

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London

Our ref:TP/VS

3 October 2022

Dear Home Secretary

**RE: Joint Thematic Inspection: The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime
- Finding time for crime**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this thematic inspection. Suffolk Constabulary has provided an update on the recommendations for Chief Constables, which is attached.

The response also draws on the findings from the recent Suffolk Constabulary PEEL inspection to put this into context and reassure around performance.

I will, as part of my oversight role, monitor the activity to respond to the police recommendations in order to continue improving performance.

Yours sincerely



Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk



Subject	Force Response to HMICFRS report titled 'The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime'
Date	30/08/22
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In August 2022, HMICFRS published a report titled '*The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime*'.

The letter accompanying the report included the following:

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has called for forces to go back to basics to ensure they are conducting investigations effectively. Inspectors found that:

- *forces are missing opportunities to identify and catch offenders, from the moment a member of the public reports the crime to the point where a case is finalised.*
- *police are not doing all they can to help victims when they report crimes - in 71 percent of the burglary reports examined, police personnel did not give victims any advice on crime-scene preservation during the initial call.*
- *forces lack investigative capacity and capability to effectively tackle burglary, robbery and theft, often because of the national detective shortage and inexperience; and*
- *investigations are not being appropriately or thoroughly supervised, with a third of cases examined having insufficient evidence of proper supervision. HMICFRS has recommended that by March 2023, all police forces should ensure that:*
 - *their crime-scene management practices adhere to the authorised professional practice on managing investigations for burglary, robbery and theft; and*
 - *these investigations are subject to effective supervision and direction.*

This report seeks to provide a summary of Suffolk Constabulary's position and response to issues and recommendations outlined by the HMICFRS.

HMICFRS – The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime

1. The screening of volume crimes can overlook the complexity and harm caused by serious acquisitive crime.

The initial policing response can set the standard for how well a crime is investigated. HMICFRS are concerned that in too many instances, forces are missing opportunities in the early stages of the investigation, when the crime is first reported. In 71 percent of the burglary reports they examined

they found police personnel didn't give victims any advice on crime scene preservation during the initial call. This failure to secure potential forensic evidence means vital material may be lost, which can hamper the success of investigations. Some forces are also failing to recognise repeat victims or conduct a good enough vulnerability risk assessment.

Suffolk Response

Contact and control Room (CCR) call takers do offer crime scene preservation advice at first point of contact. They have had a CSI training inputs covering this issue in 2022. These inputs will continue to form part of call handlers core training requirements.

Residential burglaries are a priority offence for Forensic Services activity. All such crimes are subject to review for attendance by Crime Scene Investigators to maximise the recovery of physical evidence from these scenes. In Suffolk, over three quarters of all reported residential burglaries are attended, which compares favourably with many other forces and any evidence recovered, particularly fingerprints or DNA, is treated as urgent with results being made available to investigators as soon as possible.

The CCR has strengthened processes through policy, procedure and training to ensure that THRIVE (Threat, Harm, risk Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) assessments are applied to all incident logs. THRIVE processes combined with 'STORM' incident management software capability, ensures that repeat victims and locations are located and flagged to attending officers.

The HMICFRS report recognises good practice in another force, in respect of audit and scrutiny of call handling. Suffolk's CCR continues to operate a number of formal quality assurance processes to ensure call handling and response is effective.

The following passages from Suffolk's most recent HMIC PEEL assessment (2022) are relevant when considering HMICFRS concerns as to initial response to serious acquisitive crime (SAC).

'The force deploys its resources to respond to victims and incidents appropriately.'

'The force is consistent and good at allocating incidents to the appropriate team that will be best able to assist the victim. This is predominantly the uniformed responses teams. When needed, criminal investigation department (CID) staff are expected to attend incidents wherever possible. This helps make sure that golden hour principles, such as completing house-to-house enquires and taking statements, are followed in more serious cases. And it helps to ensure effective scene management and investigation progression. When CID staff can't attend, the duty detective sergeant is expected to offer support and guidance to attending officers. When needed (such as when there has been a sexual offence), specialist officers attend scenes quickly to support victims.'

'The force identifies both high demand and vulnerable locations, groups and people, including repeat victims.'

'The force is good at identifying and supporting its communities and vulnerable people. It has 21 intelligence development officers. Their role involves engaging with communities to better understand them. This includes better understanding criminality within those communities.'

2. Forces often lack capacity to investigate SAC.

HMICFRS are reporting concerns that not enough SAC offences result in either an offender being identified or the case reaching charge or summons. They found that at all stages, from call management to the eventual closure of a crime, many forces lack the capacity to properly record, investigate and manage SAC.

Suffolk Response

Suffolk Constabulary's solved rate for Serious Acquisitive Crime, is higher than the national average and compares well with Most Similar Force (MSF) data.

Recent analysis of 'Force-Sight' data for the preceding 12-month period Serious Acquisitive Crime is summarised as follows: -

Robbery (July 21 – June 22)

Suffolk Solve rate 15.4% & Charge Rate 13.5%

England & Wales Solve rate 8.4% & Charge Rate 7.6%

Burglary (July 21 – June 22)

Suffolk Solve rate 9.6% & Charge Rate 6.1%

England & Wales Solve rate 6.1 % & Charge Rate 4.5%

Theft from Person (July 21 – June 22)

Suffolk Solve rate 3.1% & Charge Rate 1%

England & Wales Solve rate 1.3 % & Charge Rate 0.9 %

Theft from Motor Vehicle (July 21 – June 22)

Suffolk Solve rate 4.4% & Charge Rate 2.4 %

England & Wales Solve rate 1.3 % & Charge Rate 1.2 %

Theft of Motor Vehicle (July 21 – June 22)

Suffolk Solve rate 9.9% & Charge Rate 8.6%

England & Wales Solve rate 3.7 %, Charge Rate 3.3%

In Suffolk the vast majority of SAC is allocated to a CID team to deal. CID teams are proactive in identifying series and prolific offenders.

Crime Scene Investigator Teams also serve to inform the early identification of series through patterns or similarities identified following crime scene examinations (comparative Case analysis)

Analytical products are commissioned to support tasking and briefing of staff and in support of investigations.

Suffolk Constabulary has a well-established 'Taken Into Consideration Team (TIC)' team ('Operation CONVERTOR') who take every opportunity to maximise detections for SAC offences. This is often a great benefit to victims who otherwise would see their offences go undetected.

3. Inadequate digital forensic capability often hinders investigations.

HMICFRS report that often, forces' digital forensic, technological and analytical capability isn't good enough to let them carry out thorough investigations, and capacity is frequently limited. This affects how far an investigation can go and causes significant delays. It highlights that most forces need to improve in this area and make the most of the increasing evidential opportunities available through the changing digital landscape.

Suffolk Response

Suffolk have a shared Digital Forensics Unit (DFU). There are clear processes which ensure SAC investigations can benefit from early engagement with the DFU.

The following passages from Suffolk Constabulary's most recent HMIC PEEL assessment (2022) are relevant when considering HMICFRS concerns

'Digital support officers are adding significant support to officers and value to investigations.'

'The force has employed a number of digital support officers (DSOs). Their role is to support investigators by helping to triage devices at scenes (including with warrant activity) and downloading data from CCTV and phones. Officers are reporting very positively on the effect the DSOs are having. The force reviewed the posts after six months and concluded that the DSOs had completed a total of 3,340 digital enquiries. As a result, the force is now expanding the DSO team.'

As with most other forces, our digital capacity and capability is in a constant state of review. Technology moves at an alarming rate, and it is incumbent on forces to keep up with the pace of change.

4. Insufficient supervision sets the blueprint for poor standards.

In one third of the SAC cases HMICFRS examined, there was insufficient supervision and direction of investigations. This may result in missed opportunities, including the use of intelligence, and linking cases. Given the low rates for solving these crimes, this is a concern.

Suffolk Response

In 2021 and 2022 there has been a real focus on improving investigation supervision. Training sessions were delivered to Inspectors and Sergeants in early 2022.

Whilst internal audits have shown an improving trend in standards of supervision, consistency in approach particularly as regards volume crime (such as for example theft) needs to be a continuing priority area of focus for the constabulary.

Further training sessions and continued auditing and scrutiny of crime investigation standards will continue in an endeavour to achieve this.

5. Tackling SAC needs a whole-force approach.

An effective approach to SAC needs co-operation and expertise across a range of policing functions. In some forces, officers and staff at all levels and functions see SAC as a shared priority. But this isn't the case in all forces. Many need to do more to carry out effective tasking across teams. Investigations need to be complemented by the work of local policing teams, problem-solving activity, offender management, and activities that help divert those at risk of being drawn into SAC. Effective information technology (IT) and analytical capability should underpin investigative efforts, so forces can spot SAC trends before they become acute problems. But some analysts still lack access to basic mapping software, and some investigators have insufficient access to analytical and intelligence products.

Suffolk Response

Our Force Tasking and Coordination process is well established and enables Local Responsible Officers (LROs) to access a range of tactics and force / regional resources to tackle commissioned problems or threats. This includes an analytical capacity. There are numerous examples of analysts providing mapping products for SAC offending, often with communications data overlay where there are suspects. The constabulary can cite significant and recent operational success in this regard.

6. Forces with a strong crime prevention culture are more adept at problem-solving and achieve better results.

To tackle SAC, HMIC rightly states that a focus on crime prevention needs to be a cultural imperative that permeates throughout the force. Officers need to consider why a crime took place, what can be done to prevent it reoccurring, and how they can minimise risk to prevent future victimisation.

Suffolk Response

Extract from Suffolk's HMIC PEEL assessment (2022).

'The force is focused on crime prevention and is developing its problem-solving ethos. We found good examples of analytical work being used to solve problems, and preventative tactics being used by local officers working with partner agencies'.

'Other factors contributing to the force's ability to reduce crime include:

- Its extensive range of methods used to engage with its communities. This is helping to build trust and encourage the sharing of information.*
- Its use of a range of specialists to support crime prevention and assist its communities and partners in this. These include problem-solving tactical advisers, schools' officers, and a 'design out crime' role.*
- Its performance arrangements (focused on crime reduction and prevention), and its strong partnership and collaboration work,*
- Its effective integrated offender management programme, which focuses on people who commit high levels of crime'.*

• *Its use of an analytical tool that allows it to identify repeat and vulnerable victims by geographical area. I am pleased that the force is addressing the right areas of policing to reduce crime'.*

But the following areas may negatively affect the force's ability to reduce crime:

- *It doesn't consistently supervise its crime investigations to ensure a good standard of investigation, resulting in some offenders not being brought to justice.*
- *It doesn't always complete an initial assessment of victims' needs, which could lead to victims withdrawing their support for investigation.*
- *It doesn't always identify repeat or vulnerable victims at the first point of contact. By continuing to develop and enhance the positive factors, and by addressing the problems listed above, the force will be better placed to effectively reduce crime.*

The HMICFRS report 'The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime' sets out two recommendations for forces: -

Recommendation 1

By March 2023, forces should make sure their crime scene management practices adhere to the authorised professional practice on managing investigations for SAC or provide a rationale for deviating from it. They should also include:

- giving victims timely and appropriate advice during their initial call; and
- applying a risk assessment process such as THRIVE, clearly recording it, and flagging those re-victimised for further support

Recommendation 2

By March 2023, all forces should ensure SAC investigations are subject to effective supervision and direction. This should focus on:

- making sure supervisors have the capability and capacity to meaningfully supervise investigations;
- making sure investigations meet the necessary standard and achieve suitable outcomes that consider the voice or opinion of victims;
- applying investigative outcome codes appropriately; and
- complying with the Victims' Code and recording evidence of compliance.

Conclusion

As outlined, Suffolk Constabulary performs comparatively well in respect of serious acquisitive crime types of burglary, robbery, and theft.

However, there is clear scope for delivering further improvements, and a number of the recommendations as listed above accord with force specific recommendations arising within our PEEL assessment.

CSIM

Quality Investigations
Safeguarding the Vulnerable
Reducing Demand
Managing Workflows



Work will continue to embed our use of THRIVE and to ensure forensic and other advice is issued at point of call. We will continue to work on victim needs assessments and activity to ensure repeat victims are identified and provided an enhanced service, including from a preventative perspective.

The importance of supervision to ensuring high standards of investigations is fully recognised and is a priority for improvement work. A number of actions are in place to secure these improvements, including continued audit and scrutiny and bespoke reviews by our Performance Improvement Unit to shape effective Training and Guidance for supervisors.

Continuous Improvement activity to address recommendations will be co-ordinated through Force Performance, Investigations Improvement and HMICFRS related governance boards.