



Response to HMICFRS' report: *An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime*, March 2025

In March 2025, HMICFRS published the national thematic report into how effectively the police investigate crime. This followed a long-term decline in successful prosecutions, meaning that too few criminal investigations were leading to justice for victims. The report focused on volume crime and made 11 recommendations aimed at helping forces to improve the standard of crime investigations and achieve better outcomes for victims. Drawing from examples of initiatives being run by fieldwork forces, the recommendations focus on helping forces by:

- Building a better understanding of their crime-related demand and the resources they need to meet it;
- Designing more effective processes for recording, assessing, allocating and investigating crime, putting victims at the heart of the process;
- Providing better training for investigators, their supervisors, and any other officers or members of staff who have a role in an investigation; and
- Improving the supervision of crime investigations.

Of the 11 recommendations made in the report, eight of these are for police forces. Suffolk Constabulary accepts these recommendations and the below sets out the constabulary's response to these.

Recommendation 3

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has an effective and efficient end-to-end process to deal with online reports of crime. This process should remove all unnecessary delays in recording, assessing and allocating crime reports, and make sure the force consistently complies with its requirements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

Suffolk Constabulary has a process for online reporting, through Single Online Home, and a clear allocation policy for crimes that are reported in this way, which ensures that they are investigated by appropriate resources. Crimes are routinely checked and audited for timeliness of recording. The force monitors compliance with VCOP at every level of the organisation, from local management information dashboards through to Force Performance Meetings. Compliance with VCOP is good, but there are measures in place to improve, which includes ensuring that those entitled to enhanced rights are identified and timescales and entitlements are complied with.

Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime in their force minimises delays in the investigation process and the length of time before investigators contact victims.

The constabulary has a clear end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime. This includes the different methods of reporting crime into the constabulary, whether through online reporting, telephone calls, or emails. Crimes that are recorded will be processed through the Investigation Management Unit and the Crime Co-ordination Centre for quality assurance before either being closed or allocated to the appropriate resource dependent on the crime type or the threat, harm and risk. This minimises the delays to both the investigation process and contact with victims.

Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should design and operate a policy that results in their force allocating to investigators crimes that are commensurate with each investigator's level of training, accreditation and experience.

Suffolk Constabulary operates a crime management policy. PIP Level 2 crime is allocated to PIP Level 2 resource, as are crimes that are of a high threat, harm and risk. The crime management policy was reviewed in 2022 and isn't due for review until 2026. However, this will be brought forwards in response to this recommendation to ascertain whether it needs to be refreshed.

Recommendation 6

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has a clear policy relating to investigation plans. They should make sure their force communicates this policy to officers and staff. As a minimum, this policy should cover:

- when to start an investigation plan;
- who is responsible for writing the investigation plan;
- what to consider including in an investigation plan;
- how supervisors should review and approve investigation plans; and
- how the force will monitor investigation plans to check their quality, and to make sure investigators and supervisors have followed them.

The force has clear investigation plans called "8-point plans". Each officer completes the 8-point plan when they report or are allocated a crime that is screened in for investigation. The 8-point plan consists of the following headings:

- *Victim*
- *Suspect*
- *Witnesses*
- *Scene*
- *Digital Evidence*
- *Local Enquiries*
- *Other Evidence*
- *Investigation Plan*

The supervisor reviews the 8-point plan as part of the supervisory review and utilises a closing plan at the conclusion of the investigation. The force has monthly inspector audits that check the quality of the 8-point plan and whether opportunities to solve crimes have been missed. The audits are reported into the Investigation Standards Board (ISB), and this is used to shape improvement work.

Recommendation 7

By 30 June 2025, chief constables should include in their investigation policies a direction stating that when an image exists, investigators should search it against the Police National Database and any other relevant databases before their force closes an investigation.

For the majority of investigations where there are outstanding images, these would be searched against PND at the point of closure. This is processed through the Crime Co-ordination Centre of the Intelligence Units. However, there is not a clear auditable standard at the moment and Suffolk Constabulary has not conducted an audit to understand any challenges around this. This is part of the Investigative Standards Improvement work that will be co-ordinated through the ISB.

Recommendation 9

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the first supervisory review of a crime investigation takes place early enough for the supervisor to be able to:

- review any actions taken, including those to assess and manage risk;
- make sure the investigator has put in place the appropriate support for victims, and is complying with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
- set or approve an investigation plan;
- review the investigator's caseload; and
- set a date for a further review.

Suffolk Constabulary's crime management policy is clear that the supervisory review should take place as soon as possible after the crime was recorded. This should include agreeing the 8-point plan and ensuring VCOP compliance. Reviews should be completed at regular intervals throughout the investigation and supervisors conduct regular workload management with their officers/staff. The review agrees the investigation plan and activity against it, VCOP compliance and suspect management.

Recommendation 10

By 31 March 2026, chief constables should:

- make sure any member of staff who has a role in supporting the investigation process completes the College of Policing 'Introduction to investigation' learning programme;
- satisfy themselves that the content of their force's ongoing investigative training for responders is designed to develop their investigative skills and performance, and to improve outcomes for victims, and that their force gives responders protected time to complete this training;
- make sure their force focuses sufficiently on case file preparation when providing professionalising investigations programme level 1 training, while taking into account local procedures and case management systems;
- make sure their force gives officers and staff continuing professional development opportunities about preparing case files;
- make sure their force keeps accurate records of professionalising investigations programme level 2 accredited officers and staff, and that those officers and staff complete annual continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation, which forces should also accurately record; and
- review the investigative training their force gives to supervisors, making sure it equips them to oversee and direct crime investigations effectively.

Suffolk Constabulary's Learning & Development Department support PIP Level 1 investigations and a significant part of initial training is dedicated to investigations. Each student officer when they have completed training will be posted for a 7-week period into the Investigative Development Units. These teams allow officers to refine their PIP Level 1 investigative skills, including case preparation, interviewing, statement taking etc. Every 12 months, there is a day allocated for PIP Level 1 investigators to have investigation training and a further day for vulnerability training. There is a Stripes course that is given to acting and/or newly promoted sergeants that provides training around the supervision of PIP 1 crime investigations. PIP Level 2 officers are provided 2 days CPD per year.

Recommendation 11

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should establish and implement a process to monitor the proportion of recorded crime that their force allocates for investigation. This should include a process to make sure a decision not to allocate a crime for investigation is appropriate.

Suffolk Constabulary monitors crime trends through force performance meetings. However, this does not include the percentage of crime that is not allocated on for further investigation. This will be requested for inclusion in the data pack. Crime is not allocated for onward investigation if there are no identified lines of enquiry. Some unallocated crime is reviewed during inspector audits and through Crime Data Integrity audits to ensure that investigative lines of enquiry were not missed.