

# **Greater Manchester Police**

An inspection of the service provided  
to victims of crime by Greater  
Manchester Police

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# About this report

It is important that police forces provide the highest possible service levels to victims of crime. This should start at the point of contact and last throughout the criminal justice process. It not only includes recording the victim's report, responding and undertaking proportionate investigations, but also ensuring that any victim vulnerability is identified and that appropriate safeguarding measures are taken.

As part of this process, it is important that forces have high-quality crime data. This allows them to establish where, when, and how often crime is happening.

This makes sure each force:

- offers victims of crime access to appropriate support services;
- gives the public accurate information about crime in their area;
- understands its current and future demand; and
- can plan its work in support of victims and meet the demands of investigations.

In 2016, HMIC<sup>1</sup> carried out a [crime data integrity inspection](#) of Greater Manchester Police (GMP). At that time, the force was judged as inadequate for crime recording. We found that the force was not always recording reported violent crimes, sexual offences and crimes reported to its public protection investigation units (PPIUs). This meant that too often the force was failing victims of crime.

In 2018, we carried out a [crime data integrity re-inspection](#) to review the progress made since 2016. The force was found to have made several improvements, but still required further improvement to close gaps identified in the service to vulnerable victims of crime. In particular, the force still had work to do to improve its:

- identification and recording of all reports of crime that are domestic abuse-related;
- recording of public order offences; and
- recording of rape crimes reported to the force.

In our [2019 integrated PEEL assessment](#) (IPA), we inspected the force's effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy. We were concerned to find that the force was still failing to respond appropriately to some people who are vulnerable and at risk, missing some opportunities to safeguard victims and secure evidence at the scene. So victims were being put at risk.

This report sets out the findings from our inspection to follow up these concerns. The inspection was completed during September and October 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> The inspection was carried out before 19 July 2017, when HMIC took on responsibility for fire and rescue service inspections and became HMICFRS.

## Terms of reference

The [terms of reference](#) for this inspection required us to answer the question:

“How good is the force’s service to victims of crime?”

To answer this question we assessed the extent to which the force:

- manages incoming calls, assesses risk and prioritises the police response well;
- deploys its resources to respond to victims and incidents in an appropriate manner;
- records crime in a manner that can be trusted;
- has effective arrangements for the screening and allocation of crimes for further investigation, including consideration of vulnerability and risk;
- carries out a proportionate, thorough and timely investigation into reported crimes, including the extent to which senior-level governance provides robust scrutiny; and
- makes sure that it follows national guidelines and rules for deciding the outcome of each report of crime.

This assessment focuses on the experience of the service provided by Greater Manchester Police to victims of crime. This is known as a victim service assessment (VSA). The VSA has been designed as part of our updated annual PEEL programme that assesses the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of police forces in England and Wales. The updated programme is due to commence in 2021.

We conducted this inspection remotely because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was to secure the safety of staff from HMICFRS and GMP involved in the inspection.

## Methodology

The inspection included a review of:

- force performance data;
- documents relating to call handling, investigation and crime recording obtained from the force;
- incident reports and crime records, including listening to the original calls for service received by the force;
- the initial response provided to victims;
- the approach to the allocation of crimes for investigation;
- a selection of investigation case files; and
- the recorded outcomes of reported crimes.

We also interviewed relevant staff members and received a detailed presentation outlining the improvements currently in progress or that the force is planning. This was provided by the force chief officer lead and the detective superintendent, who is the head of the Crime and Incident Recording Centre of Excellence (CIRCoE).

To complete this assessment, the force provided our inspectors with remote access to its incident and crime-recording systems, investigation files and telephone recordings.

We examined a selection of calls for service, incident records, crime reports and crime investigation files from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020.

## **Crime investigation files**

The crime investigation files reviewed in this inspection were selected from the following crime types:

- rape;
- other sexual offences;
- serious injury violence;
- non-serious injury violence;
- dwelling burglary;
- stalking and harassment;
- those involving domestic abuse investigations; and
- those involving child protection investigations.

# Headline findings

The service provided to victims of crime by Greater Manchester Police, particularly vulnerable victims of crime, remains a serious cause of concern. Over one in five of all crimes reported to the police in Greater Manchester are not making it onto the books. The position is worse when it comes to recording violence against the person, where more than one in four crimes are not being recorded. Domestic abuse often lies behind these types of crimes of violence, meaning that the victims are especially vulnerable.

There are areas in which the force has made improvements and in which it provides the service victims deserve and have a right to expect.

The force:

- responds to calls for service by allocating the appropriate resource correctly;
- makes appropriate use of appointments to provide a service to victims;
- has sustained its good crime recording standards for sexual offences;
- has improved its recording of reports of rape;
- has an effective crime allocation policy that matches recorded crimes to the most appropriate resource; and
- has introduced an audit process for measuring the standards of service that call handlers provide.

But there is still much work to do. The force has yet to overcome the deficiencies in service to vulnerable victims that we identified in our [2019 integrated PEEL assessment](#) and its crime recording standards have deteriorated substantially since our [2018 crime data integrity inspection](#). This means it is failing to record a high proportion of reported crime. In many cases, these unrecorded crimes are not investigated and victim safeguarding requirements are missed. This means that some victims of crime are being let down.

We examined crime reports from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. Based on this assessment, we estimate that over 80,100 crimes reported to the force went unrecorded during the year covered by our inspection. This represents a recording rate of 77.7 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.2 percent) and is a statistically significant deterioration in recording standards since our 2018 inspection. The problem is greatest for victims of violence against the person, with a recording rate of 73.5 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 5.1 percent).

It is crucial that every police force is able to accurately record crime. Not only does it allow forces to understand demand on their services, but it enables them to direct and prioritise their resources in a targeted, cost-effective way. Importantly, in many cases,

when a reported crime is not recorded, victims are denied an effective police response and ultimately they are denied justice. This is wholly unacceptable.

We also found that around half of investigations lacked sufficient supervisory oversight and planning. In some cases, this led to slow progress and a poor service to victims of crime. We note that the more recent changes the force has made to its governance structures and arrangements are designed to improve crime recording and investigation standards. But these changes have yet to take effect.

# How the police provide a service to victims of crime

The duty of the police is to keep the peace, prevent crime and disorder and bring offenders to justice. If the service provided to the victim of crime is not handled properly and in accordance with the established rules, the police cannot perform these duties well. A failure of a police force to correctly deal with the victim at any point, from the initial call to the conclusion of a case, will not only let down a victim, but an offender may be missed as well as a possible opportunity to prevent further crime. It will also reduce public confidence in the police.

## Call handling

When a victim contacts the police, it is important that their call is answered in a timely manner, the appropriate information is recorded accurately on to police systems and the victim is dealt with in a professional manner. The information needs to be appropriately assessed, taking into consideration threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. And the victim should get appropriate safeguarding advice.

## Deployment of resources

A force should aim to respond to calls for service within its published time frames, based on the prioritisation given to the call. It should only change the prioritisation of the call where the original prioritisation is deemed inappropriate, or where it gets further information that suggests a change is necessary. And the response provided should take into consideration risk and victim vulnerability, including information obtained subsequent to the call.

## Crime recording

The force's crime recording should be trustworthy. It should be effective at recording reported crime in accordance with national standards and have effective systems and processes, supported by the necessary leadership and culture.

## Screening and allocation

Police forces should have a policy to ensure crimes are allocated to appropriately trained officers or staff for investigation or, if appropriate, not investigated further. The policy should be applied in a consistent manner. The victim of the crime should be kept informed of the allocation and whether the crime is to be further investigated.



## **Investigation**

Police forces should carry out a proportionate, thorough and timely investigation into reported crimes. Victims should be kept updated about the investigation and the force should have effective governance arrangements to make sure investigation standards are high.

## **Outcomes**

The force should make sure it follows national guidance and rules for deciding the outcome it gives to each report of crime. In deciding the outcome, the force should consider the nature of the crime, the offender and the victim. And the force should demonstrate the necessary leadership and culture to make sure the use of outcomes is appropriate.

# Summary of our main findings

## General findings

Our inspection was carried out to establish the extent to which Greater Manchester Police provides a good service to victims of crime.

We found that in too many cases, the service provided is not good enough.

The force urgently needs to make significant improvements to the service it provides to victims of crime, particularly those who are most vulnerable. While we were pleased to note that it is recording reports of rape and other sexual offences to a good standard, and has commenced an ambitious programme of strategic change to better manage the service it provides, the pace of that change needs to increase. It is worrying that the force is:

- not answering around one in five 101 non-emergency calls for service;
- often not identifying victims as vulnerable at the point of contact;
- failing to identify, record and investigate around one in four reports of violent crime and to safeguard victims of many of these crimes. This includes behavioural crimes, such as harassment, stalking and coercive controlling behaviour, crimes amounting to domestic abuse and those reported by other agencies involving vulnerable adults and children;
- not always documenting investigation plans in a consistent way, and in around one in three cases these plans fail to meet basic standards;
- not supervising investigations effectively in nearly half of cases, with the required senior-level supervisory reviews not always being completed;
- too often failing to progress investigations in a timely manner;
- failing to engage and consult with around four in five victims when proposing to use out-of-court disposals (cautions and community resolutions) when dealing with offenders; and
- wrongly and prematurely closing substantial numbers of recorded crime investigations, including a high proportion of crimes involving vulnerable victims, as not supported by the victim, but without the evidence to show this to be the case.

## Call handling and deployment of resources

We found that around one in five non-emergency 101 calls are going unanswered. But a proportion of these unanswered calls are because callers are hanging up and electing to make use of online reporting (as encouraged by the recorded message). When calls are answered, the assessment of a victim's vulnerability is not happening when it should in more than half of cases. This means the force is still missing some opportunities to safeguard vulnerable victims. Additionally, in around half of cases, the force continues to miss opportunities to provide advice to victims to secure evidence at the scene. This potentially leads to the loss of evidence that would support an investigation and to further risk of harm to the victim.

We were reassured to find that the force generally manages prioritising calls well and in accordance with its own resource allocation policy. This prioritisation was found to then be used appropriately in the initial response to victims.

## Crime recording, screening and allocation for investigation

We found the recording of reports of rape had improved markedly from our 2018 inspection. And the force has sustained its good recording standard for reports of other sexual offences. This is welcome.

However, overall crime recording standards have significantly deteriorated since 2018. This is a cause of concern. A matter of especially serious concern is the failure to record a high proportion of violent crime, including domestic abuse and behavioural crimes such as harassment, stalking and coercive controlling behaviour. And in many cases the force does not investigate these unrecorded offences or provide safeguarding to victims. This is potentially leaving many victims at risk. It is important that these shortcomings are put right as a matter of urgency.

The arrangements for allocating recorded crimes for investigation were generally in accordance with the force policy. So in most cases the crime was allocated to the most appropriate department for further investigation. But we were concerned that the policy allows for some crimes with named offenders and clear investigative opportunities to be closed without further investigation, albeit where there has been an assessment of vulnerability and risk to the victim. Furthermore, we noted substantial delays in either contact with victims or the commencement of investigative activity, without any apparent rationale for these delays. This can have a detrimental effect on victim confidence in the police and may result in victims disengaging before the investigation concludes.

## Investigations

Even when reported crimes are recorded and investigated, we found that the recording of investigation plans was inconsistent. Plans were recorded on different parts of the force IT systems or not documented at all. The standard of the plans varied greatly. Some failed to identify necessary actions and obvious investigative opportunities. And often victims of crime were left in the dark as to the progress of an investigation despite agreements to keep them regularly updated.

Throughout, we found a common theme of a lack of documented supervision, control and direction. Where this was absent, the standard of investigation was generally weak and the pace of investigations slow. In contrast, we found that good investigations were strongly supervised and well documented and the decision making was much clearer. The lack of documentation and supervision meant the force could not show if and how it reduced the risk of harm to the victim.

## **Investigation outcomes**

In appropriate cases, those offenders who are brought to justice can be dealt with by means of a caution or community resolution. To be correctly applied and recorded, the disposal must be appropriate for the offender and the views of the victim taken into consideration. In around one in five of the cases we reviewed, the offender did not meet the national criteria for the use of these outcomes. And in many cases, we found no evidence that the force asked victims what they wanted or that it properly considered their wishes if it did ask.

Where a suspect is identified but the victim does not support or withdraws support for police action, the force should have an auditable record to confirm the victim's decision so that it can close the investigation. But we found that evidence of the victim's decision was absent in the majority of cases we reviewed. This represents a risk that victims' wishes may not be fully represented and considered before the crime is finalised. As this outcome is used by the force in as many as seven in ten domestic abuse cases, this is a matter of concern.

## **Supervision and governance**

Much of what we found during this inspection was already known to the force and presented to senior officers within its internal governance and performance oversight arrangements. But the effective and visible action of leaders needed to address and overcome these known issues was less evident. We acknowledge that there is a strategic programme of change underway in the force, which includes a significant investment in the Operational Communications Branch (OCB) estate and the creation of a centralised crime recording function. However, the pace of change must be increased as there is still much to do to ensure the internal supervision and governance it has invested in properly and adequately addresses identified concerns.

# Causes of concern, recommendations and areas for improvement

## Causes of concern

The cause of concern we raised in our [2019 integrated PEEL assessment](#) remains. The force continues to fail to respond appropriately to some people who are vulnerable and at risk, and is continuing to miss some opportunities to safeguard victims and secure evidence at the scene, consequently putting victims at risk.

Additionally:

- The force is failing to make sure it correctly records all reported crimes, particularly violent crime, including domestic abuse behavioural crimes such as harassment, stalking and coercive controlling behaviour. So these crimes are often not investigated and victims are not always safeguarded.
- The force is failing to make sure investigation plans are always completed to an acceptable standard and not adequately supervising investigations. This leads to poor standards of some investigations, a lack of timely progression of investigations and a failure to adequately document and mitigate the risk to victims, including vulnerable victims.
- The force is inappropriately concluding crime investigations with cautions and community resolutions that aren't appropriate and in which it doesn't consult the victim. The force is also recording that victims are not supporting or are withdrawing support for police action, even when it doesn't have the necessary auditable evidence to confirm this is the case. This represents a risk that justice is not being served and victims' wishes are not being fully represented and considered before a crime investigation is finalised.

## Recommendations

The force should immediately:

- take steps to identify and address gaps in its systems and processes for identifying and recording all reports of crime;
- put in place arrangements to make sure that adequate supervision is applied to crime-recording decisions made by officers and staff;
- reinforce the requirement for the use of investigation plans, where these should be recorded and the supervisory responsibilities for overseeing and reviewing these, and introduce effective governance arrangements so it can satisfy itself that this is being done; and
- put in place arrangements to make sure that in all investigations the risk to victims has been appropriately assessed and sufficiently documented, and that any risks are mitigated.

Within three months the force should:

- start crime-recording training for all supervisors, officers and staff in a crime-recording role, to include the crime-recording requirements for harassment, stalking and coercive and controlling behaviour offences;
- complete an assessment of the standard and supervision of investigation plans and put in place any identified remedial actions to ensure the plans support a high standard of investigation and a good service to victims;
- make arrangements to improve the use and supervision of cautions and community resolutions so that they are only applied in appropriate circumstances, taking into account the nature of the offence and the background of the offender. The arrangements should include seeking victims' views about the use of these outcomes, and the force should ensure that it records and considers these views; and
- complete a review to understand why it uses such a high proportion of outcome 16 (where a victim is recorded as not supporting or withdrawing support for police action) in respect of domestic abuse. This review should ensure the use of this outcome is not being affected by the quality and timeliness of investigations or workload pressures on police officers and staff; and that it is only being used in appropriate circumstances, supported by an auditable record of the victim's decision.

Within six months the force should:

- complete a review of its operational governance arrangements. It should ensure the review properly and adequately considers relevant information and data, and has the appropriate authority and is effective in directing the necessary activity and actions needed to address identified shortcomings in the service provided to victims at any stage of their engagement with the force.

### **Area for improvement**

- The force should act to ensure it can answer a greater proportion of non-emergency 101 calls so that caller attrition levels are reduced and kept as low as possible.

# Detailed findings

## Call handling

When a victim contacts the police, it is important that their call is answered in a timely manner, the appropriate information is recorded on to police systems accurately and the victim is dealt with in a professional manner. The information needs to be appropriately assessed, taking into consideration threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. And the victim should get appropriate safeguarding advice.

We found that emergency calls made to the force are answered promptly. But between April and June 2020 around one in five non-emergency 101 calls were not answered before the caller disengaged. This is an improvement since 2018, when around three in ten 101 calls were not being answered. Also, around half of these callers subsequently contact the force through its internet-based system, known as single online home. This alternative option for contacting the force is welcome.

The extent to which 101 non-emergency calls are not answered has persisted for some time, and the force was aware of it through its Operational Communications Branch (OCB) performance management arrangements. A long-term sustainability plan has been developed for the OCB, which is intended to improve the service provided. The force has also introduced a process to ensure vulnerable callers routed to the force switchboard are identified as such and calls transferred to dedicated operators. This process is designed to reduce the proportion of vulnerable callers who disengage when attempting to contact the force and is known as 'alternative 101 calls'. These are encouraging developments. It is important that the force also takes the necessary steps to address the issues with regard to 101 call handling in the near term.

The force applies a structured triage approach to assess the caller's risks and needs. This assessment is recorded on the incident record and helps the force prioritise the response. It ensures vulnerable victims' needs are identified and safeguarding measures taken. But in more than half of the samples we reviewed, this assessment was not completed, and on other occasions it was completed but not entered on the incident record. When the risk assessment was not completed there were examples of clear and immediate safeguarding problems that were not addressed. This means vulnerable victims are not always receiving an enhanced response when it is needed and are potentially being exposed to avoidable risk.

The force has started work intended to overcome these issues with the introduction of a threat, harm and risk assessment on receipt of every incident, supported by continuous risk management through the life of the incident. This is intended to ensure the force always assesses a victim's vulnerability at the earliest opportunity, deploys



the correct resources effectively and ensures safeguarding. It anticipates this will be introduced fully in early 2021.

Call handlers were generally polite and professional and showed empathy to callers. But there were occasions when call-handling standards fell short, creating a risk that either the caller would not receive appropriate advice about keeping themselves safe (which is particularly important if the offender is still near) and about securing evidence that may be crucial to the investigation.

The force has introduced an audit process within its OCB for measuring the standard of service provided by call handlers. This is a welcome development that should help the force in its efforts to secure and maintain effective call-handling arrangements.

## **Deployment of resources**

A force should aim to respond to calls for service within its published time frames, based on the prioritisation given to the call. It should only change the prioritisation of the call where the original prioritisation is deemed inappropriate, or where it gets further information that suggests a change is necessary. And the response provided should take into consideration risk and victim vulnerability, including information obtained subsequent to the call.

In most cases, we found the force could respond to calls for service within its published time frames. The response provided was appropriate to the circumstances and took into account any identified risk and victim vulnerability. We found evidence of specialist officers attending scenes quickly when required to support local officers in meeting the needs of victims.

In cases where the prioritisation given to a call was changed, this only occurred in appropriate circumstances with recorded rationale.

An appointments system operates for certain low priority calls for service. We found the system was used appropriately, with victims asked to confirm appointment times based on their own availability. Any variations or delays to appointments were recorded with supporting rationale. Supervision and intervention were also evident, with supervisors becoming directly involved, advising and directing when needed.

## **Crime recording**

The force's crime recording should be trustworthy. It should be effective at recording reported crime in accordance with national standards and have effective systems and processes, supported by the necessary leadership and culture.

In this respect, we found the standards achieved by the force were a cause of concern and in need of substantial improvement.

The force introduced a Crime and Incident Recording Centre of Excellence (CIRCoE) in July 2020. This is intended to ensure sustained improvements to GMP's crime recording arrangements and is a welcome development. It is too soon to assess the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

Our assessment found that the force records just 77.7 percent of reported crime (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.2 percent), a statistically significant deterioration in recording standards since our 2018 inspection. We estimate that this means over 80,100 crimes reported to the force went unrecorded during the year covered by our inspection.

The problem is greatest for victims of violence against the person, with a recording rate of 73.5 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 5.1 percent). A very high proportion of these unrecorded crimes involved cases amounting to domestic abuse, including behavioural crimes such as harassment, stalking and coercive controlling behaviour.

We found that in the majority of these cases no investigation took place and opportunities to bring offenders to justice and safeguard victims were missed. This is leaving many vulnerable victims at risk of further harm.

### **Domestic abuse victim denied support**

A pregnant victim called to report that an older relative was making threats of violence against her, that he was always fighting her and wanted to attack her. She confirmed that this happens regularly. The caller was clearly distressed on the telephone and sounded fearful. The pattern of behaviour is repeated and continuous. A domestic abuse-related offence of controlling and coercive behaviour should have been recorded as a crime but wasn't, no investigation was undertaken and appropriate safeguarding opportunities were missed.

A common theme in those cases of unrecorded domestic abuse crimes is the disparity between the initial caller's account of events and the eventual update from the attending officers, who rarely provide a documented explanation to negate the original allegation of crime or other rationale to justify not recording a crime.

Improvements have been made to the recording of reports of rape since our 2018 report, with the force recording 31 out of the 33 we reviewed. This is a positive step, achieved using specialist resources and increased levels of supervisory oversight and intervention. This should give confidence to victims that their reports will be taken seriously and that they will receive the service they should.

Additionally, we found that the force has maintained its good recording standard for sexual offences, with a recording rate of 94.9 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 4.1 percent).

However, crimes referred from other agencies (such as children's services) into the force multi-agency safeguarding hub are not always being recorded. We examined 74 vulnerable victim records and found they contained 42 reported crimes (some of which were multiple crimes against a single victim) that should have been recorded. Of these, only 32 had been recorded. The force assessed the unrecorded crimes and acknowledged failures in a number of the cases, including wrongly allocating a case involving a child victim of physical assault by a carer for investigation by a response officer. The case was then not progressed.

We examined 40 incident reports closed as anti-social behaviour (ASB). From these records, we found that 23 crimes should have been recorded. The force recorded just 16. The seven missing crimes were made up of one public order offence and six crimes of harassment that showed significant levels of personal harassment towards victims, some of whom were vulnerable. Incidents closed as ASB can often contain reports of crime that are not recorded and that may involve vulnerable victims suffering long-term abuse. The force must take greater care to ensure victims of crime-related ASB are properly identified as victims of crime and receive the service and support they need and deserve.

When a recorded crime is later found not to have occurred, it can be cancelled. We found that arrangements to ensure this only happened when it should were generally acceptable. But on a small number of occasions some rape cases and other crimes were incorrectly cancelled. In these cases, the decision maker had not understood that the additional information required to cancel a crime must determine that no notifiable offence has occurred and that the decision to cancel a crime should not be based on their doubt about the veracity of the victim's report.

The force crime registrar (FCR) is responsible for overseeing crime-recording arrangements. The FCR is the final arbiter for auditing crime recording standards, interpreting the crime recording rules and assigning outcomes. The [Home Office counting rules for recorded crime](#) require that the FCR be outside operational line command for matters concerning crime recording. The FCR should answer directly to the deputy chief constable (DCC), or an appropriate chief officer (who should not be responsible for force crime performance) designated by the chief constable. Formal interactions between chief officers and FCR must be evidenced and auditable. The FCR should also have direct access to the chief constable (or equivalent) where necessary. Chief officers must ensure that the FCR has sufficient independence and authority so that high standards of adherence to crime recording standards and rules are attained and maintained.

In GMP, the FCR does not answer directly to the DCC or any other chief officer. Instead, he reports crime-recording matters through a superintendent. This potentially limits the extent of the FCR's influence on ensuring effective and efficient crime recording within the force and risks chief officers not being fully aware of matters of concern.

There is a hierarchy of governance meetings at which the results of crime-recording audits are presented, up to and including the force performance meeting and the DCC's Operational Committee meeting (OpsCo).

We found no evidence that the force's own crime-recording audit findings, which are similar to ours, result in substantive action to address the identified problems.

An assistant chief constable is responsible for a Crime Recording Improvement Plan. It contains some commendable objectives, including objectives to achieve a victim-centred approach to crime recording and to address our recommendations. But only limited actions have been completed to date. The force could not provide us with a substantive action plan to show the detailed actions it is taking; how long the work has been ongoing; the pace of progress; or the expected time it will take to fully implement the Crime Recording Improvement Plan. The force needs without further

delay to increase the pace at which it is working to overcome the causes of concern and gaps in the service provided to victims identified in this and our earlier inspections.

## Screening and allocation

Police forces should have a policy to ensure crimes are allocated to appropriately trained officers or staff for investigation or, if appropriate, not investigated further. The policy should be applied in a consistent manner. The victim of the crime should be kept informed of the allocation and whether the crime is to be further investigated.

We found that the decisions to allocate a crime for further investigation or not to progress with an investigation were generally made correctly in accordance with force policy. In most cases, the crime (if screened in for investigation) was allocated to the most appropriate department. But occasionally, where a decision had been taken to continue with further investigations, the force made no contact with the victim and did not record investigation activity for some considerable time. In these cases, there is a greater chance that the victim's confidence in the police is damaged and that they disengage before the investigation concludes. And in about half of the cases we looked at, where a decision had been taken not to investigate further, there was no record of the victim having been informed.

We note that in some circumstances, to manage demand, even when a suspect has been identified and there are potential investigative opportunities, the force policy provides for recorded crimes not to be progressed to an investigation. In these cases, the policy requires the decision maker to be satisfied that the victim is not vulnerable or otherwise at risk of further harm, and that there are no other public interest factors. This means that of the reported crimes that get recorded, many that could have a positive outcome, such as a conviction in court, are being finalised without further investigation.

As a result, victims' expectations will not always be met and offenders will not be brought to justice. And opportunities for intervention and the use of diversionary activity for offenders (such as attendance at a victim awareness course, drug awareness course, engagement with addiction services, or a voluntary referral to a domestic abuse perpetrator programme) are compromised. So the likelihood of further offending is increased and public safety may be put in peril.

It is important that the force takes the views of the victim into consideration when finalising reported crime in this way. The FCR should supervise this decision making on behalf of the force. This has not been the case within GMP. Without such supervision, the force may unwittingly use the policy inappropriately.

Additionally, we found that the force undertakes occasional auditing of the use of this policy. But despite these audits identifying areas for improvement, the force has taken no action to address them when presented at its Crime Standards Board.

## Investigation

Police forces should carry out a proportionate, thorough and timely investigation into reported crimes. Victims should be kept updated about the investigation and the force should have effective governance arrangements to make sure investigation standards are high.

To provide for effective and efficient investigations, police forces should have structured processes, supported by clearly defined guidance that all staff members understand. This enables investigations to be undertaken in a consistent way and to recognised standards.

GMP implemented the Crime Management Policy and Procedure in March 2020 and reviewed it in June 2020. The latest version was in consultation stage at the time of our inspection. We found that while the policy provides varying levels of guidance across a wide range of areas, it lacks clarity and consistency and requires greater detail in some areas.

The force has reflected on this and is now introducing an electronic investigations guidance workbook that another force currently uses and which has been recognised as notable practice. This work should be completed as a matter of priority and the force should support it with a strategy to ensure the updated guidance is fully understood and applied by staff undertaking investigations.

Investigation plans are an important and necessary element of good investigations. In GMP, the documenting of investigation plans was inconsistent. We found plans were recorded on different parts of the force's IT systems or not documented at all. In addition, irrespective of the seriousness of the crime, the quality of investigation plans varied, with around one in three plans failing to mention necessary actions and basic investigative opportunities.

The lack of a standard approach to recording investigation plans makes it extremely difficult for supervisors or investigators to review and monitor progress.

We were concerned to find that some of the child protection cases we reviewed did not sufficiently document important information such as care plans or safeguarding activity regarding children and their welfare. And in some cases police protection documentation was not recorded. So it is not possible to tell if the conditions of the powers were met.

Failure to adequately document the risk to victims can result in the cumulative risk not being properly assessed. This could mean that adequate safeguarding would not be in place to protect a child.

Many investigations were progressed within a reasonable timeframe, but we found cases that had no apparent activity for some considerable time. We also found instances of serious crimes such as rape and serious assault that remained in the response officer's workload without being progressed and without apparent allocation to an appropriate investigator. In these cases, there was a serious risk that evidence might be lost or degraded. In these instances, victims are potentially denied justice.

Supervisory oversight was also inconsistent, with tasks to review investigations not always shown as completed. This was the case even in serious sexual offence investigations such as rape, when mandatory 28-day inspector and 90-day detective chief inspector reviews were found not to have been completed.

### **Rape investigation not progressed**

A victim reported a rape by an identified suspect, and further disclosed that they had also recently been the victim of a violent domestic assault by a different suspect. The victim declined to provide a formal account at that stage as they wanted time to reflect on whether to take any investigation forward. The rape was recorded as a crime, however the domestic abuse crime was not.

Following initial disclosure, no investigation plan was put in place for the rape crime and there was no investigative activity for more than four months, even though clear lines of enquiry were apparent. No contact was made with the victim after the report, either directly or through agencies (who were in contact with the victim). The most recent log entry merely states that contact needed to be made and further enquiries progressed. Tasks to review the investigation were sent to a detective inspector (28 days) and a detective chief inspector (90 days). Neither of these tasks were completed.

Although the victim had some reservations about engaging in the investigation at the initial reporting stage, more could and should have been done to support and safeguard them by taking positive action.

Of the child protection investigations we reviewed, and which didn't meet an acceptable standard, we found a common theme of a lack of documented supervisory oversight control and direction. In one case, there was only one supervisory comment on the crime, which was only entered nearly two months after the incident was reported. This made it difficult to assess how effectively the case had been supervised.

We found that in some cases the lack of documentation and supervision led to risk of harm not being sufficiently mitigated on the record. In contrast, we found that good investigations were well supervised and well documented and the decision making was much clearer.

Prior to our inspection, the force had identified concerns regarding the supervision of child protection investigations and in May 2020 introduced a new approach to address those concerns. However, at the time of our inspection, these changes had not translated into practice in all of the records we reviewed.

Updating victims on progress encourages them to support the investigation and any subsequent prosecution. The force recorded that regular updates were provided in many cases. But we also found cases in which victim updates were not recorded or the detail of victim contact was limited. Inconsistency in how the force recorded updates on its systems made it difficult for officers, staff and their supervisors to identify the full extent to which victim contact had taken place.



There are established governance arrangements in relation to investigations. At a district level, these arrangements include monthly crime governance meetings with the chief inspectors responsible for trained investigators. At a force strategic level, additional governance is provided by the Crime Standards Board and the Vulnerability Board, each of which report into the force OpsCo meeting chaired by the deputy chief constable. However, with the exception of the Vulnerability Board, these arrangements did not result in substantive action to address identified problems.

## Outcomes

The force should make sure it follows national guidance and rules for deciding the outcome it gives to each report of crime. In deciding the outcome, the force should consider the nature of the crime, the offender and the victim. And the force should demonstrate the necessary leadership and culture to make sure the use of outcomes is appropriate.

Force guidance for the use of outcomes reflects that provided nationally.

There are a wide range of outcomes that can be applied to a recorded crime record. These include outcomes where an offender is charged or summonsed to court; out-of-court disposals such as cautions, community resolutions and penalty notices for disorder; and those outcomes that conclude an investigation for other reasons such as there being no realistic investigative opportunities; or where a suspect is named but the victim chooses not to support or has withdrawn support for police action (known as an outcome 16).

We looked in detail at the use of three of these outcomes by GMP: cautions, community resolutions and outcome 16s.

The views of the victim are an important consideration when the police are considering cautioning an offender or proposing a community resolution. Of the 39 cautions and community resolutions we reviewed, we found that 30 of these outcomes should have taken into account the views of the victim, but they were only shown as having been considered in seven cases. Furthermore, in around one in five of the cases we reviewed, the offender did not meet the national criteria for the use of these outcomes. This included persistent offenders being cautioned or given the opportunity for a community resolution when a more severe sanction, such as charging to court, should have been applied.

We found that in most cases where a caution was applied there was no record of supervisory consideration and approval of the decision to caution. And the use of community resolutions was not always recorded correctly onto force systems. Templates provided to ensure compliance with the relevant elements of the resolution process had not been completed. So the information that supervisors would need to check the appropriateness of the outcome was missing.

We also noted that on some occasions the force used cautions and community resolutions for offence types for which they are not intended. This includes examples of unlawful possession of firearms and other weapons, including bladed articles. This potentially diminishes the seriousness of these offences in the eyes of those who choose to break the law and fails to ensure the criminal justice system works

effectively to ensure offenders receive punishment commensurate with the nature of their offending.

The force's own data shows that for the 12 months to the end of July 2020, 70.5 percent of offences that relate to domestic abuse result in the use of outcome 16. This means that for these recorded reports of crime there is a known offender but the victim does not support or has withdrawn support for police action. This is an unacceptably high proportion of the domestic abuse crime recorded by the force and is a matter of concern. The force needs to work to understand why it uses such a high proportion of outcome 16 in respect of domestic abuse-related crimes. It must satisfy itself that matters such as the quality and timeliness of investigations or workload pressures on police officers and staff are not contributing factors.

In circumstances where a victim does not support prosecution, the force can consider the use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs).<sup>2</sup> These allow police, in certain circumstances, to support victims of domestic abuse by imposing conditions similar to bail conditions or a restraining order on a suspect. This lets the police and domestic abuse services support a reluctant victim in the hope that they will be prepared to make a formal statement of complaint. It also supports safeguarding to make sure a victim is safe. Despite the extent to which the force uses outcome 16, it was surprising to find that in August 2020, the force used DVPNs and DVPOs on just 43 occasions. The force should review whether it is making effective use of these powers to safeguard victims.

We found that in two out of the 20 outcome 16s we reviewed, no mention was recorded of the victim withdrawing support. In a further 16 out of the same 20 records, when the investigating officer commented that the victim did not support the investigation, this was not backed up by an auditable record (such as body-worn video, a statement or pocket notebook entry). Some of these were domestic abuse cases. So there is a risk that the victim's wishes may not be fully represented and considered before the crime investigation is finalised. The extent to which these outcome decisions are not supported by auditable evidence of the victim's decision is a matter of concern.

The force recently completed its own review of the use of outcome 16 and found that only three of 348 records checked did not meet the requirement of the outcome. But this review did not consider whether an auditable record existed of the victim's desire not to support or to withdraw support for police action. So the force needs to urgently satisfy itself that this outcome is only being used in appropriate cases; that is to say, that it is supported by an auditable record. And it needs to establish what is contributing to such a high proportion of victims of domestic abuse taking this view.

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<sup>2</sup> Legislation under the Crime and Security Act 2010 designed to combat domestic abuse allegations where there is insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction, usually where a formal complaint statement has not been made.



## Next steps

Greater Manchester Police must now work hard to make the necessary improvements to ensure it provides a service of good standard in all respects to all victims of crime.

The force must address its identification and management of vulnerability, its shortcomings in crime-recording standards and its management of investigations, making sure that officers and staff fully understand the standards expected of them. It must supervise these standards effectively, both locally and through force-level governance arrangements.

We expect the force urgently to make progress with implementing the recommendations and areas for improvement in this report.

# Explanatory notes

## Caution

Used for people when the offender's behaviour requires no more than a formal warning. A caution may be offered when the offender admits the offence and there is enough evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute. The offender must also agree to accept the caution and, in doing so, must understand the implications.

## Community resolution

A way of dealing with an offender that is proportionate to less serious crime. It may include, for example, apologising to the victim or making good damage caused. Community resolutions can be offered when the offender admits the offence and are mainly used in cases where the victim has agreed that they do not want formal action to be taken.

## Confidence level and confidence intervals

We apply the 95 percent confidence level as the generally accepted level of certainty used in statistical tests. Any sample may produce estimates that differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been examined. At the 95 percent confidence level, with many repeats of an audit under the same conditions, we expect the confidence interval would contain the true population value 95 times out of 100.

The audit aims to select a random sample size necessary to yield confidence intervals of no more than +/- 5 percent for violent crime, sexual offences and all other crime (at the 95 percent confidence level) and +/- 3 percent for overall recorded crime.

The confidence interval provides an estimated range of values that the given population being examined is likely to fall within. For example, if an audit found that 85 percent of crimes were correctly recorded with a confidence interval of +/- 3 percent, then we could be confident that between 82 percent and 88 percent of crimes were correctly recorded of the population for the period being examined.

## **Domestic abuse**

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological;
- physical;
- sexual;
- financial; or
- emotional abuse.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so-called honour-based violence and abuse, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

## **Estimate of the number of unrecorded crimes**

This estimate has been calculated by applying our audit findings, covering a three-month audit period, to Home Office police-recorded crime figures (excluding fraud) for the force for the 12 months to the end of the audit period.

## **Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)**

Entity bringing together the main local safeguarding agencies to better identify risks to children (and in some areas, vulnerable adults) and improve decision making, interventions and outcomes.

## **Penalty Notice for Disorder**

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

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