

Crime data integrity

Inspection of Leicestershire Police

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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. 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 chief officer team provides strong and visible leadership throughout the organisation with a real focus on crime data integrity. The assistant chief constable is the force lead for crime data and has conveyed clear messages to the workforce which are based upon the principle of 'get it right first time', instead of making decisions to hit performance targets.

The force has an established governance structure in place, with a clear expectation that staff will comply with the NCRS and the HOOCR. However this is not supported by policy as the force does not have a specific policy on crime recording. The workforce is therefore reliant on the national guidance which is available to all staff via the force intranet.

To help to maintain standards, the force operates a confidential phone line through which staff can report bad practice or inappropriate behaviour by individuals. This is relatively well-known within the organisation and is available for all staff. In addition, there is a questions page on the force intranet where staff can raise questions or discuss issues which may be causing them concern.

The force maintains a flexible audit regime which is structured to allow for a versatile approach to data quality rather than following a pre-arranged timetable of audits. All audit results are reviewed and learning is disseminated via the force intranet and through a planned training programme. There is a proposal for all audit results to be taken to the force performance delivery group, chaired by the deputy chief constable. This had not started at the time of the inspection. This would be good practice.

The force understands the various routes by which crime is reported and monitors them for compliance with the NCRS and the HOOCR. A number of these processes are being reviewed as part of the wider change programme called Operation Edison, which is designed to improve services and identify savings.

Systems and Processes

Accuracy of crime recording

We examined 123 incident records⁶ and found that 115 crimes should have been recorded as a crime. Of the 115 crimes that should have been recorded,

⁶ An incident in this context is a report of events received by the police and recorded on the electronic incident systems, that requires police attention. Whether or not an incident report

100 were. Of those 100, all were recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR, but 3 were wrongly classified.

The child abuse investigation unit (CAIU) and paedophile and online investigation team (POLIT) use a case and administration tracking system (CATS) to manage investigations. The force recognises that this system presents a risk to the integrity of its crime data as the system is not integrated with crime management system (CIS). The force is pursuing alternative systems in collaboration with other forces to address this issue. In the meantime, additional control measures have been put in place including the employment of a full-time system administrator to monitor the database and ensure that crimes are recorded in a timely manner. This individual has been given additional training to improve their knowledge and, consequently, the system's compliance with the NCRS; however, our audit of this system suggests the effectiveness of this process has yet to embed.

We examined 55 reports that were referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments. Of the 16 crimes that should have been recorded, only 6 had been recorded. All six had been correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. As some of these records related to sexual offences and assaults on children, this is a significant cause of concern and is a matter of urgent importance.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should establish a proportionate and effective process for auditing (by the FCR) referrals by other organisations (public sector, voluntary sector and private sector) to the force of incidents and reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those involving vulnerable adults and children.

Where response officers are dispatched to a call for service from the public and a crime is identified, it is their responsibility to record details on to the CIS system. Reports involving serious crime are subject to review by a trained detective at the time of reporting.

All reports of crime where an officer is not initially dispatched are assessed by the crime and incident unit within the contact management centre (CMC). Staff within this unit review the information recorded by the call-taker and determine if it is suitable for telephone recording and investigation. The force also operates a database named SENTINEL jointly with local authorities. This database, which holds details of reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB), assists in sharing information and tackling ASB collaboratively with partners. The force has

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.

conducted two audits in the past 12 months to ensure compliance with the HOCR and has identified that training is required to help officers recognise when a crime should be recorded from an ASB report.

Supervisors within the CMC dip-sample calls from the public each month to assess the quality of the decisions made by staff and find evidence that they are victim-focused. However, HMIC noted that this review was often too late to allow any meaningful remedial action to take place and more regular auditing would be more effective in driving improvements. There was also an absence of supervisors checking for common trends across the workforce as the review was focused on individual performance. The force would benefit from introducing a more timely auditing process, carried out in conjunction with the service improvement team to capture common mistakes and improve organisational learning.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should amend the CMC call-for-service dip-sampling process to ensure that it is undertaken in a timely manner on a consistent basis across all teams, includes a check of compliance with the NCRS, is able to identify themes and, where appropriate, feed into the development of professional practice and continuous improvement within the CMC.

The force uses volume crime units to prioritise and allocate work to local policing teams or specialist departments, depending on the nature of the investigation. The volume crime units examine initial crime reports to check that all of the required information has been recorded and the crime classification is correct in compliance with HOCR. These staff fulfil the role of designated decision-maker⁷ (DDM) and provide practical advice and guidance to ensure the accurate recording of crime and crime-related incidents. This responsibility includes the authorising of no-crime applications for all crime categories with the exception of rape (see page 9).

Out-of-court disposals

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

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

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

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

Cautions – Out of the 25 cautions we dip-sampled we found that in 23 cases the offender’s previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 22 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 18 cases where there was a victim to consult, 14 cases showed that the victims’ views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 25 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 19 cases. In none of the 25 cases could we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 15 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found that 11 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 25 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 20 cases. In none of the 25 cases could we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 25 community resolutions and found that in 24 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, 19 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 appropriate¹².

Staff in the volume crime units review all out-of-court disposals to ensure NCRS and HOCA compliance. Those that do not comply are re-opened, the detection

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

- *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from 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

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

removed from the system and that case returned to the reporting officer to consider future action. There has, however, been no specific training or guidance to assist staff who are responsible for these decisions.

Our inspection identified that the force sought a high level of victim engagement regarding the issuing of out-of-court disposals. However we found some examples that did not comply with national guidance, particularly in relation to issuing of cannabis warnings for offenders aged 17 years, the issuing of PND where the value of goods exceeded £100 and the use of out-of-court outcomes for offenders whose previous criminal history should preclude the use of the outcome. We also found varying approaches in the use, completion and scanning of forms onto CIS which made the audit of out-of-court disposals more difficult.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should improve the supervision of its use of out-of-court disposals to ensure that they are only used in appropriate circumstances. In particular they should not be used when the offending history of the offender precludes their use.

The force has an out-of-court scrutiny panel which is chaired by a representative of the police and crime commissioner. Its role is to review a number of randomly selected cases and provide feedback on the appropriateness of the out-of-court disposal decision. This oversight seeks to enable the force to promote best practice and identify areas for development.

No-crimes

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We examined 83 no-crime records and found 74 records to be compliant with the HOCR and the NCRS.

The force has effective structures in place to manage the no-crime process; we found good compliance in the categories of violence and rape. However our examination of robbery revealed a far lower compliance rate with 17 correct decisions out of the 23 cases we reviewed. This highlights a potential lack of understanding from staff in the use of additional verifiable information to confirm or refute that a crime has taken place.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should ensure guidance is provided to staff who make no-crime decisions in respect of robbery. This should clearly describe the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a 'no-crime' for robbery in accordance with the NCRS and HOCR.

Victim-centred approach

The force promotes a victim-centred approach to crime recording, disposal options and no-crime decisions. It carries out victim satisfaction surveys and communicates widely with different groups within its communities to increase confidence and encourage the reporting of crime. Results of these surveys are used to identify issues of public concern and how to improve service delivery.

All victims of crime receive a victim care contract which sets out the frequency of contact from the police and when they will receive updates on the investigation. If the victim consents, their details are automatically forwarded to Victim Support. There are also referral processes in place to other agencies, although there is not always the capacity to follow up to check if the other agencies have taken the necessary action.

During the inspection it was evident that frontline staff clearly understood that crime recording needs to be victim-focused and that if a victim considered that a crime had occurred, it should be recorded as such unless there was credible evidence to the contrary. This victim-focused approach is a credit to the officers and staff representing Leicestershire police on their front line.

Rape offences

In April 2013, the force introduced a revised rape policy which promotes a victim-centred approach to police action which is HOCR and NCRS compliant. The policy specifically directs that the initial attending officer takes responsibility for recording the incident as a crime on the CIS, rather than waiting for a decision by a specialist investigator. We found that this policy and the responsibility was clearly understood by operational staff. To ensure that a prompt and appropriate response is made, all incidents of rape are overseen and managed by the control room inspectors.

The policy also describes how staff should deal with 'no crime' decisions for reported rapes. This process was well understood by staff within the dedicated public protection units who are responsible for managing rape investigations. The force crime registrar¹³ (FCR) is the only person able to approve a no-crime decision for a rape offence.

A computer-based training package for dealing with reports of rape has been designed by the force and delivered to all relevant staff to develop the force response and provide support to victims.

¹³ The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HOCR provide that he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision, as the final arbiter. The force crime registrar's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with all applicable rules.

The force audits recorded sexual offence crimes to ensure that crimes of this nature are not misclassified. All reports of rape and subsequent investigation plans are overseen by a detective inspector and can only be closed following a review by the detective chief inspector within the relevant business area. This is good practice.

IT systems

The force uses an incident management system (STORM) and a separate crime recording system (CIS). These systems offer wide ranging functionality but they are not linked or interfaced. It also has several other standalone systems that contain information relating to crimes.

The force is aware that this presents a risk to its crime data integrity and is seeking to address this through a technology strategy that will provide better connected systems in the future. Until then, compliance with the rules is being managed as far as possible through a system of auditing and supervisory review.

People and Skills

The force has sufficient staff and supervisors responsible for recording and reviewing incidents and crimes. Most of these are trained in, and can demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of, the HOCR, the NCRS and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR).

Operational staff and supervisors were able to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding of the HOCR relevant to their respective roles. The force is rolling out a one day training programme to all staff which focuses primarily on dealing with vulnerability and mental health, but includes inputs on primary investigations and crime recording. Other learning opportunities available to staff include a computer-based training package and the personal issue of a crime recording advice booklet to frontline staff. All student officers receive an input on the HOCR and the NCRS as part of their initial training.

As described earlier in this report, the force has itself identified a gap in knowledge for the recording of crimes associated with ASB and there is an evident gap in knowledge of the NCRS by staff making crime-recording decisions within the volume crime team.

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 responsible for making crime-recording decisions, and ensure those who require such training receive it as soon as reasonably practicable.

During the fieldwork it was evident that the force was focused on the accurate, ethical recording of crime with no management pressure being applied to under-

record or mis-record crimes to hit performance targets. The consistent ethical crime recording messages from chief officers are reaching frontline staff and creating a culture where the victim is at the centre of all crime investigation decisions.

Force crime registrar (FCR)

The force has an experienced and well-regarded FCR who has direct access to the chief officer lead for crime data integrity. The FCR takes personal responsibility for the correct recording of no-crime rapes and is the final arbiter in all crime-recording disputes. HMIC found that the FCR has sufficient resources to discharge their duties in an effective manner.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. The force should ensure guidance is provided to staff who make no-crime decisions in respect of robbery. This should clearly describe the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a no-crime for robbery in accordance with the NCRS and HOCR.

Within three months

2. The force should establish a proportionate and effective process for auditing (by the FCR) referrals by other organisations (public sector, voluntary sector and private sector) to the force of incidents and reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those involving vulnerable adults and children.
3. The force should amend the CMC call-for-service dip-sampling process to ensure that it is undertaken in a timely manner on a consistent basis across all teams, includes a check of compliance with the NCRS, is able to identify themes and, where appropriate, feed into the development of professional practice and continuous improvement within the CMC.
4. The force should improve the supervision of its use of out-of-court disposals to ensure that they are only used in appropriate circumstances. In particular they should not be used when the offending history of the offender precludes their use.

Within six months

5. 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 responsible for making 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 Leicestershire Police. 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, Leicestershire Police recorded the following number of crimes.
123	115	100
Crime reports held on other systems		
Referrals	Crimes identified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Leicestershire Police and held on other systems which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals, HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Leicestershire Police should have recorded.	From these identified crimes, Leicestershire Police recorded the following number of crimes.
55	16	6
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which Leicestershire Police had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these, HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
83	74	

Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings

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

Leadership and governance

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

1.1 How is Leicestershire Police ensuring that leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff?

The chief officer team provides strong and visible leadership throughout the organisation with a real focus on crime data integrity. This focus has been underpinned by the promotion of the force's values which are outlined in its 'Our Duty' and the 'Get it Right First Time' principles.

Governance is provided through Operation Enigma, a data quality and crime standards group, chaired by the detective chief superintendent from the delivering justice directorate. This forum provides an objective oversight of data quality and crime standard issues to ensure compliance with all the national guidance. This group is effectively a challenge panel that is tasked through various means, including the performance development group, force tasking and by the force lead following service improvement audits.

The importance of promoting crime data integrity was evident in a podcast delivered by the assistant chief constable to all staff in February 2014. This message supports the theme of *'don't hit the target and miss the point'* which was launched by the deputy chief constable in June 2013.

During the fieldwork, staff confirmed that these messages from chief officers were communicated through a wide variety of means, including video blogs and latest news updates on the force intranet. They also featured locally through briefings and departmental newsletters.

The FCR is proactive in delivering advice and support to operational staff on ethical crime recording. The recent appointment of a deputy FCR will build extra capacity to allow even more time to be spent on this activity. There are robust oversight arrangements through bi-monthly meetings between the assistant chief constable and FCR. In addition, the FCR has regular, direct contact with the detective chief superintendent from the delivering justice directorate.

Officers and staff were aware of the change in the force's performance framework, with a stronger focus on crime prevention. They highlighted that the current force change programme had embraced ideas from the staff to improve services to the public.

To help to maintain standards, the force operates a confidential phone line through which staff can report the occurrence of bad practice or inappropriate behaviour by individuals. This is relatively well-known within the organisation and is available for all staff. In addition, there is a questions page on the force intranet where staff can raise questions or discuss issues which may be causing them concerns.

There is no mention of crime data integrity within the current police and crime plan. It does however make specific reference to the need for accurate crime data in relation to supporting victims and witnesses.

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

In 2011 the force internal audit team was restructured with revised terms of reference and audit methodology. This change allowed for a more versatile approach to data quality which is risk-based rather than following a pre-arranged timetable of audits. A recent example of this was the force audit of rape in January 2014 which demonstrated the flexibility of this process to identify areas of concern or poor practices and to make recommendations to improve.

1.3 How does Leicestershire Police use HOCR, NCRS, and NSIR to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately?

All audit reports are referred to the Operation Enigma management group where the findings are considered and any subsequent action is allocated and monitored. Any areas of learning are disseminated via the force intranet and through a planned training programme. Force level issues for crime recording are reported directly to the assistant chief constable (crime) and also the force strategic organisational risk board. The force is intending to strengthen management oversight by presenting all audit results to the force performance delivery group which is chaired by the deputy chief constable. However this has not yet started.

The force understands the various routes by which crime is reported and monitors the quality of crime records that are instigated from these different processes. Most of these systems will be the subject of an extensive review as part of an organisational change programme called Operation Edison. The aim of this is to improve services and identify savings to the force's operating costs. This work includes a specific strand on crime management and recording.

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

The force has a structured approach to the management and supervision of incidents and demonstrates good compliance with National Standards of Incident Recording. Events reported by victims, witnesses and third parties are recorded on the incident management system (STORM).

We examined 123 incident records from the STORM system and found that from these, 115 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 115 crimes that should have been recorded, 100 were. Of the 100, all were recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR, but 3 were wrongly classified.

We examined 55 reports that were referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments. Of the 16 crimes that should have been recorded, only six had been recorded. All six had been correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

During the fieldwork the inspection team also reviewed a number of most recent burglary incidents and all were found to be correctly classified and compliant with the NSIR, the HOCR and the NCRS.

The child abuse investigation unit (CAIU) and paedophile and online investigation team (POLIT) use a case and administration tracking system (CATS) to manage investigations. The force recognises that this system presents a risk to the integrity of its crime data as the system is not integrated with CIS. It is pursuing alternative systems in collaboration with other forces to address this issue. In the meantime, additional control measures have been put in place including the employment of a full time system administrator to monitor the database and ensure that crimes are recorded in a timely manner. This individual has been given additional training to improve their knowledge and, consequently, the system's compliance with the NCRS.

Where response officers attend an incident and a crime has occurred, it is their responsibility to record details on to the crime management system (CIS). Reports involving serious crime are subject to review by a trained detective at the time of reporting.

All reports of crime where an officer is not initially dispatched are assessed by the crime and incident unit within the contact management centre (CMC). Staff within this unit review the information recorded by the call taker and determine if

it is suitable for telephone recording and investigation. The unit operates between 7.00am and 10.00pm.

The CMC supervisors dip-sample three calls taken by each of their staff members each month to assess the quality of their decision-making and find evidence that those decisions are victim-focused. However, many of the incidents scrutinised are historic and it is often too late to take any meaningful remedial action. There is also an absence of supervisors checking for common trends across the workforce as the review is focused on individual performance. The force would benefit from introducing a more timely auditing process, carried out in conjunction with the service improvement team to capture common mistakes and improve organisational learning.

Volume crime units review and allocate crime enquiries and actions to local policing teams or specialist departments, depending on the nature of the investigation. The unit does not have a 24-hour capability but this does not affect the timeliness or quality of crime allocation or subsequent follow-up investigation.

Within the volume crime units there are a number of sergeants and quality and compliance advisors who examine initial crime reports, checking for missing details and ensure that the crime classification is accurate and correct. They fulfil the role of designated decision maker (DDM) and provide practical advice and guidance to operational staff. They are also responsible for authorising no-crime applications for all crimes with the exception of rape.

The force uses a database named SENTINEL where reports of anti-social behaviour of ASB are logged by the force and its partners to assist in identifying patterns and managing responses to address the problems. There will however be occasions when the information passed identifies that a crime has been committed and this needs to be recorded as such. The force has conducted two audits in the past 12 months (July and December 2013) to ensure compliance with the HOCR. These audits showed that crimes linked to ASB reports were being under-recorded and the force has issued further guidance to all officers and is developing a training package to raise awareness of this issue.

HMIC found that staff were aware of their responsibilities to record crimes reported to them which had occurred in another force area. In Leicestershire these incidents are recorded and not closed until a crime number from the force where the crime occurred has been recorded.

2.2 How does Leicestershire 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 25 cautions we dip-sampled we found that in 23 cases the offender’s previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 22 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 18 cases where there was a victim to consult, 14 cases showed that the victims’ views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 25 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 19 cases. In none of the 25 cases could we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 15 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found that 11 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 25 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 20 cases. In none of the 25 cases could we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 25 community resolutions and found that in 24 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, 19 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered and 20 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.

Staff in the volume crime units review all out-of-court disposals and conduct police national computer (PNC) checks to ensure the offending history is appropriate to the outcome. Those that do not comply are re-opened, the detection removed from the system and the case returned to the reporting officer to consider future action. During reality testing, supervisors stated that they had responsibility to check and monitor all out-of-court disposals and would only authorise the closure of a crime enquiry when satisfied that the decision and outcome complied with the guidance. HMIC noted that there has been no specific training to assist staff involved in this review process.

Our inspection identified that the force sought a high level of victim engagement regarding the issuing of out-of-court disposals. However we found some examples that did not comply with national guidance, particularly in relation to the issuing of cannabis warnings for offenders aged 17 years, the issuing of PND where the value of goods exceeded £100 and the use of out-of-court outcomes for offenders whose previous criminal history should preclude the use of the penalty. We also found varying approaches in the use, completion and scanning of forms onto CIS which made the audit of out-of-court disposals more difficult.

The force has an out-of-court scrutiny panel which is chaired by a representative of the police and crime commissioner. Its role is to review a randomly selected number of cases and provide feedback on the appropriateness of the out-of-court disposal decision. This oversight seeks to enable the force to promote best practice and identify areas for development.

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

The force has effective structures in place to provide a standardised approach to no-crime decisions. The majority of these decisions are managed by the quality and compliance advisors with the volume crime units with the more complex, serious offences reviewed by sergeants in that department. All no-crime requests for offences of rape can only be authorised by the FCR. During reality testing, it was apparent that there was a good understanding of this process and it was clear to all staff who takes responsibility for no-crime decisions.

A no-crime audit was conducted by the force's service improvement unit in November 2013. This audit found a 96 percent compliance rate with the HOCA. Each no-crime decision that did not comply was scrutinised to identify whether the issue was generic or specific to the individual decision-maker. Where necessary, specific feedback and training was provided.

Our audit revealed a high degree of compliance in no-crime decisions for violent crime including rape; however, our examination of 23 robbery cases revealed a far lower compliance rate in this category with only 17 correct decisions. This highlights a potential lack of understanding in the use of additional verifiable information by staff to confirm or refute that a crime has taken place.

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

Victim focus is a fundamental part of the force values which are expressed in its 'Our Duty' principles. It was clear from interviews with staff and visits to stations that this message from chief officers is well-publicised and communicated to operational staff. Compliance audits are conducted with the CMC and the force carries out a high level of victim satisfaction surveys. The force communicates widely with different groups, within its communities to increase confidence and encourage the reporting of crime. Results of these surveys are used to identify issues of public concern and how to improve service delivery.

The strong safeguarding focus in the force is also a factor in promoting a victim-first approach. This is driven by the management team within the delivering justice directorate. Supervisors were clear that victims should always be contacted if an investigation was being considered for a no-crime although they could not be certain if this was always done.

All victims of crime receive a victim care contract which sets out the frequency of contact from the police and when the victim will receive updates about the investigation. If the victim consents, their details are automatically forwarded to Victim Support. There are also referral processes in place to other agencies, although there is not always the capacity to follow up to check if the other agencies have taken the necessary action.

During the inspection it was evident that frontline staff clearly understand that crime recording needs to be victim-focused and that if a victim considered that a crime had occurred, it should be recorded as such unless there is credible evidence to the contrary. This victim-focused approach is a credit to the officers and staff representing Leicestershire Police on its front line.

The force conducts numerous victim satisfaction surveys including bespoke surveys to assess the quality of service provided to victims of serious sexual assault, domestic abuse and hate crime. The feedback from these is used to gain a better understanding of victims' needs in delivering the most appropriate service.

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

In April 2013, the force introduced a revised rape policy which promotes a victim-centred approach to police action which is HOCR and NCRS compliant. The policy specifically directs that the initial attending officer takes responsibility for recording the incident as a crime on the CIS rather than waiting for a decision by a specialist investigator. We found that this policy and the responsibility were clearly understood by operational staff. To ensure that a prompt and appropriate response is provided, all incidents of rape are overseen and managed by the control room inspectors.

A computer-based training package around rape has been designed by the force and delivered to all relevant staff to further develop the force response and provide support to victims.

The force audits recorded sexual offence crimes to ensure that crimes of this nature are not mis-classified. All reports of rape and subsequent investigation plans are overseen by a detective inspector and can only be closed following a review by the detective chief inspector within the relevant business area. This is good practice.

The force's safeguarding department is developing a performance framework for the management of rape offences which follows a similar successful approach to domestic abuse which received positive feedback on a previous HMIC inspection.

Our audit of rape and serious sexual offence reports found that all had been accurately recorded on the force crime and incident systems and all had been

classified correctly. There was good management and accurate recording of incidents reported by a third party who may not have been directly involved.

Force policy describes how to deal with no-crime decisions for reported rapes to comply with the HOOCR criteria. This process is clearly understood by staff within the dedicated public protection unit who manage these investigations. There is transparency and consistency in this process as only the FCR has the authority to authorise the recording of reported rape as a no-crime.

2.6 How do Leicestershire Police's IT systems allow for efficient and effective management of crime recording?

The force uses an incident management system (STORM) and a separate crime recording system (CIS). These systems offer wide-ranging functionality but they are not linked or interfaced. It also has several other standalone systems that contain information relating to crimes. The force is aware that this presents a risk to its crime data integrity and is seeking to address this through a technology strategy that will provide better connected systems in the future. Until then, compliance with the rules is being managed through a system of auditing and supervisory review.

The force also uses a search tool called Genie 2 which identifies on which system information is held, thus allowing some clarity when searching systems for crime and incident information. All of the systems are well-managed, with regular audits and information weeding.

People and skills

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

3.1 What arrangements do Leicestershire Police have in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?

The force has sufficient staff and supervisors responsible for recording and reviewing incidents and crimes and most of these are trained in, and can demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of the HOOCR, the NCRS and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR).

All staff within the contact management centre have received additional training on the NSIR, and staff in the crime and incident unit have been specifically trained in the NCRS and the HOOCR. In addition there is a mentoring arrangement in place for new staff within the volume crime units.

Operational staff and supervisors were able to demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding of the HOOCR relevant to their respective roles

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

At the time of this inspection the force was delivering a one-day training programme to all staff as part of the 'Get it Right First Time' initiative. These sessions focus primarily on how to deal with vulnerability and mental health, but include inputs on primary investigations and crime recording.

Staff also have access to a computer-based training package and frontline officers are issued a crime recording advice booklet as an aid to making the right decisions when out on patrol. All student officers receive an input on the HOCR and the NCRS as part of their initial training and staff can access these national guidance documents via the force intranet.

In addition, the FCR has personally delivered training to the crime investigation unit within contact management, who record around 30 percent of crime reported to the force.

During the fieldwork it was evident that the force is focused on the accurate, ethical recording of crime with no management pressure being applied to under-record or mis-record crimes to hit performance targets. The consistent ethical crime recording messages from chief officers are reaching frontline staff and creating a culture where the victim is at the centre of all crime investigation decisions.

3.3 How is the accuracy of crime recording in Leicestershire Police actively overseen and governed by the force crime registrar (FCR)?

The force has an experienced and well regarded FCR who has direct access to the chief officer lead for crime data integrity. The FCR takes personal responsibility for the correct recording of no-crime rapes and is the final arbiter in all crime-recording disputes. HMIC found that the FCR has sufficient resources to effectively discharge their duties.

The FCR is supported by a deputy and five DDM who are responsible for reviewing crimes recorded on CIS and undertaking no-crime decisions. The FCR is a member of the Operation Enigma group which has oversight of the audit programme and works closely with the service improvement team in the auditing of crime to ensure compliance with the HOCR and NCRS.