

# Crime data integrity

## Inspection of North Wales Police

August 2014

© HMIC 2014

ISBN: 978-1-78246-488-4

[www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk)

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
The scope and structure of the report.....	4
<b>Part A: Summary of inspection findings and recommendations</b>	<b>5</b>
Leadership and governance.....	5
System and processes.....	6
People and skills .....	10
Recommendations .....	11
<b>Part B: Audit findings in numbers</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings</b>	<b>14</b>
Leadership and governance.....	14
Systems and processes.....	16
People and skills .....	20

## Introduction

In its 2013/14 inspection programme<sup>1</sup>, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. 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<sup>2</sup> can match resources to the risks identified in communities and enables the police to provide a proper service to victims of crime.

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

We strongly recommend our findings in this report are read alongside the interim report, *Crime recording: A matter of fact - An interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales*, available at [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://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)<sup>4</sup> and Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR)<sup>5</sup>.

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

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

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

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

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

# Methodology

Each force inspection involves:

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 North Wales Police promote the importance of data integrity throughout the force. The deputy chief constable (DCC) is the chief officer responsible for crime data integrity.

The force has established governance structures to manage crime data integrity. Force policy and procedure promote a focus on victims, on outcomes which matter to the public and seek to achieve greater consistency in crime recording through organisational learning. The procedure is linked to the NCRS and HOCR but specific reference to values and ethical standards is limited.

The force has a phone number for reporting concerns about any aspect of integrity, managed by a third party for the professional standards department. Concerns about crime recording however are usually reported to, or identified by, line managers or through the crime recording user group.

The force has analysed and understands most of its risks in relation to inaccurate crime recording at an organisational level. Data quality as a force-wide risk is clearly stated in the force risk register.

The force conducts some audits of incident and crime records to assess crime recording accuracy. The audit regime is mostly flexible, and takes place within the framework of the force risk plan. Results of audits are taken into account; however, there was little evidence that they were formally considered at performance review meetings, or considered in a structured way in conjunction with performance figures.

**Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should introduce a process by which findings from crime audits are shared with relevant staff and within the force performance framework, and introduce a system for implementing any changes that are needed as a result of audit findings.

The force has 48 crime record assessors; there was clear evidence that they work to rectify crime-recording errors and that audit findings were shared with them. A similar process exists within the control room. Evidence of error rectification and impact of audit findings was less strong among operational officers and their supervisors.

## System and processes

### Accuracy of crime recording

HMIC examined 85 incident records<sup>6</sup> and found that 78 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 78 crimes that should have been recorded, 73 were actually recorded. Of these 73, three were wrongly classified and 13 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. There is a need for improvement in the timeliness of crime recording decisions.

The force has a centralised crime recording unit through which we have estimated that the force records approximately 33 percent of its total recorded crime. This unit records reports of crime directly from members of the public which do not require the creation of an incident record. Our inspection of this unit (a review of 18 calls from the public) found that of the 21 crimes that should have been recorded, all 21 were recorded correctly. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force.

We examined 50 reports that had been referred from other agencies directly to the force's public protection unit (PPU). Of the 16 crimes that should have been recorded from these reports, one had been recorded. This level of under-recorded crime is a serious cause for concern, particularly as some of these relate to violence and sexual assault against vulnerable adults and children.

**Recommendation:** Immediately, the force should take steps to ensure that reports recorded separately on other force systems (e.g., those used by the public protection teams) are recorded as crimes. The force should put in place proportionate and effective audit arrangements through the force crime registrar (FCR)<sup>7</sup> to assure itself that reports held on these systems are properly recorded as crimes with particular attention being directed to those involving vulnerable adults and children.

The force has taken steps which have improved the accuracy of crime recording, and our audit indicates that centrally managed recording processes are strong; however oversight of local recording practices across the force is variable.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HOCR provide that he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision, as the final arbiter. The force crime registrar's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with all applicable rules.

Supervisors in the control room monitor most calls and incidents to ensure accurate crime recording and a victim-centred approach. Control room supervisors close incident logs and check high-risk incident types. This is good practice.

The force has a crime recording policy but this does not detail how officers and 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 relevant force.

**Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should change the content of the policy for dealing with crimes which have occurred in another force area to describe clearly the process to be followed to secure the efficient and effective transfer of original evidence and documents.

### **Out-of-court disposals**

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND),<sup>8</sup> cannabis warnings<sup>9</sup> and community resolutions.<sup>10</sup> The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed<sup>11</sup>.

**Cautions** – Out of the 24 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in the 23 cases where we could check the offender's previous history, all of them were suitable to receive a caution. In all 24 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 14 cases where there was a victim to consult, 4 cases showed that the victims' views had been considered.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

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

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

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

**Penalty Notices for Disorder** – We dip-sampled 25 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 24 cases. In none of the 25 cases could we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 11 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found no record that the 11 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

**Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 25 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 24 cases. In 22 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 25 community resolutions and found that in all 25 cases, the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender's past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Twenty three cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Twenty cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate<sup>12</sup>.

The appropriateness of out-of-court disposals is monitored and managed effectively at either a force or local level. There is also a multi-agency group, which scrutinises these processes. It is however a concern that in respect of cautions and penalty notices for disorder, where there is a victim to consult, there is no record of victims being consulted. This may be a failure to consult with the victim or a failure to record this interaction.

**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 and the views of the victim are taken into account. This should be supported by an effective mechanism for the monitoring of the use of out-of-court disposals to ensure the decisions being taken to use the disposals are appropriate.

## **No-crime**

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

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



information<sup>13</sup>. We reviewed 76 no-crime records and found 60 records to be compliant with HOCCR and NCRS. This is a concern as the no-crime decisions we reviewed related to offences of rape, robbery and violence.

**Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should review its procedures for the authorisation and oversight of no-crime decisions, ensuring the systems and processes provide consistent decision-making and compliance with the NCRS and HOCCR. Decision-makers should be appropriately trained with access to expert advice from the FCR when required.

No-crime decisions are made by 27 authorised officers, called designated decision-makers (DDM); as a consequence we found inconsistency in the decision-making of these DDM. Checking mechanisms exist, although they need to be more comprehensive to enable the force to secure greater consistency and ensure no-crime decisions are correctly made in accordance with NCRS and HOCCR.

**Recommendation:** Within three months, the force should establish a proportionate and effective audit system to ensure a correct and consistent application of the HOCCR and NCRS by local decision-makers.

### **Victim-centred approach**

The force aims to promote and display a victim-centred approach to crime recording, crime outcomes and no-crime decisions. The force has made progress in this regard in the previous 12 months although consistency remains an issue. We found evidence that frontline members of staff demonstrate a victim-centred approach to their work and we did not find evidence of pressure to make decisions based on performance issues. There can be a lack of victim focus due to workload pressures and the availability of resources. Call-handlers in the control room however are consistently polite, professional and treated people with respect.

The force routinely surveys some victims to inform discussion about victim satisfaction. There are some other means of receiving feedback, such as from victims of sexual and domestic violence via the established third party routes; independent advocates. The force recognises that more work needs to be done in relation to victim follow-up.

<sup>13</sup> Information which can be verified by the police to show that a recorded crime did not occur, thereby enabling the police to reclassify a recorded crime as a no-crime (HOCCR, General Rules Section C, No Crimes).

## Rape offences

The force does not have a specific policy to describe how to deal with reports of rape. There is a good level of knowledge regarding this within the specialist rape investigation unit, and local officers had a good knowledge of what was required in relation to such offences and that responsibility for recording was in the hands of the specialist officers who attended and dealt with the incident.

An analyst within the rape investigation unit monitors classification of sexual offences and there is an emphasis on correct crime recording within that unit; this work is overseen by the FCR. Nevertheless, reality testing in the PPU revealed that more work needs to be done to ensure accurate crime recording of rape offences across all reporting routes and in particular, those reports that are recorded as 'concern for safety' which has been identified as an area of risk by the force.

No-crime decisions for offences of rape are made by the detective superintendent head of the PPU and sent to the investigation support team (IST) for validation. The extent to which that validation is effective is unclear as we found that of the 30 rape no-crime decisions we reviewed, 7 were incorrect.

## IT systems

The force has a single computer system for each of its incident (ICAD) and crime (NICHE) recording functions and these systems are linked. Both of these systems are well-managed, with regular audits and information weeding. There are no standalone systems.

## People and skills

We found that staff and supervisors both responsible for managing out-of-court disposals and no-crimes and those working in specialist departments generally had an appropriate knowledge of NCRS and HOCR.

Training, selection, monitoring and performance-management processes relevant to accurate recording practices are strong in the control room. However, locally-based DDM, operational officers, specialist officers and supervisors have had little training and there is no performance framework by which they are held to account for their recording standards.

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

Staff recognise chief officer messages and have a clear understanding of the expected standards of behaviour and conduct around crime recording. Senior managers are encouraged to secure accurate crime recording and we did not

find any evidence of performance pressure to under-record or record crimes incorrectly or in any way work outside the NCRS in respect of outcomes. Most members of staff receive support from their supervisors and managers to record crimes accurately.

### **Force crime registrar**

The FCR has specific responsibility and capacity for ensuring NCRS and HOCR are consistently applied. The FCR is supported by one other member of staff in order to carry out the role effectively. Some audit work is carried out by other teams coordinated by the crime recording user group; however, the involvement of the FCR in this work is not guaranteed.

The FCR has the full support of, and access to, the DCC; this is mainly through the crime recording user group, which they both attend.

We found evidence that crime-recording decisions are made locally by the network of DDM, who are not independent of the performance regime. There are no structured criteria by which recording decisions in risk areas are mandatorily referred to the FCR for validation; the final arbitration process is through the crime recording user group. This goes against the expectations of the NCRS that the final arbiter on crime recording decisions should be the FCR.

The force is currently piloting two schemes aimed at achieving efficiencies and reducing waste. Both schemes involve decentralising decision-making and there are implications for recording processes and the application of the NCRS and HOCR. Arrangements for maintaining recording standards within these pilots are not overseen by the FCR.

## **Recommendations**

### **Immediately**

1. The force should ensure that reports recorded separately on other force systems (e.g. those used by the public protection teams) are recorded as crimes. The force should put in place proportionate and effective audit arrangements through the force crime registrar (FCR) to assure itself that reports held on these systems are properly recorded as crimes with particular attention being directed to those involving vulnerable adults and children.

### **Within three months**

2. The force should introduce a process by which findings from crime audits are shared with relevant staff and within the force performance framework, and introduce a system for implementing any changes that are needed as a result of audit findings.

3. The force should change the content of the policy for dealing with crimes which have occurred in another force area to describe clearly the process to be followed to secure the efficient and effective transfer of original evidence and documents.
4. The force should improve the supervision of its use of out-of-court disposals to ensure that they are only used in appropriate circumstances and the views of the victim are taken into account. This should be supported by an effective mechanism for the monitoring of the use of out-of-court disposals to ensure the decisions being taken to use the disposals are appropriate.
5. The force should review its procedures for the authorisation and oversight of no-crime decisions, ensuring the systems and processes provide consistent decision making and compliance with the NCRS and HO CR. Decision-makers should be appropriately trained with access to expert advice from the FCR when required.
6. The force should establish a proportionate and effective audit system to ensure a correct and consistent application of the HO CR and NCRS by local decision-makers.

**Within six months**

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

## Part B: Audit findings in numbers

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

<b>Crimes reported as part of an incident record</b>		
<b>Incidents reviewed</b>	<b>Crimes identified</b>	<b>Crimes recorded</b>
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in North Wales Police. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these incidents HMIC identified the following number of crimes.	From these identified crimes North Wales Police recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>85</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Crimes reported directly from the victim</b>		
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports of crimes that were reported directly by telephone to the North Wales Police centralised crime recording unit. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these reports received directly by telephone from the victim by the centralised crime recording unit HMIC identified the following number of crimes that North Wales Police should have recorded.	From these identified crimes North Wales Police recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Crimes referred from other agencies directly to North Wales Police public protection unit</b>		
<b>Referrals</b>	<b>Crimes identified</b>	<b>Crimes recorded</b>
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to North Wales Police specialist departments from other agencies which contained reports of crime.	From these referrals to specialist departments HMIC identified the following number of crimes that North Wales Police should have recorded.	From these identified crimes North Wales Police recorded the following number of crimes.
<b>50</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>No-crimes</b>		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which North Wales Police had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
<b>76</b>	<b>60</b>	

## Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings

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

### Leadership and governance

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

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

The deputy chief constable (DCC) is the chief officer responsible for crime data integrity and is recognised as such by all senior managers and by some operational officers within the force. The DCC is responsible for some aspects of force performance but mainly call handling where there is an understanding that high standards have a consequent positive impact on the accuracy of crime recording.

The DCC has implemented processes and mechanisms to manage crime data integrity. Direct communication on recording standards is mainly through the crime recording user group (CRUG) to senior managers and then on through the chain of command. The CRUG has been in place for more than 12 months but cultural change across the whole force is some way off.

The force has a phone number for reporting concerns about any aspect of integrity, managed by a third party for the professional standards department. Concerns about crime recording however, are usually reported to, or identified by, line managers or through the CRUG.

The crime and incident recording procedures promote a focus on victims, on outcomes which matter to the public and seek to achieve greater consistency in crime recording through organisational learning. The procedure is linked to the NCRS and HOCR but specific references to values and ethical standards are limited.

There is limited reference to the need for accurate crime data in the policing and crime plan. In the revised plan of March 2014 there is an acknowledgement that some crimes are under-reported.

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

The force has analysed and understands most of its risks in relation to inaccurate crime recording at an organisational level. Data quality as a force-wide risk is clearly stated in the force risk register. The data quality board provides a mechanism for managing the risks and the force maintains a 21-point improvement plan. Minimum standards of quality have been set up as a benchmark in specific risk business areas.

The force has made an assessment of some primary crime categories and has some understanding of its recording risks in those areas. There is no overall crime recording risk profile which provides a baseline assessment of risk in each category; nevertheless, audits are commissioned on the basis of an intuitive professional estimation of where the risks might be. Interventions are managed through the CRUG.

## **1.3 How does North Wales Police use HOCR, the NCRS, and the National Standard for Incident Recording to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately?**

There are various channels through which crime is reported. Some of the routes are managed or validated by the IST, and when this is the case the quality of recording is good. The force conducts some audits of incident and crime records to assess crime recording accuracy. The audit regime is mostly flexible, and takes place within the framework of the force risk plan with oversight by the CRUG. To a degree, the use of certain closing codes inhibits the effectiveness of these audits, such as the very general concern for safety and sexual conduct headings.

Results of audits are taken into account by business leads within the business change committee. They are also fed back to managers who have responsibility for performance through the CRUG. However, we found little evidence that they were formally considered at performance review meetings, or considered in a structured way in conjunction with performance figures.

There is proportionate action taken to address crime-recording errors and audit findings. There are 48 crime record assessors within the IST and there was clear evidence that they work to rectify errors, and that audit findings were shared with them via their supervisors. A similar process exists within the control room. Evidence of error rectification and the impact of audit findings were less strong among operational officers and their supervisors.

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

We examined 85 incident records and found that 78 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 78 crimes that should have been recorded, 73 were actually recorded. Of these 73, three were wrongly classified and 13 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

The force has a centralised crime recording unit through which we have estimated that the force records approximately 33 percent of its total recorded crime. This unit records reports of crime directly from members of the public which do not require the creation of an incident record. Our inspection of this unit (a review of 18 calls from the public) found that of the 21 crimes that should have been recorded, all 21 were recorded correctly. This is an effective approach to crime recording for the force.

We examined 50 reports that had been referred from other agencies directly to the force's public protection unit (PPU). Of the 16 crimes that should have been recorded from these reports, 1 had been recorded. This level of under-recorded crime is a significant cause of concern, particularly as some of these relate to violence and sexual assault against vulnerable adults and children.

The force has taken steps which have improved the accuracy of crime recording, and our audit indicates that centrally managed recording processes are strong. However, recording practices in the PPU and the variation in oversight of local recording practices across the force are a concern.

Supervisors in the control room and the IST monitor most calls and incidents to ensure accurate crime recording and a victim-centred approach. Control room supervisors close incident logs and all of those closed as crime related incidents (without a crime report) are checked. This is good practice.

The force has a crime recording policy but this does not detail how officers and 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 relevant force.



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

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

**Cautions** – Out of the 24 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in the 23 cases where we could check the offender’s previous history, all of them were suitable to receive a caution. In all 24 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 14 cases where there was a victim to consult, 4 cases showed that the victims’ views had been considered.

**Penalty Notices for Disorder** – We dip-sampled 25 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 24 cases. In none of the 25 cases could we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 11 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found no record that the 11 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

**Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 25 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 24 cases. In 22 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 25 community resolutions and found that in all 25 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender’s past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Twenty three cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Twenty cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.

The appropriateness of out-of-court disposals is monitored and managed effectively at either a force or local level. There is also a multi-agency group, which scrutinises these processes. It is however a concern that in respect of cautions and penalty notices for disorder, where there is a victim to consult, the victims’ views as to the use of the disposal do not appear to have been considered in a large number of cases.

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

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We reviewed 76 no-crime records and found 60 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS.

No-crime decisions are made by 27 authorised officers, called designated decision makers (DDM); as a consequence we found inconsistency in the decision making of these DDM. Checking mechanisms exist, although they need to be more comprehensive to enable the force to secure greater consistency and ensure no-crime decisions are correctly made in accordance with NCRS and HOCR.

We found that the force does not use an independent person, unconnected to the performance regime, to monitor the accuracy of no-crime decisions, this would be good practice. The force crime registrar dip-samples no-crime decisions although this is not risk based and local DDM carry out further sampling, although their position is not independent of the performance regime.

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

The force aims to promote and display a victim-centred approach to crime recording, crime outcomes and no-crime decisions. This is reflected in the force crime and incident recording procedure, which promotes a victim oriented approach to crime recording. The force has made progress in this regard in the previous 12 months, although consistency remains an issue. We found evidence that frontline members of staff demonstrate a victim-centred approach to their work and there is little overt pressure to make decisions based on performance issues. There can be a lack of victim focus due to workload pressures and the availability of resources. However, we found that the call handlers in the control room are consistently polite, professional and treated people with respect.

The force routinely surveys some victims to inform discussion about victim satisfaction. There are some other means of receiving feedback, such as from victims of sexual and domestic violence via the established third party routes; independent advocates. The force recognises that more work needs to be done in relation to victim follow-up.

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

The force does not have a specific policy to describe how to deal with reports of rape or which specifically deals with how reports of rape should be recorded onto the force crime recording systems. However, whilst there is no specific

policy, there is a good level of knowledge regarding this within the specialist rape investigation unit. Reality testing showed that local officers had a good knowledge of what was required in relation to such offences and that responsibility for recording was in the hands of the specialist officers who attended and dealt with the incident.

The force understands the totality of rape allegations it has received by all reporting routes and is able to demonstrate some oversight of these routes to secure accurate crime recording; in particular, checks are undertaken to ensure the correct classification of crimes. An analyst within the rape investigation unit monitors classification of sexual offences and there is an emphasis on correct crime recording within that unit. Audit work has also been carried out by the FCR on the classification of sexual offences. Nevertheless, reality testing in the PPU revealed that more work needs to be done to ensure accurate crime recording of rape offences across all reporting routes.

Crimes of rape are mostly recorded accurately but not on every occasion. The force is aware of this and work has been commissioned within the central PPU to examine incidents recorded as concern for safety. This has already been identified by the force as an area where unrecorded crimes may be found. Our inspection corroborates this view.

The force does not have a specific policy to describe how to deal with the no-criming of rape crime records. Likewise, there is no specific mention of rape offences within the crime and incident recording procedure although the general procedure for no-crime decisions is contained within this document. No-crime decisions for offences of rape are made by the detective superintendent head of the PPU and sent to IST for validation. The extent to which that validation is effective is unclear as we found that of the 30 rape no-crime decisions we reviewed, 7 were incorrect.

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

The force has a clear understanding of the IT systems it uses which may contain reports of crime. There are no standalone systems and all reports are recorded either on the incident (ICAD) command and control system, the crime (NICHE) record management system or, on occasion, the major crime system (HOLMES). Information is automatically shared across all of the IT systems which contain reports of crime.

All IT systems containing reports of crime are capable of being audited and all systems are owned and managed effectively. Proportionate auditing and quality checks are undertaken by the IST and FCR of some of the IT systems.

## People and skills

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

#### **3.1 What arrangements does North Wales Police have in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?**

We found that staff and supervisors both responsible for managing out-of-court disposals and no-crimes and those working in specialist departments generally had an appropriate knowledge of NCRS and HOCR.

Training, selection, monitoring and performance-management processes relevant to accurate recording practices are strong in the control room. Locally based DDM, operational officers, specialist officers and supervisors have had little training and there is no performance framework by which they are held to account for their recording standards.

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

Staff recognise chief officer messages and have a clear understanding of the expected standards of behaviour and conduct around crime recording. Chief officer communication in relation to accurate crime recording is consistent, clear and understood at senior manager level but is understood less well by operational officers and staff. Senior managers are encouraged to secure accurate crime recording and we did not find any evidence of performance pressure to under-record or record crimes incorrectly or in any way work outside the NCRS in respect of outcomes. Most members of staff receive support from their supervisors and managers to record crimes accurately.

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

The FCR has specific responsibility and the capacity for ensuring NCRS and HOCR are consistently applied. The FCR is able to act objectively and impartially to ensure the force records crime correctly and carries out audit programmes to ensure high standards of data integrity as directed by the CRUG. There are no structured criteria by which recording decisions in risk areas are mandatorily referred to the FCR for decision or validation. Current decision-making structures can have the effect of bypassing the influence and oversight of the FCR.

The FCR has some resources to carry out the role effectively. The members of staff available to support the work of the FCR have reduced from two to one. Some audit work is carried out by other functions coordinated by the CRUG. However, the involvement of the FCR in this work is not guaranteed.

Force policy in relation to crime and incident recording clearly states that the FCR is the final arbiter for interpretation of HO CR. However, the escalation process for managing disputes is from the DDM to the local crime manager and then to the FCR; any further disputes are referred to the CRUG. The FCR doesn't really have a place in decision-making; rather he is involved in managing challenges to decisions. This is against the requirements of the NCRS which places the FCR as the final arbiter in respect of crime recording decisions.

The FCR has the full support of, and access to, the DCC; this is mainly through the CRUG which they both attend. A more formal mechanism for direct contact and support would be beneficial.

Pilot schemes are in operation designed as a result of a 'systems thinking' review and are aimed at achieving efficiencies and reducing waste. Both schemes involve decentralising decision-making and there could be negative implications for recording processes and the application of the NCRS and HO CR. Arrangements for maintaining recording standards are not overseen by the FCR.