

**Police and Crime  
Commissioner**  
for Hertfordshire

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>POLICE AND CRIME PANEL</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> February 2014</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	<b>POLICE CRIME DATA REPORT</b>
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b>	<b>The Police and Crime Commissioner</b>

### **Crime Data Assurance**

Police and Crime Panel members have, like me, taken a keen interest in the strength and reliability of police statistics. All analysis and reporting to date, including external scrutiny by HM Inspectors and others have served to give me confidence in the veracity of Hertfordshire's crime recording and I know that my confidence is shared with other criminal justice and community safety partners locally.

However, the recent allegations of manipulation of police statistics in other force areas risk compromising public trust in policing and damage to public confidence and feelings of safety.

With this in mind, I have sought assurances from the Chief Constable that my confidence in Hertfordshire's crime recording is well placed. I have also asked him to outline the steps that he has taken to ensure reliable data.

Annex 1 provides the Chief Constable's formal response to my request, whilst the Annex 2 'Police Crime Data Report' provides further detail and assurance.

**David Lloyd**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner**

## ANNEX 2 - POLICE CRIME DATA REPORT

### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. The paper intends to reassure the Police and Crime Panel of the reliability and accuracy of the police recorded crime by detailing the current crime recording processes within Hertfordshire, including the relevant checks and balances; together with the audit procedure adopted to ensure compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime (HOCR) and the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS).
- 1.2. Crime recording practices have recently been the subject of media interest nationally and any negative stories in relation to crime recording have the potential to damage confidence locally. The PCC has requested a report on the situation in Hertfordshire given problems identified elsewhere.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. Police recorded crime must be compliant with Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime. This is a set of rules that determine, when, where and what type, how many and by whom crimes will be recorded. The rules are quite complex but all relevant staff are aware of the basic rules due to their specific knowledge of criminal law and offence definitions.
- 2.2. The National Crime Recording Standard is a principle adopted nationally in 2002 and relates primarily to victim service and victim needs. Crime is generally victim-based rather than more evidence base as was prior to 2002. This means that if a person believes they are the victim of a crime, then on the balance of probabilities and with no evidence to the contrary a crime will be recorded. Where doubt remains, the police may make reasonable enquiries, however as soon as the officer is satisfied that a crime has occurred the crime will be recorded.
- 2.3. The Crime Service Team comprises of specialist staff who have a more in-depth knowledge and have additional responsibilities to oversee not only the investigation but also to ensure correct crime recording. Within this team are specific posts that are recognised as Dedicated Decision Makers. They are responsible for ensuring that the crimes recorded are an accurate reflection of the incident described by the victim.
- 2.4. Within Corporate Services and aside from the Crime Service Team, there is a dedicated team under the Force Crime and Incident Registrar who is responsible for auditing crimes and

incidents on a monthly basis. Whilst some specific areas are audited on a regular basis, others will feature periodically in the audit depending on any identified or perceived risk.

- 2.5. The Crime Registrar is the final arbiter in respect of crime recording and detection, ensuring compliance with HOOCR and NCRS, with direct reporting access to the Force Data Quality Lead – the Deputy Chief Constable.

### **3. CRIME RECORDING PROCESS**

- 3.1. When a victim, witness or other reporting person telephones the police to report a crime, the Force Communications Room (FCR) receives the call, a crime related incident will be recorded on the Force incident recording system - STORM. At this stage the caller will be questioned to ascertain if any of the following apply:

- A crime is in progress;
- A person needs immediate medical attention;
- A suspect is named or is believed to be at the scene or nearby;
- There is physical evidence to recover or protect
- A vulnerable person is involved;
- Any mandatory attendance crime has been committed.

- 3.2. If after questioning of the caller it is ascertained that police attendance is not required, i.e. none of the above factors applies, the crime will be recorded and an initial telephone investigation conducted. The FCR will ensure that sufficient information is obtained from the reporting person to enable the crime to be dealt with appropriately. If it is apparent that the crime meets one of the above conditions for officer attendance, a crime report will not be created. Instead the call-handler will create an incident log and allocate to an appropriate resource. The attending officer will record the crime on the Force Crime Management System or enter sufficient justification onto STORM to clearly negate the need for a crime to be recorded.

- 3.3. If it does not require police attendance, and it is determined by the FCR staff that a crime has been committed, the FCR staff will record the crime onto the Force Crime Management System or enter sufficient justification onto STORM to clearly negate the need for a crime to be recorded.

- 3.4. The Crime Service Team review all crimes entered onto the Crime Management System to ensure that they are recorded correctly i.e. correct crime classification, and they will allocate for further investigation as appropriate.

- 3.5. All incident logs are available for review and day-to-day supervision. FCR supervisors have a formal daily audit process that ensures NCRS compliance and correct incident closures.
- 3.6. It is the responsibility of the allocated officer to create any crimes identified from an allocated crime-related incident. It is also the officer's responsibility to create a crime when receiving a report direct from a member of the public either personally, by telephone or via email.
- 3.7. Direct reporting to an officer and referral from partner agencies to a specialist unit are the only methods of reporting that do not require a STORM incident report. Agency referrals (Child Protection for example) are recorded onto a separate investigation system because of the sensitive nature of this area of work. These incidents are reviewed by specialists and where a crime has been identified they will be recorded onto the Force Crime Recording System and allocated for investigation. This system is subject to monthly audits.

#### **4. CRIME SUPERVISION**

- 4.1. Once a crime has been recorded the Crime Service Team has the responsibility to ensure that it is allocated for investigation as appropriate. The Supervisors of the investigator have the responsibility to ensure a proper investigation and HOCR compliance. Further supervision of prosecuted crimes is provided by the Case Directors. Investigative supervision is provided by Detective Sergeants with a Detective Inspector overseeing all investigations allocated within their sphere of responsibility. The ability to amend crimes once recorded is restricted to the Dedicated Decision Makers.
- 4.2. During the investigation process crimes will be regularly reviewed and may be amended to reflect any additional information. If during the course of the investigation it becomes apparent that the wrong crime has been recorded or there is additional verifiable information that a crime has not been committed, only an authorised Dedicated Decision Maker can either reclassify the crime or 'no crime' the record. The rationale for either of these decisions must be recorded on the crime record.
- 4.3. Before a crime is finalised it is reviewed by the Quality Team, who are part of the Crime Service Team with specific responsibility for ensuring the quality of the crime investigation process. All crimes are again checked to ensure correct classification and the correct method of disposal has been recorded.

## 5. LEADERSHIP

- 5.1. A significant influence on maintaining high standards of crime recording is the understanding that accurate crime data is not only essential in holding the police accountable for the work they do in the on-going fight against crime, but also it is vital in ensuring that the Chief Constable and his team are able to ensure that our police officers and staff are deployed to the right place at the right time; and that victims of crime are provided with the support to which they are entitled.
- 5.2. The Chief Officer Team is clear that the primary focus remains on delivering a high quality policing service that provides victim satisfaction and builds confidence of the local communities.
- 5.3. The Strategic Performance Board, chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable, questions and challenges the outcome of the NCRS audits as and when appropriate. The Police and Crime Commissioner and members of his team attend these meetings.

## 6. CRIME AUDITS

- 6.1. Monthly audits are conducted under the direction and control of the Force Crime and Incident Registrar. The audit guidance is based on the Home Office recommendations and areas for improvement identified from previous external audits (HMIC)
- 6.2. The auditors reconcile the Incident Recording system (STORM) with the Crime Recording System to establish whether a) a crime has been recorded or b) any incident opened as a crime related incident and not closed as a crime incident has sufficient justification for not recording as a crime. If mistakes are found they are highlighted and rectified. Any learning is picked up and fed into training programmes around NCRS compliance.
- 6.3. There are two elements to the NCRS auditing process, which are as follows:
  - **Investigation 1** - % of Incidents that are correctly closed as crime on the incident system.
  - Several aspects are reviewed and the log fails audit if one or more of the following conditions are not met:
    - Is it a crime and are the incident details sufficient to justify the closing category?
    - If it is closed as a crime, is the crime number in the log?

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- **Investigation 2** - % of Incidents successfully transferred to crime system within 72 hours and recorded in accordance with HOCR.
- Several aspects are reviewed and the log fails audit if one or more of the following conditions are not met:
  - Does the crime classification comply with the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and are the crime details sufficient to justify the classification;
  - Is the incident number in the crime report;
  - Has the crime been recorded within 72 hours or is there sufficient reasoning in the crime record as to why this has not been possible.

6.4. The audit process is consistent but provides sufficient flexibility to respond to any identified risk areas. The current monthly audit consists of the following:

- ASB – assess incidents closed under ASB themes to identify compliance with National Standards of Incident Recording (NSIR) and to identify vulnerable and repeat victims of ASB;
- NSIR – assess incidents closed to identify compliance;
- *100 incidents opened as 'Violence' are audited*
- *100 incidents opened as 'Domestic' are audited*
- *All incidents opened as 'Hate crime' are audited*
- *All incidents opened as 'Robbery' are audited*
- All incidents opened as 'Sexual' are audited

6.5. In addition the following audits are carried out:

- Detections - quarterly – for accurate application of Home Office Counting rules
- 'No Crimes' – quarterly – for accurate decision making
- 'Reclassifications' – quarterly – for accurate decision making

6.6. In relation to Investigation 1, the level of HOCR and NCRS compliance within all incident-to-crime categories listed in *italics* above has achieved on average a 'good' rating which is a compliance rating of 90% or above during this financial year and is within the normal range of audit compliance measurements.

6.7. In relation to Investigation 2, this has shown some deterioration since April 2013. Further work on the auditing results was done to define the dominant mechanism that is causing the delay. It has been established that non-compliance is predominantly linked to the correct technical classification being incorrect first time. On average we have achieved a poor rating of 85%.

- 6.8. All non-compliance issues discovered during the audit process are rectified so the ultimate crime record contains the correct crime classification.
- 6.9. In relation to Sexual Offences, a full review of all STORM logs with an opening code of 'Sexual Offences' recording during August to October 2013 and we found 80% compliance. This provoked more in-depth analysis and as a result bespoke training as been provided to the specialist units dealing with this crime type and a monthly audit has been introduced.
- 6.10. The audit is presented monthly to the Strategic Performance Board and is distributed throughout the Constabulary at both senior and operational level.
- 6.11. Any non-compliance issues relating to policy or procedure are addressed through the respective Heads of Department.
- 6.12. To address all non-compliance remedial action has been taken and this forms part of the training that is being rolled out across the Constabulary. A process has been put in place which flags unresolved incidents to the officers.

## **7. EXTERNAL AUDITS**

7.1. Alongside the inspection processes carried out internally, external inspections are carried out by HMIC. These inspections are carried out independently of the Constabulary.

7.2. HMIC has undertaken a programme of work over a number of years to test aspects of whether crimes are being recorded by the police when they should be, and categorised correctly. The most recent inspection in Hertfordshire was reported in January 2012. The key findings were:

- The sampling indicated that Hertfordshire Constabulary almost always records crimes accurately as required by NCRS.
- Chief Officers demonstrate strong leadership and reinforce the importance of accurate crime recording throughout the organisation.
- Overall the Constabulary is committed to ensuring good quality and incident data.
- The force ensures that the staff involved in crime recording decisions have the right skills to do their job well.
- The force is supported by strong quality assurance arrangements, this helps to maintain good levels of crime and incident data quality.
- The Constabulary needs to address the risks that HMIC has identified to the inconsistent identification of repeat and vulnerable victims of anti-social behaviour.

- The force does not have a stated target for data quality compliance; this has the potential to result in some managers taking a disproportionate level of action to raise data compliance standards higher than the Chief Officer requirements.

7.3. The areas for improvement identified within that report were readily accepted and have been addressed.

## **8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISK.**

8.1. Hertfordshire Constabulary, together with all other forces is schedule a Crime Data Integrity Review commencing on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2014. This will concentrate not only on incident-to-crime conversion but also any source material available to evaluate police crime recording accuracy. HMIC inspection is attached at Appendix A.



APPENDIX A

Inspection Criteria

**1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

**The force has arrangements at a senior level to ensure there is confidence in recorded crime figures and all aspects of the HOCR.**

- 1.1 Leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff.
- 1.2 There is a proportionate approach to managing the strategic and organisational risk of recording crime data.
- 1.3 HOCR, NCRS, and NSIR are used to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately.

**2. SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES**

**There are systems and processes in place to ensure that; crime is correctly recorded in accordance with HOCR and NCRS; standards of out of court outcomes are maintained; and no-crime decisions are correct.**

- 2.1 The force effectively manages and supervises incidents, other reporting routes and crime records in order to ensure that crimes are correctly recorded.
- 2.2 The force ensures that out of court outcomes suit the needs of victims, offenders and the criminal justice system.
- 2.3 No-crime decision making for high risk crime categories is correct and there is robust oversight and quality control.
- 2.4 The force promotes a victim-centred approach to crime recording and associated outcomes.
- 2.5 The force ensures processes for receiving, recording and managing reported crimes of rape are robust.
- 2.6 The force has I.T systems which allows for efficient and effective management of crime recording.

**PEOPLE AND SKILLS**

**The force has staff whose conduct and skills ensure accurate crime recording.**

- 3.1 The force has arrangements in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording.
- 3.2 The behaviour of staff reflects a culture of integrity for crime recording practice and decision-making.
- 3.3 The accuracy of crime recording is actively overseen and governed by the Force Crime Registrar (FCR).