

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP18/18

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL -
27 APRIL 2018**

**SUBJECT: CRIME DATA INTEGRITY – NATIONAL CRIME RECORDING
STANDARDS (NCRS)**

SUMMARY:

1. Compliance with the NCRS ensures crimes are identified and recorded accurately in line with national standards; crimes are recorded ethically, with integrity, and victims are believed. This builds trust and confidence in our communities and ensures we provide a proper service to the public and victims of crime, enabling a better understanding of demand and enables investigation to bring offenders to justice.
2. In November 2015 Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) commenced a rolling programme of inspection of all forces' crime data integrity. This includes a review of previous audit recommendations, plus an audit to determine the current compliance levels with the NCRS.
3. Twenty reports have been published to date in the current round of inspections, out of forty three forces in England and Wales. These have highlighted a number of inconsistencies among forces.
4. As each report is published forces are expected to note areas of concern, consider any areas for improvement and adopt good practice and recommendations.
5. With each report, and clarification of recording practices, the compliance level of each subsequent force should improve, resulting in further, previous unidentified crime being recorded, however this relies to an extent on a force's ability to fund necessary process changes.
6. There are also amendments to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), both on an annual and quarterly basis resulting from legislative changes and working group queries, which provide further clarity and can also influence the recording rates in an ever changing landscape.

7. To improve compliance and monitor the changing landscape, the force has implemented a series of improvements which are detailed within the body of the report.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to support the work undertaken in addressing the crime and data integrity needs of the force, as detailed within National Crime Recording Standards and applying the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime.

DETAIL OF THE SUBMISSION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) (ethical crime recording) was introduced in 2002. The intention is to provide a level playing field allowing all forces to apply a consistent set of rules that put the victim at the forefront of any crime recording decision.
- 1.2 Over time these Home Office Counting Rules continue to be refined and clarified to ensure that the most accurate crime data is recorded and the victim-based ethos remains paramount.
- 1.3 A previous Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) review took place in 2013/2014. It was estimated that forces were under-recording crime, the prominent areas of concern being sexual and violence offences, plus within the vulnerable victim area.
- 1.4 All forces were individually provided with a series of recommendations to improve consistency, these for most, included improved training, supervision, recording processes and improved audit functions.
- 1.5 The Action Plan from 2013/2014 for Suffolk was completed and 'signed off' by HMICFRS.
- 1.6 The current round of Crime Data Integrity (CDI) reviews is revisiting previous recommendations and also performing an audit of specified incidents and crimes taken from identified risk areas, in order to assess current levels of recording compliance.
- 1.7 The CDI reviews are being published in batches, and forces yet to be visited are expected to adopt clarifications and recommendations that will improve their own compliance level.
- 1.8 There are other factors that impact on crime recording performance, but as the administrative accuracy and improved training/awareness of crime recording continues to improve, this will obviously have an impact on the total number recorded.

2. HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) CDI REVIEW

- 2.1 There are sixteen set criteria against which each force is evaluated and these are used to determine the force performance in respect of three elements:
 - How effective is the force at recording reported crime?
 - How efficiently do the systems and processes in the force support accurate crime recording?
 - How well does the force demonstrate the leadership and culture necessary to meet the national standards for crime recording?
- 2.2 Crime recording is the principal consideration but will not determine, on its own, what the final performance grade will be; other considerations include completion of previous action plans, timeliness of recording, victim service, leadership and culture within the force.

2.3 The performance grades that can be attributed are:

- Inadequate
- Requires Improvement
- Good
- Outstanding

2.4 To date, five forces have been rated as good, five require improvement and ten have been found to be inadequate. No force has attracted an outstanding grade.

3. CURRENT AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

3.1 CDI inspections have highlighted some emerging themes which appear common to most forces and some of which Suffolk Constabulary can identify with.

3.2 Key areas of focus centre around violence and sexual offences, much of the missed recording relates to specific offence types, such as stalking, harassment and malicious communications; common assault without battery and the accurate resulting of public order incidents – failure to adequately result and confirm why a crime has not been committed. Both sexual and violence offences in general have received comment - failure to identify all historic or additional crimes disclosed whilst conducting an investigation into the principal crime; failure to recognise the victim confirmation provided by a parent or professional person acting on behalf of the vulnerable.

3.3 A comprehensive schedule of work is ongoing in respect of improving our crime recording decision making process, brief details are summarised below.

4. CURRENT AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Leadership

4.1 The support for crime recording demonstrated by senior leaders reflects the national position:-

- A Crime Data Integrity Group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and including the Crime Registrar, meets monthly and consists of senior management representing the responsible areas, such as crime management, command and control, incident recording and county policing. The monthly audit and current improvement initiatives are discussed and action points raised to ensure issues are addressed.
- Detective Superintendent Investigations is actively involved in supporting the Crime Registrar in providing the additional authority, giving the necessary gravity to guidance material, including presentations at crime training days.
- A small sub-group was initiated, chaired by the Detective Superintendent, to address the sixteen criteria and identify outstanding issues.
- Numerous guidance documents – two online training packages, Constables County feature, Power Point presentations and an aide memoir have all been personally introduced and solidly supported by members of the Chief Officer Team.

Training

- 4.2 Training of all staff, involved in any way with crime recording, is a priority concern.
- 4.3 Two force-wide on-line training packages have been developed. The initial training was launched shortly after the previous review in 2014. This was completed by all relevant staff and a second on-line training package is now close to completion.
- 4.4 In addition two rounds of direct training have been provided during the last three years by means of PowerPoint cascade training via Sergeants and Inspectors.
- 4.5 All sergeants, including all acting and temporary sergeants, throughout the force are currently undergoing additional training in respect of the Athena crime system with specific reference to NCRS basic rules and outcomes.
- 4.6 Student officers receive basic NCRS training – this has recently moved from initial input to later within the probationary period to ensure it has more relevance to the officers' experience level.
- 4.7 An aide memoir has been provided to all relevant staff that details common recording issues and the principal recording rules.
- 4.8 Further dedicated training has been provided, and continues to be provided, to specialist staff to equip them for their specific roles such as:-
- Communications staff;
 - Communications supervisors;
 - Safeguarding/Vulnerable person staff;
 - Crime Management;
 - Incident Management Unit;
 - Incident and Crime Management Hub;
 - On-line Investigations;
 - Operational supervisor briefings.
- 4.9 The monthly internal CDI audits are also used as a learning tool. Any crimes identified within the audit that have not been correctly recorded, or missed are referred back to the officer concerned for advice and correction. The audit is also closely monitored in order to identify any trends or repeat 'offenders' in order that further remedial action may be taken and additional training prepared.
- 4.10 Where concerning trends are identified or a general misunderstanding is perceived, then additional interim training is provided, usually in the form of on-line briefing notes and/or additional aide memoir or posters.
- 4.11 Emerging HMIC themes that impact on crime recording were mentioned earlier. Training in respect of these has been more concentrated. A new PowerPoint has recently been provided for supervisors to present to staff, which specifically addresses the areas of particular concern, plus a Constables County feature also focuses on these issues, a display poster for briefing rooms has been created, regular features on the on-line (intranet) self-briefing tool are regularly uploaded, clear additional guidance has been provided to Safeguarding staff in relation to the recording of rape and Control Room Inspectors and Detective Sergeants have been given specific responsibility for the oversight of rape reports.

Audit

- 4.12 As a result of the previous HMIC review, CDI audit/quality assurance resources available to the Crime Registrar were increased with the development of a Crime Integrity section comprising of a supervisor and four auditors, in addition to the present Crime Registrar and deputy.
- 4.13 The NCRS/CDI monthly audit is conducted to mirror, as far as possible, the impending HMICFRS audit, in that the audit samples (albeit somewhat smaller) are taken from the same crime and incident categories in order that a realistic indication of the HMIC audit assessment may be made, using the same robust audit criteria.
- 4.14 It has to be emphasised however that the internal audit can only provide a snapshot of the estimated position in respect of overall performance and relates purely to the sample taken – there is a level of subjectivity in respect of some crime recording decisions (particularly in respect of volume crime such as minor public order) and the audit cannot totally accurately pre-judge the random sample that HMICFRS will select – the sample size chosen by HMICFRS will be in the region of 1,500 records. Replicating this is outside the capabilities of most forces, hence potential for discrepancy between internal and HMICFRS findings.
- 4.15 The audit is circulated to senior management and all operational supervisors and specialists; it is prefixed with a summary that details current recording issues and lists bullet points for briefing purposes. It forms the basis of further remedial action identified by the Crime Integrity Group.
- 4.16 The audit also provides information on trends, enabling additional training or additional audits to be identified in specific themed areas.
- 4.17 As previously mentioned, the audit also acts a learning guide, failures identified within the audit are referred back to the officer concerned (also where appropriate the supervisor) for remedial action/information and these remain outstanding until rectified. Learning issues from the audit are also included within the '60 second' briefing guidance.

5. OTHER IMPACTING FACTORS

- 5.1 Major changes to HOCR are issues either on an annual, or quarterly basis, with on-off clarifications being issued throughout the year.
- 5.2 Changes are not generally retrospective and so will impact on future statistical returns. There have, over the last few years, been a number of changes that will have directly influenced figures, particularly within the violence and sexual offence categories and as such can frustrate year-on-year comparisons.
- 5.3 The below list is not exhaustive, but does indicate some changes that will have influenced relatively recent crime statistics:
- 2017: Burglary Dwelling definition amended to Residential Burglary and premises included within definition extended to include outbuildings, garages etc. which previously would not have counted within the domestic burglary category.

- 2017: Sexual Communication with a child crime added to cover loophole in legislation, where predatory contact has been made with a child that contains sexual content, but does not yet amount to an incitement to sexual activity offence.
- 2016: Recording practice in respect of rape amended. Previously where several persons were concerned together in rape, one offence was recorded; subsequently in line with victim perception, each individual penetration recorded as separate offence.
- 2015: Controlling and Coercive Behaviour crime added to address situations where one party within a relationship is being unduly influenced and controlled by the other. This may or may not involve other notifiable offences and could be recorded in addition to other offences.
- 2015: Recording practice in respect of modern slavery offences amended. Previously only the most serious offence in a series of crimes would be recorded; subsequently not only would the most serious crime be recorded but in addition the modern slavery offence would also be recorded.
- 2015: Offences of 'revenge porn' were added – to address the display of adult indecent images.
- 2015: Malicious Communications crime was added to the list of notifiable violence crimes reported within statistical returns.
- 2015: Recording practice in respect of professional persons, parents or carers acting on behalf of vulnerable person will be recorded as if directly reported and do not require victim confirmation.
- 2015: Recording practice in respect of third party reporting amended, even if victim confirmation has not been received, if sufficient evidence and police believe appropriate and necessary to crime, a crime will be recorded.
- 2015: Crimes added in respect of abuse and neglect in respect of care home treatment and management.

5.4 Police have experienced an inordinate number of historic offences, particularly involving both sexual and historic abuse. The publicity generated by offences involving celebrities has given courage to a very great many people to come forward in the knowledge that their complaint will be believed and will be treated accordingly by police. Continuing frequent additional public-interest cases mean that historic reporting remains very high within both the sexual and violence categories.

5.5 As previously mentioned continuing HMICFRS reviews are identifying trends that impact upon crime recording. This has resulted in closer inspection and the generation of further training and guidance to ensure accurate recording and correct classification in particular areas, including:

- The correct identification and recording of offences involving harassment and stalking (note: further national HOCA changes are being introduced April 2018, in an attempt to assist with the correct identification of these, which, in itself will consequently lead to another increase in recording).

- Clarification around the necessity to assess and document the effect that minor public order disputes and arguments have on victims and witnesses and to determine in each case whether these may amount to notifiable crimes.
- Clarification about whether an unconfirmed report from a third party should be recorded as a crime, being the appropriate and the right thing to do.
- Clarification around the recording of threats of violence occurring within private premises that do not involve physical assault.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial risks associated with this paper.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

7.1 There are no other implications and risks associated with this report, as the Constabulary maintains its current compliance initiatives within audit and training.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	No
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	No
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	No
Have human resource implications been considered?	No
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	Yes
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	No
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	No
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	Yes

In relation to the above, please ensure that all relevant issues have been highlighted in the 'other implications and risks' section of the submission.