

Crime data integrity

Inspection of North Yorkshire Police

August 2014

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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 North Yorkshire Police the deputy chief constable is the chief officer lead for crime data integrity. The chief officer team have chosen to communicate through the chain of command about the standards they require in respect of crime data; consequently there is little evidence to show that this has made any difference to the crime recording standards achieved.

Despite the lack of direct messaging from chief officers it is evident that senior managers and frontline staff do understand the need for ethical crime recording and that the emphasis on performance measures has softened. However, there remains evidence that some middle managers are still looking to numerical crime reduction targets as the measure of their performance. This carries the risk of weakening the focus on integrity of crime recording.

Recommendation: Immediately, the chief officer team should develop and implement a communication plan that explicitly places compliance with the NCRS and HOCA at the centre of crime recording in the force, and provides unequivocal re-assurance to managers that rising levels of crime, linked to ethical crime recording, will not adversely affect the assessment of their personal performance.

The force crime recording policies make reference to and emphasises that information should be accurate and that crime and non-crime occurrences should be recorded in accordance with the NCRS.

The force has mechanisms for staff to report concerns about crime recording practice. However, most staff spoken to confirmed that they had confidence in routine management processes as an effective means of addressing any such concerns.

Despite there being no overarching analysis the force has made an assessment of crime recording of the higher risk crime categories, consequently it has some understanding of its recording risks in those areas. The force has placed crime data integrity on the force risk register.

The force has an understanding of the main channels through which crime is reported to them, and measures are in place to manage the routes through the force control room. Third party reporting into the protecting vulnerable people unit (PVP) and central referral unit (CRU) is less well understood. Our inspection found that measures to ensure the integrity of crime recording through these channels were not as effective.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should review processes designed to manage the crime-recording route through the central referral unit and the relationship with the protecting vulnerable people unit and the crime management unit. And, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of effective measures to ensure accurate and timely recording of all crime reported through this route with special attention being directed to those reports involving vulnerable adults and children.

The force crime recording procedures refer to minimum data set requirements however there is no clear expectation that more attention would be paid to higher risk offences. Nevertheless, force control room and crime recording staff do, in practice, apply more rigorous standards when recording high-risk incidents and crime reports. This is good practice.

The force has an annual crime audit programme; this is flexible and as such can respond to emerging issues. We found that the effectiveness of the audits can on some occasions be affected by the use of incorrect incident closing codes. As these incidents may in fact require crime records creating this leaves a gap in the force oversight of its crime recording accuracy.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should carry out a comprehensive assessment of crime recording standards to identify risk areas e.g. non-crime occurrences and to provide evidence based focus for the audit programme.

The audit findings are taken into account in strategic meetings, but it is not clear what impact they have on the development of policy and practice and we did not see evidence of a consistent process for following up audit findings. There is evidence that some action is taken to address crime-recording errors and audit findings at individual and team levels. The mechanism for ensuring that all improvement actions resulting from the audits are implemented is not clear.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should establish and, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of an adequate system for the oversight, management and implementation of changes that are required as a consequence of the findings of crime data audits.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

We examined 72 incident records⁶ and found that 68 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 68 crimes that should have been recorded, 57 were. Of the 57, five were wrongly classified and 13 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. There is a need for improvement in the accuracy and timeliness of crime recording decisions.

Within the force control room the standards and approach varies across different teams and according to the circumstances under which the incident is reported, for example, a report from a third party may receive a different service to that where an officer is deployed and speaks to the victim.

In some cases, including some serious offences, the decision on how an incident is to be recorded is deferred pending feedback from the scene from the officer deployed. It was noted that of those dip sampled offences found not to be crimed upon receipt in accordance with HOCR and NCRS included sexual offences.

The dip sample of 12 emails in the PVP unit in-boxes at York and Harrogate revealed four unrecorded crimes, 1 of which was an offence of rape. Some of these e-mails were from third parties including partner agencies reporting directly to the specialist unit.

Supervisors conduct some monitoring of calls and incidents to ensure accurate crime recording and a victim-centred approach, however this is unstructured.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should implement crime-recording practices within the force control room, which are compliant with the NCRS and HOCR.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should introduce a structured and proportionate quality assurance process 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.

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

Force procedures make no specific reference to recording crime, which occurs in another force area. Members of staff in the control room demonstrated a widespread understanding of what should be done, however the absence of a defined procedure could lead to inconsistency.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should amend the force crime recording procedure to include the management and recording of crime that occurs in another force area, which is reported to North Yorkshire Police and vice versa.

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs),⁷ cannabis warnings⁸ and community resolutions.⁹ The HOCA (section H) states that national guidance must be followed¹⁰.

Cautions – Out of the 28 cautions we dip-sampled we found that in 26 cases the offender’s previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all 28 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 21 cases where there was a victim to consult 13 cases showed that the victim’s views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip sampled 35 PNDs and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 11 cases. In all 35 cases we found evidence that showed the offender had been made aware of the future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 24 cases where there was a victim to consult we found 12 where the victim’s had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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

Cannabis warning – We dip sampled 35 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 33 cases. We found evidence in 28 cases, which showed that the offender had been made aware of the implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip sample of 29 community resolutions and found that in 22 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender’s past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 26 resolutions where there was a victim, 19 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. 27 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.¹¹

The force monitors the appropriateness of out-of-court disposals at a strategic level, with an audit being completed in October 2013; however, the extent of local monitoring is inconsistent and our findings suggest the use of out-of-court disposals for offenders whose previous criminal history should preclude the use of the outcome is occurring too often.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should takes steps to ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that they are only used in appropriate circumstances, and in particular, that they are not used when the offending history of the offender should preclude their use.

No-crime

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. Of the 105 no-crimes we reviewed, 71 complied with the NCRS and HOCR. It is particularly concerning that of the 35 rape no-crime records we reviewed, 21 of them were incorrectly no-crime.

The crime management unit (CMU) is the decision making body for no-crimes, however the extent to which this unit is independent from force performance objectives is unclear. The force does not have a set process for involving the force crime and incident registrar¹² (FCIR) in decisions to no-crime recorded offences.

¹¹ 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; 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.

¹² The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime and incident-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 and incident

Our inspection found that whilst the accuracy of no-crime decisions is monitored within the CMU, and there is provision for decisions in high-risk cases to have additional monitoring, significant numbers of no-crime decisions do not comply with the requirements of the NCRS and HOCR.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should review the no-crime decision making process, ensuring those authorised to make no-crime decisions are fully conversant with the rules applying to the no-criming of recorded offences; and that no-crime decisions for higher-risk offences, including rape, are overseen by the FCIR.

Victim-centred approach

The force has been consistent with its clear message there should be a victim-centred approach to crime recording, crime outcomes and no-crime decisions. This is reflected in crime recording policies, strategies and procedures where they exist. However this doesn't always translate into consistent practice.

Most frontline members of staff, including call-takers, understand the victim-centred approach and are polite, professional and helpful. The force routinely carries out surveys of people who report incidents and crime however there is little evidence that this is used to inform work to improve crime-recording processes.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should develop and implement a process whereby the feedback received from victim surveys is formally considered, and used, for the continuous improvement of the victim-centred approach to the delivery of services by North Yorkshire Police.

Rape

The force has a comprehensive policy that describes how to deal with reports of rape.

Our audit showed that the recording of rape and serious sexual offences is frequently delayed by force working practices and that the oversight of this area is not sufficient to ensure accurate recording. Our audit of the no-crime decisions for reports of rape, discussed above, is indicative of the gap in oversight of this important area of business.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should commence a review of its management of reports of rape, from report to finalisation, ensuring: that at all stages the force policy is sufficiently clear to ensure

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.

NCRS and HOCR are applied, and that staff involved at each stage have a clear understanding of their recording roles and responsibilities.

The force policy makes no specific reference to recording crimes of rape which occur in another force area, although members of staff in the force control room demonstrated a widespread understanding of what should be done, the absence of a defined procedure could lead to inconsistency.

IT systems

North Yorkshire Police utilises a single computer system for each of its incident (STORM) and crime-recording (NICHE) functions, these systems are linked and are well managed.

People and skills

The force has sufficient staff and supervisors responsible for recording and reviewing incidents and crimes, but of those available most are not trained to a consistent standard, and do not demonstrate a consistent and appropriate knowledge of force policies, HOCR, NCRS and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). Of those staff responsible for out-of-court disposals and specialist crime recording decisions, some have an appropriate knowledge of HOCR, but guidance and training is not provided to a consistent standard.

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

We found that most staff recognise chief officer messages and have a clear understanding of the expected standards of behaviour and conduct to achieve crime recording integrity. Senior managers are encouraged to secure accurate crime recording and we did not find any evidence of pressure to under-record or misclassify crimes or in any way to work outside the NCRS. The principal reason for the mis-application of HOCR and NCRS is a lack of knowledge or incorrect interpretation of the rules.

Force crime and incident registrar

The FCIR is able to act objectively and impartially and is involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of crime recording and outcome policies, and the subsequent audit programmes. However, the FCIR has insufficient resources to carry out the role effectively and therefore the capacity to ensure accurate crime recording is limited and as a consequence some audits and reviews are carried out by others in the organisation that are less qualified and not independent of performance pressure.

The FCIR has the full support of and access to the deputy chief constable who has lead responsibility for crime data quality.

We found that whilst the FCIR is generally the final arbiter for the crime recording process and interpretation of the HOCRs, there is no structured process for the referral of questions to her, thus some parts of the organisation are not aware that they could obtain expert advice from the FCIR.

Recommendation: Within three months, and to the greatest extent economically feasible, the force should: ensure that the FCIR has sufficient resource capability to effectively and efficiently deliver the force audit programme, and communicate to all staff a clear process that places the FCIR as the professional advisor and final arbiter for all NCRS and HOCR issues.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. The chief officer team should develop and implement a communication plan that explicitly places compliance with the NCRS and HOCR at the centre of crime recording in the force, and provides unequivocal reassurance to managers that rising levels of crime, linked to ethical crime recording, will not adversely affect the assessment of their personal performance.
2. The force should carry out a comprehensive assessment of crime recording standards to identify risk areas e.g. non-crime occurrences and to provide evidence based focus for the audit programme.
3. The force should implement crime-recording practices within the force control room, which are compliant with the NCRS and HOCR.
4. The force should amend the force crime recording procedure to include the management and recording of crime that occurs in another force area, which is reported to North Yorkshire Police and vice versa.
5. The force should take steps to ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that they are only used in appropriate circumstances, and in particular, that they are not used when the offending history of the offender should preclude their use.
6. The force should review the no-crime decision making process, ensuring those authorised to make no-crime decisions are fully conversant with the rules applying to the no-criming of recorded offences; and that no-crime decisions for higher-risk offences, including rape, are overseen by the FCIR.

Within three months

7. The force should review processes designed to manage the crime-recording route through the central referral unit and the relationship with the protecting vulnerable people unit and the crime management unit. And, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of effective measures to ensure accurate and timely recording of all crime reported through this route with special attention being directed to those reports involving vulnerable adults and children.
8. The force should establish and, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of an adequate system for the oversight, management and implementation of changes that are required as a consequence of the findings of crime data audits.
9. The force should introduce a structured and proportionate quality assurance process 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.
10. The force should develop and implement a process whereby the feedback received from victim surveys is formally considered, and used, for the continuous improvement of the victim-centred approach to the delivery of services by North Yorkshire Police.
11. The force should commence a review of its management of reports of rape, from report to finalisation, ensuring: that at all stages the force policy is sufficiently clear to ensure NCRS and HOCR are applied, and that staff involved at each stage have a clear understanding of their recording roles and responsibilities.
12. To the greatest extent economically feasible, the force should: ensure that the FCIR has sufficient resource capability to effectively and efficiently deliver the force audit programme, and communicate to all staff a clear process that places the FCIR as the professional advisor and final arbiter for all NCRS and HOCR issues.

Within six months

13. The force should establish and begin operation of an adequate system of training in crime-recording for all police officers and police staff, 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 North Yorkshire 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 Yorkshire Police recorded the following number of crimes.
72	68	57
Crime reports held on other systems		
Referrals	Crimes identified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of reports held by North Yorkshire Police on other systems which contained reports of crime.	From these reports HMIC identified the following number of crimes that North Yorkshire Police should have recorded.	From these identified crimes North Yorkshire Police recorded the following number of crimes.
12	9	5
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery, which North Yorkshire Police had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
105	71	

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

Within North Yorkshire Police the deputy chief constable is the chief officer lead for crime data integrity. The chief officer team have chosen to communicate through the chain of command about the standards they require in respect of crime data; consequently there is little evidence to show that this has made any difference to the crime recording standards achieved.

The force crime recording policy clearly states that crime and non-crime occurrences should be recorded in accordance with the NCRS.

Despite the lack of direct messaging from chief officers it is evident that senior managers and frontline staff do understand the need for ethical crime recording and that the emphasis on performance measures has softened. However, there remains evidence that some middle managers are still looking to numerical crime reduction targets as the measure of their performance. This carries the risk of weakening the focus on integrity of crime recording.

The force has mechanisms for staff to report concerns about crime recording practice. However, most staff spoken to confirmed that they had confidence in routine management processes as an effective means of addressing any such concerns.

We note that the police and crime plan refers to a decision to review data recording processes in the future.

1.2 How do North Yorkshire Police ensure they have a proportionate approach to managing the strategic and organisational risk of recording crime data?

Despite there being no overarching analysis the force has made an assessment of crime recording of the higher risk crime categories, consequently it has some understanding of its recording risks in those areas. The force has placed crime data integrity on the force risk register. The crime data recording risk is owned

by the information assurance board, which reports into the force risk management group.

The force has an understanding of the main channels through which crime is reported to them, and measures are in place to manage the routes through the force control room. Third party reporting into the protecting vulnerable people unit (PVPU) and central referral unit (CRU) is less well understood. Our inspection found that measures to ensure the integrity of crime recording through these channels were not as effective.

The force crime recording policy: *Collection and recording of police information (NICHE RMS) procedure* refers to minimum data set requirements however there is no clear expectation in relation to data to be recorded in relation to higher risk offences. Nevertheless, force control room and crime recording staff do in practice apply more rigorous standards when recording high-risk/profile incidents and crime reports.

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

The force conducts regular audits based on the FCIR's annual programme and on commissioning as a result of specific issues which may arise; commissions may come from the performance steering group, or from strategic forums. Our review of the audit timetable and internal audits confirmed that the regime is comprehensive and covers most areas of risk and that flexibility is designed into the programme to enable a response to emerging audit requirements.

We noted that capacity to carry out auditing is an issue, and found that the effectiveness of the audits can on some occasions be affected by the use of incorrect incident closing codes. As these incidents may in fact require crime records creating this leaves a gap in the force oversight of its crime recording accuracy.

The audit findings are taken into account in strategic meetings, but it is not clear what impact they have on the development of policy and practice and we did not see evidence of a consistent process for following up audit findings. There is evidence that some action is taken to address crime-recording errors and audit findings at individual and team levels. The mechanism for ensuring that all improvement actions resulting from the audits are implemented is not clear.

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

We examined 72 incident records and found that 68 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 68 crimes that should have been recorded, 57 were. Of the 57, five were wrongly classified and 13 were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. There is a need for improvement in the accuracy and timeliness of crime recording decisions.

Within the force control room the standards and approach varies across different teams and according to the circumstances under which the incident is reported, for example, a report from a third party may receive a different service to that where an officer is deployed and speaks to the victim.

In some cases, including some serious offences, the decision on how an incident is to be recorded is deferred pending feedback from the scene from the officer deployed. It was noted that of those dip sampled offences found not to be crimed upon receipt in accordance with HOCR and NCRS included sexual offences.

The dip sample of 12 emails in the PVP unit in-boxes at York and Harrogate revealed four unrecorded crimes, 1 of which was an offence of rape. Some of these e-mails were from third parties including partner agencies reporting directly to the specialist unit.

Supervisors conduct some monitoring of calls and incidents to ensure accurate crime recording and a victim-centred approach. Monitoring is largely done on the basis of opportunity rather than on a structured approach to supervision based on an understanding of risk.

The force crime recording policy makes no specific reference to recording crime, which occurs in another force area. Members of staff in the force control room demonstrated a widespread understanding of what should be done, however the absence of a defined procedure could lead to inconsistency.

2.2 How does North Yorkshire 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 28 cautions we dip-sampled we found that in 26 cases the offender's previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In all 28 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 21 cases where there was a victim to consult 13 cases showed that the victim's views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip sampled 35 PNDs and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 11 cases. In all 35 cases we found evidence that showed the offender had been made aware of the future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 24 cases where there was a victim to consult we found 12 where the victim's had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warning – We dip sampled 35 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 33 cases. We found evidence in 28 cases which showed that the offender had been made aware of the implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We took a dip sample of 29 community resolutions and found that in 22 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender's past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 26 resolutions where there was a victim, 19 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. 27 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate.

The force monitors the appropriateness of out-of-court disposals at a strategic level, with an audit being completed in October 2013; however, the extent of local monitoring is inconsistent and our findings suggest the use of out-of-court disposals for offenders whose previous criminal history should preclude the use of the outcome is occurring too often.

2.3 Are no-crime decisions for high-risk crime categories correct, and is there is robust oversight and quality control in North Yorkshire 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. Of the 105 no-crimes we reviewed, 71 complied with the NCRS and

HOCR. It is particularly concerning that of the 35 rape no-crime records we reviewed, 21 of them were incorrectly no-crime.

The crime management unit (CMU) is the decision making body for no-crimes, however the extent to which this unit is independent from force performance objectives is unclear. The force does not have a set process for involving the FCIR in decisions to no-crime recorded offences.

Our inspection found that whilst the accuracy of no-crime decisions is monitored within the CMU, and there is provision for decisions in high-risk cases to have additional monitoring, significant numbers of no-crime decisions do not comply with the requirements of the NCRS and HOCR.

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

The force has been consistent with its clear message from the police and crime commissioner and senior officers that there should be a victim-centred approach to crime recording, crime outcomes and no-crime decisions. This is reflected in crime recording policies, strategies and procedures where they exist. However this doesn't always translate into consistent practice.

Most frontline members of staff, including call-takers, understand the victim-centred approach and are polite, professional and helpful. The force routinely carries out surveys of people who report incidents and crime however there is little evidence that this is used to inform work to improve crime-recording processes.

The police and crime commissioner is in the process of getting a researcher to do work on victim satisfaction. She hopes to use it as the basis for future benchmarking exercises.

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

The force has a comprehensive policy that describes how to deal with reports of rape.

Our audit showed that the recording of rape and serious sexual offences is frequently delayed by force working practices and that the oversight of this area is not sufficient to ensure accurate recording. Our audit of the no-crime decisions for reports of rape, discussed above, is indicative of the gap in oversight of this important area of business.

The force policy makes no specific reference to recording crimes of rape which occur in another force area, although members of staff in the force control room demonstrated a widespread understanding of what should be done, the absence of a defined procedure could lead to inconsistency.

2.6 How do North Yorkshire Police 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. The force uses the STORM system to record incidents and the NICHE system to record crimes these systems are linked and well managed.

People and skills

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

3.1 What arrangements does North Yorkshire Police have in place to ensure that members of staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?

The force has sufficient staff and supervisors responsible for recording and reviewing incidents and crimes, but of those available most are not trained to a consistent standard, and do not demonstrate a consistent and appropriate knowledge of force policies, HOCCR, NCRS and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). Of those staff responsible for out-of-court disposals and specialist crime recording decisions, some have an appropriate knowledge of HOCCR, but guidance and training is not provided to a consistent standard.

We found that most staff recognise chief officer messages and have a clear understanding of the expected standards of behaviour and conduct to achieve crime recording integrity. Senior managers are encouraged to secure accurate crime recording and we did not find any evidence of pressure to under-record or misclassify crimes or in any way to work outside the NCRS. The principal reason for the mis-application of HOCCR and NCRS is a lack of knowledge or incorrect interpretation of the rules.

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

We found that some members of staff receive support from their supervisors and managers to record crimes accurately and that whilst non-adherence to the NCRS and HOCCR is considered to be unacceptable, there still exists among middle managers a lingering legacy of the target based performance culture of the past. In particular we found evidence of practices, which may lead to delay in recording reports of serious sexual offences and inaccurate crime recording.

3.3 How is the accuracy of crime recording in North Yorkshire Police actively overseen and governed by the force crime and incident registrar (FCIR)?

The FCIR has oversight of crime recording in the force and we found that she is able to act objectively and impartially. She is involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of crime recording and outcome policies, and the subsequent audit programmes. However, the FCIR has insufficient resources to carry out the role effectively and therefore the capacity to ensure accurate crime recording is limited and as a consequence some audits and reviews are carried out by others in the organisation that are less qualified and not independent of performance pressure.

The FCIR has the full support of, and access to, the deputy chief constable who has lead responsibility for crime data quality. We found that whilst the FCIR is generally the final arbiter for the crime recording process and interpretation of the HOCRs, there is no structured process for the referral of questions to her, thus some parts of the organisation are not aware that they could obtain expert advice from the FCIR.