

Crime data integrity

Inspection of Derbyshire Constabulary

November 2014

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ISBN: 978-1-78246-536-2

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Contents

Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Scope and structure of report	4
Part A: Summary of inspection findings and recommendations	5
Leadership and governance	5
Systems and processes.....	6
People and skills.....	11
Recommendations.....	12
Part B: Audit findings in numbers	13
Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings.....	15
Leadership and governance	15
Systems and processes.....	17
People and skills.....	23

Introduction

In its 2013/14 inspection programme¹, 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 bodies² can match resources to the risks identified in communities and enables the police to provide a proper service to victims of crime.

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

We strongly recommend our findings in this report are read alongside the interim report, Crime recording: A matter of fact - An interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales, available at www.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)⁴ and Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR)⁵.

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

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

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

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

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

Methodology

Each force inspection involves:

- 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

The chief officers of Derbyshire Constabulary have maintained a consistent focus on improving crime data integrity over a number of years. The assistant chief constable (ACC) lead for crime data has a comprehensive understanding of the subject and displays a commitment to drive improvement in this area of business. In the past he has personally managed many of the specialist units that record crime in the force, and he demonstrates a high level of knowledge on the subject which is conveyed to staff.

The force lead chairs a steering group that looks at issues concerning compliance with NCRS, HOCR and the National Standards for Incident Recording (NSIR). Under his direction, the NCRS group is a useful forum for discussing emerging issues that have an impact on crime data integrity. The group has been effective in making a number of important changes to force procedures, such as how harassment crimes are dealt with as well as policy for restorative justice.

A wide variety of methods has been used to convey the principal messages on crime recording from the chief officers. These focus on the need to record a crime using the NCRS test as well as ensuring there is a focus on the victim's needs. Staff at headquarters, and particularly key managers within crime recording teams, value the support given by the ACC lead. This positive engagement could be extended more widely to frontline staff through direct engagement on divisions.

The force has a mechanism for staff to report any unethical behaviour involving crime recording; this is called 'bad apple'. This is intranet-based and has recently been revised following a previous HMIC recommendation to make the reporting system more accessible.

The force also has a professional standards policy for dealing with wrongdoing and this is currently being revised. The policy for reporting unethical behaviour could be refreshed to include how concerns about crime recording can be flagged to the organisation.

The force crime recording policy is regularly reviewed and provides a helpful framework for staff to work to in everyday decision making. It puts special emphasis on promoting the interests of victims alongside the ethical reporting of crime.

While the force has not identified a specific risk linked to crime recording, there is an understanding of the reputational risk from poor crime recording. There is a wide-ranging and focused audit regime which assists the force to test for compliance in the main areas of risk. This is agreed at a meeting of the NCRS group and follows an

annual assessment by the force of all the categories of crime that pose the greatest risk of harm to local people. Results from audits and the need for any change to practice are quickly acted upon, usually by teams that deal with crime recording.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

All calls from members of the public are answered within the force contact centre (FCC). If necessary, this contact is recorded as an incident report on a command and control computer system. This may subsequently be recorded as a crime when a decision has been made that, on the balance of probability, a notifiable offence has occurred.

We examined 109 incident records⁶ and found that 94 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 94 crimes that should have been recorded, 85 were. Of the 85, all were correctly classified and 3 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. Overall this is a good result for the force. The force is good at recording crime which means that victims of crime are more likely to receive the service they deserve (because, for example, certain victim support services are only triggered when a crime is recorded).

The force has a centralised crime recording facility within the FCC through which all crime is recorded. This unit records reports of crime made directly from members of the public that do not require the creation of an incident record; this accounts for about 28 percent of all recorded crime. We reviewed 26 calls from the public and found that of the 27 crimes that should have been recorded, 26 were recorded correctly. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force in respect of this element of the process.

The force crime recording policy sets out clear responsibilities for supervisors within the force control room for incidents that may relate to crime. There is a requirement for supervisors to check personally any incident first created on the incident system as a potential report of crime, but which ultimately had no crime recorded. The supervisor must check the circumstances of the incident as first reported by the public and then compare this with the way the incident is closed after police attendance or action. If necessary, further action or a clarification is required from the attending officer on why no crime was recorded. However, although this clarification

⁶ 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.

is completed, it is evident from the crimes that are still going unrecorded that this procedure needs to be applied more effectively.

Two additional elements assist the accurate recording of crime. Contact centre staff are trained to record the original comments from the public using the first person and this accurately records the nature and sentiment of the call. Checks are also carried out by the crime management unit (CMU) once the crime has been recorded to ensure that the right category of crime is recorded. We found that a number of non-emergency calls to the FCC had not been answered by an operator before the call was terminated. These 'abandoned calls' remain a persistent problem.

The results from public satisfaction surveys carried out locally show high levels of satisfaction about the ease with which the public can contact Derbyshire Constabulary. Nonetheless, the non-emergency calls into the force are an important way for local people to report crime and the force recognises that greater effort needs to be made to address this problem to ensure the public can report crime effectively and victims receive the service they need.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should take steps to understand when the capacity of the FCC is such that they are unable to adequately service non-emergency calls being made by the public, and put in place arrangements to improve call-handling performance.

HMIC reviewed crime recording within the public protection unit (PPU). We dip-sampled 50 reports that were referred from other organisations directly to the force's specialist departments. We found that from those 50 reports, 17 crimes should have been recorded and 10 crimes were recorded. Of the 10, all were correctly classified and only 1 was recorded outside the 72-hour limit for NCRS and the HOCR. The force lead had reviewed crime recording by the PPU in May 2013 and subsequent force audits, led by the force crime and incident registrar⁷ (FCIR), indicate that working practices have improved significantly and continue to do so. There remains a need for further improvement as the crimes we found not to be recorded included sexual offences against a child and offences relating to domestic disputes, although these offences were investigated and safeguarding measures put in place.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should take further steps to ensure that reports recorded separately on other force systems, for example, those used by the public protection teams, are recorded as crimes. This should include proportionate and effective audit arrangements through the FCIR.

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

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND),⁸ cannabis warnings⁹ and community resolutions.¹⁰ The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed¹¹.

Cautions – Out of the 20 cautions dip-sampled, HMIC found that in 19 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 18 cases where there was a victim to consult, all the cases showed that the victims' views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 17 cases. In 19 cases we found evidence 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 that 2 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

It is of concern that we could find no record of the views of victims being considered in the vast majority of cases where a decision was taken to issue a PND.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should improve the supervision of the use of PND to ensure that where there is a victim, their views are appropriately considered and recorded before a decision to issue a PND is taken.

⁸ 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.

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

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

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

- *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from 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
- *Code of Practice for Adult Conditional Cautions*, 8 April 2000. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *Home Office Police Operational Guidance for penalty Notices for Disorder*, March 2005. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from www.acpo.police.uk

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in all cases.

We were unable to form a judgement on how many offenders were made aware of the nature and implications of the warning. This was because details of this warning are supplied to the offender on the cannabis warning forms issued by officers. At the time of the audit we found that there was a variety of warning forms in circulation across the force. An older version of the form carried insufficient detail about the nature of the warning. A newer form then replaced this with a fuller explanation provided for the offender.

Community resolutions – We dip sampled 20 community resolutions and found that in 12 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 20 resolutions where there was a victim, 15 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Of the 20 resolutions, 15 showed that the agreed resolution was meaningful and appropriate¹².

It is concerning to find that community resolutions are being used in cases where the previous history of the offender means it is not suitable. It is also disappointing that, when the agreement of both the victim and offender is required for a community resolution to be acceptable, we found cases where the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had not been properly considered. This means that offenders are less likely to be discouraged from further offending and victims are not always being placed at the heart of decision making.

The force has set up an external scrutiny panel to providing oversight on the appropriateness of community resolutions. There is also an internal review system where samples from each of the three policing divisions are checked. Both of these examinations have shown areas where there are repeated errors in applying force policy, or where decisions to use community resolutions are inappropriate; this includes cases where an officer makes a referral to a supervisor.

The force has introduced recent changes for community resolutions, notably to the circumstances in which they can be given for cases of domestic abuse. The CMU has responsibility for auditing and checking community resolutions; however we found that the unit does not have the ability to review all the information to undertake these audits and checks effectively (such as original notes recorded in individual officers’ notebooks).

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

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should ensure officers and staff have a clear understanding of the standards to be applied for the use of community resolutions, and their use is subject to effective and proportionate oversight.

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 77 no-crime records and found 74 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. The quality of the no-crime decisions was of a good standard and we noted that there were checks made of these decisions in each of the three categories of crime we audited. This is good practice.

Victim-centred approach

The force has five core values of integrity, respect, performance, responsibility and innovation. These are intended to help the workforce in 'doing things right'. As shown in the force crime recording policy, the victim should be placed at the heart of the crime-recording processes, both in centrally-based teams and in the attitudes of operational staff. The crime recording policy guides staff in how to deal with crime and record it correctly from the outset. The policy aims to ensure that victims get the best possible service.

We found a distinct victim focus within the force's approach to crime recording and frontline staff display this in their everyday actions. Victim contracts are effectively used and supervised. There are plans to introduce a similar contract for community resolution cases to reinforce the importance of working in the interests of the victim.

Rape

There is no separate policy in Derbyshire Constabulary to guide officers on the recording of reports of rape, but specialist officers rely on the general crime recording policy and procedures indicating how such crimes should be recorded and investigated. We audited seven reports of rape and found that all had been properly identified and recorded. In March 2014, the force modified its approach to how no-crime decisions are made. The change affirms the role of the FCIR as the 'final arbiter' and cases are still routed through a number of detective chief inspectors. These individuals are now seen as having a gatekeeping role for no-crime decisions. Not every chief inspector appears to understand this new approach and clarity should be provided through dialogue with the small number of managers involved.

There is no commentary in the rape investigation policy about how crimes of rape, reported to Derbyshire but which have been committed in another force area, should be handled. However, there is reference in the general crime recording policy on how all crime should be transferred. Crime managers in the force were confident, however, that the force would manage any victim-care issues in such cases and would work positively to assist other forces involved in the investigation of rape.

IT systems

Derbyshire Constabulary is planning to replace both its incident recording and crime recording systems. Currently the force uses the Guardian system to record crime including those generated from the PPU area of business. The command and control system is NSPIS and this will be the first system to be changed. At present, the crime and command and control systems are not linked.

Earlier this year HMIC expressed concern about the alignment of the force IT strategy to some critical changes within the force. The force has since asserted that work has been done to reduce this gap. During this inspection, however, we found that the IT managers we spoke to were unclear of the user requirements before system changes in both the command and control and crime systems.

The force has also begun the incremental introduction of an IT system to share information on action to combat anti-social behaviour (ASB) with other relevant organisations. This is being set up in each of the three divisional areas. We were not able to audit this new database called 'Empowering Communities Inclusion and Neighbourhood Management System' (ECINS) but the force needs to ensure that crime reports are not overlooked, or inadvertently recorded and managed through this system rather than on Guardian. The FCIR plans to begin auditing this new database once the last of the force's three areas has adopted the system.

People and skills

Managers in force-level crime-recording units showed a strong understanding of both HOCC and NCRS. Many officers and staff see the force CMU as a source of advice and guidance. We found that the majority of staff had heard the key messages on the force's approach to crime recording.

We found no evidence of inappropriate performance pressure skewing the reporting of crime. We found that across the force, staff firmly believed that it was important to record crime properly and accurately at all times.

There are a number of areas such as the FCC where staff numbers are considered by some to be affecting the recording and management of crime. This happens when telephone calls take a long time to be answered and some calls are lost. Some officers also describe waiting for more than half an hour trying to ring in to report a crime to the FCC. Managers within the CMU have drafted in a number of FCC staff to assist, but this has led to a backlog of finalised crimes waiting to be checked and filed. This is not affecting the checking and allocation of new crime which is seen as the priority in the unit. The force is soon to conduct a budgetary review of these areas following the introduction of telephone resolution for some crimes.

The FCIR and his deputy have established a system for embedding the basic principles of NCRS and the HOCR both in new recruits to the force, and in staff joining the force control room and FCC. They have also trained a number of specialist investigators on the requirements of the recording standards and force approaches to ethical recording. In addition, communications staff have spent time with force auditors discussing standards and expectations of crime recording.

We found a great reliance on the central crime-recording units to ensure the circumstances of a crime were correctly recorded on force systems. All requests to classify a report as no-crime are referred to the crime management unit. This ensures a centralised corporate approach to this process with ethical crime recording at the heart of the decision. However, the requirements necessary for a report to be considered as a no-crime were not widely understood – a process known locally as ‘marking off’. Force crime and incident registrar (FCIR)

The FCIR is a capable individual, responsible for effective improvement in crime recording standards. He has a sound grasp of NCRS and the HOCR and promotes an ethical approach to crime recording. He also acts as an additional control room inspector to increase resilience for that team. This appears to add to his understanding of force systems and issues rather than detract from his main role as the FCIR.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. The force should take steps to understand when the capacity of the FCC is such that they are unable to adequately service non-emergency calls being made by the public, and put in place arrangements to improve call-handling performance.
2. The force should take further steps to ensure that reports recorded separately on other force systems, for example, those used by the public protection teams, are recorded as crimes. This should include proportionate and effective audit arrangements through the FCIR.

Within three months

3. The force should improve the supervision of the use of PND to ensure that where there is a victim, their views are appropriately considered and recorded before a decision to issue a PND is taken.
4. The force should ensure officers and staff have a clear understanding of the standards to be applied for the use of community resolutions, and their use is subject to effective and proportionate oversight.

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.

Crimes reported as part of an incident record		
Incidents reviewed	Crimes identified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Derbyshire. 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 Derbyshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes
109	94	85
Crimes reported directly from the victim		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports of crimes that were reported directly by telephone to the Derbyshire 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 Derbyshire Constabulary should have recorded.	From these identified crimes Derbyshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
26	27	26
Crime reports held on other systems		
Referrals	Crimes identified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Derbyshire Constabulary and held on other systems which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Derbyshire Constabulary should have recorded.	From these identified crimes Derbyshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
50	17	10

No-crimes	
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery, which Derbyshire Constabulary had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.
77	74

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 Derbyshire Constabulary ensuring that leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff?

There has been a sustained focus on improving both practices in the force control room and in crime recording for a number of years in Derbyshire Constabulary. The assistant chief constable (ACC) lead for crime data has considerable experience in this area. Before his recent promotion he was responsible for the control room and crime-recording functions of the force and he therefore speaks with both expertise and commitment on the subject.

There is a clear separation of function between his work and oversight of force performance within the policing divisional areas, which is undertaken by the other ACC in the force. He uses a working group meeting every six months to introduce any changes necessary to improve the way crime is recorded and managed.

The force lead has used a wide variety of force communication channels to push clear messages on the need for staff to record crime properly. These include articles in the 'just think' and 'just lead' campaigns that the chief constable has initiated to reinforce professional behaviour and supervisory leadership attitudes. Staff based at headquarters spoke in the highest terms of the support the ACC had given them and his reinforcement of high standards of crime recording whenever possible.

The force intranet has a section which gives information to staff on how to report unethical behaviour. This system is called 'bad apple' and has been used to report unethical behaviour by some officers involving some out-of-court disposals. The vast majority of officers and staff are aware of how it operates and trust its confidential nature.

The force also has a professional standards policy for dealing with wrongdoing and this is currently being revised.

The force has a general policy on crime recording that was first drafted in 2013 and was revised earlier this year. The policy is comprehensive and clearly sets out responsibilities for a number of roles in the constabulary to ensure ethical crime

recording. Within a five-point strategy, it places the interests of the victim as the first consideration and repeatedly points to the need for an ethical approach.

The police and crime plan 2012-17 published by the police and crime commissioner (PCC) makes no direct reference to the need for accuracy in crime recording.

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

Derbyshire Constabulary risk register does not contain a reference to crime-recording integrity. However, there is a clear understanding at both the strategic and operational levels of the impact of inaccurate crime recording and this informs actions taken at the force-level working group.

The force has experienced falling crime rates for a number of years but is now seeing increases in some crime categories. This is reported into the office of the police and crime commissioner through the joint audit risk and assurance committee (JARAC) meetings alongside the work of the force crime recording working group. The force crime data integrity lead has also commissioned a presentation to members of the local independent advisory group (IAG) to promote reassurance that a robust approach to crime recording is being taken.

The ACC lead had identified potential problems in the way third party reports of crime were being managed by the public protection unit (PPU) which deals with sensitive child protection investigations and safeguarding vulnerable adults. The PPU is now included in the regular force audits. The working group continues to take action to improve crime-recording accuracy. There is also a thorough understanding of the routes through which the force receives reports of crime. The force contact centre (FCC) is judged to deal with about 95 percent of contacts that subsequently become crime reports. The ACC lead had previously recognised the importance of having trained and effective front counter staff and, in his previous role, had taken responsibility for them and their training from the divisional policing commands in which they were located.

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

There is a regular review of the way the force uses NCRS, HOCR and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR) to ensure the force has sufficient insight into patterns discernible in crimes and reported incidents. An example of this is the way the force recently introduced a way of tracking incidents for vulnerable adults by using a unique identifying code. This mirrors the approach taken for cybercrime. The NCRS working group agreed the audit schedule in March 2014 following a force-level strategic threat assessment. The audit focused on those areas which were

thought to pose the greatest risk to local people and the frequency of the audits reflected the degree of harm perceived.

These audits show an improvement in crime-recording compliance. The findings are similar to the audit for this inspection. The ACC lead can also commission additional audits to examine emerging risks to the force.

A close working relationship has developed between the manager of the CMU and the audit team. When the audit team identify recurring errors or problems in the way crime is recorded, corrective action is quickly taken by the CMU.

The FCIR ensures that the wider operational policing areas are engaged in the development and review of crime recording. All three divisions of the force are represented at the working group as well as specialist investigation departments.

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 Derbyshire Constabulary effectively manage and supervise incidents, other reporting routes and crime records in order to ensure that crimes are correctly recorded?

The management and supervision of incidents within Derbyshire Constabulary shows a strong commitment to ensuring reports of crime are correctly identified and recorded. There are a number of checking procedures in place to assist the force to maintain positive performance against NSIR, NCRS and the HOCR.

The incident logs we reviewed showed signs of the active involvement of supervisors in checking that correct procedures had been followed by operators and by the officers attending incidents. This is reinforced by our audit finding that every single crime recorded was correctly classified. In addition, we found that of the 109 incidents, 99 had been finalised with the correct code for the type of incident involved

Control room supervisors are required to examine any incident where a crime has been reported but then closed without a crime being recorded. Staff within the CMU are readily on hand to provide advice on making these checks. Each month, supervisors check incident records made by operators and their decision making. The force is also about to use a volunteer worker to assist this process.

Our audit of 109 incident records identified 94 crimes that should have been recorded. Of the 94 crimes that should have been recorded, 85 were. We found that 3 crimes of the 85 identified by the force were recorded outside the 72-hour period allowed by the HOCR. Supervisors in the FCC stated that they tried to ensure crime

was recorded promptly and accurately. Although not replicated within the findings of our audit, force auditing has illustrated fluctuating levels of compliance in recording crimes of robbery. This is judged by force auditors to be the result of crime being incorrectly classified as thefts from individuals, or where officers did not believe a crime of robbery had occurred. This is being scrutinised by the force working group and the general trend appears to be an improving one. Many frontline staff commented that there were frequently problems when trying to ring back into the FCC to update incidents and record crime. Senior managers are aware of the pressure on non-emergency telephone lines, and staff from the force control room are encouraged to help at times of peak demand. In a bid to ensure that members of the public receive priority, officers' calls are routed to a separate crime investigation management team (CIMT) in the FCC; however there is still a proportion of abandoned calls from the public which may include reports of crime.

The force has recently started to try to reduce demand by introducing telephone resolution for some types of reported crime without the need to allocate the crime for further investigation. Care has been taken to make certain that FCC staff understand when this is appropriate, and checks for vulnerable or repeat victims are built into the system.

The force has a centralised crime-recording facility within the force contact centre (FCC) through which all crime is recorded. This unit records reports of crime made directly from members of the public that do not require the creation of an incident record; these account for about 28 percent of all the force's recorded crime. Our audit of 26 calls from the public handled by this unit found that of the 27 crimes that should have been recorded, 26 were recorded correctly. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force in respect of this element of the process.

As part of our audit, we examined 50 records referred from other organisations directly to the force's specialist departments and recorded on the Guardian crime system. We found that 17 crimes should have been recorded and of these, 10 were. Of the 10, all were correctly classified and 1 was recorded outside the 72-hour HOCR limit. The most recent force audit indicates that the PPU is achieving a high compliance rate; however, as the crimes we found not to be recorded included sexual offences against a child and offences relating to domestic disputes, there remains a need for further improvement.

Derbyshire Constabulary has set out in its crime recording policy how crime reports are to be managed when they are either received by the force from another, or sent to another force area. The policy also covers how written material is to be transferred between forces. This is managed by the CMU which checks to make sure the relevant crime number from another force has been received before concluding the records first started in Derbyshire.

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

Derbyshire Constabulary has reviewed its process on out-of-court disposals and improved how it determines what decisions are made, particularly on domestic abuse cases.

Cautions – Out of the 20 cautions dip-sampled, HMIC found that in 19 cases, the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all cases there was evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 18 cases where there was a victim to consult, all the cases showed that the victims' views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – HMIC dip-sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 17 cases. In 19 cases there was evidence 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, only 2 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

It is of concern that there is no record of the views of victims being considered in the vast majority of cases where a decision was taken to issue a PND.

Cannabis warnings – HMIC dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in all cases. None of the cases showed evidence that that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

HMIC was unable to form a judgment on how many offenders were made aware of the nature and implications of the warning. This was because details of this warning are supplied to the offender on the cannabis warning form issued by officers. At the time of the audit, we found that there was a variety of warning forms in circulation across the force. An older version of the form had insufficient detail about the nature of the warning. A newer form then replaced this with a fuller explanation provided for the offender. **Community resolutions –** 20 community resolutions were dip-sampled and in 12 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 20 resolutions where there was a victim, 15 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Of the 20 resolutions, 15 showed that the agreed resolution was meaningful and appropriate.

HMIC is concerned to find that community resolutions are being used in cases where the previous history of the offender means it is not suitable. It is also disappointing that, when the agreement of both the victim and offender is required for a community resolution to be acceptable, we found cases where the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had not been properly considered. This means that

offenders are less likely to be discouraged from further offending and victims are not always being placed at the heart of decision making.

Out-of-court disposals are monitored at two levels in the constabulary. There is divisional-level scrutiny of all cases that are resolved in this way in each of the three divisions. In addition, there is a second review at force-level, although this is carried out in different units according to the type of outcome. The criminal justice unit reviews cannabis warnings, PND and cautions while the CMU looks at community resolutions. The force records detail of resolutions on crime records but does not have a separate purpose-designed form to manage the outcomes. The checks by the CMU are therefore of a partial nature as there is no review of the records made by individual officers in their pocket books.

There is also a force-level scrutiny group which currently examines a selected number of cases involving community resolutions. There are plans to extend the group's remit to check all out-of-court disposals. The force crime integrity lead is aware that sometimes these disposals are completed without clearly referring to the needs of the victim. As a result, there are proposals in the force to introduce a document similar to the victims' contract to help officers focus more on the victims' perspectives. Likewise, victims' views need to be considered more frequently in PND cases.

The force has set up an external scrutiny panel to providing oversight on the appropriateness of community resolutions. There is also an internal review system where samples from each of the three police divisions are checked. Both of these examinations have shown areas where there are repeated errors in applying force policy.

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

Our audit of 77 no-crime decisions in the categories of robbery, violence and rape crimes revealed that 74 were correctly recorded. In all three areas there was a high degree of consistent and accurate decision making with only one no-crime decision in each crime type being judged incorrect.

All the police officers working in the CMU are authorised to make decisions about no-crimes for crimes not involving rape; this currently includes around six members of staff. Their decisions are regularly dip-sampled. This group is independent of any potential performance pressures in making these decisions.

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

Derbyshire Constabulary's approach to making crime recording a victim-centred process is illustrated by the way the CMU approaches the allocation of crimes to frontline officers. Newly-promoted supervisors, including detectives, are invited to the

CMU to understand the processes around crime recording and allocation. They are advised that when they receive a crime from the CMU, their priority is to re-contact the victim as soon as possible and begin an investigation. Any discussion about the category of the crime and the circumstances of its reporting should be addressed later on, once the victim has been reassured that police are responding to the report.

There is a force-level victim confidence steering group chaired by the DCC which seeks to promote higher levels of satisfaction in all areas of the force's policing. Their work can be seen in the way the force has adapted the normal crime contract forms issued to victims to become crime and incident contracts, thereby broadening the range of the public with whom they come in contact. Inspectors check each crime and incident contract to make sure that the victim's wishes are carried out wherever possible.

The force obtains feedback on the way the contracts are delivered by means of an additional question it has placed in its user satisfaction survey. There are plans to drive further improvements to call-handling through the use of volunteers. In our audit we found that operators answering calls from the public were polite, helpful and professional.

The force makes active use of local feedback and survey data, circulating them to key managers. The force also carries out additional surveying to get better insights into racially-aggravated crime. It is also commissioning work from another force in the region to begin surveying victims of domestic abuse. We encountered a number of supervisors on the divisions who independently check on the service provided by their staff.

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

There is a high degree of confidence that all reports of rape from whatever source are correctly identified and recorded. This is particularly the case since more work has been done through the NCRS group to improve the awareness of PPU staff of NCRS and the HOCR. The FCIR has led sessions to broaden this understanding. All rape and serious sexual crime is audited regularly to avoid crimes being wrongly classified.

Throughout the force, rape victims are assisted by sexual offences liaison officers (SOLO) at an early stage. In Derby there is a small team working under Operation Diamond to prevent and investigate rape crime. Most frontline uniformed officers stated they had only limited initial involvement in such cases and that specialists recorded most of these crimes.

While there has been a rise in reports of serious sexual offences and rape, particularly historical crimes following recent national events, those responsible for recording and managing these crimes stated categorically that there were no

pressures affecting the correct recording of these types of crime. The force has a high discontinuance rate in prosecutions of rape cases but it points to this as evidence of its desire to record such matters fully and accurately and bring offenders to justice.

At the force NCRS group earlier this year, the ACC lead agreed that the FCIR was the final decision maker involving these decisions. Rape crimes are traditionally routed through the detective chief inspector for each part of the force where the investigation has taken place. The NCRS group determined that its role was to be that of a gatekeeper before a final decision was made in the centre. It was clear that not all detective chief inspectors understood that they are no longer the decision makers. This shift in policy needs to be more firmly embedded so that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities for rape no-crimes.

The staff we interviewed during our inspection had a sound understanding of required action in the event that someone wished to report a rape crime in Derbyshire which had happened elsewhere. This was in line with the overall crime recording policy and national guidelines on victim care and support.

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

The force has some understanding of which IT systems may contain reports of crime; these are the incident management system, NSPIS and the crime management system, Guardian. There is no direct link between these two systems which means that data have to be entered separately to record a crime. The force recognises that both of these systems are in need of replacement and is sequencing the transition to minimise operational disruption.

The change to the command and control system is the first to be scheduled. The force is trying to make sure that those responsible for IT provision have a closer involvement with officers and staff using the system. These efforts need to be strengthened as, during our inspection, there still appeared to be a lack of understanding about some of the operational user requirements, although user groups for both systems are in place with identified user-managers.

The force has recently introduced a separate database for recording ASB matters and joint action planning with other organisations. The force has plans to begin auditing this new database, but only once it has been established across all areas of the force. This auditing will be retrospective in areas where the database is already in use and is aimed at preventing crime matters from being inappropriately recorded as ASB.

People and skills

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

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

The force crime data integrity lead stated that the constabulary had adopted a deliberate policy of concentrating its expertise in NCRS and the HOCR within a few centralised departments. These units would then provide a quality assurance process for reports of crime sent in from the frontline. He believed this made it unnecessary to train constables and staff in customer-facing areas on NCRS and HOCR matters as they could rely on these experts and use their own knowledge of criminal law. In consequence, managers in the centralised teams had a good grasp of crime recording policies and practice.

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

Longer serving staff within the constabulary pointed out that the force had transformed its approach to crime recording over the last few years. Changes in approach within the local police and crime plan had removed the need to pursue numerical targets for crimes recorded. The emphasis in the plan and the strategy of the chief constable had shifted to focus on 'harm and threat'. To respond to this, officers were aware of the need to record crime accurately so that the scale of this harm could be assessed.

Some frontline staff had completed e-learning courses on community resolutions when these were introduced but most have had no direct training on NCRS or HOCR. This lack of knowledge is acute in some areas, such as when a crime is eligible to be put forward for a no-crime decision.

3.3. How is the accuracy of crime recording in Derbyshire Constabulary actively overseen and governed by the force crime and incident registrar (FCIR)?

The FCIR in Derbyshire Constabulary has the support of a capable and experienced deputy. The FCIR is also a fully trained control room inspector and he acts in this role when there are staffing shortfalls. He uses this experience to develop a good insight into emerging issues within the crime-recording system. These are then included on the agenda of the force NCRS working group for resolution. This brings him into regular contact with the ACC lead and there is evidence of a shared determination from the two to improve crime recording in the force. The FCIR is able to engage with the ACC whenever he feels this is necessary.

Many frontline officers are aware of the existence of the post and the FCIR is the final arbiter for any disputes involving interpretation of NCRS and the HOCR.

The FCIR asks to be involved in the formulation of any new policy or procedure that affects aspects of control room practice or crime recording. He rigorously checks them for compliance with NCRS and the HOCR.