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## **Review of Police Crime and Incident Reports**

**Derbyshire Constabulary  
January 2012**

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest. We monitor, inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the police service in England and Wales. More information and copies of inspection and review reports are available on our website, [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

## The process for recording crimes and incidents

The crime recording process has three key stages:

- **Recording an incident:** A member of the public calls for police assistance, or a police officer observes or discovers a crime. The police create an incident record.
- **Recording a crime:** If the police decide a crime was committed, they create a crime record (usually straight away).
- **Investigating a crime:** Investigations begin as soon as possible, usually with initial enquiries which look for possible leads and gather evidence (a 'primary investigation'). A more detailed, 'secondary investigation' then takes place to consider the evidence gathered in the initial stages.

## Purpose of the review

The Minister of State for Policing and Criminal Justice, Nick Herbert, asked HMIC to inspect the quality of the crime and incident data collected by police forces across England and Wales.

## Why is it important to have high quality crime and incident data?

High quality data means that:

- The police can establish the extent, location and victims of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB), and so plan their work to achieve the best outcomes for victims and their communities;
- The public, the Government and HMIC can get an accurate picture of crime and ASB in a particular area, and judge whether their force's performance represents value for money.

The Government's commitment to public accountability and transparency adds to this need for accurate and consistent data. This will become increasingly important as oversight of the police service is moved away from Whitehall to local police and crime commissioners (PCCs), who will rely on accurate, local information on how well their force is performing.

## Who sets the standards for crime and incident recording?

The Home Office sets standards for both crime and incident recording. The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) is underpinned by the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR). These aim to provide consistent standards in all forces and an approach to recording crimes that is based on the needs of the victim.

## **Review methodology: a note on data collection**

HMIC checked the accuracy of a small number of the force's crime and incident records. This was used to flag up any potential issues which could usefully be explored during the review.

Although the sample size was not large enough to be statistically significant, it gives some indication of the quality of the data collected by the force, and of the efficiency of its systems and processes. Some findings from the data collection are therefore included below.

## **Findings for Derbyshire Constabulary**

### **Does the force record crimes accurately and consistently?**

HMIC looked at 120 incident records created by Derbyshire Constabulary as a result of calls for assistance from the public. This is a small sample compared to the 2,436 calls that the Constabulary typically receives each day, but it provides an indicator of how accurately crime is being recorded. We found that of the 120 calls samples only four had been closed without a crime being properly recorded; this sampling provides an initial indication that Derbyshire Constabulary almost always records crimes accurately as required by the NCRS.

We found that the Constabulary had effective processes which ensured that reports of crime and ASB (including those reported directly to officers or to police station front counters) are correctly recorded.

A relatively high number of crime reports in Derbyshire are duplicate records, caused by both the initial call taker and the investigating officer recording the same crime. The Constabulary recognises that more efficient ways of working should be introduced to eliminate unnecessary duplication.

### **What is the quality of the investigation and service to victims?**

Derbyshire Constabulary has a victim-focused approach to crime recording. It is good at quickly identifying repeat and vulnerable victims, such as those who are disabled or elderly, so they can be given extra support if needed. The Constabulary deals with crimes in the most appropriate manner, including the use of restorative justice. Investigations in Derbyshire were generally carried out to a good standard, although supervision of both crime and incident recording could be further improved.

### **How does the force ensure that standards are met?**

Derbyshire Constabulary, from the top team and across the whole organisation, are clearly committed to ensuring that crime recording is accurate and of the highest quality. Recent improvements include revised crime reporting and recording practices and the appointment of a member of staff to be responsible for information quality and accuracy. Details of how the new arrangements will work in practice were still being decided at the time of the inspection. Once finalised, they will need to be communicated clearly to staff to ensure that the Constabulary's high standards are maintained.

The Constabulary carries out thorough checks of their records to ensure compliance with national standards but it does not always act on the findings. However, the Constabulary is taking steps to rectify this.

## **Conclusions**

HMIC sampling indicates that Derbyshire Constabulary almost always records crimes accurately as required by the NCRS. Chief officers demonstrate strong leadership and reinforce the importance of accurate crime recording throughout the organisation. The force has effective processes in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims of ASB. New arrangements for crime recording and auditing were being implemented at the time of the inspection. These will need to be communicated clearly to staff to ensure that the high standards are maintained.

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