

# Crime data integrity

## Inspection of Cambridgeshire Constabulary

November 2014

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# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Scope and structure of report .....	4
<b>Part A: Summary of inspection findings, and recommendations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Leadership and governance .....	5
Systems and processes.....	6
People and skills.....	11
Recommendations.....	12
<b>Part B: Audit findings in numbers .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Leadership and governance .....	16
Systems and processes.....	18
People and skills.....	23

## Introduction

In its 2013/14 inspection programme<sup>1</sup>, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. The central question of this inspection programme is:

*“To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?”*

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

Recent HMIC inspections have revealed weaknesses in police crime recording, particularly the under-recording of crimes. In our interim report of 1 May 2014 we said that “we are seriously concerned at the picture which is emerging”.<sup>3</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Methodology

Each force inspection involves:

- An examination of crime records for the period 1 November 2012 to 31 October 2013;
- A dip-sample of out-of-court disposals (cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND), cannabis warnings, community resolutions) and no-crime decisions for rape, robbery and violence;
- Visits to forces where inspectors assess local crime-recording arrangements under three headings: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and people and skills; and
- A peer review of audit findings by an NCRS expert from outside HMIC.

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

## Scope and structure of report

This report is divided into the following sections:

1. Part A: A summary of our findings and recommendations;
2. Part B: Our findings in numbers;
3. Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings.

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

## Part A: Summary of inspection findings, and recommendations

### Leadership and governance

Chief officers in Cambridgeshire Constabulary promote compliance with HOCRs, encouraging a victim-centred approach.

The assistant chief constable (ACC) has responsibility for crime data integrity and chairs the force performance board (FPB) and the crime data integrity working group, introduced in 2014.

We found that more could be done by chief officers to encourage police officers and staff to speak out in the event of any concerns about the integrity of crime recording. There is a confidential reporting line available for staff to report any concerns but there is a degree of distrust in its confidentiality; some staff are unaware of its existence and some staff are reluctant to use it.

**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should ensure that all police officers and staff are fully aware of the confidential reporting line, emphasising that it is indeed confidential and can be used for all matters of concern, including those relating to crime data integrity.

Force policy for crime and incident recording describe the requirements of the HOCR, NCRS and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). The policy states that crime will be recorded within the 72 hours allowed under the HOCR. We found some staff interpreted this as meaning they had 72 hours in which to decide if a crime had occurred and needed to be recorded. This is not the case. The HOCR require crimes to be recorded as soon as there is sufficient information to believe that a crime has occurred and, in any case, within 72 hours.

**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should ensure that all relevant officers and staff are reminded of their responsibility to record crime as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed.

All crimes are entered on to the Crime File system through the police service centre (PSC).

Crime reports are notified to the PSC by telephone during opening hours. Outside of these times, an electronic crime report form is emailed to the PSC. In addition some officers have been trained to directly input crime reports via a mobile device.

There is a standard approach to all crimes to ensure effective investigation regardless of the nature of the report; however, there is not a proportionate approach in terms of the level of detail included in crime records.

Crime audits are open to scrutiny through the crime data integrity working group (CDIWG), chaired by the head of information management. However, the force does not currently have an effective process in place to systematically identify, capture and share common good practice or failures in NCRS that have been identified through audit. We found that some officers are still confused about when they should record crimes. A communications plan has been agreed by the force to ensure regular updates are provided to all staff in relation to crime-recording issues and directives, but this is yet to be circulated.

**Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should put in place a process that enables it to capture and share good practice and to correct failures in NCRS compliance, as identified by the audit regime.

## Systems and processes

### Accuracy of crime recording

We examined 75 incident records<sup>6</sup> and found that 58 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 58 crimes that should have been recorded only 41 were. Of the 41, five were wrongly classified and eight were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. This is of serious concern as it means that some crimes are not being recorded and victims are not getting the service they deserve (because, for example, certain victim support services are only triggered when a crime is recorded).

The force also has a police service centre through which, we have estimated, the force record approximately 21 percent of its total recorded crime. This unit records reports of crime directly from members of the public which do not require the creation of an incident record. Our inspection of this unit (a review of 13 calls from the public) found that of the 13 crimes that should have been recorded, all 13 were recorded correctly which is an effective approach in respect of this element of crime recording.

We examined 52 reports which were recorded separately on other force systems. We found that from those 52 reports, 18 crimes should have been recorded; the force had only recorded 7 crimes. It is extremely concerning that the reports reviewed on this system had not been recorded properly as a crime, including serious sexual offences, domestic abuse and offences against children committed by adults. This is a matter that should be rectified urgently by the force.

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

The identification of crimes on the case administration tracking system (CATS) and the ECINS system,<sup>7</sup> which include external referrals from other public sector organisations such as local councils, presents a significant risk to the force. We found little evidence of supervision of these systems and we found that there is no cross-referencing to the crime-recording system.

**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should ensure that all reports recorded separately on other force systems (e.g., those used by the public protection teams) are recorded as crimes. The force should put in place proportionate and effective audit arrangements, through the FCR, to ensure that reports held on separate systems are properly recorded as crimes.

The force uses the STORM incident recording system. This system enables force control room operators to identify repeat victims by location and contact number. Vulnerability is assessed using drop-down checklists that are associated with incident opening codes. Automatic highlighting occurs for incidents where the crime should be recorded; this is a positive addition from previous versions of the system.

More effective supervision is required to improve the accuracy of incident and crime records, particularly within the force control room where we found there are too few call-handler incident records reviewed regularly by supervisors and that reviews do not assess compliance with the NCRS.

**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should introduce a structured and proportionate quality assurance process by supervisors in the force control room. This should be undertaken on a consistent basis across all teams; include a check of compliance with the NCRS; and, where appropriate feed into the development of professional practice and continuous improvement in the force control room.

The force has a procedure for detailing how officers and staff should deal with reports of crime which are reported in Cambridgeshire but which have occurred elsewhere. This procedure is understood by officers.

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<sup>7</sup> ECINS is a database used by neighbourhood resources to record community problems and activities directed to address them.

## Out-of-court disposals

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

**Cautions** – Out of the 20 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in 17 cases the offender’s previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In nine cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 13 cases where there was a victim to consult, all 13 cases showed that the victims’ views had been considered.

We found that if offenders receive a caution while in the custody suite, they were provided with an explanatory leaflet detailing the cautioning process; outside the custody suite this does not occur.

**Penalty Notices for Disorder** – We dip-sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 16 cases. We found that in all 20 cases the offender had been made aware of the future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 11 cases where there was a victim to consult; we found no evidence that victims had had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

**Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 19 cases. In all of the 20 cases, we found that the offender had been made aware of the implications of accepting the warning.

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<sup>8</sup> A form of immediate financial penalty used by police to deal with low-level offending such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft, and minor criminal damage.

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

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

<sup>11</sup> National guidance for the use of out-of-court disposals is detailed in a number of documents:

- *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from [http://www.xact.org.uk/information/downloads/Pace/HOC\\_16-2008.pdf](http://www.xact.org.uk/information/downloads/Pace/HOC_16-2008.pdf)
- *Simple Cautions For Adult Offenders*, 14 November 2013. Available from [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)
- *Code of Practice for Adult Conditional Cautions*, 8 April 2000. Available from [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)
- *Home Office Police Operational Guidance for penalty Notices for Disorder*, March 2005. Available from [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)
- *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from [www.acpo.police.uk](http://www.acpo.police.uk)



**Community resolutions** – We dip-sampled 21 community resolutions and found that in 20 cases, the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender’s past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 21 resolutions where there was a victim, all 21 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. In 17 cases it was shown that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate<sup>12</sup>.

It is of concern that we could find no record of the views of victims being considered where a decision had been taken to issue a PND.

**Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should improve the supervision of PND to ensure that, where there is a victim, their view is appropriately considered and recorded.

The force’s ability to defend current decision-making on community resolutions, PND, cautions and cannabis warnings at a future date is compromised by its policy of not retaining relevant paperwork. This is also contrary to Management of Police Information guidelines.

**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should retain out-of-court disposal records in compliance with the Management of Police Information guidelines.

## **No-crimes**

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We examined 58 no-crime records and found 50 records to be compliant with HO CR and NCRS. The force’s approach to no-criming is a matter of concern.

No-crimes and re-classification can only be completed by designated decision makers (DDM)<sup>13</sup> or the force crime registrar (FCR)<sup>14</sup>. Some officers we interviewed

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

<sup>13</sup> The DDM role is to provide practical advice, guidance and act as arbitrator at a local level to ensure the accurate recording of crime and crime-related incidents in accordance with national standards.

<sup>14</sup> The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HO CR provide that he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision, as the final arbiter. The force crime registrar’s responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with all applicable rules.

did not fully understand the no-crime procedure but accepted that the DDM had the final say. The FCR personally approves all no-crime decisions for rape.

### **Victim-centred approach**

The force and the police and crime commissioner have promoted the importance of a victim-focused approach. Some audit work is carried out into the compliance of victim contracts, but the data can be difficult to use as they do not take into account bespoke agreements.

We found frontline staff, including call-takers, understand the importance of meeting the needs of the victim when considering crime recording and investigation; they are polite, professional and helpful.

The force has carried out some work to map and understand its migrant and emerging communities, including the use of Language Line and bilingual PCSO. However it is not clear what action has been taken to improve access for these communities to report crime. Previous partnership funding enabled the Open Out initiative to provide third party reporting avenues. However, this initiative ended two years ago and similar arrangements do not appear to have been secured.

The force conducts victim surveys of people who report incidents and crimes. These focus on the victim's contact with the police from their first point of contact, to follow up action and their overall experience. The force undertakes monthly satisfaction surveys to help inform how it can improve its service.

### **Rape offences**

Auditing of rape records is effective and we found that reports of rape are recorded accurately. The FCR monitors every rape no-crime decision, although this is not documented. Not all the rape no-crime decisions that were inspected were correct.

The force has a policy contained in its manual of standards for investigation of serious sexual offences which outlines how to deal with allegations of rape, including those occurring in other force areas. We found that the majority of officers we interviewed understood the policy.

### **IT systems**

The force uses the STORM system to manage incidents and the Crime File system to manage crime recording. However, the force does not have a clear understanding of the IT systems it uses which may contain reports of crime. IT systems which could contain information leading to reports of crime are not linked so information cannot be shared between those systems.

We found that not all the force's IT systems that could contain reports of crime have a named person responsible for them. Additionally, IT systems were not monitored or audited, nor weeded, controlled or subject to review as directed by the Management of Police Information (MOPI) process.

**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should take steps to ensure that the FCR audit programme includes an audit of all IT systems which may contain reports of crime, so as to ensure compliance with the HOOCR and NCRS.

The force is committed to increasing its use of mobile data technology and has issued 154 tablets to frontline staff to enable direct entry of crime. There are data quality issues that arise from the direct entry of crimes, such as the creation of duplicate records (of people and locations) arising from syntax errors, which require action to correct. The issue has been recognised and is on the force risk register. Work is ongoing to determine the scale of the additional quality assurance required; in the interim, corrective action is being taken by improved training and supervision at the user level.

## People and skills

The force has sufficient staff and supervisors responsible for recording and reviewing incidents and crimes; most are trained on, and demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of, force policies, HOOCR, NCRS and NSIR. However, only police officers in the control room (not police staff) have received NCRS training despite the fact that it is police staff who receive the calls direct from the public and make an initial assessment as to whether or not a crime has been committed.

**Recommendation:** Within six months, the force should ensure that police staff, and in particular those working in the force control room, receive adequate training in the application of the HOOCR and NCRS.

Although our audit identified deficiencies, the staff and supervisors we interviewed who were responsible for authorising out-of-court disposals and no-crimes were trained, and had an appropriate knowledge of HOOCR and national guidance. We found however that supervisors do not adequately supervise the process and are not visible within it.

Many operational staff misinterpret the 72-hour HOOCR time limit for crime recording, which could lead to delays in recording and to under-recording.

There is a developing culture among officers and staff within Cambridgeshire to secure crime data accuracy. The vast majority of staff understood chief officer messages, and expected standards of behaviour and conduct for crime recording. Non-adherence to HOOCR is considered unacceptable. Above all it is clear that there is no pressure, explicit or implied, to under-record or mis-record crimes, or in any way work outside NCRS in terms of outcomes.

The FCR and the DDM have carried out crime-recording training for specialist units and, in addition, officers receive a half-day's training on crime recording when issued with tablets.

### **Force Crime Registrar**

The force's FCR has specific responsibility for ensuring NCRS and HOCR are consistently applied. The FCR has responsibility for the development, implementation and monitoring of crime recording and outcome policies. This includes audit programmes to ensure high standards of data integrity. We found that she is able to act objectively and impartially and that she has sufficient resources to carry out the role effectively.

Although the FCR is the final arbiter for resolving crime-recording disputes, the DDMs' knowledge of the NCRS is very detailed; as a result decisions made by DDMs are rarely challenged.

The FCR is well known by senior managers in the force and has the full support of, and access to, the ACC with lead responsibility for crime data quality.

## **Recommendations**

### **Immediately**

1. The force should ensure that all police officers and staff are fully aware of the confidential reporting line, emphasising that it is indeed confidential and can be used for all matters of concern, including those relating to crime data integrity.
2. The force should ensure that all relevant officers and staff are reminded of their responsibility to record crime as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed.
3. The force should ensure that all reports recorded separately on other force systems (e.g., those used by the public protection teams) are recorded as crimes. The force should put in place proportionate and effective audit arrangements, through the FCR, to ensure that reports held on separate systems are properly recorded as crimes.
4. The force should introduce a structured and proportionate quality assurance process by supervisors in the force control room. This should be undertaken on a consistent basis across all teams, include a check of compliance with the NCRS and, where appropriate feed into the development of professional practice and continuous improvement in the force control room.
5. The force should retain out-of-court disposal records in compliance with the Management of Police Information guidelines.

6. The force should take steps to ensure that the FCR audit programme includes audit of all IT systems which may contain reports of crime so as to ensure compliance with the HOCR and NCRS.

**Within three months**

7. The force should put in place a process that enables it to capture and share good practice and to correct failures in NCRS compliance as identified by the audit regime.
8. The force should improve the supervision of PND to ensure that, where there is a victim, their view is appropriately considered, and recorded.

**Within six months**

9. The force should ensure that police staff, and in particular those working in the force control room, receive adequate training in the application of the HOCR and NCRS.

## Part B: Audit findings in numbers

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

<b>Crimes reported as part of an incident record</b>		
<b>Incidents reviewed</b>	<b>Crimes identified</b>	<b>Crimes recorded</b>
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Cambridgeshire Constabulary. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these incidents HMIC identified the following number of crimes.	From these identified crimes Cambridgeshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>75</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Crimes reported directly from the victim</b>		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports of crimes that were reported directly by telephone to the Cambridgeshire Constabulary centralised crime-recording unit. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these reports, received directly by telephone from the victim by the centralised crime-recording unit, HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Cambridgeshire Constabulary should have recorded.	From these identified crimes Cambridgeshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>Crime reports held on other systems</b>		
<b>Referrals</b>	<b>Crimes identified</b>	<b>Crimes recorded</b>
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Cambridgeshire Constabulary and held on other systems which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Cambridgeshire Constabulary should have recorded.	From these identified crimes Cambridgeshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>52</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>No-crimes</b>		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which Cambridgeshire Constabulary had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
<b>58</b>	<b>50</b>	

## Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings

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

### Leadership and governance

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

##### **1.1. How is Cambridgeshire Constabulary ensuring that leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff?**

The headline message from chief officers for crime recording is one that promotes compliance with HOCR, encouraging a victim-centred approach even if this means an increase in the volume of recorded crime. This message has been communicated through seminars, intranet video and messages and personal briefings by the ACC and FCR. It is reflected in the views expressed by most staff. An operational supervisor summed up the force's attitude as: 'crime at the time'.

The ACC takes responsibility for crime data integrity and chairs the force performance board (FPB). The FPB is responsible for maintaining strategic ownership for all aspects of organisational performance. It identifies strategic, corporate and national issues that may have an impact on the achievement of strategic objectives. This includes the pledges within the policing and crime plan, such as maintaining local performance and reducing crime and disorder. There is also an information management strategy group, chaired by the deputy chief constable (DCC). There are identified leads for crime recording within each area of the force.

We found that more could be done by chief officers to encourage police officers and staff to speak out in the event of any concerns about the integrity of crime recording. There is a confidential reporting line available for staff to report any concerns but there is a degree of distrust in its confidentiality; some staff are unaware of its existence and others are reluctant to use it.

Force policy for crime and incident recording describes the requirements of the HOCR, NCRS and the NSIR. The policy states that crime will be recorded within the 72 hours allowed under the HOCR. We found some staff interpreted this as meaning they had 72 hours in which to decide if a crime had occurred and needed to be recorded. This is not the case. The HOCR require crimes to be recorded as soon as there is sufficient information to believe that a crime has occurred and, in any case, within 72 hours.



The crime assessment policy gives all staff receiving reports of a crime a framework by which to assess initially whether or not a crime should be further investigated or closed. Crimes are investigated according to their seriousness and/or solvability; officers, staff and resources are deployed to investigate crime in an effective and efficient manner. All crimes enter the Crime File system through the PSC. Crime reports are notified to the PSC by telephone during opening hours. Outside of these times, an electronic form is emailed to the PSC. In addition, some officers have been trained to enter crime reports directly via a tablet or desktop computer as part of the force's move to increase use of mobile data devices (Operation Metis).

All crimes are assessed in accordance with the force crime assessment policy to identify those with viable lines of enquiry. Where there are no viable lines of enquiry, crimes are finalised by the PSC. Where there are lines of enquiry, crimes are allocated to an operator in the investigation management unit (IMU) who will direct the report to the most appropriate resource. Where an investigation is viable, the supervisor sets an investigative action plan (IAP) specific to the allocated crime.

### **1.2. How does Cambridgeshire Constabulary ensure it has a proportionate approach to managing the strategic and organisational risk of recording crime data?**

The work of the crime data integrity working group, information standards group, the out-of-court disposal group and the force crime data quality action plan demonstrate the force's commitment to continuous improvement of its process. All groups feed into the force performance board to escalate actions resulting from their findings. The audit regime is open to scrutiny and positively includes external representation on the groups.

### **1.3. How does Cambridgeshire Constabulary use HOCR, NCRS and NSIR to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately?**

The force does not require its staff to record more details of a reported crime if it is deemed more serious in nature. There is a standard approach to all crimes to ensure an effective investigation, regardless of the nature of the report.

The force routinely audits incident and crime records to assess crime-recording accuracy and compliance with HOCR, NCRS and NSIR. There is an audit plan that is carried out by the designated decision makers (DDM); audits are risk-based with more stringent audits on higher-risk areas. For example, the DDM audit almost all incidents opened with a sexual offence codes on the STORM incident management system. The DDM role is to provide practical advice and guidance, and to act as the initial arbitrator in any disputes.

All no-crime decisions are taken by the DDM who are independent from investigation. The decision-making process is sound in most cases. We found evidence of DDM requesting further information from colleagues before authorising a no-crime decision. No-crimes are not audited because only the DDM are authorised to no-crime and the force crime registrar (FCR) personally oversees all no-crimes for rape.

The force recognises, through its own audit regime, that crimes are being missed in domestic and child abuse case records recorded on the public protection unit's case administration and tracking system (CATS). This was reflected in our investigation's findings.

The force does not currently have an effective process in place to systematically identify, capture and share common good practice or failures in NCRS identified through its audit processes. Some officers are still confused about when they should record crimes. A communications plan has been agreed by the crime data integrity working group to ensure regular updates are provided to all staff on crime-recording issues and directives, but this is yet to be circulated.

## **Systems and processes**

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

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

We examined 75 incident records and found that 58 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 58 crimes that should have been recorded, 41 were. Of the 41, five were wrongly classified and eight were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

The force also has a police service centre through which, we have estimated, the force records approximately 21 percent of its total recorded crime. This unit records crime reports directly from members of the public which do not require the creation of an incident record. Our inspection of this unit (a review of 13 calls from the public) found that of the 13 crimes that should have been recorded, all 13 were recorded correctly which is an effective approach in respect of this element of crime recording.

We examined 52 reports which were recorded separately on other force systems. We found that from those 52 reports, 18 crimes should have been recorded; the force had only recorded 7 crimes. It is extremely concerning that the reports reviewed on this system had not been recorded properly as crimes.

These reports included serious sexual offences, domestic abuse and offences against children committed by adults. This is a matter that should be rectified urgently by the force.

The identification of crimes on CATS, which includes external referrals from other public sector organisations such as local councils, presents a significant risk to the force. We found little evidence of supervision of the systems and we found that there is no cross-referencing to the crime-recording system. There was evidence that incidents were being investigated before a decision being made to record a crime.

The force problem-solving database, called ECINS, is used by neighbourhood resources to record community problems and the activities taken to address them. It includes a lot of relevant information, both from the police and other partner organisations. However, the inspection found that there that there is no evaluation conducted on the effectiveness of preventative activity in problem solving community issues or operations; there also needs to be a more consistent use of the system. In addition, while all six policing districts have access to this system, the inspection found that the multi-agency referral unit (MARU) did not. This means that it risks missing important information which might lead it to make different decisions about high-risk areas of policing.

The force uses the STORM incident recording system, which enables force control room operators to identify repeat victims by location and contact number. Vulnerability is assessed using drop-down checklists that are associated with incident opening codes. Automatic highlighting occurs for incidents where the crime should be recorded, which is a positive addition from previous versions of the system. Where a crime should be recorded but the officer cannot provide the crime number immediately, the incident is transferred to a holding queue. This is, however, reliant on the call-handler correctly identifying a crime-related incident.

We found that more effective supervision is required to improve the accuracy of incident and crime records, particularly in the force control room where we found there are too few call-handler incident records reviewed regularly by supervisors and that reviews do not measure compliance with the NCRS.

Crimes identified from professional standards investigations are correctly recorded as restricted-access crimes on the Crime File, either at the time of first disclosure or when Crown Prosecution Service advice has been received. All are subject to FCR oversight.

From our dip-sampling of other systems and fieldwork, we found that the majority of NCRS failures could, and should, have been recorded at the time of first report as required by NCRS. Instead, an investigate-to-record approach has been followed, which results in the degradation of information, repetition of information from victims, lost opportunities for dynamic crime pattern analysis and, ultimately, a failure to record some crimes.

The process for dealing with transferred crime, handled by the incident management unit, works well with crimes being promptly sent by email (PDF attachment) and only closed once a reference has been provided by the receiving force. For offences transferred into the force, there is a clear and strong direction to complete as much of the investigation as possible without waiting for details to be transferred from the other force. Victim care is something that is considered important and is maintained while the report is transferred.

## 2.2. How does Cambridgeshire Constabulary ensure that out-of-court disposals suit the needs of victims, offenders and the criminal justice system?

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

**Cautions** – Out of the 20 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in 17 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In nine cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 13 cases where there was a victim to consult, all 13 cases showed that the victims' views had been considered.

We found that if offenders receive a caution while in the custody suite, they were provided with an explanatory leaflet detailing the cautioning process; outside of the custody suite this does not occur.

**Penalty Notices for Disorder** – We dip-sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 16 cases. We found in all the 20 cases that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 11 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found no evidence that victims had had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

**Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 19 cases. We found that in all 20 of the cases, the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

**Community resolutions** – We dip-sampled 21 community resolutions and found that in 20 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or the offender's past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 21 resolutions where there was a victim, all 21 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. In 17 cases it was demonstrated that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate

It is of concern that we could find no record of the views of victims being considered where a decision had been taken to issue a PND.

The force's ability to defend current decision-making about community resolutions, PND, cautions and cannabis warnings at a future date is compromised by its policy of not retaining relevant paperwork. This also goes against Management of Police Information guidelines.

### **2.3. Are no-crime decisions for high-risk crime categories correct and is there robust oversight and quality control in Cambridgeshire Constabulary?**

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We examined 58 no-crime records and found 50 records to be compliant with HOCA and NCRS. The force's approach to no-criming is a matter of concern.

No-crimes and re-classification can only be completed by DDM or FCR. Some officers interviewed did not fully understand the no-crime procedure but accepted that the DDM had the final say. We found some officers were confused by what constitutes additional verifiable information and relied on the information management unit for advice. The FCR personally approves all no-crime decisions for rape.

The crime allocators within the incident management unit undertake a critical and independent role in overseeing the classification and finalisation of crime. Staff spoke very highly of the incident management unit.

### **2.4. How does Cambridgeshire Constabulary promote a victim-centred approach to crime recording and associated outcomes?**

The inspection found that the force and the police and crime commissioner have been explicit in messages to staff about the importance of a victim-focused approach. The police and crime commissioner is leading on victim focus nationally and the force is going to pilot a victims' hub. This will include an enhanced flagging system for crime files and will lead to a bespoke assessment of the needs of the victim. The force currently undertakes some audits into compliance with victim contracts, but the data can be difficult to use as they do not take into account bespoke agreements.

We found frontline staff, including call-takers, understand the importance of meeting the needs of the victim when considering crime recording and investigation; they are polite, professional and helpful.

The force has carried out some work to map and understand its migrant and emerging communities, including the use of Language Line and bilingual PCSO. However, it is not clear what action has been taken to improve access for these communities to report crimes. Previous partnership funding enabled the Open Out initiative to provide third party reporting avenues; however this ended two years ago and similar arrangements do not appear to have been secured.

The force conducts victim surveys of people who report incidents and crime. These focus on the victim's contact with the police from their first point of contact to follow up action and their overall experience. The force undertakes monthly satisfaction surveys to help inform how the force can improve its service.

## **2.5. How does Cambridgeshire Constabulary ensure systems for receiving, recording and managing reported crimes of rape are robust?**

Auditing of rape records is highly effective and we found that reports of rape are recorded accurately. Not all no-crime decisions were correct. The FCR monitors every rape no-crime, although this is not documented.

The force has a policy contained within a manual of standards for investigation of serious sexual offences outlining how to deal with allegations of rape, including those occurring in other force areas, which is clearly understood and applied by the majority of officers and staff.

## **2.6. How do Cambridgeshire Constabulary IT systems allow for efficient and effective management of crime recording?**

The force uses the STORM system to manage incidents and the Crime File system to manage crime recording. However, the force does not have a clear understanding of the IT systems it uses which may contain reports of crime. Not all IT systems that could contain information leading to reports of crime are linked, so information cannot easily be shared between systems.

We found that not all the force's IT systems that could contain reports of crime have a named person responsible for them. IT systems were also not monitored or audited, nor weeded, controlled or subject to review as directed by the Management of Police Information (MOPI) process.

The force is committed to increasing its use of mobile data technology. It is planned that the tablet and operating system will be a one-stop shop for all policing purposes. It is anticipated that there will be 1,000 tablets in circulation by the end of December 2014. The force rolled out 154 tablets in November 2013. Staff have received training on how to enter crimes directly from their tablets on to the Crime File system using unrestricted access. There are data quality assurance issues that arise from the direct entry of crime, such as the creation of duplicate records (of people and locations) arising from syntax errors which require action within the incident management unit to correct. The implications of creating duplicate records is potentially serious and the force has, rightly, prioritised this risk. Work is ongoing to determine the scale of the additional quality assurance required; in the interim, corrective action is being taken by improved training and supervision at a user level. The issue has been recognised and is on the force risk register.

## People and skills

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

#### **3.1. What arrangements does Cambridgeshire Constabulary have in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?**

The force has sufficient staff and supervisors responsible for recording and reviewing incidents and crimes; most of these are trained on, and demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of, force policies, HOCR, NCRS and NSIR. However, only police officers in the control room (not police staff) have received NCRS training, despite the fact that it is police staff who receive the calls directly from the public and make an initial assessment of whether or not a crime has been committed.

Although our audit identified deficiencies, the staff and supervisors we interviewed who were responsible for authorising out-of-court disposals and no-crimes were trained, and had an appropriate knowledge of HOCR and national guidance. We found, however, that supervisors do not adequately supervise the process and are not visible within it.

Most specialist staff who make crime-recording decisions also have an appropriate level of knowledge of NCRS and HOCR and consult with the incident management unit, the FCR or her team when they need any clarification. Many operational staff genuinely misinterpret the 72-hour HOCR time limit for crime recording, especially in the specialist units and proactive teams, which could lead to delays in recording and to under-recording.

Crimes identified from professional standards investigations are correctly recorded as restricted-access crimes on the Crime File, either at the time of first disclosure or when CPS advice has been received. All are subject to FCR oversight.

The FCR and the DDM have carried out training on crime recording for specialist units, such as MARU and the public protection unit. In addition, officers receive a half-day's training on crime recording when they are issued with their tablets. Some staff felt there was a lack of knowledge on division around NCRS and HOCR. There was also a feeling among staff that the staff-to-supervisor ratio in the MARU was not sufficient to ensure accurate monitoring of crime recording.

### **3.2. How do the behaviours of Cambridgeshire Constabulary staff reflect a culture of integrity for crime-recording practice and decision-making?**

There is clearly a developing culture among officers and staff within the force to ensure crime data accuracy. The vast majority of staff understood chief officer messages and expected standards of behaviour and conduct for crime recording. Non-adherence to HOOCR is considered unacceptable. We found senior managers are encouraged to ensure accurate crime recording and there is no pressure, explicit or implied, to under-record or mis-record crimes or, in any way, work outside the NCRS in respect of outcomes.

### **3.3. How is the accuracy of crime recording in Cambridgeshire Constabulary actively overseen and governed by the force crime registrar (FCR)?**

The force has an FCR with specific responsibility and capacity for ensuring NCRS and HOOCR are consistently applied. We found she is active in maintaining standards and sits on a number of working groups representing the interests of accurate crime recording.

The FCR is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of crime recording and outcome policies and subsequent audit programmes to ensure high standards of data integrity. We found that she is able to act objectively and impartially to ensure the force records crime correctly. She has sufficient resources to carry out the role effectively, supported by DDM on division and within the incident management unit.

It is expected that if an officer cannot make a decision on crime recording then they should go first to their supervisor. Alternatively, there are duty detectives who can give advice and help officers to identify the correct crime classification. Final classification sits with the DDM with the FCR as the final arbiter. The DDMs' knowledge of the NCRS is very detailed; as a result decisions made by DDM are rarely challenged. We found that crimes are being classified correctly.

The FCR is well known by senior managers in the force. She deals mainly with the managers, while her team within the incident management unit has daily interaction with operational officers.

The FCR has the full support of, and access to, the chief officer with lead responsibility for crime data quality, and can approach the deputy chief constable or assistant chief constable at any time. In addition, the FCR has monthly one-to-one meetings with the deputy chief constable as part of her role within the information standards group.