

Crime data integrity

Inspection of Norfolk Constabulary

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Introduction

In its 2013/14 inspection programme¹, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. All 43 forces will be inspected by mid August 2014, with a full thematic report published in autumn 2014. The central question of this inspection programme is:

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

Accurate crime recording underlines the police service's commitment to public accountability, ensures that local policing bodies² can match resources to the risks identified in communities and enables the police to provide a proper service to victims of crime.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Methodology

Each force inspection involves:

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

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

The scope and structure of the report

This report is divided into the following sections:

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

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

Part A: Summary of inspection findings and recommendations

Leadership and governance

Within Norfolk Constabulary there is strong and committed chief officer leadership for crime data integrity with consistent clear guidance. The assistant chief constable (ACC) is the force lead for crime data and is supported by his chief officer colleagues in consistently reinforcing the need for crime data accuracy.

Force policies on the management of crime include reference to the need to record crime accurately; however, there are few explicit references within the policies on the need for an ethical approach to crime recording. Many of these policies are marked as interim guidance, and are awaiting revision so as to introduce policies which are common with the force's collaborative partner, Suffolk Constabulary.

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies share a joint professional standards unit which has a process for officers and staff to report anonymously any improper or inappropriate crime recording practices. This consists of a confidential telephone reporting line and an untraceable email facility. The ACC cites regular contact with staff associations as a method for him to encourage the reporting of concerns. Also, a newly formed collaboration working group, focused on integrity, actively is considering crime data integrity matters.

The force has a clear understanding of the routes by which reports of crime are received, the majority of which come through the force control room following calls from the public. Other routes such as front enquiry offices and reports made directly to officers or through email have been recognised and evaluated for their compliance with HOCA and NCRS.

The force has a well-developed and flexible audit regime covering compliance and quality which reports on both incident and crime recording. The findings of these audits are used by management to improve standards. However, some middle managers we saw during our inspection were not aware of the themes or trends the audit regime was revealing and were therefore unable to take any necessary local action to help improve standards. We also found that the scale and scope of these audits do not allow patterns and trends to be identified in individuals or teams of officers who repeatedly make crime recording or classification errors.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should review its crime-recording audit process to ensure that:

- it is capable of identifying classification errors by individuals or teams; and
- the results of the audit are shared with operational managers so that effective remedial action can be taken.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

HMIC examined 95 incident records⁶ and found that 79 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 79 crimes that should have been recorded, 68 were. Of the 68, two were wrongly classified and four were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed by the HOCR. This is of concern as it means that some victims' crimes are not being recorded and they are not getting the service they deserve (for example, because certain victim support services are only triggered when a crime is recorded).

We examined 51 reports that were referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments, and found that 30 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 30 crimes that should have been recorded, 24 were recorded. Of the 24, all were correctly classified and three were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed by the HOCR. As some of these records related to assaults on children and vulnerable adults, this is a significant concern.

The force has actively sought ways to improve crime recording within the public protection area of business, and has recently introduced a way of reviewing public protection investigations for crime recording accuracy and timeliness. This uses a system designed by users of the public protection IT system (CATS). However, the process is yet to be understood fully and has not yet been subject to assessment.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should establish a proportionate and effective process for auditing by the force crime registrar⁷ (FCR) referrals by other organisations (public sector, voluntary

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

sector and private sector) to the force of incidents and reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those involving vulnerable adults and children.

We found that upon receipt of a report of a crime, force control room operators produce an incident report and dispatch an officer to the scene of the incident. Any crime report is then validated by the force's crime development team and converted into a full crime record upon receipt of all the required information from the attending officer. HMIC found examples where the attending officer had failed to provide the required information within 72 hours. In these cases the control room creates a crime report at the 72-hour point, based on the initial report of the informant. As a result, the crime is converted into a full crime record without all the information. This could affect the forces ability to fully understand its reported crime data.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should ensure that the detail required for correct decisions to be made for conversion of outline incidents into full crime records, is provided by officers to the crime development team by the end of the relevant tour of duty. This system should be subject to effective supervisory oversight, and the force should ensure this is applied consistently.

Supervisors in the force control room listen routinely to a range of calls handled by their staff to ensure the quality of the call taking. Calls requiring an incident log are checked to ensure this was completed. Internal checks on 1,200 calls indicate 97.5 percent compliance rate. However, these checks do not consider the requirements of the NCRS, in particular whether, based on the information available, a crime record should have been created and whether one was.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should introduce a structured and proportionate quality assurance process by supervisors within the force control room. This should be undertaken on a consistent basis across all teams, include a check of compliance with the NCRS and where appropriate feed into the development of professional practice and continuous improvement within the force control room.

There are clear instructions within force policy about how any reports of crime received from, or which require to be transferred to another force are managed. There is a requirement to obtain a cross-referred unique reference number from any receiving force. Any associated documentary evidence necessary to support crimes is sent by recorded delivery from the force. This is good practice.

Out-of-court disposals

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

Cautions – Of the 30 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in all 30 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all 30 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 23 cases where there was a victim to consult 16 showed that the victims' views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 30 PND disposals and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 25 cases. In all 30 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 20 cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found that 13 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 30 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 25 cases. In 18 cases we found evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 30 community resolutions and found that in 22 cases the offender was suitable to receive the disposal. Out of the 28 resolutions where there was a victim, 23 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered.

⁸ A form of immediate financial punishment used by police to deal with low-level offending such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft, and minor criminal damage.

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

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

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

- *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from www.xact.org.uk
- *Simple Cautions for Adult Offenders*, 14 November 2013. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *Code of Practice for Adult Conditional Cautions*, 8 April 2000. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *Home Office Police Operational Guidance for Penalty Notices for Disorder*, March 2005. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from www.acpo.police.uk

Eighteen cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.¹²

Our findings suggest that the use of out-of-court disposals for offenders whose previous criminal history should preclude the use of the outcome is occurring too often. We found that checks of past offending histories of suspects are not always completed thoroughly.

Some forms used for out-of-court disposals were found to be unfit for purpose, such as omitting to include the implications for offenders of accepting the disposal. The force has very recently introduced new forms that are compliant with the national guidance.

The role of the centralised crime development team includes oversight of out-of-court disposals. However, we found that this was very limited and looked primarily at whether the form was completed correctly and had the required signatures.

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

No-crime

No-crime refers to an incident that was recorded initially as a crime but then has been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We examined 64 no-crime records relating to offences of robbery, violence and rape and found 58 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS.

The force has a small team of eight individuals within the crime development team who take responsibility for determining whether a crime report should be marked as a no-crime. The FCR and his deputy are also authorised to make such decisions. The head of the crime development team, who does not have a role linked to force performance, monitors all these decisions. This is good practice.

Victim-centred approach

There is a strong drive from the leadership of the force to actively promote and display a victim-centred approach. Our inspection of call handling found that call-handlers are polite, helpful and professional. Local commanders are

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

encouraged to increase the levels of victim satisfaction through local targets, and police community support officers (PCSOs) are required on a daily basis to speak to every victim of crime on their area, from the previous 24 hours, unless this would be inappropriate.

The force carries out surveys of victims of crime, and the findings of these surveys are used by the force to learn any lessons and make improvements to the service provided. For example, district crime managers are provided with the survey results and where these relate to individual officers or staff they will discuss the feedback with them. A quality assurance team also looks more broadly at the way services are provided by the force to identify opportunities to improve the overall victim satisfaction rate.

Rape

HMIC found that the approach to recording reports of rape is to use the 72-hour limit allowed by HOCR to confirm that a crime has been committed. Whilst this approach may be suitable in some instances it will not be in all cases. The HOCR state *“A crime should be recorded as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed”*¹³. The force will need to ensure any delays in recording are appropriate and comply with the HOCR.

The decision making for rape no-crimes is the responsibility of a small number of individuals; of the 29 rape no-crimes reviewed, 27 complied with the HOCR and NCRS. Routinely, the FCR views all rape no-crimes; this helps to maintain the high standards being achieved.

IT systems

The force has a clear understanding of the IT systems it uses which may contain reports of crime. Data can be shared between the incident recording system (STORM) and the force crime system (CIS). The crime system and CATS, used by the public protection unit area of business to manage cases do not link together and data needs to be re-keyed onto the crime system.

People and skills

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

The issuing of an aide memoire to all staff working in the force control room and in operational roles which describes the requirements of the HOCR and NCRS

¹³ *Home Office Counting Rules, General Rules, Section A.* Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340315/count-general-july-2014.pdf

has bolstered understanding by officers and staff, however we found limited evidence of training in respect of HOCR and NCRS. We found that prompts contained within the incident and crime computer systems also assisted understanding of force policies and the requirements of the HOCR, NCRS and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR).

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

The chief officer's drive to improve crime standards has been understood widely through the organisation. Although we did not find any evidence of organisational performance pressure to not record crime accurately, we noted that some managers remained focused on numerical targets and retain a crime-by-crime count on their areas. This suggests that there remains a risk that the focus on ethical recording of crime has yet to be grasped by all supervisors and managers. There was evidence of some senior officers seeking to have small numbers of more serious crimes downgraded into the lower categories. The force has in place a good process to ensure this does not happen. HMIC noted that the crime development team, which receives such requests, has resisted them actively; as a result we found no inappropriate reclassifications in our audit.

Force crime registrar (FCR)

The FCR has extensive knowledge and experience in the management of crime data and the application of the NCRS and HOCR. The FCR has access to the chief officer lead when required and frequently shares his opinion on crime issues with the chief constable.

All crime-recording disputes are appropriately referred to the FCR who is seen as the final arbiter in any disputes arising in the crime recording process.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. The force should ensure that the detail required for correct decisions to be made for conversion of outline incidents into full crime records, is provided by officers to the crime development team by the end of the relevant tour of duty. This system should be subject to effective supervisory oversight, and the force should ensure this is applied consistently.

Within three months

2. The force should review its crime-recording audit process to ensure that:
 - it is capable of identifying classification errors by individuals or teams; and
 - the results of the audit are shared with operational managers so that effective remedial action can be taken.
3. The force should improve the supervision of its use of out-of-court disposals to ensure that they are only used in appropriate circumstances. In particular they should not be used when the offending history of the offender precludes their use.
4. The force should establish a proportionate and effective process for auditing (by the FCR) referrals by other organisations (public sector, voluntary sector and private sector) to the force of incidents and reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those involving vulnerable adults and children.
5. The force should introduce a structured and proportionate quality assurance process by supervisors within the force control room. This should be undertaken on a consistent basis across all teams, include a check of compliance with the NCRS and where appropriate feed into the development of professional practice and continuous improvement within the force control room.

Within six months

6. The force should establish and begin operating an adequate system of training in crime-recording for all police officers and police staff who are responsible for making crime recording decisions, and ensure those who require such training receive it as soon as reasonably practicable.

Part B: Audit findings in numbers

Our examination of records will be used as part of a statistically robust national audit to allow HMIC to report a figure for national crime recording accuracy across the 43 Home Office forces within our final report to be published in autumn 2014. The audit undertaken at a force level is not of a sufficient size to be statistically robust and is therefore used alongside our fieldwork interviews to form qualitative judgments only.

| Crimes reported as part of an incident record | | |
|---|---|---|
| Incidents reviewed | Crimes identified | Crimes recorded |
| HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Norfolk Constabulary. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences. | From these incidents HMIC identified the following number of crimes. | From these incidents crimes Norfolk Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes. |
| 95 | 79 | 68 |
| Crimes referred from other agencies directly to Norfolk Constabulary specialist departments | | |
| Referrals | Crimes identified | Crimes recorded |
| HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Norfolk Constabulary specialist departments from other agencies which contained reports of crime. | From these referrals to specialist departments HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Norfolk Constabulary should have recorded. | From these incidents crimes Norfolk Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes. |
| 51 | 30 | 24 |
| No-crimes | | |
| HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which Norfolk Constabulary had subsequently recorded as no-crime. | From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct. | |
| 64 | 58 | |

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

The assistant chief constable (ACC) in charge of local policing is the lead for crime data integrity within Norfolk Constabulary. Since July 2013, the ACC has maintained a regular and sustained focus on improving the force's collective ability to record crime accurately; this has been embedded through the creation of a gold group. This has acted as a driving force for change and means issues are discussed at a corporate level. The ACC has responsibility for holding officers to account for the delivery of local policing, but is emphatic that their emphasis is on supporting senior managers to resolve policing problems without compromising accurate crime recording.

Regularly and for some considerable time, the chief constable has reinforced that ethical crime recording practice is of critical importance. He engages with all staff on the matter and communicates this important message in a way that is readily understood by all. The deputy chief constable and ACC have assisted him positively in this respect. The senior leadership needs to continue its strategy for conveying its message about what constitutes good performance until all levels of staff are aware fully of what the expectations are on accurate recording.

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies share a joint professional standards unit which has a way that officers and staff can report anonymously any improper or inappropriate crime recording practices. This consists of a confidential telephone reporting line and an untraceable email facility. The ACC cites regular contact with staff associations as a method for him to encourage the reporting of concerns. A newly formed collaboration working group focussed on integrity is also actively considering crime data integrity matters.

Force policies on the management of crime refer to the need to record crime accurately. However, there are few explicit references within the policies to the need for an ethical approach. Many of these policies are marked as interim

guidance and are awaiting revision following the agreement of joint collaborative positions between Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies.

The police and crime plan contains a number of outcomes around reducing priority crime and improving under-reporting of crimes, although there is no direct reference to accurate and ethical crime recording.

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

The minutes of the force gold group reflect a careful consideration of most of the key risk areas stemming from inaccurate recording of crime; none of these concerns have been assessed as requiring elevation onto the force risk register. Part of the performance management of crime aims to boost the confidence levels of local people to ensure more victims come forward to report domestic abuse and hate crimes.

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

The force made a radical change to its entire audit regime in July 2013, and as a result, auditors carry out regular assessments of most primary crime categories, where the highest recording risks are believed to exist. The audit regime looks at out-of-court disposals with the same regularity. Techniques paralleling those used by HMIC are used for the audit process and, throughout the latter part of 2013, there have been a succession of management interventions in response to the audit findings. These include making sure that any incidents relating to anti-social behaviour that may relate to a crime being committed are identified properly as crime and relayed back to the original officer in the case. This practice assists in making sure officers are aware if an incident has a crime dimension, rather than approaching it as an ASB problem.

The force insists on both accurate and sufficient detail on all crime records and the ACC recognises the importance of this for analysis of policing problems.

The force has a clear understanding of the routes by which reports of crime are received; it is able to calculate that 86 percent of reported crime is received through the force control room following calls from members of the public. Other routes such as public enquiry offices and direct reports to officers or through email are also understood and have been evaluated for their compliance with HOCR and NCRS. Higher levels of scrutiny are now being applied to the reports of crime generated within specialist departments, such as public protection, for offences involving vulnerable adults or child abuse cases.

The force has a well-developed and flexible audit regime which covers compliance and quality which reports on both incident and crime recording. The findings of these audits are used by management to improve standards.

However, some middle managers seen during our inspection were not aware of the themes or trends the audit regime was revealing and were therefore unable to take any necessary local action to help improve standards. We also found that the scale and scope of these audits do not allow patterns and trends to be identified in individuals or teams of officers who repeatedly make crime recording or classification errors.

The deputy force crime registrar works closely with force control room staff in the early identification of problems and their resolution. This includes a daily check of those incidents which are initially thought to relate to crime but which are closed without a crime being raised. Any action to ensure a crime is recorded, where one is necessary, is documented and managed through a force daily management meeting.

New audits have been introduced, such as one involving specialist investigations on the case administration and tracking system (CATS) dealing with child abuse and other sensitive investigations. This demonstrates the flexibility of the force audit regime. The gold group commissioned this approach in October 2013 and it is conducted every two weeks. The ACC has also commissioned other audits to take account of emerging issues.

The crime development team is a small centralised unit, which has oversight and control of all recorded crime generated by the force. When this team discovers an error, an email is sent to the officer involved but there is no meaningful or structured process to alert supervisors. A sergeant in each area, called the district crime manager, has been embedded on districts; their role is to supervise all crime recording on their district. These individuals could become conduits for important developmental feedback for individuals, teams or areas.

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

HMIC examined 95 incident records and found that 79 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 79 crimes that should have been recorded, 68 were. Of the 68, two were wrongly classified and four were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed by the HOCR.

We examined 51 reports that were referred from other agencies directly to the force's specialist departments, and found that 30 crimes should have been

recorded. Of the 30 crimes that should have been recorded, 24 were recorded. Of the 24, all were correctly classified and three were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed by the HOCR. As some of these records related to assaults on children and vulnerable adults, this is a significant concern.

The force actively has sought ways to improve crime recording within the public protection area of business, and recently has introduced a way of reviewing public protection investigations for crime recording accuracy and timeliness. This uses a system designed by users of the public protection IT system (CATS). However, the process is yet to be integrated fully into the organisation and has not yet been subject of assessment.

We found that upon receipt of a report of a crime, force control room operators produce an incident report and dispatch an officer to the scene of the incident. Any crime report is then validated by the force's crime development team and converted into a full crime record upon receipt of all the required information from the attending officer. HMIC found examples where the attending officer had failed to provide the required information within 72 hours. In these cases, the control room creates a crime report at the 72-hour point, based on the initial report of the informant. As a result the crime is converted into a full crime record without all the information. This could affect the force's ability to fully understand its reported crime data.

Supervisors in the force control room routinely listen to a range of calls handled by their staff to ensure the quality of the call taking. Calls requiring an incident log are checked to ensure this was completed. Internal checks on 1,200 calls indicate 97.5 percent compliance rate.

Control room staff receive feedback on their performance and are required to justify their actions if there is any issue. A further, more in-depth evaluation of their call-handling approach called proactive listening score (PALS), is available for use if a problem is perceived. However, none of these checks consider the requirements of the NCRS, in particular whether, based on the information available, a crime record should have been created and whether one was.

There are clear instructions within force policy about how any reports of crime received from, or which require to be transferred to another force are managed. There is a requirement to obtain a cross-referred unique reference number from any receiving force. Any associated documentary evidence necessary to support crimes is sent by recorded delivery from the force. This is good practice.

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

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

Cautions – Of the 30 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in all 30 cases the offender’s previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all 30 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 23 cases where there was a victim to consult, 16 showed that the victims’ views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 30 PND disposals and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 25 cases. In all 30 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 20 cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found that 13 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 30 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 25 cases. In 18 cases we found evidence that that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip-sample of 30 community resolutions and found that in 22 cases the offender was suitable to receive the disposal. Out of the 28 resolutions where there was a victim, 23 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Eighteen cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.

A sizeable number of out-of-court disposals were found to lack sufficient information to conform to the requirements of HOCR and national guidance. This was largely due to the way a number of out-of-court disposal forms had been designed by the force. In particular, the forms for cannabis warnings had an important omission about the implications for offenders; in many cases there is no record that the offender was informed that the police can disclose that the offender accepted the outcome. The force has introduced very recently new forms that are compliant with the national guidance.

Our audit revealed that, in most cases, the needs of the victims are properly balanced with the needs of the offender and the wider criminal justice system when out-of-court disposals are used. There were occasions when officers had tried to apply approaches such as community resolution, which were resisted by victims and other more appropriate ways of concluding the crimes were

adopted. The force internal audits also refer to a number of cases where the needs of the victim have not been considered or there is no record of any consultation to obtain their view.

The force audits out-of-court disposals on a bi-monthly basis using a similar approach to HMIC. The results are fully discussed and addressed in the gold group. The chief officer team routinely monitors what use is made of victim-centred out-of-court disposals and looks for any anomalies. The role of the centralised crime development team includes oversight of out-of-court disposals. However, we found that this was very limited and looked primarily at whether the form was completed correctly and had the required signatures.

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

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but subsequently has been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We examined 64 no-crime records relating to offences of robbery, violence and rape and found 58 records to be compliant with HOCC and NCRS.

The force has a small team of eight individuals within the crime development team who take responsibility for determining whether a crime report should be marked as a no-crime. The FCR and his deputy are also authorised to make such decisions. The head of the crime development team, who does not have a role linked to force performance, monitors all these decisions. This is good practice.

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

There is a strong drive from the leadership of the force actively to promote and display a victim-centred approach. Our inspection of call handling found that call handlers are polite, helpful and professional. Local commanders are encouraged to increase the satisfaction rate through local satisfaction targets, and police community support officers (PCSOs) are required on a daily basis to speak to every victim of crime on their area, from the previous 24 hours, unless this would be inappropriate.

Visits to the force control room and operational stations during our inspection together with evidence from calls evaluated during the audit show that staff understand the victim-centred approach. Of 90 incidents examined, (which had records of telephone calls from the public available), 85 demonstrated that the call handler was polite, helpful and professional. The force has put efforts into attending as many calls for service as possible, and currently attends 95 percent of calls for service.

The force carries out surveys of victims of crime, and the findings of these surveys are used by the force to learn any lessons and make improvements to the service provided. For example, district crime managers are provided with the survey results and where these relate to individual officers or staff they will discuss the feedback with them. A quality assurance team also looks more broadly at the way services are provided by the force to identify opportunities to improve the overall victim satisfaction rate.

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

HMIC found that the approach to recording reports of rape is to use the 72-hour limit allowed by HOCR to confirm that a crime has been committed. While this approach may be suitable in some instances it will not be in all cases. The HOCR state *“A crime should be recorded as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed”*. The force will need to ensure any delays in recording are appropriate and comply with the HOCR.

The decision making for rape no-crimes is the responsibility of a small number of individuals, of the 29 rape no-crimes reviewed, 27 complied with the HOCR and NCRS. The force crime registrar (FCR) routinely views all rape no crimes, this helps to maintain the high standards being achieved.

Reports of rape sent to Norfolk Constabulary from another force, or generated in Norfolk and transferred elsewhere, are dealt with through a general force policy for the transfer of such reports of crime.

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

The force also has a clear understanding of the IT systems it uses which may contain reports of crime. Data can be shared between the incident recording system (STORM) and the force crime system (CIS). The crime system and CATS, used by the public protection unit area of business to manage cases do not link together and data needs to be re-keyed onto the crime system.

All systems with crime data are fully auditable, and there is active management of these systems. The force has recently joined with Suffolk Constabulary to combine their STORM system. This means that if required, through an unforeseen event or problem, one force could support the other in their incident management as the two systems work in the same way.

People and skills

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

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

Issuing a NCRS/HOCR aide memoire to all staff in the force control room and operational environment has bolstered the understanding by officers and staff. Prompts in the command and control and crime system also assist in reminding staff of force policies and the requirements of the HOCR, NCRS and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). There is a need to work with student officers to develop an early knowledge of the NCRS and HOCR, and this could be extended to frontline staff, including enquiry office staff and PCSOs who carry out crime-recording work.

Staff and supervisors in the force control room and crime development team have appropriate levels of the NCRS/HOCR knowledge, skills and understanding. A resolutions team working in the force control room is largely resourced through restricted officer postings and their knowledge of the NCRS and HOCR is built up by working alongside the deputy FCR. However, the skills base of this team tends to be undermined because of the frequency of staffing changes in and out of this unit.

All staff in the public protection command that make crime-recording decisions have the appropriate knowledge and experience and are trained in the NCRS and HOCR. An inspector has also been delivering training around data integrity. A booklet on the NCRS compliance has been issued to all officers, and all sergeants have been trained with a view to sharing information on the NCRS with the staff they supervise. The professional standards unit is aware of the provisions of the HOCR and NCRS and is planning to set up a working group looking at integrity issues.

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

The chief officer drive to improve crime recording standards has been widely understood through the organisation. In some areas these important messages are reinforced in the everyday environment such as in the force control room where visual messages contain critical reminders about data and crime recording integrity.

The force performance framework divides the evaluation of crime levels into four separate areas; priority, volume, prevention and under-reported types of crime. The expectation is that while reductions in the priority area are desired,

increases in other areas such as sexual offences are seen as positive indicators.

Although we did not find any evidence of organisational performance pressure to not record crime accurately, we noted that some managers remained focused on numerical targets and retain a crime-by-crime count on their areas. This suggests that there remains a risk that the focus on ethical recording of crime has yet to be grasped by all supervisors and managers. There was evidence of some senior officers seeking to have small numbers of more serious crimes, downgraded into the lower categories. The force has in place a good process to ensure this does not happen. HMIC found that the crime development team, which receives such requests, has actively resisted them; as a result, we found no inappropriate reclassifications in our audit.

The force has introduced numerous measures to build a wider awareness about the NCRS and HOCR across the force. These include an NCRS briefing to all operational inspectors and sergeants, an integrity master class and refresher sessions on some out-of-court disposals. We noted that the strong systems within the crime development team, and audit teams have the effect of making frontline officers feel others have control and that they do not need to worry about any mistakes, classifications or recording issues.

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

The force has a dedicated FCR and a deputy FCR who are responsible for ensuring the NCRS and HOCR are consistently applied. The FCR is an experienced individual, who has a strong commitment to the need to maintain standards of compliance with the HOCR and NCRS. Most officers know that the FCR is the person responsible for making sure things are done correctly, and they have no hesitation in contacting him or his deputy for advice.

The FCR's auditing team divides its time between active monitoring in the force control room, and routine auditing of crime systems. The FCR depends on a small number of capable staff to achieve both these functions.

The crime development team receives and manages all post crime-recording issues and initially deals with any queries or disputes in respect of the crime recording process. Unresolved issues are taken to the FCR to consider, he is respected by all as the final arbiter on such matters. The FCR has access to the chief officer lead when required and frequently shares his opinion on crime issues with the chief constable.

The FCR is consulted in respect of policies which relate to crime recording to ensure they are compliant with the HOCR and NCRS.