Crime data integrity

Inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service

Contents

Introduction

In its 2013/14 inspection programme[1], 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 bodies[2] 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].

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[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

Chief officers in the Metropolitan Police Service promote a message of no compromise on crime data integrity. The assistant commissioner for territorial policing is the named, responsible officer for crime data quality.

The force has an established governance structure for monitoring performance, including crime data integrity, which is underpinned by statements of expectation by all borough commanders. The force maintains policies and procedures on crime reporting, management and criminal investigations which are compliant with the NCRS and HOCR, but are not explicit or detailed about taking a victim-centred approach.

Most officers and staff engaged in the crime recording process are aware of the headline message to ensure integrity in crime recording however, junior staff engaged in crime recording processes would benefit from increased clarity on the subject.

> **Recommendation:** As soon as reasonably practicable, chief officers should clarify the roles and responsibilities for all staff in ensuring compliance with NCRS. Accountability for compliance should be held within the control room, at the point of closure, for incidents that are not recorded as a crime, and within the crime recording and investigation bureau and the specialist crime and operations (SC&O) crime management unit for recorded crime and that referred to police by partners.

The force has a confidential internal reporting route called 'right line', by which officers can raise concerns in respect of unethical practices of whatever kind to the professional standards department. The process has an emphasis on identifying individual wrongdoing as opposed to identifying organisational failings.

The force maintains a flexible audit regime with the focus being on the seven priority crime types which are detailed in the force police and crime plan.

The results from audit are tracked at a senior level, actions are allocated and monitored through local performance meetings, and individuals and their line managers receive feedback where required. The force has an established process in place to identify and share good practice or lessons learned from the findings of these audits.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

Of the 1428 incident records[6] examined, 1169 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 1169 crimes that should have been recorded, 948 were. Of the 948, 24 were wrongly classified and 11 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed by the HOCR. This indicates a need for improvement in the accuracy of crime recording decisions.

The data above include some wide variances[7]. Burglary (140 crimes correctly recorded out of 162) and Robbery (321 crimes correctly recorded out of 379) were found by inspection staff to be areas where crimes were more likely to be recorded in line with the HOCR.

For other categories of crime the MPS were found not to comply with the HOCR effectively. Of the 128 violent crimes that should have been recorded, 75 were. Of the 106 sexual offences that should have been recorded, 65 were. Many calls contain sufficient information for the force to record a crime at the time the report was made; however, the force follows an 'investigate-to-record'[8] approach for all reports of crime which can often result in some loss of information between the first report and the finalisation of the incident

The crime recording investigation bureau also handles internet-based reports of crime, which are called Holon reports. 110 Holon reports were examined, identifying 95 crimes that should have been recorded. Of the 95 crimes that should have been recorded, 75 were. Of these, 5 were wrongly classified and two were recorded outside of the 72-hour limit allowed by HOCR.

Another standalone system used by the force is the Airspace system. This is used by boroughs to support the case management of anti-social behaviour. 110 reports on the Airspace system were examined, identifying 12 crimes that should have been recorded. Of these 12 crimes that should have been

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

[7] The audit was designed to provide a nationally robust estimate of crime recording (via incidents and crime desk) for all crime and selected crime types. It is possible that the sampling process generates results that, for any individual force, are not representative of the actual level of crime recording. Results for different crime types should not be compared but are provided as supporting evidence to HMIC inspection findings.

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

recorded, 5 were. Of these 5, all were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed by HOCR.

There is evidence that a lack of training and knowledge of legislation, as well as some workload pressures experienced by frontline staff, contribute to errors in deciding whether or not to record a crime. Our audit revealed a number of incidents with clear and obvious lines of enquiry that were not, according to the incident record, adequately pursued and resulted by staff. This is particularly prevalent where the report of the incident is via a third party.

> **Recommendation:** Within six months, the force should undertake a review of its systems and processes for the recording of crimes reported through incidents, Holon and Airspace, and no later than 31 December 2014 ensure these systems and processes are sufficiently robust to ensure the prompt recording and investigation of all reports of crime in compliance with NCRS.

The supervision of incidents is variable; 212 of the 215 reports of dwelling burglaries reviewed had been supervised. In the high-risk area of sexual offences, evidence of supervisory oversight was only present in 88 of the 164 sexual offence incidents reviewed. The supervision of internet-based reports (Holon) of crime, and of crime outcome decisions, presents a challenge for the force. We found limited evidence of intrusive oversight on records and case files

> **Recommendation:** The force should immediately introduce a consistent and structured approach to call handling quality assurance processes, ensuring that compliance with NCRS is at its core and that particular attention is given to those offences which are of greater risk to public safety.

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs),[9] cannabis warnings[10] and community resolutions.[11] The HOCR (section H) state that national guidelines must be followed[12].

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[9] 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.

[10] 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.

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

[12] 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

Cautions – Of the 30 cautions dip-sampled, the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution in 27 cases. In 26 cases the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 21 cases where there was a victim to consult, 6 showed that the victims' views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – Of the 30 PND disposals dip-sampled, the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 24 cases. In all cases 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, 3 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – Of the 30 cannabis warnings dip-sampled, the offender was suitable to receive a warning in all cases. In all cases the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions - Of the 31 community resolutions dip-sampled, the offender was suitable for community resolution in 27 cases. Out of the 31 resolutions where there was a victim, all 31 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. 27 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate[13].

There was little evidence that the administration of out-of-court disposals was adequately supervised at a local level, and force audits have yet routinely to include this issue.

The force is currently reviewing its management of crime and those units whose role it is to record, investigate, and manage crime. The crime recording and investigation bureau has proved to be a great success in improving the quality of crime classification decisions and the force could usefully pass responsibility for the finalisation of all types of crime outcome to this unit.

• *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

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

> **Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should introduce a structured regular audit plan for out-of-court disposals, ensuring as far as is reasonably possible that the resources available to the Force Crime Registrar are sufficient to ensure full compliance with national guidance, HOCR and NCRS and the proper and timely operation of the audits, which must be subject to scrutiny through local performance meetings.

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. 90 no-crime records were examined and 69 were found to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS.

Most errors for no-crime relate to shortcomings in the attainment of additional verifiable information, some of which were based on a single telephone conversation without corroboration.

With the exception of rape, all no-crimes within the force are managed centrally by the crime recording and investigation bureau and are subject to management oversight within the unit. There is some concern amongst crime recording and investigation bureau staff that they feel ill-equipped to make decisions due to the complexity and responsibility of no-crime decisions; however guidance from the force crime registrar can be obtained when required.

> **Recommendation:** The force should immediately assess the knowledge gaps of officers and staff within the crime recording information bureau in respect of no-crime decision making, and without delay ensure guidance is provided which enables them to make no-crime decisions with confidence. In particular the guidance provided should clearly describe the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a no-crime in accordance with the NCRS.

Victim-centred approach

The force promotes a victim-centred approach to crime recording, crime outcomes and no-crime decisions. The force's crime recording policy and procedure highlight a requirement to consider the special needs of vulnerable groups and detailed procedures exist for crimes committed against children. Victim First care cards are issued to victims of crime and the *Victim's Charter and Code of Practice* is applied by staff and monitored by supervisors. Subject to the victim's consent, all suitable crimes are referred to Victim Support London.

The quality of call handling, professionalism and victim focus by operators is excellent with the operators being polite, helpful and professional in 1,315 of

1,348 calls listened to from the public. There is increasing use made of Language Line[14] for those callers who do not speak fluent English.

The force regularly conducts surveys of people who report incidents and crime, and has a cohort of volunteers who, at weekends, make victim call-backs and invite feedback on their perception of the service they have received. Results are fed back to management, staff and their supervisors within the force control room and the crime recording and investigation bureau.

Rape offences

The force has a clear and detailed procedure for dealing with reports of rape, and most officers and staff have a clear understanding of the policy.

Dip-sampling of the computer systems used for partner agency reports of child abuse found no reports of rape received from these agencies that have gone unrecorded by the force. However, the audit did identify concerns with the accurate recording of initial reports of other types of sexual offence, due to misunderstanding of legislation and the HOCR (particularly with victims who suffer from with mental illness), and poor primary investigations for crime related incidents where clear lines of enquiry were not actively pursued (see Recommendation 6).

Our audit revealed that 26 out of 30 rape no-crimes complied with HOCR.

Since January 2014 a new process for no-crimes has been implemented. In cases where officers believe their investigation proves beyond doubt that no crime took place, a panel is convened, chaired by the specialist crime commander, who reviews the investigation. If the commander is satisfied that no crime has taken place, the case is submitted to external academic professors who meet on a quarterly basis for final approval of the no crime decision. Both the Force Crime Registrar and the external professors are independent from the force performance regime.

The force procedure gives clear guidance in respect of the handling of rape offences that are reported to the force but which are committed in other force areas. The processes are clearly understood by staff involved.

IT systems

The MPS has a computer system for recording each of its incidents (CAD) and another system for recording crime (CRIS). The force also uses a system to record telephone call data – the call handling system (CHS). The MPS recognises the possibility of reports of crime being lost between the CHS and CAD systems; however the quality assurance review team has done much to

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[14] Language Line is an interpreting service that is used to translate calls from members of the public.

reduce this risk. The recordings for all calls received by the control room are captured on digital audio files and are accessible for audit.

There remain other systems used for case management that may contain reports of crime that have not been correctly transferred to CRIS for investigation; these are called drop-off systems (such as Airspace). Our examination of these systems found crimes that had not been recorded onto CRIS.

> **Recommendation:** The force should immediately undertake an audit to identify what other 'drop-off systems' are in use by the force which may contain reports of crime, and immediately thereafter include these in the regular force crime audit regime.

The professional standards department use a standalone IT system called Tribune for the recording of crimes disclosed from their disciplinary investigations. This system is not subject to force crime registrar oversight and crimes recorded therein are not included within the force's annual data return to the Home Office.

> **Recommendation:** The force should immediately ensure that crimes held on the Tribune IT system are added to the annual data return for the Home Office.

> **Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should introduce a structured regular audit of the Tribune IT system to ensure crime reports contained within this system are recorded as required in compliance with HOCR and NCRS.

The MPS recognises its challenge in the modernisation of its core IT systems as little data is currently shared across applications. Proposals under the force Total Technology Programme are expected to address these issues.

People and skills

Training for staff that make HOCR and NCRS decisions is very limited in the MPS. Some have completed computer based training packages and others seek advice from the force crime registrar as required. Staff repeatedly told inspectors that they did not feel properly trained or equipped to make decisions under NCRS and the HOCR.

> **Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should conduct a NCRS and HOCR training needs analysis, and immediately thereafter introduce a tiered, co-ordinated training programme on NCRS and HOCR, prioritising personnel in roles which impact on quality, timeliness and victim focus, and in particular ensure the training is always made available to new personnel, including those taking on supervisory roles.

Most staff engaged in the crime recording process are generally aware of the unambiguous chief officer headline message of integrity for crime recording. This is more clearly understood amongst senior ranks and grades. Junior staff engaged in crime recording processes would benefit from increased clarity on the expected accountabilities, behaviours and main processes to support crime data integrity.

Senior managers encourage staff to record crime accurately and we did not find evidence of performance pressures affecting their approach to crime recording decisions.

Force crime registrar[15]

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

The force crime registrar has unrestricted access to the assistant commissioner for territorial policing who is the force lead for data integrity and is able to act objectively and impartially to ensure that the MPS records crime correctly. In practice, due to the volume of crime, the initial interface is between staff and their crime management support units; and the force crime registrar, in effect, only deals with disputes in his role as the final arbiter.

> **Recommendation:** Within three months the force should assess the audit requirements for the MPS to enable it to be satisfied, on an ongoing basis, that it is applying NCRS and HOCR effectively and, as far as is reasonably possible, ensure the audit capacity of the data accuracy team adequately reflects this audit requirement.

The force crime registrar is consulted on the development of MPS crime recording policy and all such policy is compliant with the NCRS and HOCR.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. Chief officers should clarify the roles and responsibilities for all staff in ensuring compliance with NCRS. Accountability for compliance should be held within the control room, at the point of closure, for incidents that are not recorded as a crime, and within the crime recording and investigation bureau and the specialist crime and operations (SC&O) crime management unit for recorded crime and that referred to police by partners.

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[15] 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.

2. The force should immediately introduce a consistent and structured approach to call handling quality assurance processes, ensuring that compliance with NCRS is at its core and that particular attention is given to those offences which are of greater risk to public safety.

3. The force should assess the knowledge gaps of officers and staff within the crime recording information bureau in respect of no-crime decision making, and without undue delay ensure guidance is provided which enables them to make no-crime decisions with confidence. In particular the guidance provided should clearly describe the standard of additional verifiable information required in order to authorise a no-crime in accordance with the NCRS.

4. The force should undertake an audit to identify what other 'drop-off systems' are in use by the force which may contain reports of crime, and immediately thereafter include these in the regular force crime audit regime.

5. The force should ensure that crimes held on the Tribune IT system are added to the annual data return for the Home Office.

Within three months

6. The force should introduce a structured regular audit plan for out-of-court disposals, ensuring as far as is reasonably possible that the resources available to the FCR are sufficient to ensure full compliance with national guidance, HOCR and NCRS and the proper and timely operation of the audits, which must be subject to scrutiny through local performance meetings.

7. The force should introduce a structured regular audit of the Tribune IT system to ensure crime reports contained within this system are recorded as required in compliance with HOCR and NCRS.

8. The force should conduct a NCRS and HOCR training needs analysis, and immediately thereafter introduce a tiered, co-ordinated training programme on NCRS and HOCR, prioritising personnel in roles which impact on quality, timeliness and victim focus, and in particular ensure the training is always made available to new personnel, including those taking on supervisory roles.

9. The force should assess the audit requirements for the MPS to enable it to be satisfied, on an ongoing basis, that it is applying NCRS and HOCR effectively and, as far as is reasonably possible, ensure the audit capacity of the data accuracy team adequately reflects this audit requirement.

Within six months

10. The force should undertake a review of its systems and processes for the recording of crime reported through incidents, Holon and Airspace and ensure these systems and processes are sufficiently robust to ensure the prompt recording and investigation of all reports of crime in compliance with NCRS.

Part B: Audit findings in numbers

Our audit 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 MPS. 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 the MPS recorded the following number of crimes
1428	**1169**	**948**
Crimes reported via Holon system		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports that were recorded onto the Holon system.	From these reports HMIC identified the following number of crimes that the MPS should have recorded.	From these identified crimes the MPS recorded the following number of crimes
110	**95**	**75**
Crimes reported via Airspace system		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports that were recorded onto the Airspace system.	From these reports HMIC identified the following number of crimes that the MPS should have recorded.	From these identified crimes the MPS recorded the following number of crimes
110	**12**	**5**
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which the MPS had subsequently recorded as no-crime.		From these HMIC assessed the following number as being correct.
90		**69**

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

Chief officer accountability for crime data integrity in the MPS is clear with the assistant commissioner for territorial policing being ultimately accountable, supported by a commander who has no direct accountability for the delivery of external performance targets. The headline message is clear. There will be no compromise on integrity in crime recording. This expectation has been communicated to command teams across the force. It is underpinned by statements of expectation for all borough commanders and reinforced through monthly strategic performance management meetings.

In assessment of the reasons behind failure to record crime correctly at the operational level. We found no evidence of performance pressures affecting decision-making. Moreover, judgment errors against the HOCR and NCRS were more a consequence of shortcomings in knowledge, compliance and, in some cases, pressure of workload. Indeed, most errors could be eliminated by sharper accountability for NCRS, targeted training and improvements in the design of key crime recording processes.

The MPS has a professional standards policy that is supported by a procedure for anonymously reporting integrity concerns of any kind. The policy and procedure has an emphasis on individual wrongdoing as opposed to organisational failings. There is awareness of the facility amongst staff but its use for crime integrity matters is limited.

There are documented crime recording policies for the MPS and these are supported by operating procedures and hyperlinks to the HOCR and National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR), all of which are accessible via the force intranet. They emphasise the need for recording every crime correctly and in accordance with NCRS but are not explicit or detailed about taking a victim-centred approach. However, accountability and responsibility for NCRS compliance in the finalisation of incidents and classification of crime are unclear

from our reading of the MPS policy documents, and staff are uncertain on the matter.

Most staff engaged in the crime recording process are aware of the requirement of integrity in crime recording, and this is currently being reinforced through a new quarterly data quality and ethics board attended by borough commanders. However, junior staff engaged in crime recording processes would nevertheless benefit from increased clarity on the expected accountabilities, behaviours and key processes to support crime data integrity. This is especially the case as the MPS is currently undergoing significant organisational change.

The need for accurate crime data is succinctly and unambiguously detailed within the MPS policing and crime plan. It recognises the importance of accurate crime data in promoting public confidence and in the efficient deployment of resources.

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

The MPS analyses and considers most of its risks in relation to inaccurate crime recording at an organisational level. It recognises the need to get it right first time alongside the risk to vulnerable victims arising from poor identification of crime at the time a report is first received. In the case of anti-social behaviour, the MPS uses a software system that requires vulnerability to be assessed as part of the case management process, and the quality assurance review team systematically checks 50 randomly selected incidents a day, and initiates action on a graduated basis to minimise any risks.

However, not all of the risks associated with crime data are identified, with our audit identifying concerns in relation to the accurate recording of violent crime and sexual offences. Other significant concerns related to the accurate recording of no-crimes, and in the finalisation of cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder, and the application of restorative justice. The audit findings indicate that the underlying issues go beyond that of simple compliance and principally relate to system and process design, accountability for NCRS and knowledge among responsible staff.

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

The work of the quality assurance review team is complemented by a focused and proportionate monthly audit regime applied by the data accuracy team. Force audits focus upon the seven priority crime types detailed within the MPS police and crime plan, alongside the overall reduction of crime, sexual offences, racial and domestic incidents. Action taken from audits is tracked and monitored through a strategic performance meeting. The MPS uses the generic thresholds for crime audits as recommended in the *Home Office Data Quality Audit Manual*

and does not adopt a risk-based approach to their own audit plan. There remains an opportunity for the force to improve the integration of audit results on crime data integrity with core performance data.

Crimes are reported through a number of different routes. The majority are routed through the call handling and incident system. Others are reported to the crime recording and investigation bureau as internet-based reports, transferred from other forces or reported to staff engaged on boroughs or in specialist units, such as child abuse investigation teams, who will input reports of crime directly onto crime system. This latter category is difficult to assess in terms of quantity, quality and compliance with the HOCR due to the lack of an audit trail to capture accurately the initial conversation or report from the victim, their representative or a third party.

The MPS audit and quality assurance regime is fairly flexible and takes account of most emerging issues. The quality assurance review team has recently focused on examining the action taken by operators to deal with vulnerable callers, and it is currently exploring what could be done to incorporate mental health awareness. The data accuracy team has a small audit capability of 5 staff which is increased when exceptional MPS requirements arise. The results from sampling and audits are tracked, addressed and closely monitored through the performance management processes with individuals and their line managers receiving feedback. Emerging themes are raised for discussion at strategic performance meetings.

The quality assurance review team will inform line managers when it discovers three or more errors made by any given member of staff. Issues raised from data accuracy team audits will usually result in an action plan, the implementation of which is overseen by the strategic crime and incident recording group. The force closely monitors every single crime-related incident of rape and tracks compliance with HOCR and the progress of investigations.

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

Of the 1428 incident records examined, 1169 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 1169 crimes that should have been recorded, 948 were. Of the 948, 24 were wrongly classified and 11 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed by the HOCR.

The data above include some wide variances. Burglary (140 crimes correctly recorded out of 162) and Robbery (321 crimes correctly recorded out of 379) were found by inspection staff to be areas where crimes were more likely to be recorded in line with the HOCR.

For other categories of crime, the MPS were found not to comply with the HOCR effectively. Of the 128 violent crimes that should have been recorded, 75 were. Of the 106 sexual offences that should have been recorded, 65 were. Many calls contain sufficient information for the force to record a crime at the time the report was made, however the force follows an 'investigate-to-record' approach for all reports of crime which can often result in some degradation of information between the first report and the finalisation of the incident. The crime recording investigation bureau also handles internet-based reports of crime, which are called Holon reports. 110 Holon reports were examined, identifying 95 crimes that should have been recorded. Of the 95 crimes that should have been recorded, 75 were. Of these, 5 were wrongly classified and two were recorded outside of the 72-hour limit allowed by HOCR.

Another standalone system used by the force is the Airspace system. This is used by boroughs to support the case management of anti-social behaviour. 110 reports on the Airspace system were examined, identifying 12 crimes that should have been recorded. Of these 12 crimes that should have been recorded, 5 were. Of these 5, all were correctly classified and recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed by HOCR.

Many calls contain sufficient information for the MPS to record a crime at the time and in accordance with NCRS. However the force follows an 'investigate-to-record' approach for all reports of crime. This results in the decision to record crime being deferred until an officer attends or a telephone investigation is undertaken, which can often result in some degradation of information between the first report and the finalisation of the incident, particularly for non-urgent reports of crime. It also requires victims to repeat information that has invariably been communicated during the first call for service.

There is evidence that a lack of training and knowledge of legislation, and some workload pressures experienced by frontline staff contribute to errors in deciding whether or not to record a crime. Officer action during scheduled appointments for third party and non-urgent first party crime related incidents requires tighter management. Our audit revealed a number of incidents with clear and obvious lines of enquiry that were not, according to the incident record, adequately pursued and resulted by staff. The creation of the crime recording investigation bureau and its independent role in the assessment of crime classifications has made a strong and positive impact on HOCR compliance.

The force has trained its staff to input reports of crime directly onto its crime system and a number of reports are made directly to staff by partner agencies,

victims or their representatives. This latter category is difficult to assess in terms of quantity, quality and compliance with the HOCR due to the lack of an audit trail to capture accurately the initial conversation or report. The NCRS requirement to record correctly crime from these direct reports needs to be emphasised clearly within existing force crime recording policy.

The supervision of incidents is variable; 212 of the 215 reports of dwelling burglaries reviewed had been supervised. In the high-risk area of sexual offences, evidence of supervisory oversight was present in only 88 of the 164 sexual offence incidents reviewed. The supervision of internet-based reports (Holon) of crime, and of crime outcome decisions, presents a challenge for the force with limited evidence from audit of intrusive oversight on records and case files. Opportunities for improvement will exist with the new command and control system (MPS Command Point) which is due to be adopted from 2015 and from related applications under the new MPS Total Technology Programme.

The force crime recording policy does not give specific instructions for how staff should deal with reports of crime which have occurred in another force area; nor does it include details for managing the transfer of relevant documentation to the corresponding force. We found that such crime reports are handled centrally by the transferred crime unit within the crime recording investigation bureau. Staff on boroughs provided positive feedback indicating that the crime recording investigation bureau processes for transferred crime worked well.

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

Cautions – Of the 30 cautions dip-sampled, the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution in 27 cases. In 26 cases the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 21 cases where there was a victim to consult, 6 showed that the victims' views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – Of the 30 PND disposals dip-sampled, the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 24 cases. In all cases 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, 3 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – Of the 30 cannabis warnings dip-sampled, the offender was suitable to receive a warning in all cases. In all cases the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – Of the 31 community resolutions dip-sampled, in 27 of the cases the offender was suitable to receive the disposal. Out of the 31 resolutions where there was a victim, all 31 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. 27 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.

There was little evidence that the selection and administration of out-of-court disposals was adequately supervised at a local level, and force audits by the data accuracy team have yet to include routinely this issue. The role and remit of the crime recording investigation bureau is currently being reviewed by the force alongside that of borough crime management units and, taking account of its success in the quality of classification decisions, it could usefully include responsibility for the finalisation of all types of crime outcome against the new HOCR outcome criteria.

Compliance with the *Victims' Charter* and its *Code of Practice* is monitored and all suitable crimes are routinely referred to Victim Support London.

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

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information.

HMIC found too many no-crime decisions did not comply with the HOCR. 90 records for violence, robbery and rape were reviewed, of which 69 no-crime decisions were compliant with the HOCR. For violence, 21 of 30 no-crime records were compliant; for rape, 26 of 30 no-crime records were compliant; for robbery, 22 of 30 no-crime records were compliant. Most errors relate to shortcomings in the attainment of additional verifiable information; some of these were based on a single telephone conversation without corroboration.

With the exception of rape, all no-crimes within the force are managed centrally by the crime recording investigation bureau which is subject to management oversight within the unit. A decision from the force crime registrar, who acts as the final arbiter in the case of disputes, is obtained when required. Staff involved in the process felt ill-equipped to undertake the task due to the complexity of decisions. The issue of no-crimes therefore remains a challenge for the force that should be addressed through targeted training and support.

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

The force's crime recording policy and procedure highlights a requirement to consider the special needs of vulnerable groups and detailed procedures exist for crimes committed against children. 'Victim First' cards are issued to victims of crime and the *Victims' Charter* and *Code of Practice* is applied by staff and

monitored by supervisors. Subject to the victim's consent, all suitable crimes are referred to Victim Support London by the force. All victims of crime are offered a personal visit leading to an improvement to its customer satisfaction rates for ease of contact. This will be enhanced further by the introduction of a system to allow the public to track the investigative progress of their report of crime via the internet. Enhanced vulnerability assessments are being explored potentially to include mental health issues.

The quality of call handling, professionalism and victim focus by operators, as judged by our inspection, is excellent with the operator being polite, helpful and professional in 1,315 of the 1,348 calls we listened to from members of the public. There is increasing use made of Language Line for those callers who do not speak fluent English. This represents a radical improvement from the service encountered by the HMIC inspection team in 2011, and is a reflection of the improved selection, development and leadership of staff within the force's control room.

In addition to the British Crime Survey data, the force routinely commissions its own survey of people who report incidents and crime. The force uses a cohort of 20-30 volunteers at weekends to make approximately 300 victim call-backs and invite feedback on their perception of service. Results are fed back to management, staff and their supervisors within the force control room.

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

The MPS has a clear and detailed procedure for dealing with reports of rape that provides thorough guidance on investigative procedures and highlights the need to take a victim-centred approach. There are separate and specific instructions for dealing with reports received from the London Sexual Abuse Referral Centre. Most officers and staff have a clear understanding of the policy although a number of frontline staff reiterated that they have received no training in NCRS/HOCR.

The force understands the various reporting routes for rape, although the exact volume reported through each route is less clearly understood due to the limitations of the data held within the force crime recording system. The force maintains a tight grip on the progress of investigation, recording and classification of third party reports of rape and other crime related incidents. However, it is more difficult to maintain oversight of reports made directly to police by the public at front counters or in the street, particularly if it is decided that a crime has not occurred under NCRS by the officer who has initial contact with the victim.

Crimes reported to rape and child abuse investigation teams by partner agencies, such as health or social services, are entered directly onto the crime system and there is no evidence of any standalone IT system being used. Dip-sampling of the intelligence system (CrimInt Plus) and that used for partner

reports of child abuse (Merlin) found no cases of reports of rape having been missed by the force. However, concerns with the accurate recording of initial reports of other types of sexual offence under NCRS were identified, arising from misunderstanding of legislation and the HOCR (particularly with victims who suffer from mental illness) and poor primary investigations for crime-related incidents where clear lines of enquiry were not actively pursued.

The force procedure for dealing with reports of rape no-crimes was understood by staff who investigate reports of rape. Our audit which included reports between the period 1 November 2012 and 31 October 2013 revealed that 26 out of 30 rape no-crimes complied with HOCR.

Since January 2014, a new process for no-crimes has been implemented. In cases where officers believe their investigation proves beyond doubt that no crime took place, a panel is convened, chaired by the Specialist Crime Commander, who reviews the investigation. If the Commander is satisfied that no crime has taken place, the case is submitted to external academic professors who meet on a quarterly basis, for final approval of the no crime decision. Both the force crime registrar and the external professors are independent from the force performance regime.

For rape offences that are reported to the force which are committed in other force areas, the force procedure gives clear guidance. The processes are clearly understood by staff whose role it is to deal with these incidents.

2.6 How do the MPS IT systems allow for efficient and effective management of crime recording?

The MPS has a computer system for recording each of its incidents (CAD) and another system for recording crime (CRIS). The force also uses a system to record telephone call data the call handling system (CHS). The MPS recognises the possibility of reports of crime being lost between the CHS and CAD systems; however the quality assurance review team has done much to reduce this risk. The recordings for all calls received by the control room are captured on digital audio files and are accessible for audit.

There remain other precursor systems that may contain reports of crime that have not been correctly transferred to crime recording system for investigation – these are called drop-off systems. One such system is Airspace which is used by boroughs to support the case management of anti-social behaviour not otherwise recorded on the crime recording system. The system is highly regarded by staff and has usefully met a requirement for the MPS pending introduction of new applications under its Total Technology Programme. Its use for incidents that concern mental health is currently being considered by the force. Notwithstanding its value as a case management tool, there is evidence that some entries on Airspace include less serious crimes that were not recorded on the crime recording system.

Another drop-off system is the intelligence system, CrimInt Plus, which contained 10 reports of less serious crime from 30 records sampled. These were not recorded on the crime recording system.

The professional standards department uses a standalone IT system called Tribune for the recording of crimes disclosed from its disciplinary investigations. This system is not subject to force crime registrar oversight and crimes recorded therein are not included within the force's annual data return to the Home Office. Such records should either be added to the annual data return derived from the crime recording system or placed within the confidential element of the crime recording system from the outset.

The MPS recognises its challenge in the modernisation of its core IT systems as few data are currently shared across applications. The proposals under the force Total Technology Programme are expected to address these issues.

The majority of IT systems that could contain reports of crime are capable of being audited. All force IT systems that contain reports of crime in the MPS have an identified owner but their management in terms of weeding, control and review is constrained by their design. The MPS carries out monthly audits of its core systems for the reporting and recording of crime to assess compliance with NCRS and HOCR.

People and skills

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

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

The MPS has adequate staff within the force control room to handle the initial reports of crime, and aside from some scheduling issues for appointments, there was little evidence to indicate that excessive workload was a factor to affect crime recording decision-making for staff on boroughs or in specialist units.

The crime recording investigation bureau uses productivity indicators for performance monitoring alongside qualitative measures derived from its review of crime reports against minimum standards. The productivity measure for telephone investigation is set at one and a half crimes per individual/per hour which indicates some scope to increase responsibility and potential expansion of the crime recording investigation bureau role and remit.

Training for staff who make key decisions against the HOCR, NCRS and related guidance is very limited in the MPS with some having completed computer based training packages and others taking advice on an 'as required' basis.

Staff repeatedly told our inspectors that they did not feel properly trained or equipped to make decisions under NCRS and the HOCR. Clarity on accountability for NCRS and properly targeted training for those responsible would therefore help to address this issue. Such training should equally reflect the MPS process for the reporting and recording of crime through its various routes and any changes to process design.

Most staff interviewed were aware of the HOCR and knew that advice could be obtained either from the data accuracy team or from its intranet website. New staff received a presentation on crime recording and the HOCR but there remained some concerns regarding the adequacy of this training and the availability of refresher training for existing staff on the subject. Intrusive supervision of out-of-court disposal decisions was not evident from most of the case files sampled and our inspectors found shortcomings in staff knowledge of the HOCR and related guidance as it applies to these decisions. Once again, training was cited as being minimal with any knowledge being acquired from advice and experience in the role.

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

Most staff engaged in the crime recording process are generally aware of the unambiguous headline message of integrity for crime recording. This is more clearly understood amongst senior ranks and grades. Junior staff engaged in crime recording processes would benefit from increased clarity on the expected accountabilities, behaviours and main processes to support crime data integrity.

Senior managers encourage staff to record crime accurately and there was no evidence of performance pressures unduly affecting their approach to decision-making for crime recording. Most staff receive support from their supervisors and managers to record crimes accurately and we did not find any evidence of performance pressures having a bearing on their decision-making. Moreover, judgment errors against the HOCR and related guidance were a consequence of shortcomings in knowledge, compliance and, in some cases, pressure of workload.

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

The MPS has a dedicated force crime registrar role, with a small team to support him with his specific responsibility for ensuring NCRS and HOCR are consistently and accurately applied. The force crime registrar is able to act objectively and impartially to ensure that the MPS records crime correctly. In practice due to the volume of crime, the initial interface is between staff and their crime management support units; the force crime registrar, in effect, only deals with disputes. The force crime registrar is supported by a dedicated force incident registrar and they both have the capacity to lead, provide oversight and audit of HOCR and NCRS compliance.

The force crime registrar and force incident registrar coordinate a programme of audits that focus upon force priorities with proportionate sampling. Both are consulted on the development of MPS crime recording policy with advice given being heeded. All such policy is compliant with NCRS/HOCR having been endorsed by them. The MPS may wish to consider whether the audit capacity of the data accuracy team adequately reflects its demand.

Crime recording disputes are suitably referred to the force crime registrar who is the final arbiter for crime recording decisions and interpretation of HOCR for the MPS. The MPS will need to ensure that its Tribune system used by professional standards department is also subject to transparent oversight.

The force crime registrar has direct access to, and the support of, the chief officer lead with whom he has quarterly meetings on crime recording.