

Crime data integrity

Inspection of Greater Manchester Police

August 2014

© HMIC 2014

ISBN: 978-1-78246-480-8

www.hmic.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction	3
Methodology	4
The scope and structure of the 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	14
Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings	15
Leadership and governance.....	15
Systems and processes.....	17
People and skills.....	21

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. All 43 forces will be inspected by mid August 2014, with a full thematic report published in autumn 2014. 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.hmic.gov.uk.

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:

1. An examination of crime records for the period 1 November 2012 to 31 October 2013;
2. 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;
3. Visits to forces where inspectors assess local crime recording arrangements under three headings: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and people and skills; and
4. A peer review of audit findings by an NCRS expert from outside HMIC.

The audit examined for compliance 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.

The scope and structure of the 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 deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester Police (GMP) is the chief officer lead for crime data integrity.

Chief officers in GMP promote qualified support for the NCRS in that there is an expectation that officers will act in the best interests of victims and consequently may not always record less-serious crime despite force policy reinforcing the requirement for the NCRS compliance. The dichotomy between chief officer qualified support and force policy undermines compliance with NCRS and creates uncertainty amongst staff in their recording of crime.

Recommendation: Immediately, chief officers should promote the importance of crime data integrity and compliance with the NCRS without qualification, and ensure that all references to qualified support are removed from all sources.

The force has a well-established governance structure with which to monitor performance including crime data integrity. We note that the crime recording policy highlights the need for an ethical approach both for divisional commanders and designated decision-makers (DDM)⁶ and that all relevant policies are compliant with the HO CR with the exception of the policy regarding reports of making off without payment⁷, which is not victim-focused, instead advocating an ‘investigate-to-record’ approach⁸.

Recommendation: Immediately, the policy on making off without payment should be amended to ensure compliance with the NCRS and HO CR.

Accountability for NCRS compliance in the finalisation of an incident or crime rests with divisional staff and their supervisors. We found that there is an overriding need to separate responsibility for making decisions against the HO CR and related guidelines from that of external service delivery and performance accountability. The force is piloting a new concept; a team of

⁶ The DDM role is to provide practical advice, guidance and act as arbiter at a local level to ensure the accurate recording of crime and crime-related incidents in accordance with national standards.

⁷ Making off without payment is mostly used to refer to the offence of driving away from petrol stations without paying for fuel taken, but it can also refer to non payment of services and other property, such as taxi fares, and restaurant meals.

⁸ This means that the police do not record the incident as a crime at first, but instead investigate the matter in order to establish whether a crime has been committed

officers called the local resolution team whose role includes the quality assurance of crime recording. It is important to ensure that compliance responsibilities under the HOCRs are kept clearly separate from those for local service delivery.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should reposition accountability for NCRS compliance so as to be independent of service delivery and crime performance accountability, and embed this within force policy.

The force has an internal reporting route to the professional standards department that officers can use to raise concerns over unethical practices of whatever kind. We found that chief officers have made efforts to encourage staff to report any concerns over crime recording standards. Most staff said that they would happily discuss concerns with their supervisors.

The force has a comprehensive audit regime that involves reviewing 1000 incidents as well as additional risk-based audits and bespoke divisional dip-sampling. We found that the regime has limited flexibility and that there is limited scope to find sufficient resources for new and emerging issues owing to the resources required to maintain the ongoing force audit regime. Audit findings are used to inform performance meetings and we found evidence that individual shortcomings are dealt with promptly and firmly and, on occasion, referred to the professional standards department.

The force understands the various routes by which crime is reported and monitors the primary routes for the quality of crime reports raised. Crime reports are recorded by officers to the minimum standards specified in force policy.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

We examined 496 incident records⁹ and found that 388 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 388 crimes that should have been recorded, 265 were. Of the 265, 10 were wrongly classified and 22 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. There is a need for improvement in the accuracy and timeliness of crime recording decisions.

The force also has a centralised crime recording bureau/public assistance desk through which we have estimated that the force records approximately 19 per

⁹ 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.

cent of the total of its 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 review of this unit (a review of 29 calls from the public) found that of the 31 crimes that should have been recorded, 30 were. All 30 were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force.

We examined 55 reports that are referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments. Of the 11 crimes that should have been recorded, nine had been recorded. Of these nine, all were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

We found a notable number of cases where a crime had not been raised because the victim could not be contacted, despite repeated efforts from the police. There is evidence that reports of sexual offences made by other organisations on behalf of victims to the public protection unit are not being recorded immediately, and some reports are not crimed at all due to misinterpretation of the HOCR. We found that lack of training, knowledge of legislation and workload pressures all contributed to errors in crime recording.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should ensure the prompt recording of first party reports of crime in compliance with the NCRS when sufficient information exists and IT systems permit. This will ensure that more reports are correctly recorded by the force, crimes are investigated and victims of crime receive an improved service.

The force does not have a specific policy for how to deal with crimes occurring in another force area. In practice, transferred crimes are usually handled by the crime recording unit or the force contact centre using e-mails and the incident management system. As such, the approach for transferred crimes was found to be inconsistent and in need of regularising within force policy and procedure.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should amend the force crime recording policy to include clear direction for officers dealing with transferred crimes.

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND),¹⁰ cannabis warnings¹¹ and community resolutions.¹² The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed¹³.

¹⁰ A form of immediate financial punishment used by police to deal with low-level offending such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft, and minor criminal damage.

¹¹ 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.

Cautions – Out of the 22 cautions we dip-sampled, all of them showed evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 17 cases where there was a victim to consult, 8 cases showed that the victims' views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 23 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 21 of the cases. In one case we found evidence that showed the offender had been made aware of the future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 17 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found four where the victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warning – We dip-sampled 26 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive the warning in 24 cases. 25 of the samples showed that the offender had been made aware of the implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 22 community resolutions and found that in 21 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 14 resolutions where there was a victim, all 14 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. 20 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate¹⁴.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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 www.xact.org.uk
- *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

¹⁴ 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.

It is disappointing to find that the views of the victim do not appear always to be considered when considering the use of cautions and PNDs for victim-based offences.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should take steps to ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that where the offence has a victim, the views of the victim on the use of the disposal are properly and adequately considered.

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.

The force will have to work hard to ensure that incidents recorded as crimes are only reclassified as no-crimes when it is correct to do this. Our audit revealed that of the 91 no-crime decisions reviewed, 65 complied with the NCRS and HO CR. Of particular concern, we found that of the 31 rape no-crimes decisions reviewed, only 22 complied with the NCRS and HO CR.

Responsibility for all crime outcomes and no-crime decisions currently rests with the 14 DDM with limited force crime registrar¹⁵ (FCR) oversight, it was noted that the DDM are not wholly independent of service delivery; this could create tensions between HO CR compliance and service delivery performance.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should review the current structure for the approval of no-crime decisions, including the provision of specific guidance and support on the use of additional verifiable information, ensuring these decisions are made by individuals who are independent of local performance accountability and supported by effective and proportionate oversight by the FCR.

Victim-centred approach

The force is keen to move towards a more victim-centred approach to policing. Work has been completed to encourage the reporting of crime from its diverse and minority communities including: increased recruitment from minority communities; third party reporting centres; and interpreting facilities within the force contact centre.

We found that there is an inconsistent approach to the assessment of risk and vulnerability in the force contact centre. Many call-handlers have received

¹⁵ 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.

training in the identification of risk but do not follow a common and structured approach that could prevent vulnerability and risk being misjudged.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should take action to reinforce the importance to staff within the force contact centre of working to the standard of risk identification that they have been trained to use, and underline that their assessment of risk is subject to appropriate levels of real-time oversight and regular audit.

Surveys of people who report incidents and crime are routinely carried out, and the data collected and used as part of performance reports. The force has recently established a customer satisfaction focus group which should assist the force in identifying areas for improvement.

Rape offences

The force has a specific policy for dealing with rape offences; this includes guidance for dealing with offences committed against members of vulnerable groups. The policy is available to all staff through the force intranet and we found that most officers and staff have a clear understanding of the policy.

The force understands the totality of rape allegations and its reporting routes, and we found that rape was mostly recorded accurately. More focus is required on referrals/reports on the mailbox system— a process whereby all third party reports of child abuse and sexual offences are forwarded to a single mailbox. This mailbox is used by the public protection unit (PPU) to ensure all reports are accurately captured and recorded; however we found in our fieldwork dip-sample of the system that crimes are not always being recorded when they should be.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should establish and, as soon as practicable after that date, begin operation of an adequate system for the auditing by the FCR of the PPU mailbox system, with special attention being directed to those reports involving vulnerable adults and children.

Of significant concern is the decision-making around no-crime decisions for rape (discussed above). Failures were primarily attributed to the interpretation of additional verifiable information, with those victims suffering with mental health, those young of age or intoxicated more likely to receive a poor service. The process for authorising a no-crime for rape is not sufficient and requires attention. There is a need to provide a layer of independent scrutiny and increased oversight from the FCR.

The force does not have a specific policy to deal with the transfer of such crimes between forces, custom and practise, however, does direct officers to give good victim care and to transfer documentation and exhibits effectively.

IT systems

The force utilises a single computer system for each of its incident and crime recording functions these systems are both dated and require modernisation to assist the force in achieving crime data accuracy. These systems are however well-managed, with a comprehensive programme of crime auditing and quality assurance checks. There is less attention paid to local systems such as the public protection unit mailbox (see above).

The force has an ambitious £30m IT Programme and is working to identify an industry partner to help procure and implement replacement incident, crime and intelligence systems over the next three years. This will enable single data entry, mobile data, shared data across partnerships, access control and is expected to improved compliance by design.

People and skills

Staff and supervisors who review incidents, crimes, out-of-court disposals, and no-crimes have been trained on, and demonstrate a reasonable knowledge of, force policies, the HOCR, NCRS and the National Standard of Incident Recording. The issue of the inappropriate and confused use of additional verifiable information covered earlier is a substantial area of concern for the force to resolve.

We found that training in the HOCR for staff and supervisors within the force contact centre is generally good but less so for the wider pool of divisional staff and particularly for those within the public protection unit.

Recommendation: Within six months, the force should establish and, begin operation of, an adequate system of training in crime-recording for all police officers and police staff who are required to make crime-recording decisions, and ensure those who require such training receive it as soon as reasonably practicable.

We did not find substantial evidence of performance pressure influencing individual decision-making on whether to record or classify crime. Rather we found that erroneous decisions not to record were more a consequence of workload pressures and/or an inadequate understanding of legislation and the NCRS the HOCR. Strong leadership on the subject was evident, but not across the whole force area. Some staff described themselves as too busy to worry about the NCRS and did not see the importance of accurate and timely crime recording. Reflecting the chief officer view, non-adherence to the NCRS is considered to be acceptable by some when recording crime is not deemed to be in the best interest of the victim.

Force crime registrar

The FCR acts objectively and impartially to ensure that crimes are recorded correctly and he leads a comprehensive programme of crime audits. Notwithstanding the professional nature of this audit programme, the cost of compliance appears high. Audit is but one mechanism to improve compliance and the force may wish to consider whether it could achieve its objective more efficiently through improved system/process design, sharper and more independent accountabilities and a 'right first time' approach.

While the FCR has sufficient resources to undertake the force audit programme, which is in itself, ambitious, there is little capacity to accommodate new demands.

Most crime-recording disputes are suitably referred to the FCR and he is seen as the final arbiter. He also has the full support of, and access to, the chief officer with lead responsibility for crime data quality.

The FCR has an input into force policies and procedures that relate to crime recording and his views are invariably accommodated.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. Chief officers should promote the importance of crime data integrity without qualification, and ensure that all references to qualified support are removed from all sources.
2. The policy on making off without payment should be amended to ensure compliance with the NCRS and HOCR.
3. The force should ensure the prompt recording of first party reports of crime in compliance with the NCRS when sufficient information exists and IT systems permit. This will ensure that more reports are correctly recorded by the force, crimes are investigated and victims of crime receive an improved service.
4. The force should amend the force crime recording policy to include clear direction for officers dealing with transferred crimes.
5. The force should take steps to ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that where the offence has a victim, the views of the victim on the use of the disposal are properly and adequately considered.
6. The force should review the current structure for the approval of no-crime decisions, including the provision of specific guidance and support on the use of additional verifiable information, ensuring these decisions are

made by individuals who are independent of local performance accountability and supported by effective and proportionate oversight by the FCR.

7. The force should take action to reinforce the importance to staff within the force contact centre of working to the standard of risk identification that they have been trained to use, and that their assessment of risk is subject to appropriate levels of real-time oversight and regular audit.

Within three months

8. The force should reposition accountability for NCRS compliance so as to be independent of service delivery and crime performance accountability, and to embed this within force policy.
9. The force should establish and, as soon as practicable after that date, begin operation of an adequate system for the auditing by the FCR of the PPU mailbox system, with special attention being directed to those reports involving vulnerable adults and children.

Within six months

10. The force should establish and begin operation of, an adequate system of training in crime-recording for all police officers and police staff who are required to make crime-recording decisions, and ensure those who require such training receive it as soon as reasonably practicable.

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 within our final report to be published in autumn 2014. 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 GMP. 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 GMP recorded the following number of crimes.
496	388	265
Crimes reported directly from the victim		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports of crimes that were reported directly by telephone to the GMP 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 GMP should have recorded.	From these identified crimes GMP recorded the following number of crimes.
29	31	30
Crimes referred from other agencies directly to GMP specialist departments		
Referrals	Crimes identified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to GMP specialist departments from other agencies which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals to specialist departments HMIC identified the following number of crimes that GMP should have recorded	From these identified crimes GMP recorded the following number of crimes.
55	11	9
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which GMP had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
91	65	

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 Greater Manchester Police ensuring that leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff?

The deputy chief constable is the chief officer lead for crime data integrity and chairs monthly NCRS governance group meetings. Day to day management is undertaken by the assistant chief constables. Messages are reinforced by written and video messages to staff alongside audits, policy and guidance. Despite this, there is only qualified support for the NCRS. There is an expectation that officers will act in the best interests of victims and consequently may not always record less-serious crime if it is felt that to record a crime would not be in the interest of the victim, despite force policy reinforcing the requirement for NCRS compliance. The dichotomy between the qualified support and force policy undermines compliance with the NCRS and creates uncertainty amongst staff in their recording of crime. A degree of professional discretion nevertheless remains, within national guidelines, for the way in which crimes are investigated and finalised.

Accountability for the NCRS compliance in the finalisation of an incident or crime rests with divisional staff and their supervisors. We found that there is an overriding need to separate responsibility for making key decisions against the HOCR and related guidelines from that of external service delivery and performance accountability. The force is piloting a new concept called local resolution team at Tameside and Bury divisions. If the pilot does progress, the force will need to ensure that compliance responsibilities under the HOCR are kept clearly separate from those for local service delivery.

The force has an internal reporting route to the professional standards department that officers can use to raise concerns over unethical practices of whatever kind. We found that chief officers have made efforts to encourage staff to report any concerns over crime recording standards. Most staff said that they would happily discuss concerns with their supervisors.

We note that the primary crime recording policy highlights the need for an ethical approach both for divisional commanders and designated decision-makers (DDM) and that all relevant policies are compliant with the HOCR with the exception of that for making off without payment which requires some minor adjustment. Policies and strategies on crime recording are accompanied by useful flowcharts for specific offence types; this includes detailed requirements and guidance for the recording and investigation of rape.

The policing and crime plan highlights the importance of openness and integrity in securing public confidence, specifically in relation to the complaints system. There is also an intention to set up an independent ethics committee in April 2014.

1.2 How does Greater Manchester Police ensure it has a proportionate approach to managing the strategic and organisational risk of recording crime data?

We found that the force has analysed and understands some of its risks in relation to inaccurate crime recording at an organisational level. This has resulted in NCRS audits of violence, sexual offences, domestic abuse and hate crime alongside an audit of no-crimes completed in December 2013. The scope of audits includes a recent audit of public protection unit (PPU) investigations that comprises vulnerability records used by the PPU but not its mailbox. The PPU mailbox system is primarily used for partner referrals and has been identified as an area of risk from this inspection. These crime-recording risks do not feature within the force risk register but are reviewed at the NCRS governance group chaired by the deputy chief constable.

The force does not adopt a proportionate approach to the level of detail included in crime records; crimes are recorded to the minimum standards specified in force policy.

1.3 How do Greater Manchester Police use HOCR, NCRS, and NSIR to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately?

The force understands most of the channels through which crime is reported and the quality of reports is monitored from the identified primary crime reporting channel - those received as incidents on the incident recording system.

The FCR oversees a comprehensive monthly audit regime that involves reviewing 1000 incidents, additional risk based audits and bespoke divisional dip-sampling. The contact centre also completes live audits that result in immediate feedback and corrective action; this promotes a 'right first time' approach. While the force describes the audit regime as flexible, there is limited scope to find sufficient resources for new and emerging issues owing to the resources required to maintain the ongoing force audit regime.

Findings from audits are included in the quarterly performance packs and are the subject of force-level discussion at the monthly NCRS governance group where action plans are agreed. Positioning headline audit results against crime reduction information would give an indicator of the degree of confidence that can be held in the data themselves.

We found that the results from force audits are passed to DDM for local action and that there is evidence that individual shortcomings are dealt with promptly and firmly and, on occasion, referred to professional standards. A monthly spreadsheet of NCRS failures is produced by the FCR. We found that the results from quality assurance checks within the force contact centre are also fed back to individuals and their line managers. Overall management interventions were found to be tiered in accordance with risk with advice and training offered to individuals.

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

We examined 496 incident records and found that 388 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 388 crimes that should have been recorded, 265 were. Of the 265, 10 were wrongly classified and 22 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. There is a need for improvement in the accuracy and timeliness of crime-recording decisions.

The force also has a centralised crime recording bureau/public assistance desk through which we have estimated that the force records approximately 19 per cent of the total of its 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 review of this unit (a review of 29 calls from the public) found that of the 31 crimes that should have been recorded, 30 were. All 30 were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force.

We examined 55 reports that were referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments. Of the 11 crimes that should have been recorded, 9 had been recorded. Of these 9, all were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

We found a notable number of cases where a crime had not been raised because the victim could not be contacted, despite repeated efforts from the

police. There is evidence that reports of sexual offences made by other organisations on behalf of victims to the public protection unit are not being recorded immediately and some reports are not crimed at all due to misinterpretation of the HOCR. We found that lack of training, knowledge of legislation and workload pressures all contributed to errors in crime recording.

2.2 How does Greater Manchester Police 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 them.

Cautions – Out of the 22 cautions we dip-sampled, all of them showed evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 17 cases where there was a victim to consult, 8 cases showed that the victim's views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 23 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 21 of the cases. In one case we found evidence that showed the offender had been made aware of the future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 17 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found 4 where the victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warning – We dip-sampled 26 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive the warning in 24 cases. 25 of the samples showed that the offender had been made aware of the implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 22 community resolutions and found that in 21 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 14 resolutions where there was a victim, all 14 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. 20 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.

It is disappointing to find that the views of the victim do not appear always to be considered when considering the use of cautions and PNDs for victim-based offences.

2.3 Are no-crime decisions for high-risk crime categories correct, and is there robust oversight and quality control in Greater Manchester Police?

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.

The force will have to work hard to ensure that incidents recorded as crimes are only reclassified as no-crimes when it is correct to do this. Our audit revealed that of the 91 no-crime decisions, 65 complied with the NCRS and HOCC. Of particular concern, we found that of the 31 rape no-crimes decisions reviewed, only 22 complied with the NCRS and HOCC.

Responsibility for all crime outcomes and no-crime decisions currently rests with the 14 DDM with limited FCR oversight. It was noted that the DDM are not wholly independent of service delivery; this could create tensions between HOCC compliance and service delivery. The force may therefore wish to consider repositioning responsibility for no-crimes to an independent corporate unit that is subject to FCR oversight.

2.4 How does Greater Manchester Police promote a victim-centred approach to crime recording and associated outcomes?

The force is keen to move towards a more victim-centred approach to policing, as is evident at the local resolution team pilot site where victim-focused investigations are being developed. Work has been completed to encourage the reporting of crime from its diverse and minority communities; including increased recruitment from minority communities for PCSO; third party reporting centres, and interpreting facilities within the force contact centre.

We found that there is an inconsistent approach to the assessment of risk and vulnerability in the force contact centre. Many call-handlers have received training in the identification of risk but do not follow a common and structured approach that could prevent vulnerability and risk being misjudged.

The force makes good use of victim satisfaction data as part of performance reports and victim contact contracts are actively used for crime investigations. In addition there are referrals to Victim Support for more serious crimes when the victim consents. The recently established customer satisfaction focus group should assist the force in improvements in this area.

2.5 How does Greater Manchester Police ensure systems for receiving, recording and managing reported crimes of rape are robust?

The force has a specific policy for dealing with rape offences; this includes guidance for dealing with offences committed against members of vulnerable groups. The policy is available to all staff through the force intranet and we found that most officers and staff have a clear understanding of the policy.

The force understands the totality of rape allegations and its reporting routes and we found that rape was mostly recorded accurately. More focus is required on referrals/reports on the mailbox system – a process whereby all third party reports of child abuse and sexual offences are forwarded to a single mailbox. This mailbox is used by the public protection unit to ensure all reports are accurately captured and recorded; however we found in our fieldwork dip-sample of the system that crimes are not always being recorded when they should be.

Of significant concern for GMP is the decision making around no-crime decisions for rape (discussed above). Failures were primarily attributed to the interpretation of additional verifiable information, with those victims suffering with mental health problems, those young of age or intoxicated more likely to receive a poor service. The process for authorising a no-crime for rape is not sufficient and requires attention. There is a need to provide a layer of independent scrutiny and increased oversight from the FCR.

The force does not have a policy to deal with the transfer of such crimes between forces; custom and practice, however, do direct officers to give good victim care and to transfer documentation and exhibits effectively.

2.6 How do Greater Manchester Police IT systems allow for efficient and effective management of crime recording?

Looking particularly at the force IT systems for recording purposes, the overwhelming majority of reports are handled through its incident management system (GMPICS) and crime management system (OPUS) which are dated and require modernisation. We found that these core systems that contain reports of crime are owned and managed, with a comprehensive programme of crime auditing and quality assurance checks. However there is less attention paid to local systems such as the multi-agency referral forum mailbox.

The force has an ambitious £30m IT programme and is working to identify an industry partner to help procure and implement replacement incident, crime and intelligence systems over the next three years. This will enable single data entry, mobile data, shared data across partnerships, access control and is expected to improved compliance by design.

People and skills

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

3.1 What arrangements does Greater Manchester Police have in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?

In broad terms, the force has sufficient resources to manage the reporting of incidents from the public. There are some resilience issues within the crime recording unit that affect the waiting time for call backs which can be over 24 hours, and the time taken to respond to internal calls to input crime reports on GMPICS. We found that training in HOCR for staff and supervisors within the force contact centre is generally good, but less so for the wider pool of divisional staff and particularly for those within the public protection department.

A video-message from the deputy chief constable has been produced and an NCRS master class has been delivered to sergeants and cascaded to staff alongside documents and briefings on the subject.

3.2 How do the behaviours of the Greater Manchester Police staff reflect a culture of integrity for crime recording practice and decision-making?

We did not find substantial evidence of performance pressure influencing individual decision-making on whether to record or classify crime. Strong leadership on the subject was evident, but not across the whole force area. Some staff described themselves as too busy to worry about the NCRS and did not see the importance of accurate and timely crime recording. Reflecting the chief officer view, non-adherence to the NCRS is considered to be acceptable by some when recording crime is not deemed to be in the best interest of the victim.

3.3 How is the accuracy of crime recording in Greater Manchester Police actively overseen and governed by the force crime registrar?

The FCR acts objectively and impartially to ensure that crimes are recorded correctly and he leads a comprehensive programme of crime audits. Notwithstanding the professional nature of this audit programme, the cost of compliance appears high. Audit is but one mechanism to improve compliance and the force may wish to consider whether it could achieve its objective more efficiently through improved system/process design, sharper and more independent accountabilities and a 'right first time' approach.

While the FCR has sufficient resources to undertake the force audit programme which is in itself, ambitious, there is little capacity to accommodate new demands.

Most crime-recording disputes are suitably referred to the FCR and he is seen to be, and operates as, the final arbiter on any disputes occurring within the crime recording process. The FCR has the full support of, and access to, the chief officer with lead responsibility for crime data quality.

The FCR has an input into force policies and procedures that relate to crime recording and his views are invariably accommodated.