

Crime data integrity

Inspection of Hampshire Constabulary

November 2014

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ISBN: 978-1-78246-540-9

www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic

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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 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 individually 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.

Overview

HMIC's inspection of Hampshire Constabulary's crime recording practices revealed some unacceptable weaknesses. The force was provided with immediate feedback following HMIC's on-site inspection in June 2014. It has taken a number of steps to address the findings since.

A chief officer is chairing a newly established strategic meeting to co-ordinate and oversee improvements in how Hampshire Constabulary records and manages incidents and crime data integrity. A comprehensive action plan has identified the actions required to improve the accuracy of crime recording across the force. Progress is monitored and those responsible for implementation are being held to account.

The chief constable and the police and crime commissioner are committed to ensuring that crime recording improves with a focus on the victim. There is an acknowledgement that while process changes can be made, it may take longer to change the culture of the organisation. Six golden rules of crime recording have been introduced which aim to develop the culture among officers and staff within the force to secure improved crime data accuracy.

The force has taken the inspection results extremely seriously and has initiated action designed to improve the quality and accuracy of crime recording. HMIC will carry out a further inspection in early 2015 to assess whether the public of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight can have greater confidence in the force's crime recording arrangements.

Part A: Summary of inspection findings, and recommendations

Leadership and governance

Within Hampshire Constabulary there is strong and committed chief officer leadership for crime data integrity with a consistent expectation of compliance with the NCRS and HOCR. A strong victim focus is also expected. The deputy chief constable (DCC) is the force lead for crime data.

Officers and staff can raise concerns about unethical practices of any kind through a confidential integrity telephone line. However, this facility has not been used to report any crime recording integrity issues, and when interviewed officers and staff said that they would be more likely to report such issues directly to their own supervisors.

Force policies on the management of reporting and recording of crime lack certain details and need to be updated to reflect recent changes to structure and procedures introduced by the force. There is no guidance on how officers should manage crimes that require transferring to another force, or the receipt of crimes transferred from another force; the current procedure for handling records of crime which need to be classified as no-crimes is also not explained. The policy for investigating sexual offences is out of date, and it makes no reference as to when or how such offences should be recorded as crimes.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should review and update its policies on the management of reporting and recording of crime, to ensure that:

- they are fully compliant with the NCRS and HOCR;
- they reflect the changes in working practices recently introduced by the force; and
- they clearly specify the point at which, and conditions in which, reports of crime relating to sexual offences should be recorded as a crime.

Reports of crime can come in from a variety of sources such as those received by telephone, at a police station front enquiry office, or through referrals from partner agencies directly into specialist departments.

The force crime and incident registrar (FCIR⁶) oversees an audit regime for both incident and crime recording, and the audit reports are widely circulated and accessible. Identified failures are directed to individual managers for action, with corrective actions undertaken. We reviewed a number of these audits from April 2014, and this review identified under-recording in rape, incorrect decisions to no-crime⁷ recorded offences (including rape), and an under-recording of crimes reported from incidents. While it is good that the force is identifying such issues themselves, the force should satisfy itself that the actions taken to improve identified failings are properly and adequately progressed.

An audit and quality assurance process, for incident recording (as opposed to crime recording) is also undertaken within the force contact centre, where reports of crime are received directly from the public. This aims to ensure crimes are recorded correctly closer to the time of initial reporting, with results fed back to individuals by their line managers.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

When a member of the public telephones the police 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.

HMIC examined 127 incident records⁸ and found that 112 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 112 crimes that should have been recorded, 67 were. Of the 67, eight were wrongly classified and two were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. This is of serious concern as it means that some crimes are not being recorded and the victims are not getting the service they deserve (for example, because certain victim support services are only triggered when a crime is recorded).

⁶ The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime and incident - 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ An incident is a report of events received by the police 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 on the force's incident-recording system or some other accessible or auditable means.

A number of the failures had sufficient information from the caller to require a crime to be recorded immediately. HMIC concludes that the force has adopted an 'investigate to record'⁹ approach, which is not in accordance with NCRS and HOCR. This results in the force failing to record crime as accurately as it should.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should take steps to ensure that all reports of crime are recorded at the first possible opportunity and in accordance with the NCRS, that any working practices to 'investigate to record' are discontinued and that this requirement is subject to regular auditing as part of the FCIR audit programme.

The force enquiry centre (FEC) records reports of crime directly from members of the public who contact the force by telephone. In these cases the call handler considers that a telephone investigation is appropriate, an incident record does not need to be created and in most cases a police officer does not need to attend the scene or speak with the person reporting. We have estimated that the force records approximately 42 percent of the total of its recorded crime through direct recording. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force in respect of this element of the process.

We also examined 50 reports that were recorded separately on the crime recording system as a non-crime¹⁰. We found that from those 50 reports, 25 should have been recorded as crimes. The force had recorded 15 out of the 25 correctly. As some of these records relate to sexual offences and assaults on vulnerable adults and children, some of which were referred by partner agencies, this is a cause of considerable concern and is a matter of material and urgent importance. An 'investigate to record' approach was clearly evident. Most crimes should have been recorded as crimes at the time the referrals were first received. This is a matter that should be rectified by the force urgently.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should ensure that referrals from partner agencies which contain reports of crime are recorded as crimes in accordance with the NCRS and not, without just cause, entered as 'non-crime' records. The force should put in place proportionate and effective audit arrangements, through the central referral unit, to assure itself that such referrals are consistently recorded as crimes.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ A non-crime is an incident which in the first instance has not been recorded as a crime as police are unsure as to whether it is a crime or not. A non-crime can eventually be recorded as a crime if the police find evidence that a crime has indeed occurred.

Accountability for the correct classification of recorded crimes, with the exception of those crimes created by the force enquiry centre (for example telephone investigations), sits with local officers, sergeants and district commanders since the changes were introduced in February 2014, when the quality finalisation team (QFT) was formed. The QFT offers HOCR/NCRS guidance to officers, but the decision for a crime classification remains with the officer or sergeant.

Supervisors within the force control room are overstretched. Incidents are supervised on an exceptions basis only and operators can either request support or supervisors can identify specific calls by reviewing the open incident list. There is a lack of monitoring in respect of NCRS compliance within the force control room. As this is the first stage at which the majority of reports of crime are received by the force, it is important that supervision (in terms of NCRS compliance) is effective and timely.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should introduce a structured and proportionate approach to call handling supervision in the force control room to ensure better compliance with NCRS.

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND),¹¹ cannabis warnings¹² and community resolutions.¹³ The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed. This guidance is updated from time to time.¹⁴

Cautions – Out of the 20 cautions dip-sampled by HMIC, we found that in 17 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 18 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 15 cases where there was a victim to consult seven cases showed that the victim's views had been considered.

¹¹ 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.

¹² A cannabis warning is a non-statutory disposal for cases of possession of cannabis for personal use. It consists of a warning to the offender and confiscation of the cannabis.

¹³ Resolution of a minor offence or anti-social behaviour incident through informal agreement between the parties involved, for example often involving the offender making good the loss or damage caused.

¹⁴ 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.
- *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from www.acpo.police.uk

Penalty Notices for Disorder – HMIC dip-sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 18 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 nine cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found eight where the victim had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

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

Community resolutions – HMIC took a dip-sample of 20 community resolutions and found that in 18 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, 18 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. All 20 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate for both the offender and the victim¹⁵.

Some improvement could be made to ensuring the victims' views are considered when a caution is being considered but the use of out-of-court disposals is generally good, with due consideration given to the national guidelines.

No-crime

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 88 no-crime records and found 39 records to be compliant with HOCA and NCRS.

HMIC is concerned that of the no-crime decisions for rape no-crimes, of 28 rapes recorded as no-crime, we found that 18 should have remained classified as crimes. This is unacceptable given the risk associated with this type of crime and is therefore a matter of urgent and material concern.

No-criming decisions have been taken by local sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors who are not independent of investigations, and nor are they trained in NCRS compliance. There was also little evidence of any oversight of their decisions. The final decision for validation of no-crimes has recently been moved from local

¹⁵ 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, 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 HOCA.

officers. The QFT now has scrutiny of no-crime decisions in all cases except rape no-crimes. Rape no-crime decisions are made by the detective chief inspector, but are subject to further audit by the FCIR.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should:

- ensure that steps are taken to address the inaccuracy of no-criming decisions so that they are in compliance with the HOCR and NCRS;
- provide guidance to all officers and staff who are engaged in requesting or making no-crime decisions which clearly describes the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a no-crime in accordance with the NCRS; and
- put in place arrangements to ensure ongoing compliance with the standard, with appropriate involvement of the FCIR.

More recent no-crime decisions tested during HMIC's on-site inspection, showed some improvement in compliance. This appeared to be as a direct result of the introduction of the QFT and some FCIR scrutiny. The introduction of independent decision-making to the process therefore seems to be making an impact albeit further work is required.

Victim-centred approach

There is a strong victim focus in the force. Activity is overseen and coordinated by the force victim and witness strategic board, and supported by the force satisfaction board. The findings from satisfaction surveys inform activity at force and district levels, as does a programme of local telephone call-backs to some victims. The victim's voice increasingly informs decision making from the point of first contact through to the finalisation of crime, and Code of Practice for Victims of Crime requirements are followed and closely monitored.

The force has completed, and continues to work to assist the engagement with new and emergent communities. Particular initiatives have been pursued with Nepalese and Somalian communities.

Rape offences

The leadership of rape investigations is overseen by the force serious sexual offences silver group, which works closely with partners to improve service to victims. However, the focus of the group is not on the reporting routes and ethical recording of rape.

Where reports of rape are received through referrals from partners, such as health or social services, we found an 'investigate to record' approach is being applied. Referrals are being held in the non-crime category of the NICHE crime recording system for excessive periods of time pending investigation, with some not being

recorded as a crime at all. An audit completed by the force in April 2014, identified nine rapes that should have been recorded as crimes but which were not. Our own audit identified a further three offences of rape where a crime was not correctly recorded on NICHE. This is a concern and the force need to take urgent steps to improve the recording of rape.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should review the scope of the serious sexual offences silver group to include the initial recording of rape through the key routes of reporting, and the need for compliance with the NCRS and HOCR.

IT systems

Hampshire Constabulary uses the Altaris system for its incident management and the NICHE system for crime recording; both systems are capable of being audited. These systems are linked which enables the transfer of data between systems.

The force was an early adopter of NICHE and staff are positive about its flexibility and value in supporting investigations. However, the maintenance of good data quality on the system remains a significant challenge. As at January 2014, there were an estimated 70,000 duplicate people records remaining on NICHE, despite efforts to reduce this volume by the crime recording bureau and quality checking by the quality finalisation team. These records relate to individuals whose details have been entered on to the crime system but the entries have different or incorrect spellings. This means when searching the system an individual's record may not be found and this may present a risk if information about them does not get identified. This presents a significant and unacceptable risk to the force that requires addressing.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should secure system design changes to NICHE that significantly reduce the volume of duplicate records relating to individuals.

People and skills

To support its move to direct officer input of crime on NICHE and the use of mobile data, between November 2013 and February 2014 the force completed an intensive training programme for officers in crime recording. This included a message from the DCC on crime recording and an overview of NCRS and HOCR requirements. There have also been e-learning packages on the use of NICHE for specialist staff. Staff considered these packages to be helpful.

Most staff understand the message to record crime with integrity and the reasons for so doing, albeit we found pockets within the force that are less receptive to this message. There is no evidence of institutionalised performance pressure to record crime incorrectly.

The key reasons for failures of compliance relate to a lack of knowledge of the HOCR (e.g. third party reports from vulnerable victims), poor supervision and some pressures of workload.

Force crime and incident registrar

The FCIR has the full support of his chief officer and is the final arbiter on crime recording matters. He is able to act impartially and staff will regularly contact him for advice. The FCIR has an audit team that has recently been enhanced which gives flexibility to respond to new demands and risks as they arise, and to undertake new audits as required.

Whilst acknowledging his inclusion so far, there remains a need to engage the FCIR more fully in the process of business change for the reporting and recording of crime. This should include the use of crime recording IT. His expertise should also be fully exploited to help to develop and ensure that relevant force policies and procedures are compliant with the NCRS and HOCR.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. The force should take steps to ensure that all reports of crime are recorded at the first possible opportunity and in accordance with the NCRS, that any working practices to 'investigate to record' are discontinued and that this requirement is subject to regular auditing as part of the FCIR audit programme.
2. The force should ensure that referrals from partner agencies which contain reports of crime are recorded as crimes in accordance with the NCRS and not, without just cause, entered as 'non-crime' records. The force should put in place proportionate and effective audit arrangements, through the central referral unit, to assure itself that such referrals are consistently recorded as crimes.
3. The force should:
 - ensure that steps are taken to address the inaccuracy of no-criming decisions so that they are in compliance with the HOCR and NCRS;
 - provide guidance to all officers and staff who are engaged in requesting or making no-crime decisions which clearly describes the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a no-crime in accordance with the NCRS; and
 - put in place arrangements to ensure ongoing compliance with the standard.

4. The force should review the scope of the serious sexual offences silver group to include the initial recording of rape through the key routes of reporting, and the need for compliance with the NCRS and HOCR.

Within three months

5. The force should review and update its policies on the management of the reporting and recording of crime, to ensure that:
 - they are fully compliant with the NCRS and HOCR;
 - they reflect the changes in working practices recently introduced by the force; and
 - they clearly specify the point at which, and conditions in which, reports of crime relating to sexual offences should be recorded as a crime.
6. The force should introduce a structured and proportionate approach to call handling supervision in the force control room to ensure better compliance with NCRS.
7. The force should secure system design changes to NICHE that significantly reduce the volume of duplicate records relating to individuals.

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 judgements only.

Crimes reported as part of an incident record		
Incidents reviewed	Crimes identified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Hampshire Constabulary. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these incidents HMIC identified the following number of crimes.	From these identified crimes Hampshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
127	112	67
Crimes reported directly from the victim		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports of crimes that were reported directly by telephone to the Hampshire Constabulary force enquiry centre. 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 force enquiry centre HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Hampshire Constabulary should have recorded.	From these identified crimes Hampshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
60	77	76

Crime reports held on other systems		
Referrals	Crimes indentified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Hampshire Constabulary and held on other systems which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Hampshire Constabulary should have recorded.	From these identified crimes Hampshire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes.
50	25	15
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which Hampshire Constabulary had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
88	39	

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

The deputy chief constable (DCC) is the force lead for crime data integrity matters in Hampshire Constabulary.

There is a clear and unambiguous expectation from the DCC of compliance with the NCRS and the wider HOCR; this is seen as non-negotiable. A strong victim focus is also expected. This has been extensively reinforced through a personal video message to staff, the force performance management framework, the local policing area meeting processes, senior leadership conferences and through staff focus groups. The updated police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan will also include a requirement for good data quality.

A crime hub is accessible to staff via the force intranet. This contains links to detailed guidance on the HOCR, FAQs, lessons learned and the results from audit. Staff do make use of the hub and it is considered to be a valuable resource.

The force has a confidential telephone line for the reporting of wrongdoing, called the integrity line. No issues of crime recording integrity have been reported by staff using this facility, and officers and staff stated that they would be more likely to report such issues directly to their own supervisors.

Force policies relating to crime recording are limited and require updating to reflect recent changes to structure and procedures. There is no guidance on how officers should manage crimes that require transferring to another force, or indeed the receipt of crimes transferred from another force; the current procedure for handling records of crime which need to be classified as no-crimes is also not explained. The policy for investigating sexual offences is out of date, the review date for the document being the 8 January 2014. While it describes the process for getting authorisation to no-crime a recorded crime of rape it makes no reference as to when or how such offences should be recorded as crimes.

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

Reports of crime can come in from a variety of sources such as those received via telephone, at a police station front enquiry office, or through referrals from partner agencies directly into specialist departments. How does Hampshire Constabulary use HOCR, NCRS and NSIR¹⁶ to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately?

The role of the force crime and incident registrar (FCIR) is to ensure that the force complies with the NCRS and HOCR. Additionally, the FCIR has responsibility for overseeing force compliance with the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). The FCIR oversees an audit regime across the force, and this comprises monthly district audits which check for NCRS compliance. The latest audit involved: a sample of 463 reports, to inform district reviews; two force-wide audits of 750 incidents and 750 crimes against HOCR and NCRS; and bi-monthly audits of out-of-court disposal compliance. Audit reports are widely circulated and accessible via the force intranet hub, and failures are directed to individual managers for action. Findings are routinely discussed at the force performance group and corrective action is tracked by the crime standards department.

There is also an effective audit and quality assurance process within the contact centre to check for accuracy of incident recording (as opposed to crime recording). The force enquiry centre samples 500-700 NICHE records each month to assess HOCR and NCRS compliance. There is also an audit of Altaris records to focus upon incident closing codes but with limited attention to NCRS. This activity helps to explain the higher level of NCRS and HOCR compliance attained by the force enquiry centre for directly recorded crime.

¹⁶ The national standard for incident recording (NSIR) is designed to ensure that all incidents, whether crime or non-crime, are recorded by police in a consistent and accurate manner. This allows resulting data to be used at a local and national level for management and performance information purposes.

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

When a member of the public telephones the police 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.

HMIC examined 127 incident records¹⁷ and found that 112 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 112 crimes that should have been recorded, 67 were. Of the 67, eight were wrongly classified and two were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. This is of serious concern as it means that some crimes are not being recorded and the victims are not getting the service they deserve (for example, because certain victim support services are only triggered when a crime is recorded).

A number of the incidents which failed had sufficient information from the caller to require a crime to be recorded immediately, in accordance with NCRS. HMIC concludes that the force has adopted an 'investigate to record' approach which is not in accordance with NCRS and HOCR. This results in the force failing to record crime as accurately as it should.

The force enquiry centre (FEC) records reports of crime directly from members of the public who contact the force by telephone. In these cases the call handler considers that a telephone investigation is appropriate, an incident record does not need to be created and in most cases a police officer does not need to attend the scene or speak with the person reporting. Our inspection of this unit (a review of 60 calls from the public) found that of the 77 crimes that should have been recorded, 76 were recorded. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force in respect of this element of the process.

¹⁷ An incident is a report of events received by the police that require 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 on the force's incident-recording system or some other accessible or auditable means.

We also examined 50 reports that were recorded separately on NICHE, the force crime recording system, as a non-crime¹⁸. We found that from those 50 reports, 25 should have been recorded as crimes. The force had recorded 15 out of the 25 correctly. As some of these records relate to sexual offences and assaults on vulnerable adults and children resulting from partner referrals, this is a cause of considerable concern and is a matter of material and urgent importance.

An 'investigate to record' approach was clearly evident. Most crimes should have been recorded at the time the referrals were first received. This is a matter that should be rectified by the force urgently.

A dip-sample of 10 racial incidents recorded on the NICHE non-crime category found that six records were compliant with NCRS, but the remaining four contained five reports of crime which were not recorded. A dip-sample of 10 sexual offences revealed that one was correctly recorded, but the remaining nine contained 11 crimes that had gone unrecorded. The 11 crimes comprised four rapes, two of which were still being investigated, six indecency offences and one assault.

Notwithstanding the considerable and ongoing efforts to train and equip officers to take responsibility for the direct input of crime on NICHE, there remains a challenge in the correct classification of crime from incidents. The latest force audit on the subject (April 2014) indicates that compliance is 70 percent and HMIC considers this may be attributed to the ongoing move to direct officer input.

Accountability for the correct classification of recorded crimes, with the exception of those crimes created by the force enquiry centre (for example telephone investigations), sits with local officers, sergeants and district commanders since the changes were introduced in February 2014, when the quality finalisation team (QFT) was formed. The QFT offers HOCR/NCRS guidance to officers, but the decision for a crime classification remains with the officer or sergeant. A recent QFT audit of section 5 Public Order Act 1986 offences disclosed an error rate by officers of approximately 50 percent with officer knowledge and workload cited as the principle reasons for errors. As the QFT team is independent from the investigation and performance accountability this new arrangement represents good practice.

Supervisors within the force control room are overstretched. Incidents are supervised on an exceptions basis only and operators can either request support or supervisors can identify specific calls by reviewing the open incident list. There is a lack of monitoring in respect of NCRS compliance within the force control room. As this is the first stage at which the majority of reports of crime are received by the force, it is important that supervision (in terms of NCRS compliance) is effective and timely.

¹⁸ A non-crime is an incident which in the first instance has not been recorded as a crime as police are unsure as to whether it is a crime or not. A non-crime can eventually be recorded as a crime if the police find evidence that a crime has indeed occurred.

All pursuits, firearms incidents and critical incidents are supervised and domestic abuse reports have to go to a supervisor for closure.

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

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

Cautions – Out of the 20 cautions HMIC dip-sampled we found that in 17 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 18 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 15 cases where there was a victim to consult seven cases showed that the victim's 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 18 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 nine cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found eight records where the victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

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

Community resolutions – HMIC took a dip-sample of 20 community resolutions and found that in 18 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, 18 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. All 20 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate for both the offender and the victim.

Some improvement could be made to ensuring the victims' views are considered when a caution is being considered but the use of out-of-court disposals is generally good, with due consideration given to the national guidelines.

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

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. HMIC examined 88 no-crime records and found 39 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. Of 28 rapes recorded as no-crime, we found that 18 should have remained classified as crimes. This is unacceptable given the risk associated with this type of crime and is therefore a matter of urgent and material concern.

No-criming decisions have been taken by local sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors who are not independent of investigations, and nor are they trained in NCRS compliance. There was also little evidence of any oversight of their decisions. The final decision for validation of no-crimes has recently been moved from local officers. The QFT now has scrutiny of no-crime decisions in all cases except rape no-crimes. Rape no-crime decisions are made by the DCI, but are subject to further audit by the FCIR.

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

There is a strong victim focus in the force. Activity is overseen and coordinated by the force victim and witness strategic board, and supported by the force satisfaction board. The findings from satisfaction surveys inform activity at force and district levels, as does a programme of local telephone call-backs to some victims (four calls per month per sergeant/inspector). The victim's voice increasingly informs decision making from the point of first contact through to the finalisation of crime, and Code of Practice for Victims of Crime requirements are followed and closely monitored and the Victim Support scheme appears to be engaged for recorded crime when suitable and sought.

The force has completed, and continues to work to assist the engagement with new and emergent communities. Particular initiatives have been pursued with Nepalese and Somalian communities.

The new force resolution centre is developing ways to manage demand while retaining a focus on HOCR and NCRS compliance. It has the aim to reduce deployment demand through a careful review of calls but with the objective to maximise victim satisfaction.

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

The leadership of rape investigations is overseen by the force serious sexual offences silver group, which works closely with partners to improve service to victims. However, the focus of the group is not on how reports of rape are received or the ethical recording of rape.

Where reports of rape are received through referrals from partners, such as health or social services, we found an 'investigate to record' approach is being applied. Referrals are being held in the non-crime category of NICHE for excessive periods of time pending investigation, with some not being recorded as a crime at all. An audit completed by the force, in April 2014, identified nine rapes that should have been recorded as crimes but which were not. Our own audit identified a further three offences of rape where a crime was not correctly recorded on NICHE. This is a concern and the force need to take urgent steps to improve the recording of rape.

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

2.7. Hampshire Constabulary uses the Altaris system for its incident management and the NICHE system for crime recording; both systems are capable of being audited.

The force was an early adopter of NICHE and staff are positive about its flexibility and value in supporting investigations. However, the maintenance of good data quality on the system remains a significant challenge. As at January 2014, there were an estimated 70,000 duplicate people records remaining on NICHE, despite efforts to reduce this volume by the crime recording bureau and quality checking by the quality finalisation team. These records relate to individuals whose details have been entered on to the crime system but the entries have different or incorrect spellings. This means when searching the system an individual's record may not be found and may present a risk if information about them does not get identified. This presents a significant and unacceptable risk to the force that requires addressing.

People and skills

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

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

To support its move to direct officer input of crime on NICHE and the move to use of mobile data, between November 2013 and February 2014 the force completed an intensive training programme for officers in crime recording. This comprised a two and a half hour session that included a message from the DCC on crime recording and an overview of NCRS and HOCR requirements. There have also been computer based e-learning packages on the use of NICHE and for the force enquiry centre staff on the NCRS and HOCR. Staff considered these packages to be helpful.

Whilst most police and community support officers (PCSO) are not authorised to record and investigate crime some are doing so (Portsmouth). A consistent approach to the issue would therefore be beneficial, as would appropriate training that includes guidance on the NCRS and HOCRs for those PCSO authorised to raise and investigate crime.

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

Most staff understand the message to record crime with integrity and the reasons for so doing albeit there remain pockets within the force that are less receptive to this message. There is no evidence of institutionalised performance pressure to record crime incorrectly. The key reasons for failures of compliance relate to a lack of knowledge of the HOCR (e.g. third party reports from vulnerable victims), poor supervision and some pressures of workload.

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

The FCIR has the full support of his chief officer and is the final arbiter on crime recording matters. He is able to act impartially and has regular monthly meetings with the DCC. Staff will regularly contact the FCIR for advice.

The FCIR has an audit team that has recently been enhanced to 5.2 full-time equivalent posts. This gives flexibility to respond to new demands and risks as they arise and to undertake new audits as required.

Whilst acknowledging his inclusion thus far, there remains a need to engage the FCIR more fully in the process of business change for the reporting and recording of crime. This should include the use of crime recording IT systems (through the

Minerva group) and the development of force policy on such matters. His expertise should also be fully exploited to ensure that all relevant force policies and procedures are compliant with the NCRS and HOCR.