information relates not only to crime recording issues but is essential to:
- ❑ directed police activity
 - ❑ crime pattern analysis
 - ❑ criminal intelligence
 - ❑ partnership crime reduction efforts
 - ❑ meaningful crime reduction targets.

Her Majesty's Inspector urges chief officers to actively analyse, evaluate and, where appropriate, act upon internal crime management information. Such information is a useful tool for monitoring the effectiveness of crime reduction initiatives and monitoring the quality of crime recording particularly at BCU level. It should include relevant crime categories grouped together and all detection and disposal methods including a profile of 'no crimes' for each offence.



2 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 2

Force Processes	Yes	No
Has the force issued its own guidance in relation to recording and detecting crimes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When was it last checked and updated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is force guidance entirely consistent with the Home Office Counting Rules for the recording and detecting of crimes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system of disseminating new policies, guidance and the Counting Rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system to deal with queries regarding the Counting Rules and to ensure consistency in recording approaches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crime Recording Practices at Force and BCU Level		
Can all staff access latest force policy in one consolidated easy reference guide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are BCUs held to account for the quality and accuracy of their crime recording? How?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do BCUs support and practice ethical crime recording?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a strong independent audit and quality assurance function to ensure that BCUs are engaged in ethical crime recording?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force have a structured system to ensure that all crimes reported are recorded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all officers aware of their responsibilities in relation to the recording of crimes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force routinely include quality of crime recording in staff appraisals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do BCUs have in place a system for taking remedial action against officers who consistently fail to properly record crimes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force have a system in place to check the 'modus operandi' on crime reports? How are deficiencies remedied?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force routinely check the integrity of crime recording decisions made at BCU level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership		
Have chief officers made an unequivocal statement and shown clear commitment to ethical crime recording?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If so, how effective has this been? Has it permeated through all levels of the organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force have a nominated chief or senior officer who takes responsibility for the quality and accuracy of the force crime recording processes and figures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2

Crime recording checklist – Chapter 2

Home Office Guidance	Yes	No
Have BCU commanders made clear statements backing up the chief officer's statement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the access levels to the crime system known and appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force conducted any internal reviews on crime recording?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, have the recommendations been progressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force addressed previous HMIC recommendations in relation to crime recording?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training		
Has a training needs analysis been undertaken within the force?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force provide a structured training programme for staff at all levels in relation to the recording and detection of crimes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all appropriate staff trained regarding the Counting Rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force provided structured training for staff conducting telephone interviews and investigations on crime management units (CMUs) or centralised crime reception units?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has specific guidance been given to CMU or centralised crime reception staff in relation to ascertaining the ethnic origin of the victim or complainant, and to identifying race, domestic and homophobic crime?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have CMU or centralised crime reception unit staff been given training in identifying all forensic investigative opportunities when conducting telephone interviews?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force periodically quality assure the service being provided by CMU and centralised crime desk staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crime Management Information		
Does the force produce comprehensive crime management information down to BCU level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does this information detail:		
<input type="checkbox"/> all crime categories?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> offences related to national crime targets grouped together?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> all detection types?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 'no-crimes'?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it available at all levels of the force?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a mechanism for identifying good performance and trends which may be related to recording practices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a robust BCU accountability mechanism in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Force Recording Rates

Force Recording Rates

- 1 Force Incident and Crime Management Systems**
- 2 Force Crime Recording Rates**
- 3 Conclusion**



3 Force Recording Rates

This chapter focuses on the relationship between forces' recorded incidents and recorded crimes. An assessment is made of forces' recording rates and the potential impact of correcting their recording rates on national and individual force crime figures.

3.1 Force Incident and Crime Management Systems

Incidents and Crimes

- 3.1.1 An incident - whilst there is no nationally accepted definition of an 'incident' the term means any call for police service - included in this category will be crimes and non-crimes eg traffic collisions or suspicious activity. Most incidents are recorded by forces on their command and control systems, each incident message being given a unique reference number. It is important to note that not every call for service will have an incident number because a force may receive a number of calls about one incident. As discussed later the relationship between the number of incidents and the number of recorded crimes is very complex.
- 3.1.2 A crime - the Home Office has produced a schedule of 'notifiable offences' which constitutes all offences which should be recorded by the police as crimes and notified to the Home Office. Although crimes may come to the notice of the police by other means, eg found by officers on the street or by letter etc, the majority are reported by the public and recorded on command and control systems. In effect most crimes are a sub-set of all incidents recorded by a force.
- 3.1.3 The Inspection Team analysed a total of 11,000 incident logs (1000 per force visited) and identified those incidents which appeared, from the evidence given on the logs, to be recordable crimes. It was found that forces used their command and control logs for different purposes. In addition to a resource management and allocation system some forces recorded information such as staff sickness and messages on their logs whilst in others crime related calls were passed through to crime desks and the information recorded elsewhere. Accordingly, the relationship between the number of incident logs and crimes is complex and depends on the process used in each force.

Force Recording Rates

Incident and Crime Information Recorded by Forces

- 3.1.4 During the Inspection it was found that each force had a unique information logging system which included various permutations of the following:
- ❑ an incident log was created for virtually every call, crime and non-crime, that came into the force
 - ❑ a report of a crime (not requiring police attendance) went to a crime desk, a crime report was created but no incident log
 - ❑ a report from the public which did not amount to a crime, but was crime related, was put onto a non-crime system to capture the intelligence but no incident log was created
 - ❑ a call to a crime desk which, in the opinion of the crime desk staff, did not amount to a recordable crime had no incident log or other record kept
 - ❑ when a crime was reported to an officer or station desk clerk no incident log was created (many station counters kept a manual 'occurrence book' or similar)
 - ❑ when a crime was reported to an officer or station desk clerk an incident log was created
 - ❑ incident logs were used by some forces to record miscellaneous matters such as staff sickness, routine security operations and messages left for officers
 - ❑ forces that used a help desk facility could pass a caller through to a telephone help line.
- 3.1.5 The Inspection Team also found that the quality of incident logs varied enormously. Some were clear and well laid out and contained a full account of the incident with the result whilst others contained scant details and were closed before the final result was known. The amount of detail contained on each log was related to the function of the logs in each respective force and the skills and knowledge of the particular operator. In a number of forces visited the log was used for the early identification of a crime and a crime number had to be allocated to close the log.
- 3.1.6 All forces used an incident classification system using a 'final code' obtained from a list provided by the Home Office. Once the incident had been dealt with it was closed by the controller with the final code which most accurately reflected the circumstances, albeit that the initial information received often bore little relationship to the live nature of the incident. These final codes were categorised into a number of broader generic incident types - one of which was 'crime'.
- 3.1.7 In addition the inspection team found that the 'final code' classification was often very misleading because there was no consistent link between incidents

given a crime related 'final code' as described above and recorded crimes on the crime system. In other words it could not be assumed because an incident had a crime 'final code' it would be found on the forces' crime system.

The Inspection Team found incidents:

- ❑ closed as a 'crime incident' – they were crimes yet had no recorded crime numbers
- ❑ had a 'crime incident' tag but were not crimes
- ❑ closed as 'suspicious incident' which were clearly crimes of which some had crime numbers and some did not.

From the majority of forces visited the Inspection Team concluded that little reliance could be placed on the veracity of incident coding systems to determine crime rates.

- 3.1.8 In several forces evidence was found that the general accuracy in terms of the coding of incidents was poor. This made it very difficult for forces, particularly at BCU level, to audit call logs and ensure compliance in terms of recording reported crime. It was acknowledged by the Inspection Team that some forces had to undertake a huge amount of labour intensive work to provide crime numbers linked to incidents included in this study. There are also implications about the value of some of the new Best Value Indicators which are based on incident statistics¹.
- 3.1.9 It was clear from this exercise that this was the first time some of the forces had undertaken such a piece of research. One force, with a low recording rate, claimed that some of the incidents for which no crime number was provided may well have been recorded as a crime but they simply could not be found on the system. Whilst the poor IT link may have provided the basis for this assertion it was regarded more as speculative reasoning which could not be quantified². For the purpose of this research each force's crime recording rate was calculated on the basis of actual crime numbers provided.
- 3.1.10 Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to note that a few forces visited had made a connection between their command and control and crime systems and he regards this as good practice.

¹ The main one is Best Value Indicator BVP1130 concerning the incidence of disorder.

² Near the completion of this report the force concerned contacted HMIC with the results of a second audit of the same incident logs. They reported that more crime numbers had been found. HMIC has obtained a copy of this report but the findings have not been independently verified.

Force Recording Rates

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

In West Midlands Police when an incident is created on the command and control system (called MDIS) and is closed with a final incident code 'crime' the system automatically requires a crime reference number before the incident can be closed.

3.1.11 One of the biggest barriers to the development of such a link in the other forces was the IT required and obvious cost implications. The lack of an intelligent link between the two systems is, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Inspector, a major obstacle to effective crime recording in forces because the two are intrinsically linked. Many forces were aware of the inadequacies of their systems but were frustrated by problems stated as a lack of funding or the delay in being able to acquire the NSPIS³ crime systems. Some forces appeared to have no specific migration plans and target dates relating to the acquisition of new IT systems so meantime for robust internal auditing processes are essential.

³ NSPIS - National Strategy for Police Information Systems

Her Majesty's Inspector encourages forces to ensure that any future IT developments include a link to ensure correlation between command and control and crime systems.

Ratio of Crimes to all Incidents on Force Command and Control Systems

3.1.12 Table 1 shows the range of the ratio of 'crime incident to recorded crimes' in each force visited.

Table 1		
Force	Crimes as percentage of all incidents logs	Rank* – recorded crimes per head of population
Force 1	17%	11
Force 2	22%	2
Force 3	23%	4
Force 4	23%	10
Force 5	24%	8
Force 6	25%	5
Force 7	26%	7
Force 8	28%	6
Force 9	30%	9
Force 10	37%	3
Force 11	39%	1

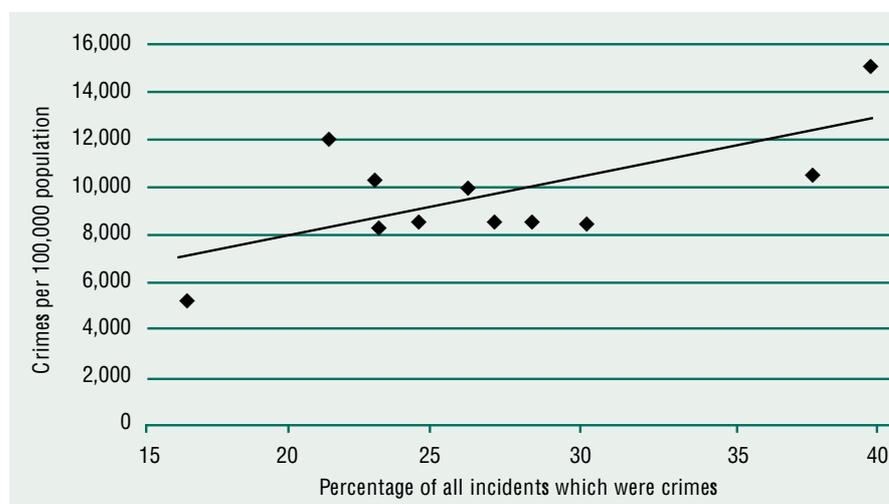
*It is important to note that the crime ranking shown is based on a comparison between the 11 forces inspected only.

- 3.1.13 From Table 1 it can be seen that the highest proportion of crime incidents was in the Force 11 at 39% with Force 1 recording the lowest at 17%. The average ratio of crimes to incidents for the eleven forces inspected was 28% or 280 crimes per thousand incidents.
- 3.1.14 The 1998/99 Home Office figures show Force 11 as having the highest recorded crime rate per head of population in the country and Table 1 shows they also had the highest ratio of crimes per 1000 incidents. It could be expected that a relatively high crime rate would be accompanied by a high ratio of crimes per 1000 incident logs. Similarly, Force 1 had the lowest crime rate in the country and the lowest ratio of crimes per to incident logs.
- 3.1.15 Whilst there appeared to be a relationship between incident logs and crime rates for those forces having the highest and lowest crime rates there was no consistent pattern for the remaining forces (this was confirmed by the statistical analysis). For example, Force 2 had a relatively high crime rate yet a low ratio of crimes per 1000 incidents and Force 9 had a relatively low crime rate but a high ratio of crimes per 1000 incidents.

Statistical Analysis of the Relationship Between Crimes per 1000 Incidents and Force Crime Rates.

- 3.1.16 A statistical analysis was undertaken to examine the relationship between the ratio of crimes on the incident logging system and forces' official crime rate per head of population to see if incident logging systems are correlated with forces' crime rates (and hence criminal activity in the community).

Figure 1: Relationship Between Crime Incidents and Crimes



Force Recording Rates

The results of the statistical analysis are shown in Chart 1 which reveals a correlation co-efficient of 0.67 (not significant) between the 1998/99 Home Office crime figures and the incident logs from November 1999. Further analysis using adjusted crime figures after applying the estimated under-recording rate for each force was carried out (not shown) and revealed a weaker correlation of 0.57.

- 3.1.17 Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that the Inspection demonstrates that considerable caution needs to be exercised when attempting to compare forces' incident and crime rates because they use their command and control logging systems for different resource and management functions. Forces which use their incident logging systems for additional management or intelligence functions will tend to show a relatively low ratio of crimes per incident compared to those who use their systems mainly for dispatching resources.

Her Majesty's Inspector concludes that there was no significant relationship between incident logs and crime rates for the forces used in this study. However he was encouraged to find that most forces visited recognised the benefits of linking incidents to recorded crimes.

Crime Numbers

- 3.1.18 The 11 forces inspected used a variety of crime numbering systems. Some used numbers allocated on a BCU basis, and others used a separate numbering system for each BCU. A separate number system is more complex in terms of processing and in some forces with poor IT made searching on a force-wide basis extremely problematical. In one force it was not possible for BCU commanders to obtain force crime information for comparison purposes because the crime system was not networked force-wide. Other forces allocated a force crime number with an additional alpha-numeric tag so that the relevant BCU could be identified. This is simpler to manage from a force perspective but makes it less easy to identify individual BCU's year-to-date crime figure from the headline force figure.
- 3.1.19 At least two forces allowed other specialist departments to create their own unique crime numbers and then aggregate all the various numbers to give a force return. Examples included force cheque squads and vehicle squads. In most forces, crime numbers were generated electronically by using the next consecutive BCU/specialist squad/force crime number.

- 3.1.20 In one force the hard copy crime reports had pre-printed crime numbers on the front which enabled a crime number to be identified immediately at the scene of a crime, and given to the complainant. The computer system was then able to assimilate both hard copy and computer generated numbers to give a force crime total. In another force the crime number was individualised to each officer. The number was generated by a combination of the date, officer number and officer station code identifier thus enabling a crime number to be given immediately to the victim. This also enabled monitoring of crime performance at individual officer level to be easily achieved.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Avon and Somerset Constabulary are applying for the international quality standard award ISO 9000 for its crime recording process. This involves mapping out the crime recording process and identifying key stages and areas of weakness. If the force is successful in its application, its crime recording process will be subject to external independent validation.

- 3.1.21 However, in a number of forces what appeared to be a crime number was not necessarily so. All crime related incidents were allocated a 'crime number' but so were other incidents 'of force interest' such as a first case of harassment or racial incidents not amounting to a crime. Detailed analysis revealed that a proportion had been wrongly labelled as not notifiable to the Home Office. This meant that a victim or other outside agency issued with a 'crime number' may actually have been issued with a unique internal reference number which was not in fact being treated as a crime and being notified to the Home Office. The Inspection Team also found a number of serious crimes which had been excluded from that force's official Home Office crime returns. Her Majesty's Inspector was concerned at this and other similar systems.
- 3.1.22 The different crime numbering systems found had been developed to suit the needs of each force and their data collection systems. Accordingly no one numbering system was necessarily better than another. However the complexity of some of the numbering systems mentioned above, particularly those which use the same system for non-crime categories, reinforce the need for rigorous structured internal audit systems to ensure accuracy, integrity and accountability.



Force Recording Rates

Non-Crime Categories

- 3.1.23 Forces often make use of a number of 'other categories' within their crime systems to capture incidents that do not amount to notifiable offences but need to be recorded for intelligence and information purposes. This is good practice. At Kent Constabulary in addition to recorded crimes the non-crime categories included:
- ❑ accosting
 - ❑ artifice
 - ❑ harassment (first case)
 - ❑ being carried
 - ❑ non-crime racial.
- 3.1.24 The same force had a category 'refused crime'. This was used to record incidents phoned through by members of the public who mistakenly thought the incident they were reporting was a recordable crime. The staff taking the call would still record the details but classify it as a 'refused crime'. This practice is commended by Her Majesty's Inspector because it makes the process transparent, auditable and aids intelligence-led policing.
- 3.1.25 Overall the Inspection Team was generally satisfied with the non-crime categories used in most forces. However it was found that a number of crimes were being inappropriately recorded in these non-crime categories. Her Majesty's Inspector was extremely concerned to find in one force offences such as robbery, serious assault and serious sexual offences amongst others being 'hidden' in a non-crime category called 'of force interest'. Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that whilst such information is essential to aid intelligence and problem solving their use must be closely monitored to ensure that notifiable crimes are not recorded inappropriately in non-crime categories.



Recommendation 7

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces ensure that any information systems, either electronic or paper based, which are used to store information or intelligence for crime related incidents are routinely and robustly audited to ensure that all crimes reported are recorded and notified to the Home Office.

Timeliness in Recording Crimes

- 3.1.26 In most forces the allocation of a crime number to a crime report was relatively quick ie the same or the following day. The rationale being that victims required a number as soon as possible as part of a high quality of service and that the sooner a crime was entered on the system the better the use could be made of the intelligence for directed patrol and problem solving. However, evidence from uniformed patrol officers revealed that few saw a direct link between timely crime reports and intelligence-led policing. There were one or two notable exceptions. Those officers who had a 'beat manager' role identified the need for quick, accurate crime information to enable them to manage their areas properly. One force which was very focused on intelligence driven policing ensured that crimes were entered onto the system immediately and then sent out electronically to the BCU. This enabled a 'real time' response to crimes, even relatively minor crimes such as the theft of a bicycle, which maximised the investigative potential.

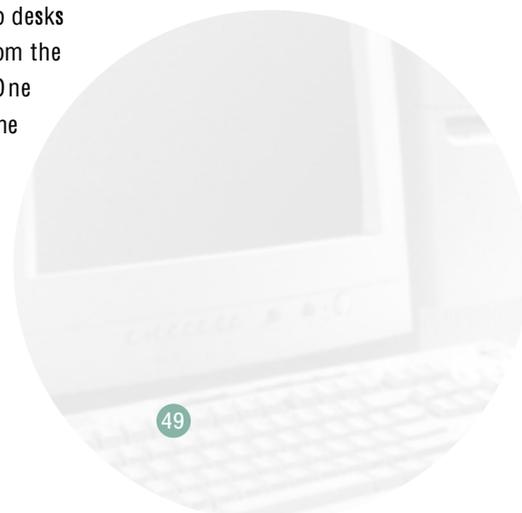
GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Kent Constabulary employs a system of call handling which ensures that when a member of the public phones through to the crime-recording bureau their call is answered regardless of how busy the bureau is. Details of the caller are obtained and as soon as possible an operator calls the person back.

Lancashire Constabulary have a published 0800 freephone telephone number for members of the public to report crimes

Sussex Police have an 0800 telephone number which officers can dial when at the scene of a domestic burglary to contact the force call centre and obtain a crime reference number for the victim.

- 3.1.27 In one force a crime number was allocated to an incident as soon as the control room operator taking a call identified that a crime may have been committed. Other forces who employed dedicated crime reception centres or help desks usually allocated numbers at the time the crime details were taken from the public or police officers as part of a telephone investigation process. One force sent hard copy crime reports from outlying stations to BCU crime desks by internal post and this often meant a delay of at least two to three days before the crime was entered on the force system and a crime number allocated. The audit of dates on crimes revealed a worrying number which had taken in excess of a week to get onto the system. In such circumstances it would be possible for an officer



Force Recording Rates

to undertake a week of a particular shift and not be aware of crimes committed on their area in that, or the previous, week. Her Majesty's Inspector viewed these delays as unacceptable in terms of quality of service to the public and in support of intelligence-led policing for operational officers.

Reasons for Delays in Recording Crimes

- 3.1.28 There were a number of other reasons given for delays in recording crimes. Some forces were clearly hampered by their crime recording IT infrastructure but other delays could not be attributed to 'the system'. The reason for most human delays could not be accounted for and no explanation could be given as to why a particular officer had taken so long to record the crime on the system. In one force it was discovered that allegations of serious sexual assault, and in other forces credit card fraud, were tending to be crimed only when the offences had been detected. Her Majesty's Inspector questions the ethical nature of such practices as it leaves forces open to the suspicion that it is only being crimed because it has been detected. This practice is contrary to the Counting Rules as crimes should be recorded at "*the earliest that the police force's crime recording system allows*"⁴ and it also provides misleading information in relation to crime trends and crime pattern analysis.

⁴ Rule A, Home Office Counting Rules For Recorded Crime

Her Majesty's Inspector is of the opinion that delaying the recording of crimes until they are detected constitutes unethical and inaccurate recording and is therefore a totally unacceptable practice.

Centralised or BCU Based Crime Recording Units?

- 3.1.29 The Inspection Team noted that four of the forces visited had centralised force crime reception units. It is important to distinguish between this function and that of a crime management unit. A crime reception unit receives the initial crime complaint from either the public or a police officer, conducts an initial investigation, usually over the telephone, and creates a crime record. This record is then transferred electronically to the BCU crime management unit for them to further investigate and manage.
- 3.1.30 Significantly, it was found that the highest recording forces (see paragraph 3.1.31) all employed centralised force crime recording units or data validation units, using mainly specialist support staff. The benefits of such units are:
- independence from the performance pressures at BCU level
 - economies of scale for staff and equipment which may lead to an improvement in the hours that such a facility can be offered to the public
 - greater ease in providing training, and implementing force and Home Office policies

- ❑ less movement of staff in these posts leading to greater specialist knowledge and more consistent advice provided to operational staff
- ❑ often a higher level of keyboard and telephone investigation skills.

3.1.31 The Inspection Team found some resistance to the concept of centralised crime reception units by BCU crime managers and crime desk staff. These staff felt that this function was best carried out at BCU level where it could be supervised by them and better integrated with the wider crime management function.

Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that there are many merits in establishing a centralised civilian crime reception facility for the reasons given above. This inspection has shown that the level of knowledge of the Counting Rules of such staff was higher, crime recording rates were higher and the general level of data quality was better. He urges all forces to review their crime reception processes and consider the merits of introducing centralised civilian crime reception units.

3.2 Force Crime Recording Rates

3.2.1 The 'recording rate' for each force Inspected is defined as the number of crimes recorded as a percentage of the number of crimes reported. It takes account of other factors, such as no crimes, and lack of compliance with Counting Rules. The estimated recording rate reflected each force's model of recording ie a tendency towards '*prima facie*' or 'evidential', (see chapter 4) and the crime recording process they employed. Table 2 shows the calculated recording rate for each force Inspected.

Table 2

Force	Rank for crime per head of population ⁵	1998/99 Notifiable crimes per 100,000 population	Estimated recording rate
Force 11	1	14,772	80%
Force 2	2	11,959	82%
Force 10	3	10,579	800%
Force 3	4	10,153	74%
Force 6	5	9,967	55%
Force 8	6	8,886	74%
Force 7	7	8,767	80%
Force 5	8	8,461	78%
Force 9	9	8,288	72%
Force 4	10	8,259	82%
Force 1	11	5,145	82%

⁵ Based on 1998/99 Home Office recorded crime statistics, Issue 18/99.

Force Recording Rates

3.2.2 From Table 2 it can be seen that the highest recording forces (Forces 1, 2 and 4) were recording 82% of crimes reported to them. The lowest recording force was Force 6 with a rate of only 55%. The average recording rate across the 11 forces was 76%.

3.2.3 Whilst there is a wide disparity between the highest and lowest recording rates it is important to note that the majority of forces (10 of the 11) were recording between 70% to 80% of offences reported to them. The MHB study⁶ reported a substantial difference in recording rates of between 33% and 55% for the five forces they examined. (These are similar to the under recording rates found by previous British Crime Surveys.)⁷ Their highest recording rate of 55% corresponds to the lowest found by the Her Majesty's Inspector. So, whilst both studies indicate under-recording the MHB study reported much higher rates than this study. The two research teams have examined their respective findings to explain the differences in results.

3.2.4 The MHB team examined all cases with opening incident codes alleging that any form of notifiable crime had occurred: in other words, calls by victims, witnesses or others alleging crime and accepted by operators as allegations of crime. This approach mirrored that applied by Farrington and Dowds' research in the 1980s. This study examined the whole incident log – in other words both the allegation and the outcome – against the standards set out in the Counting Rules to establish if a notifiable offence had in fact occurred. The baseline cases for the MHB study can be characterised as all '*prima facie*' allegations of crime and so, taking such a broad definition of crime, a major shortfall was expected. In contrast, the team for this study only selected cases where they were satisfied that a crime had occurred and it was expected that all those selected should have been recorded.

3.2.5 The MHB report went on to distinguish between 'definite' and 'possible' allegations:

'What distinguishes those allegations that are accorded a crime label from those that do not? Farrington and Dowds suggested the distinction between 'definite' and 'possible' allegations was critical: finding that between 75% and 83% of the former were recorded as crimes, as opposed to between 2% and 9% of the latter.' (page 31)

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ See Morgan Harris and Burrows, (1999), *Review of police forces' crime recording practices*

An examination of how many of the 'definite' allegations were recorded as crimes in the MHB report revealed that the proportion rose to 71%, a figure very close to the overall figure for this study of 76%. The range of recording rates was 63% to 82% in the MHB study and 55% to 82% in this study.

Her Majesty's Inspector concludes from this and the MHB study that forces are under-recording crimes reported to them. He suggests that the reported difference in recording rates from the two studies can be explained by their different aims and methods. In particular, this study is based on an evidential model of recording whereas the MHB study and previous British Crime Surveys used a 'prima facie' (allegation) based model.

Implications of Force Recording Rates on National Crime Figures.

3.2.6 An assessment was made of the potential impact on each force's crime figures and their relative position, within this study group, if they were all to record 100% of offences reported to them. The results are predicated on the assumption that all categories of crime are under-recorded to the same extent as the recording rate is generalised across all offence categories ie all crime, for each force. Further research would be necessary to determine differences in recording rates by offence type. The British Crime Survey, for example, has indicated that property crime such as burglary of people's homes or theft of motor vehicles is more likely to be reported than offences against the person such as assaults. The aim of this exercise was to assess the overall impact on forces' crime figures.

Her Majesty's Inspector concludes that if all forces were to record all crimes reported to them in line with the current Home Office Counting Rules and based on an evidential model of recording,⁸ nationally total crime would increase. He has not been able to determine the exact effect on national crime figures because, whilst the average under-reporting rate across the 11 forces Inspected was approximately 24%, each force's proportionate effect on the national figure depends on its size and rate of under-recording. Accordingly, it would be unwise to generalise across all 43 forces on the basis of this study of 11 forces. However, Her Majesty's Inspector is clear that the published national crime rate would increase significantly.

⁸ see chapter four

Individual Force Crime Rates

3.2.7 The impact on each of the 11 force's crime rates has been calculated and the results are shown at Table 3.

Force Recording Rates

Table 3

Force	Current rank – crimes per head of population	1998/99 notifiable crime per 100,000 population	Re-adjusted figures to 100% compliance	Change in crimes per 100,000 population	New rank	Change in rank position
Force 11	1	14,772	18,465	+ 3,693	1	–
Force 2	2	11,959	14,584	+ 2,625	2	–1
Force 10	3	10,579	13,224	+ 2,645	3	–2
Force 3	4	10,153	13,720	+ 3,567	4	–
Force 6	5	9,967	18,122	+ 8,155	5	+ 3
Force 8	6	8,886	12,008	+ 3,122	6	–
Force 7	7	8,767	10,959	+ 2,192	7	–1
Force 5	8	8,461	10,847	+ 2,386	8	–1
Force 9	9	8,288	11,511	+ 3,223	9	+ 2
Force 4	10	8,259	10,071	+ 1,812	10	–
Force 1	11	5,145	6,274	+ 1,129	11	–

3.2.8 From Table 3 it can be seen that there would be a considerable impact on individual force's recorded crime rate if they were to record all crime reported to them. It would also have an impact on their relative position in terms of crime performance. Looking at the 11 forces it can be seen that six (over half) change position – two forces (6 and 9) move up the table and four (2, 5, 7 and 10) move down. Not only does it affect their relative position but it also affects the differential between forces. Force 6 moves three places from fifth to second and the differential between the first and second place is considerably reduced. This sort of change in position and differential is of fundamental importance to the new Best Value framework which assesses forces against Best Value targets and their relative quartile league position. There is also every likelihood that such change will impact upon force efficiency plan targets and consequently their share of Government challenge funding.⁹

⁹ Additional Funding available to Forces from central Government for Crime Reduction Initiatives

3.3 Conclusion

- 3.3.1 The evidence in this and preceding chapters has clearly shown:
- ❑ the major differences in procedures and protocols across forces
 - ❑ the complexity and difficulties faced by police forces in recording incidents and crimes
 - ❑ the need for all forces to have in place accurate and ethical crime recording systems under-pinned by robust auditing systems.

3.3.2 It is clear to Her Majesty's Inspector that unless forces take prompt remedial action as set out in this report there will continue to be an adverse impact and undermining of:

- ❑ performance measurement
- ❑ crime league tables
- ❑ quartile league position under the Best Value regime
- ❑ equitable allocation of Government challenge funding
- ❑ the target setting process
- ❑ crime and disorder partnership information sharing protocols
- ❑ intelligence-led policing
- ❑ problem oriented policing.

3.3.3 All these areas depend on good quality and accurate crime figures – they are key to achieving a sustained and long term reduction in crime. However, the evidence in this chapter demonstrates the potential shorter term impact of the police improving their crime recording systems on national and local recorded crime levels.



3 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 3

Force Recording Rates	Yes	No
Incident Logging Systems		
Does the force have a routine quality control mechanism for the content of incident logs, particularly consistent use of 'final codes'?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force issued clear guidance to control-room staff in relation to the coding and classification of incidents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a link between the force incident logging system and the crime recording system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If not is this included within any future IT developments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force routinely audit crime related incidents to ensure they have been recorded on the crime system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are incident logs cross-referenced with the crime system and vice-versa?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crime Recording Process		
Has the force recently reviewed its crime recording process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force use non-crime categories on its crime or other IT system? If not, how does the force capture crime related information not held on the force crime system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is information held on these systems routinely incorporated within crime and disorder pattern analysis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a robust auditing structure in place to ensure that crimes are not inappropriately recorded within these 'non-crime' categories?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are crimes entered on the crime system quickly to maximise operational effectiveness? If there are delays have steps been taken to remedy the situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there auditing structures in place, particularly at BCU level, to ensure that all crimes reported are recorded and not delayed until they are detected?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force considered the merits of introducing a centralised crime reception unit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 The Police Approach to Crime Recording - *Prima Facie* or Evidential?

The Police Approach to Crime Recording – ‘*Prima Facie* or Evidential?’

4.1 The ‘*Prima Facie*’ versus ‘Evidential’ Model of Crime Recording

4.2 The Police View of Crime Recording

4.3 The Results of the Written Scenario Exercises

4.4 A ‘Detection Based’ Model of Crime Recording

4.5 Conclusion



4 The Police Approach to Crime Recording - *Prima Facie* or Evidential?

This chapter examines the '*prima facie*' versus 'evidential' model of recording and then discusses this model within the context of the Inspection findings. The reasons given by officers as to whether or not to record a crime are examined and a 'detection based' model of recording is described. Finally, the importance of police officers' perceptions of victims of crime is discussed.



4.1 A '*Prima Facie*' versus 'Evidential' Model of Crime Recording

4.1.1 The previous chapters have looked at Home Office guidance for the police recording of crime and the problem of inconsistent interpretation of that guidance by forces. Crucial to understanding why these inconsistencies occur is the need to establish how operational officers and crime desk staff approach crime recording as they are the gatekeepers to the recording process. The Home Office commissioned research mentioned earlier in this report¹ proposed a model of crime recording which was used to structure the findings in this report.

¹ Morgan, Harris, Burrows (1999)
"Review of police forces' crime recording practices"

The '*Prima Facie*' versus 'Evidential' Model of Crime Recording

4.1.2 The 1999 Home Office commissioned study reviewed crime recording practices in five forces and suggested the following model to describe the police's approach to crime recording.

Diagram 1: The '*prima facie*' versus 'evidential' model



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4.1.3 It is important to understand that the model describes two distinct approaches and as found during the Inspection they are not mutually exclusive. The recording of crimes involves a complex interaction of the unique circumstances surrounding each crime incident, a force's organisational approach and style, and the recording officer's views. All of these come into play for each crime incident and as discussed later contribute to the attrition rate, ie the gap between reported and recorded crime. One of the main problems is that the Home Office Counting Rules for the recording of crime discussed in chapter one are unclear as to whether the police should be applying a '*prima facie*' or 'evidential' approach to the rule that they should record any notifiable offence which comes to their notice.

4.2 The Police View of Crime Recording

4.2.1 To better understand how officers and staff approached crime recording and whether they tended to use a '*prima facie*' or evidential approach, the Inspection Team interviewed BCU crime managers and crime desk staff, and held focus groups, including a written exercise, with over 80 operational uniformed and detective constables.

4.2.2 Most policy makers stated that they generally supported the '*prima facie*' approach to recording on the basis that the recording of crimes at the point of allegation, aided crime intelligence and problem solving techniques. However, there were some who stated that crime recording should be evidential because a '*prima facie*' model implicitly suggests that the police do not need to validate allegations of crime. For example, a number stated that a crime allegation should not be recorded, or should be categorised as a 'no-crime', if the case was not supported by the victim. The issue of the apparent unwillingness of some victims to support a police investigation is an important theme discussed later.

4.2.3 Some crime managers stated that they felt under pressure to perform and this pressure, whether real or perceived, affected the way in which they instructed their staff to record crimes. They were of the view that '*prima facie*' crime recording was only attainable when performance figures were favourable. They were also keen to ensure that any change to their approach to recording was simultaneously implemented across all BCUs to avoid any unfavourable effect on their relative performance. Support at chief officer level was felt to be particularly important.

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- 4.2.4 Operational officers acknowledged that approaches to crime recording varied between BCUs within their force. As discussed later in this chapter, most staff spoken to used an evidential approach to crime recording with some influenced by their supervisors'.
- 4.2.5 The evidential model of recording - what level of evidence is required by officers to record an allegation as a crime?
- 4.2.6 Whilst the Counting Rules state that the police should record a notifiable offence (crime) when it comes to their attention, the Inspection found that officers applied different evidential tests. A good example was a case of minor damage to property where the cause was not known. Was it accidental or deliberate? Most officers said they would not record unless they had evidence that the damage occurred by a criminal act. Courts require a standard of evidence 'beyond reasonable doubt' to convict a person. It was found that, with the exception of serious crimes, most police officers applied a similar rigorous standard of evidence before recording crime allegations.
- 4.2.7 The same issue arose with: '*Is it lost or stolen?*' In line with the previous paragraph, most officers said that in the absence of evidence that a criminal offence had taken place they would record missing wallets and mobile phones as lost not stolen. A few crime desk staff said they would be guided by the views of the person reporting and that if they insisted it had been stolen they would record it as a crime. In summary, the Inspection Team found that, with the exception of serious crimes, most officers applied an evidential test of 'beyond reasonable doubt' before recording crimes.

The evidential model of recording - what level of evidence is required by officers to categorise a recorded crime as a 'no-crime' or to detect a crime?

- 4.2.8 If officers generally required a level of evidence 'beyond reasonable doubt' to record a crime, the Inspection Team were keen to establish what level of evidence officers required to classify a recorded crime as a 'no-crime'. The Home Office Counting Rules state:

"a recorded offence should be classified as a 'no-crime' if (...) (B) where following the report of an alleged offence which has subsequently been recorded, it has been determined that no offence has been committed."



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Her Majesty's Inspector is of the opinion that this facility should only be used when it is absolutely clear, backed up by evidence, that no offence has occurred, for example, in circumstances where a complaint has been made maliciously. However, the Inspection Team found that staff in all forces stated they were prepared to 'no-crime' a crime record on the basis that it probably didn't happen or there was some dispute or doubt as to whether that offence occurred.

- 4.2.9 As shown in chapter one of this report, one of the types of detection allowed within the Home Office Counting Rules is called 'Detected - No Proceedings' (DNP). The rationale behind this type of detection is that the police often attend and investigate crimes where the identity of the offender is clear, backed up by evidence yet they are not able to take proceedings against the offender or it would not be in the public interest to proceed. There are many reasons why this might be the case. Examples include a common assault where the victim does not want the offender prosecuted because it would be inflammatory to their relationship, or a minor assault outside a pub where the victim and offender are known to each other or a shoplifter where the shop does not want any proceedings taken due to the offender's age. However, the Counting Rules demand a level of evidence which is such that if given in court would be likely to result in a conviction, ie beyond reasonable doubt.
- 4.2.10 It can be seen that officers may be attracted to DNPs in that a detection can be claimed for an offence without the need to prepare a lengthy and time consuming court file or in some cases arrest an offender. Officers interviewed stated that they often applied for crimes to be DNP on the basis that an individual had probably committed an offence. Their main frustration was that they felt that the level of evidence required within the Counting Rules was too stringent because in practical terms it was often not possible to secure the necessary evidence without arresting and proceeding with the offender. This led to a situation where the police were expected to record a crime yet they could not claim it as detected despite knowing who the offender was. Some officers stated that they were left with the dilemma of:
- ❑ trying to claim the crime as detected without sufficient evidence or
 - ❑ not recording the crime because it could not be detected or
 - ❑ recording the crime and leaving it as undetected or
 - ❑ going against the wishes of the victim and dealing with the offender.

Conclusions

4.2.11 Her Majesty's Inspector found that in general, and with the exception of serious crimes, officers required a level of evidence tending towards beyond reasonable doubt before they were prepared to record a crime allegation yet once recorded they were prepared to accept a balance of probability to either 'no-crime' or detect an offence under DNP. The effect of this approach:

- ❑ reduces recorded crime levels
- ❑ increases 'no-crimes', thereby further reducing the level of recorded crime
- ❑ increases detection rates.

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that the Police Statistics Committee issue guidance in relation to the evidence required in relation to 'no-crimes' and review the level of evidence required for 'Detected - No Proceedings' when the victim does not wish to support the police in any further proceedings.

4.3 Results of Written Scenario Exercise

4.3.1 A written exercise was designed to get officers to be explicit about their approach to crime recording. It involved officers examining 16 different crime scenarios², based on the analysis of the 11,000 incident logs submitted by forces, and recording their decision as to whether they would record a crime or otherwise, ie did they tend to use a '*prima facie*' or 'evidential' approach to recording? The exercise was designed such that all the scenarios given should have been recorded as crimes based on the current Home Office Counting Rules. Overall, it was found that³:

²See Appendix for full list of the scenarios given

- ❑ officers immediately recorded just over half (54%) of the scenarios as crimes
- ❑ for the remaining 46% of scenarios, officers either would not record as a crime or wished to defer recording to gather further information. In the absence of any further information they would not have recorded the incident as a crime.

³See Appendix G for table of results

4.3.2 This exercise indicates that officers were not prepared to record all allegations of crime at face value ie the '*prima facie*' model. They applied an evidential test to the circumstances and then decided whether to record. The officers gave reasons for their decisions which are shown in Chart 2 below.



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Chart 2: Reasons given by officers for recording crimes



4.3.3 It can be seen from Chart 2 that the two most frequent answers given for those crime scenarios recorded (54% of the total) were 'evidence of offence' and 'crime allegation with supporting evidence'. These were given in response to cases where there was tangible evidence that a crime had occurred, such as a broken panel of glass in a door, video coverage of an alleged fight or visible injury to a person.

4.3.4 In 17% of the reasons given for recording a crime, officers accepted the information at face value, ie the '*prima facie*' approach. They would tend to record crime allegations at face value unless there was evidence that the offence did not occur. However, there were other important factors which influenced the decision to record. A number of officers stated they would record some incidents as crimes, on the basis of an allegation only and with no supporting evidence, based on the seriousness of the allegation. This featured heavily in the rape case scenario where the only information given was that an offence had been alleged. A number of officers stated it was a case of 'covering your back' when it came to the more serious offences. A few recognised the need to record crimes on the basis that they might form part of a pattern of offending or they added to criminal intelligence. Others stated they needed to record the incident as a crime in order to facilitate further enquiries and investigations.

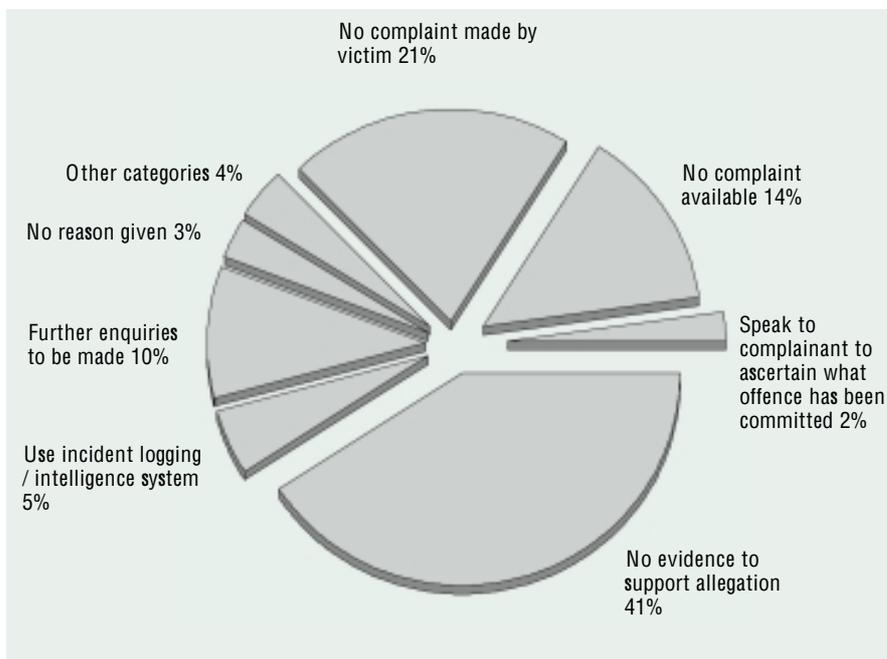
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- 4.3.5 In relation to the domestic violence scenario the Inspection Team were pleased to find that the majority of officers recorded it as a crime. A small number stated they would record it, regardless of the presence of evidence, specifically because it was force domestic violence policy and positive action was required.
- 4.3.6 In assault scenarios where the offender could be identified, a number of officers indicated they would record on the basis that the offence could be detected. The Inspection Team was concerned that some officers stated they would not record the crime at the point of allegation but wait until the offence was detected. Evidence of this was found during the audit of crime reports and is discussed later.

Why Don't Officers Record Crimes?

- 4.3.7 Chart 3 below shows the reasons given by officers for not recording crimes.

Chart 3: Reasons given by officers for not recording crimes



- 4.3.8 From Chart 3 it can be seen that the main reason (41%) for officers not recording a crime allegation is that there is 'no evidence to support allegation'. They were unwilling to record incidents as crimes without carrying out further enquiries to verify the facts. For example, where damage had occurred officers suggested many

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possible reasons to support accidental damage, such as tiles from a roof, children playing football, stones from passing vehicles and even birds flying into windows. The evidence here clearly suggests that many officers use an evidential model of recording.

- 4.3.9 Officers were also reluctant to record any offence where the victim could not be interviewed. Many stated that an offence could not be recorded without a victim's details and that this was a requirement of their crime system. In scenarios where the victim was not known or unavailable or did not wish to cooperate many officers pointed out that if a crime was recorded they would not be able to detect it. Other officers suggested that the volume of crime such as assaults at weekends prevented them from recording the offence and often the victim did not expect the police to take any action. However, officers were unanimous that if an offender was seen to commit an offence it would be recorded, without any victim's details, if it could be detected.

4.4 A 'Detection Based' Model of Crime Recording

- 4.4.1 A common theme which emerged from interviews in all forces, particularly with patrol officers, was their assessment of the likely outcome of a crime enquiry. Was it worth investing effort in recording it? Officers stated that when they were on a busy shift they were least likely to record crimes which could not be further investigated and hence detected. This approach permeated one force at all levels from senior to patrol officer. What was the point in merely carrying out an administrative function of recording a crime which could not be investigated or, more importantly, detected?
- 4.4.2 Officers in another force said they would record as many crimes as possible from one incident when the offences could be detected but would record fewer offences if it could not be detected. Some officers stated that the decision as to whether to record was directly related to personal performance indicators regarding crime detections. They also had to take into account the wishes of their crime managers as they would not be happy with an undetected crime on the books. This also affected the category of crime recorded. For example, an attempt burglary might be recorded as a criminal damage to appease the crime manager despite recognition by the patrol officer that inaccurate recording affected crime pattern analysis.
- 4.4.3 Another key factor given was the perceived prosecuting criteria employed by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Officers said that where a victim was

unwilling to support the allegation the CPS was unlikely to take the matter any further thereby stifling positive intervention by the police, particularly in domestic violence matters. As a result of this perceived inaction by the CPS they felt their role had become little more than an administrative function with little support from the rest of the criminal justice system.

Victim Based or Victim Led Crime Recording.

- 4.4.4 Another key factor for officers, linked to the preceding paragraph, was the attitude of the victim. With the exception of what officers regarded as serious or special offences, such as rape, indecent assault or those for which there were specific force policies, such as domestic violence, they said they would be reluctant to record offences when the victim did not wish to make a statement of complaint. Two main categories of victim were identified.
- 4.4.5 Firstly, there are victims who reported, or were persuaded by officers to report, crimes for 'information only'. The officers then justify the non-recording of the crime by saying the victim does not wish to report the crime 'officially'. This practice was said by officers interviewed to be widespread, however, the Counting Rules do not include any reference to: 'subject to the victim wanting to report it officially'. Also, if a victim goes to the trouble of reporting a crime to the police they have a right to expect their complaint to be taken seriously. Victims may not understand that their crime is not being formally recorded or they may not have the confidence to challenge the police officer. This practice by patrol officers puts pressure back onto the victims of crime and disguises true crime rates.
- 4.4.6 The second category of victim includes two types who do not wish to support a police investigation – the unco-operative victim and the reluctant victim. Some officers were reluctant to record crimes involving victims who did not wish to co-operate or who refused to provide certain details. A good example is an unco-operative young male who has been out drinking and been involved in a fight. This causes a dilemma for officers because a crime has come to their notice so it should be recorded. Many officers said the recording of such offences was a waste of time and a purely administrative function, especially as there was little chance of detecting the crime due to a lack of evidence.
- 4.4.7 The reluctant victim relates to those who because of their personal circumstances did not wish to involve the police. Unfortunately an all too common example is the female victim of domestic violence. Despite some forces having positive action strategies for dealing with



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domestic crimes the Inspection found that some officers stated they were still reluctant to crime offences where the victim declined to support a prosecution. This tendency to 'not crime' had been reinforced by the revised Counting Rules in April 1999, which required more stringent evidence before such an assault can be 'Detected – No Proceedings' (DNP). The standard of evidence required had changed from 'guilt of the offender is clear' to 'sufficient admissible evidence to charge'. The latter is a level of evidence, which is such that if given in court would be likely to result in a conviction.

- 4.4.8 It was found that officers sometimes allowed their judgement of a person's status in society to influence whether or not to record a crime. Drug addicts, for example, that failed to re-contact the police to allow their crime to be further investigated were seen as a drain on resources and a waste of time. One force had adopted a policy of 'no-criming' allegations made by certain victims if they did not re-contact the police within a specified time. Others were more willing to record a crime relating to a cracked window in a private dwelling than from a victim in a council house who 'just needed a crime number to get the damage fixed'.

4.5 Conclusion

- 4.5.1 Her Majesty's Inspector concludes that evidence from this Inspection suggests that operational officers use not only the 'evidential' model described earlier; they take other factors into account and go beyond just 'challenging and validating ' whether a crime has occurred.

Additional factors considered by forces included:

- can the victim be contacted?
- is the victim co-operative?
- the perceived expectations of the victim
- can the offence be detected?
- the volume or prevalence of particular crimes
- how busy is the officer?
- personal performance indicators
- views of crime managers
- is the Crown Prosecution Service likely to prosecute?
- the officer's perception of the victim.

- 4.5.2 Her Majesty's Inspector is of the opinion that the problems underlying many of the discrepancies in recording rates can be distilled to two main issues.

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- ❑ Firstly, the difficulty with the Home Office Counting Rules in defining exactly what is meant by 'any notifiable offence which comes to the attention of the police ...'. This is the essence of the '*prima facie*' versus the 'evidential' debate. If it is intended that the police should adopt a '*prima facie*' approach then the wording within the Counting Rules should be amended to state that 'any allegation of a notifiable offence which comes to the attention of the police should be recorded by them'. If the intention is for the police to adopt an 'evidential' approach then additional guidance is required to clarify the level and nature of evidence required. For example, is the word of a third party sufficient or what if the victim refuses to co-operate?
- ❑ The second issue relates to the police culture of crime recording and the views of officers. This Inspection has found that the recording of crime goes beyond a simple 'evidential model' but is linked to factors such as the likelihood or ability within the Counting Rules of detecting the offence and the police officer's perception of the victim. The police culture of crime recording, including the adherence to guidance and compliance with evidential rules, can only be addressed by forces themselves. This will require leadership and more commitment by forces to put in place adequate crime recording and robust auditing and accountability mechanisms.

4.5.3 In essence the key question to be debated is whether the police should adopt an allegation based crime recording system. This is the '*prima facie*' model where any allegation of crime is recorded as a crime without scrutiny. The benefits of this are that the police would capture all crime allegation information on their crime systems resulting in a more comprehensive picture of criminal activity in the community and better data for crime pattern analysis and intelligence-led policing. Although, it is accepted that a '*prima facie*' model may result in a distortion of criminal activity because it would include anecdotal reports of crimes.

4.5.4 However this would overcome the problem faced by many forces of not having their crime and incident systems linked resulting in a loss of valuable information from analysis. '*Prima facie*' recording would also close the gap between police recorded crime figures and those obtained by the annual British Crime Survey (BCS).

4.5.5 Another benefit of '*prima facie*' recording is that it would overcome all the problems of the interpretation of the Counting Rules in relation to when to record a crime and all the issues raised in this chapter concerning the police 'detection based' model of recording.



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- 4.5.6 However, is such an unfettered approach to crime recording a realistic proposal for the Police Service? It was found that the Home Office commissioned research study which used a '*prima facie*' based methodology estimated that on this basis forces were under-recording between 45% and 67% of allegations reported to them. It is doubted that such a massive increase in recorded crime figures would be politically acceptable nor would it give a reassuring message to the public that sustained crime reduction is achievable.
- 4.5.7 Another problem with '*prima facie*' based recording is that the veracity between recorded crimes cannot easily be distinguished, particularly from a crime league table perspective. Crime allegations include many genuine crimes but also include those which are not crimes in law, the facts as given have not been substantiated or are fraudulent. There is also the issue of a crime allegation which is investigated and subsequently found to be false. In such circumstances should it remain as a crime allegation? If not then an evidential test is being applied.
- 4.5.8 Further difficulties with '*prima facie*' based recording include the additional resources required by forces to manage such a huge increase in crime based records. This Inspection has demonstrated that the police do apply an evidential model of recording and, notwithstanding the issue of compliance with existing guidance which certainly must be addressed, this enables the police to focus their valuable resources on substantiated crimes. It is worth recalling that at present the police already deal with just over 5 million crime recorded crimes each year. Many forces would resist a '*prima facie*' model of recording on the basis that it would be an overwhelming administrative burden and that this model of assessing crime levels is already used by the BCS.
- 4.5.9 Another issue relates to the assessment of forces' success in solving crime ie their detection rate. During the course of this Inspection a continuing theme was that the police could not, by definition, detect many crimes they are required to record because of the rules governing their detection, eg when the victim refuses to co-operate. A '*prima facie*' model of recording would greatly exacerbate this situation because an even greater proportion of allegations would simply not be 'detectable'.

The Way Forward?

- 4.5.10 Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that the issue over the model of crime recording to be adopted by the Police Service needs to be widely and properly debated and then resolved to bring about nationally consistent and reliable police recorded crime figures. He is aware that the Home Office is conducting

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research into the merits of incident based recording systems from which recorded crimes would in effect be a sub-set. In principle he supports this idea and believes many forces would also give it their support. The linking of incidents to crimes is recognised as good practice in this report and many forces aspire to have this facility.

- 4.5.11 Her Majesty's Inspector concludes that there would be merit in forces recording all crime allegations for criminal intelligence and crime and disorder partnership purposes but, for the reasons given above, not as recorded crimes. Crime allegations could be recorded on existing command and control or other systems. Indeed he congratulates those forces who have already made good progress towards this.

Her Majesty's Inspector is of a view that greater clarity must be given to forces concerning the Counting Rules for recording crime. They in turn must respond by putting into practice the advice concerning compliance and integrity given in this report. Whether an "evidential" or "*prima facie*" model for the recording of crime (as notifiable to the Home Office) is to be adopted by the Police Service is a fundamental issue which needs to be negotiated and agreed by the Police Statistics Committee.

Recommendation 8

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Police Statistics Committee considers the issues raised in this chapter and decides on the model of recording to be adopted by the Police Service. This should be agreed by all stakeholders and accompanied by comprehensive, unambiguous and clear advice to all forces to ensure a nationally consistent approach to crime recording.



Introduction to Phoenix and the 1998 PRG Recommendations

Introduction

The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to sustained crime reduction by making it a Public Service Aim and including it within Ministerial Priorities. In partnership with the Audit Commission and other key organisations, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has undertaken a thematic inspection 'Calling Time on Crime' which identifies and evaluates how forces and local authorities are working together in partnership to reduce crime and disorder.

If substantial crime reduction is to be achieved by the police and its partners it is essential that all available crime reduction tools are utilised effectively. Police forces store a variety of details on offences and offenders investigated, prosecuted or cautioned for offences. Some of this data is stored on and can be searched by national police computers and only if it is accurate, timely and complete can it provide the police with a powerful crime reduction tool.

A report produced by the former Police Research Group (now Police and Reducing Crime Unit) in 1998, "Phoenix Data Quality" identified shortfalls in the quality of some police data stored on national computer systems. In October 1999, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) produced a (PNC) to address these concerns and to promote the use of certain national computer systems to reduce, investigate and detect crime.

One of the 'Key Actions' in the Compliance Strategy was to invite Her Majesty's Inspector to – 'Utilise inspections to advise forces of the links between force performance and use of police information systems'. This inspection has been undertaken as a response to that invitation and to enable Her Majesty's Inspector to gain an assessment of the present position of some forces against previous research and some of the content of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC.

This report identifies good practice, major concerns and areas for improvement in those forces inspected. It concludes with a series of recommendations to enhance the quality and use made of some police data to reduce crime. Whilst this report is intended for a wide audience, some technical areas will be examined in detail to enable specific action to be taken by practitioners and operators of the systems. A fold out glossary of terms is located at the rear of this report as a reference point for readers.

The original PNC mainframe could process 2 million instructions per second and took up the space of an indoor football pitch. It can now process 317 million instructions per second and is the size of a wardrobe



Introduction to Phoenix and the 1998 PRG Recommendations

Background – The Police National Computer

The Service recognised the need for a National Database to assist in its crime investigation and reduction efforts as far back as 1974. With the crime trend continuing upwards and the increasing mobility of offenders, an easily accessible national records system to verify people and vehicle details was required. This basic role was to be undertaken by the PNC.

PNC initially began with a simple stolen vehicle database but followed almost annually with developments including PNC broadcast, fingerprints, vehicle owners and criminal names. By the late 1970s a vehicle descriptive search facility was made available for major incidents. This allowed vehicle and owner details to be retrieved without the need for any part of a vehicle's registration number. Forces though, did not have direct access to this facility; it required a superintendent's authority and often took several days to process the enquiry.

By 1980, the facilities to identify Wanted and Missing Persons and Disqualified Drivers had been introduced and PNC was well established within the Service primarily as a national record keeping system. This perception as a record keeping system has to some extent remained with PNC throughout its development, and is a theme, which is discussed later in this report. The Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO), established in 1996, and others involved in PNC's management, have sought to establish its true and legitimate identity as a powerful crime reduction and investigative tool.

¹ now Comparative Case Analysis (CCA)

By 1985, PNC had developed Crime Pattern Case Analysis (CPCA)¹ as a consequence of the Lawrence Byford report into the Yorkshire Ripper murders, and also criminal conviction information. Whilst CPCA extended the retrieval of information to compare serious offences of similar characteristics, PNC's other retrieval powers still only covered Name, Age, Sex, Colour, Height (the NASCH factors) in relation to individuals and the restricted vehicle descriptive search facility. Its research powers were still somewhat limited.

In 1991, PNC's capabilities were enhanced by the Stolen Property Search facility. This was modified three years later to include marine craft and firearms. In addition, a Transaction Log facility was introduced which added the ability to search on certain PNC transactions previously conducted anywhere in the country, and was accessible directly by forces. This useful facility not only enhanced the security of PNC by identifying inappropriate interrogation of the system, it could also be used to track the movements and whereabouts of vehicles and people of interest to the Police Service. It therefore had considerable value for criminal intelligence purposes.

PNC presently stores details of 46 million vehicles and 6 million names. 88,000 items of property are recorded on the Property Search application

The Introduction of Phoenix and SCAS

The most significant shift in the development of PNC, has taken place since 1995 when Phoenix was introduced. It extended information recorded about individuals to include modus operandi (MO)², personal habits, offence history and personal descriptive details, amongst others. Although not all the information was readily searchable directly by forces the advent of Phoenix marked a significant step in PNC's development. It developed from being principally a record keeping facility, to jointly as a source of intelligence and an aid to criminal investigation. This coincided nationally, with the development outside of PNC of the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) at the National Crime Faculty³ (NCF) to assist in the investigation of murder and rape offences.

² an individual offender's particular method of operating

³ a co-ordinating centre based at the Police Staff College in Bramshill, Hampshire.

In 1997, PNC's crime reduction and investigative potential was further enhanced by the introduction of direct access by forces to the Vehicle On-line Descriptive Search (VODS) facility. This development allowed the searching of vehicle information by forces themselves using any descriptive detail, even narrowed down by postcode area.

In 1997 the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) facility was developed, and in 1998, the full power of Phoenix began to bear fruit with the introduction of the Query Using Extended Search Technique (QUEST) facility. This extended the search capabilities on Phoenix information beyond any previous applications. Although Phoenix is an intelligence and investigative tool in its own right, it relies on the correct record being selected, principally from a person's name. QUEST however, unlocks the potential to access a person's Phoenix record from a variety of personal and descriptive details, making it an even more powerful aid to crime investigation and reduction.

The Scottish Criminal Records Offices speculative search facility (the equivalent of QUEST) has shown that when it was introduced in 1987, it was possible to improve detection rates for violent offences by three percent, and by one percent for other less confrontational crimes. This was achieved simply by using the system's potential and no other additional resources.

Despite these developments, PNC is not standing still. Further modifications to VODS, for example, should soon allow the tracing of a vehicle to a single address. PNC has come some way in its bid to shed its image of record keeping, but its journey is by no means complete. Given the power and potential of this crime-fighting tool, it is relevant to cover two important aspects that influence its impact. Firstly, in this chapter, the current situation in which it operates and in the remaining chapters of the report, issues surrounding its use.



Introduction to Phoenix and the 1998 PRG Recommendations

Over 10,000 PNC terminals nationally access, read, and update data over 230,000 times per weekday.

The Current Situation

The Home Office Police Research Group (PRG) Special Interest Paper 11 - Phoenix Data Quality (1998)

In recent years, there have been a number of research findings causing concern over the quality of data held on some key police information systems. In 1996, PITO produced a review⁴, which prompted them to ask the PRG to research the noticeable difference in performance between forces in entering data onto the Phoenix system. ACPO Crime Committee gave its full support to the research proposal. The subsequent PRG Report 'Phoenix Data Quality', produced in March 1998, was quite alarming in its findings. The report highlighted serious concerns relating to the poor quality of data held on the Phoenix system, including not only the accuracy and timeliness of data but also the extent to which officers were unaware of its practical use in the investigation and reduction of crime.

The report concluded with a number of recommendations which are summarised below (full details of the recommendations can be found in Appendix H).

Summary of PRG Report Recommendations (1998)

- ❑ National performance indicators and standards for timeliness of input, data fields to be completed, quality assurance requirements and the provision of training should be agreed by ACPO and promulgated to all forces. Achievement and compliance with these should be audited after 12 months perhaps in the scope of HMIC audits.
- ❑ Senior officers should take an active and visible role in policing compliance with agreed standards within their own force. ACPO performance indicators should be reflected in force policies. This should include responsibilities of officers at each stage of the submission process, approval levels, time taken to pass to the input bureaux and the bureaux responsibilities for data entry and quality control. Line and divisional managers as well as chief officers should be held accountable for compliance with these standards perhaps through divisional efficiency assessments and publication of performance statistics in-force and nationally.
- ❑ Phoenix Source Documents should be common across all forces, if not in design, in the information requested. A national format, stipulating fields to be populated, should be developed.

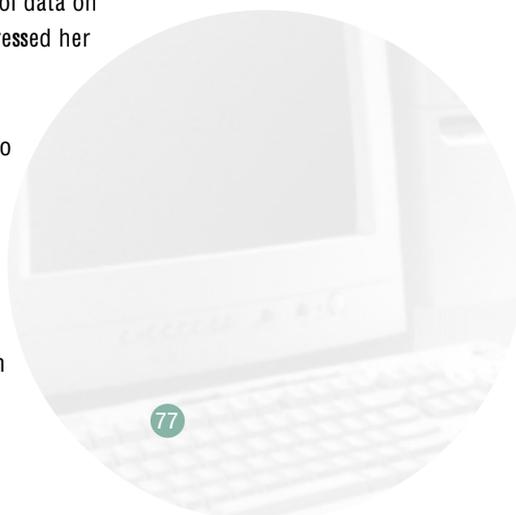
⁴ A 1996 PITO report A Review of Phoenix Input Data Standards and Data Quality

- ❑ Programme(s) geared to raising awareness amongst operational officers and line managers of the potential benefits of Phoenix in a practical sense and their responsibilities of the provision of data should be developed. To ensure all officers have an opportunity to benefit from these programmes, consideration should be given to inclusion of a 'Phoenix awareness' module in probationer training, promotion courses and divisional training days.
- ❑ Best practice in administrative arrangements and organisational structures should be streamlined to remove any redundancies.
- ❑ Greater computerisation of the transfer of results from courts direct to Phoenix should continue to be developed. In the shorter term, the Police Service is likely to retain responsibility for the input of court information. To minimise the resource burden on the Police Service in this interim period, the police and courts should work to ensure recognition of each other's requirements and to minimise any inconsistencies in their respective working practices.

In response to the 1998 PRG report, ACPO produced a 'Compliance Strategy for the Police National Computer' (see Chapter Five). In addition to the PRG Report, the PNC Compliance Audit Reports on forces by Her Majesty's Inspector have confirmed many of the points raised in both the PRG Report and the ACPO Compliance Strategy. The variety of responses and different progress by forces to these reports and their recommendations is of key concern to Her Majesty's Inspector, and is reflected throughout this report. Forces have the potential to make significant performance improvements through the more effective handling and use of data.

If these findings are not in themselves sufficient to provide impetus for change, other drivers provide further compelling reasons to do so. The forthcoming Human Rights Act and Freedom of Information Act, reinforce the rights of the individual and demand that police data are both accurate and stored with integrity. In addition, the Data Protection Act Principles further reinforce the need for relevance, accuracy and timeliness of data on police information systems. The Data Protection Commissioner has already expressed her concerns over the 1998 PRG Report on Phoenix Data Quality.

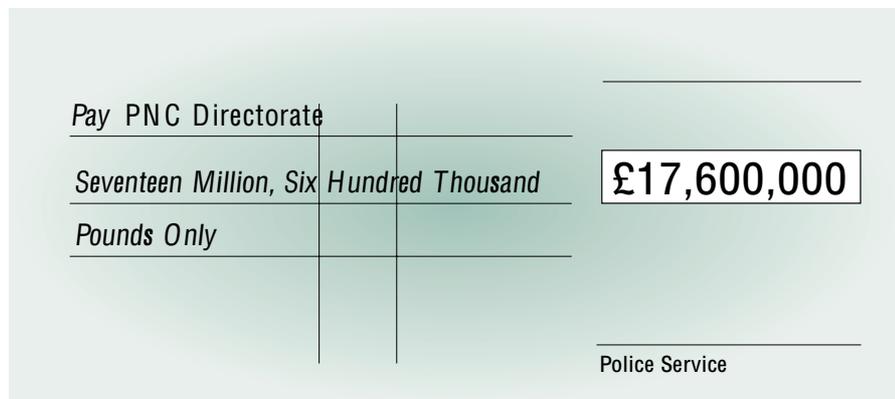
The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), when operative, will increase the extent to which information on police information systems concerning the intelligence and criminal history of job applicants for certain positions is retrieved and disclosed to potential employers, employment agencies and the applicants themselves. The information stored and disclosed will be relied upon to assess the suitability of applicants for certain positions. Furthermore, increased access to PNC by the courts and Prison Service will place an increasing requirement on



Introduction to Phoenix and the 1998 PRG Recommendations

the police to ensure its data handling procedures are robust to ensure that what is disclosed is both accurate and justifiable. The need for greater police integrity was set out in the HM Inspectorate report 'Police Integrity – Securing and Maintaining Public Confidence' (1999). The Service must therefore ensure its data is accurate and can withstand vigorous internal and external scrutiny.

The final dimension is one of Best Value. The annual cost to forces of PNC is illustrated below and serves as a significant reminder as to the need for continuous improvement.



Methodology

This Inspection did not assume the status of a full Data Protection Audit but did include some auditing work. The framework for the Inspection methodology was the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC. In advance of the Inspection the 11 forces visited were asked to provide the following details:

- ❑ details and numbers of all in-force PNC trainers and, if trained by National Police Training(NPT), the dates they were trained
- ❑ details of the length and curriculum covered during in-force PNC training courses.

These details were then passed to NPT (PNC Training) for comments as to content, objectives and duration of courses.

In addition, forces were asked to provide details of:

- ❑ a total of 10 offences, consisting of a combination of both murder and stranger rape offences committed during 1999 (or further back if the total did not reach 10) defined by the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) criteria for murder and rape offence referral. Forces were also asked to state whether there was a suspect or not within 28 days of the offence being reported, together with their details.

On the day of the Inspection, the force was then asked to provide:

- ❑ The present case status as to whether the murder or rape offence was detected or not and if there was a suspect or offender and their updated prosecution status.

Details of the murder and rape offences and any suspects or offenders were then passed to SCAS at the NCF to identify if:

- ❑ the offences fitted the SCAS criteria
- ❑ whether the offence had been registered with SCAS
- ❑ of those offences which were not registered on SCAS, and undetected, were they registered on CCA
- ❑ did the updated prosecution status provided by forces match that recorded on the SCAS database?

On the first day of each Inspection forces were also asked to provide the following documents:

- ❑ printouts of the descriptive and intelligence pages from the Phoenix system for ten different adults who were 'known, active criminals'
- ❑ the last three Phoenix Source Documents created for each person.

The details recorded on the three separate Phoenix Source Documents (PSDs) for the same person were then compared with one another and against those details recorded on the Phoenix system.

The force was then asked to supply:

- ❑ 20 PSDs freshly arrived for Phoenix inputting on the day of the Inspection.

The time delay between the origination of each PSD, and the date of its arrival for entry onto the system was calculated. Where forces operated a computer interface with Phoenix, manually entered offences where the offender received a formal police caution were selected. Where appropriate, the Inspection Team also selected further random records to validate findings:

- ❑ 40 of the most recently entered PSDs together with the corresponding intelligence and descriptive pages printed out from the Phoenix system.

A comparison was then made between the detail recorded on the PSD and that entered onto the Phoenix system. A record was made of the number and type of errors, anomalies, omissions and discrepancies.



Introduction to Phoenix and the 1998 PRG Recommendations

- ❑ Crime and descriptive details for a number of undetected thefts of items of un-recovered property from the following:
 - thefts of caravans
 - thefts of trailers
 - thefts of marine craft
 - thefts of firearms

The force was then asked to provide the relevant PNC Property Application entry it had entered to register the item as stolen on PNC.

Interviews

The Inspection Team held interviews, covering awareness of system capabilities and Phoenix working practices with the following staff in each force:

- ❑ two Senior Investigating Officers
- ❑ two operational detective inspectors
- ❑ the force PNC / Phoenix Manager or equivalent
- ❑ two PNC Bureau Staff (in addition, relevant team leaders and supervisors were also seen)
- ❑ two operational sergeants
- ❑ two operational constables
- ❑ two operational detective constables

Report Structure

The following chapters cover the management, marketing and use of some police information systems together with issues surrounding the quality of data and the need for compliance. The report also outlines areas, which require improvement to achieve better performance.

5 The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC and Implementation of the PRG Report on Phoenix Data Quality (1998)

The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC and Implementation of the PRG Report on Phoenix Data Quality (1998)

5.1 The ACPO Response to the 1998 PRG Report on Phoenix Data Quality.

5.2 Implementation of the PRG Report Phoenix Data Quality (1998)



5 The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC and Implementation of the PRG Report on Phoenix Data Quality

This chapter examines the ACPO response to the 1998 PRG Report on Phoenix Data Quality and outlines the contents of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC. It then examines the progression those forces inspected have made towards the implementation of the PRG report.

5.1 The ACPO response to the 1998 PRG Report on Phoenix Data Quality

- 5.1.1 As a result of concerns raised in the 1998 PRG Report, the ACPO Sub-Committee on Records established a working group to research nationally how forces had responded to the contents of the report and issues surrounding PNC. The work of this group was completed in October 1999 and resulted in the production of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC. The strategy is part of the overall National Police Information Management Strategy for the Police Service which has been developed by ACPO. As part of the Compliance Strategy, ACPO have developed a set of performance indicators covering the timeliness, completeness and quality of information. Those performance indicators are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. The strategy also identifies key actions for National Police Training, PITO, HMIC and all forces. The key elements and actions outlined in the strategy are summarised below (a full copy of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC is attached at Appendix I).
- 5.1.2 Overall, the working group's findings concerned ACPO because many forces either had not implemented the 1998 PRG recommendations, or had no plan to do so. The ACPO Compliance Strategy governing PNC and Phoenix, is intended to provide a strategic view for the Police Service on the developments necessary to maximise performance benefits from information systems, principally PNC, and to ensure data integrity. It provides a structured framework for forces to re-visit the points raised in the PRG Report and incorporates the requirement for all forces to comply with the actions within the strategy. Her Majesty's Inspector considers this to be an essential ingredient for its success. The actions outlined above should be promptly addressed by all forces.

The ACPO Compliance Strategy

Key Actions Contained within the ACPO Compliance Strategy for the Police National Computer (PNC)

Organisation	Summary of Key Actions
National Police Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ To develop competency levels required in the use of PNC for different roles within the service ❑ Set minimum standards of PNC training and quality assure training delivered by non NPT sources ❑ Optimise in all training, the link between performance and information systems ❑ Develop a national skills profile to assist in the selection of staff for training in the use of police information systems ❑ Maintain a database of nationally approved PNC trainers
HMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ To emphasise performance benefits in the use of police information systems during inspections ❑ To consider an assessment during inspections, of forces action plans to deliver their obligations to the ❑ Identify and advise the service on links between efficiency plans, Best Value and data management
PITO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Ensure production of relevant system manuals ❑ Ensure all police and non-police users are aware of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC and its parent National Police Information Management Strategy ❑ Provide a marketing strategy to emphasise the shift of PNC from record keeping, to crime investigation and performance improvement
Individual Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Should comply with the National Police Information Management Strategy and Compliance Strategy action plans ❑ Be aware of and comply with the relevant Data Protection and system manuals, now and in the future ❑ Ensure appropriate staff selection for PNC training and apply national training and competency standards where developed ❑ Establish the levels of resources at present and those needed, to deliver both the principles in the National Police Information Strategy and the advocated Phoenix performance indicators ❑ Establish levels of awareness amongst senior staff in the capabilities of PNC applications ❑ Establish robust quality assurance processes ❑ Ensure reporting lines exist to allow Data Protection Officers to raise matters at a senior level ❑ Ensure that internal Best Value and performance reviews focus on data, compliance and the use of police information systems and make clear links between effective data management and performance ❑ Establish the reason for their present performance against national Phoenix performance statistics ❑ Recognise the importance of the Phoenix Source Document, and regularly review the submission process

5.2 Implementation of the PRG Report 'Phoenix Data Quality' (1998)

- 5.2.1 During the Inspection, Her Majesty's Inspector was keen to establish the progress of forces towards implementing the 1998 PRG Report recommendations. He was encouraged to find that in one force the Phoenix Manager had in 1998 developed a series of position statements. Similarly, in another force, the Phoenix Manager had prepared a report giving his views on the recommendations. In addition, three forces had adopted some of the PRG policy statements with regard to PSD submission recommended within the report and one force had all the recommended policy statements included within force directives.
- 5.2.2 However, none of the forces visited had in place a structured implementation plan governing all the 1998 PRG Report recommendations. As a consequence, none of them were able to provide updated position statements regarding the report.

Her Majesty's Inspector is concerned that such a well researched and important document has, until the recent ACPO led Compliance Strategy, been given such little attention by the Service. This is particularly so, given the external scrutiny facing the Service. The Data Protection Commissioner has already expressed her concern over the contents of the 1998 PRG Report.

- 5.2.3 The impetus provided by the ACPO Compliance Strategy, is a great opportunity for the Service to quickly address the issues and concerns raised within it and the 1998 PRG Report. Whilst it was found that a number of forces had some measures in place, there is a need for a more systematic approach from all forces to realise the full benefits of Phoenix and PNC.
- 5.2.4 The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC was endorsed as ACPO policy in April 2000 although the performance indicators accompanying the strategy are subject to minor refinement.

Her Majesty's Inspector welcomes and supports the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC as a timely initiative by ACPO. Poor data quality within the Police Service is a recurring theme, despite being highlighted in previous reports.

The ACPO Compliance Strategy



Recommendation 9

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces produce position statements in relation to the 1998 PRG report recommendations on Phoenix Data Quality and the ACPO Compliance Strategy for the Police National Computer. He further recommends that forces produce a detailed action plan, with timescales, to implement their recommendations. The position statements and action plans together with progress updates should be available for audit and inspection during future HMIC PNC Compliance Audits and inspection of forces. Forces should send copies of action plans to HMIC's PNC Compliance Audit Section by the 1 February 2001.

5 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 5

ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC and Implementation of the PRG Report	Yes	No
Has the force produced position statements in relation to the ACPO Compliance Strategy for the Police National Computer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a detailed action plan with time-scales to implement the requirements of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC been produced?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the detailed action plan been forwarded to HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Section by the 1st October 2000?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force produced position statements in relation to the PRG report 'Phoenix Data Quality (1998)'?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a detailed action plan with timescales to implement the recommendations of the PRG report 'Phoenix Data Quality' 1998 been produced?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the detailed action plan been forwarded to HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Section by the 1 February 2001?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



6 **Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems**

Levels of Awareness and Use of Systems

6.1 Initiatives to Assess Levels of Awareness of System Capabilities

6.2 Level of Awareness of System Capabilities

6.3 Senior Officer Awareness of System Capabilities

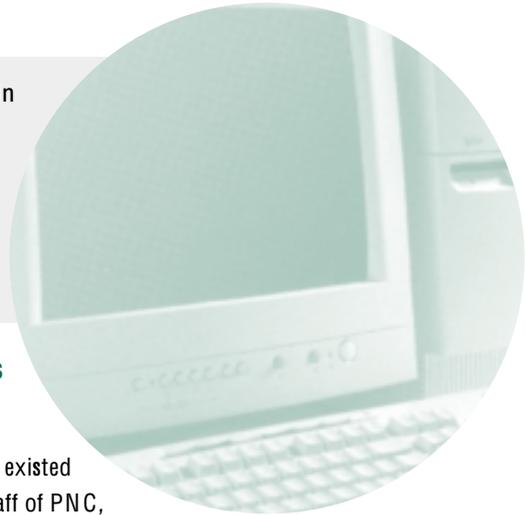
6.4 Use of PNC Applications

6.5 Conclusion



6 Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

It is essential that maximum use is made of systems to assist in the reduction of crime. This chapter focuses on levels of awareness amongst staff of systems and their capabilities. It concludes with findings indicating that too many opportunities are being missed to realise the benefits of system use.



6.1 Initiatives to Assess Levels of Awareness of System Capabilities

- 6.1.1 The Inspection Team was keen to identify if any systems existed within forces to assess the level of awareness amongst staff of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS capabilities. These are essential to:
- ❑ identify any knowledge gaps
 - ❑ ensure that limited training resources are targeted effectively
 - ❑ assess the impact of marketing initiatives.
- 6.1.2 Although it was found that none of the forces visited had a force-wide programme, Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to find individual initiatives.
- 6.1.3 These types of initiatives are essential when evaluating the content and impact of any PNC and Phoenix marketing activities. Forces should recognise the benefits of conducting them at a force level.

Her Majesty's Inspector encourages forces to introduce systems to assess levels of awareness amongst staff of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS. This should be a precursor to any further marketing. In doing so forces are also encouraged to notify PITO on the marketing activities for PNC and Phoenix they consider to be effective.

6.2 Level of Awareness of System Capabilities

- 6.2.1 In order to make maximum use of investigative systems, it is important that staff are at least aware of their existence and basic capabilities. The Inspection Team assessed the level of knowledge amongst staff of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS through the use of simple, operationally based scenarios and questionnaires. It was found that knowledge of the system's capabilities varied enormously. In most forces, there were individuals of all ranks, both uniform and CID, who were not



Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

aware of some key PNC and Phoenix capabilities and applications. Of particular concern was that some detective officers were not aware of the existence of CCA or SCAS and in another force, some intelligence staff were not aware of certain applications. However, one force impressed the Inspection Team with their general levels of knowledge.

GOOD PRACTICE

In Kent Constabulary, a detective inspector had devised a questionnaire covering aspects of PNC and Phoenix. A number of questions were designed to gauge levels of awareness amongst staff.

- 6.2.2 Her Majesty's Inspector believes there is much value to be gained by forces establishing a minimum level of knowledge required for PNC and Phoenix system capabilities. This will assist in strategic planning and places the onus on staff to seek knowledge which itself can be a powerful motivator for compliance. Setting minimum levels of knowledge is entirely appropriate for personal development reviews and should be the subject of comment in selection processes.

6.3 Senior Officer Awareness of Systems Capabilities

- 6.3.1 Leadership and senior officer commitment are not new issues to be raised in the area of information systems and compliance. The 1998 PRG Report identified them as underpinning the success of some forces. The report also highlighted that one of the major frustrations cited by staff connected with PNC and Phoenix activities, was the perceived lack of involvement, commitment and awareness of compliance issues from senior staff, including chief officers.

- 6.3.2 Recent research¹ found that of the 32 forces responding 26 said that at least one chief officer had knowledge of the 1998 PRG Report. This suggests an informed position from which the Service should be progressing. The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC also identifies that senior officer awareness of the principal national police information systems is an essential ingredient in ensuring compliance and realising system potential. Her Majesty's Inspector endorses this viewpoint.

- 6.3.3 During the course of the Inspection, Her Majesty's Inspector was impressed with the breadth and depth of understanding achieved by some Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs). They displayed a good understanding of the linkages between

¹ Conducted by the working group from the ACPO Sub-committee on Records

Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

information systems, their capabilities and the quality of data entered. Within some forces however, the Inspection Team was concerned to find a low level of awareness of some system capabilities. In one force, in response to common operational scenarios designed to test level of awareness of national police information systems, a detective superintendent did not appear to be aware of the potential of QUEST, CCA, SCAS, or the PNC Property Application (see glossary of terms) to assist in crime investigations.

6.3.4 The main shortfalls in knowledge in forces were found to be in relation to PNC Transaction Logs, PNC Property Application and to a lesser extent CCA. This varied from not being aware of the existence of the system or its capabilities, or misconceptions about the data held by them. The Inspection Team found that SIOs² whose knowledge was weak, tended to delegate enquiries to others. Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that to effectively manage investigations and to ensure that all areas of enquiry have been pursued, SIOs must possess at least a basic understanding of information systems and their capabilities. This was confirmed by one SIO who spoke of the need for greater system marketing, in particular CCA and SCAS, at detective chief inspector and detective inspector level.

² Many of those spoken to had not received any formal training

6.3.5 Her Majesty's Inspector was impressed by the approach taken in a number of forces to marketing system capabilities to senior detective officers:

GOOD PRACTICE

In West Midlands Police, the Force PNC manager has provided inputs to Murder Investigation Units, Force Intelligence operatives and detective officer training courses.

In Northumbria Police, senior detective officers undertake a modular based in-force detective-training programme. This incorporates a specific input on National Police Information Systems.

In Thames Valley Police, senior crime managers visited the National Crime Faculty to receive inputs on CCA and SCAS.

Her Majesty's Inspector commends these forces on these examples of good practice, which support the recommendations within the ACPO Compliance Strategy to incorporate relevant inputs into detective training. All forces are urged to assess the level of understanding amongst its senior officers, particularly SIOs, and take steps to address any shortfalls, to ensure that all investigative opportunities and potential for crime reduction are being maximised.

Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

6.4 Use of PNC Applications

PNC Property Application

- 6.4.1 The PNC Property Application requires forces to enter details of all items of plant equipment, marine craft, caravans, trailers, animals, engines and firearms which are lost, stolen or found. The facility was modified some years ago to allow items to be entered and searched by description only, without the need for a serial number. This is a very effective facility to trace property.
- 6.4.2 The Inspection Team obtained details of items of stolen property from the eleven forces which fitted the above criteria. Forces were then asked to produce the corresponding entry on the PNC Property Application registering that item as lost or stolen. Table 4 below illustrates in descending order the ratio of compliance found.

Table 4: Compliance rates for registering stolen property on the PNC Property Application

Force	Number of Stolen Items of property sampled by HMIC	Number of those stolen items registered on PNC	% Compliance
E	20	15	75%
F	25	9	36%
B	20	7	35%
I	23	6	26%
J	20	5	25%
K	20	5	25%
H	10	2	20%
D	22	4	18%
A	20	3	15%
C	28	4	14%
G	20	0	0%
Total	228	60	Average 26%

- 6.4.3 It can be seen from the table above, that there was considerable disparity between forces in the use of this system. Force E had the highest compliance rate of 75% with Force G showing the lowest rate of 0%. The average compliance rate for the 11 forces was only 26%. Her Majesty's Inspector is disappointed with these poor results. The same disparity in use was found in forces' overall use of the PNC Property Application:

Table 5: Use made of PNC Property Application

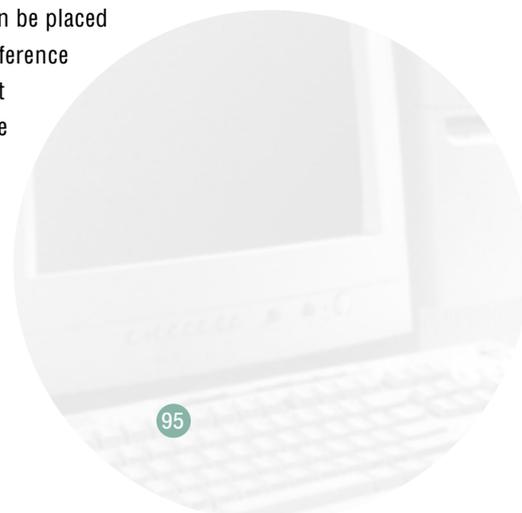
Force	Number of Theft & Burglary crimes in force (April 1998- March 1999) ¹	%Total Primary Detections (April - March 1999) ¹	Total number of items entered onto the PNC Property Application in 1999*	Total number of PNC property searches conducted by forces by serial number in 1999*	Total number of PNC property searches conducted by force by description in 1999*
A	101,263	23	1,923	3,955	242
B	29,710	29	1,200	1,222	70
C	10,317	62	228	1,743	146
D	92,058	21	444	1,859	1
E	80,292	31	3,739	6,540	177
F	74,181	30	1,398	3,214	115
G	85,542	28	211	1,177	14
H	93,939	29	942	2,305	25
I	78,535	24	833	1,704	8
J	120,351	20	1,401	4,449	20
K	196,586	27	2,881	7,286	57

¹ Based on Home Office figures which are published for the financial year

*Based on figures supplied by PIT O

6.4.4 It can be seen from Table 5 that despite some forces having similar crime levels there was a large difference in their use of the PNC Property Application. For example, although Forces E and G had similar crime rates, Force E entered at least 3,500 more items onto the PNC facility, and conducted over 5,300 more searches using serial numbers. In addition many forces appeared to make limited use of the facility to search on property from a description only.

6.4.5 In a number of forces, the Inspection Team found a significant number of staff, both operators and officers who were incorrectly assuming that items needed a serial number before they could be entered onto the system. Items can be placed onto the system using any reference number, which can be a crime reference number. It was found that many officers and PNC Operators were not fully aware of system operations and specifications to achieve effective compliance. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the mechanisms to alert PNC staff of the need to enter items onto the PNC Property Application were very unstructured. In many forces, staff did not understand whose responsibility it was to ensure items



Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

were placed on PNC, or even how to go about it. In addition, as detailed later in chapter 7, some forces do not cover the use of the PNC Property Application during in-force PNC training which could explain the disparity in its use.

Her Majesty's Inspector concludes that poor awareness and an absence of reporting structures is completely undermining the PNC Property Application. Forces are urged to immediately review their practices in this area.

Vehicle On-line Descriptive Searches (VODS) Transactions

6.4.6 The VODS Application, allows vehicle and owner details to be retrieved from PNC using only the briefest of details. There is no requirement for a full or part vehicle registration number as searches can be conducted by colour, make or model, or even postcode. Her Majesty's Inspector was impressed by the use of the VODS system by some forces:

GOOD PRACTICE

In Northumbria Police, an informant provided information that a man owning a red Ferrari, living in a large country house was to be targeted in a robbery. A VODS check on red Ferraris revealed only two registered owners in the locality. One vehicle belonged to the owner of a flat, the second to the owner of a large country house. An operation was mounted resulting in the arrest of the offender in the act of committing the offence. This is a good example of the merits of the system.

In Kent Constabulary, VODS was used to identify all white vans registered to a firm used by drug importers. Registration numbers were provided to H.M Customs and Excise, and arrests followed for Class A drug importation.

In Dyfed-Powys Police, during a child abduction enquiry, witnesses described the make of an offender's vehicle as a Vauxhall. It was established that the vehicle was a Vauxhall Senator and a VODS check produced two possible matches. One of the vehicles was registered to and sold by the offender on the day of the offence. The vehicle was traced and forensic evidence obtained. The offender was later convicted and sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

In Avon and Somerset Constabulary an initiative used VODS to identify all registered owners of a particular model of Vauxhall car. This type of vehicle had been attacked in a large number of vehicle crimes in the local area. Owners were then targeted with leaflets notifying them of those crime trends. Incorporated in the leaflet were details of car crime prevention equipment available in local shops. The advertising on the leaflets, financed the cost of this initiative.

Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

Despite these many examples of good practice there was again great disparity in the use made by forces of the VODS facility. This is shown below:

Table 6: Annual number of VODS transactions conducted

Force	Total recorded crime (March 1998 -April 1999) ¹	% Total primary detections (April - March 1999) ¹	Number of initial VODS searches Jan - Dec1999*
A	150,089	23	3,869
B	49,076	29	1,220
C	24,588	62	3,398
D	130,691	21	2,328
E	129,340	31	2,702
F	118,117	30	6,025
G	140,874	28	2,324
H	151,298	29	3,463
I	130,402	24	1,664
J	176,477	20	2,124
K	314,611	27	4,019

*Based on figures supplied by PITO

¹ Based on Home Office figures which are published for the financial year

6.4.7 It can be seen from Table 6 that Force F conducted nearly three times as many VODS checks (6,025) and had a 9% higher detection rate than Force D in the same period. Whilst Her Majesty's Inspector is not suggesting that the difference in detection rates is attributable solely to the use of VODS, he is confident that it is a contributory factor³. The differences in use by forces of the various PNC and Phoenix applications, poses questions about the unrealised potential these systems have in helping to reduce crime. The figures shown above tend to confirm the varying levels of knowledge of systems discussed in the previous section.

³ The Introduction to Phoenix and the 1998 PRG Recommendations in this report comments on the potential impact of PNC and Phoenix on detection rates.

Whilst Her Majesty's Inspector applauds some of the excellent examples of the use of VODS found during the Inspection, he is concerned about the extent of its under-use by some forces.

QUEST Transactions

6.4.8 The QUEST facility operates on information recorded on the Phoenix Source Document (PSD) after a person is arrested. It is



Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

possible to search on a range of details from basic names to descriptive and intelligence information. Her Majesty's Inspector was again impressed by the use of this application by some forces:

GOOD PRACTICE

In Dyfed-Powys Police, a serious injury road collision victim could not be identified. A PNC operator, conducted a series of QUEST searches on a tattoo found on the victim. This led to the identification of the individual. In a further case, intelligence on a drugs dealer identified the man as having a distinctive spider's web shaved in his hairline - no other details were known. A QUEST search identified the individual and he was targeted. In addition, the force is about to place both the use of VODS and QUEST figures in force performance statistics to emphasise its performance contribution.

In West Midlands Police an officer investigating a series of 'brace and bit' burglaries conducted a search on Modus Operandi on QUEST. A former resident of the area was identified from some five years ago. They had since left and recently returned to live nearby. A search was conducted at their premises and proceeds of the burglaries recovered.

6.4.9 However it was found that there was again a great deal of variance amongst forces concerning QUEST's overall usage. This has already been identified as a continuing theme in applications already discussed. The use of QUEST is shown below.

Table 7: Annual use of QUEST transactions

Force	Total recorded crime (March 1998 -April 1999) ¹	% Total primary detections (April - March 1999) ¹	Number of initial VODS searches Jan - Dec1999*
A	150,089	23	2,323
B	49,076	29	1,265
C	24,588	62	587
D	130,691	21	162
E	129,340	31	1,545
F	118,117	30	877
G	140,874	28	819
H	151,298	29	181
I	130,402	24	1,322
J	176,477	20	671
K	314,611	27	2,997

¹ Based on Home Office figures which are published for the financial year

*Based on figures supplied by PITO

- 6.4.10 It can be seen from Table 7 that in relation to QUEST searches, the difference in use between forces is even more marked than in relation to other applications ranging from Force K with 2,997 searches, to Force D with 162. Force E, conducted 1,545 searches yet had a comparable crime rate to Force D. In addition Force B, with approximately one third of the crime of Force D conducted 1103 more searches.

Whilst Her Majesty's Inspector acknowledges the good use some forces have made of the QUEST facility he is again concerned at the under-use of this valuable investigative tool by some of the forces visited.

PNC Transaction Log

- 6.4.11 The PNC Transaction Log allows retrieval of any PNC searches that have been conducted on people or vehicles. This feature is available wherever the original enquiry took place. Although originally introduced as an auditing tool, it has powerful crime investigation and intelligence potential. Her Majesty's Inspector found some good examples of how the system had been used by forces:

GOOD PRACTICE

In Lancashire Constabulary Transaction Logs were used in a double murder enquiry allowing officers to trace a vehicle, used by the offender, which had been stopped by officers in Kent. Checks on CCTV cameras revealed footage of the offender near to the vehicle with a hand bandage from an injury. Forensic analysis of the victim's trousers provided a match with the individual captured on the CCTV camera.

In Kent Constabulary, during a burglary involving the theft of Jet Skis, one offender in a vehicle was detained but an accomplice absconded. A Transaction Log enquiry identified that the offenders' vehicle had been stopped earlier that evening by officers in another force, with two identified individuals inside. The second named individual was subsequently visited and found to be the outstanding offender.

In Dyfed-Powys Police a Transaction Log enquiry was conducted on vehicles used by drug dealers. This retrieved details of a stop check of a target vehicle in Bristol. This identified a local resident who had connections with Wales and resulted in an arrest for possession of heroin. In a further case officers wishing to relocate a vital witness in a crime case who had since left the force area, used Transaction logs to trace his whereabouts to London.

Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

6.4.12 An analysis of PNC Transaction Logs statistics revealed a similar wide disparity in its use by the forces Inspected. Table 8 below shows the relationship between forces' recorded crime figures and the number of PNC Transaction Log enquiries.

Table 8: Forces' PNC Transaction Log Enquiries

Force	Total recorded crime (March 1998 -April 1999) ¹	% Total primary detections (April - March 1999) ¹	Number of PNC Transaction Log Enquiries 1999*
A	150,089	23	29,366
B	49,076	29	2,704
C	24,588	62	9,276
D	130,691	21	8,560
E	129,340	31	15,836
F	118,117	30	17,312
G	140,874	28	6,947
H	151,298	29	6,349
I	130,402	24	13,076
J	176,477	20	12,474
K	314,611	27	21,351

¹ Based on Home Office figures which are published for the financial year

*Based on figures supplied by P I T O

6.4.13 It can be seen that from Table 8 above that the range of use of PNC Transaction Logs varied from 2,704 to over 29,000. Force A conducted 29,366, whereas Force H conducted 6,349. This is a difference of over 23,000 Transaction Logs despite the forces having a comparable crime rate. Whilst some of the transactions may be attributed to auditing work and administrative enquiries there was still a large difference in system usage. As identified later in chapter 7, this disparity could also be explained by the fact some forces do not routinely cover the PNC transaction log facility during in-force PNC training for all operators.

Her Majesty's Inspector concludes that the investigative opportunities available through the PNC Transaction Log facility are not being used by some forces

The Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) and Comparative Case Analysis (CCA)

6.4.14 The Inspection Team obtained, from the forces visited, details of murder and rape offences which fitted the criteria for registration at SCAS located at the

Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

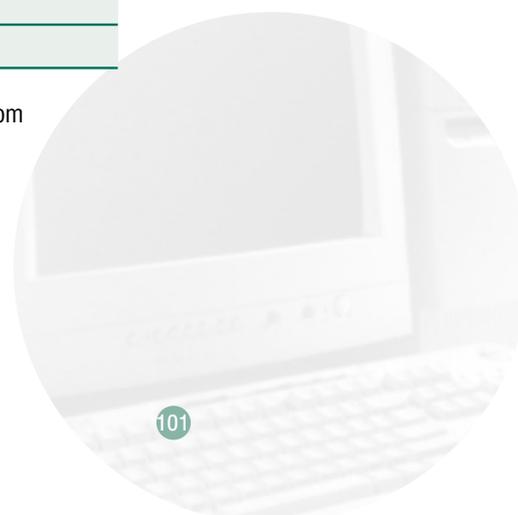
National Crime Faculty. Although SCAS is not part of the PNC system, it does have close links with CCA in that they both record details of certain murder and rape offences. Given the importance of the SCAS database to the investigation of murder and rape offences compliance with this system was covered during this Inspection.

- 6.4.15 SCAS receive details, via in-force SCAS Liaison Officers, of specified offences from forces and maintain a national database of serious offences to identify patterns and links, and to provide wide ranging investigative support to officers. In relation to PNC, CCA should presently be updated by forces to include details of undetected murder and rape offences, irrespective of whether they fit within the SCAS criteria. If a murder or rape is registered with SCAS and is undetected, it should also at present, be on CCA. The Inspection Team analysed the number of offences notified to SCAS by forces. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Number of offences notified to SCAS

Force	Murder		Rape	
	No of offences sampled by HMIC	No of offences registered at SCAS	No of offences sampled by HMIC	No of offences registered at SCAS
D	6	3	2	0
H	2	1	7	0
A	2	0	6	0
F	3	0	4	0
K	3	1	9	1
E	4	4	3	2
I	5	4	4	2
C	1	0	5	4
G	3	3	7	7
J	2	1	7	7
B	2	2	10	10

- 6.4.16 It can be seen from Table 9 that in relation to murder a total of 14 from 33 offences (42%) were not notified to SCAS. In relation to rapes a total of 31 from 64 offences (48%) were not notified to SCAS. This aggregates to a total of 45 from 97 offences (46%) not being registered and available for analysis by all forces in the country on the SCAS database.



Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

- 6.4.17 Recently the process for notifying offences to SCAS has been simplified, to encourage greater compliance. In fact, initial SCAS notification policy has changed from a 22-page form to either a one page referral or CCA entry. In addition, the faxing of case papers is also permitted by SCAS.

Whilst a minority of forces are to be commended on their level of compliance, considering the serious nature of these offences and the value of the investigative facility provided by SCAS, Her Majesty's Inspector is deeply concerned about the poor compliance rate for some of the forces Inspected. This is clearly linked to the apparent shortfalls in some detective officers awareness of the SCAS systems and capabilities mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Corresponding Entry on CCA

- 6.4.18 A subsequent check on CCA revealed that 20 out of the 45 offences which were not notified to SCAS by forces, which should have been registered on CCA were not. Although Her Majesty's Inspectorate is aware the the scope of CCA recorded offences is presently being deliberated, clearly, it's overall operation at present is being undermined by poor compliance. Her Majesty's Inspector considers this to be totally unacceptable.
- 6.4.19 Her Majesty's Inspector found problems with two offences registered on the CCA system. One case of rape had not been registered until two months after the date of the offence being reported and one case of murder had not been entered until five months later. Use of CCA was the method used by this force to notify SCAS of offences. Although two isolated cases, they raise concerns over the timeliness and reliability of forces in placing details on CCA and they suggest that CCA is not a suitable vehicle to notify offences to SCAS.

Her Majesty's Inspector concludes that a better means of initial notification of offences to SCAS needs to be re-established, to more promptly alert them of provisional case details. Thereafter, more detailed disclosure can be arranged through direct contact with sources. Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that the SCAS section of the National Crime Faculty explore this issue further with forces to establish a standardised and improved procedure. However, the focus for improvement remains firmly on forces in raising levels of awareness, initial notification and subsequent compliance.

Compliance with the Requirement to Update SCAS

- 6.4.20 In order to check whether forces had notified case updates to SCAS the Inspection Team obtained details of suspects and offenders for the same murder

and rape offences discussed above. This included whether the person had been charged, bailed, convicted, or was no longer a suspect. This information was then compared to the details recorded on the SCAS database.

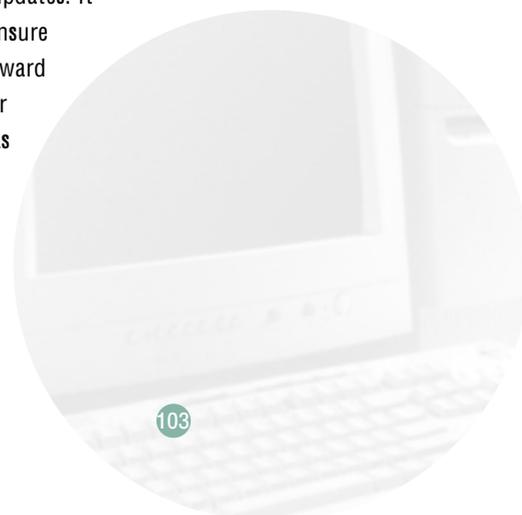
6.4.21 The Inspection Team were concerned to find that, in a number of cases, updates had not been provided to SCAS. The following illustrates the individual case discrepancies found:

- ❑ two forces had an offenders status as 'found guilty', whereas SCAS only had the offenders' status as charged
- ❑ one force had an offender's status as 'found guilty' whereas SCAS only had their status as a suspect
- ❑ one force had an offender's status as charged whereas SCAS only had details of 'case papers pending'
- ❑ one force had details of an offender arrested and charged with an offence. SCAS had no details of the person either as a suspect or an offender
- ❑ one force had charged one person in one case and in another case an offender had been convicted. SCAS had no details of either offenders and still had the cases as undetected
- ❑ one force had no details of any suspects in two separate offences. SCAS still had details of two suspects connected with each of the offences on its database
- ❑ one force had an allegation of rape 'no-crimes'⁴ on the 11.11.98. SCAS still had details of the offence and a suspect on its database.

⁴ See Chapter 1 on 'no-crimes'.

6.4.22 Although some of these updates appear to be of minor significance, in respect of the latter two cases, there are clear implications for the integrity of the SCAS database and Data Protection Principles. It was found that in both of these cases, no formal system of updating in-force SCAS liaison officers was in operation.

6.4.23 The Inspection Team explored whether forces had in place a policy as to whose responsibility it was to notify in-force SCAS Liaison Officers of case updates. It was found that none of the forces visited had a formalised policy to ensure appropriate case updates were made known to Liaison Officers for onward transmission to SCAS. Although one force had an informal system for Liaison Officers to regularly contact the Investigation Team, there was no structured policy concerning case status changes being notified to SCAS. Accordingly, many potential opportunities to provide positive investigative leads are being lost because of the unstructured and informal systems being used by forces.



Levels Of Awareness and Use Of Systems

6.5 Conclusion

- 6.5.1 It is clear that shortfalls in knowledge and awareness of systems and their capabilities amongst some staff is resulting in underuse. The shortfall in use and compliance extends beyond PNC systems and includes SCAS. In order to realise the crime reduction benefits of these systems it is essential for present levels of awareness to be improved.

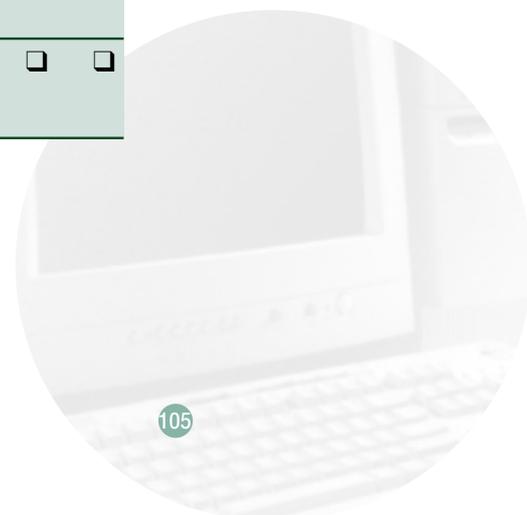


Recommendation 10

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces urgently review their existing SCAS referral mechanisms in the light of the above findings. These reviews should include verification with SCAS that all force offences fitting the SCAS criteria have been fully notified to them, and updated. This process should be managed by forces through their in-force SCAS Liaison Officers.

6 Crime Recording Checklist – Chapter 6

Levels of Awareness and Use of the Systems	Yes	No
Initiatives to assess levels of awareness system capabilities		
Is there a force-wide system to assess the present level of awareness amongst all staff of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS capabilities ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force notified PITO of those marketing activities it has identified to be effective ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the system to assess present levels of awareness in system capabilities operated prior to any marketing activities ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Levels of Awareness of PNC and Phoenix		
Has the force set a minimum level of knowledge required of staff in PNC and Phoenix system capabilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is staff performance against this standard subject of comment in both Personal Development Reviews and featured in selection processes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior Officer awareness of systems capabilities.		
Is there a system to assess the present levels of understanding amongst senior staff of the capabilities of national information systems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system operated to address identified shortfalls in senior staff knowledge of the capabilities of national information systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have identified shortfalls in senior staff knowledge of the capabilities of National Information Systems been addressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of PNC Applications and SCAS		
Has the correct system requirements for the PNC Property Application been marketed to both operators and staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a policy which clearly states whose responsibility it is to ensure that items are placed onto the PNC Property Application?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force examined the extent of its present use of the QUEST, PNC Property Application, VODS and Transaction Logs search facilities to ensure maximum opportunities for their use are being taken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force examined its processes concerning the registration of appropriate offences with SCAS to ensure effective compliance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a policy which clearly outlines whose responsibility it is to notify in-force SCAS Liaison Officers of case updates for SCAS related offences for onward transmission to the National Crime Faculty?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7 Marketing, Strategy and Training

Marketing, Strategy and Training

7.1 Marketing System Capabilities

7.2 Integration of Information Systems in Force Planning Documents

7.3 PNC Steering Groups and Strategic Plans

7.4 Organisational Positioning

7.5 PNC Training

7.6 Conclusion



7 Marketing, Strategy and Training

This chapter examines the level and methods used by forces to market system capabilities to staff. It also looks at the integration of systems into strategic planning and their line management arrangements within forces. Finally the standard of force PNC training and the importance of national standards are examined and discussed.



7.1 Marketing System Capabilities

- 7.1.1 Effective marketing is a key element in realising the full potential of national information systems such as PNC, Phoenix and SCAS. Whilst PITO have invested in marketing PNC capabilities to forces via a video and road-show the onus is on forces themselves to market the performance benefits of all applications. To this end, Her Majesty's Inspector was impressed with the following marketing initiatives in some forces:

GOOD PRACTICE

In Northumbria Police, a modular based training program for senior detective officers included an input on national police information systems.

In Thames Valley Police, a two day input on national police information systems was provided for supervisors. This is being extended force-wide.

In Merseyside Police, the Stolen Vehicle Squad provided inputs on VODS to SIOs and traffic officers.

In Dyfed-Powys Police and Lancashire Constabulary inputs were incorporated in Special Constabulary training.

In Northumbria Police, a pamphlet 'Start spreading the news' contained updates on PNC applications.

In Sussex Police, a 'PNC pack' is being distributed to intelligence units containing information on system capabilities.

- 7.1.2 However, with the exception of a few forces, the approach to marketing was not structured. As a consequence, key departments and individuals were not captured by the initiative or important features of PNC and Phoenix such as the PNC Property Application, Transaction Logs, CCA and also SCAS, were omitted from the content. Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to note the following structured examples:



Marketing, Strategy and Training

GOOD PRACTICE

In Avon and Somerset Constabulary, an input on national police information systems was being provided to every shift, in every BCU, on a tiered and structured basis.

In Merseyside Police, a similar structured program had visited many parts of the force.

In West Midlands Police, a 'Front Line Directory' issued to every officer contained guidance on a variety of issues including PNC applications and every officer had been issued with a PITO PNC booklet.

In Lancashire Constabulary, a PNC user guide was distributed to all staff.

7.1.3 Whilst many of the forces visited had invested in marketing initiatives, not all were well attended by their target audience. In one force, a PNC road-show was arranged at force headquarters and invitations sent out force-wide, but only 50 people attended. In another force, road-shows in BCUs were arranged and at some venues there was no attendance at all. Forces should ensure that an accountability mechanism exists for attendance at these expensive marketing initiatives, as opportunities to raise staff knowledge of PNC and Phoenix capabilities are being missed.

7.1.4 There are other simple marketing opportunities available that were not being used. For example, in one BCU headquarters visited there were no PNC posters on any corridor or parade room walls. In one force, a former PNC operator commented that no marketing had taken place for two to three years and that no PNC or Phoenix information was contained on the force intranet site. In another force, one person was not aware of any PNC marketing for over ten years. Yet some forces had used innovative methods to market applications to staff such as distributing PITO mugs, coasters, mouse mats, a variety of marketing booklets and newspaper articles. Other specific examples included:

GOOD PRACTICE

In Merseyside Police e-mails on PNC had been sent to various parts of the force.

Dyfed Powys Police had a Force Intranet page covering PNC applications and their potential uses.

In Avon and Somerset Constabulary a series of articles had been prepared on the force's IT systems including bulletins entitled: 'The use of PNC as an investigation tool' and 'PNC what's in it for you?'

Her Majesty's Inspector commends forces on some of the imaginative ways being employed to market PNC and Phoenix systems, but closer links should be established between any marketing plan and initiatives, and the overall strategic development of them.

7.2 Integration of Information Systems in Force Planning Documents

7.2.1 The 1998 PRG report highlighted that Phoenix was often absent from forces' strategic planning and some had significant progress to make. Her Majesty's Inspector agrees it is essential that such systems are formally integrated into the planning process. Specifically, the PRG report stated in its conclusions:

'Strategic planning, linking forthcoming requirements and increasing demands on the criminal record keeping function with staffing, resource levels and working practices, are not yet commonplace.' (page 38)

7.2.2 During the Inspection the following force planning documents were examined for references to the use, development and marketing of national police information systems:

- ❑ crime Reduction Strategies
- ❑ crime Strategies
- ❑ draft Best Value Performance Plans
- ❑ CID/Crime Management Departmental/Business Plans
- ❑ local Policing Plans
- ❑ force Policing Plans.

7.2.3 Her Majesty's Inspector was concerned to find that, other than a brief entry in Avon and Somerset Constabulary's Criminal Justice Policing Plan, none of the documents contained any reference to key information systems.

Recommendation 11

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the marketing, use and development of national police information systems is integrated into appropriate force, local and departmental, strategic planning documents.



Marketing, Strategy and Training

7.3 PNC Steering Groups and Strategic Plans

7.3.1 If forces are to realise the full potential of national police information systems such as PNC and Phoenix it is essential that they establish a strategic view as to their use, marketing and development. The Inspection Team found that five forces had strategic PNC Groups, one force had a PNC User Group and another had recommended the introduction of such a group. Given that the 1998 PRG Report outlined an absence of strategic thinking surrounding PNC and Phoenix, it was disappointing to find several forces who did not have such a group. Research conducted by the working group for the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC indicated that 16 out of 32 forces responding did not have such a group.

GOOD PRACTICE

Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Merseyside Police and Lancashire Constabulary all have strategic PNC Steering Groups with chief officer membership.

7.3.2 The work of a Strategic PNC Group should be linked to an overall strategic plan for PNC development in forces. Such a plan is essential to ensure a co-ordinated and strategic approach is taken in the use, development and marketing of PNC applications and other systems. Of those forces visited during the Inspection none had yet benefited from developing an overall strategic plan. Her Majesty's Inspector also considers chief officer membership to be a powerful way of heightening staff awareness of compliance issues. It provides a linkage between the development of information systems such as PNC and Phoenix, and the overall strategic development within forces at chief officer level.

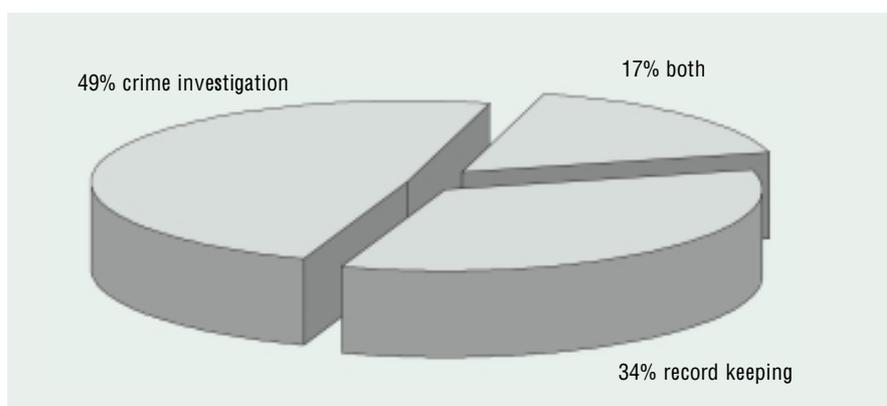
Recommendation 12

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that where not already in place, forces should establish a strategic PNC Steering Group. This group should develop and be responsible for a strategic plan covering the development, use and marketing of PNC and Phoenix.

7.4 Organisational Positioning

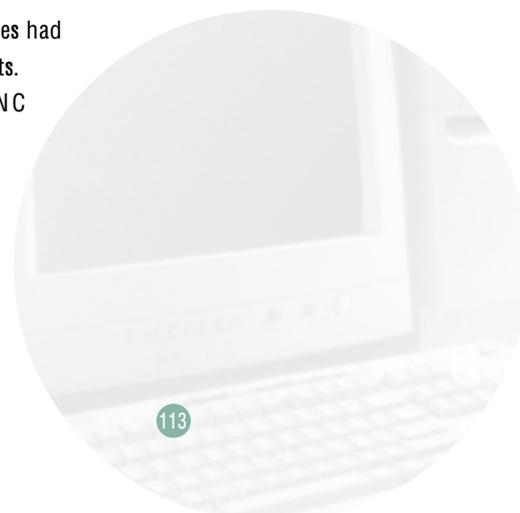
7.4.1 In the introduction to this report the difficulty of modifying PNC's image from a record keeping facility to a valuable investigative tool was discussed. A positive image of PNC and all its applications, such as Phoenix, is vital in getting operational officers to use the systems to their full potential. In order to establish how PNC is currently viewed, officers were asked for their perception of the PNC system. The responses are shown below in Chart 2

Chart 2: PC's and DC's Perception of PNC – All Forces



7.4.2 From Chart 2 it can be seen that although 49% of officers saw PNC as a crime investigation tool, 34% saw it still primarily as a record keeping facility. The perception of PNC, could be related to where in the organisation a force places its PNC related functions. When PNC and Phoenix, and other investigative applications, are placed within the principal CID related departments, it can potentially have a positive influence on the perception of staff.

7.4.3 Her Majesty's Inspector was encouraged to find that a number of forces had placed PNC and Phoenix applications within CID related departments. Some forces were also looking to extend the availability and use of PNC and Phoenix applications by increasing the number and location of operators in their force area, thereby making them more accessible to operational staff.



Marketing, Strategy and Training

GOOD PRACTICE

In Merseyside Police QUEST and CCA were operated by BCU based analysts.

In West Midlands Police in addition to the Force Intelligence Bureau, BCU based analysts operate VODS and QUEST. The force Stolen Vehicle Squad Examiners, Traffic Intelligence Units and Motorway Control Centre were also trained in certain PNC and Phoenix applications.

7.4.4 Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that there are clear benefits to be gained from emphasising the important investigative capabilities of PNC and Phoenix, and associated applications, by placing them within CID related departments. Equally important, as recognised by a number of forces visited, is the accessibility of these systems to operational staff. Provided responsibility for the overall management of the system is clearly identified these are positive steps.

Number of Departments Operating and Managing PNC, Phoenix and SCAS

7.4.5 Her Majesty's Inspector was keen to establish the number of departments and the corresponding number of managers responsible for PNC, Phoenix and SCAS applications. This is important in relation to the strategic development of PNC and Phoenix, maintaining an overview of system problems, including marketing and use, and ensuring compliance with standards across a force area. The number of departments and managers found during the Inspection are shown below.

Table 10: Number of force departments and managers responsible for the management of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS applications

Force	Number of departments operating PNC applications, Phoenix and SCAS	Number of managers responsible for PNC applications, Phoenix and SCAS
A	2	2
B	5	5
C	3	2
D	2	2
E	1	1
F	9	3
G	3	4
H	3	2
I	2	1
J	4	3
K	26	24

- 7.4.6 Table 10 shows that from the 11 forces visited, five had more than two managers responsible for PNC, Phoenix and SCAS applications. One force visited, had 24 managers involved. This was, however, as a consequence of the force increasing accessibility to PNC applications by devolving their operation to BCU based staff. Whilst there can be considerable benefits in improving accessibility by dispersing the operation of applications across a force, it is important to establish an overview of issues and problems connected with the systems and their use. It was found in some forces that, given the high number of managers involved, it was difficult for lines of accountability to be identified and for the force to achieve consistent compliance standards. In such forces it was difficult to establish who was responsible for marketing the systems and their crime reduction potential.

Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that, whilst forces are encouraged to improve accessibility to the various applications, they should ensure that they establish clear responsibilities for the overall management and marketing of systems.

7.5 PNC Training

- 7.5.1 The provision of high quality training is a key ingredient in ensuring all staff are equipped to obtain the maximum crime reduction benefits from PNC applications. The importance of training was highlighted in the 1998 PRG Report. Training is also an essential precursor to system compliance. The Inspection Team asked the 11 forces to supply details of the content of their in-force PNC training courses. The Inspection Team then consulted with the National PNC Training Centre at Leicester to establish a consensus view on the content of the course details submitted.
- 7.5.2 Forces were also asked to supply details of their trainers presently conducting in-force PNC training, and details of when they passed a nationally accredited National Police Training (NPT) PNC Trainers Course.

It is a requirement of the code under which forces are connected to PNC that all persons having access to PNC must have received the correct training. It has also been agreed, by the PNC Director, NPT and user groups, that training will only be delivered by trainers who have successfully attended the nationally accredited PNC Trainers Course.

Marketing, Strategy and Training

Course Content

- 7.5.3 In terms of the course analysis undertaken, Her Majesty's Inspector has the following observations to make:
- ❑ Some courses contained scheduled exercises as part of each session which enabled students to put their learning into practice. Some of these were contextualised around operational policing - this is good practice.
 - ❑ Some PNC courses were tailored to a specific audience, to meet their specified needs. This was considered a commendable practice provided that the students' PNC authority reflected both the training provided, and the needs of the post they occupied.
 - ❑ On some courses there was no 'end-of-course' assessment to test competency levels. This is a necessary feature. Where this was present the pass mark was published - this was good practice. However, some assessments appeared to be only theory based, where a practically based assessment should be standard for course participants.
 - ❑ Some PNC courses aimed at 'light users' of the system offered limited 'hands on' use of the system. The practical operation of the system should have been maximised to ensure the retention of knowledge.
 - ❑ Some PNC Mobile Data Courses were scheduled for only one day. This period was considered too short to cover Names Searching, Wanted/Missing reports, Disqualified Driver details, Nominal details, Vehicle Records or Reports together with Data Protection and the use of PNC terminals themselves.
 - ❑ Some forces offer PNC Operator training to probationary constables, who only normally receive an overview of the system in most forces. This is considered good practice. If this is to be done, though, they should receive the same minimum level of operator training, and be subject to the same assessments, as any other operator.
 - ❑ In a variety of courses, too little time was allocated to some key elements. In one force, the Wanted/Missing persons facility was covered in only 40 minutes (with the risks that incorrect interpretation of data could lead to unlawful arrests). Similarly, Disqualified Driver reports were dealt with in only 30 minutes. Both of these were considered unrealistic.
 - ❑ Some 'enquiry only' courses were only of three days duration when five days is more realistic to cover the input that is required.
 - ❑ The PNC Property Application and PNC Transaction Logs were sometimes omitted or given minimal coverage in most courses.

- 7.5.4 The issues raised in the above analysis need to be addressed if PNC training time is to be used to maximum effect. If forces are to maximise the use of systems and thereby realise their full potential to reduce and detect crime, it is essential operators are given the necessary skills to achieve this. Any increased training commitment should be considered an investment and a tactic by forces to achieve better performance. Whilst the above comments relate only to the course content of the 11 forces visited, many features will affect forces not Inspected.

Her Majesty's Inspector is of the opinion that there is a need to establish a national standard for PNC training course content delivered by forces. He supports the ACPO led initiative, as part of their Compliance Strategy, requesting National Police Training to undertake such a task. He understands that NPT have already commenced work on this and Her Majesty's Inspector looks forward to its early completion.

PNC Trainers

- 7.5.5 The Inspection Team also examined whether in-force PNC Trainers had successfully passed the NPT PNC trainers course as detailed above. It was found that the majority of PNC trainers had passed the approved national course. However, in one force, three out of four PNC trainers had not attended an approved course.
- 7.5.6 The NPT PNC Trainers Course lasts for five weeks yet one force delivers its own 'in house' one-day "PNC Trainers Course". On completion of this one-day course the students are considered 'qualified' to deliver PNC training in-force. Although some of the students attending this in-force training course could have been BCU training staff some of them may not have had any previous experience of the PNC system or training. The Inspection Team also noted that vital information on key PNC manuals and Data Protection were not covered on the course but were provided once the session had been completed. Students did though have to acknowledge receipt of the manuals before they had access to the PNC system. The force concerned had 92 'qualified PNC trainers' who had received this one-day input.
- 7.5.7 This is a clear example of non-compliance to agreed PNC training standards which are intended to offer protection to forces and the public in terms of data integrity. The response of forces to PNC training standards was subject of comment in the 1998 PRG report and appears to be still relevant today in some forces, namely:



Marketing, Strategy and Training

'Despite agreed standards for PNC training, forces continue to make their own rules'.

Her Majesty's Inspector considers such localised arrangements to be undermining national PNC training standards and reminds forces of the standards agreed between the PNC Director, NPT and user groups

Recommendation 13

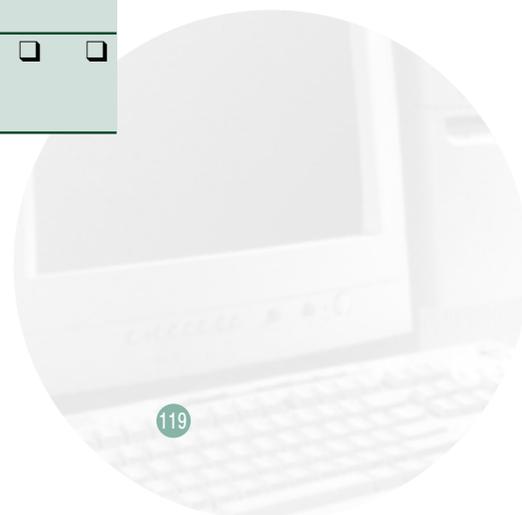
Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces conduct an audit of their present in-force PNC trainers to ensure they have received nationally accredited training. Any individuals who have not been accredited as PNC trainers by National Police Training should not conduct in-force PNC training.

7.6 Conclusion

- 7.6.1 All of the measures combined within this chapter will serve to raise the level of awareness amongst staff of systems and their capabilities. The systems are however only as good as the information they contain. The effectiveness of all of the systems relies on the provision of timely, accurate and relevant data. Forces should reinforce to staff the link between efficient and accurate provision of information and its overall effect on force performance.

7 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 7

Marketing, Strategy and Training	Yes	No
Marketing System Capabilities		
Are marketing activities structured to ensure all applications and staff are covered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there appropriate accountability to ensure attendance at marketing events arranged to promote system capabilities ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is marketing undertaken making the best use of all methods available, including the use of I.T?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are marketing activities undertaken linked to the overall strategic plan for PNC development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integration of Information Systems in Force Planning Documents		
Is the marketing, use and development of national police information systems integrated in force local and departmental planning documents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PNC Steering Groups and Strategic plans		
Is there a strategic force PNC Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the membership of the PNC Steering group include someone at chief officer level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force PNC Steering Group developed an overall strategic plan covering the use, development and marketing of PNC and Phoenix ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisational Positioning		
Are PNC applications line managed by CID related departments ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If not, has the force examined existing arrangements to assess if there are marketing benefits to be gained by placing PNC applications within CID related departments ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force established clear responsibilities for the overall management and marketing of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS systems ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force examined its overall line management of PNC, Phoenix and SCAS applications to assess if there are any improvements to be gained by rationalising existing arrangements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PNC Training		
Has the force audited its present PNC training staff to ensure that only those who have received nationally accredited training conduct in-force PNC training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



8

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

8.1 Staffing Levels and Performance Standards

8.2 Phoenix Performance Indicators

8.3 Phoenix Source Document (PSD) Submission

8.4 Phoenix Related Issues

8.5 Conclusion



8

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

This chapter examines the resources allocated to the operation of Phoenix and performance in relation to existing Phoenix standards. It also describes the new national Phoenix performance indicators developed as part of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC and their potential impact on force performance figures. The final part of the chapter examines practices and procedures which affect force performance in entering information onto Phoenix, particularly those which affect accuracy.



8.1 Staffing Levels and Performance Standards

Entering Data onto the Phoenix System

8.1.1 When discussing resources allocated to Phoenix it is important to understand the different working practices operated by forces. When a person is arrested and bailed, charged or cautioned, their name, personal description and case details are recorded by case officers¹ and placed onto Phoenix in one of two ways:

- ❑ Most forces require case officers to complete a Phoenix Source Document (PSD) and the details are then manually entered onto the Phoenix system by dedicated staff.
- ❑ Some forces use a computerised link, also known as an interface, to electronically transfer information already recorded on another computer system, such as a custody computer, onto Phoenix.

¹ These can be from non-police agencies
- see section 8.3

Initial Registration

8.1.2 When information is entered onto Phoenix there is a minimum number of mandatory fields that have to be completed. These details must be provided to register an entry on the Phoenix system. Some forces choose to initially enter only this minimum detail – this is referred to as a 'partial update' or 'skeleton record'. This is done so that details are registered as quickly as possible. This has some benefits in that at least preliminary information is available quickly for operational reference and can act as a prompt for further research. There are however several personal descriptive fields that are not included in these records which are valuable information to search and retrieve. Problems can result later if forces do not ensure 'skeleton records' are fully populated as soon as possible after initial registration as omitted details hamper the capabilities of QUEST² to provide information.

² see page 3



Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

8.1.3 Currently, forces are only measured on how quickly they initially register records but not on how complete they are. Accordingly, when looking at performance figures on the speed of entering arrest/summons reports later in this chapter it is important to note whether a 'skeleton record' is used.

Staffing Levels

8.1.4 Some forces have a single Phoenix Department usually located at force headquarters - this is referred to as 'central inputting'. Others have a number of Phoenix Departments - this is referred to as 'satellite inputting'. Forces operate Phoenix facilities on either a 24-hour or part-time basis.

8.1.5 During the Inspection details were obtained of staff numbers involved in 'Phoenix inputting, including court resulting', in each force. These figures have been used in this report to draw comparisons. It is important to note that in some forces staff were multi-skilled conducting several tasks from Phoenix inputting to crime recording. The range of resource allocation varied considerably in the 11 forces visited and is shown in Table 11 .

Table 11: The range of resource allocation to Phoenix inputting

Force	Number of arrest / summons reports entered Jan - Dec 1999*	Number of staff involved in Phoenix inputting including court resulting	Staff ratio to arrest/summons reports	Satellite inputting and number of offices [▲]	Central inputting	Interface	24hr inputting
A	32,302	51 [†]	1:633	✗	✓	✗	✓
B	19,125	7	1:2,732	✓ 3	✗	✗	✗
C	23,655	9	1:2,628	✗	✓	✗	✗
D	41,727	36 [†]	1:1,159	✓ 3	✗	✗	✗
E	28,954	35 [†]	1:827	✗	✓	✗	Arrest Summons only
F	120,982	196 [†]	1:617	✓ 7	✗	✓	Initial skeleton records for Arrest Summons only
G	77,550	27 [†]	1:2,872	✗	✓	✓	✓
H	81,235	17	1:4,779	✗	✓	✗	✗
I	37,014	16 [†]	1:2,313	✗	✓	✗	✗
J	56,323	31	1:1,817	✗	✓	✗	✗
K	118,633	140 [†]	1:847	✓ 14	✗	✗	✓

[†] Multi functional staff ^{*}Based on figures supplied by PITO [▲] Figures provided by forces

8.1.6 It can be seen from Table 11 that the ratio of staff to arrest/summons reports has a wide variation from 1 to 617 in Force F to 1 to 4,779 in Force H.

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

The Inspection found that there was no systematic relationship between levels of resources allocated to Phoenix and whether forces input centrally or by satellite offices. For example, Force B had three satellite offices and seven staff compared to Force D who had three satellite offices and 36 staff. Additionally, any comparisons should also take account of whether forces used multi-skilled staff.

8.1.7 Resource allocation needs to be placed not only in the context of workload but also performance. PITO currently measure forces against the quickest 50% of court results and arrest/summons entries achieved. They also monitor the number of records with postcodes entered and those with *Modus Operandi* (MO)³ details using agreed 'keywords'. The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC⁴ recommends that performance standards for court results and arrest/summons details should be raised significantly⁵ although there will be significant resourcing issues that forces will have to address to attain these.

³ description of how an offender commits an offence

⁴ see chapter 5

⁵ see section 8.2

8.1.8 Table 12 below shows resource allocations and present performance statistics for Phoenix. It also indicates those forces that only complete 'skeleton records'.

Table 12: Resource allocation and present performance statistics for Phoenix inputting

Force	Number of staff involved in Phoenix inputting and court resulting	Number of arrest / summons records entered Jan - Dec 1999*	Average time taken to enter 50% of quickest arrest / summons Jan - Dec 1999*	Average time taken to enter 50% of quickest court results Jan - Dec 1999*	Cumulative total offences with keywords in Modus Operandi May 1995 - Dec 1999*	Satellite inputting	Central inputting	24hr inputting
A	51 [†]	32,302	1 day [‡]	16 day [§]	1,840	✗	✓	✓
B	7	19,125	14 days	61 days	1,254	✓	✗	✗
C	9	23,655	11 days	7 days	91	✗	✓	✗
D	36 [†]	41,727	1 day [‡]	7 days	865	✓	✗	✗
E	35 [†]	28,954	1 day [‡]	36 day [§]	4,500	✗	✓	Arrest Summons only
F	196 [†]	120,982	1 day [‡]	20 day [§]	123	✓	✗	Initial skeleton records for Arrest Summons only
G	27 [†]	77,550	5 days	59 days	4	✗	✓	✓
H	17	81,235	9 days	10 days	1,742	✗	✓	✗
I	16 [†]	37,014	4 days [‡]	19 days [‡]	1,576	✗	✓	✗
J	31	56,323	13 days	44 days	668	✗	✓	✗
K	140 [†]	118,633	3 days	49 days	142	✓	✗	✓

[†] Multi functional staff

*Based on figures supplied by PITO on a cumulative basis since measurement began.

[‡] Figures provided by forces

[§] Skeleton record inputting

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- 8.1.9 It can be seen from Table 12 that the time taken to enter 50% of the quickest arrest/summons reports varied between 1 day and 14 days. Those forces (A, D, E, F and I) who enter 'skeleton records' had a much quicker average time to initially register records onto Phoenix. However, Force K was able to attain an average of 3 days without the use of skeleton records despite entering the second highest amount of records. It did have the second highest level of resources albeit that they were multi-skilled staff.

The 1998 PRG report highlighted that using 'skeleton records' did not necessarily reduce the overall time taken to create a full record because the same total information is required. This can result in records not being fully populated thereafter. During the Inspection it was identified that a number of forces who entered 'skeleton records' did not have systems in place to ensure they were all fully populated later. This severely undermines the capabilities and potential of QUEST. It was also found that the resource time freed by entering skeleton records was not necessarily channelled into the more qualitative areas of Phoenix data. It can also be seen that although Forces D and F made use of skeleton records they entered a low proportion of offence MOs with keywords included.

Her Majesty's Inspector asks forces to consider the qualitative versus speed issues when deciding whether to enter 'skeleton records' on Phoenix. The use of 'skeleton records' can provide minimal but quick essential operational information and identify when there is need for further research. The benefits of this initial operational information are undermined by the absence of a system to ensure that initial 'skeleton records' are fully populated promptly thereafter. He urges forces to concentrate equally on the quality of information placed onto the system and recognise that this will have resourcing implications with a balance between numbers and quality.

⁶ see section 8.2

- 8.1.10 The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC performance standards⁶ for Phoenix provide a welcome quality assurance mechanism in this respect but again will have resourcing implications for forces. Table 13 illustrates the effects of changing measurement from the quickest 50% of entries to the quickest 90% as detailed in the strategy.

Table 13: The effects of changing measurement from the quickest 50% of entries to the quickest 90%

Force	Number of staff involved in Phoenix inputting and court resulting	Number of arrest / summons records entered Jan - Dec 1999*	Average number of days taken to enter quickest 50% arrest / summons details Jan - Dec 1999*	Average number of days taken to enter quickest 90% initial arrest / summons details Mar 99 - Feb 2000*	Difference	Average number of days taken to enter quickest 50% of court results*	Average number of days taken to enter quickest 90% of court results* ¹ Mar 99 - Feb 2000	Difference
A	51 [†]	32,302	1 day	16 days	15 days	16 days	146 days	130 days
B	7	19,125	14 days	60 days	46 days	61 days	217 days	156 days
C	9	23,655	11 days	41 days	31 days	7 days	28 days	21 days
D	36 [†]	41,727	1 day	22 days	21 days	7 days	225 days	218 days
E	35 [†]	28,954	1 day	7 days	6 days	36 days	238 days	202 days
F	196 [†]	120,982	1 day ¹	6 days	5 days	20 days	280 days	260 days
G	27 [†]	77,550	5 days	39 days	34 days	59 days	413 days	354 days
H	17	81,235	9 days	37 days	28 days	10 days	25 days	15 days
I	16 [†]	37,014	4 days	51 days	48 days	19 days	75 days	56 days
J	31	56,323	13 days	105 days	92 days	44 days	138 days	94 days
K	140 [†]	118,633	3 days	52 days	47 days	49 days	244 days	195 days

[†] Multi functional staff

*Based on figures supplied by PITO

¹ Source: figures obtained from an existing PITO program and have yet to be generated on the PI advocated as 100% for court results

8.1.11 From Table 13 it can be seen that using existing levels of resources there would be a huge gap between current performance of the quickest 50% of those details entered and the new standard of 90% suggested by ACPO. Forces will need to consider this issue when reviewing Phoenix resourcing levels. The difference in performance for forces between existing and proposed indicators varies considerably for entering arrest details from 5 days to 92 days. In relation to court results increases in delays would vary from 15 days to 354 days. There are serious implications resulting from the delayed entry of court results for all aspects of crime reduction, investigation and the administration of justice. This requires urgent research by forces given that these variances in performance relate to a national IT system requiring common Phoenix information. Forces need to benchmark their performance and identify success factors.



Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

Central or Satellite Inputting Offices?

- 8.1.12 The figures shown in Table 13 above do not produce a conclusive argument as to whether central inputting or satellite offices are more effective in terms of current Phoenix performance. In terms of speed of entering information onto Phoenix both central and satellite inputting operate with varying degrees of success.
- 8.1.13 In terms of quality and accuracy however, significant factors include establishing effective auditing mechanisms and ensuring compliance with standards. These issues are more easily managed using a central inputting centre. Indeed HMIC's own PNC Compliance Audit Section has identified a trend of fewer errors in forces that use a centralised Phoenix inputting centre. This stems principally from common working practices and dedicated operating staff. This is supported by the evidence found in this Inspection where it was identified that a common weakness of 'satellite offices' was a failure to co-ordinate working practices resulting in variable standards. Forces should carefully consider whether the advantages of having localised satellite offices outweigh the difficulties in establishing effective common compliance standards. This same issue is highlighted in Chapter 3 of this report on centralised or BCU based crime recording units.
- 8.1.14 The level of resources afforded to Phoenix is a matter for individual forces. They should however, study their HMIC PNC Compliance Audit findings and all the issues raised within this report. The performance improvements that are required though, are more an issue of establishing efficient processes and effective use of staff, than the quantity of resources employed.

Her Majesty's Inspector urges forces to analyse their performance in relation to both existing and the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC performance standards and establish working arrangements necessary to achieve those standards.

8.2 Phoenix Performance Indicators

- 8.2.1 The 1998 PRG report highlighted the need for the Police Service to develop appropriate Phoenix performance indicators to promote system compliance. The area of Phoenix data quality has until now only been evaluated through performance statistics produced and monitored by PITO. Although ACPO indicated their support for Phoenix performance standards these have never been formalised. At present, monitoring by PITO covers:

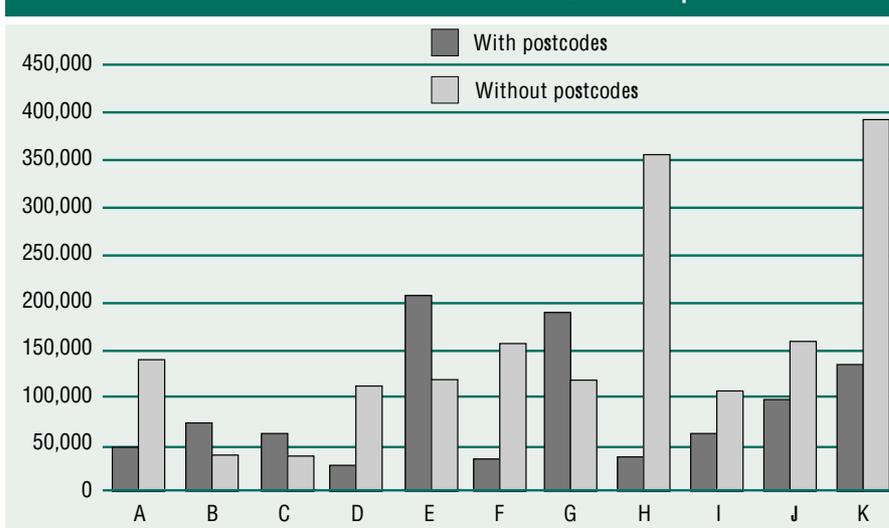
Current Phoenix Performance information

- 1) The time taken by a force to enter the quickest 50% of its arrest/summons reports onto Phoenix. The statistics also indicate those forces who update using only a 'skeleton record'.
- 2) The time taken by a force to enter from the court date, the quickest 50% of court results. This does not presently cover the proportion of delay attributable to awaiting the arrival of results from the various Magistrate and Crown Courts.
- 3) The cumulative total of offences with *Modus Operandi* details entered using the approved 'Keyword' approach.
- 4) The percentage and totals of postcode details attached to addresses entered onto Phoenix.

8.2.2 Her Majesty's Inspector was keen to assess the current position of forces according to PITO figures. Performance in relation to arrest/summons entries and court results has already been covered above. The following two graphs show forces' performance relating to post-coding addresses on records entered onto the Phoenix system.

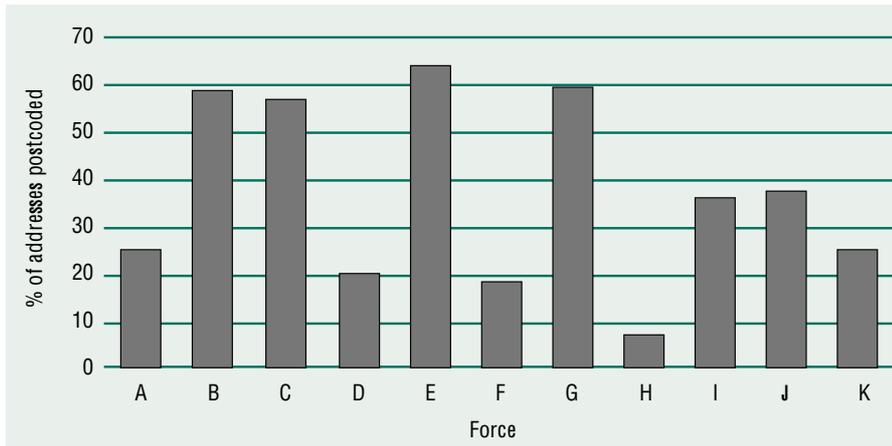
Post-coding Address Records on Phoenix

Chart 3: Number of address records entered with/without postcodes



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Chart 4: Percentage of addresses recorded on Phoenix which are postcoded – by force



8.2.3 Chart 3 shows that only four Forces, B,C,E and G are post-coding more than half of the addresses on records they enter on Phoenix. It also illustrates the number of records involved with Force K omitting nearly 400,000 postcodes and Force C omitting nearly 45,000 postcodes. Chart 4 profiles this same information in terms of percentage compliance and from this perspective it can be seen that Force H is only entering postcodes on about 10% of address records whereas Force E is achieving over 60% compliance.

8.2.4 The low compliance rate of some forces is seriously undermining the capabilities of QUEST because a postcode is a key search criterion. This is illustrated by one force which investigated a serious offence and interrogated QUEST using postcodes to retrieve previous offenders details, and subsequently expressed disappointment that only a few records had been received. Subsequent enquiries from PITO revealed that 91% of that force's entries on Phoenix did not have a postcode.

Keywords on *Modus Operandi* (MO)

8.2.5 On each Phoenix offence record there should be a description of how the offender committed the offence - this is known as the '*Modus Operandi*' (MO). In order to facilitate searching of tens of thousands of MOs held on Phoenix the system uses agreed phrases or words called 'keywords'. An absence of keywords seriously undermines the search capability of QUEST. Table 14 illustrates the number of offences which had keywords included in the MO.

Table 14: Keywords included in MOs

Force	Total*	Total recorded crime (March 1998 – April 1999)
A	1,840	150,089
B	1,254	49,076
C	91	24,588
D	865	130,691
E	4,500	129,340
F	123	118,117
G	4	140,874
H	1,742	151,298
I	1,576	130,402
J	668	176,477
K	142	314,611

* Based on figures supplied by PITO

- 8.2.6 Table 14 shows that Force G had entered only 4 offences with keywords yet Force E had managed 4,500. Her Majesty's Inspector finds this disparity in performance unacceptable particularly as the two forces in question have similar crime rates. He congratulates those forces who have systems in place to ensure compliance with this important system requirement. This example graphically illustrates the need for forces to produce more detailed information on their Phoenix system performance.
- 8.2.7 These problems have been acknowledged by ACPO who have developed a set of penetrating and exacting Phoenix performance indicators within their Compliance Strategy. Her Majesty's Inspector is convinced that this strategic initiative from ACPO will result in essential data integrity safeguards for the service. The proposed measures are discussed below.

The ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC - National Phoenix Performance Indicators

- 8.2.8 Although the following performance indicators are still subject to possible amendment Her Majesty's Inspector supports their introduction and is pleased that they have now received full ACPO endorsement⁷. The new indicators together with ACPO narrative are shown below:

⁷ endorsed by ACPO Council in April 2000

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Timeliness Performance Indicators

Arrest and Charge

Initial details satisfying operational need 90% within 24 hours.

Full entry - 90% within 5 days.

Once compliance with 1 and 2 above is obtained, then a staged improvement to 90% within 24 hours for full entry.

Bail Conditions

Police bail 100% within 24 hours.

Eventually the Service should aspire to establishing an identical PI standard in relation to court bail conditions. Appropriate technology and agreements need to be in place before this can be realised.

Warning Signals

90% within 24 hours.

This proposed performance indicator will require an appropriate measurement system to be developed by PITO to ensure compliance remains measurable. (Her Majesty's Inspector understands that due to measurement difficulties this indicator may not be adopted)

Court Case Results - Police Entered

100% entered within 72 hours of coming into police possession.

This performance indicator standard will remain valid only whilst work is continuing on the computerised link between forces and magistrates courts.

Court Case Results - Court Entered

100% within 24 hours.

Quality Performance Indicators

Number of offences with method recorded - 90%

Number of offences with location postcode recorded - 95%

Number of addresses with postcode recorded - 95%

Number of offences (England and Wales) recorded to the 4th level ACPO

Offence Code

Number of marks, scars, abnormalities created with at least one keyword included - 95%

It is important to note that whilst forces could (and currently do) use the skeleton record approach to achieve the timeliness performance indicator (PI) - they would need to complete a full record to achieve the quality PIs. So using the two sets of indicators would solve the current problem of forces getting skeleton records on quickly and not pursuing full records. It would also permit the fast entry of essential operational information.

It is recognised that a significant number of forces do not achieve the present PI standards. This will become even more pronounced given the more exacting targets proposed.

- 8.2.9 With regard to the first 'timeliness' indicator relating to 'arrest and charge' Her Majesty's Inspector is aware that the issue of entering skeleton records is central

to the secondary indicator to measure timeliness for a full arrest/summons update. Given the collective findings in this inspection concerning problems with the completeness, accuracy and timelines of Phoenix entries he fully supports this additional measure as it will optimise the capabilities of QUEST. He is however aware that this secondary performance indicator may prove problematic to implement.

Her Majesty's Inspector invites PITO to develop alternative options for consideration by ACPO should this secondary indicator not be feasible to adopt.

- 8.2.10 The development of the proposed ACPO led performance indicators is an essential ingredient in developing police data quality and system compliance. The exacting standards advocated will present a considerable challenge for forces and will require a more sustained and committed response to data compliance than has been hitherto apparent.

Her Majesty's Inspector expects chief officers to provide the appropriate leadership to deliver the performance improvements for data integrity and compliance standards proposed by ACPO.

8.3 Phoenix Source Document (PSD) Submission

- 8.3.1 In order to identify what influenced force performance the Inspection Team examined and audited a number of areas relating to Phoenix updating and PSD submission.

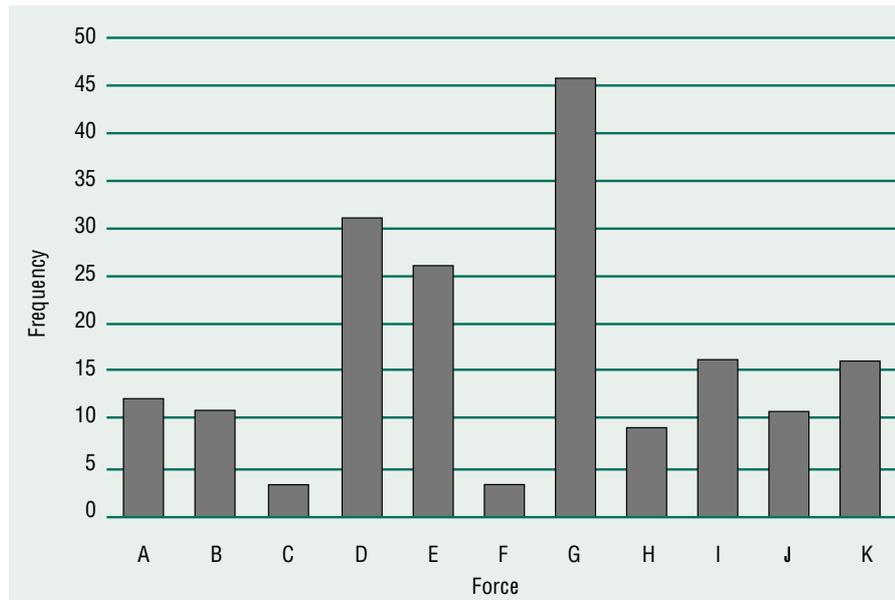
Timeliness Issues

- 8.3.2 The 11 forces were asked to provide 20 PSDs which had arrived for entering onto Phoenix on the day of the Inspection. The time delay between the date the PSDs were completed by originating officers and the date of their arrival ready for entry was calculated. The results were:



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Chart 5: Average number of days Phoenix Source Documents took from their origination to arrival for entering onto Phoenix in 20 audited documents



8.3.3 Chart 5 reveals that the average time delays ranged from less than five days to over 45 days. It is important to note that these are average delays found on the 20 PSDs audited within each force. Table 15 illustrates the actual range of delays that were found in the same audit.

Table 15: Range of delays in PSD submission

Force	Quickest PSD submission (days)	Slowest PSD submission (days)
A	5	39
B	5	24
C	5	6
D	3	166
E	1	278
F	2	9
G	35	87
H	5	26
I	2	247
J	4	25
K	4	75

8.3.4 Table 15 above identifies that average delays shown in Chart 5 disguise the huge range of delays in entering some PSDs. Whilst five forces managed to enter PSDs within 48 hours of the documents origination many were delayed in excess of five days with three instances of PSDs being delayed in excess of 240 days. This is unacceptable and illustrates the need for forces to examine their performance in relation to PSD submission (possible reasons for delays are discussed later in this chapter). The delays also have a serious impact on the system's criminal intelligence capability.

8.3.5 In order to verify the Inspection Team's findings PITO provided details of PSD submissions for the 11 forces for a one month period. The results are shown in Table 16:

Table 16: PITO figures showing range of delays for PSD submission for a one month period

Number of Arrest/Summons Reports Entered during March 2000*					
Force	Time delay				
	In 24 hrs	Between 5-7 days	Between 1-2 months	Between 6 months – 1 year	More than 1 year
A	1,936	17	99	21	17
B	182	58	31	8	0
C	45	165	49	11	6
D	1,321	116	94	16	12
E	2,445	41	24	26	12
F	2,381	194	40	20	8
G	823	201	436	23	46
H	3	1,107	280	23	10
I	1,260	50	112	11	5
J	1	518	293	83	77
K	1,697	447	366	94	27

*Based on figures supplied by PITO

8.3.6 Table 16 above reveals the same pattern in delays as found by the Inspection Team during their audit of 20 PSDs in each force. Some forces are able to enter a significant number of their PSDs within 24 hours whereas other forces routinely take more than five days. Again there were extremes with Force J having 77 PSDs taking more than a



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year to enter onto the system. The Inspection Team sought to establish reasons for these delays and analysed various working practices and system features surrounding PSD submission. Some possible reasons for delay were:

Delays Resulting from Phoenix Computer Entry Fields and PSD Fields not being Synchronised

- 8.3.7 Phoenix inputting staff in the majority of forces stated they did not experience any major difficulties associated with the layout and sequence of details on PSDs compared to those on the computer entry screen for Phoenix. Members of staff in three forces indicated they suffered minor delays due to the layout of their force's PSD. Forces would benefit from establishing the extent to which this aspect may be affecting overall force performance in promptly entering details onto the Phoenix system.

Delays in Submission of PSDs Resulting from the Number of Process Stages

- 8.3.8 Interim passage of PSDs to other departments prior to arriving for inputting onto Phoenix can contribute to the delay in entering information onto the system. Although none of the forces visited appeared to have an excessive number of destinations through which the PSDs passed before arriving at the Phoenix inputters, one force was aware that passing the PSD through Local Intelligence Officers prior to it being entered onto Phoenix caused delays. In another force Phoenix inputting staff stated that routing PSDs via BCU based administration departments contributed to delays.

Officers Awareness of the Purpose of the PSD.

- 8.3.9 The Inspection Team found that 83% of officers interviewed knew that the information placed on the PSD was used to update Phoenix. Ten percent of officers did not know what the document was used for and 5 % thought it was used for updating other Criminal Justice computers. A further 2% of officers thought the information on PSDs updated local intelligence systems. The fact that 17% of officers interviewed did not know the purpose of the PSD may be linked to the fact that in some forces the document is known by another identity unique to that force. Forces should include inputs on PSDs in future marketing events.

Time of Completion and Forwarding of PSDs by Originating Officers

- 8.3.10 The majority of officers interviewed stated that they tried to complete and forward the PSD by the end of their tour of duty. Some were unaware of any

force policy governing when they should be completed and forwarded although one officer thought it acceptable to be forwarded within 72 hours.

The Role of Supervisors

- 8.3.11 In respect of supervisors (usually sergeants) forwarding PSDs to Phoenix inputting centres, again the majority stated they would action them by the end of their tour of duty. However, some stated they would forward PSDs within 48 hours or by the end of the week.
- 8.3.12 If originating officers take up to 72 hours to submit PSDs and supervisors up to seven days to forward them, it is possible therefore, for PSDs to be 10 days old before leaving supervisors. The evidence from these interviews could be an explanation for some of the delays discussed previously. Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that forces, as part of their research to better understand their performance, establish the extent to which these delays may be occurring.

Perceptions of Phoenix Inputting Staff

- 8.3.13 The Phoenix inputting staff interviewed stated that in their opinion the following aspects of PSD submission adversely affected force performance:
- ❑ resolving errors or omissions on the PSD
 - ❑ routing PSDs to other departments prior to arrival for entry onto Phoenix
 - ❑ poor *Modus Operandi* details
 - ❑ technical problems with the interface contributing to delays

Again these issues should be taken into account by forces when establishing the causes of delays within the system.

Quality Assurance and Accuracy Issues

- 8.3.14 In addition to timeliness Her Majesty's Inspector was keen to examine the accuracy of information entered onto the Phoenix system, in particular, those aspects which impact on the integrity of data and the operation of PNC search applications such as QUEST.

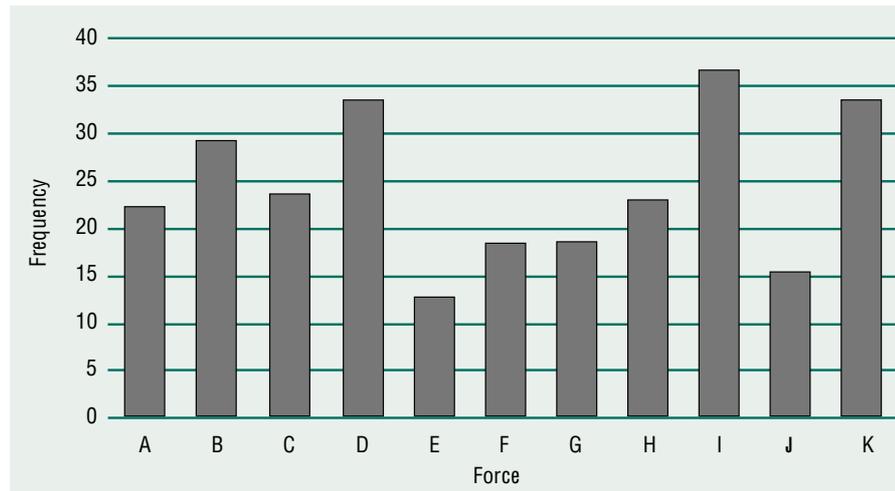
Omissions and Anomalies on Phoenix Source Documents (PSDs)

- 8.3.15 The Inspection Team audited 40 PSDs in each force together with corresponding descriptive and intelligence details printed out, for that person, from the Phoenix system. The findings are shown in Chart 6 below.



Phoenix Data Quality and Performance

Chart 6: Total number of Phoenix Source Documents with omissions/discrepancies from 40 audited documents



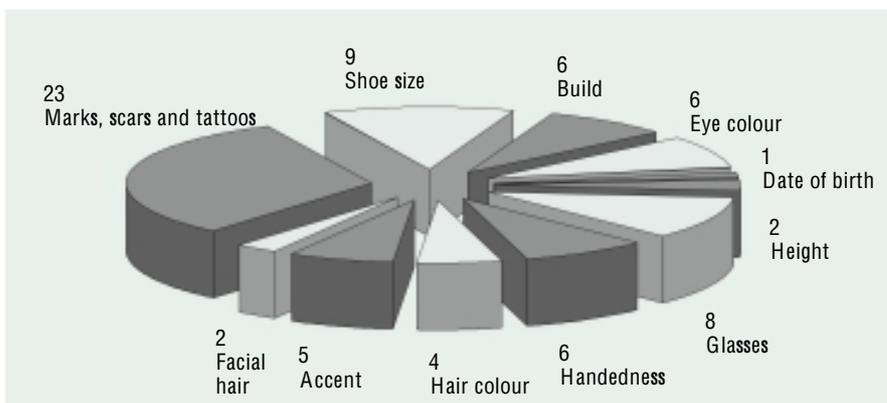
8.3.16 The majority of PSDs audited had omissions on the PSD compared to the details already recorded on Phoenix. The best force (Force E) had 13 PSDs with omissions and the worst (Force I) had 37 out of 40 PSDs with omissions. Although some of the omissions were of a minor nature the Inspection Team was concerned to find that in one force some PSDs had no descriptive details whatsoever. In another force 11 PSDs had two or more descriptive fields left blank.

8.3.17 Yet again this evidence demonstrates that some staff are taking an unprofessional approach to data quality and are undermining a national investigative database. It is important to understand that even the more innocuous descriptive details can provide positive investigative outcomes. A good example was included in a recent PITO presentation:

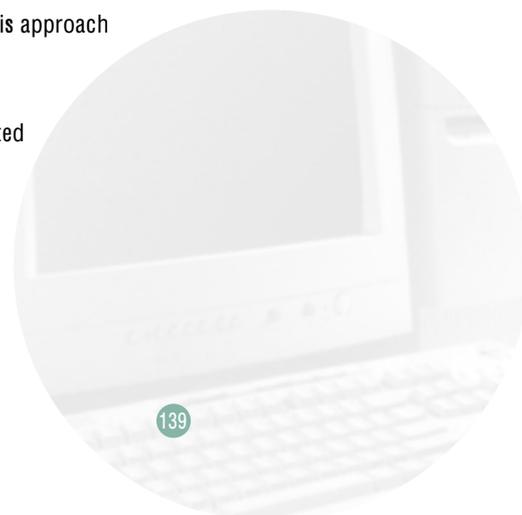
In the Dorset Police area, a burglary offender was linked to the scene of a crime through his unusual, size 13 feet. Details of these had been recorded on a PSD.

8.3.18 The Inspection Team further analysed the PSDs to determine in which of the descriptive and intelligence fields the omissions most frequently occurred. A detailed breakdown of one force's PSDs is shown in Chart 7 below:

Chart 7: PC's and DC's Perception of PNC – All Forces



- 8.3.19 Chart 7 reveals that there were particular problems with marks, scars and tattoos. A number of PSD fields were simply endorsed 'as per PNC' or 'no change since last record'. The Inspection Team established that no PNC checks had been carried out on some of the people to which the PSDs related despite being endorsed to this effect.
- 8.3.20 The time spent by officers on preparing PSDs for previous offenders can be reduced by using information already recorded on Phoenix. Two options are available to forces. Firstly, the Phoenix system will produce either a blank PSD, or one pre-printed with the majority of information already recorded for that person on Phoenix for it then to be verified. Only details of new offences then need to be manually entered onto this PSD by officers. This process though, requires certain technology within forces to print the information at a location where the officer can verify it. Not all forces presently have this.
- 8.3.21 The second option is for officers to obtain a conventional printout of information already recorded on the Phoenix system for a person and to record any updates to that information and new offence details this time on a conventional PSD. The PSD would then have to be endorsed that this approach had been taken to explain gaps in any fields.
- 8.3.22 The Inspection Team found that although some force policies permitted both these approaches, they were not always routinely operated. Where they were in operation, some officers stated they did not always verify the pre-printed details recorded on the PSD, often only completing the blank fields. This approach results in a vital opportunity being lost to update Phoenix intelligence and descriptive data and questions the integrity of some data.



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8.3.23 Despite the practices adopted by some officers, these options, if properly managed, provide an opportunity to reduce administrative burdens on officers. Her Majesty's Inspector is keen for forces to take advantage of streamlined procedures, but given the Inspection Teams findings, he remains concerned at the level of application that is presently afforded to these options by some officers. There are clear grounds to doubt the level of compliance and integrity of information that would result, if these practices were extended further.

He urges those forces who permit this approach to ensure that more rigorous procedures exist to quality assure and check compliance with the verification of information obtained from Phoenix in this way. Given more effective compliance and close monitoring of approaches, there should thereafter be considerable benefits in reducing administrative burdens on officers.

- 8.3.24 The Inspection found further examples of the omission or inaccurate recording of valuable descriptive information on PSDs. In addition, there were examples where valuable information recorded on the PSD had not been entered onto Phoenix. The following are specific examples found across all forces inspected:
- ❑ no tattoos or scars recorded on the PSD, when there were four tattoos and four scars recorded on Phoenix
 - ❑ the scars and tattoos field was left blank on the PSD when there were ten tattoos recorded on Phoenix
 - ❑ the tattoo fields on two of the PSDs were marked 'Unknown', when there were five tattoos and two scars on Phoenix
 - ❑ tattoo details on one PSD were recorded as 'swallow, numerous etc.' and on another 'all over body'
 - ❑ descriptive details on nine separate PSDs were completely blank.
 - ❑ details of an accent were recorded on the PSD as 'southern' when the entry on Phoenix had it recorded as 'Welsh'
 - ❑ a date of birth on the PSD for a first time offender was detailed as 05/04/80 but had been entered on Phoenix as 15/04/80
 - ❑ a 'warning signal' prompt on a PSD was ticked for an offender for murder, which had not been entered onto Phoenix to update an older 'violent' marker
 - ❑ an entry 'spits at police officers' was entered on the PSD but had not been entered onto Phoenix.
- 8.3.25 The above examples represent a small sample of the errors, omissions and discrepancies found by the Inspection Team. In addition, when certain descriptive details such as 'beard colour' were omitted, Phoenix inputting staff

stated they would sometimes guess the details. The implications of the above findings are serious. A graphic example to reinforce this point was found:

One force investigating a serious offence case had witness evidence of an offender sporting a distinctive tattoo. Despite several QUEST checks they were unable to locate the individual using this identifiable clue. From other sources they later traced the offender whose description had previously been recorded on a PSD by the same force. At this time he was sporting the same tattoo. The force retrieved the last PSD and found that the tattoo details field was blank.

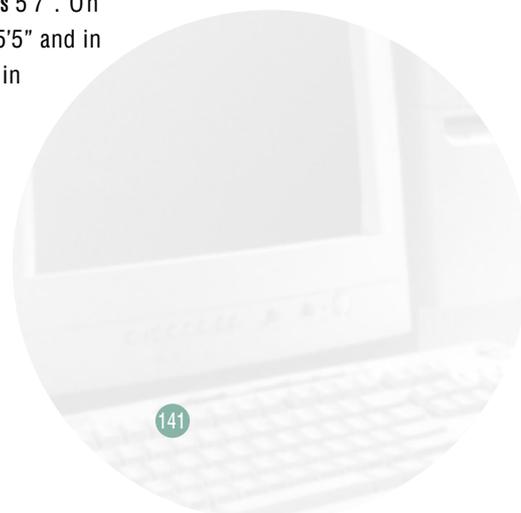
- 8.3.26 The Inspection Team was concerned to find that some forces had also amended their PSD to negate the need for certain key fields to be completed. For example, one force did not require officers to record 'places frequented' and 'habits and mannerisms' on their force PSD despite these being valuable details and a powerful aid to investigation. Places frequented, if postcoded, can be searched using QUEST.

Forces should review their Phoenix Source Document content to ensure they are optimising the investigative and intelligence information that can be captured in this way. At minimum the information required should fully capture the search parameters available on the Phoenix system.

- 8.3.27 The Inspection Team also audited the last three PSDs in relation to 10 adult 'known, active criminals' to assess the accuracy of descriptive details entered by different officers on different occasions for the same offender. The results⁸ are shown below:

- ❑ a PSD had 3 scars and 4 tattoos endorsed, whereas one 5 months later for the same person had one tattoo. On further PSDs the number of tattoos over 6 weeks were recorded as 2, 8, and 2 respectively
- ❑ the height of an offender was recorded as 5'1", and six days later as 5'7". On other records, in 24 hours a person's height changed from 5'7" to 5'5" and in the space of 5 weeks, from 5'8" to 5'11" for an adult. Additionally in three months, height details on some forms went from 5'5" down to 5'2"
- ❑ one PSD had details of 'short dark brown hair', whereas 7 days later it was recorded as 'short greying straight hair'
- ❑ hair details varied from 'short grey hair' to 6 days later 'collar length grey hair'
- ❑ eye colour in the space of 6 days changed from green to blue and on three other records from blue to hazel to brown

⁸ The Inspection Team were aware that some offenders make use of temporary 'transfers' of tattoos.



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- ❑ accents were recorded on three forms as 'Welsh', but on a fourth one as 'English'. On further records accents ranged from North West to English
- ❑ one PSD had a person's accent as 'Scottish' whereas another had it recorded as 'Yorkshire'
- ❑ ethnicity details ranged from 'white' to 'Dark European' for the same person
- ❑ on 'handedness', one PSD detailed a person as being right handed and two as left-handed
- ❑ build details ranged from 'slim' to 'stocky' on separate forms within a period of 1 week.

Overall Her Majesty's Inspector considers the level and nature of errors, omissions and discrepancies found to be totally unacceptable especially given that many of these same observations were made in the 1998 PRG Report⁹. They reflect an unprofessional approach to data quality by forces.

⁹ See page 8 of 1998 PRG Report "Phoenix Data Quality"

The Link between PSD Completion and Personal Performance

8.3.28 Her Majesty's Inspector was keen to establish whether forces included evidence of officers' competency in the completion of PSDs in Personal Development Reviews¹⁰ (PDR). The Inspection Team asked sergeants whether they had recorded evidence concerning PSD completion standards for their staff within PDRs. None interviewed had ever done so. In one force, found to be plagued by poor PSDs, supervisors knew officers who submitted poor quality PSDs yet this had never been recorded within those officers' PDRs. In those forces which expected a supervisor's signature on the PSD some sergeants stated they signed it automatically and few actually checked the PSDs contents.

¹⁰ this is a generic term for any staff appraisal or similar system

8.3.29 The 1999 HMIC Report on *Police Integrity* raised issues concerning the lack of honest performance assessment of staff which are relevant to PNC and Phoenix data quality standards:

"There is little evidence that appraisals are conducted with complete honesty and objectivity, most supervisors preferring to be charitable, either to avoid upsetting a member of their staff or because they lack the skills to produce a balanced and evidenced appraisal."

8.3.30 The Inspection Team was pleased to find one example where problems with personal performance relating to PSD completion was provided to that officer's supervisor.

GOOD PRACTICE

In Dyfed-Powys Police, monitoring of error and rejection rates for each officer is recorded within the Phoenix inputting centre. If an officer has three PSDs returned, a performance report is sent from the departmental chief inspector to the officer's own chief inspector highlighting the matter as a performance issue. Her Majesty's Inspector commends the force on this performance driven approach.

Her Majesty's Inspector urges forces to further develop aspects of personal accountability in respect of PSD completion by staff. This will establish a clear link between data compliance and the recording of evidence in PDRs. It will also serve to reinforce the commitment of forces to raise the status of compliance as a key performance issue.

Phoenix Inputting Staffs' Perception of Issues Affecting Accuracy

- 8.3.31 The Phoenix inputting staff interviewed stated that, in their opinion, the following aspects of PSD submission affected force performance:
- ❑ omissions on the PSD
 - ❑ incorrect details on the PSD, including dates of birth
 - ❑ originating officers' sometimes completing PSD details after the offender had left the police station and either guessing, or trying to recall details from memory
 - ❑ some originating officers guessing descriptive information when PSDs were returned to them due to omissions in descriptive fields.

Forces should consider these points when researching their performance and the accuracy of information entered by them onto the Phoenix system.

Force Guidance on PSD Completion

- 8.3.32 The Inspection Team was keen to establish the level of guidance provided on PSD completion to staff in those forces Inspected. Her Majesty's Inspector was impressed by the efforts of some forces to address this important dimension.

GOOD PRACTICE

In Avon and Somerset Constabulary the Force Phoenix Manager had arranged an input to BCUs covering the importance of PSD completion. Dyfed-Powys Police, Sussex Police and Humberside Police have developed PSD completion guides which are distributed to officers. Dyfed-Powys

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Police have also developed a 'prisoner check sheet' located in each custody suite which emphasises the importance of accurate PSD information. In addition the force distributes a personal copy of PSD completion guidelines to all officers who repeatedly submit substandard PSDs.

In Northumbria Police guidance on PSD completion appeared in three separate documents distributed to staff. In Kent Constabulary guidance was incorporated in the PSD itself.

- 8.3.33 Her Majesty's Inspector was disappointed to find a number of forces had not issued any guidance and in some of those that had, few officers spoken to were aware of its existence.

Her Majesty's Inspector advises that where forces have not already done so, they should issue guidance on PSD completion to all staff. Forces should also consider the most effective method to alert staff to its existence.

Presence of Audit Systems for PSDs Returned to Originating Officers for Amendment

- 8.3.34 In order to ensure complete and accurate information is placed on Phoenix it is essential that there is a system to identify which substandard PSDs have been returned from Phoenix inputting staff to originating officers for amendment. This enables forces to assess the impact that returned substandard PSDs has on overall force performance and to ensure all information is accounted for.
- 8.3.35 Her Majesty's Inspector examined the extent to which those forces Inspected had audit systems in place. It was found that six forces did not have such a system and in three of those who did, it was not always operated. In one force, although audit trails operated for PSDs completed for offenders who had been charged with an offence they did not operate for offenders who were cautioned or summonsed. In those forces which did operate an audit system Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to find the following example:

GOOD PRACTICE

In Dyfed-Powys Police an audit trail operates for returned PSDs. If PSDs are not returned a memorandum is sent from the departmental chief inspector to the chief inspector line managing the originating officer to arrange for its return.

8.3.36 The Inspection Team also found that there were few locally based audit trails operating between sergeants and originating officers to monitor the passage of returned PSDs. This is important to enable sergeants to identify those officers who generate substandard PSDs and to monitor their performance in amending and returning them.

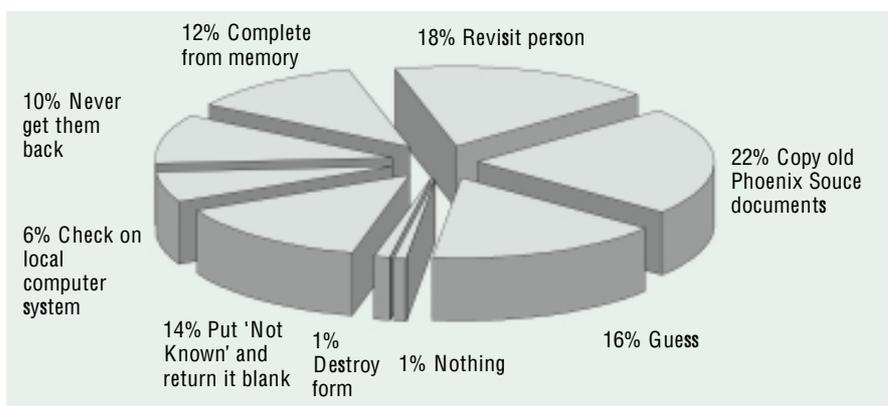
Recommendation 14

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces ensure that each Phoenix inputting department develops an audit trail to register the return of substandard PSDs, via line supervisors, to originating officers. The system developed should include a mechanism to ensure the prompt return of PSDs. Forces should also incorporate locally based audit trails, monitoring the passage of returned PSDs between line supervisors and originating officers.

Originating Officers Actions on the Return of a Substandard PSD.

8.3.37 In order to establish the accuracy of some details entered on PSDs by originating officers the Inspection Team interviewed constables and detective constables to establish what action they would take if a PSD was returned due to an omission they had made on the offenders description. Chart 8 illustrates their responses:

Chart 8: PC's and DC's Actions/Response on Return of Phoenix Source Document to them for Amendment – All Forces



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- 8.3.38 It can be seen from Chart 8 that although 18% of officers stated they would revisit the person and a further 14% stated they would endorse the PSD 'not known' and return it blank, 22% stated they would copy an old PSD. A further 6% stated they would use information on local force computer systems. By using local system information, or copying old PSDs, there is a real danger of 'recycling' inaccurate and misleading data.
- 8.3.39 Her Majesty's Inspector is even more concerned that 16% of officers stated they would guess descriptive details and a further 12% of officers would 'complete from memory'. With most of these responses there are obvious implications for data integrity and the quality of information entered onto the Phoenix system. It is also debatable as to the definition of 'guessing' and 'completing from memory'. If these two responses were combined it could result in 28% of respondents potentially 'inventing' data. This matter was also raised in the 1998 PRG report which commented:
- "Instances were cited of officers 'making up' data if it was not known or could not be remembered" (page 8)*
- 8.3.40 This is particularly disturbing given that the majority of officers interviewed understood what the PSD was used for. A number of officers mentioned mistaken identity and the possibility of being sued for false arrests in their responses when questioned on possible outcomes of inaccurate information.
- 8.3.41 Her Majesty's Inspector considers the actions of officers in these circumstances to be highly damaging to the integrity of information on the Phoenix system. It was found that none of the forces inspected had developed a clear force policy defining exactly what officers were expected to do on the return of a PSD. This is an important dimension that needs to be urgently addressed.

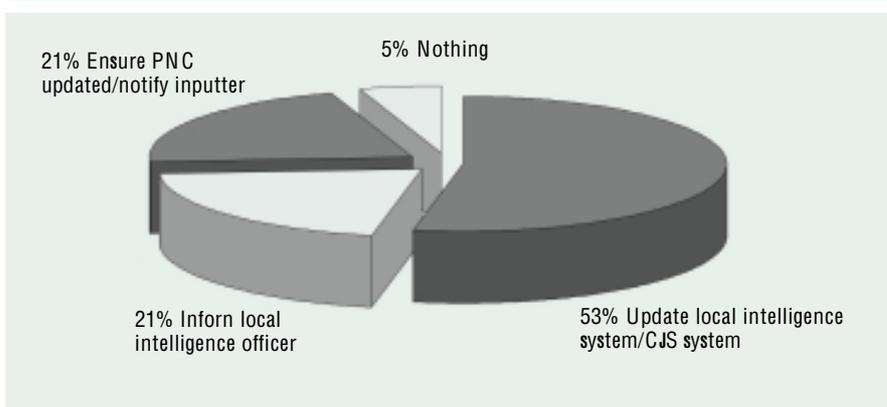
Recommendation 15

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces develop clear guidelines to cover their expectations of officers on the return of incomplete or substandard PSDs. This guidance should be communicated to all staff and regular checks conducted to ensure compliance.

Updates on Phoenix Descriptive Information other than from Arrest

8.3.42 In order for Phoenix information to remain relevant and accurate it is important it is updated with any changes that staff become aware of, even though the person may not have been arrested. The Inspection Team established from operational officers and Phoenix inputting staff what action they would take if they became aware of a change in a known criminal's descriptive appearance. The responses of operational officers are shown in Chart 9 below:

Chart 9: PC's and DC's Actions on Receiving description Update of Known Offender – All Forces



8.3.43 In Chart 9 although 53% of officers would at least update a local computer system only 21% would ensure Phoenix was updated. This again mirrors the comments of the 1998 PRG report¹¹ on the preference of officers to use local computer systems as opposed to Phoenix. During the majority of interviews conducted in forces officers mentioned using local systems for both investigation and descriptive update purposes. This tendency to focus on local systems reinforces the perception that Phoenix is inaccurate or outdated. Many officers assumed, incorrectly, that descriptive information from local computer systems was automatically forwarded to Phoenix inputting staff to be entered onto the system.

¹¹ P13, 1998 PRG report on Phoenix Data Quality

8.3.44 The Inspection Team found that there were no written policies in forces detailing whose responsibility it was to notify Phoenix staff of any descriptive updates. A number did have forms used to record intelligence information and descriptive updates for transferring onto local intelligence computer systems. Despite updated descriptive details being essential pieces of intelligence and ensuring records remain accurate only one force visited had a system to ensure these descriptive updates were automatically passed for input onto Phoenix.



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Recommendation 16

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces should develop a system to ensure that all ad-hoc descriptive and intelligence updates registered on local force systems are automatically entered onto the Phoenix system. The policy should clearly outline whose responsibility it is to notify Phoenix inputters of any descriptive changes. Forces should also ensure that the policy is marketed to staff and that regular checks are conducted to ensure compliance.

Presence of a Policy for Phoenix Staff on how to Resolve Anomalies and Omissions on PSDs

- 8.3.45 To ensure that all staff entering information onto the Phoenix system operate in a consistent manner it is essential that a policy exists covering the expected response from Phoenix inputting staff to errors or omissions on PSDs received. A consistent approach is also essential to accurately calculate the number and reasons for substandard PSDs submitted.
- 8.3.46 The Inspection Team found that although some of the forces visited had such a policy, eight of the forces had not. As a consequence, some staff entering details onto Phoenix receiving PSDs containing errors, anomalies or omissions responded in a variety of ways. These included:-
- ❑ guessing details
 - ❑ leaving details blank on inputting
 - ❑ using local computer systems to obtain the required information
 - ❑ ignoring details which were provided on PSDs which were at variance to existing entries on the Phoenix system. Some staff stated this was because they felt more confident that details already on Phoenix must be correct.

These practices are again affecting the integrity of data placed onto the Phoenix system.

Her Majesty's Inspector urges all forces to develop a policy detailing how Phoenix inputting staff should resolve omissions, errors and discrepancies on PSDs. Forces should ensure this policy is communicated to all Phoenix inputting staff and regular checks conducted to ensure compliance.

Quality Assurance of Phoenix Inputting Staff Work.

- 8.3.47 The importance of both accurate and timely information being entered onto Phoenix has already been highlighted. Procedures were examined to establish the extent to which forces had a systematic approach to quality assuring the work of Phoenix inputting staff. Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to find five of the forces visited had in place well structured quality assurance processes some of which have been highlighted.

GOOD PRACTICE

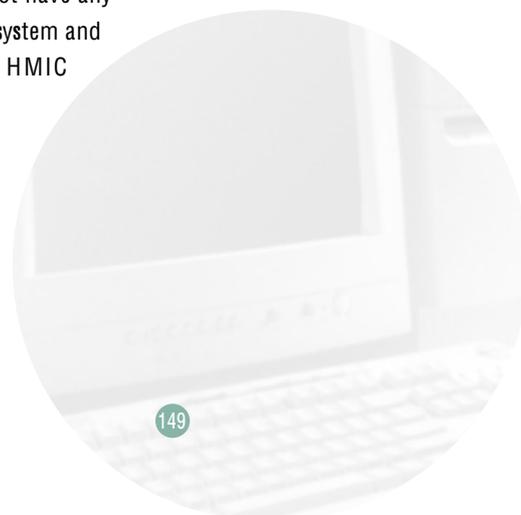
In Northumbria Police work entered onto Phoenix was quality assured on a daily basis by supervisors. Individual performance indicators were created for each member of inputting staff. This recorded details of any error rates, the time taken to enter records and the numbers of forms validated. This information was produced on a weekly basis.

In Kent Constabulary inputting staff with less than six months experience, had all their records entered checked by a supervisor. More established staff had 20% of their work checked. The Phoenix inputting centre also used the Force Data Protection Officers audit findings to indicate whether they needed to conduct full checking of all inputting staff work in certain areas. In addition, before Phoenix related files were finally archived, 10% were re-audited and any errors found influenced working practices.

In Dyfed-Powys Police the work of inputting staff was quality assured on a daily basis and covered 20% of the department's work. Error figures were then produced (presently only 1.9% for the last 6 months). In addition each staff member's performance was highlighted on a grid and included in personal reviews. Supervisors in the Phoenix inputting centre also examined a minimum number of Phoenix entries made by each member of staff.

Her Majesty's Inspector commends these forces on their approaches.

- 8.3.48 Her Majesty's Inspector was concerned to find that three forces did not have any systems to check the quality of staff entries placed onto the Phoenix system and three other forces did not conduct them on a regular basis. The 1998 HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Section Annual Report identified that approximately half of forces had no quality assurance processes for Phoenix inputting staff despite this being an essential element in ensuring data integrity.



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Recommendation 17

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces develop a formal system to ensure that a proportion of each member of Phoenix inputting staff's work is regularly checked for accuracy. Forces should also consider the benefits of measuring other aspects of their work including speed of entry and compliance with policies. Performance outcomes should be evidenced in staff PDRs.

Non-Police Agency PSDs

- 8.3.49 A number of organisations outside of the Police Service have prosecuting powers. In order to register details of some of these offences and offenders on Phoenix, these organisations provide information for the PSD. Although an assessment of non-police PSD submission was not covered during this Inspection process it is vital that a clear link is established between previous research papers, the work of Her Majesty's Inspector and the data quality responsibilities of non-police agencies. Given the findings in this report there is a need to be confident that data accuracy responsibilities are being taken just as seriously amongst organisations outside of the Police Service.
- 8.3.50 Whilst PITO distribute guidance and advice to the principal organisations providing Phoenix information, their records do not include details of some of the locally developed arrangements initiated by forces. The extent to which some of these outside organisations are aware of expected data standards is therefore, in doubt. It is crucial that these organisations are identified to be notified and updated on issues surrounding data quality standards.

Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that an audit is needed to establish the present complement of non-police Phoenix source data providers from whom individual forces receive information. Details of these should then be passed by forces to PITO to update their existing mailing lists of the principal national providers. In addition he urges forces to establish locally enforced data standards as regards non-police agency PSD submissions.

- 8.3.51 The Inspection Team became aware of several comments from Phoenix supervisors in forces concerning the poor quality of non-police agency PSDs and the burdensome nature of resolving issues surrounding errors, omissions or discrepancies.

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that a more robust approach needs to be taken by forces inheriting these data inputting responsibilities from non-police sources. Chief Officers are encouraged to establish an assessment of the present inputting arrangements with outside data providers and the present resourcing commitment expended within the force resolving sub-standard PSD submissions. In addition to their responsibilities to own and input accurate data, chief officers may wish to highlight to non-police data providers the financial and resourcing implications of resolving any sub-standard submissions. In order to establish this information Her Majesty's Inspector considers there is considerable merit in providing data providers with details of rejection rates, as advocated in Chapter 9 of this report.

8.4 Phoenix Related Issues

8.4.1 During the visits to forces there were a number of issues relevant to Phoenix and its operation which require additional comment.

Interface Operation

8.4.2 A number of the forces had an electronic interface with Phoenix and others were contemplating its introduction. Initially interfaces appear to reduce the need for double-keying of information already entered into custody and criminal justice computers. The perception is that they also solve a number of inputting difficulties and facilitate speedier initial arrest/summons registration. However the Inspection Team found some forces had encountered significant difficulties with the operation of their interfaces. These included:

- ❑ selecting the wrong record from Phoenix to update
- ❑ local working practices
- ❑ operator behaviour and training.

8.4.3 The initial inputting of information onto local custody and criminal justice computers is a crucial part of the process. In one force custody staff sometimes selected the wrong Phoenix record to populate with new arrest details. They also started a completely new Phoenix record for that person when one already existed. These practices have clear implications for the completeness and accuracy of records.

8.4.4 In another force once charge information was transferred from the custody system to the interface they were unable to identify which Phoenix records had poor descriptive details. Subsequently the force had a problem (which impacted nationally) of missing details thereby



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weakening the power of QUEST. In another force, training did not capture all operators and there was an assumption by some of them that descriptive information for the interface was completed by custody staff. In several cases no one actually undertook the task. It is clear that the advantages of a Phoenix interface can only be realised if they are supported by stringent quality assurance measures.

Her Majesty's Inspector urges those forces with existing interfaces to review their working practices and procedures to ensure system integrity. Forces contemplating interface developments should consult with existing interface operators to be aware of potential difficulties and to understand the need for robust working practices.

Telephone Registration of Arrest/Summons Details

- 8.4.5 The Inspection Team found some forces allowed officers to telephone initial arrest/summons details to Phoenix inputting staff to register an entry on the system. Whilst this has the advantage of achieving timely initial registration it results in the creation of skeleton records. In one force the Inspection Team found there was no verification check with callers to establish their identity and other forces were unable to accurately assess if all telephone registered skeleton records had been fully updated later by the receipt of the relevant PSD. This could seriously compromise the integrity of PNC by permitting false records to be placed onto the system. This became even more problematic where full updating of Phoenix records took place elsewhere than telephone registration. It is possible that some entries were placed onto Phoenix this way without a validating PSD ever being received. Her Majesty's Inspector is concerned by this possibility.
- 8.4.6 The most serious compromise to data integrity occurred in the timing of some telephone registrations. In one force telephone registrations were sometimes based on anticipated case disposals. In some of these cases officers had registered arrest summons details on Phoenix without first establishing how the case was to be resolved. Custody staff unaware of this sometimes decided on an alternative outcome. In some cases this resulted in entries being registered on Phoenix that a person had been charged with an offence when they had either been cautioned or released with no further action. Although some forces had documented policies covering this practice compliance was often lacking.
- 8.4.7 There is clearly a need for far closer regulation and management of the registration of Phoenix information by telephone. Whilst it provides obvious benefits in speed it can often affect data integrity and quality.

Her Majesty's Inspector urges those forces who permit initial telephone registration to examine its operation in the light of these findings. Where they are not already apparent forces should develop a system to clearly identify all those telephone registered records which have not been fully updated. This should include a system of accountability to ensure that all such documents are promptly received. In addition forces should ensure stringent measures exist to validate the authenticity of telephone calls to preserve the integrity of information placed onto the system.

8.5 Conclusion

- 8.5.1 There are many areas within this section which require significant improvement to secure greater integrity and timeliness of information. Many of these issues have been raised on previous occasions and the situation calls for a more thorough and committed response. Too many aspects of police performance are being undermined by unprofessional standards and a lack of compliance.



8 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 8

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance	Yes	No
Staffing Levels and Performance Standards		
If skeleton records are used in Phoenix registration, is there a system in place to identify these records to ensure they are fully populated thereafter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If skeleton records are used, has the force considered the qualitative versus speed issues in deciding whether to enter skeleton records on Phoenix?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the impact of the new Phoenix Performance Indicators as part of the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC been considered in terms of their effect on resource levels required to deliver those standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If satellite offices are used for phoenix inputting, are working practices co-ordinated between them to achieve common standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If satellite offices are used to input Phoenix has the force examined whether the advantages of having localised satellite offices outweigh the difficulties in establishing common compliance standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have any HMIC PNC Compliance Audit findings been studied as regards their impact on resourcing requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has force performance in relation to both existing and the new Phoenix Performance Indicators within the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC been analysed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force researched and established the working arrangements necessary to achieve the standards within the new ACPO PIs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do chief officers provide the appropriate leadership to deliver the performance improvements in data integrity and compliance standards endorsed by ACPO?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Phoenix Source Document Submission		
Do delays result from the PSD field not being synchronised with the Phoenix computer entry fields?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do delays result from an excessive number of process stages through which the PSD passes before arriving at Phoenix inputters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force established the extent to which officers are aware of the purpose of the PSD?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force a policy governing the submission time of PSDs and has the force established the level of awareness amongst officers of this policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do supervisors in the force have, and fulfil their role in the PSD submission process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force PSD contain at minimum the information which is within the search parameters of the Phoenix system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the force permits officers to generate pre-printed PSDs from the custody system, does the force have rigorous procedures to quality assure and check compliance with this process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 8

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance	Yes	No
Has the force established a clear link between data compliance and the recording of evidence in PDRs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the views of Phoenix inputting staff as to the causes of delays and inaccuracy considered in establishing reasons for overall performance ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force issued regular guidance on PSD submission to staff and established the most effective methods to market it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force in existence an audit trail to monitor the return of PSDs from Phoenix inputting staff to originating officers via line supervisors for amendment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force a system of local audit trails to monitor the passage of returned PSDs between line supervisors and originating officers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a policy which outlines the expectations of originating officers on the return of incomplete or substandard PSDs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has this policy been communicated to staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are regular checks conducted to ensure staff compliance with the policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system to ensure all ad hoc descriptive and intelligence updates registered on local force systems are automatically entered onto the Phoenix system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has this policy been communicated to staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are regular checks conducted to ensure staff compliance with the policy ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the force have a policy outlining how Phoenix inputting staff should resolve omissions, errors and discrepancies on PSDs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has this policy been communicated to staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are regular checks conducted to ensure staff compliance with the policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force developed a mechanism to ensure that a proportion of each member of Phoenix inputting staff's work is regularly checked for accuracy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force conducted an audit to establish the details of all non-police Phoenix source data providers and provided them to PIT O?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the present resourcing commitment expended on resolving substandard PSDs from non-police agencies known?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this resourcing commitment communicated to the relevant non-police data provider?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are rejection rates of PSDs from non-police sources provided to the respective organistaions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8 Crime recording checklist – Chapter 8

Phoenix Data Quality and Performance	Yes	No
Phoenix Related Issues		
If the force has an interface has it reviewed its working practices to ensure duplicate records and incorrect record selection are minimised to ensure system integrity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the force is considering developing an interface with Phoenix has it consulted extensively with existing interface operators?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the force permits telephone registration of Phoenix information, does it have a system to verify the identity of the caller?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system to identify all those telephone-registered records for which a full update has not taken place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system of accountability to ensure that all such documents are promptly received?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9 The Way Forward

The Way Forward

9.1 Force Evaluation of Phoenix Performance Standards

9.2 Senior Officer Responsibility for Information Systems

9.3 Internal Scrutiny

9.4 Conclusion



9 The Way Forward

This chapter outlines the measures that need to be taken by forces to improve performance. It focuses on the present understanding amongst forces of their performance against existing Phoenix standards. It also covers the need for senior staff to take responsibility for compliance. Finally, it details the necessary scrutiny required to improve performance and to secure system integrity.



9.1 Force Evaluation of Phoenix Performance Standards

- 9.1.1 Her Majesty's Inspector examined the steps forces had taken to research and evaluate their own performance in relation to the PNC and Phoenix system. It was encouraging to find a number of forces had undertaken research into their performance.

GOOD PRACTICE

In Kent Constabulary the submission process of Phoenix Source Documents (PSDs) and court results has been process mapped with a view to increasing timeliness. The next stage will be to establish the effect of postal delays.

In Dyfed Powys Police research has been carried out into the speed of Phoenix entries and the mapping of PSD submissions with a view to streamlining the process and improving performance.

- 9.1.2 It was also found that some research had been undertaken by Phoenix inputting departments themselves although these were not always corporately driven. Her Majesty's Inspector applauds the motivation of individual departments for this work and is of the view that such work should be encouraged but should be integrated at a force level. In one force, for example, valuable research into Phoenix system performance was undertaken by an individual as part of an external academic course but it was not formally initiated by the force. Any research undertaken should be linked to a strategic plan for PNC and Phoenix development so that best use is made of the findings. Evidence was found of some well intentioned research which had resulted in inconclusive outcomes or occurred in isolation of other force processes. The Inspection Team found that where research had been corporately initiated and linked with a PNC Steering Group the benefits were clear.



The Way Forward

GOOD PRACTICE

In Merseyside Police the PNC Steering Group chaired by an assistant chief constable had developed specific strategic terms of reference. It had designed an organisational chart governing the structure of the main and associated groups. The structure consisted of the Steering Group, senior suppliers, a work group co-ordinator and work group managers covering training, crime, intelligence, criminal justice and IT. Progress on matters related to PNC and Phoenix were well structured through a series of sub-groups with individual work allocations and reporting procedures.

9.1.3 Her Majesty's Inspector was disappointed to find occasions where research had been commissioned on Phoenix performance and the recommendations or concerns raised had not been addressed. In one force, for example, a research report in March 1999 initiated at the request of a chief officer highlighted some serious concerns and gave detailed recommendations together with solutions:

- ❑ custody officers have not been attaching their charges to PNC records causing duplicate records. We have had a very large amount of duplicate records
- ❑ custody Officers have identified the wrong record by mistake causing problems when the record is updated with the wrong details
- ❑ there are serious implications for breaching data protection principles in the event of somebody's record being wrongly updated
- ❑ currently we are in breach of PNC code of connectivity due to the fact that no verification takes place before transmission of impending cases to PNC Hendon.

9.1.4 The force concerned also had a possible 8,000 duplicate records registered on Phoenix which were brought to their attention by PITO between 03/11/98 and 02/09/99. Her Majesty's Inspector was concerned to find that apart from some initial microfiche retrieval there appeared to be no overall action plan with timescales to expedite what is now a mature problem. He was also concerned that there was no implementation plan in relation to the March 1999 report and, as a consequence, many of the recommendations had not been progressed.

Clearly if the service is to comply with PNC and Phoenix system requirements, legislation and Data Protection Principles, there is a need for forces to respond positively and promptly to wellfound research findings and identified problems.

9.2 Senior Officer Responsibility for Information Systems

- 9.2.1 The 1998 PRG report identified that central to compliance with data standards is the need for a clearly identified senior officer responsible for data quality in each force. Her Majesty's Inspector was encouraged to find that ten of the forces visited had identified a senior officer to oversee compliance issues connected with PNC and Phoenix. In five of these forces the person was at chief officer level.

GOOD PRACTICE

In Merseyside Police an assistant chief constable's involvement in data quality was stated by a number of staff to be a major contribution in organising and realising change. This included the establishment of a PNC steering group and a series of sub groups researching various aspects of PNC and Phoenix.

- 9.2.2 In another force however, it was unclear as to where the lines of accountability were drawn with three departmental heads having a stake in data compliance issues. Some staff interviewed felt there was mixed commitment or little interest in PNC, Phoenix and compliance issues amongst senior and chief officers. This was a key concern highlighted in the 1998 PRG report. The designation of a senior officer to oversee and be responsible for data compliance issues is an essential ingredient in progressing data quality issues and thereby realising crime reduction benefits.

Her Majesty's Inspector expects, that where forces have not already done so, they should designate a senior officer to be responsible for compliance with the PRG report and ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC. Where this is not at chief officer level, forces should include compliance within a chief officer's portfolio of responsibilities.

9.3 Internal Scrutiny

- 9.3.1 Appropriate levels of scrutiny are essential to achieving and being able to evidence data integrity. The provision of relevant, up-to-date and accessible system and Data Protection Manuals are a necessary safeguard and heighten the awareness amongst staff of data



The Way Forward

compliance issues. The Inspection Team sought to establish the extent to which an audit and performance culture existed within forces in relation to PNC and Phoenix data entries. Two aspects were examined, namely:

- ❑ the presence of Data Protection and System Manuals
- ❑ staff awareness of these manuals and their location.

9.3.2 The Inspection Team examined the extent to which Phoenix inputting staff and managers had access to the principal system and Data Protection Manuals. Secondly, the team examined whether Phoenix inputting staff had knowledge of the manuals, knew how to locate them and whether they had read them. Specifically the Inspection Team looked for copies of:

- ❑ the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual
- ❑ the ACPO Code of Practice on Data Protection
- ❑ the PNC Operating Rules Manual
- ❑ the PITO PNC Users Manual
- ❑ QUEST User Guides (where appropriate).

9.3.3 It was found that of the 11 forces visited only two had a complete set of the above manuals readily accessible to Phoenix inputting staff. In the remaining forces one or more of them was missing. In particular:

- ❑ in four separate forces staff did not have a copy of the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual
- ❑ in three separate forces staff did not have a copy of the ACPO Code of Practice on Data Protection
- ❑ in seven separate forces staff did not have a current copy of the PNC Operating Rules Manual; one force did have an outdated version
- ❑ in one force Phoenix inputting office staff did not have a current copy of the PITO PNC Users Manual
- ❑ in one force a copy of the ACPO Code of Practice on Data Protection was found face down behind a collection of other manuals. The copy was covered in dust, evidently untouched for some time.

9.3.4 In terms of staff awareness, the Inspection Team were concerned to find that in nine forces at least one member of Phoenix inputting staff was not aware of, or had not read, some of the primary system and Data Protection Manuals. A number did not know where to locate copies including essential documents such as the PITO PNC Users Manual and ACPO Code of Practice on Data Protection.

Her Majesty's Inspector urges forces to conduct audits of Phoenix offices to assess the presence and awareness amongst staff of the principal system and Data Protection Manuals listed above. In addition, they should examine the content of their in-force PNC training courses to ensure that these manuals are to some extent covered. Forces thereafter should address identified shortfalls.

Data Protection Audits

- 9.3.5 Nationally, all forces have Data Protection Officers. They are primarily responsible for advising forces in relation to Data Protection issues and ensuring each force has a rigorous and systematic approach to data integrity and quality. The existence of a risk-assessed Data Protection audit schedule in each force is monitored by the HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Section. The Inspection Team were concerned therefore to find that one force Inspected did not have such an audit schedule in place. These are essential to ensure that all aspects of data compliance, including PNC and Phoenix, receive regular auditing.
- 9.3.6 The Inspection Team was pleased to find that a number of forces had data audit processes operated from within Phoenix inputting departments themselves. These served to supplement the on-going Data Protection Officers Audit Programme.

GOOD PRACTICE

In Kent Constabulary, the Force Intelligence Bureau supervisors re-audit 10% of files due to be archived. A report is produced and identified problems are fed back to inform working practices.

- 9.3.7 This type of internal audit helps to identify problems at an early stage and can pre-empt difficulties arising during Force Data Protection Officers' audits and forces should consider the benefits of such an approach. The presence of internal audit programs heightens awareness and understanding amongst Phoenix inputting staff concerning Data Protection issues and shows commitment to data integrity.



The Way Forward

Recommendation 18

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends, where not already present, that forces develop risk assessed Force Data Protection Officer audit programmes.

Force Performance Reviews on PNC Data and Compliance

- 9.3.8 The Inspection Team was keen to assess the extent to which force performance reviews, other than those carried out by Data Protection Officers, included data compliance issues. The inclusion of Phoenix data quality and integrity in force performance reviews, particularly in a thematic review, is a powerful way of elevating the status of data compliance within a force.
- 9.3.9 Her Majesty's Inspector was disappointed to find that none of the forces visited integrated Phoenix data compliance into performance reviews covering BCUs and specialist departments. He is of the opinion that establishing a link between data compliance and performance is essential to achieving better accountability and motivation to improve performance.

Recommendation 19

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces integrate PNC and Phoenix data quality compliance into their performance review and inspectorate programmes for BCUs and specialist departments.

Performance Information on Phoenix Source Document (PSD) Completion

- 9.3.10 Although none of the forces Inspected included data compliance in performance reviews, Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to find that a number did include PSD statistics within performance results documents.

GOOD PRACTICE

In Avon and Somerset Constabulary statistics on the completion of PSDs are generated down to individual officer level. They also appear in force performance statistics on BCUs.

In Northumbria Police a six monthly performance report is produced on PSD completion and is forwarded to BCU commanders for information.

In Dyfed-Powys Police performance data on PSD omissions and errors are discussed at a chief inspectors conference. The force is proposing to include the data in routine performance statistics.

- 9.3.11 The inclusion of this type of information in regular performance statistics is regarded by Her Majesty's Inspector as good practice. It helps to strengthen accountability for data quality standards and enables forces to monitor standards, analyse performance and take remedial action when necessary. The Inspection Team found that although some forces had undertaken such analysis, it was generally ad-hoc. In one force, for example, PSD performance statistics were last produced in 1998. This force now has a large number of PSDs which contain little or no descriptive detail and there was no accountability mechanism in place to rectify the situation.
- 9.3.12 The benefit of PSD performance statistics can best be realised when they cover all BCUs. In one force only one BCU produced PSD figures and it was found that the remaining BCUs had a poorer compliance rate for PSD completion. This is a good example which illustrates the link between production of PSD statistics and better performance.
- 9.3.13 Another important dimension is the detail to which PSD performance statistics are broken down. Without sufficient detail it is difficult to identify specific problem areas and take remedial action. Only one force visited had a system to break down statistics to include errors and omissions according to individual descriptive fields such as marks, scars and tattoos, although this was not always operated. The quality of descriptive fields are important as they directly impact on the effectiveness of the PNC QUEST search facility.

Recommendation 20

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that PSD performance statistics should be incorporated in routine force performance information. The statistics should identify omissions and errors in individual fields, in particular, descriptive information. Appropriate accountability measures should be established to ensure that any performance shortfalls identified are addressed.

Responses to HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Recommendations

- 9.3.14 In addition to the 1998 PRG Report, HMIC's PNC Compliance Audit Section has made recommendations, suggestions and highlighted good practice to forces in relation to PNC and Phoenix data quality issues as a result of their audits of each force every three years.



The Way Forward

- 9.3.15 The Inspection Team obtained a copy of the latest HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Report for each force visited to establish what progress each force had made against the relevant recommendations and suggestions contained within the report. The Inspection discovered a mixed response by forces to the recommendations. Some forces had taken prompt action whereas others had done nothing.
- 9.3.16 In September 1998 Avon and Somerset Constabulary were subject to an HMIC PNC Compliance Audit. The force was advised of a good practice suggestion concerning production of error rates on PSD completion. As a result of their response the force has been highlighted in the good practice guide of the HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Report in relation to the production of PSD statistics.

GOOD PRACTICE

The West Midlands Police was subject to a Compliance Audit in October 1999. Implementation of the various suggestions and recommendations was controlled by a covering memorandum from a chief superintendent. Individuals had been identified to progress certain areas and were required to provide updates on actions by the end of March 2000. Her Majesty's Inspector commends the force on this disciplined approach to recommendations.

- 9.3.17 In one force however, a similar suggestion in September 1997 to conduct quality checks on PSDs had not been progressed even though it was a high priority action. The same force had also not progressed other medium priority suggestions. In another force subject to a PNC Compliance Audit in November 1998 an identical recommendation to record error rates for PSDs had not been progressed. Further recommendations including the quality assuring of PSDs had not been implemented.
- 9.3.18 In another force subject of a PNC Compliance Audit in 1997, a recommendation was made to produce a set of PNC Operating Rules and to make them available to staff. This same recommendation was repeated to the force when re-inspected in September 1999. During this Inspection this area was re-visited again and it was found that there was no such Operating Rules Manual present in the Phoenix inputting centre visited. A further recommendation put to the same force in September 1999 concerned the production of error rates for PSDs. This was performed once in 1998 but has not been operated since. The force concerned now receives a high proportion of PSDs which contain no descriptive details whatsoever.

Her Majesty's Inspector congratulates those forces who have responded promptly to HMIC PNC Compliance Audit recommendations and suggestions. However, he is extremely concerned about the indifferent response from some forces to formal requests for improvement particularly when the measures advocated are known to improve performance and strengthen data integrity.

9.4 Conclusion

- 9.4.1 The effective use of PNC, Phoenix and information systems such as SCAS is essential if all forces are to reduce crime. This Inspection has raised many concerns as to the impact and missed opportunities caused by delayed, inaccurate and poor quality data for key crime reduction and investigative systems. Linked to the lack of use and awareness of some PNC features the full potential of its investigative ability is not being realised. Forces are encouraged to raise their levels of commitment by following the recommendations and checklists within this report and fulfil their obligations to the ACPO Compliance Strategy for PNC. HMIC will examine force compliance in the future.



9

Crime recording checklist – Chapter 9

The Way Forward	Yes	No
Forces' Evaluation of Phoenix Performance Standards		
Is there research undertaken to evaluate force performance in relation to Phoenix performance standards ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If research is undertaken in relation to force Phoenix performance standards by Phoenix inputting staff/departments, is this corporately driven ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is research undertaken to evaluate force performance against Phoenix performance standards incorporated in a strategic plan for PNC development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an action or implementation plan attached to all recommendations from in-force research findings/reports on PNC and Phoenix ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior Officer Responsibility for Information Systems		
Is there a senior member of staff identified to oversee compliance to national police information systems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the senior member of staff identified to oversee compliance with national information systems is not at chief officer level, is compliance to information systems included within a chief officer's portfolio of responsibilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal Scrutiny		
Has an audit been carried out to ensure each of the forces Phoenix inputting offices has a full complement of systems and Data Protection Manuals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the existence and location of system and Data Protection Manuals been communicated to Phoenix inputting staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If not already present, has the force considered the benefit of Phoenix Department driven audits to supplement Force Data Protection Officer audits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force an existing risk assessed Data Protection Officers Audit Schedule?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force integrated the use of and compliance to PNC and Phoenix data standards into their performance review and Inspectorate programs covering BCUs and specialist departments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are performance statistics concerning errors and omissions on PSD submissions routinely incorporated into force performance information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the performance statistics identify omissions and errors on PSDs in individual fields, in particular descriptive information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there appropriate accountability measures established to ensure any performance shortfalls identified are addressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the force an implementation plan with timescales covering any HMIC PNC Compliance Audit Section suggestions and recommendations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of recommendations

Crime Recording

Recommendation 1 (Chapter 1 page 8)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that steps be taken by the Home Office to bring agreed and negotiated Home Office Counting Rules and guidance onto a more formal legal status binding on all forces.

Recommendation 2 (Chapter 1 page 9)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Home Office establish a regular, formal and properly structured Police Statistics Committee to bring clarity to the Home Office Counting Rules for the recording and detecting of crimes and to publish clear national guidance thereby leading to greater consistency between forces. It should include all relevant stakeholders and include members who have the authority to represent the views of their respective organisations.

Recommendation 3 (Chapter 1 page 10)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Home Office RDS Directorate sets-up an internet site containing the Counting Rules for the recording and detecting of crime, and guidance, by offence type, as soon as possible. It should include a help desk facility and allow for two-way communication between forces and RDS.

Recommendation 4 (Chapter 1 page 14)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Home Office include recorded 'no-crimes' in their standard notifiable offence (crime) returns from forces. This information should be routinely profiled as an integral part of the national statistics picture.

Recommendation 5 (Chapter 2 page 28)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces ensure they have in place an effective monitoring and inspection process to quality assure crime recording practices, particularly at BCU level.

Recommendation 6 (Chapter 2 page 30)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that a senior or chief officer is nominated in each force and takes personal responsibility for force crime recording and detection standards and is held accountable for the integrity and accuracy of those figures.

Recommendation 7 (Chapter 3 page 48)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces ensure that any information systems, either electronic or paper based, which are used to store information or intelligence for crime related incidents are routinely and robustly audited to ensure that all crimes reported are recorded and notified to the Home Office.



Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 8 (Chapter 4 page 71)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that a Police Statistics Committee considers the issues raised in this chapter and decides on the model of recording to be adopted by the Police Service. This should be agreed by all stakeholders and accompanied by comprehensive, unambiguous and clear advice to all forces to ensure a nationally consistent approach to crime recording.

PNC and Phoenix

Recommendation 9 (Chapter 5 page 86)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces produce position statements in relation to the 1998 PRG report recommendations on Phoenix Data Quality and the ACPO Compliance Strategy for the Police National Computer. He further recommends that forces produce a detailed action plan, with timescales, to implement their recommendations. The position statements and action plans together with progress updates should be available for audit and inspection during future HMIC PNC Compliance Audits and inspection of forces. Forces should send copies of action plans to HMIC's PNC Compliance Audit Section by 1 February 2001.

Recommendation 10 (Chapter 6 page 104)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces urgently review their existing SCAS referral mechanisms in the light of the above findings. These reviews should include verification with SCAS that all force offences fitting the SCAS criteria have been fully notified to them, and updated. This process should be managed by forces through their in-force SCAS Liaison Officers.

Recommendation 11 (Chapter 7 page 111)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the marketing, use and development of national police information systems is integrated into appropriate force, local and departmental, strategic planning documents.

Recommendation 12 (Chapter 7 page 112)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that where not already in place, forces should establish a strategic PNC Steering Group. This group should develop and be responsible for a strategic plan covering the development, use and marketing of PNC and Phoenix.

Recommendation 13 (Chapter 7 page 118)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all forces conduct an audit of their present in-force PNC trainers to ensure they have received nationally accredited training. Any individuals who have not been accredited as PNC trainers by National Police Training should not conduct in-force PNC training.

Recommendation 14 (Chapter 8 page 145)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces ensure that each Phoenix inputting department develops an audit trail to register the return of substandard PSDs, via line supervisors, to originating officers. The system developed should include a mechanism to ensure the prompt return of PSDs. Forces should also incorporate locally based audit trails, monitoring the passage of returned PSDs between line supervisors and originating officers.

Recommendation 15 (Chapter 8 page 146)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces develop clear guidelines to cover their expectations of officers on the return of incomplete or substandard PSDs. This guidance should be communicated to all staff and regular checks conducted to ensure compliance.

Recommendation 16 (Chapter 8 page 148)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces should develop a system to ensure that all ad-hoc descriptive and intelligence updates registered on local force systems are automatically entered onto the Phoenix system. The policy should clearly outline whose responsibility it is to notify Phoenix inputters of any descriptive changes. Forces should also ensure that the policy is marketed to staff and that regular checks are conducted to ensure compliance.

Recommendation 17 (Chapter 8 page 150)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces develop a formal system to ensure that a proportion of each member of Phoenix inputting staff's work is regularly checked for accuracy. Forces should also consider the benefits of measuring other aspects of their work including speed of entry and compliance with policies. Performance outcomes should be evidenced in staff PDRs.

Recommendation 18 (Chapter 9 page 164)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends, where not already present, that forces develop risk assessed Force Data Protection Officer audit programmes.

Recommendation 19 (Chapter 9 page 164)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that forces integrate PNC and Phoenix data quality compliance into their performance review and inspectorate programmes for BCUs and specialist departments.

Recommendation 20 (Chapter 9 page 165)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that PSD performance statistics should be incorporated in routine force performance information. The statistics should identify omissions and errors in individual fields, in particular, descriptive information. Appropriate accountability measures should be established to ensure that any performance shortfalls identified are addressed.



Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Arrest/Summons report This is the initial information placed onto Phoenix to register that an offender has been processed for a particular offence. Once sufficient fields have been completed, an Arrest/ Summons number is allocated to the record created by the force.

Basic Command Unit (BCU) Generic term for the principal territorial policing areas within a force, referred to by some forces as Areas, Divisions or Districts.

Comparative Case Analysis (CCA) CCA is used to record and analyse serious, predominantly undetected crimes of certain categories. The system records details of how the offences were committed using 'Keywords', together with sections for vehicles and suspects. It can search on offences which have similar characteristics nationally, to provide links for further investigation. It records details of predominantly undetected offences of murder, serious sexual assaults, kidnapping, robbery, burglary, blackmail and theft of high value loads in excess of £50,000.

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) This is the organisation which will be responsible when fully operative for the processing of prospective employee conviction checks.

Interface This is an electronic means of transferring information relating to an offender from a local force computer onto the Phoenix system. This sometimes prevents the need for the same information to be entered into two different computer systems.

Keywords These are a set of pre-agreed words used to describe how offences were actually committed. Completion of offence details using keywords allows for them to be searched on more effectively.

Phoenix Source Documents (PSD) These are completed each time a person is arrested and processed for an offence. The form contains a variety of offence details and contains a descriptive section detailing the appearance of the offender and is the source of the information placed onto Phoenix. It is the content of this form, which is searched by QUEST.

Phoenix This is a feature within PNC, which houses a host of information concerning persons who have been processed for offences. The information contains details of not only offences, addresses and details of persons, but also personal descriptive and intelligence information.



Glossary of Terms

PNC Property Application This records, both found, but principally stolen items, of the following property: plant, engines, trailers and sidecars, marine craft, animals and firearms. Details can be entered and searched on by description only if required. Property recovered can be checked against the systems entries to trace its origins.

PNC Transaction Log This interrogates PNC to provide summaries of all transactions that have taken place on PNC. It can search to identify where, when and why a vehicle, or person was checked. This allows staff to track the location of individuals and vehicles at particular times and can provide valuable intelligence and investigative information. It is also used as an auditing tool.

Query Using Extended Search Techniques (QUEST) This searches on those details within Phoenix provided from Phoenix Source Documents when offenders are processed for offences. It can search on a variety of fields including intelligence, offence history, associates, as well as personal descriptive information.

Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) This is a team of specialist staff who record, analyse and provide investigative support in relation to certain types of murder, rape, abduction and precursor offences. A database of the details of relevant offences is maintained at Bramshill by forces notifying SCAS.

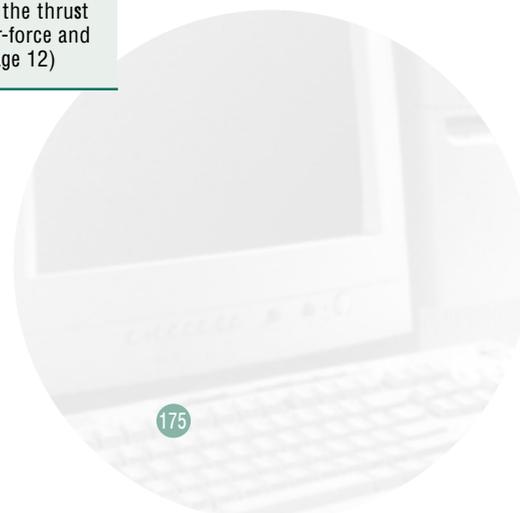
"Skeleton record" or "partial update" This is used to describe those Arrest/ Summons reports that only contain the minimum amount of information that is required to register the record on Phoenix. Often these records do not contain the valuable descriptive information searched on by QUEST.

Vehicle On-line Descriptive Search (VODS) This searches on PNC for vehicle owners and details even where this no part of a vehicle registration available. Searches can be done on a variety of fields, including colour, make, model and postcode. Combined the searches can narrow down possibilities. Searches can be conducted by all forces, and results printed in-force obtained direct from the system 'on-line'.

A Appendix A

Crime Recording – Summary of Key Points Raised by HMIC since 1993

Date and publication	Comment
1993 HMCIC Annual Report	'I am encouraged by the number of forces that have established internal inspection and quality assurance departments. These departments have a key role to play in conducting reviews and monitoring service delivery. The need for such departments will become more pronounced as the move towards devolved local management gathers momentum and as local managers are increasingly held to account for specific, measurable aspects of performance.' (page 16)
1994/5 HMCIC Annual Report	'During the course of primary inspections, HM Inspectors routinely conduct crime audits within forces which at times reveal anomalies in recording practice' (page 27)
1996 HMIC Thematic Report 'A Review of Crime Recording Procedures'	It is recommended that a training needs analysis be undertaken and suitable training be provided to relevant staff. This will include operational officers as well as specialists such as crime desk personnel and statistical staff. Consider guidance booklets both for staff investigating reported crime and for supervisors. 'Establish a regular audit process within the force to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ audits of crime recording practices; accuracy of classifications of crime and completeness of reports; □ audits of incident logs.
1996/97 HMCIC Annual Report	'As organisations experience pressure to present their performance in the best possible light there is an increasing temptation to manipulate the figures and play the numbers game. It is the responsibility of managers at all levels to ensure that data represents an accurate picture of what has been achieved. It is particularly important that forces undertake regular systems audits to ensure that managerial decisions are made on a sound basis.' (page 47)
1998/99 HMCIC Annual Report	'There is a tendency for crime recording practices to vary between forces, at times considerably. I am concerned to note that a number of forces have yet to introduce regular and independent systems of audit, as recommended in our good practice guide. Those forces should do so without further delay.' 'It is crucial that crime recording practice is in total accord, in all forces, with national policing and guidance set by the Home Office. There is an ever present risk that vulnerabilities in a system provide temptation to the corrupt officer or team to inflate performance. Forces need to remove temptation by establishing robust systems and suffering and subjecting those systems to a searching and regular audit. The integrity of recorded crime figures assumes additional importance as the thrust towards crime reduction develops. It is important that inter-force and inter-BCU comparisons are based on totally valid data.' (page 12)



B Appendix B

Force visited during the inspection:

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Bedfordshire Police

Dyfed-Powys Police

Humberside Police

Kent County Constabulary

Lancashire Constabulary

Merseyside Police

Northumbria Police

Sussex Police

Thames Valley Police

West Midlands Police



C Appendix C

HOME OFFICE RULES FOR DETECTING CRIME

The categories of detected crime are governed by strict rules and guidance within the Counting Rules which dictate how and when the categories may be used. In addition there are five 'basic principles' that also have to be fulfilled in each case before a crime may be shown as detected. These are:

- 1 A notifiable offence (crime) has been committed and recorded.
- 2 A suspect has been identified and interviewed by a police officer or, if an interview is not necessary to determine guilt, has at least been informed that the offence has been detected.
- 3 There must be sufficient evidence to charge the suspect with the crime¹.
- 4 If the victim subsequently refuses to give evidence, then a reason for this decision has been documented.
- 5 In cases where there is an identifiable victim, the victim must have been informed that the offence has been 'cleared up'.

¹ Sufficient evidence to charge the suspect with crime is dealt with under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The evidence must be such that, if given in court, it is sufficient for a prosecution to succeed. This is more than 'prima facie' or on the balance of probabilities.

THE FOUR MAIN CATEGORIES OF DETECCED CRIME

- ❑ A PERSON HAS BEEN CHARGED OR SUMMONSED FOR THE OFFENCE (Irrespective of any subsequent acquittal at Court).
- ❑ THE OFFENDER HAS BEEN CAUTIONED BY THE POLICE. (For those forces piloting the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 sections 65 & 66, this method includes reprimands and final warnings where a caution would previously have been given). Guidance on the use of formal cautions were given in Home Office Circular 18/1994.
- ❑ THE OFFENCE HAS BEEN TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BY THE COURT² (or if the offender is found to be not guilty, that the unequivocal consent of the offender had been obtained by way of statement of admission and desire to have further offences taken into consideration prior to him/her being found not guilty).
- ❑ NO FURTHER ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN BY THE POLICE, FOR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS:
 - ❑ The offender dies before proceedings could be initiated or completed.
 - ❑ The offender is ill and is unlikely to recover or is too senile or too mentally disturbed for proceedings to be taken.
 - ❑ The complainant or an essential witness is dead and the proceedings cannot be pursued.

² Offences taken in to consideration by the court (TIC) are additional offences admitted by the offender but with which he or she has not been charged. The offences are taken into consideration by a judge or magistrate during sentencing.



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- ❑ There would be sufficient admissible evidence to charge but the victim or an essential witness refuses, or is permanently unable, or if a juvenile is not permitted, to give evidence.
- ❑ It is ascertained that an offence has been committed by a child under the age of criminal responsibility.
- ❑ An offence is admitted by a juvenile of the age of criminal responsibility and police take no action other than reporting the particulars to a local authority for action under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969.
- ❑ There is sufficient admissible evidence to charge the offender but the CPS or a police officer of inspector rank or above decides that no useful purpose would be served by proceeding with the charge.
- ❑ There is sufficient admissible evidence to charge the offender with a summary offence but a police officer or superintendent rank or above has authorised the detection as the time limit of six months for commencing prosecution has been exceeded.

D Appendix D

Detailed Comment on Incidents Identified as Being Problematic in Terms of Recording and Classification.

'No-crimes'

The Home Office Counting Rules allow a force to "no-crime" a crime record in certain specific circumstances – this includes when a crime has been recorded by one force and it is subsequently established that it occurred on another force area.

Comment – the Inspection Team found that all forces who allocated a unique BCU crime number were 'no criming' records which had been recorded against the wrong BCU. This practice is not in accordance with the Counting Rules as they clearly state that this facility should only be used in relation to another police area not another BCU area. Understandably, forces use this facility to ensure BCUs have correct crime information however with the increasing tendency towards performance accountability police commanders are reluctant to carry other BCU crimes.

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that the Home Office reinforces the current counting rule that 'no criming' is only allowed when the crime has been recorded on another force area.

Allegations of crime (including by a third party)

The Counting Rules state that the police should record a notifiable offence when it comes to their attention.

Comment – for the purpose of crime recording the issue is: does an allegation of crime amount, *per se*, to a notifiable offence coming to the attention of the police or should the police investigate to establish whether a notifiable offence has in fact occurred? Recording allegations of crime amounts to a '*prima facie*' model of recording and this would be resisted vigorously by most forces. The problem is that, currently, forces are approaching this rule in a different way. A small number are interpreting the rule literally with most forces applying an evidential test of varying levels. This difference in approach results in differing levels of recording crimes.

The Inspection found that officers will not record a crime on unsubstantiated information provided by a third party. A good example is where a person reports a fight in progress and the police find nobody at the scene or no independent evidence, usually in the form of an injured party, to confirm an assault or public order offence has taken place. The reluctance to crime in such circumstances could be argued to be at odds with the Home Office finished incident rule which states that in such circumstances a crime has been reported and



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therefore should be recorded. Forces (operational officers) are simply not prepared to crime such an incident until they have investigated and established to their satisfaction that a crime has in fact been committed (this usually means the identification of an injured/aggrieved person).

Comment –. To bring greater parity between forces, Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that further guidance should be provided by the Home Office as to the extent of evidence required before a force formally records an allegation of a crime, including how to deal with unsubstantiated offences reported by a third party. Whilst this is a difficult area to define there must be greater consistency between forces so that those currently employing a more '*prima facie*' recording system are not disadvantaged in terms of their relative crime rates.

Harassment

Despite the Counting Rules offering comprehensive advice on harassment classification and harassment Counting Rules the Inspection Team found a widespread misunderstanding of the offence and when it should be recorded. The confusion relates to the fact that to commit the offence there must be conduct by the offender 'on at least two occasions' not two separate reports recorded by the police. When a victim reports to the police, for the first time, that they have been subjected to harassment on at least two occasions many forces are failing to record the offence. They use the first reporting by the victim as evidence that the conduct has occurred on at least one occasion (despite the fact that it may have already occurred on at least two occasions) and many record it on non-crime systems. If a subsequent report is received then the crime is deemed to have been committed and may then be crimed. Further to this, many forces were found to have adapted this response to harassment to give offenders an 'official warning' which could then be relied upon if the victim reported a further case of harassment.

Comment –. Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that the failure of many forces to properly record offences of harassment, and therefore take appropriate positive action, on the first occasion when it is reported (when the conduct has happened on at least two occasions) is a serious omission by forces and needs to be addressed. This omission results in victims failing to receive a proper response from the police as the intervention usually involves verbal warning – despite the offence being complete. The intention of the legislation to protect victims from harassment is being undermined and the offence is being under-recorded. Although Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that the Home Office Counting Rules already provide comprehensive guidance in relation to harassment further advice is required to reinforce the requirements for this new piece of legislation. Regional HMIs should also audit the offence of harassment as part of the inspection process to ensure compliance with the Protection From Harassment Act 1997.

Malicious phone calls

The Counting Rules make no mention of malicious phone calls because the offence is not a recordable crime. However, the phone is often used by offenders to harass their victims and harassment is a recordable crime. The inspection team found that most offences where a victim was harassed or threatened over the telephone were minimised as nuisance calls rather than the more serious substantive offences. There appeared to be uncertainty and confusion over how offences such as harassment over the telephone should be dealt with.

Comment – Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that updated guidance be issued in relation to the recording of 'telephone offences' which constitute crimes such as harassment, threats to commit damage or threats to kill.

Theft of motor vehicle and arson.

The Counting Rules state that when a motor vehicle is reported as stolen and is subsequently recovered 'burnt out' then another crime of arson should be recorded.

Comment – The Inspection found inconsistency across forces in the correct implementation of this counting rule. In practice most forces Inspected did record a subsequent arson. The reasons given were either that it could not be proved that the fire was malicious or they did not want to create another crime record or they were ignorant of the requirement to submit another crime record.

The argument that most recovered stolen vehicles which have been burnt out may not have been maliciously destroyed defies rational belief. However, Her Majesty's Inspector is of the view that if an offender steals a vehicle and subsequently destroys it by arson then he/she is treating it as their own and is permanently depriving the owner of it. This amounts to a compounding of the theft - it is not a separate offence. A person cannot be guilty of destroying their own property. If a vehicle is destroyed by another person then an offence of arson is committed. Accordingly, it is suggested that forces should not be required to record a further offence of arson unless it can be proven beyond reasonable doubt that the car was destroyed by a person other than the offender who stole the car. Recording two offences in such circumstances is misleading and unnecessarily inflates crime figures.

Offenders under the age of criminal responsibility (under 10 years).

The Counting Rules give no specific advice relating to the recording of crimes' where the offenders are, or are believed to be, under the age of criminal responsibility.

¹ Section H, 'D5' covers detecting of offences committed by a child

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Comment – The Inspection Team found considerable confusion amongst forces as to whether or not they should be recording crimes committed by under tens. An argument put forward is that if children under 10 are under the age of criminal responsibility how can they commit an offence? Her Majesty's Inspector does not support this view as most offences remain undetected and the exact age of any offenders cannot be ascertained with certainty – especially when they are not detained.

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that all offences are recorded in line with the Home Office Counting Rules regardless of the age, real or perceived, of the offender. Each crime still has a victim and should be recorded. The detection of offences committed by those under the age of criminal responsibility is already adequately covered by the Counting Rules. Clear advice should be issued by the Home Office stating that offences committed by children under the age of 10 should be recorded in the normal way.

Minor criminal damage

In April 1998 amended Counting Rules came into effect which required the police to record all offences of criminal damage regardless of the value of the damage. Prior to that date the police were only required to crime those offences where the cost of the damage amounted to £20 or more.

Comment – One of the effects of this change in the Counting Rules was to bring into the recording system a large number of offences hitherto excluded. The Inspection Team found that operational officers take what they feel is a pragmatic approach to this rule. Officers stated that if they were to record literally all offences of minor damage then the crime system would become overwhelmed with undetected minor offences. For instance, during the examination of the 11,000 incident logs the inspection team found a surprising number of offences involving the throwing of eggs at properties. The issue here is should the police record all damage no matter how minor and should damage of a temporary nature be recorded. Case law² states that damage of a temporary nature can constitute the full criminal offence of damage i.e. the property can be brought back to its original state after cleaning.

Telephone kiosks and bus shelters – in connection with the recording of minor damage the Inspection Team found little consistency between forces in their approach to recording damage to street furniture such as bus shelters and telephone kiosks. The theme emerging here was property owned by other than private individuals. Many officers, particularly those working in busy urban areas, frequently notice or encounter damage to shelters or kiosks yet do not record them as crimes – despite readily acknowledging that an offence of criminal damage had probably been committed (a few officers asserted that the damage could have been of a non criminal nature). Some forces do crime such damage but most note the circumstances on a command and control log, if one has been created, and notify the agency concerned by telephone.

² Hogan and Smith, *Criminal Law*, 7th Edition, page 685

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that further Home Office guidance is produced relating to the recording of minor damage (especially where there is no complainant) as a literal interpretation of the current rules has little credibility with operational officers. Such advice should bring greater clarity and consistency to crime recording in this area. It would be useful to provide similar realistic examples to those published in connection with vehicle crime in November 1999.

Assaults and public order offences

The Counting Rules cover assaults and public order offences in a complex way. Section 8C Harassment Classification includes the 'new' public order crimes of Section 4, Section 5 and Section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986. Section 105A Common Assault Classification covers Section 39 of Criminal Justice Act 1998, Section 64 Rioting and Section 65 Violent Disorder Classification covers Section 1 and Section 2 of the Public Order Act 1986. Section 66 Other Offences Against the State & Public Order Classification covers Affray under Section 3 of Public Order Act 1986. Under affray the rules state 'Where offences of violence against the person are connected with an affray, count the Violence Against the Person offences but not the affray'. The situation is further complicated because the Counting Rules state that for the more serious public order offences of riot and violent disorder both the assaults and the public order offences should be recorded.

Comment – There is often a close relationship between public order incidents and assaults. The Counting Rules do cover these offences but they split the offences into four different sections and it is difficult, from a crime recording perspective, to tease out the relationship between offences and therefore the correct recording procedure. The rules state that violence against the person offences should take precedence over public order offences but they also state (Section B) that 'the offence chosen should be the one with which a suspect would be charged, given the information at the time of recording'. The Inspection Team found that operational officers indicated they were more likely to charge with public order offences as they are easier to prove in court particularly as they now count as a recordable crime and a detection. This contradictory advice causes tensions in the recording system as many violence against the person offences are subsumed within public order offences. Also there is a substantial difference in terms of the number of crimes recorded. For violence against the person offences there should be one crime per victim whereas public order offences only require one crime per incident which may involve several offenders. Overall the relationship between public order and assault offences is very complex in terms of consistent recording and charging offenders.

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that the Home Office review its guidance and advice in relation to public order offences and assaults. It is suggested that the



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revised guidance brings together the different stages and levels of offences relating to public order and assault in an easy to read reference format. This should include a step by step guide to crime recording issues.

Common assault

In April 1998, as for minor damage, the police were required to record common assaults as crimes. Previously offences of common assault were not recorded or usually dealt with by the police. The Counting Rules give a number of examples relating to how many crimes of common assault should be recorded for certain incidents and which crimes to record if common assault forms an integral part of another crime e.g. robbery.

Comment – The problems associated with the recording of common assault are similar to those relating to minor damage. The requirement for the police to record common assault, which is defined as 'common assault with no injury' and injuries amounting 'to no more than grazes, scratches, abrasions, minor bruising, swellings, reddening of the skin, superficial cuts or a "black eye"',³ resulted in a large number of offences being recordable. One of the difficulties with this offence is that it is so widespread in everyday life and quite literally any unlawful or unwelcome contact between two or more people amounts to a common assault. All the officers spoken to agreed that it would be impossible to crime all the common assaults they came across and that their approach was practical and very much led by the wishes of the victim. Basically if officers have a person who wishes to make a formal complaint of assault and providing that person is willing to support the police then they are more inclined to crime the assault. Where the victims are unwilling or reluctant to support the police or where they come across an assault where the parties are not interested in the police becoming involved the officers will not be inclined to crime the assault. Many officers get their pocket note book signed or endorse an incident log to this effect and feel this is sufficient to deal with the incident. The reluctance to crime many offences of common assault is not only related to the sheer prevalence of the offence but it is tied up with the performance culture. Forces and officers are, understandably, reluctant to crime assaults which they cannot investigate and detect, especially if they feel they know who the offender is. The Counting Rules require some form of documentary evidence concerning an offender before an offence can be detected by the police with no formal proceedings. If the police record a crime of common assault where the victim refuses to co-operate then they cannot often obtain documentary evidence and therefore cannot detect the crime. Officers feel that the rules are unfair in this regard as the police are being expected to fulfil an administrative recording function only and are then judged by their detection rates relating to these offences. Further to this, the drive for performance (down to individual officer level in some forces) means that officers who have recorded a common assault are reluctant to leave it as undetected so there is pressure to either inappropriately 'no-crime' the offence on the basis that the victim declines to support a prosecution or the offence is inappropriately detected.

³ Section 105 of the Home Office
Counting Rules for Recording Crime

The question is are the Home Office really expecting forces to formally record every single case of common assault they encounter? If the answer is 'yes', then the position is unrealistic. If the answer is 'no', then guidance should be provided to forces relating to the criming of common assaults.

One further complication relates to the offender charging standards agreed between ACPO and the CPS. Basically, these standards, which came out in 1994, downgraded the offence of assault occasioning actual bodily harm (ABH) to common assault, although the legal definition of the offence and the corresponding powers of arrest did not change. This has left officers confused as the Counting Rules state that the offence crimed should be the same as that charged. An officer who attends an assault incident which legally amounts to an ABH may use their power of arrest under this offence but actually charge under the ACPO/CPS agreement with common assault. However, many officers are uneasy about using their powers under one offence (ABH) knowing that they are going to charge with another offence (common assault). As there is no power of arrest for common assault officers often arrest and deal with the offender for the offence of breach of the peace and this means that the assault is not recorded.

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the Home Office issue further guidance to forces concerning the recording of common assault taking into account all the issues raised above.

Making off without payment from petrol stations (drive-offs).

The Counting Rules list this offence but give no specific guidance on recording.

Comment – The Inspection Team found a considerable variance between forces' and indeed between BCUs' approach to recording offences of making off without payment from petrol stations. This offence is perhaps unique in that it can involve innocent parties who have genuinely forgotten to pay for their fuel yet it cannot be ascertained at the time of the offence whether there is any criminal intent to deceive. Many of the busier urban areas may experience a number of 'drive-offs' in a single day and of these some drivers realise that they have forgotten to pay and return. However, many are criminal acts sometimes in collaboration with petrol station staff. A number of officers spoken to argued that the offence should not be crimed because it could not be proven that there was, at the time of the offence, criminal intent. This could only be established if the driver was traced. Overall, the Inspection found the following approaches to this offence:

- ❑ record the crime and investigate as soon as it is reported
- ❑ record as a crime only if there are attendant suspicious circumstances such as the vehicle drives off at high speed or the driver deliberately obscures the index number



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- ❑ record as crime and send a letter to the registered keeper to pay with a view to no-criming if bill settled
- ❑ not record as a crime and send a letter – some provide details to the garage to make a civil claim but do not actively investigate the offence themselves
- ❑ get the garage to send a letter to the registered keeper and if no response the police record as a crime and investigate
- ❑ wait until the end of the shift or longer to see if the driver returns
- ❑ make enquiries using PNC to trace the driver and get them to return and pay
- ❑ note the incident on the incident logging system only and not crime
- ❑ within the same force some BCUs record as a crime and some have local policy not to crime
- ❑ some forces will not take a report if the garage has not obtained the index number of the vehicle as a consequence some garages will not report a drive-off to the police if the index number is not obtained
- ❑ some garages keep a list of drive-offs over a period of time and then provide the list to the local police.

Forces who had a more intelligence led approach felt it important to record and investigate every offence. If it subsequently transpired that it was a genuine mistake then they would 'no-crime' the offence. It was felt important to crime each offence so that a patterns of criminal activity could be identified and investigated. Interestingly, those forces who crime the offence as soon as it was reported and were unable to trace the driver often filed the report as part of their crime screening process (no further active investigation). No further enquiries were made with the garage concerned to see if the driver did return to pay – this means that possibly a number of undetected crimes are on file which could be no-crime.

Comment – Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that forces are instructed to treat 'making off without payment', especially from petrol station forecourts, as a notifiable offence. In line with the Counting Rules the offence should be recorded when it comes the attention of the police.

Other agencies

The Counting Rules state "offences dealt with by agencies other than the police should not be recorded unless there has been a major contribution to the investigation by the police ...". The Counting Rules then give examples of crimes which should be recorded – "the police assist the DTI with a fraud investigation or the police accompany customs officials in raiding a ship suspected of smuggling or the police assist DSS officials in surveillance work that leads to apprehension of benefit fraudsters".

Examples of those crimes that should not be recorded are – “police provide PNC information but no other assistance to a DTI fraud investigation or police offer custody facilities to customs officials or police obtain names of benefit fraud offenders from DSS but take no part in investigation”.

This section also includes where the name of a shoplifter cautioned by a store detective is passed to the police; or an assault on a prison inmate is reported to the police but dealt with under prison rules; or a head teacher informs the police schools liaison officer regarding a pupil in possession of a controlled substance which has been dealt with under the school’s drug policy.

Comment – The Inspection Team found that the ‘other agency rule’ was being widely interpreted by officers particularly in relation to offences such as damage to telephone kiosks and bus shelters, and fraud and forgery cases. It is assumed that the intention behind this rule was to avoid the police recording a crime for administrative purposes when another agency has carried out the investigation. However, the Inspection Team is of the view that schools and stores are not agencies and that the inclusion of these as examples has resulted in an interpretation of this rule beyond that intended by the Home Office. The Inspection Team also found widely varying opinions on what the term ‘dealt with’ means. This ranged from another agency noting or recording an offence to the active investigation of the offence with a view to prosecuting an offender. For example, some forces merely refer incident log numbers to telephone companies when kiosks have been damaged or even when an attempt has been made to break into the cash box. Similarly, some forces do not record fraud offences brought to their attention on the assumption that a bank’s fraud team are actively investigating the offences.

Her Majesty’s Inspector suggests that the contents of advice in relation to the ‘other agency’ rule is amended. The advice should list the names of the specific agencies intended thus avoiding different interpretations by forces. Additionally, the wording ‘dealt with’ should be replaced with more specific guidance as to what exactly is intended by this term.

Cheque and credit card fraud.

The Counting Rules provide very clear guidance on how and when to record cheque and credit card fraud.

Comment – During the Inspection evidence was found that several forces were recording cheque and credit card frauds as *forgery* instead of *deceptions* in an attempt to minimise the number of crimes recorded. The rules require every *deception* to be recorded but not necessarily every *forgery*. The reason put forward by one force was that the Crown Prosecution Service would only proceed with a case when an offender was charged with *forgery*. When someone



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uses a stolen cheque or credit card there are two offence types committed, deception and forgery. There was anecdotal evidence from one force that officers made an assessment of the likelihood of detecting the offence. Where an offence was likely to be detected then multiple deceptions were recorded as these could all be legitimately detected. If there was little prospect of detecting the crime then a forgery was recorded so that there was only one undetected crime outstanding.

Her Majesty's Inspector suggests that the Counting Rules make it explicitly clear that when a stolen cheque or credit card is used to obtain goods or services then the offence to be recorded for each separate victim should be deception. The likelihood of detecting the offence should have no bearing on its recorded classification.

HOME OFFICE COUNTING RULES FOR RECORDED CRIME

C No Crimes

- A RECORDED OFFENCE SHOULD BE CLASSIFIED AS A "NO CRIME" IF ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE SATISFIED:
 - (A) THE OFFENCE WAS COMMITTED OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE POLICE FORCE IN WHICH IT WAS RECORDED. (Crimes committed within the jurisdiction of another police force area should be referred to the respective force - see also section G.)
 - (B) WHERE FOLLOWING THE REPORT OF AN ALLEGED OFFENCE WHICH HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN RECORDED, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT NO OFFENCE HAS BEEN COMMITTED.
 - (C) IF THE OFFENCE, AS ALLEGED, CONSTITUTES PART OF AN OFFENCE ALREADY RECORDED.
 - (D) IF THE REPORTED OFFENCE WAS RECORDED IN ERROR.

- A CRIME CAN ONLY BE 'NO-CRIMED' IN THE SAME FINANCIAL YEAR.

Examples of crime which should be NO CRIME

A man reports that he has been blackmailed. The crime is recorded and investigated but the complaint is shown to be false. The complainant is prosecuted for wasting police time.
No crime the blackmail.

A burglary is reported and recorded but the subsequent investigation reveals that the report was false and a fraudulent insurance claim has been made.
No crime the burglary and record one crime of fraud.

A theft in a dwelling is discovered to have been recorded subsequent to the burglary of which it forms part
No crime the theft in a dwelling.

An ABH is recorded but is discovered to have occurred during the course of a robbery which is already recorded
No crime the ABH.

An offender burgles a dwelling, rapes the occupant and steals her car from the driveway. The offences are reported together and under the Principal Offence Rule the rape is recorded. One of the other constituent crimes of the incident are subsequently recorded
No crime the subsequent record.



E APPENDIX E

Results of Audit of 40 Specific Crimes and Other Categories

40 computerised crime records were audited from each force - these crimes were chosen from the crime numbers connected with incident logs returned by forces on the pre-inspection analysis. The purpose was to ascertain if:

- ❑ they had been correctly classified initially
- ❑ the correct number of crimes had been recorded
- ❑ they had been subsequently reclassified or 'no-crimed'
- ❑ the crime had been recorded within 48 hours of it being reported.

In a number of forces it was not possible to ascertain whether crimes had been reclassified which meant that some forces did not know whether it was occurring or not, and if it was, the extent to which it was happening.

Overall, it was found that there was a marked variance between forces in the error rate of crimes audited. This varied from 15% to 65% of crimes examined. An error was defined as at least one of the following on each report: wrong classification or inappropriate 'no-criming' or failure to record the correct number of crimes.

The following evidence illustrates the type and nature of the errors found on crime records.

Motor vehicle crime – damage to car doors was classified as attempted theft from a motor vehicle. More often, damage to a car door such as bending the whole door back, lock damage and wiring damage were recorded as criminal damage instead of vehicle interference. In some instances where a search had taken place the offence was classified as vehicle interference instead of attempt theft from motor vehicle. A car broken into had men's clothing stolen from it and was recorded as vehicle interference. A vehicle stolen and reported to the police was later found burnt out and the crime of arson had not been recorded.

Burglary – attempted burglaries of houses and other buildings were recorded as criminal damage. In one case an attempted burglary was changed to criminal damage by an officer in a crime management unit, despite the fact that the officer attending the scene had originally recorded the offence as attempted burglary. An offence of theft was recorded when it was clear that the offender had entered as a trespasser - this should have been recorded as a burglary non-dwelling.

Fraud – there were numerous instances where deceptions were not recorded despite the fact that the victim was reporting the theft and subsequent usage of their cheque or credit card within the same force area. In a number of forces it



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was not possible to link these types of crime and therefore the recording of offences was somewhat ad hoc. A credit card fraud involving between two and nine crimes had not been recorded, only the theft was recorded. When queried the division gave the reason that CID was still investigating. In another force one offence of theft of a chequebook had been recorded but not the deception even though a cheque had been cashed to the value of £100.

Assaults – in two separate cases offenders were charged with affray when in fact there were multiple assaults on different victims. The requirements are that the assault offences should be recorded in preference to the public order offence. In a case of assault on police, an escape from lawful custody was recorded but the assault on the police officer and criminal damage were not recorded.

Robbery – in a small number of cases crimes of robbery were wrongly recorded as theft from the person.

Multiple offences – errors were quite prevalent in relation to the under recording of multiple offences arising from one incident. One case related to damage to a vehicle which also included damage to phone boxes where the damage to the phone box had not been recorded. Another case involved a burglary of a shop and an attempt to enter several garages nearby and the attempt burglaries had not been recorded. In another case of burglary of a house, an earlier attempt during the night that had been reported to the police had not been recorded. In another case three adjoining garages belonging to three separate victims had been broken into but only one crime report had been submitted.

Modus Operandi – it was found that the MOs for many crimes were scant which meant that it was not possible to tell from the crime record whether the correct classification had been recorded.

Timeliness – a number of offences in forces had been recorded subsequent to the returning of the incident logs to forces by HMIC.

Crime screening – is a term used to identify those crimes which are recorded but no further investigation is undertaken. It was a technique used by 10 of the 11 forces visited. The crimes are usually filed pending any further information coming to light. One case that represented poor crime management, in the view of the Inspection Team, involved an incident of indecent exposure – which had been wrongly recorded as gross indecency. The offence involved two nine year-old girls being invited over to a vehicle where the driver exposed himself to them. The crime report was screened out the same day with no follow-up enquiries apparently having been made.

Recorded as non-crimes – a number of incidents, such as harassment and domestic incidents, that are not notifiable to the Home Office, had been entered on crime systems as crimes. The offences were recorded for intelligence purposes and were given a crime number. However, in one instance the victim had been subject to repeated harassment over a six-month period but there was no evidence that a crime report had been generated for any of the incidents. In another, threats of violence and witness intimidation were recorded as a first occasion of harassment and an offence of criminal damage was recorded as a domestic incident.

No-crimes – there were many cases of inappropriate 'no-criming'. In one case a letter had been sent to the victim stating that if they did not supply a statement within 21 days the matter would be 'no-crimes' - this was later found to be accepted as informal force policy despite it being contrary to the Home Office Counting Rules.

Intelligence – it was found that useful information held on the command and control logs were not entered on to the crime recording systems and in some instances the information on the systems were contradictory. A good example related to a command and control entry, 'multiple repeat victim, all calls to be logged' in the free text and yet there was no repeat victim flag on the crime report. In another there was a named offender on the command and control system but no suspect details on the crime recording system. In a domestic dispute the command and control log showed that a person had been assaulted whereas the crime report showed that there had just been a verbal argument and the incident had been recorded as a 'non-notifiable' domestic incident. An offence of attempt burglary to a house was classified as damage to non-dwelling - the incident stated offenders had climbed on the roof and attempted to force the skylight. The MO on the crime report simply stated damage caused to skylight. Another crime report showed minor damage to a vehicle when in fact the command and control log showed someone had tried to steal the radio from the vehicle.

An audit was also carried out into specific crime classifications with at least 10 crimes being sampled from each classification in each force.

Classification - 'no-crimes' general

Again many crimes were found to have been inappropriately 'no-crimes'. Examples related to specific offences are shown below. The authorisation level for 'no-criming' a crime record ranged from sergeant to detective chief inspector. It was found that some individuals who were not authorised by force policy to 'no-crime' a record had in fact done so.



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¹ IP - injured party, police jargon for victim.

Assault – a number of assaults were 'no-crimed' because the victim was unco-operative even though there was clear evidence of assault. More often than not the victim had suffered visible injury such as cuts and bruises. One crime report gave the reason for 'no-criming' as 'No complaint made by IP¹', therefore 'no-crime'. Another reason for 'no-criming' was the inability of the officers to prove the offence. In one case of common assault the crime log stated 'no admissions by suspect.' Another assault case was 'no-crimed' on the basis that it was one person's word against another.

Burglary – one burglary was 'no-crimed' when clearly there was an offence present, perhaps criminal damage. The reason for 'no-criming' was not clear but a second report for criminal damage had not been raised. A burglary non-dwelling where an offender entered a school via an insecure skylight and then couldn't escape was 'no-crimed' on the basis that the investigating officers were unable to prove the intent.

Theft – a theft of a mobile phone from a handbag was 'no-crimed' as 'no evidence of a crime, no witnesses.' Another theft was 'no-crimed' on the basis that the offender denied the allegation. One theft allegation made by a passenger coming off an inbound flight was 'no-crimed' on the basis that it could not be substantiated where the offence had occurred.

Obtaining services by deception – a person was arrested for the offence and subsequently returned to the restaurant and paid the outstanding bill. There was no reason given in the log for the 'no-crime' classification.

Making off without payment – two offences related to cars being driven from garage forecourts without payment being made for the petrol. Both were 'no-crimed' on the basis that there was no registration number of the vehicle or other details. Another similar offence was 'no-crimed' on the basis that a letter had been sent to the registered keeper and a person had subsequently returned and paid the outstanding amount. There was no way of knowing whether the person that paid was the original offender.

Robbery – one robbery that was later discovered to be an assault had been 'no-crimed' and then re-crimed as a detected assault.

Criminal Damage – to a car was 'no-crimed' on the basis that damage could have been accidental and there was no evidence to rebut this.

Quite often the Inspection Team had difficulty auditing 'no-crimes' because the reason for 'no-criming' was not apparent on the crime recording system. Forces often used paper-based systems to record the reason for 'no-criming' – in a number of cases these paper records were checked as part of the audit.

Classification - cancelled crimes/error entry

Some forces used their own classifications, contrary to Home Office guidance, to deal with crimes recorded as a result of administrative errors. In such cases the crime should have been categorised as a 'no-crime - administrative error' and included in the annual statistical return to HMIC. In some forces if the cancelled/error entry category was aggregated with the correct 'no-crimes' category then this would have doubled the number of 'no-crimes' recorded by the force.

Classification - theft from shop (shoplifting)

10 undetected offences were sampled in this category to ascertain whether forces were recording crimes where the offender had not been detained. It was found that forces were recording crimes where the offender had not been detained. It was disconcerting to find one force that two offences involved violence by the offender (staff threatened with hypodermic needle and another offender lashed out and threatened staff with a knife). The violence offences had not been recorded and neither had the details been entered on the MO coding system. This was a serious omission from an officer safety and criminal investigation perspective.

Classification - cheque and credit card fraud

This category was audited to ascertain whether crimes were being recorded and linked, as they can be quite complex and involve many linked offences. The recording of these crimes varied between forces and BCUs within forces. In some the crimes were being recorded at the point of allegation whereas in others it was clear that the offences were only being recorded when the offence had been detected. It was found that there were considerable delays between the date reported and the date recorded on the crime system. This ranged from over two weeks to several months. It was noted a number had a detection date that closely coincided with the recorded date. Crimes were not being recorded on the crime system until they had been detected.

In one force, a central cheque squad maintained a separate record of crimes and on a monthly basis supplied the numbers of crimes recorded and detected to the central crime administration unit. In the same force a separate category for lost credit cards and chequebooks had been created on the crime system. The high volume of incidents recorded in this 'lost' category caused concern as it had not been audited. In another force, in relation to theft of credit cards, the crime auditing section placed a message on the crime system for officers to update any subsequent transactions. This resulted in crimes being quickly and correctly recorded.



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The audit revealed a theft of a switch card that had been used in the local area on the same day. There was no record of the subsequent transactions. Another incident suggested that because a bank was dealing with the matter the force had not recorded the offence. One record stated that numerous credit cards had been sent to the victim's address and subsequently used by another person; only one crime record was found. In another case only one offence of deception was recorded despite the fact that there was another deception and the theft of the original credit card.

In one force it was found that a number of credit card deceptions were being recorded as forgery – contrary to force policy. Officers stated the reason for recording such offences was that the local Crown Prosecution Service prosecuting policy in relation to these types of offences was to prosecute forgery because it was easier to prove.

Classification - dangerous driving

This category was audited because it was only classed as a recordable crime in April 1998. The term 'dangerous driving' is used by the public to cover a whole range of driving misdemeanours but there is a specific legal definition. This means that an allegation of dangerous driving may not amount to the same named offence in law. It was found that, in general, most forces did not record these offences unless a police officer witnessed the offence or the offences constituted part of a road traffic collision. One force, however, did not have dangerous driving on its crime system hence the staff in the crime reception unit did not record the offence.

Classification - vehicle interference and damage to vehicles

A number of forces recorded these offences in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules and few errors were found on their crime recording systems. However, in other forces there was clear evidence that crimes in these categories should have been classified as either 'theft from motor vehicle' or 'attempted theft from motor vehicle'. In the MO it was stated that the offender had searched the vehicle and in some cases property had actually been stolen. In one case it was the vehicle that had been taken without the owners consent. One offence of vehicle interference related to a pedal cycle and another offence stated the boot of the vehicle had been searched this is an attempt theft from vehicle.

In one force, the guidance issued stated that a searched glove compartment or search of the vehicle was to be recorded as vehicle interference, contrary to the Counting Rules. In another force one busy BCU had only recorded 11 vehicle interference offences since 1994. One force did not recognise the offence of vehicle interference; its policy was to record either 'attempt theft of or from a vehicle' or 'criminal damage to vehicles'.

Classification – damage to dwellings

This category was sampled to ascertain whether offences of 'attempted burglary' were being recorded as 'criminal damage', as it is a closely related offence. Numerous examples of attempted burglaries were found to be recorded as criminal damage but not vice versa.

Classification – other categories

Forces often made use of a number of 'other' categories within their crime systems to capture incidents that did not amount to recordable crimes yet needed to be captured for intelligence and information purposes. Where such systems existed a dip sample was taken of the main categories. Although the Inspection Team were generally satisfied with these categories in most forces, it was clear that in some forces crimes were being inappropriately recorded in these categories.

Nuisance phone calls – it was found that some contained details of verbal abuse or similar, and were often repeated over a period of time. It was clear that a number of these were harassment offences and should have been recorded as such. There was also some evidence of calls being made which amounted to threats to commit damage and threats to kill.

Harassment – this category was generally used to capture first incidents of harassment. A number of incidents within this category were a culmination of events which amounted to the offence of harassment.

Domestic violence – a number of those sampled were found to be assaults where the victim did not wish the police to take the matter further. One incident involved damage to property and an assault whilst another related to an argument between boyfriend and girlfriend.

Racial incidents – a small number of those sampled were considered to be public order offences rather than racially aggravated offences. The Inspection Team was concerned that the racial dimension had not been given priority. All such individual cases were brought to the attention of each force visited.

One force had a category 'Unusual event' which was excluded from their Home Office crime returns. The Inspection Team was seriously concerned to find a number of offences including robbery and serious assault held under this category. Also included were a number of complaints against police officers.



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Another force had a category 'Refused crime'. This was used to record incidents that have been phoned through to the central crime recording unit by members of the public and which in the view of the person taking the call did not amount to a recordable crime. These were not recorded as crimes but it meant that the recording process was transparent and could be audited. However, a random sample audited by the Inspection Team revealed incidents which should have been recorded as crimes. These included damage to motor vehicles, a smashed shop window, the theft of a tax disc, the theft of mobile phones and a report of a forgery where the person reporting did not want the police involved and the victim was never contacted.

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Written Scenarios Exercise

- 1 A woman phones up and states that she has returned home from a shopping trip and found the kitchen window at the back of her council house damaged. The damage amounts to crack in the glass spanning across the whole window. She does not know how the damage occurred but is reporting it to the police because she cannot have the window repaired by the council unless she gets a crime number from the police and gives the number to the council.
- 2 A person reports that a neighbour has damaged his fence. He does not wish you to take the matter any further but has reported this in case anything else happens. He does not want you to visit the neighbour. What if anything would you record?
- 3 Whilst driving around you see graffiti on a telephone box and a surrounding wall. The graffiti is new and you know it wasn't there yesterday.
- 4 During the course of a patrol you come across a car that has a smashed quarterlight, the ignition barrel has been removed and the radio appears to have been ripped out. PNC shows No trace lost or stolen and the previous keeper has notified DVLA that they are no longer the keeper of the vehicle. There are no current keeper details and you are unable to trace the owner of the vehicle.
- 5 You eventually manage to contact the owner of the vehicle. He is staying with a friend out of the county and will not return for a week. He states he will recover the vehicle on his return. You return to the same vehicle the following day. You notice the vehicle is now up on bricks, the wheels and headlights have been removed.
- 6 You receive a call from a person living in a block of flats. They state that they saw a fight outside between five men. During the fight they saw one man punch another in the face and this person fell to the floor. They are still lying there whilst the informant is making the call. On your arrival there is no sign of any of the parties involved.
- 7 Having carried out an area search you find the injured person who tells you that the alleged offender is his friend and they had a disagreement, which resulted in them punching each other. The injured person has been drinking heavily and does not wish to make any complaint, he has a bruise to the side of his face.
- 8 The incident has been captured on CCTV and you can identify all the parties involved. You are called to a domestic dispute; on your arrival it is apparent that the occupants of the house a male and female have been



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involved in a fight. The woman has a red mark to her cheek. She decides she does not wish to make a complaint and will not support a prosecution, she does however tell you that the man hit her across the face.

- 9 You are called to a dwelling house where the occupants report that a small glass panel in the front door has been smashed. It does not appear that anyone had entered the premises.
- 10 You are called to a shopping precinct as a result of a radio call. A store detective has seen someone who had been in the store walk out with two bottles of alcoholic drink under their coat and run off. The store detective has given chase but lost this person. The store detective did not see the person remove the bottles from the shelf as their vision was obscured. They did however see two bottles under the person's coat as they left the store and the store detective tells you the person did not have the bottles on them when they entered the store. There is no immediate way of telling what exactly was stolen.
- 11 A woman alleges she has been raped and names the offender. She states that she is not prepared to attend court and give evidence and she does not want the police to contact the person. She is simply reporting the offence so that the police are aware of the matter.
- 12 A filling station cashier reports that they have had a drive off. A red Escort filled up with £24-90 worth of petrol and the driver failed to pay. The cashier did not see the vehicle leave and there are no details on CCTV.
- 13 A filling station cashier reports that they have had a drive off. A red Escort filled up with £24-90 worth of petrol and the driver failed to pay. The cashier has details of the registration number of the vehicle which are passed to you.
- 14 A filling station cashier reports that they have had a drive off. A red Escort filled up with £24-90 worth of petrol and the driver failed to pay. The cashier has details of the registration number of the vehicle which are passed to you. A PNC check reveals previous keeper only no details of current keeper known. The vehicle was sold two months ago.

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Results of Focus Groups

The Table below shows the answer provided by the 81 officers that took part in the focus groups

Results of focus groups			
Reasons for recording		Reasons for not recording	
Evidence of offence	231	No complaint made by IP	59
No Evidence that offence hasn't occurred	26	No complainant available	84
Seriousness of allegation	28	Speak to injured party to ascertain if complaint will be made	65
No reason given	70	Speak to IP to ascertain what offence has been committed	13
Detection of offence	27	Volume of crime	1
Allegation of offence	116	No evidence	238
Domestic violence policy	23	Use incident logging system	23
Allegation & evidence of offence	114	Further enquiries to be made	62
Allegation of offence, intelligence or other enquiry	9	No reason given	18
Allegation of offence, intelligence or other enquiry	45	No possibility of proving offence/ detaining offender	5
		Offence already recorded	6
		Use Intelligence system	6
		Seek Advice	7
		Ascertain whether already recorded	8
		Enquiries to obtain a detection	3
Total	687	Total	598

In total there were 1,285 answers given to the scenarios with only 11 having been left blank. In some cases officers indicated their option to record, defer or not record but failed to provide their reasons for their answer.

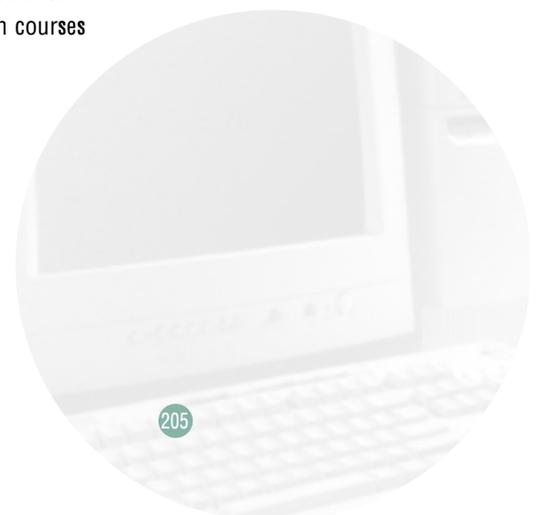
Of the 1,285 scenarios officers recorded 693 (54%) as crimes immediately, deferred recording in 391 (30%) of cases and would not record the incident in 201 (16%) cases.



APPENDIX H

PRG Report “Phoenix Data Quality” Recommendations

- ❑ National performance indicators and standards for timeliness of input, data fields to be completed, quality assurance requirements and the provision of training should be agreed by ACPO and promulgated to all forces.
- ❑ Achievement against and compliance with these indicators should be audited after a period of 12 months, perhaps though the inclusion in the scope of HMIC audits.
- ❑ Senior officers take an active and visible role in policing compliance with agreed standards within their own force.
 - ❑ ACPO performance indicators should be reflected in force policy or standing orders (or the force equivalent). Guidance should include the responsibilities of officers at each stage of the process eg for the provision of source documentation, for approval, time taken to pass to input bureaux, and the bureaux' responsibilities for data entry and quality control.
 - ❑ Line and divisional managers, as well as chief officers, should be held accountable for compliance with these standards. This could be achieved through inclusion in divisional efficiency assessments, and through the publication and dissemination of performance statistics throughout individual forces and nationally.
- ❑ Source documentation should be common across all forces, if not in design, in the information requested. A national format, stipulating a hierarchy of fields to be populated, should be developed.
- ❑ Programme(s) geared to raising awareness amongst operational officers and line managers of the potential benefits of Phoenix in a practical sense and their responsibilities of the provision of data should be developed. To ensure all officers have an opportunity to benefit from these programmes, consideration should be given to inclusion of a 'Phoenix awareness' module in probationer training, promotion courses and divisional training days.
- ❑ Best practice in administrative arrangements and organisational structures should be widely distributed. Internal working practices and organisational structures should be streamlined to remove any redundancies.



- Greater computerisation of the transfer of results from courts direct to Phoenix should continue to be developed. In the shorter term, the Police Service is likely to retain responsibility of the input of court information. To minimise the resource burden on the Police Service in this interim period, the police and courts should work to ensure recognition of each others requirements and to minimise any inconsistencies in their respective working practices.

 - In the first instance, this might be achieved by ACPO highlighting to Magistrates' Courts and to the Crown Court, perhaps through the Trails Issue Group, the importance of Phoenix records to the integrity of the criminal justice system as a whole. Liaison meetings could usefully be established to introduce greater consistency in working and recording practices between the courts and police forces eg for recording data. In the first instance, this could be pursued locally, perhaps through the court user group. Issues considered by such meetings might include supplying additional information (such as Arrest / Summons numbers) to the Magistrates' Court system and to automated transfer of court registers.
 - Consistent practice and performance is also required from the courts. Recommendations referring to performance indicators and standards, audits and monitoring, senior level commitment, common recording practices, awareness of system customers and administrative 'best practice' could equally apply to the courts. Mirroring the responsibilities of Chief Constables for their force, the Court Service and the Magistrates' Court Committee should be accountable for the performance of courts.
 - Consistent practice in advising custody details, including transfers and releases, is required. This includes consistency in advising CRO numbers to maximise the number of complete records. The police and prison services should liaise to encourage greater understanding and acknowledgement of each other's requirements.

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ACPO COMPLIANCE STRATEGY FOR PNC

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APPENDIX I

Foreword

This strategy is subordinate to the National Police Information Management Strategy (IMS) and designed to be applied to PNC. The IMS is owned by ACPOS/ACPO Council and developed by the ACPO IM Committee.

The Service must recognise that Performance Indicators are needed for all national systems covering :-

Accuracy
 Timeliness
 Completeness
 Relevancy

Strategy status and ownership

- ACPO and ACPOS Councils own the strategy.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate and where appropriate ACPO IM Committee oversee the application of the strategy.
- Individual forces and agencies have responsibilities to implement the strategy.

Reasons for a PNC Compliance Strategy

The drivers for the development of this strategy have been identified in the IMS (see page seven) and will continue to be :-

- Acknowledged shortfalls in data handling, accuracy and timeliness - as evidenced by the PRG report on Phoenix Data Quality.
- Data Protection principles governing Subject Access and the move after transitional periods to full application of the new Act beyond 2000. At present the Service may not meet the Registrar's standards on Relevance, Accuracy and Timeliness. The Registrar has already seen the PRG Report and is aware of the issues which face the service. Given the Registrar's considerable enforcement powers concerning data handling, compliance is essential.
- The Service is failing to maximise the full business potential of its major national crime reduction and investigative IT systems. As Mr M. O'Byrne C.C. Bedfordshire states in his report on proposed Phoenix Performance Indicators "given the current scrutiny which is being applied to the management of the service, the fact that the service has stated that the future of effective policing lies in an intelligence led approach....it is essential that the service puts its house in order as quickly as possible in the management of this key system."
- We must be able to demonstrate that we can be trusted to deal with information about individuals with integrity – this requires adherence to agreed standards.
- The Freedom of Information Act will be drafted so that it is compatible with the principles of the Data Protection Act.

- ❑ The Human Rights Act will pose fundamental questions on how the Service handles and uses data – the Home Secretary has stated, "Rights flow from duties - not the other way round. One person's freedom is another person's responsibility."
- ❑ If our systems are defective The Freedom of Information Act, the Human Rights Act and the Data Protection Act will increase the likelihood of litigation against the Service based on data handling procedures and use in operational situations.
- ❑ The ACPO/ACPOS Information Systems Community Security Policy provides a set of security requirements for safeguarding sensitive information including procedural and compliance issues. All members of the Community are required to comply with its content.
- ❑ Best Value demands that we "deliver services to clear standards - covering both cost and quality - by the most effective, economic and efficient means available" Best Value Policing, DETR 1998. This has clear implications given that the annual costs in 1998/99 for PNC services amounted to £17.6 million.

Strategy benefits

Full implementation of the Compliance Strategy will allow the service to demonstrate a more professional and ethical approach to data handling. This will enable the Service to continue to develop the investigative and crime reduction capacity of its national systems confident that it can stand scrutiny and is helping to improve operational performance. It will also allow the Service to approach issues of disclosure with greater confidence that the data will be relevant, timely and accurate.

Managing Information Strategically

The publication of a National Information Management Strategy recognises the need to shift from poor data quality management systems to a perspective where users understand their role both as providers and users of data and as a consequence, information being of a quality level which means it is fit for purpose.

This Compliance Strategy sets the framework and performance targets to ensure the service at large ensures effective management of National Police Data held in the PNC. The performance regime will require significant improvement in data quality in accordance with the principles enshrined in the IMS.

Key Action Areas

The areas this strategy identifies as requiring a response are collectively referred to as Key Action Areas. They are:

- ❑ Resources
- ❑ Leadership
- ❑ Organisational Positioning



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- ❑ Training
- ❑ Internal Scrutiny
- ❑ Performance Indicators
- ❑ Accountability
- ❑ Ownership/Sponsorship

A more detailed breakdown of these Key Action Areas now follows

Resources

A significant under resourcing of data handling functions has contributed to present problems:

- ❑ Forces should establish the present level of resources committed to the gathering, collation, input and use of data and should determine the level required to achieve the principles behind the IMS. The PNC Compliance Performance Indicators proposed may assist in defining the resource levels required and the appropriate competencies of staff.

Organisational Positioning

The IMS recognises that each force is different but forces would benefit from viewing the national systems primarily as aids in crime investigation as opposed to functions of record keeping:

- ❑ Forces should be mindful that where they place the local management of Police Information Systems within the organisation [e.g within CID or Criminal Justice] can influence whether staff see their value as merely record keeping systems or powerful crime investigation tools.
- ❑ The IMS action plan identifies the need to re-focus the management of information so that an organisation-wide perspective is achieved. (IMS ACTION PLAN No.14 – page 15)

Leadership

To improve performance results senior managers need to understand the benefits of present systems and the potential for the future. Serious concerns surrounding the perceived lack of knowledge and commitment to PNC were clearly laid out in the Police Research Group Paper "Phoenix Data Quality". This stated "Line and Divisional managers, as well as Chief Officers, should be held accountable for compliance with these standards". Therefore -

- ❑ Forces/agencies should establish the level of awareness amongst senior staff of the capabilities of PNC/Quest/CCA/VODS and ensure that the full potential of these national systems is appreciated.
- ❑ Senior staff should explore how best use can be made of these systems to improve force performance in both serious/series and volume crime. (IMS ACTION NO.13 – HOW THE IMS WILL SUPPORT A FORCES MEDIUM TERM PLAN).

- ❑ Forces may wish to review their in-force crime reduction strategy to ensure that the national systems are integrated properly.

Training

The present situation has three dimensions:

1. The information user [operational officer] must be provided with sufficient awareness to understand the capabilities of the services available and their own responsibilities in providing source data.
2. The information provider [terminal operator] must have the requisite skills to use the systems to their full potential and offer guidance on capabilities to operational staff.
3. Line managers should be trained to recognise how information systems can best contribute to operational performance.

All the above should be addressed by national training programmes and adherence to national training standards.

Internal Scrutiny

The Service should recognise the benefits of taking a proactive approach to auditing to maximise performance -

- ❑ Forces should comply with documentation and Manuals governing the use of PNC.
- ❑ Individual forces should ensure that reporting lines exist to allow Data Protection Officers to raise matters at a senior level.
- ❑ Where appropriate Internal Performance and Best Value Reviews should focus on optimum use of data and compliance to standards and make clear the links between effective data management and operational performance.
- ❑ Forces should understand the reason for their performance against national PIs and take action where appropriate.

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators specifically for Phoenix data standards have already been developed by Mr M. O'Byrne. Details of the proposed PIs are included as an appendix to this strategy. The Service should recognise the need for these PIs on data standards, acknowledging that some are aspirational and influenced by other organisations. Their staged implementation in some areas presents a progress path for forces to follow designed to deliver sustainable compliance:

- ❑ The Service should formally adopt the PIs for Phoenix data standards.
- ❑ Individual forces should establish their position in relation to existing and future PIs, understand the reasons behind their performance and take appropriate action.



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Accountability

The Service should recognise the increasing importance of information as a resource.

Issues in relation to audit and accountability must assume a higher profile:

- The Service will continue to be subject to separate PNC compliance audits by HMIC.
- HMIC will be able to explore the linkage between efficient data management and operational effectiveness during inspections of forces.
- HMIC will be able to audit forces against the nationally agreed data management PIs.
- HMIC will be able to inspect in-force audit processes.

Ownership and Sponsorship

For the strategy to be implemented effectively, monitored and remain relevant in the event of change it must have an owner:

- ACPO and ACPOS Councils own the PNC Compliance Strategy.
- ACPO Information Management Committee will have on-going responsibility for the IMS which is the overarching framework within which this PNC Compliance Strategy sits.
- The strategy will only work if the partners in the strategy fulfil their KEY ACTIONS and fully adopt the principles within them. The partners include:
 - NPT
 - HMIC
 - PITO
 - Individual Forces

Their individual KEY ACTIONS now follow

Key Actions

The PNC Compliance Strategy assumes all agencies identified as taking action to implement the IMS will be complying with it. In particular the action plan in the IMS and its relevance to the PNC Compliance Strategy is shown in the table below:

Key Actions

	IMS Action	Responsibility	Relevance to PNC compliance
1	ACPO Council endorse the IMS as formal ACPO Policy.	ACPO Council	Provides the overarching framework for PNC Compliance Strategy
2	To use the agreed IMS policy statements as a basis for discussion with all non-police agencies about information exchange and new IT developments.	All agencies using PNC	IMPLIED throughout this document.
6/7/8	<p>Identify where within the ACPO/PITO structures responsibility rests for Corporate (Service-wide) Information Management Policy. NB: The body which has responsibility for Service-wide Information Management Policy will be the final arbiter in respect of data standard and data management issues.</p> <p>Identify (with the support of members of the ACPO IM Futures Group) which ACPO Committee is responsible for developing the high level policy statements and ensuring all ACPO Committees take account of this Strategy in their development work.</p> <p>Determine how the ACPO IM Committee will shift its focus from "Products" to "Information Management" and support the continued development of IMS.</p>	ACPO IM Committee	Establishes the role of IM Committee in ensuring on-going improvement in the strategic use of information across the Service
9	Agree the basis of Service-wide Benchmarking of Information Management and Technology in support of the IMS both in terms of the methodology, process and resources	ACPO IM Committee ACPO Council HMIC	Establish the IM Benchmarking approach includes section on Data Quality and IM Policy formation.
10	Use the IMS/IT Benchmarking Tool Kit being developed by ACPO IM Committee (see 9) as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of Information Management and Technology Services within Forces	Forces	As above
13/14	<p>Determine how the IMS will support the Force's medium/long term Strategic Plan and then where necessary re-align local IS/IT Strategies with the Service-wide Information Management Strategy. In doing so, Forces should ensure that local strategies support the high level policy statements</p> <p>Where Forces have "Computer Departments", these are to consider how the issues of managing information across the organisation will be delivered and where appropriate re-focus their organisation to ensure the high level policy statements can be implemented.</p>	Forces	Ensures Forces see PNC as a strategic crime fighting tool and a Chief Officer has overall responsibility for managing information as a corporate resource.

APPENDIX I

Key Actions			
	IMS Action	Responsibility	Relevance to PNC compliance
15	To carry out an information audit at Force level against the policy statements and determine what action needs to be taken locally to meet the agreed standards.	Force Chief Officers with responsibility for Information Management	Compliance with PI's.
17	To commission a review of the impact of IMS on the current Service Training for IT Delivery and propose a way forward for a Service-wide Strategy of training and education which supports the IMS.	ACPO IM Committee	Training and education needs addressed.

ACPO and ACPOS COUNCILS should be invited to:-

- ❑ Formally adopt the PNC Compliance Strategy and ensure it is visited at least annually by the ACPO IM and Crime Committees to assess its relevance to the Service and reflect developments in Police Information systems and new legislation.
- ❑ Formally adopt the Phoenix Data Quality Performance Indicators (see Annex A).
- ❑ Develop and implement a unified approach to Data Protection auditing by enhancing the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual.
- ❑ ACPO IM Committee will consider the benefits of developing compliance strategies and where appropriate PIs for all national systems covering accuracy, timeliness, completeness and relevance.

NPT should be invited to:

- ❑ Establish competency levels required in the use of PNC for different generic roles within the Service eg uniform patrol officer, detective and SIO.
- ❑ Set minimum standards of training for PNC operators and quality assure training delivered via non-NPT sources.
- ❑ Ensure that opportunities are taken in all training delivered to emphasise the linkage between operational performance and information systems eg regional detective training and SCIMITAR.
- ❑ Develop a national skills profile to assist forces in selection of appropriate staff for training in the use of Police Information systems.
- ❑ Maintain a database of nationally approved PNC trainers.

HMIC should be invited to:

- ❑ Utilise inspections to advise forces of the links between force performance and use of Police Information systems.
- ❑ Identify and advise the Service on the links between efficiency plans, best value and data management.

- ❑ Consider including within the inspection process an assessment of individual force action plans designed to deliver their obligations to the strategy.

PITO should be invited to:-

- ❑ Ensure production and maintenance of relevant user manuals for PNC.
- ❑ Ensure all users [including non-police users] are aware of the IMS and the PNC Compliance Strategy and HMIC's role in policing the system.
- ❑ Provide a marketing strategy to support the thrust of the Service in moving the focus of Police Information systems from record keeping to crime investigation and performance improvement, in keeping with the IMS.

INDIVIDUAL FORCES must:

- ❑ Comply with the IMS and PNC Compliance action plans.
- ❑ Be aware of and comply with, the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual and other system manuals. When new systems are developed they should be used according to the operating rules provided.
- ❑ Ensure that appropriate staff are selected for training in PNC, and where appropriate apply the national competency profile [generated by NPT] and train to the national standard where these have been set.
- ❑ Establish the present level of resources committed to gathering, collation, input and use of data and determine the level required to achieve the principles in the IMS. The P.I.'s proposed may assist in defining resource levels required and the appropriate competencies those staff will need.
- ❑ Establish the level of awareness amongst senior staff of the capabilities of PNC/Quest/CCA/VODS and ensure that the full potential of these national systems is appreciated.
- ❑ Establish robust quality assurance processes in line with the IMS action plans.
- ❑ Ensure that reporting lines exist to allow Data Protection Officers to raise matters at a senior level.
- ❑ Ensure that internal Best Value and Performance Reviews focus on optimum use of data and compliance to standards and make clear the links between effective data management and operational performance.
- ❑ Understand the reason for their performance against national P.I.'s and take action where appropriate.
- ❑ Be aware of the importance of the Phoenix source document. Periodic reviews of the submission process should be carried out to ensure efficiency.

It is important for the Service to recognise that non-compliance by a single force can undermine not only the strategy but the integrity of the whole Service.



APPENDIX I

The Way Ahead

- This document represents the start of a continuous process of monitoring, evaluation and development for the Service and should be examined at least annually. It is important that the PNC Compliance Strategy is also visited on an annual basis through a formal process by ACPO Crime and IM Committees and ACPOS/ACPO Councils to ensure it remains relevant to the Service's needs and sympathetic to future developments.
- This strategy should be considered as any new national system is developed.

