

# Crime data integrity

## Inspection of Lincolnshire Police

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## Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Methodology

Each force inspection involves:

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

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

## Scope and structure of report

This report is divided into the following sections:

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

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

## Part A: Summary of inspection findings and recommendations

### Leadership and governance

Chief officers promote the importance of crime data integrity throughout the force. The deputy chief constable (DCC) is the named, responsible officer for crime data quality.

The force has an established governance structure for monitoring performance. It maintains policies and procedures for crime reporting, recording, management and investigations which meet the requirements of NCRS and HOCR.

The PRIDE<sup>6</sup> standards and values initiative, which includes integrity as a key feature, is very well known and understood throughout the force.

Officers and staff can raise concerns about unethical practices of any kind through a number of confidential, internal reporting routes. This includes a mechanism for anonymous reporting into the professional standards department (PSD) called “Bad Apple”. The PSD give presentations on police ethics and integrity to all new staff.

One of the responsibilities of the force crime registrar<sup>7</sup> (FCR) is to ensure the force complies with the NCRS and HOCR. Additionally, the FCR has responsibility for overseeing force compliance with the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR)<sup>8</sup>.

HMIC’s audit of force crime and incident records found the quality of initial information entered within incident and crime reports by staff to be generally good.

The force control room and crime management bureau (CMB) are outsourced and managed by a contracted industry partner. We found staff within the CMB to be competent and well skilled but we were concerned to find a backlog of work, specifically with regard to the daily allocation of recorded crime and the classification of crime.

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<sup>6</sup> Professionalism, respect, integrity, dedication and empathy.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

The force is aware of this backlog and at the time of the inspection had arranged to meet with the contracted service provider to resolve the problem. HMIC will monitor the force's progress on this matter.

## **Systems and processes**

### **Accuracy of crime recording**

We examined 90 incident<sup>9</sup> records and found that 86 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 86 crimes that should have been recorded, 84 were. Of the 84, two were wrongly classified and eight were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under HOCR. While there is a need to improve the timeliness of the recording of some reports of crime, overall this is a good result for the force. The force is good at recording crime which means that victims of crime are more likely to receive the service they deserve (because, for example, certain victim support services are only triggered when a crime is recorded).

The force also has a centralised crime-recording unit through which we have estimated that the force record approximately 36 per cent of the total of their recorded crime. This unit records reports of crime directly from members of the public which do not require the creation of an incident record. Our inspection of this unit (a review of 11 calls from the public) found that of the 12 crimes that should have been recorded, all 12 were recorded correctly. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force.

We examined 44 reports that were recorded separately on other force systems used by the central referral unit, which collates and assesses information from partner organisations, such as social services. We found that of those 44 reports, 23 crimes should have been recorded; 20 crimes were recorded. Since June 2014, to minimise risk, the force no longer uses a separate database to record high-risk crimes on vulnerable adults or children and all such cases are now directly recorded onto Niche, the force crime system.

To ensure a consistent approach to recording crime only CMB staff can authorise or classify a crime record.

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<sup>9</sup> An incident in this context is a report of events received by the police; recorded on the electronic incident systems, that requires police attention. Whether or not an incident report becomes a crime record is determined on the balance of probability that a notifiable offence has occurred as set out in the Home Office Counting Rules. If an incident does not turn out to be a crime, it must still be logged in an auditable form on the force's incident-recording system or some other accessible or auditable means.

## Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND),<sup>10</sup> cannabis warnings<sup>11</sup> and community resolutions.<sup>12</sup> The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed<sup>13</sup>.

**Cautions** – Out of the 25 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in all cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 17 cases where there was a victim to consult only one case showed that the victims' views had been considered.

**Penalty Notices for Disorder** – We dip-sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 19 cases. In all 20 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 10 cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found that only one victim had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

**Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in all cases. However, in only one case did we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning. The force accepts that the wording on the cannabis warning form was insufficient, as it did not contain information about potential disclosure during an enhanced DBS check. Immediately following the inspection the force updated the form to include supplementary text to clarify this.

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

<sup>11</sup> A cannabis warning is a non-statutory disposal for cases of possession of cannabis for personal use. It constitutes a warning to the offender and confiscation of the cannabis.

<sup>12</sup> Resolution of a minor offence or anti-social behaviour incident through informal agreement between the parties involved, for example involving the offender making good the loss or damage caused.

<sup>13</sup> National guidance for the use of out-of-court disposals is detailed in a number of documents:

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

**Community resolutions** – We dip-sampled 20 community resolutions and found that in all 20 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender’s past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 20 resolutions where there was a victim, 19 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Eight cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate<sup>14</sup>. The force has a gold resolutions group, chaired by an assistant chief constable, which was set up to monitor the appropriate use of this form of out-of-court disposal.

It is of concern that we could find no record of the views of victims being considered in the vast majority of cases where a decision was taken to issue a caution or PND. It is also of concern that we could not find evidence, in all but one case, of the offender being made fully aware of the nature and implications of accepting a cannabis warning.

**Recommendation:** Within three months the force should improve the supervision of PND, cautions and cannabis warnings. In the case of PND and cautions, where there is a victim, their views should be appropriately considered and recorded.

### **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.

The decision to no-crime offences is made by one of the two supervisors in the CMB. This includes no-crime requests for recorded rapes, which will have already been assessed by a detective inspector as being suitable for re-classification.

We examined 89 no-crime records and found 71 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. As the no-crime records we reviewed were for offences of rape, robbery and violence this is a matter of concern.

To ensure improved compliance with the NCRS and HOCR and consistency in approach to no-crimes, supervisors in the CMB would benefit from receiving further training on the no-crime decision-making process.

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<sup>14</sup> National guidance for community resolution directs that at the point the community resolution is administered an officer will need to: confirm the offender admits the offence and explain the process to the offender – including how the offender will make good the harm caused. The implications of receiving a community resolution need to be explained to the offender – it does not form part of a criminal record but may be disclosed as part of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. The community resolution is to be recorded appropriately, in accordance with the NCRS and HOCR.



**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should provide guidance to all officers and staff who are engaged in requesting or making no-crime decisions which sets out the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a no-crime in accordance with the NCRS. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure ongoing compliance with the standard.

### **Victim-centred approach**

Chief officers, through briefings and guidance, promote a victim-centred approach to crime recording. We found frontline officers and staff, including call-takers, understood the importance of meeting the needs of the victim when considering crime recording and investigation. The victim satisfaction lead for the force, a local crime manager, reviews up to ten restorative cases a month to ensure victims' needs have been taken into full consideration.

The force regularly conducts surveys of people who report incidents and crime and those who call the non-emergency 101 number. The results of these surveys are reviewed by the force and used to improve its processes. Nothing specific on crime reporting or recording has been raised by those surveyed.

### **Rape offences**

The FCR scrutinises all recorded sexual offences to ensure they have been correctly recorded and classified. The detective inspector in charge of the rape investigation team submits rape cases for a no-crime decision and these are initially scrutinised by the CMB supervisors who will either agree or reject the submission, or refer it to the FCR for final arbitration.

We examined 33 rape no-crime records and found that 29 complied with NCRS.

There is no bespoke policy or guidance on how rape should be recorded within the Lincolnshire Police area. NCRS, HOCR and the Association of Chief Police Officer (ACPO) guidance on investigating and prosecuting rape are used as reference documents. However, officers we spoke to about the process were able to tell us how they would deal with a report of rape.

### **IT systems**

The force uses the NSPIS command and control system for incidents, command and control and the Niche system for crime recording. These systems are not linked and this could lead to duplication of effort or the loss of data. Both systems are, however, well managed with regular audits and information weeding. There are clear instructions to officers and staff to only use the systems prescribed by the force.

## **People and skills**

Staff and supervisors responsible for managing out-of-court disposals and no-crimes, and those working in specialist departments were generally found to have an appropriate knowledge of NCRS and HOCR.

Longer serving constables, including detectives and police staff, do not receive training on NCRS or HOCR. This is a gap that needs to be examined and appropriate training delivered, commensurate to the role, so as to improve compliance and ensure that all staff fully understand NCRS and HOCR.

The vast majority of staff understand the chief officer's message and the standards that must be achieved in relation to ethical crime recording. Non-adherence to NCRS and HOCR is considered to be unacceptable at all levels of the force and we did not find any evidence that performance pressures, explicitly or implicitly, led to failures to record crime correctly.

### **Force crime registrar**

The FCR has extensive knowledge and experience in the management of crime data and the application of NCRS and HOCR.

The FCR has unrestricted access to the deputy chief constable who is the force lead for data integrity. All crime-recording disputes are appropriately referred to the FCR who is seen as the final arbiter in any dispute arising from the crime-recording process.

## **Recommendations**

### **Immediately**

1. The force should provide guidance to all officers and staff who are engaged in requesting or making no-crime decisions which sets out the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a no-crime in accordance with the NCRS. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure ongoing compliance with the standard.

### **Within three months**

2. The force should improve the supervision of the use of PND, cautions and cannabis warnings. In the case of PND and cautions, where there is a victim, their views should be appropriately considered and recorded.

## 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 on 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.

<b>Crimes reported as part of an incident record</b>		
<b>Incidents reviewed</b>	<b>Crimes identified</b>	<b>Crimes recorded</b>
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Lincolnshire. 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, Lincolnshire recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>90</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Crimes reported directly from the victim</b>		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports of crimes that were reported directly by telephone to the Lincolnshire Police centralised crime-recording unit. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these reports received directly by telephone from the victim by the centralised crime-recording unit, HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Lincolnshire Police should have recorded.	From these identified crimes, Lincolnshire recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Crime reports held on other systems</b>		
<b>Referrals</b>	<b>Crimes identified</b>	<b>Crimes recorded</b>
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Lincolnshire Police and held on other systems which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals, HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Lincolnshire Police should have recorded.	From these identified crimes, Lincolnshire Police recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>44</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>

<b>No-crimes</b>	
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery that Lincolnshire Police had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these, HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.
<b>89</b>	<b>71</b>

## Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings

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

### Leadership and governance

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

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

Chief officers promote crime data integrity to officers and staff and are fully engaged in providing high-level guidance on ethical crime recording. The deputy chief constable takes responsibility for leading on crime data integrity in the force.

Chief officers provide input on integrity issues during staff development days. We also found consistent messages on the force intranet on the need for integrity in crime recording. The assistant chief constable has circulated a briefing on the importance of accurate crime recording to all staff and chief officer visits to police stations have been used to reinforce the message by face-to-face briefings. The few staff we spoke with who had not heard a specific message about ethical recording did know about PRIDE, the initiative on force values that includes integrity.

Non-adherence to NCRS and HOCR is considered unacceptable. All of the staff we spoke with, either during planned interviews or on unannounced visits to stations, were adamant there was no pressure to under-record crime. We found no evidence of performance pressures leading to failures in crime recording, whether by under-recording or from the misclassification of crime.

The professional standards department (PSD) delivers presentations on police ethics and integrity to new staff. The PSD has a number of confidential routes by which staff can voice concerns. Officers were aware that these routes could be used to report concerns on crime data integrity. The force crime recording and outcomes policy reflects NCRS and HOCR standards. The introduction explains that Lincolnshire Police is committed to accurate crime recording. The need for accurate crime data is not specifically reflected in the police and crime plan 2013-17.

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

The force has analysed and assessed risk in relation to inaccurate crime recording and this features in the force risk register. Work has been carried out to profile and engage with emerging, as well as longstanding, migrant communities. This has not extended to an analysis of the true scale of crime committed against those communities, especially those people who either cannot speak English or have it as a second language.

Overall, the quality of the incident and crime reports we examined was good. We found examples where incident records contained the detail necessary for the effective deployment of resources. We also saw crime reports where clear and well-ordered narratives explained the various stages of investigation. More detail was generally found on reports for serious crime. However, we also found the modus operandi field in some reports could have been more detailed.

The force has mapped the various channels through which crime is reported and it understands the proportion of crime reported through each; measures are in place to check the quality of crime recording through most of these channels.

The central referral unit collates and assesses information from seven other agencies or sources, which includes social services. The force does not audit these referrals and there may be investigation opportunities which are being missed, particularly if led by a single agency other than the police. An area of focus would be information contained in non-crimes on Niche.

The crime management bureau (CMB) has backlogs for daily allocations of recorded crime and the classification of crime, which is in addition to the more significant volume issue of resolutions. The force is in discussions with its industry partner to resolve these matters.

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

The force is working hard to ensure that crimes and incidents are recorded in accordance with the HOCR, NCRS and NSIR but it has still further work to do.

The night duty control room inspector carries out checks against all reports of rape, sexual offences and burglary, as well as those incidents reported and opened with crime opening codes but which have been closed without a crime number being allocated.

There is some flexibility in the audit system, as demonstrated by a recent internal examination triggered by the realisation that Lincolnshire had a comparatively high rape no-crime rate when compared with other forces. The result of this examination was that the force had a process in place that was consistent with NCRS.

NCRS and NSIR audit failures are returned to the relevant unit for action. However, the force does not currently have a process in place to systematically identify, capture and share good practice or common failures. It would be a useful source of reference for officers to have access to guidance that draws upon the most common failures against NCRS and HOCR on the force intranet.

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

The force control room and crime management bureau are outsourced and managed by a contracted industry partner. Overall responsibility for command decisions and the management of operational decisions remains with the force but the day-to-day running of both functions is provided by the contractor.

In addition to regular live monitoring of high-risk calls, control room supervisors scrutinise five calls from the public per call handler per month.

We examined 90 incident records and found that 86 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 86 crimes that should have been recorded, 84 were. Of the 84, two were wrongly classified and eight were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. While there is a need to improve the timeliness of the recording of some reports of crime, overall this is a good result for the force. The force is good at recording crime which means that victims of crime are more likely to receive the service they deserve (because, for example, certain victim support services are only triggered when a crime is recorded).

The force also has a centralised crime-recording unit through which we have estimated that the force record approximately 36 percent of the total of their recorded crime. This unit records reports of crime directly from members of the public which do not require the creation of an incident record. Our inspection of this unit (a review of 11 calls from the public) found that of the 12 crimes that should have been recorded, all 12 were recorded correctly. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force.

We examined 44 reports that were recorded separately on other force systems used by the central referral unit, which collates and assesses information from partner agencies, such as social services. We found that of those 44 reports, 23 crimes should have been recorded; 20 crimes were recorded. Since June 2014, to minimise

risk, the force no longer uses a separate database to record high-risk crimes on vulnerable adults or children and all such cases are now directly recorded onto Niche, the force crime system.

There is no bespoke policy or guidance on rape that details how these crimes should be recorded within the Lincolnshire Police area. NCRS, HOOCR and ACPO guidance on investigating and prosecuting rape are used as reference documents. Officers were able to tell us how they would deal with a rape committed in another force area and what they would do to provide the proper witness care.

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

An out-of-court scrutiny panel was introduced in April 2014 to provide oversight on non-court sanctions. This is supported by first-line supervision from patrol supervisors who are responsible for deciding whether a particular out-of-court disposal is appropriate. These disposals are, in turn, reviewed by the CMB.

**Cautions** – Out of the 25 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in all cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 17 cases where there was a victim to consult only one case showed that the victims' views had been considered.

**Penalty Notices for Disorder** – We dip-sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 19 cases. In all 20 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 10 cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found that only one victim had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

**Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in all cases. However, in only one case did we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning. The force accepts that the wording on the cannabis warning form was insufficient, as it did not contain information about potential disclosure during an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Immediately following the inspection the force amended the form to make this clear.

**Community resolutions** – We dip-sampled 20 community resolutions and found that in all 20 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender's past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 20 resolutions where there was a victim, 19 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Eight cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate. The force has a gold



resolutions group, chaired by an assistant chief constable, which was set up to monitor the appropriate use of this form of out-of-court disposal.

It is of concern that we could find no record of the views of victims being considered in the vast majority of cases where a decision was taken to issue a caution or PND. It is also of concern that we could not find evidence, in all but one case, of the offender being made fully aware of the nature and implications of accepting a cannabis warning.

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

We examined 89 no-crime records and found 71 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. As the no-crime records we reviewed were for offences of rape, robbery and violence this is a matter of concern.

The force has processes in place, including the use of designated decision makers (DDMs),<sup>15</sup> to ensure that incidents recorded as crimes are only reclassified as no-crimes when it is correct to do this.

No-crime decisions for offences other than rape are made by supervisors in the CMB. We found the force did not meet the criteria for reliable no-crime decisions mainly owing to the incorrect interpretation and application of additional verifiable information. Importantly, we do not consider any of the incorrect no-crime decisions were made as a result of any intention to manipulate figures and reduce recorded crime.

The accuracy of no-crime decision making is monitored by the FCR and he is the final decision maker in all such cases.

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

Chief officers advocate a victim-centred approach to crime recording, crime outcomes and no-crimes.

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

The force routinely carries out surveys of people who report incidents or crime. We did not find any feedback, positive or otherwise, that directly related to the crime-recording process.

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<sup>15</sup> 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.

As with many forces, the feedback related to the investigation of crime or incidents and of the need to keep people informed and updated with their case. The force monitors feedback from surveys as part of its wider performance management measures.

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

The force policy, accessible from the intranet, provides guidance on how rape crimes should be monitored and reviewed but does not indicate at what point a crime should be recorded and by whom. We found that officers and staff had a clear understanding of the rape policy and no-crime process.

The FCR scrutinises all recorded sexual offences to ensure they have been correctly recorded and classified. The detective inspector in charge of the rape investigation team submits rape cases for a no-crime decision and these are initially scrutinised by the CMB supervisors who will either agree or reject the submission, or refer it to the FCR for final arbitration. We examined 33 rape no-crime records and found that 29 complied with NCRS.

The force guidance does not specify how to deal with rapes that have been reported to the force but were committed in another force area. However, in such cases we found that officers had promptly taken responsibility and ensured that a crime was recorded and that the victim received the appropriate care.

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

The force has a clear understanding of the IT systems it uses which may contain reports of crime; these are the incident management system, NSPIS, and the crime management system, Niche. These systems are well managed with regular system audits and information weeding but they are not linked.

## People and skills

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

#### **3.1. What arrangements does Lincolnshire 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 of incidents and crime and, although our audit identified some deficiencies, the staff and supervisors who were responsible for applying out-of-court disposals and no-crimes, were generally found to have an appropriate knowledge of NCRS, HO CR and national guidance.

Some officers had received training on the use of restorative justice. The FCR and his deputy provide training on NCRS and HO CR to new police officer recruits, special constables, PCSOs and town enquiry officers<sup>16</sup>. Refresher courses are also provided to sergeants, inspectors and supervisors in the CMB. Newly promoted inspectors receive training on where to find information, compliance and supervision standards, no-crimes and reclassifications.

Longer serving constables including detectives do not receive training on NCRS or HO CR. This is a gap that should be examined with appropriate training delivered, commensurate to the role and to ensure that all staff fully understand NCRS and HO CR.

Guidance on NCRS and HO CR is accessible via the force intranet; we were shown examples of previous work the force had carried out to raise awareness of when to crime and what classification should be used. For example, the FCR devised a poster campaign to highlight to officers when houses and caravans should be regarded as dwellings, dependent on their use at the time.

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

The significant majority of staff understood chief officer messages and were aware of the required standards of behaviour and conduct with regards to crime recording.

Senior managers described being given a clear mandate to record crime ethically. We found no evidence of pressure, implicit or explicit, to under-record or mis-record crime or in any way work outside NCRS in terms of outcomes. Non-adherence to HO CR is considered unacceptable by those with whom we spoke.

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<sup>16</sup> Town enquiry officers are also known as front counter staff in other force areas.

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

We found that the FCR is active in his oversight of crime-recording systems and processes within the force. He has specific responsibility for ensuring NCRS and HOCA are consistently applied and he is very well known to senior managers and other officers in the force.

The FCR shows objectivity and impartiality in managing the current audit programme. He is known to be, and operates as, the final arbiter for any disputes occurring within the crime-recording process. The FCR – and his deputy – have ready access to the deputy chief constable lead for crime data integrity with whom he discusses crime recording and data issues on a regular basis.